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Inexperienced Teachers: The Challenges of Teaching

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Difficulties of Inexperienced Teachers: The Challenges of Teaching

Introduction

During this semester in this course, we participated in the Remedial Program, which requires us to go to Guo-tai Elementary School, which is near Fu Jen University, to teach elementary students in English once a week for five times in total. We all choose to go there to teach our students from 7:50 to 8:30 a.m. on every Tuesday morning, and therefore we form into a group. The experience of joining in this project not only offers us a chance to put what we have learned in class into actual practice but also makes us ponder over and correct the teaching methods which we used to teach our students. Since we are all inexperienced teachers without any teaching-related background and experience, teaching is undoubtedly a challenge for us. In addition, we also faced some difficulties during our teaching process. Among all the difficulties we encountered, we find out some common challenges in three aspects of teaching that inexperienced teachers might often face, which are classroom management, teaching and students' learning condition.

Classroom Management

The first challenge we face is classroom management. We actually did not set any rule to our students since our students are all quite well-behaved students. Hence, we did not need to spend extra time on regulating their behaviors during our class. However, we did set reward system to our students, and this reward system consequently turns out to be not a good idea for teachers to use in classroom management. In order to make our students be more interested and motivated towards learning English in class, we designed the reward system to let them collect drawing smiles on the back of their name cards if they were able to get the correct answers when we played games related to what we taught. They would get small presents depending on the amount of their smiles from us at the end of the class. Nevertheless, we found that our students would compare the amount of their smiles with their classmates,

and we were afraid that students with lesser smiles may feel frustrated or less confident in their learning. Even though we would give them the same gifts consequently, we found that it was a way which may potentially make students into a form similar to competition with one another. From this experience, we learned that reward system will not always be an effective way of motivating students in learning English because when it comes to collecting stamps to exchange gifts according to the amounts of stamps, we discover that students may end up competing their stamps with one another rather than do it for their own good.

Teaching

We believe that children are versatile, so before we dedicate ourselves to a specific teaching method, we think that it is important for us to figure out through what way the kids learn best. However, how do we find out the best ways to teach? We believe that the key is observation. Through our observation, we can choose the proper teaching methods or techniques for our students, and we can also evaluate whether these teaching methods will work out in the end. Besides, if the teaching methods or techniques do not work, we would try to adjust our lesson plan and apply another teaching method.

While we are teaching, we think that it is important for us to take what the children already know and what they can do into consideration, so that we can design the learning goals for a specific situation. Yet, we should always remain flexible and observant; we can determine which teaching strategy or teaching approach are most effective, but if one strategy does not work, then we should be flexible to adopt other tactics.

A. The teaching majored teaching methods/ techniques we applied are as follows:

1. **Encourage** our students to try – We encourage our students to participate in class; we hope that they can to actively join the game, read and sing with us.
2. **Demonstrate** the correct way to do something – e.g. If the students are learning how to

write, we can show them first, and then let them try.

3. **Ask questions** to provoke students' thinking and to see whether they really understand what we are talking.
4. **Give assistance** (such as a cue or hint) – When the students don't know the answer to a question or when they don't know how to do something, we can give them a cue or hint to help them, so that they would have a better understanding of what we are going to teach.
5. **Give feedback** – When the students do something right, we will give them some positive feedback, even if they don't, we will still keep encouraging them to try.

B. Teaching materials –

Flashcards –It is particularly important to appeal to visual learners, as a very high proportion of learners have this type of intelligence. While we were teaching, we often found that our students learn quite well through use of some visual aids, and the images and pictures always successfully draw the students' attention.

Lyrics – We sometimes sing with our students, and when we teach them to sing a song, we would print out the lyrics, so that it would be easier for them to follow the singing and they would not have to worry about memorizing the lyrics.

Worksheets – We design our own worksheets to reinforce their memory of what they just learn. Using an in-class worksheet can help to engage the students in the learning process, and it is also a good way to bridge the gap between watching and doing.

Games – We also design some games for our students because we found that games can effectively help to enhance interest and spark motivation in learners.

Games provide practice and feedback. The students can rehearse procedures and see the immediate results without serious consequences. Games appeal to different learning styles. People who read, write, draw, or learn through movement can find an outlet in games.

Students' Learning Condition

In the five lessons, we find out that elementary school students are curious about all the teaching material and activities, easily distracted, short of concentration on teaching, and uninterested in reviewing what they have been taught before. First, in the beginning of every lesson, when we were taking teaching materials out of our bags and starting preparing for teaching, student would ask us to let them see name cards, flash cards and worksheets. They are curious about anything they are not familiar with. Moreover, because of their strong curiosity, they are easily distracted by things they have not seen before, such as new teaching materials, worksheet, our cell phone, etc. In the first lesson, we play music video of Halloween song through cell phone. After listening to the song, we put the phone on other desk. Then, when we start another teaching activity, they still stick to looking at the phone. In addition, during the lessons, if we spend several minutes on one thing, such as one letter or one word, they will be bored with our teaching and thus start to look other things in the classroom. Then, we have to ask them to concentrate on our teaching again. Also, they are interested in reviewing things they have learned before although they are not familiar with them. For example, they have learned the phonic sounds of 26 letters when they are first graders and seconders. However, they are not familiar with some of phonic sounds of the 26 letters now and they dislike reviewing them many times. Thus, we have to come up with exciting games to make them naturally memorize them.

Teachers' Limitations

As juniors in English Department, we only receive little basic training in teaching young learners, have tight budget for teaching materials and worksheets, and spend short time teaching English alphabet and corresponding words. First, rather than students who are trained as teachers, we are only English major taking Children Teaching Course. Thus, we only know some teaching approaches and have few practices of teaching English alphabet,

vocabulary, sentence pattern and grammar. Before we actually teach elementary school students, we only practice teaching alphabet one time and vocabulary one time. In addition, we can only spend little money on teaching materials and worksheet because we have to spend our own money on them. As a result, we only make simple and crude flash cards, which are made of papers and some one-page or two-page worksheets. Moreover, we are able to spend little time on teaching and other interesting activities. The lesson time is from 7:50 to 8:30. Also, students are usually late for more than five minutes or even sometimes absent. As a result, we have to get good use of the limited time in order to implement our plans successfully.

Students' Limitations

1. Lack of confidence

The children we taught are those who have lower self-esteem because they know that they are a little bit behind the schedule if comparing with their peers and since they are less confident about their English skills, so they dare not actively participate in any activities; however, we still think that it is important to let our students know that it's okay for them to try, to ask questions or to make mistakes.

2. Short attention span

Our students are ten-year-old kids, so of course they have shorter attention span than we do. Children get bored easily, so we need to figure out some ways to arouse their interest and help them to stay focused. Before the class began, the students always like to play with each other or run around in the classroom, so we often played some games at the very beginning of a class in order to draw their attention. After teaching for maybe 15 minutes, our students get bored again; we would distribute the in-class worksheet

3. Learning difficulties

There might be some students with learning difficulties. I remembered there was girl in

my class, and she was always punctual and she was always concentrated on her study, but she still has hard time distinguishing some similar letters. We also find that it is difficult for us to read a word or even to repeat. She also had troubles with writing and copying, and usually spent more time than her peers, and she would draw some symbols to help herself to write.

Jin' Reflection

Over all, I think I do learn a lot by teaching and interacting with children. One important thing I learned is that we need to be very careful and thoughtful when talking to kids because we need to be aware of how our words and behavior can affect the children and their emotion. As for what impress me most is that even though my partners and I are young and inexperienced teachers, the kids still respect us and always take our words seriously. I am really touched by them; they know that they are children who are below their grade level, but they are still trying so hard to learn. I think those kids are so smart and considerate, but they just need someone to tell them that they are good enough.

Yoko's Reflection

In the short five lessons, not only I learn more about how to teach my knowledge related to English to others, especially young learners in elementary school, but also I understand more about how to interact with little children, who are much younger than me. In addition, I know many teaching approaches, making me consider which one is good to my students. Also, I learn details about phonics. In the past, I think it is natural that I learn all the phonic sounds of letters, syllables and words. Learning phonics systematically, I understand more about the foreign language English, but also about teaching phonic sounds to others. If I have chances, I will be willing to teach little children again.

Cindy's Reflection

After participating in the Remedial Program and having the actual experience of teaching children, I find that being a teacher is not an easy task. As merely a college student without any teaching experience and background, honestly, it is a hard start for me to prepare the teaching content and find the right and proper way to teach my students at the beginning. However, this program not only offers me a chance to put what I have learned in class into practice but also allows me to find my own teaching method from the actual teaching experience with my students. Even though my partners and I encountered some difficulties and limitations during our teaching process, I am glad that we all helped each other out and learned a profound and precious lesson from this special experience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, during the process of teaching, it is hard for teachers not to encounter difficulties or make mistakes, especially for those who are inexperienced teachers. Even though we encountered some challenges when we taught our students, we ended up not only learning from this experience but also coming up with better methods or ideas for teaching as well as finding out what is good for students' learning and what is not. The challenges which we faced in classroom management, teaching and students' learning condition helps us to have a more careful observation when we are teaching, reflect on the ways we teach and the fashions we use for teaching, and also be more careful in avoiding such negative situation from happening again. The challenges or difficulties which we faced in our teaching may seem to be like a knock down at the beginning, yet after we conquered them, we find that challenges and difficulties do help us to improve and become better teachers.

Lesson Plan #1

I. Group Members: Jin Lai, Yoko Hsieh and Cindy Peng / **Instructor:** Jane Yang

II. Theme: Halloween

III. Learners: 5th or 6th grade (4 students)

IV. Time: 14th October, 2014

V. Overall Objectives:

To make the students learn about the origin of Halloween by telling them one of the Halloween stories and thus learn further about the western culture. Also, using the song “trick-or-treat” to lead the students into the atmosphere of the story and therefore arouse their interests in learning English. Finally, teach the children Halloween-related vocabularies by using flash cards.

VI. Teaching Materials: Flash Cards(Vampire, Witch, Monster, Mummy, Goblin, Ghost), Animation, Alphabet Cookies, “trick-or-treat” Lyrics, Candies, Story (Jack O’ Lantern)

VII. Procedures:

Time	Activities
5 min(s)	Self-introduction for each of the teachers and students
1 min	Grouping (2 students for each group)
6min(s)	Story-telling and Animation
3 min(s)	Q&A time about the story content
5-7 min(s)	Explain the meaning of the lyrics of the song “trick-or-treat”
5-7 min(s)	Sing the song together x3
10 min(s)	Teaching Halloween-related vocabulary
5min(s)	Play the game (hangman)
5 min(s)	Spelling game with alphabet cookies

Lesson Plan #2

Date	October 21th, 2014	Lesson Performer	Yoko Hsieh, Jin Lai and Cindy Peng
Instructor	Professor Jane Yang	Subject	English
Class level	4 th grade	Class size	5 students
Time	50 minutes		
The Teaching Approach	Through some interactive activities to draw their attention and develop further interests in English learning.		
Objectives	Let the students be more familiar with the 26 alphabets and be able to pronounce the vocabulary we teach.		
Teaching Aids	Flashcards (26 alphabets and 26 pictures and the matching words) 52 in total		
Vocabulary	ant, book, cat, dog, egg, frog, gift, hat, ink, jet, key, lion, moon, net, ox, paper, queen, rabbit, snake, tea, umbrella, van, water, X-ray, yoyo, zoo		
Procedure	Description	Time	Teaching Aids
Review on phonics	We will show them some flashcards to see if they can pronounce the correct sound of the alphabets	10 min(s)	Flashcards
Sing Together - Alphabet song	To review on what we just taught.	3 min(s)	Video clip
Alphabet Game	We will display the 26 alphabets on the table, and we will pronounce the sound of one of the alphabets; if they knew the sound of it, they should put their hands on that card	2 min(s)	Flashcards
Vocabulary	Show them some flashcards and we will read the words together.	15 min(s)	Flashcards
Vocabulary Game	Flip the flashcards over to show them the pictures, and we will read some words to see if they can find the matching pictures.	10 min(s)	Flashcards

Lesson Plan #3

Date	October 28th, 2014	Lesson Performer	Yoko Xie, Jin Lai and Cindy Peng	
Instructor	Professor Jane Yang	Subject	English	
Class level	4 th grade	Class size	5 students	
Time	40 minutes			
The Teaching Approach	Through some interactive activities to draw their attention and develop further interests in English learning.			
Objectives	Let the students be more familiar with the 26 alphabets and be able to pronounce the vocabulary we teach.			
Teaching Aids	Flashcards (26 alphabets and 26 pictures and the matching words) 52 in total			
Vocabulary	ant, book, cat, dog, egg, frog, gift, hat, ink, jet, key, lion, moon, net, ox, paper, queen, rabbit, snake, tea, umbrella, van, water, X-ray, yoyo, zoo			
Procedure	Description	Time	Teaching Aids	
Review all the A-Z phonics	<p>A. Teachers hear students read the sounds of A-Z, and find out the alphabets which students cannot tell or have difficulties remembering.</p> <p>B. Alphabet Game: Go upstairs (The alphabets which students cannot tell or have difficulties remembering)</p> <p>[Process and Rules] Teachers draw the picture of stairs on the blackboard. In the picture, there will be some down arrows on some stairs. Before the game start, each student has to choose one magnet as the symbols of themselves. Then, teachers will read one alphabet aloud and students have to find the corresponding flash cards. If one student finds the right flash card, he or she can play Rock-paper-scissors game with one teacher.</p> <p>Win: two steps up Tie: one step up Lose: stay here</p> <p>In addition, if students arrive at the stairs marked</p>	10 min(s)	Flashcards (the ones with 26 alphabets)	

	<p>with down arrows, their magnets have to go down one step.</p> <p>The student who first arrives at the top of the stairs wins the game and get 5 points.</p>		
Teach vocabularies corresponding to A-I, a-i	<p>A. Let the students see flash cards and guess the meanings of the pictures on the flash cards.</p> <p>B. Turn over the flash cards and let them see the vocabularies.</p> <p>C. Ask the students whether they have known them before. If they have, teachers can spend less time on them. If they have not, teachers have to spend more time on them.</p> <p>D. Apply A-I phonics to the process of teaching vocabulary to make students remember the pronunciation of the words clearly and quickly.</p> <p>E. Let students repeat the words ten times to make them memorize the corresponding words.</p>	20 min(s)	Flashcards (the ones with vocabularies of A-I)
Vocabulary Game: Bingo! and one nursery rhyme	<p>[Process and Rules]</p> <p>Teachers will prepare 5 pieces of blank paper before class. On the blank paper, teachers will let the students write 9 vocabularies on the nine-squared paper randomly. Then, teachers will read one vocabulary aloud and the students have to find the words on their paper and circle them right away and also read the word aloud. If they circle the right ones and read them aloud correctly, they can get 2 points.</p> <p>[Nursery Rhyme]</p> <p>Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star</p> <p>[Lyrics]</p> <p>Twinkle, twinkle, little star, How I wonder what you are! Up above the world so high,</p>	10 min(s)	White paper, lyrics and video

	<p>Like a diamond in the sky. Twinkle, twinkle, little star, How I wonder what you are!</p> <p>After teaching them how to sing the song, teachers will play a video and let the students sing with the singing in the video.</p>		
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Lesson Plan #4

Date	November 4th, 2014	Lesson Performer	Yoko Xie, Jin Lai and Cindy Peng	
Instructor	Professor Jane Yang	Subject	English	
Class level	4 th grade	Class size	5 students	
Time	40 minutes			
The Teaching Approach	Through some interactive activities to draw their attention and develop further interests in English learning.			
Objectives	Let the students be more familiar with the pronunciation 9 words we teach and help them to memorize each word and its meaning.			
Teaching Aids	Flashcards (26 alphabets and 26 pictures and the matching words) 52 in total, drawings on the blackboard			
Vocabulary	ant, book, cat, dog, egg, frog, gift, hat, ink, jet, key, lion, moon, net, ox, paper, queen, rabbit, snake, tea, umbrella, van, water, X-ray, yoyo, zoo			
Procedure	Description	Time	Teaching Aids	
Review all the A-Z phonics	<p>C. Briefly review of A-Z, and find out the alphabets which students cannot tell or have difficulties remembering.</p> <p>D. Alphabet Game: Go upstairs (The alphabets which students cannot tell or have difficulties remembering)</p> <p>[Process and Rules] Teachers draw the picture of stairs on the blackboard. In the picture, there will be some down arrows on some stairs. Before the game start, each student has to choose one magnet as the symbols of themselves. Then, teachers will read one alphabet aloud and students have to find the corresponding flash cards. If one student finds the right flash card, he or she can play Rock-paper-scissors game with one teacher.</p> <p>Win: two steps up Tie: one step up Lose: stay here</p> <p>In addition, if students arrive at the stairs marked</p>	10 min(s)	Flashcards (the ones with 26 alphabets)	

	<p>with down arrows, their magnets have to go down one step.</p> <p>The student who first arrives at the top of the stairs wins the game and get 5 points.</p>		
<p>Teach vocabularies corresponding to J-R, j-r</p>	<p>F. Let the students see flash cards and guess the meanings of the pictures on the flash cards.</p> <p>G. Turn over the flash cards and let them see the vocabularies.</p> <p>H. Ask the students whether they have seen the words before. If they have, teachers can spend less time on them. If they have not, teachers have to spend more time on them.</p> <p>I. Apply J-R phonics to the process of teaching vocabulary to make students remember the pronunciation of the words clearly and quickly.</p> <p>J. Let students repeat the words ten times to make them memorize the corresponding words.</p>	20 min(s)	Flashcards (the ones with vocabularies of J-R)
Worksheet	<p>[Process and Rules]</p> <p>Picture worksheet: There are 9 words and 9 pictures on the worksheet, the children have to finds the words and their matching pictures.</p> <p>Writing Practice: On the worksheet, there will be some samples of the words we just taught, so that the students can try to write the words on their own, and be familiar with both upper and lower case letters.</p>	10 min(s)	White paper, lyrics and video

Lesson Plan #5

Date	November 18th, 2014	Lesson Performer	Yoko Xie, Jin Lai and Cindy Peng	
Instructor	Professor Jane Yang	Subject	English	
Class level	4 th grade	Class size	5 students	
Time	40 minutes			
The Teaching Approach	Through some interactive activities to draw their attention and develop further interests in English learning.			
Objectives	Let the students be more familiar with the pronunciation 8 words we teach and help them to memorize each word and its meaning.			
Teaching Aids	Flashcards (17 alphabets and 17 pictures of the matching words) , Bingo Call Sheet, Worksheet			
Vocabulary	jet, key, lion, moon, net, ox, paper, queen, rabbit, snake, tea, umbrella, van, water, X-ray, yoyo, zoo			
Procedure	Description	Time	Teaching Aids	
Teaching Vocabulary corresponding to J-Z, j-z	<p>K. Let the students see flash cards and guess the meanings of the pictures on the flash cards.</p> <p>L. Turn over the flash cards and let them see the vocabularies.</p> <p>M. Ask the students whether they have seen the words before. If they have, teachers can spend less time on them. If they have not, teachers have to spend more time on them.</p> <p>N. Apply J-R phonics to the process of teaching vocabulary to make students remember the pronunciation of the words clearly and quickly.</p> <p>O. Let students repeat the words ten times to make them memorize the corresponding words.</p>	20 min(s)	Flashcards (the ones with vocabularies of J-Z)	
Game - Bingo	After finishing teaching all the vocabularies, we will tell the students to fill in the bingo call sheet with the words we taught (the ones which they are not so familiar with); and we hope that this game can help them to memorize some words.	10 min(s)	Bingo Call Sheet	

Worksheet	<p>[Process and Rules]</p> <p>Picture worksheet: There are 8 words and 8 pictures on the worksheet, the children have to find the words and their matching pictures.</p> <p>Writing Practice: On the worksheet, there will be some samples of the words we just taught, so that the students can try to write the words on their own, and be familiar with both upper and lower case letters.</p>	10 min(s)	Worksheet
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