

BEd (EL) Yr 4 FE Reflective Essay

Goal statement:

My beliefs of learning in general:

I believe that being curious and willing to learn are human natures. Learning can happen naturally when students are interested in something, i.e. when learning is student-centered. Based on this perception, I think teachers have two roles. One role is to facilitate students' learning by addressing students' diversity; the other is to provide students with a positive environment for learning to happen.

My beliefs of second language learning:

Since languages are created for effective communication, generally speaking, the ultimate goal of learning a language is to use it to communicate with people. So in my opinion, second language teachers should design lessons based on authentic contexts, use authentic learning materials and focus on developing students' overall ability to use English effectively.

At the same time, teachers should also enhance students' interest and motivation, so as to promote learner autonomy, which leads to effective learning. To achieve this, on the one hand, teachers should make sure that the lessons are student-centered, and tailor-make teaching materials to cater for students' diverse needs. On the other hand, teachers should at the same time, make their lessons fun, to enable students to learn in a relaxing and enjoyable way. This means that a variety of teaching strategies and materials should be used, such as games, songs, and plays.

Artifacts Support

I have tried my best to translate my beliefs above during my teaching practice and in the following section, I am going to present three artifacts and reflect my teaching.

Artifact 1: PowerPoint Slides for a Teacher-in-role Activity

Teaching context:

I was teaching the class these structures "Was there a/an... in Hong Kong 60 years ago?" and "Yes, it was. / No, it wasn't." using a teacher-in-role activity. After introducing the new structures by using places in old Hong Kong, I said to the class "Do you want to know more about the life 60 years ago in Hong Kong? We have a guest, she's a very old lady—she's 75 years old. You can call her 'Mrs. Rainbow' because she always brings an umbrella that has the colors of the rainbow. You can ask her some questions about the past." Then I went out of the classroom, took off my overcoat and went in the classroom as Mrs. Rainbow. Students asked me questions using "Was there a/an?" under the guidance of some PowerPoint slides (Please see Slides 6-11 in Artifact 1). For example, when students see the picture of a cinema on slide 7, they should ask the question accordingly, i.e., "Was there a cinema in Hong Kong 60 years ago?".

Reasons for choosing it:

The PowerPoint slides were used with the teacher-in-role activity. Drama activities in all forms can be beneficial for language teaching and learning because not only can they arouse students' interest and add an enjoyment in learning, but they also provide a context, which allows students to learn the target language in a meaningful way for real communication. The form of teacher-in-role is especially helpful in providing this kind of context.

The use of PowerPoint slides was to help students elicit questions in relation to some particular places they have learned. Therefore, I was able to control the learning activity in a way that students could learn the target language items. Another reason of using the PowerPoint slides was to raise students' interest and to provide visual aids for visual learners.

Effectiveness of the artifact:

The use of PowerPoint slides effectively helped structure the teacher-in-role activity. On the whole, the teacher-in-role activity captured the students' attention to a great extent and motivated students to be involved in learning. Although it did not facilitate students to achieve the learning objective of that lesson completely, it was effective in making learning an enjoyable experience. I think the latter is more important as it has the hidden effect of developing students' liking in English.

Artifact 2: Self-made chant

Teaching Context:

I was teaching P2 the new structures "How do you come to school?", "I come to school by... / on...", and reviewing "Where do you live?" "I live in ...". The learning material in the textbook was a chant including all four structures.

Reasons for choosing the artifact:

Chants can provide an opportunity for pupils to enjoy the beauty of the language. Students can remember new structures easily, and at the same time, develop a sense of stress and rhyming in English. Most places that appeared in the textbook chant, however, were not relevant to my students' daily life. As I value authentic learning materials, I made up two verses myself following the same rhythmic patterns with the places Fanling and Shenzhen where most students in my class lived (Please see slides 2-3 in Artifact 2).

One of them is as follows:

"I'm Ling. Ling! / I live in Fanling. / I come to school on foot. / And I can't stay put."

I also put dots on the stressed syllables on the PowerPoint Slide and intended to let my students clap their hands when practicing stressing, since many of them could not stop fiddling constantly.

Effectiveness of the artifact:

The self-made chant highly raised students' interest since the majority live in the two places. They could also chant well—with the right rhythm and stress. The activity also helped them learn the structures. However, words like "stay put" and "make a fuss" seemed to be too difficult for them to understand. Maybe next time I should find a better way to explain the new words, not merely by talking. Also, I should

have helped pupils to notice the rhymes and let them work out the pronunciation of the new words themselves, instead of telling them directly.

Artifact 3: Tickets for exchanging stamps

Teaching Context:

My 2F students in general had short attention-span and low motivation. Many of them liked to move a lot and some were with ADHD. I felt the need of constantly guiding them to refocus. So I came up with an awarding system.

Reasons for using the artifact:

Originally, the awarding system worked like this: during class, whenever a student answered my question correctly or behaved well, I allowed him/her to come out to the front and put a stamp on his/her textbook. I was hoping that the students would be more attentive as well as more motivated in English, with the positive reinforcement.

However, after my supporting teacher and my supervisor observed one of my lessons, they both said that the method was somehow disruptive. Students who came out to get the stamp were very likely to miss some part of the next teaching activity. My supervisor suggested that I could make tickets and give them out to students during class for them to exchange stamps after class.

I considered it a very good idea so I made two kinds of tickets—the orange ones each stands for one stamp whereas the pink standing for two (Please see Artifact 3). The student who answered an easy question could get an orange ticket and a student who answers a relatively challenging question could get a pink one. For the exchange of stamps, I asked a student to help me do the stamping after class and collect my tickets back.

Effectiveness of the artifact:

The use of tickets worked nicely when the teaching activities were not quick-paced. There were a lot more hands putting up in class to try to participate in learning. However, as long as the learning activities became quick-paced and I needed to handle a lot of things at the same time, I felt that the ticket-giving became complicated and time-consuming. Other problems were that I ran out of tickets and the students began playing with the tickets during class and so were distracted.

At last, I decided to abandon using the tickets. I grouped the students and marked down the scores each group had gained on the blackboard and asked a student to help me do the stamping afterwards. In this way, students competed with each other to behave well as well as participate actively in learning.

Conclusion:

After the experience of teaching in a real local school, I would still keep the goal statement as it is stated in the beginning, for the reason that my beliefs have not changed and I have found it possible to achieve the goals I listed. In terms of professional development as an English teacher, I am quite contented with

myself as I can apply what I learned theoretically into practice with the consideration of my teaching context. What I need to work on now are class management skills and fitting into the school's culture and conventions without conflicting with my own teaching beliefs.

Word Count: 1453