

Reflections

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I am writing this report as per Tonson's request for a record/reflection of co-teaching the CBEST summer prep course in 2008.

a. Co-teaching

This was my first experience co-teaching a class. I had thought co-teaching would be rather time-consuming, but it turned out to be a rewarding experience. My task was to lead both the Reading and Writing sections, but Tonson would often chime in when I asked for his input or whenever he had something important to add. Tonson sometimes took the lead to explain several pertinent reading and writing issues. I felt that students in class-C* were most fortunate that Tonson co-taught with me for 3 hours, and the students seemed to share this sentiment .

The student also benefited because Tonson was always available to answer any of their questions about the process of getting certified in California, and satisfied their curiosity regarding teaching Chinese as a second language in the US, California in particular. Tonson not only provided words of encouragement and inspiration for the students, but also shared his sense of humor. It was indeed a pleasure co-teaching with Tonson.

b. Materials

Tonson provided a wealth of materials which I believe are indispensable. The newspaper articles for the Reading section presented issues that are pertinent in the educational system in the US. Tonson also helped in explaining the key terms and concepts in those articles, information which only an insider to the American educational system can provide in detail. These newspaper articles and Tonson's explanation of key terms and concepts are most invaluable indeed. Also, the genre of the newspaper articles echoes the themes of writing for each week. The close association of materials for reading and writing is significant for students' learning.

Tonson also provided a plethora of sample essays for both types of writing. These sample essays allow students a model to work toward, and also provide students with the information from which to learn. They are very valuable resources.

c. Class Atmosphere

One student, Cathy C., wrote to me in the first week of the course that both she and Cathy K were interested to transfer to class-B** because of their strong desire for an instructor who is a native-speaker of English. However, they later decided to stay in class-C because they believed that they would learn best in the “happy environment of class-C” (Cathy K’s own words in her email to Tonson and me).

Another student also shared with me her interest to transfer to class-B because it was taught by a native-speaker. It seems to me that students in general crave for an instructor who is a native-speaker so that they may experience an English-speaking environment provided by a native speaker. Such opportunities are indeed hard to come by for some students in Taiwan. I therefore believe that students would benefit most if Tonson co-teaches with a native-speaker of English.

Final Thoughts

To conclude, it has been a most enriching experience co-teaching with Tonson on this first CBEST course in Taiwan. I also feel extremely fortunate to have a class of students (class-C students) who are motivated and enthusiastic. Because of the cooperation of all parties involved, teaching class-C has been a great pleasure and privilege.

* Class C – Students were placed in Classes A, B, and C according to their scores on the English screening test, Class A being the most proficient.

**Class A and B were taught by a native-speaker of English.