|  |
| --- |
| A&HL 5301.002 Integrated Skills: Practicum I |
| CEP Self Observation |
| Observing and Reflecting on my own teaching |
|  |
| **Youngmee Suh** |
| **4/16/2014** |

|  |
| --- |
| The lesson chosen for this self-observation was day two in reported speech forms. The lesson attempted to build upon previously introduced reported speech forms which focused on backshifting to the past tense for statements or commands. The two main verbs used were “say” and “tell.” |

Part 1: General

1. What is the first thing (verbatim) you said to your students?

“Today I want you guys to play the game from yesterday again. Because now you know how to change the verbs into past tense. Right?”

1. How did you introduce the lesson objectives?

Before going over the homework, I address certain questions that the students have raised about the homework that directly relates to the lesson objectives of class. This was an attempt to deliberately force students to notice certain time and place words in reported speech that make the sentences sound awkward when put in past tense (i.e. yesterday, next Wednesday, today). These questions were brought up because they logically did not make sense and students were not sure if I would accept them as “correct” answers to the homework. What that allowed me to do is address the simple past tense, time, and place words as part of the next lessons, which lessened anxiety about it, and also take it away as a “correctness” factor in going over the homework. This was supposed to help students focus on the verb tense changes in reported speech.

In hindsight, this may not have been the best idea and later influenced me to provide examples and homework that only contained sentences that pertained to specific verb tense changes in reported speech. There was only more confusion and students were not able to let go of the fact that their sentences did not chronologically or logically make sense. Furthermore, I was not successfully in clearly stating the objectives of that day. What I did was only outline the objectives of reported speech, which would continue on for a few more days.

1. How did you connect the lesson (or parts of the lesson) to previous lessons or students’ previous experience or comments in the class?

The homework was a deliberate effort in my part to slowly introduce backshifting time and place words in reported speech. However, we did not get a chance to touch upon that as students still had many questions about verb tense change in general. So I had to shift the class focus on practicing and clarifying those forms. Also, the game played that day as a review was a game played in the previous class where students had to elicit reported speech for the present, present continuous, and present perfect using only “say” and “tell.” The sentences were deliberately chosen to be a reflection of sentences students would possibly hear in their real lives. Therefore, students would more likely be able to contextualize as well as visualize the scenario in which they would have to report certain statements or commands.

Unfortunately this connection was not scaffolded well enough to help guide students into the new lesson. The review game itself was successful in the sense that students were more comfortable with the rules and regulations to play it more successfully. Also students were more familiar with the terms and forms introduced in the games. I would go so far as to say that students were more successful in producing reported speech forms that directly emulated the forms we had learned and practiced the day before. It was the homework review that fell apart because it was not scaffolded well enough to lead into the new lesson since it introduced one too many new points of focus.

1. Did you notice any patterns in your tendency to call on some students more than others? If so, what were those patterns? What might the explanation be for those patterns?

I think I was successful, in this particular lesson, in allowing equal talk times for all my students. I was able to call on students who wanted to volunteer as well as call on students who were reluctant to do so. However, I will say that this lesson as a whole did not allow for much student participation at all, which is my tendency when I had to make an extreme change from the original lesson plan. As mentioned before, this class veered away from the lesson plan because the homework review opened up too much room for confusion. So I had to re-review to clear up any confusion. This took up the whole class time.

I realize that I panicked and therefore began to lecture rather than allow students to work through the problems *with* me. I see that my tendency is to talk. I talk to fill in silence gaps and I talk to reassure myself of a lesson that is basically being improvised. This was not conducive to students’ learning and ultimately set back the future lessons as well as providing more room for discrepancy in the future lessons.

1. Were there any surprises or unexpected events during the lesson? If so, what were they? How did you handle them?

This whole lesson did not go as planned. Once again because the homework tried to introduce too many things at one time the students brought up questions I was not quite ready to answer. Because of this, I felt it was necessary to clear up this confusion by re-working the homework questions into a review for verb-tense change. I had to consistently re-focus the attention to verb-tense change and reassure students that inconsistencies within the examples would be clarified at a later time. Students were able to change verb tenses with more focus towards the end but I think I still left them with a sense of confusion because so many of their questions were left unanswered.

Another problem that surprised me was students’ problem with the reported speech forms using “tell.” Students consistently got the pronouns wrong because they were unable to create their own fill-ins for the example sentences. They had a tendency to ask me who they were “telling” the statement to even after I allowed them to use whomever they wanted. Ultimately, because I was pressed for time, I provided those plug-ins for them so that they could just focus on the verb tense change. I do not think this was the best alternative because this happened again in the lessons following, however I feel that there was so much confusion going on in that particular lesson that providing pronouns was not the biggest issue. I was able to force students to change pronouns for themselves in a later lesson with more clarity.

1. What is one compliment you would give yourself about your teaching, based on this recording?

I would compliment myself on my lessened “baby-talk.” My tendency to slip into “baby talk” is something that I have been trying to consciously change for a long time. I think I have become more aware of myself and how I speak because of this. Moreover, for this particular lesson I did not use “baby talk” at all. This may have to do with the fact that I was lecturing rather than interacting, and it may also have to do with the fact that I was super conscious of recording myself. However, I still want to compliment myself on getting to a point and a mindset where “baby talk” did not factor in at all. It brings hope that one day this habit of “baby talk” will forever be erased.

1. What changes would you make to this lesson if you were to teach it again?

If I had to teach this lesson again, I would change the way I went over the homework or not go over it at all that day/that lesson. I would now ask students *just* to find the verbs and provide the past tense forms. Then I would ask students to use a specific tense (i.e. present tense) with a specific verb (i.e. “say”) and elicit the sentence based on those two criteria rather than using everything that is written in the homework example. This is allow students to elicit the reported speech by themselves as well as provide an example “answer” to the homework sentences without the confusion. It might have also helped me steer away from the more confusing aspects of the homework examples without having to sacrifice the lesson or the homework review.

Honestly, it may have been better to just go over the homework either after the new lesson after the new lesson had been introduced or even after the next lesson when all the forms of reported speech had been introduced. This way the original homework could serve as a way to self-correct or even provide an opportunity for peer feedback/evaluation. It was too hasty on my part to have students go over a homework that introduced forms that had not been introduced yet.

1. Did you see anything on the tape that you were unaware of during the lesson? (e.g., Were you paying more attention to some students than others? Was a student trying to get your attention and you didn’t notice? Anything else?)

I realize that my energy level may be distracting. It is extremely uncomfortable to say this, but after watching this I realize that while keeping my energy up is a good way to keep students engaged I need to be aware that too much of a good thing is bad. Students were focusing on how funny I was not on the different sentences I was producing for comparison or the corrective feedback I was providing. I think I need to slow down my gestures as well as control them more deliberately because they are taking away from what is being said. It is a lot to ask a student to look at a teacher, be aware of the gestures, listen to what is being said, and think about what all of that means. I think I need to find a good balance between energized but, once again, structured. It is okay that I am keeping the students engaged but not okay to take away from the lesson itself.

**Part 2: Teacher-initiated questions**

1. As you watch the video of yourself teaching, write out **all of the questions** that you ask your students. Categorize them into the following groups:

1. Yes/No questions
   1. Did you pick a starter? (for the game)
   2. Does everyone remember [the rules for] the game?
   3. Remember?
   4. Right?
   5. Does everyone remember this from yesterday?
   6. Does everyone agree with that answer?
   7. Are there any questions?
   8. Does everyone know what “pudding” is?
2. Rhetorical questions (questions that cannot be answered)
   1. Does that make sense?

c. Questions that elicit one- or two-word answers

d. Questions that stimulate student thinking or ask for student opinions

1. If I say “I like ice cream” then your [reported] sentence should be?
2. What if I say “She says.” Then what is it?
3. What if “She *is* watching TV” then?
4. What is “pudding.”?
5. What did [Youngmee] say?
6. What did [Youngmee] tell you?
7. What is another way to say that?
8. What did you guys have?
9. What if I want to put this [sentence] in the past tense?

Present the list of questions, categorized into groups.

2. Do you notice yourself using any IRF (Initiation, Response, Feedback) sequences? What type of activity were you doing?

Because this whole lesson was using the homework as a review and clarification, I spent the whole class time using IRF. I wanted to make sure the students elicited the correct forms for reported speech and provide alternatives (i.e. use the sentence with “told” instead of “said). This activity required me to use IRF to get through the homework review as well as allow room for dispute or questions.

3. What patterns do you notice in your questioning habits? (What kinds of questions do you tend to use most often?)

I tend to use Yes or No questions to gauge where my students are in comprehension. If students do not understand I try to explain again to clarify. If students say yes, then I move on. Because my group of students are particularly vocal, if there is a disagreement they are very forthright with saying so. I take advantage of this, possibly too much, and allow students to bring up their questions without having to force them to ask.

4. How do your students respond to the different kinds of questions you ask?

When I ask yes or no questions, students are quick to respond. Usually they will tell me why they say “no” because it is linked to another question or some kind of confusion to the activity or directions. For questions that elicit students’ opinions or thought, students require some time to think before they answer. Even when eliciting grammatical forms (in this case the reported speech forms) students require a few seconds before they can fully answer. This causes a lot of disjointed answering. It forces me to ask the same question again and have students answer together as a class and with more confidence.

5. Are there any times on the video when you are able to encourage student participation without asking questions?

In the last part of the lesson when I use the powerpoint with more exact and clear statements to be reproduced in reported speech, I only had to read the statements out loud and look at the students. Because it was very clear who had said the statement or who the statement had been told to, students were more able to put the sentences together into reported speech forms. Also because I had prompted the reported speech form so many times by that point, just by looking at them or pointing at the statement elicited reported speech from the students.

When reviewing the homework students were very good at voicing their opinions or concerns to what other students have brought up. They were quick to agree and explain why they did. This type of participation is very common with this particular group. However, I realize it needs to be structured and scaffolded more because this type of free participation lead to more confusing problems with this particular lesson.

6. Based on this observation, what changes, if any, would you like to make in your questioning habits? Why?

I think I need to ask less questions. I feel like I am using questions as a crutch to assess student’s comprehension and competence rather than allowing students to interact with the material. I realize after watching that asking if they understand something and receiving an answer should not be taken at face value. Again I see the error in mistaking “wants” and “needs” because it is clear that what students want is not always what they need. Here, their comprehension of one homework question did not equal comprehension of the whole form itself. And my mistake was taking my students’ “Yes,” as an affirmation of comprehension of the form rather than the question. Ultimately this lead to even more confusion and problems. I need to be able to let go of “yes or no” questions and force myself to scaffold the discussions themselves because chaos is quick to reign. I am aware that I want to allow every student to voice their questions and concerns but I also see that it may not always be conducive to the lesson or the whole class. I think I need to step out of my comfort zone here and also my own personality to be empathetic and be more structured and strict. This may mean that my lesson planning skills also need to change where I do not allow for more open-ended questions but rather restructure the whole process to allow for more structured questions that students can interact with and benefit from. I understand that this is a huge task and a challenging one that will not happen immediately. But watching myself and listing the questions really helped me notice what I was doing not only to my class but to myself. And maybe with more conscious editing and structuring I will slowly be able to create better questioning habits.