

# Celta assignment lessons from the classroom



I have learned from observing my peers and experienced teachers how important it is to use a variety of teaching methods and styles. Within the same lesson I have witnessed teachers organising their students so that they worked alone, in pairs, in pods, and in teams. The students were encouraged to move around the classroom, doing exercises pinned to the wall, and to write on the whiteboard. This kept the energy high and engaged students who like to learn by doing.

I have witnessed how important visual aids are in a classroom, in order to clarify language and how clear board work clarifies instructions, meaning, form and pronunciation. I have seen how starting the lesson by asking students to talk about a picture prepares them to understand the material better by activating their schema. Watching a video of a teacher drilling a group of elementary students in functional language and watching an experienced teacher at GV, helped me realise the amount of repetitive aural clarification and practice that is needed at this stage. I also noted how important it is to use clear and simple models.

It was interesting to see how the teacher on the video focussed first on aural and verbal skills without writing on the board so that the students did not become fixated on the form before the meaning and pronunciation. Contrasting how experienced and inexperienced teachers correct is demonstrating to me how important it is to be clear and decisive in feedback. It can be a struggle to work against a natural inclination to be liked, not to appear bossy, to be reticent about directing adults, or to perhaps hurt someone's feelings by telling them they are wrong. However I realise that this can be overcome by being task and student oriented.

I appreciated the advice from our tutors to go and engage with our students in the waiting area. This meant that they were human beings who I had already begun to know individually, noting how confidently they spoke, learning about their lives and why they wanted to improve their English language skills. It also lessened my anxiety about teaching them. It is so much easier, quicker and less complicated to simply feed the class information and to tell them the answer when they make mistakes. Theoretically I know this is ineffective, however I can teach in this way when I am anxious and feeling pressed for time.

By watching more experienced teachers I have noticed the benefits of encouraging students to correct themselves and each other, and to elicit the answers, sometimes by circuitous routes. It will be rewarding to do more of this myself as I grow in confidence. I have learned from videos, teaching and observations, various non-verbal ways to correct mistakes and give information about meaning, pronunciation and form - for example, with rhythm, finger correction, Cuisenaire rods, facial expressions, repetition, using the group and many other ways.

Again as I become more confident, I will be able to use these more effective methods. One of my fellow students has a flair for creativity in preparation of tasks, which the students find compelling. Another's board work and materials are very clear, providing essential visual back up to her teaching. My materials and creativity have improved, but my board work can be untidy, unclear and inconsistent.

Strengths

1. I am good at establishing rapport with the students and working collaboratively with my fellow trainees. I can effectively facilitate a group, getting all members of the class engaged and build a positive classroom atmosphere.
2. My monitoring skills have improved since my first lesson. I have been able to effectively monitor in an appropriate way to the task, for example staying quiet during initial listening; quietly checking their answers during a more detailed listening to decide what I need to clarify; being more directive and helpful during other tasks.
3. My handling of equipment has been described as effective and my handouts have improved and become more engaging.

#### Weaknesses

1. Board work -My planning for board work has been patchy and my use of the board during lessons is not consistent, even when I have initially had a good plan. When I feel pressured by time or get flustered, I stop boarding and this has a detrimental effect on the lesson.
2. Clarifying meaning, pronunciation and form effectively in the classroom - this is strongly related to my board work. Prior to the lesson I always do a lot of research on meaning form and pronunciation and am usually clear about the grammar. However by not organising this on the board effectively, my clarification also becomes chaotic. I also need to be clearer about the appropriate depth and complexity of my explanations for the level of the class.

3. Simple and clear language - I need to grade my language to the student level. This will be a matter of planning - writing down verbatim what I will say in the lesson, looking at it from the point of view of myself as an elementary French or German speaker, and then simplifying accordingly.

### Knowledge and Skills

I recognise that my teaching needs to be grounded in a solid knowledge of the meaning, form and pronunciation of the target language, and am looking forward to having more time to learn grammar. I am also looking forward to more academic study around theories of how students learn, and different teaching methods.

I am currently volunteering for Frontier College, assisting the teacher at the Britannia Family Literacy project with a class of recent immigrants to Canada. This is a wide mixed ability group, with a variety of different first languages. This enables me to practice the skills I am learning on the CELTA course. It also gives me the opportunity to watch experienced teachers, with different styles and methods of teaching. I will continue with this until I return home.

I live in Brighton in the UK, which is full of language schools and foreign students. When I return home I intend applying for teaching work to gain more experience.

In these ways I plan to use the CELTA course as a jumping off point to becoming an effective teacher of English.