

Extensive Observation Report: Kirkwood Community College

Bethany Anderson

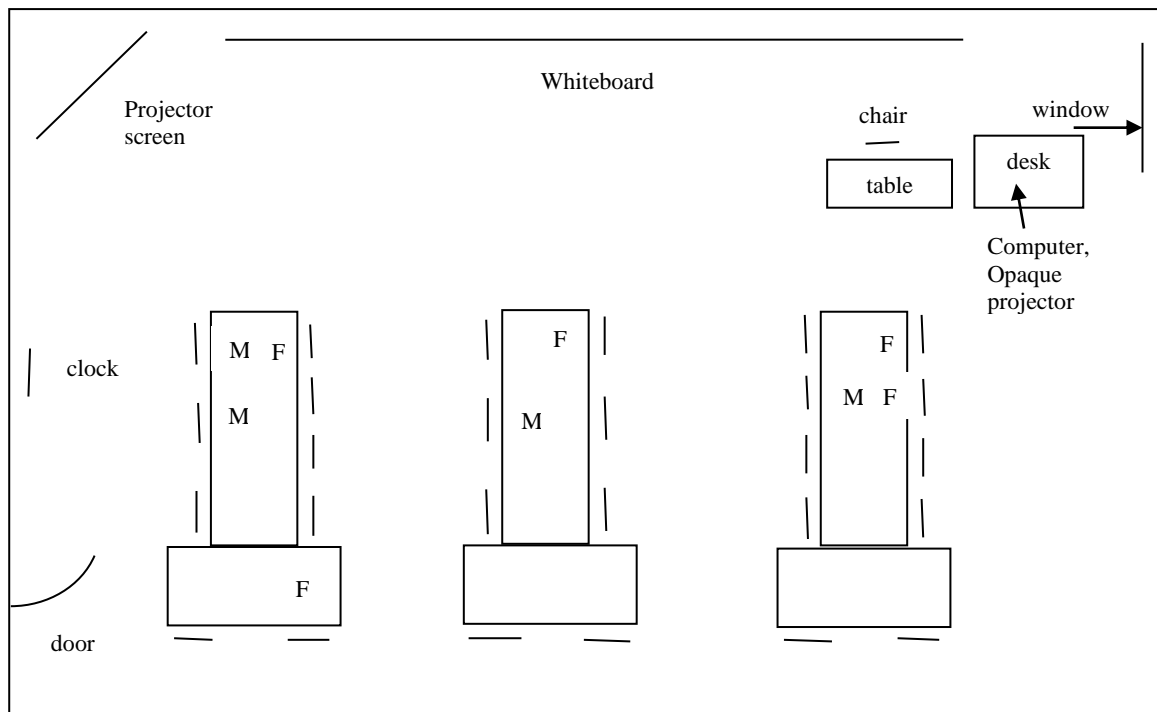
Azusa Pacific University

Overview

Your Name	Bethany Anderson
Date	9/10/19
City	Iowa City, IA
School	Kirkwood Community College
Class Title	Level 5 Culture and Communication
Mentor teacher	Ryan Dehner
Time (from/to)	8:00-10:00 AM
# of Ss #M & #F	9 Ss: 4 M, 5 F
Ss Age range	20-60s
Ss Countries	Sudan, DRC, Japan
Ss Eng. Level	Intermediate
Materials used	Textbook: <i>American ways: An introduction to American culture</i> (Datesman, Crandall, & Kearney, 2014)
Other	This observation was conducted in the third week of classes (5 th class session of the semester); the first textbook reading had just been assigned in the previous class.

Classroom Sketch

Front of room



Back of room

Thick Description and Rich Reflection

Time	Description	Reflection
8:00	T greets Ss, begins giving instructions for the chapter quiz over Chapter 1 in the textbook.	
8:05	T: <i>Just to help you understand why we're doing this, I have a nice little picture for you. . .</i> [shows photo of swimmers on edge of pool, preparing for competition] <i>What is in this picture? What do you see?</i> Ss: <i>Swimming pool.</i> T: <i>Swimming, right? So, we're doing Chapter. . . Chapter what? Chapter 1? And have we discussed Chapter 1 yet?</i> Ss: <i>No.</i> T: <i>No. But before we talk about Chapter 1, what do we need to do?</i> Ss: <i>Read.</i> T: <i>Read a little bit, right? Before we jump into the water, before we discuss Chapter 1, we all need to. . . what?</i> S: <i>Be ready.</i> T: <i>Be ready to talk. So how can everyone be ready? By reading a little bit before. Does that make sense?</i> Ss: <i>Yeah.</i> T: <i>So, if you don't read, you're going to be like this person here. . .</i> [points to a person standing far away from the edge of the pool]. . . <i>a little behind, a little confused, a little lost.</i>	I: T engages Ss by using a picture and relating it to the importance of reading at home before class discussions. R: T asks a lot of questions, sometimes pausing briefly for a response from Ss and sometimes continuing without a pause, using questions both to draw out passive knowledge and keep Ss engaged in the learning process (Wajnryb, 1999). McCormick & Donato (2000) discuss the use of display questions in an interactive format for the purpose of scaffolding. T often uses display questions in this way throughout the class. A: I really like this idea of using an analogy to emphasize the importance of reading the textbook. Especially in conjunction with a picture, I think it is memorable and drives the point home.
8:09	T explains how the chapter quiz will work, writing important instructions on the board. T: <i>You need to write as quickly as you can in 10 minutes. . . If you write one sentence, is that okay?</i> Ss: <i>No.</i> T: <i>Probably not. What about grammar and vocabulary? Do we care much about that?</i> Ss: <i>No.</i> T: <i>No. Don't worry too much about that.</i>	I, A: Instead of simply giving the instructions himself, T asks questions to elicit the important details Ss need to know about the quiz. R: Rules for discourse competence (Canale, 1983) depend on the type of discourse used. For this quiz, T clarifies that some requirements (e.g., grammar, spelling) applying to other discourse types (e.g. formal written assignments) are not important and Ss should focus on meaning instead.
8:12	T: <i>Do we all need to take a deep breath? I think we should. Are you ready?</i> [takes a deep breath] <i>This is the first one, and it's okay to be nervous.</i>	I, A: T addresses affective factors like test anxiety and nervousness by recognizing that these feelings are normal and to be expected. In this way, T also shows that he cares about his Ss as people, not just learners.
8:13	T: <i>Okay. This is the first quiz that we have, so, question: where should your eyes be?</i> Ss: <i>On your paper.</i> T: <i>Whose paper? Your friend's paper?</i> [laughter] <i>Please keep your eyes on your own paper, okay? Nobody wants a zero.</i>	I: Since this is the first test of the semester, T addresses expectations and rules for academic honesty. T uses humor to help Ss feel more relaxed.
8:14	T: <i>Your question: What did you learn in Chapter 1?</i> [T gives 10 minutes for Ss to write their answers to this question. When the time is up, he gives Ss an additional 3 minutes.]	I: T allows extra time to help Ss do their best, but also possibly to help them with time management (helping them prepare for a shorter period of time).
8:27	T asks Ss to rate the difficulty of the quiz on a scale of 1-10. [Ss' answers ranged from 5-10.]	A: I think this is a great way to get immediate feedback about how Ss feel about an assessment and the perceived degree of difficulty.

8:28	<p>T: <i>How can you improve next time?</i> [writing on board] <i>What are some strategies, some things that you can do next time, in the future quizzes to help you do better? Volunteer? Ss: Know what your teacher wants you to do/ Read/ To know the big idea/ annotate</i> [T writes on board, asks follow-up questions with each, asking for examples.]</p>	<p>R: Dörnyei (2001) emphasizes the importance of retrospective motivation (i.e., asking, “How am I doing so far?”) This activity (evaluating how they felt they did on the quiz and brainstorming ways to improve their performance on upcoming quizzes) has the potential to boost Ss’ motivation.</p>
8:30	<p><i>I want you to look at your paper, at your reading. Did you annotate? Look at my paper:</i> [puts his copy of textbook under the opaque projector and points to markings on page] <i>a lot of annotations. . . What are annotations? S: Important things.</i> T points out different ways he has marked the textbook reading.</p>	<p>I, A: T takes opportunity to show a visual example of what he means. It would be easy to just say, “make notes in your book” without showing an authentic example of what this looks like.</p>
8:31	<p>T: <i>So, here’s a bad example. . . I go home, I have a quiz tomorrow, and I sit down to read. . . and I just read.</i> [T sits in chair, holds book and looks at the page, then mimics starting to fall asleep.] <i>So, this is not a good way to read.</i></p>	<p>I: T uses humor to engage Ss, at the same time clearly illustrating what <i>not</i> to do.</p>
8:32	<p><i>How can you understand these big ideas?</i> [Calls on S] S: <i>Preview the titles.</i> T: [gasps dramatically] <i>Preview? What does that mean?</i> S: <i>Look at all the big titles.</i> T discusses more reading strategies: pre-reading activities in book, looking at discussion questions, taking breaks, looking up words in the dictionary, eliciting ideas from Ss.</p>	<p>I: T incorporates humor while validating and emphasizing S’s response.</p> <p>R: Hedgecock & Ferris (2009) discuss explicit instruction of reading strategies (e.g., predicting, re-reading, discussion, etc.) as an important element of ESL courses with an academic focus.</p>
8:39	<p>T requested that I share some reading strategies. I talked about searching for specific answers in text, reading quickly, reading introduction and conclusion, not reading when you’re tired, sitting at a table. [T wrote key words on board.]</p>	<p>I, A: T makes use of resource in the classroom (me) to bring in a new voice. Using a “guest speaker” is a great way to keep Ss’ interest high while letting Ss hear similar ideas in a slightly different way.</p>
8:42	<p>T writes one word of a sentence on the board and then erases it, writes the next word and erases it, etc. T: <i>What’s the problem here?</i> S: <i>I forget everything.</i> T: <i>When students read really slow they. . .forget the meaning. So, I really like that idea. Read fast—you don’t have to understand everything—but when you read fast, your brain is going to catch some of the big ideas. And then you can read it again, slowly, later.</i> T wrote two additional strategies on board: discuss reading with a friend and ask your teacher.</p>	<p>I: T spent much longer talking about reading strategies than I would have, which was surprising to me. Since he is preparing Ss for college classes after leaving the ESL program, I’m sure that textbook reading skills are a priority, even though this is a communication class.</p> <p>Q: Are there some reading strategies that have been proven to be more effective than others? Are there some strategies that should be taught and emphasized more, rather than giving all strategies equal weight and discussion time?</p>
8:46	<p>T: <i>Well, I’m so excited to read about your ideas here!</i> [holds up chapter quizzes Ss just completed] <i>So, let me get you into groups, and</i></p>	<p>I: Previously, T has allowed Ss to work with the person next to them, but he now chooses who they will work with, possibly because they now feel more comfortable</p>

	<p><i>I have a question for you.</i> [Assigns partners]</p>	<p>in class since this is week 3.</p>
<p>8:47</p>	<p><i>And the question for you this morning is, what did you write about today?</i> [writes question on board] <i>What do you remember from Chapter 1? What did you learn?</i></p>	<p>I, A: T assigns a discussion question that they already feel comfortable answering since they have just spent 13 minutes thinking and writing about it. I would have probably chosen a different question but I can see that this is a great way to transition into group discussion.</p>
<p>8:53</p>	<p>T: <i>Please write one short thing you learned from Chapter 1. Who wants to go first?</i> [Writes Chapter 1 in center of board, with lines coming out from it, gives dry erase markers to Ss and has them come to the board to write ideas.] T provides encouragement as Ss come up to the board to write, thanks them after they finish, gently prompts Ss who haven't written anything yet.</p>	<div data-bbox="873 415 1193 590" data-label="Diagram"> </div> <p>A: This is a simple activity that I can see myself using. T didn't require anyone to come to the board to write, but almost all Ss did voluntarily.</p>
<p>8:58</p>	<p>T asks each S to read what they wrote on the board. T asks for examples from reading, rephrases, elaborates, and asks follow-up questions: <i>Explain. What do you mean? Example? What does that mean?</i> T thanks each S for their contribution: <i>I love this word that you used. Very good. Interesting. Thank you.</i></p>	<p>I, A: T noticed which Ss wrote which ideas and called on them by name to read and elaborate on what they wrote. T took the opportunity to push Ss to go deeper and think critically about what they had written, backing it up from the reading, while at the same time being very encouraging and positive about the ideas they shared.</p>
<p>9:04</p>	<p>T: <i>Who can read this question for us? K? Thank you.</i> S: <i>What is the difference between American and Native American?</i> T: <i>So, with your partner, answer this question real quick.</i> [Ss discuss question with their partner]</p>	<p>A: T takes the opportunity to minimize teacher talk time by allowing a S to read the question, rather than reading it himself.</p>
<p>9:08</p>	<p>T: <i>Did you talk a lot in your group? This is a good chance for speaking practice, so fight to make sure you can talk.</i></p>	<p>I: T sets the expectation for small group discussion time, making sure Ss understand the importance of everyone having time to talk.</p>
<p>9:08</p>	<p>T asks for volunteers to share what they talked about with their partner. T listens, comments: <i>uh-huh, mmm, mm-hmm, oh, okay,</i> and occasionally inserts clarification questions: <i>Indian? From India? I am Native American? Americans are white? Many of them? Most of them? All of them?</i></p>	<p>I, A: Rather than steering the discussion with comments, T directs with questions, guiding the conversation while at the same time inviting Ss' participation.</p>
<p>9:10</p>	<p>T: <i>I have a picture here, what do you see?</i> [shows picture on screen of the outline of U.S. with faces of people of different ethnicities] <i>Which country?</i> Ss: <i>America.</i> T: <i>The United States, right? And I see many different. . . what?</i> S: <i>Ethnic groups.</i> T: <i>Ethnic groups. And these are all Americans.</i></p>	<p>I, A: T again uses a visual to engage Ss and introduce a discussion topic.</p> <p>Q: What type of visuals are most engaging for Ss? Are videos more memorable than pictures, or is the effect the same? Do images need to be relatable for students in order to hold their interest?</p>
<p>9:11</p>	<p>T: <i>This is very different from</i> [writes <i>Native American</i> on board]. . . <i>what is this?</i> Ss: <i>Native American.</i> T: <i>A Native American</i> [with emphasis]. <i>Now be careful, do you see this here?</i> [points to uppercase letters] <i>Capital,</i></p>	<p>I: T takes the opportunity to remind Ss about the way uppercase letters signal proper nouns.</p>

	<i>capital</i> . T goes on to explain the meaning of the term Native American.	
9:14	10 minute break	
9:24	T gave questions to discuss in pairs (e.g., <i>Where did people come from during the 1500's-1600's?</i>) T allowed 2-4 minutes for Ss to discuss each question, then called on Ss for answers. T explained unfamiliar terms (<i>factors, cultural pluralism</i>) as they came up.	I, A: T chose class discussion as the primary means of instruction, rather than lecturing about the chapter. This provided for more S talk time and higher interest and engagement. Q: Is it more effective to keep Ss working with the same partner for the entirety of the class (as done here) or to switch partners periodically?
9:37	T showed map on projector screen of first colonizers in America (Spain, France, Britain). T referenced Des Moines, French name of the capital of Iowa, dating back to French settlers.	I, A: T uses image to increase S engagement. T introduces information Ss can relate to, activating previous knowledge.
9:44	T: <i>For example, why does the United States speak mostly English? Where does this come from?</i> Ss: <i>England</i> .	I: Again, T activates previous knowledge and relates it to the textbook reading.
9:45	T: <i>Anybody have a dollar?</i> [S hands T a dollar, T puts it under opaque projector] <i>Look at this man. What's his name?</i> Ss: <i>George Washington</i> . T: <i>Why is he important?</i> Ss: <i>The first president</i> T: <i>Look at that face! Definitely a white man, a Christian man who speaks English. Why is he not black, for example? Why is he not Asian, for example?</i>	I: T uses familiar image to illustrate his point. T maintains a dialogue throughout his comments, holding Ss' attention and interest, even when he does not pause for an answer.
9:51	T: <i>What if I told you, the United States is a melting pot?</i> [T shows a picture of a fondue pot.] <i>If you put some different cultures inside. . . it all becomes what?</i> Ss: <i>Mixed</i> . T: <i>Mixed</i> . <i>For example, can we see somebody from England? Can we see somebody from China? No. Their culture has been melted and mixed with other cultures. Look at this picture. What do you see?</i> [T shows picture of a salad] S: <i>Different vegetable in there, like tomato, lettuce. . .</i> T: <i>So, wait a minute. There's somebody from Saudi Arabia. There's somebody from Mexico. And what happens to their culture?</i> Ss: <i>Mixed</i> . T: <i>No, it's not mixed. It stays the same. But it's together.</i>	I: T again uses an image to hold Ss' interest. T asks lots of questions to "get students thinking in a certain direction" (Wajnryb, 1999, p. 94), guiding discussion of a perhaps unfamiliar, abstract topic.
9:53	T has Ss discuss with partner, <i>do you think the United States is a melting pot or a salad bowl?</i> [T allows four minutes for discussion in groups, follows up, asking Ss what they thought.]	R: Lightbown and Spada (2013) claim that "open questions. . . invite elaboration, typically leading to longer and more complex answers" (p. 147). T does not provide any indication that one answer is more correct than the other, allowing Ss to share their own opinions.
10:00	T assigns homework. <i>Before you leave, tell the person next to you, what is my homework for Thursday? Good job today, yay!</i> [claps] <i>See you on Thursday.</i>	A, I: I like this idea for making sure Ss understand the homework assignment. T used this strategy on a number of occasions. T ended class on a positive, upbeat note.

Summary Comments

In this class, the instructor made excellent use of questions to draw out important ideas (rather than simply stating them), direct discussion, help students develop critical thinking skills (by asking them to explain and defend their ideas and opinions), as well as increase student talk time, scaffold instruction, check comprehension, and elicit specific information. He also used a significant number of pictures and visuals to illustrate and guide class discussions. Students were highly engaged throughout the lesson, readily responding to questions and actively participating in small group discussion time. The teacher used discussion as a vehicle for instruction, directing students to talk about specific questions rather than lecturing over the content of the chapter. He used steady, unhurried pacing throughout the class, allowing enough time to thoroughly cover topics such as reading strategies. He was aware of affective variables, recognizing and attempting to minimize anxiety before the quiz, using humor to keep the classroom atmosphere light and upbeat, and providing plenty of positive feedback and encouragement. In my own classes, I would like to implement some of the techniques I have observed by making better use of pictures/visuals to engage learners, as well as using analogies (perhaps accompanied by an image) to help students grasp abstract concepts. I can also experiment with using small group discussions in favor of teacher instruction whenever possible. Above all, I have learned how much more I could be using questions to maintain student engagement, scaffold instruction, check for comprehension, and push students to think more deeply and critically.

References:

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