

A Case Study on the 2019 Champion Team in FLTRP Teaching Star Competition

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Abstract

The present paper is a case study of the 2019 champion team's introduction and demo teaching in FLTRP teaching star competition. The first teacher's introduction about his teaching context, teaching methodologies and teaching design and the second teacher's demo teaching are summarized and critically evaluated.

Keywords

Introduction; Teaching context; Teaching methodologies; Teaching design; Demo teaching.

1. Introduction

Being one of the most authoritative teaching competitions for teachers teaching foreign languages in China, FLTRP teaching star competition has been exerting profound influence upon language teachers and students as well. The present paper intends to critically evaluate FLTRP teaching star competition and similar competitions by a case study in a bid to thoroughly understand such competitions and shed light on college English course reform. For convenience's sake, this year's champion team in the college English group is chosen as the object of the case study. By the way, the competition has undergone some changes. Now it is required that a teaching team be built before teachers are qualified to register and take part. For the champion team to be discussed, one teacher is responsible for the "introduction" part, and the other for the "demo teaching" part. The body part of the paper will comment in detail on the former's teaching context, teaching methodologies and teaching designs and the latter's demo teaching.

2. Body

2.1 Comment on the First Teacher's Teaching Context

The first teacher who gives the introduction divides his introduction into three parts, teaching context, teaching methodologies and teaching designs. There is one point deserving our attention in his introduction about the teaching context. The teacher claims that his teaching target, the students, has "high reading competence and intermediate writing and oral competence. In their writing, they lack the confidence to apply certain rhetorical devices, where the proper use of rhetorical devices is helpful to make their expressions more powerful and convincing". This is a point that can never hold water concerning most college students. There is no doubt that the proper use of rhetorical devices can help students to express in a powerful and convincing way. But are students really lacking the confidence to apply certain rhetorical devices? Definitely not. Chinese students are taught to identify and use rhetorical devices such as simile, metaphor, personification etc in secondary school, if not in primary school. Even kids in kindergarten are singing together the lines "We are the flowers of our motherland". So what college students lack is not the confidence to apply certain rhetorical devices, but the confidence to write out or speak out the proper English language. In a word, it is not the "thought" but still the language that troubles the majority of the students.

2.2 Comment on the First Teacher's Teaching Methodologies

In the first teacher's introduction about teaching methodologies, he mentions Production-oriented Approach (POA) and Teacher-student Collaborative Assessment (TSA), the two chief teaching concepts he uses in his teaching. The teacher quotes that POA includes three stages, motivating stage in which he just designs his task as an initiative for his students, enabling stage in which he sets up effective and practical scaffolding for the students, and the assessing stage in which he uses TSA to evaluate the production tasks of the students. The teacher quotes that TSA also includes three stages, pre-class in which students submit their production tasks, in-class in which he makes sample analysis based on the assessment criteria and helps students make peer assessment and after-class in which students make self-assessment. The introduction of the two methodologies is just too general to be of any value as they are not illustrated with specific details. The teacher does give the "motivating" in detail. That is, the students are asked to make a video clip about family love in China, responding to the other teacher's foreign friend. But neither specific materials for the scaffoldings nor the explanation for the effectiveness of applying these scaffoldings to communicate in real situations are offered. Although the teacher informs that he assesses students' writing work from content, language and structure, and students' play performance from language, collaboration, originality and delivery, he does not offer in detail what substitutes for the inappropriate language should be offered so that students can really make improvements concerning these points. Without detailed guidance, these assessing aspects turn into nothing but directions in CET4 writing. In the teaching reality in China, if a teacher is super qualified, he or she may make a wonderful sample analysis based on the assessment criteria in class. Probably some teachers just cannot make it. According to the survey I conducted among my colleagues, 6 out of the 13 say they have trouble making the sample analysis in English in class. Peer assessment in class and students' self-assessment after class are virtually impossible in reality. 34 out of the 50 students interviewed say they have much trouble making peer and self-assessments. All the students think that teachers should play the assessing role, and it is of little value and a waste of time if students assess each other in class and assess themselves after class. But in reality the large class size, heavy load of teaching work for the teachers, and some teachers' unwillingness and incapability make the whole matter almost impossible.

2.3 Comment on the First Teacher's Teaching Design

In the teaching design part, the first teacher lists his three teaching objectives: 1. Identify and use six basic elements of story-telling and rhetorical devices in writing 2. Clarify the significance of spending time with families 3. Perform a play about family love. Again, here comes the same problem. Don't the college students know about the six elements (When, Where, Who, What, Why and How) of storytelling? They have been taught these six elements ever since childhood. A college teacher does not have to identify these six elements for his or her students in class just because it is an English class. The same is true of rhetorical devices that I have mentioned before. So it becomes a true laughing stock when the teacher says "Since the proper use of rhetorical devices is quite a challenging job for our students.....". I believe most students have more difficulty pronouncing the word "rhetorical" or expressing a complex sentence in English than using rhetorical devices. The simplicity of the seemingly complicated term "rhetorical devices" is further proved in his partner's demo teaching, in which the second teacher uses only several seconds to explain the term and the mocked students have not at all the slightest difficulty understanding the so-called challenging term. As to the teaching procedures, they include three sessions and three periods. The procedures roughly go as follows: session 1. Students' self-learning online about language points and the teacher's assignment of the unit task (before class) ---Teacher's explanation of the 6 basic elements of a narrative (in class) ---Students' submission of the first drafts of their writing (after class) 2. The teacher's review of the first drafts of students and selection of sample writing for class assessment (before class) --- The teacher's assessment of students' first drafts and presentation of the sample analysis (in class) --- Students' submission of the second drafts of students' writing (after class) 3. The teacher's review of the second drafts of students' writing and selection of sample writing for class assessment (before

class) --- The teacher's assessment of students' second drafts and students' presentation of their initial performances (in class) --- Students' submission of their video works of their plays online. These above procedures are just too ideal to implement in most universities in China. The first reason is the large size of the college English class. It is practically impossible for teachers to review and comment on all the writing assignments one draft after another. In reality, many teachers lack the ability to assess and analyze a student's drafts in English in a way that students feel they are interested and attracted and benefit from such assessment and analysis. So if a video clip of the procedure details is offered, I am sure that a lot of problems will be exposed to the audience. Besides, the class in this way becomes something like an English writing class rather than a comprehensive English class.

2.4 Comment on the Second Teacher's Demo Teaching

The demo teaching part given by the second teacher elaborates on the use of rhetorical devices, metaphor to be accurate. The teacher can speak really accurate and fluent English with proper gestures and passion. He is skillful in teaching. He first admits the importance of the use of rhetorical devices to good writing and students' weakness in this aspect. Then he defines metaphor by asking questions to warm up and by giving examples. There is a lot of interaction between the "teacher" and the "students", and the "students" present are given ample chances to invent their own metaphors. Finally, the teacher uses his own experience to illustrate the power of the use of metaphor. Everything seems perfect in the eyes of outsiders. But what is the difference between the demo teaching and a college student's speech contest? Some students may understand the teacher's lecturing, but they really benefit little in terms of language learning. It is never enough to emphasize the point that it is never the "metaphor" that overwhelms students, but the proper use of language. By the way, a student present called April answers the teacher's question like this, "My mother is like a tree for me....." This is actually not metaphor, but simile. And when the teacher asks his students to use metaphor to help a father to quit smoking, a male student answers in his broken English, "Smoking will make your lung like..... (laughing in embarrassment) like.....I don't know, some kind of..... er ersome kind of.....er.....like quench like paper or something like.....I don't know." The student may actually be a teacher. So even a teacher has difficulty expressing fluently. The teacher's English also needs to be improved, not to mention the students'. So language is the forever core issue that we should deal with in our college English courses.

3. Conclusion

From the introduction to the demo teaching, the 2019 champion team in the FLTRP teaching star competition presents a lot of problems that might be mutually shared by us college English teachers. The major problem of such teaching is caused by "easy thought with difficult language crusts". In other words, the emphasis of such classes has diverted from the right direction of language focus. Solutions to this radical problem still need much discussion among us college English teachers.

References

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