Reflection Paper # 4 APLNG 410

Maggie

For the last meeting with my language partner Ali, we decided to focus on “rehearsal” of his presentation for the upcoming candidacy exam in this month. I think it is a good activity for the last session since it could be regarded as both a summary of what we have worked on earlier, and at the same time, this is something that he really needs immediately.

I totally understand that this is a tough task for him as an EFL learner to present an about an-hour long speech in front of several professors. So both of us think it would be a good idea to let him present his speech for me before the exam and hopefully I could give him some advice on different aspects of pronunciation, for instance the pronunciation of specific words, prominence, and intonation.

For preparation, he gave me the transcript which relates to his speech so that I could have a general idea about the content, and also, in order to understand his speech, there are some professional words and phrases which I might not know and need to take a look at before our meeting. During our meeting, he presented his speech quite formally for me, and I marked things that I thought he needs to pay more attention to and specific sentences that I couldn’t follow his thought as a listener. Then we had a discussion and he practiced a little bit after that. Ali felt that it was a good opportunity since we could work on his speech and also both of us thought it went quite well as a conclusion for our language partner activity.

After the whole session of the activity, I feel that it is a great opportunity for both instructor and the learner to work one-on-one to teach and learn oral communication skills. Within a limited timeframe, I think it is a good chance to raise learners’ awareness about the pronunciation and communication skills. At the beginning I felt like it is impossible to cover most of knowledge about pronunciation, and I had no expectation for great improvement of Ali’s pronunciation skill. While what I learned from this activity is that it could be used as a chance to raise his awareness of the pronunciation priorities, and tell him something that he had never pay attention to but felt important to learn about. For him, I think this activity might be a starting point of being aware of and learning pronunciation.

One of the general awareness about English language teaching I have gained though this activity is that as an instructor, I should always consider the learners’ needs. It is important since it could promise the learners’ improvement within a shorter time limit, and at the same time, it could raise learners’ motivation. I think this is also a great advantage of such one-on-one activity since the instructor has much time and energy to address the specific learner’s needs.

If I were given another opportunity to work with a different learner, I think what I want to do differently is trying to change the process of instruction a little bit. I feel that basically what I like to do is following a sequence of explaining the knowledge point—little exercise—little quizzes, just like what I did at the beginning of this language partner activity. I know approaches like this might be lack of practices of communicative competence and I am trying to switch to something more practical, interactive and interesting. And it is obvious that different approaches for instruction could raise learners’ attention.

I think what I need to keep learning about teaching pronunciation is diverse methods for the instruction of different aspects of pronunciation. As I said earlier, different approaches of instruction could make the language teaching and learning process more dynamic, interactive and interesting. And I really appreciate what the textbook we use provide me about this, and how you organize this course by preparing different activities, which make me think about what I could conduct in my future teaching.