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Report on Training

1 Introduction

This summer I left Japan with my PC, adjusted my watch to for the nineteen hour time difference, and arrived at the Honolulu International Airport after an 8 hour flight. I participated in the Hiroshima Board of Education's Training Program 2010 at Kapi'olani Community College of Hawai'i (KCC) in Honolulu for three weeks. I was grateful for an opportunity to retrace and identify my teaching style through the training. Even after having been an English teacher for over 14 years, it can still be a struggle to find effective teaching methods.

Before the program, I wanted to learn how to help my students to think and express themselves enthusiastically in English by applying their knowledge and help prepare them for authentic language-use situations. Through this program, I gained new ideas on planning and implementation of daily lessons. I also experienced what it was like to think and express myself in English. The following is a review of what I learned during the training.

2 Kapi'olani Community College (KCC)

KCC is located on the slopes of Diamond Head, east of central Honolulu and looks like a botanical garden. The campus was surrounded by many kinds of cactuses, big trees, and colorful flowers which were all well maintained. There was a view of the sky and ocean in the distance. There were also little birds singing and mongooses running around. Each building was named after Hawaiian plants, so I could understand the spirit of KCC which showed respect for Hawaiian nature and culture. Many students from abroad, mostly from Asia, study at KCC.

The curriculum was based on Content-Based Instruction (CBI). The goal of CBI is to prepare students to acquire a language by studying one theme in various ways. Students use integrated language skills within a specific context because it is effective for teaching learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). During the seminar, I experienced the process of CBI which focused on English education; including lectures and activities to reach the goal of the research presentation at the end.

3. Lectures and Activities

Professor Malm always taught in a positive manner and led us toward our goals with great encouragement. During the seminar, she had us create a classroom situation in English through brainstorming and free-writing exercises. Prof. Malm taught that, "The students' motivation is the most important factor for learning EFL." Following her remarks, I noticed some problems with my daily lessons. Considering the connection between elementary and junior high school students' tendency to lose

enthusiasm in the classroom, I thought following: tasks or activities were not interesting, there is a greater focus on accuracy rather than fluency, and not giving them enough time to think and express themselves. Upon identifying those problems, Prof. Malm offered several useful suggestions which led me toward the final goal of our seminar.

There were two types of homework assignments given every day. One was writing about a reflection about the day or a notable topic in ten minutes. The other was reading reference articles.

It was difficult for me to write a reflection in ten minutes and usually took more time to finish. Prof. Malm said that "The purpose of free-writing is not for grammar but fluency." She also gave advice such as: enjoy writing without any pressure, write down whatever thoughts that comes to mind, and there were no right or wrong answers. I gradually could write without pressure and realized the positive effects of continually free-writing.

I also had to read a lot of articles every day, so I went to bed after midnight even if I did not finish reading the entire articles. Sometimes during the lecture, it was hard to open my eyes because of lack of sleep but I tried my best to keep them open. Prof. Malm told us to read quickly, find information quickly, and separate the main ideas from details. The reading experience helped me realize why it is important to read. For example, I could better understand outlines by using worksheets distributed by Prof. Malm that included questions related to the seminar. Even if I was not able to initially understand the meaning of something I read, I understood it more clearly after reading it three times. Prof. Malm usually invited us to share our ideas or experiences about themes from the articles we read. I briefly shared my experiences; however, I was able to think deeply and provide better insight when I more clearly understood the articles.

Prof. Dudzik also provided suggestions on reading. She explained that English language materials should be a little more difficult for EFL learners to gain new words or grammars. If the purpose was to help learners to get used to reading, easier materials should be given as much as possible to help them enjoy reading. I want to refer to this idea in regard to my students' homework. Reading and writing during the seminar proved to be challenging. I witnessed how the effects of reading and writing activities enhanced my thoughts in order to help improve my listening and speaking abilities.

For example, in a workshop called "Encouraging Student-to-Student Interaction," we defined the meaning of interaction. First, we wrote our own definition without using dictionaries. Then, we discussed our individual thoughts to clear our ideas. The Professor helped us to make up the deficit. I learned from others and understood the concept. The process was interesting. After defining the term interaction, we proceeded with activities using it. The activities were reading each other's journal entries, writing comments on it, creating and telling stories, correcting grammatical mistakes as a group, and completing a story consisting of six parts. We also participated in an Information Gap activity to distinguish the spelling, meaning,

and grammar of words without showing cards. I hope to use these activities in my classroom and make my lessons more active.

4 Teaching Philosophy

During the second week, we were asked to create our own teaching philosophy. What is my motivation for teaching? How can I motivate students to study? What is my mission as an English teacher in my school? This was an important process that helped me understand my beliefs and policies.

It is wonderful to see my students eyes brighten after such activities as creating poems, making and presenting skits, and retelling stories or making speeches. If I feel their personal growth, I am satisfied as a teacher. I am surprised by their original ideas. It can take a long time to incorporate these kinds of lesson plans but I hope to prepare creative activities with the ideas I learned through this seminar. The encouragement and opinions Prof. Malm gave motivated me to further build upon my teaching philosophy.

Prof. Malm inquired about our school's mission in regards to adapting to social change. I answered, "To adapt to the changes of not only their regional society but also a global society." She continued asking, "Why is it important? To get better jobs using English?" I answered that, "Our society is in a depression so students seem to feel hopeless, but even in such situations I want them to find their dreams or hopes. Through seeing the global world and communicating with many people, I think they can understand the importance and find pleasure in cooperating with people. With their hopes, I want them to think about what they can do for the world." Prof. Malm replied, "I'm glad that you have the same thoughts on teaching." I was also glad to hear that.

I identified my thoughts which were vague at first through writing a teaching philosophy. Writing is a creation and my efforts to realize that are motivating me to teach more effectively. I learned how important it is for students to write something by considering the connection with themselves. Effective feedback from teachers can be a powerful means of motivating them to think and express themselves.

4 Homestay

I experienced a home stay for three days over a weekend. My host family was Robin and her son Keshy who was fifteen years old. Ms. Yagai and I stayed together because Robin's parents were her host family. They welcomed us with big smiles and delicious dinners. They told us about their family and showed many pictures. I was impressed by such hospitality.

There were two things which I wanted to do during the homestay. One was to serve Japanese tea. I brought powdered Japanese tea, tea cups, and some sweets. I showed them how to make Japanese tea and enjoy a tea ceremony. They said they enjoyed it, so I was really happy. Another thing I hoped to do was to record interviews on video. I wanted to show my students the life of people in Hawaii. There were four

people who cooperated to the interview; Keshy, his grandfather John who was a major league baseball player, and overseas students who also stayed at their house from Germany and Switzerland. They introduced themselves and answered questions with smiles. At first I was nervous to conduct interviews but I continued to record because I knew it was a great chance to show my students authentic communication. This experience was exciting for me, too.

6 Field Trip

Professor Malm took us on a field trip to the Plantation Village and Bishop Museum so we could learn about the history and culture of Hawaii. It was a good opportunity to understand the relationship between Japan, Hawaii, and internationalization in Hawaii. Hawaii is well known as a place for sightseeing, but I did not know how the people established their communities. There were two aspects of the Hawaii society; immigration and the original inhabitants. I learned about both of them briefly and discovered that Hawaiians actively maintain many of their traditions.

At Plantation Village, I learned about the history of the sugar plantation, and saw many workers' houses from the early 20th century, which were restored as exhibitions. Many immigrants went to Hawaii during the last half of the 19th century. They were from countries such as China, Japan, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Korea and the Philippines. I thought that it must have been a hard time especially for first generation immigrants. They brought their own ideas from different countries, learned each others' cultures and cooperated to make a new society. I also came to understand the Hawaiian spirit of cooperation and generosity.

At Bishop Museum, there were many traditional things which were connected with native Hawaiians who worshipped God and nature. They did not have a written language so they conveyed traditions through oral chants passed from generation to generation. I had a chance to make a lei and dance the hula. The meaning of the song I danced described the blessing of waterfalls. I imagined the great nature of the song. I experienced the hula dance while wearing the lei I made around my neck. I was glad to feel like I was released into nature.

7 Research Paper and Presentation

Our final project was to write research paper. My research theme was "Integrating reading and writing activities in an Integrated-Skills Approach to textbook content readings." A new "Course of Study" emphasizes the importance of Integrated-Skills. One of the concepts of Content Based Instruction (CBI) is using Integrated-Skills in order to achieve English skills. In the lectures and activities conducted by Prof. Malm and Prof. Dudzic, I experienced Integrated-Skills like; taking notes of what I had heard in the lectures, writing my thoughts and conveying them to others, and reading journals which other participants wrote and writing my opinions to them. I realized that my brain became active with Integrated-Skills. It was also

great that I could learn about English education in various ways while incorporating CBI which focuses on the content. My interests increased rapidly. For these reasons, I want to try to use some of CBI's ideas which tend to motivate students.

How can I understand the content of the textbooks? What do I have to prepare to make the content more attractive? What kind of activities can help students think and express themselves? The seminar offered an opportunity to think about how to use the content from textbooks like that. Finally, I was able to achieve my goals thanks to Prof. Malm and Prof. Dudzic constructive feedback and encouragement.

At the end of the seminar, we presented our research paper using a Power Point presentation. I did not have enough time to practice and write a complete manuscript, but was able to present my findings as a result of the seminar. Dr. Richards a chancellor from KCC, some professors, staff, and people from the Hawaii Department of Education (DOE) attended our presentations. Such reactions from them like nodding or facial expressions helped me continue my presentation to the end. I felt that my explanations were not detailed enough but they asked a lot of questions, offered suggestions, shared their feelings about the presentation. I was surprised by their positive reactions and felt happy because all seven panel members seemed to understand our efforts.

8 Conclusion

Throughout the whole program, Prof. Malm led us to through the process of presenting our research projects. It included challenges I met while brainstorming during the first session, teaching methodology and activities I learned, a mission I considered as part of the philosophy, and the content of my research. At the conclusion of my research, I was surprised that they were all interconnected. I more clearly understood the effects of Content-Based Instruction. It was a wonderful moment like solving jigsaw puzzle.

The training program coordinator, Mr. Tom Tsurutani, and other KCC staff kindly helped make our stay and studies very comfortable. I was impressed by their level of hospitality. I also want to thank the other participants Ms. Yagai and Ms. Iwamoto. We helped and encouraged each other during the seminar. Learning at KCC, seeing other cultures, and meeting many people were great experiences that I treasure! How can I convey my feelings of gratitude? What can I do in return? It is difficult to fully express my feelings in words so I hope to continue studying and further perpetuate my learning experiences. I learned not only as an English teacher but also as an EFL learner.

After returning to Kui Junior High School, I felt a need to support my students with gratitude for being their educator and help them experience the feeling being motivated to learn more. Lastly, I'd like to express my appreciation for the Hiroshima Board of Education for offering me this wonderful opportunity and all the people who helped me to make this experience possible.