

Tesol – observation journal 1

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Observation Journal 1 Date: 13/09/2012 Duration: 1 hour Location: International House London Level: Upper Intermediate Teaching Aim: Past Subjunctive (structure lesson) Use of " I wish" for regrets and criticism Lesson Pace During the first half of the lesson the teacher moved at a particularly fast pace. Whilst understandably a swift pace is required in order to fit the breath of information into the lesson I feel this was to the detriment of student learning in some instances. For example when asking questions of students it was common for the teacher to answer before providing sufficient time for students to answer.

This had the consequence of stopping all but the quickest students a chance to be involved with the lesson. Again this was also seen when individual students were picked out by name to repeat a phrase paying specific attention to their intonation; on numerous occasions at the start of the lesson upon speaking the requested phrase the teacher was very quick to repeat the same phrase using the correct intonation. This style of teaching limits student talking time which is a key aspect when trying to engage the active memory of the students in order to promote retention of the material being taught.

A better structure would have been to elicit the correct repetition of the request phrase from another student and then returning to the initially asked student to repeat the phrase once more. Using this suggested structure would promote student talking time and allow all students more time to hear the correct intonation of the phrase. The benefits of the fast pace were that all students stayed engaged for the duration of the lesson however I believe a

lesson can move at a swift pace whilst still allowing sufficient time for students to repeat phrases and answer questions.

I have learnt that a quick pace is generally beneficial when all students are able to keep up however my opinion is that allowing students the time to answer questions and not always giving the correct answer to quickly is paramount to student learning. By permitting this additional time to elicit answers from students you will more readily be able to establish whether or not the class is in fact following the lesson as expected and therefore be able to continue or adjust the pace accordingly. Teachers Manner

Overall I felt the teacher was engaging and authoritative whilst also being able to display humorous traits which worked well to keep the class involved for the duration of the lesson. For the majority of correct answers the teacher would affirm the answer given by saying " good". This was a positive aspect of the teacher's manner as she used this phrase repeatedly as opposed to varying this affirmation with phrases such as " excellent" or " very good" which may have led to a degree of favouritism within the class. On one occasion however the teacher, in accompaniment to the introduction of a new concept, asks a particular student " is it clear? . In a typical classroom setting I find it unlikely that any student would want to profess to a lack of understanding and thus the lesson moves on without really knowing whether or not the concept was correctly understood. In this situation a more appropriate tactic would have been to request the student provide an alternate example of the concept being taught. This would allow any lack of understanding to be identified whilst also presenting an opportunity for the teacher to involve the rest of the class when eliciting a correct response.

Oftentimes the teacher would call students by name and with the exception of one instance where the teacher got the students name wrong this worked well to firstly engage the class throughout the lesson and secondly concept check important lesson points. The teacher also made an effort to select students at random when eliciting answers; something which I believe is key to keeping students focused, as it is all too easy for students to switch off if they know they are fifth or sixth in line to answer a question.

A couple of times the teacher admitted to making mistakes on the hand-outs, which is an aspect of the lesson that could easily have been corrected by proofreading all materials beforehand. This didn't appear to be a problem for the class as they looked comfortable with the teacher whom they have likely worked with before. Although for students with which the teacher had not worked with before this could have been a problem because students wouldn't necessarily have the same confidence levels in a teacher they are unfamiliar with. Classroom Management

Students were arranged in a semi-circle formation facing the teacher. My belief was that this particular arrangement benefited the students, as it allowed all students to face each other and thus lower any barriers to peer-group interaction which may have existed with some students sitting behind others. This structure also helped when students were asked to talk in pairs and allowed the teacher to easily monitor each conversation without being disruptive. For my own lessons I aim to use this same layout where possible as it would appear to be the best way to involve all students to interact within the lesson.

Towards the end of the lesson the students were instructed to form new pairs for the free stage. This worked by splitting the class into “ husband” and “ wife” pairings which also had the added impact of adding some fun to the exercise. This use of stereotypes for the “ husband” and “ wife” was an effective way to set context for the exercise. The benefit of which was that the students were quickly able to get into the role playing game, which would likely not have been so enjoyable for the students if the class had not been segmented in such a way.

Teaching Point Ultimately the teacher achieved her aim and had the students using “ I wish” in the correct manner for the most part. The free stage was the most successful contributor towards the students achieving the aim and the teacher did well to leave the correction of the free stage to after it had finished. The free stage was corrected at the end via a board review and the students appeared to have a strong grasp on the past subjunctive.

Whilst adjacent to the stated teaching aim of the lesson it was also identifiable that the teacher was incorporating aspects of past lessons into her teaching. In particular requesting that students state the tense of a sentence proved effective in eliciting what would be passive memory from previous lessons. This naturally also underlined the primary aim of the lesson and at one point the teacher highlighted the point, after eliciting the correct tenses from the students, by stating that “ the only difference is in the subjunctive of to be”.

I felt this gave clarity to the students as they progressed through the lesson with a core concise definition of what they were learning as referenced by

this example. Focus was sustained throughout the lesson on a couple of occasions and this allowed the teacher to continue with the lesson whilst wasting little time discussing points that were outside the scope of the initial objectives. An example was when the teacher asked the students to identify the difference in tense between two sentences where one student identified the difference in meaning rather than tense.

On this occasion it could have been easy for the teacher to become side tracked whilst discussing the meaning of the sentences however she simply dismissed the answer in a polite fashion and brought focus back to the topic at hand. With respect to the teaching aim of this lesson my main takeaway was the importance of sustaining focus on the stated objectives. When teaching myself I imagine students will be eager to explore different aspects of the English language, which if indulged could lead to the primary focus not being reached within the time frame. [1, 332 words]