

Caritas Fanling Chan Chun Ha Secondary School

Name of Awarded Teacher : Chung Wai Chee, Mary Julia

Cater for Learners' Diversity

Introduction

Since most of my students were low achievers, I had a hard time making them learn. I started off with a word game. Playing games would be fun and my Form 3 class would surely enjoy it. It was far from what I expected. I talked to my students hoping to locate the underlying reasons. Some had never done a crossword puzzle, while others had no idea what prepositions were. I seemed to know so little about the learners. I was not sensitive to them and had not considered whether their knowledge and skills could cope with the activity.

I realized the vital importance of language input and output. I understood the strategies to tailor and adapt materials are more than just copying, cutting and pasting. I modified the worksheet. From one puzzle I had two more activities: (1) a matching game played with preposition word-cards and cue pictures and (2) a worksheet with the matching exercise. Moreover, the three activities also cater for learner diversity.

As the saying goes, "A change in perspective was born out of failure." After all these years, this incident remains fresh in my mind and whenever I select or adapt teaching material, it will pop up to remind me. Teachers tend to believe too much in themselves. They must have realistic expectations of their students and know the characteristics of the learners well. A student is a person, not a stereotype. I accept unconditionally that there is a mix of abilities and limitations.

Learning and teaching should be made within the learner's grasp and not bound by textbooks. Tailoring and adapting is a practical way by which I can control the linguistic and cognitive demands to match students' abilities. Sometimes I may need to rewrite in their level of language concept. It is advisable to add a small amount of new learning that can be handled. Even though the content or the subject matter is selected and repackaged to the students' grade level, suitable teaching methods and approaches are adopted to suit my students' learning style.

I pay attention to individual learner's response to the approach used to teach a particular task. If things go wrong in the very act of teaching, I stop and re-examine the situation, then try to correct and change in the most appropriate way in the interest of the students. Thus a supportive environment can be created so learners are willing to adopt risk-taking language learning attitudes and strategies. They no longer play a passive role in learning.

I extended my practice beyond my individual classroom to include fellow teachers. Under the School Curriculum Tailoring Scheme I shared my experience with three other colleagues in designing our own school-based teaching materials for the junior forms.

Information technology is used to arouse students' interests and enhance language learning. In "Getting to Know Some Animals", one of the exemplars in English Language Education KLA Curriculum Guide (P1 - S3) published by the Curriculum Development Council in 2002, the students use the Internet for English language learning.

What better way to improve my teaching than to participate in the professional development of other teachers. Many joys and benefits result from sharing one's knowledge, one's time and one's self. It is a good opportunity to talk about the issues in teaching beyond the theories and methodology. In the midst of sharing with others, I rediscovered long forgotten feelings of accomplishment that occurred when I first mastered the craft for myself. I appreciated the opportunity to pass my techniques and skills to others.



Way of Access to Further Information of the above Teaching Practice

Please e-mail to the ATE Secretariat (ate@emb.gov.hk) stating the specific information you would like to obtain.

Preferred Way of dissemination / collaboration

Please refer to the latest news of sharing activities organized by the ATE Teachers Association.

Website: www.ate.gov.hk

Contact

ATE Secretariat: ate@emb.gov.hk

Remarks of the Assessment Panel

Ms Chung is particularly concerned about "the lost, the last and the least" (3Ls). To cater for their learning diversity, Ms Chung's teaching practice is characterized by selecting simple but challenging goals, concepts and teaching styles; a refined learning process to handle the cognitive and linguistic demands word-by-word, step-by-step, layer-by-layer, task-by-task; designing manageable and learnable contents; observing and diagnosing students' problems right at the beginning for giving on-the-spot remedial support; and encouraging and appreciating the diversified presentation of learning outcomes that go beyond language expression, because the 3Ls students are rich in ideas but handicapped in language.

