Extended Team Teaching Reflection Paper APLNG 493

Maggie

This semester I am so glad that I could finally have some actual classroom teaching experience. I was both anxious and excited since I have never stand in such a formal classroom as a teacher. I knew that this would means a lot to me and I was provided with the opportunity to combine what I have learned in class and the actual teaching process. After the whole team teaching process, I was still so surprise that I have gained so much experience in different perspectives which I had never thought about before, and there was also something that I could never find out in the textbook.

Observation

The first thing I need to do in order to prepare our team teaching is to observe one session of the real ESL course, which is ESL 015—composition for American academic communication Ⅱ. The overall goal of this course is to provide students the reading and writing skills required to be successful in academic reading and writing tasks throughout their university experiences in the United States. The content of the session which I observed was about how to write a critique. In the class, the instructor gave the students a presentation of what is a critique and then set up a group discussion to make the students find out a critique from the reading material which were assigned as their homework. During the whole class, students kept concentrating on the teacher and the discussion, though there were only a few students kept being active towards the questions that the teacher raised.

After the observation of the class, the instructor talked to us about the situation of the students. She said that they came from different countries and all work hard, but some of them feel shy to talk out loud or in front of people. The other problem was that the students would sit at the same place every time, which maybe because it gave them the feeling of safety since they could sit with the students they were more familiar with, and they might feel comfortable when having the group discussion. However, that might cause the distraction of the students since they may feel too relaxed with the people around them. So the teacher hoped that we could make them move a little bit if we want to have an activity so that they could talk to different classmates and be more focus on their task.

Lesson planning

The topic of our team was APA style citation. My feeling about this topic was a little mixed. I felt it was good since it was a separated and independent topic from other writing patterns and skills so the wholeness of the content could be taught in one session. However, I was a little worried about that the students might don't take APA citation as a serious and important part of their writing course to learn at the same time. So how could we grab their attention throughout the lesson?

After talking with our professor of TESL course Karen, we were suggested that it would be better to start our lesson with an attractive orientation part. We had to help the students to conceptualize why we have this lesson, and why plagiarism is a serious problem, and then came to the content of the lesson. About the orientation part, we chose something that the students were all interested in. We had asked the instructor that what kind of topic that the students would like to discuss, and have something to talk about, and the answer was social network. So we made something up about the one person copies the other person’s Facebook status, and wanted to let the students to talk about their feelings about it, and then switch to the conception of plagiarism. After the plagiarism, we would give a sort of lecture to introduce both the form of in-text citation and reference. Then we prepared two activities as to strengthen what they just learned, and we ended up with some introduction of online resources that the students could use when they want to cite. Everything seemed to have gone well so far, and we were nervous and excited about the upcoming practice teaching for our classmates.

Practice Teaching

I think practice teaching was really an important segment in our whole teaching process since this was a great opportunity to check that whether our lecture and activities could effectively work for the students, and we also believed that our classmates would provide great suggestions according to their teaching and learning experience.

It turned out that the suggestions which Karen and our classmates provided for us was really worth noticing and we did some modification after the practice teaching. There were two major points that we need to pay attention to: the content of the examples and the form of the activities.

In my lecturing part, I presented several examples after I introduced diverse ways of in-text citation. I didn’t really consider the content of the examples when I was preparing my presentation. However, during the practice teaching, my classmates felt like it was a little hard to read and understand the content examples since they came from different articles and discussed diverse topics. At the same time, some of my classmates felt that my presenting speed was a little too fast, so there were times that I finished mentioning my point and turned to the other thing while the students may not finished reading the examples. Karen suggested that it would be better if I could use examples from the same article. I think this was really a necessary and important suggestion for me, so I changed my examples to the ones in a student’s essay which Karen gave me. At first I was thinking that I could give the article to the students at the beginning of my presentation and let them figure out the citation part by themselves. While I was afraid of it would be really time-consuming since we only have 75 minutes altogether. So I decided to mark the citation part for the students and make sure that they could locate them right after they got the article. About the problem of making sure that everyone could have time to read through the example, we decided to ask students to read out loud each example so that everyone could follow.

The other problem was the form of our activities. We prepared two worksheets for the students to fill out. In order to make the students move, we asked the students to count out from one to five first so that we could separated them into five groups and they could work on the worksheets together. While according to Karen and our classmates, the activities should be more interactive and interesting so that everyone was excited to join. Since we were talking about citation, we were suggested that we could bring different kinds of materials and let the students practice real citation by using them. We decided to make colorful cards with basic elements of citation and gave each group a kind of material (whether a book, newspaper, or an online text), and then made them to figure out the correct ways of citation by using the cards. After making those changes of our teaching process, we felt more confident about ourselves and couldn’t wait the actual teaching.

Teaching

I think our team did a great job on the actual teaching. We covered everything we prepared in that lesson, and there wasn’t something that we couldn’t handle happened. Students were quite active to follow us. In my lecturing part, I was a little worried about it would be boring to make the students doing nothing except listening to my explanation. While it seemed that they really focused on what I was saying and that was a relief for me.

It was so good to see that every student enjoyed in the activities that we prepared for them. According to Karen, even the group at the very back of the classroom had a warm discussion. And we were happy that the students were willing to ask for help when they met problems when dealing with the citation. I knew that it must work much better than making them to work on a worksheet. The activities were really successful.

Another thing which was worth mentioning was that after we finished introducing the online resources for APA citation, a student asked us to help him figure out the right citation form of an online article by using one of the websites which we were just talking about. We tried one immediately, but it turned out that it was not the correct one that the website presented us. We had never thought about that, while Victoria was so clever to say that sometimes the citation which the website gave us might not be always correct, you had to double check it before you actually use it. Then she tried again by using another website, and here came the correct one. Actually, this was also an important point we wanted to mention about the websites, and we just used an actual example to prove it. It was not something in our plan, but I think we did a good job by using what the student asked us to teach what we want to teach.

Stimulated Recall Session

It was always embarrassing to watch yourself in the video clip, but it really made me know more about myself when I was teaching and what I should do to make my teaching better.

There was one thing I would make a little change if there was another chance for me to teach this lesson. Before introducing the content of in-text citation, I asked some students to read out loud the examples of citation. The aim of doing this was making sure that we could go over the examples together. However, things were different when it actually happened. There were several girls who I asked to read the examples had really small voice, and we didn’t think that every student in that classroom could hear them. This was something unexpected in our plan. So maybe I would ask the students who had loud voice to read for the rest of the class next time in order to get a better effect. This made me know that sometimes things like this would happen in our teaching. I may make a decision before the actual teaching which I think would work well in class, while when I apply it in my teaching process, it might not work that well as I thought. So what I need to do is make a little change due to the real situation, and it will be better next time. I think that our whole experience of planning-teaching-reflecting is also a process of modification. We made our lesson plan by ourselves, and we modified it after the practice teaching. After the actual teaching, we know that what our strength is in the whole lesson so that we can keep that for the future teaching, and we keep modifying something which was proved to get less effect than we expected.

The other thing about me after I watched the teaching video was that I need to pay much attention to my behavior as an instructor. All I did when I was teaching was whether looking at the paper in my hand, or looking at the screen right next to me. I thought I was really nervous at that time and as a novice teacher, I really need more experience. I need to learn how to be comfortable in front of the students, and not just as someone who is not confident and afraid of students’ judgment. Interaction is definitely what I need as well. When I present something, I need to make eye contact with students to check that whether they understand me or not. This will make the students feel that we are communicating, and it is not like me and the students are two separated groups. Not just in the presentation, I think I always need to check the students’ reaction throughout the whole lesson. When I throw a question to them, when I make them to have an activity, the first thing I need to do is to make sure that they all understand what we are doing now, and what I’m asking them to do. It is always important to make the students to know what I, the instructor, am doing and what they need to do and also the reason behind everything we do during the whole lesson.