

Songs, Chants and Drama

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Part I: My learning trip

From October 23 through November 5, 2011, I went to America to attend an English teacher training program for two weeks. I was very grateful to have this opportunity. I'm deeply thankful for the government of New Taipei City. It allowed me to have the chance to "live" in the USA and experience American culture and observe teaching skills and students' lives in elementary schools in California. I had a wonderful experience during this program.

I lived with my host family and experienced the lifestyles in America. My host mother Fiona really took good care of me during those days. I had a great chance to learn the variety things about their lives, like the foods, the transportation, the neighborhood, even how to do the laundry. They have a cute daughter, Kasity, who is a seventh grader girl. I also learned from her that the seventh grader student in the USA also has lots of homework and projects to do after school. Living with them is really a lovely stay for me.

The first week we visited ABC Adult School in Cerritos, CA. In the morning, I joined the Beginner Level Class and observed the teachers teaching adults who were in the basic level. Firstly, I realized that even adult students liked the art works and games. During the activities, they cut and drew the new vocabulary cards and practiced with the cards just like young students. They also felt more excited and concentrated when they played games in class. And the adult students liked encouragements and praises from teachers.



Secondly, I learned that it's really a big melting pot in the USA, including Mexican, Spanish, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Mainland China, and Taiwanese, a variety of races were there. Many young people were eager to enhance their English to make their own jobs and careers go more smoothly and to have more opportunities to choose better jobs for their future. Senior people learned English there to help themselves to have better communication

with their families and neighbors. People came here to learn English because of the different kinds of reasons and they all wanted to have better lives in the USA.

In the afternoon during the first week, we attended workshops that were very well-planned by ABC Adult School, so that we could have different topics to learn every day. We learned about Songs, Chants and Drama; Vocabulary and Cooperative Learning; Writing and Conversation; Improving Listening Skill; Integrating Pronunciation into a Lesson. Those teaching skills and topics really inspired me to think a lot in my teaching.

In the training programs, we had two teachers in a class every afternoon. Sometimes one teacher was the main teacher and the other was an assistant teacher. Sometime two teachers taught at the same time, just like in a talk show. Both ways make two teachers cooperate and prepare well and learn from each other. The most important thing is that teachers could put their specialty in teaching and give students more. I really learned a lot and had a great time there.

The second week I visited some elementary schools in Cerritos, CA. I was very lucky to have the chances to see three different schools in the district. The three elementary schools are Stowers, Elliott, and Cerritos.

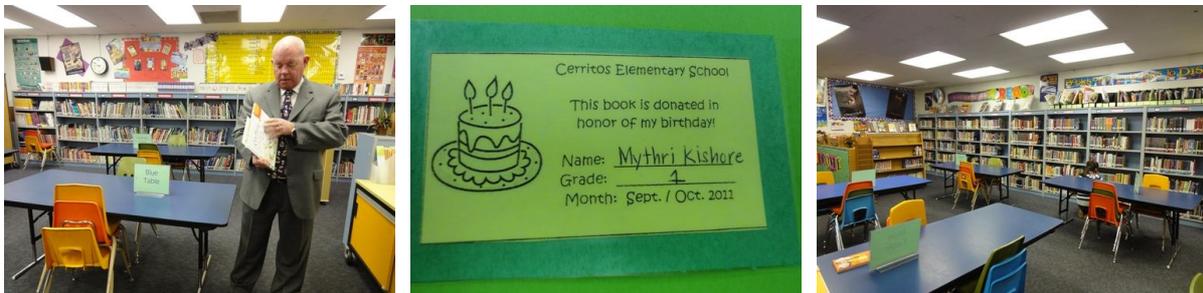
At Stowers, I went to Harvest Festival which was just like a Halloween parade. The students wore costumes, traditional clothes or anything they liked and they walked around the play yard. The PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) and teachers at Stowers really put a lot of efforts in this activity and their students all had a fun time. Stowers has students from different countries. We could tell this part from their school badge. They want their students to understand each other through their languages, cultures, and points of view.



At Elliott, I visited a 5th grade class, and at Cerritos I visited a 1st grade class. I sat at the back of the classrooms to observe different courses, like Reading, Math, and Science; this boosted me to understand their schemes and plans for their elementary education system. I had a strong impression of their good equipment and facilities at school, too. All of the

classrooms are on the first floor. In American education system, elementary schools have students from kindergarten to sixth grade. Each school's timetable is different from others. But generally speaking, teachers have to work six hours everyday, starting around eight thirty in the morning to two thirty in the afternoon. There are only two breaks, one is 20 minutes recess in the morning and another is 45 minutes to have lunch. The schedule is very different from ours in Taiwan. I remembered they were very surprised by our school schedules when I did the introduction about "A school day in Taiwan." They were surprised at the cleanings which were done by the students and the naptime after lunch. During the short observation, I really learned a lot.

I was very impressed by the library at Cerritos Elementary School. There is a wonderful program called Birthday Book Club. A student is able to choose a pre-ordered selection and donate it to the library in his birthday month. Over 15 years, nearly 4800 books have been donated to the school library for students' enjoyment. A certificate is placed on the back cover of the book, including the child's name and birthday with a statement, "This book is donated in the honor of my birthday." Students can see the book his parents donated for him in the school library.



Part II: Songs, Chants and Drama

A. Songs

In the lecture, the teachers gave us some examples of using familiar tunes with English words substituted for the original lyrics. The vocabulary is chosen based on the theme or topic being taught. Two songs I learned from the lecture were as follows:

1. Song for inspiring students:

"Speak Your English" (to the tune of: Row, Row, Row your Boat)

Speak, speak, speak your English, speak it every day.

When you practice, practice, practice, practice, you'll know what to say.

*Teacher could ask students to sing in turns (like canon, or choir).

2. Song for greeting and practicing sentence patterns:

“I’m Glad to meet you” (to the tune of: La Cucaracha, a Mexican folk song)

A: Do you speak English? Do you speak English?

B: Yes, but just a little bit. (A & B x2)

A: Are you from Chile? Are you from Chile?

B: No, I’m not. I’m from Brazil. (A & B x2)

A: My name is Victor. My name is Victor. What’s your name and where are you from?

B: My name is Alice. My name is Alice. I’m from Washington, DC.

A: I’m glad to meet you. I’m glad to meet you.

B: I’m glad to meet you, too. (A & B x2)

After working on the two examples, we were divided into groups and had to decide a familiar tune that our children know and wrote new English lyrics according to the topic we had chosen. We created some new songs in such a short time that we couldn’t believe it ourselves. The songs were as follows:

1. Teaching animals and jobs (to the tune of: B-I-N-G-O)

There was a cop who had a dog, and Mango was his name O,

M-A-N-G-O, M-A-N-G-O, M-A-N-G-O, and Mango was his name O.

There was a nurse who had a cat, and Happy was her name O,

H-A-P-P-Y, H-A-P-P-Y, H-A-P-P-Y, and Happy was her name O.

2. Teaching ages, numbers and comparison (to the tune of: Are You Sleeping?)

How old are you? How old are you?

I’m ten and what about you?

I am nine. I am nine.

Younger than you, younger than you

How old are you? How old are you?

I'm ten and what about you?

I am eleven. I am eleven.

Older than you, older than you

3. Teaching foods (to the tune of: London Bridge is Falling Down)

What do you want to eat for breakfast? To eat for breakfast. To eat for breakfast.

What do you want to eat for breakfast? Milk and sandwiches.

What do you want to eat for lunch? To eat for lunch. To eat for lunch.

What do you want to eat for lunch? Dumplings and chicken soup.

What do you want to eat for dinner? To eat for dinner. To eat for dinner.

What do you want to eat for dinner? Fried rice and some sushi.

4. Teaching Environmental protection (to the tune of: The More We Get Together)

Reduce, reuse, recycle, recycle, recycle.

Reduce, reuse, recycle. It's easy to do

Because your world is my world, and my world is your world.

Reduce, reuse, recycle. It's easy to do.

Songs can be used in teaching English in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Songs benefit language learners based on three aspects of learning theory: affective, cognitive, and linguistic. Songs provide a non-threatening atmosphere; they expose the learner to authentic English which promotes language learning (Schoepp, 2001). Songs really help students with their memorization ability. Songs can be applied to our teaching whenever we want, like teaching vocabulary, sentence patterns, and so forth.

B. Chants

Rhymes and rhythms have always been a part of children's play and are parts of the natural way children develop their first language. Chants can be used in a primary classroom for a variety of reasons (Graham, 1979):

- To teach the natural rhythm, stress and intonation of conversational English.
- To recall a grammatical point, i.e., present simple, past simple, pronouns, questions...

- To teach language functions, i.e., asking for information, giving explanations, etc...
- To develop students' listening and speaking skills.
- To create an interesting, relaxing atmosphere that helps students in acquiring the new language.

The chants we practiced in the lecture were as follows:

1. A Practice Rhyme

I sing. You sing. He, she, it sings. We sing. They sing. All the pretty birds sing.

They walk. We walk. He, she it walks. You walk. I walk. All the active boys walk.

I go. You go. He, she, it goes. We go. They go. All the smiling girls go.

They sit. We sit. He, she, it sits. You sit. I sit. All the tired dogs sit.

I sleep. You sleep. He, she it, sleeps. We sleep. They sleep.

Close your eyes for deep sleep.

This chant offers practice in using subject pronouns and action verbs. Subject verb agreement is taught in this rhyme. For variations, students can add their own English action words to the rhyme in turns.

2. Hi! How are you?

Hi! How are you? Fine. How are you?

Hi! How are you? Fine. How are you?

Hi! How are you? Hi! How are you? Hi! How are you? Fine. How are you?

This chant offers practice in asking questions and practice in shifting the stress from “are” in the first speaker’s greeting to “you” in a responding voice.

C. Drama

Research shows that dramatization leads to stronger and more lasting retention of information than either verbal or visual instruction alone (Marzano, Pickering and Pollock, 2001). In the lecture, we played a dramatic game called “tableaux”. It’s just like a “Frozen Picture.” Students choose



several scenes from a story and each scene is at a critical point. Students perform each scene by doing their own characters accordingly. Meanwhile, students are asked to 'freeze' to create a still image. And the audiences can make some guesses and discuss what they have seen. We dramatized a children's story: The Three Little Pigs. Everyone had a great time and the time was full of joy.

Part III: More songs I learned from class observation

1. Song for holiday: "Rock 'n' Roll snowman"

Have you heard about the rock 'n' roll snowman? Snow-woh-woh-woh! (x2)

He likes to play his snow guitar. He wants to be a snowman star.

Have you heard about the rock 'n' roll snowman? Snow-woh-woh-woh!

Do you wanna hear the rock 'n' roll snowman? Snow-woh-woh-woh! (x2)

He's always rockin' in the snow. And everyone says, "Go, man, go!"

Do you wanna hear the rock 'n' roll snowman? Snow-woh-woh-woh!

Go, man, go! Go, man, go! Snow, snow. Snow, snow. Go, man, go!

2. Song for phonics: "Apples & Bananas"

I like to eat, eat, eat apples and bananas

I like to ate, ate, ate ay-ples and ba-nay-nays

I like to eat, eat, eat ee-ples and bee-nee-nees

I like to ite, ite, ite i-ples and by-ny-nys

I like to ote, ote, ote oh-ples and bo-no-nos

I like to oot, oot, oot oo-ples and boo-noo-noos

This cute song allows children to play around with the five vowel sounds (A, E, I, O and U) and create nonsense words with each of the sounds. Playing with sounds is an important step in reading readiness.

3. Song for science: "Matter Song" (to the tune of: Oh, My Darling)

What's the matter? What's the matter? What's the matter all around?

It's the solid. It's the liquid. It's the gas all around.

*It's a song I learned from Mrs. Woesner's class.

The song was made by the class and students loved it.

4. Song for class: "My Class is Your Class" (to the tune of: You Are My Sunshine)

This class is your class. This class is my class. From 8:45 am till 2:48.

We will have fun together. Working hard and playing fair.

This class was made for you and me.

*It's a class song from Mrs. Woesner's class. The students have to sing the theme every day.

Part IV: Conclusion

I am really grateful to everything I have learned during this trip and I really had a wonderful time there. I spoke English everyday and that's what I couldn't do in Taiwan. Observing American Elementary School classes, learning some teaching skills, and living with Americans had really benefitted me a lot. It's a whole new experience for me.

Reference

Graham, C. (1979). *Jazz Chants for Children*. New York, NY, USA: Oxford University Press.

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