

Record of Observation or Review of Teaching Practice

Session: 'Art Prodigies': Seminar Discussion Practice & Polemic Writing

Size of student group: ~15

Observer: Kwame Baah (Tutor), Rafin Jannat (Peer)

Observee: Andrew Fisher

Date: 13/03-2024; 90 minute session

Part One

What is the context of this session within the curriculum?

Within the Pre-sessional English courses, students take part in seminar discussions, the last one of which is summatively assessed. This session is designed to give students practice. By this point the students will already have been introduced to how seminars work, what language and interaction is needed, and what is expected of them.

How long have you been working with this group and in what capacity?

I will have been the class tutor for approximately 3 weeks.

What are the intended or expected learning outcomes?

- To gain further practice in seminar discussions by responding to provided questions.
- To express opinions on child artists, as portrayed in general news stories.
- To expand their vocabulary.
- To write a short critical text on photorealism (which they will receive feedback on).

What are the anticipated outputs (anything students will make/do)?

- Engage in a seminar style discussion.
- Write a short polemic essay.

Are there potential difficulties or specific areas of concern?

- That students are able to sufficiently understand the content of the 3 videos after only one viewing.
- That students are able to keep a discussion moving for a predetermined length of time.

How will students be informed of the observation/Review?

n/a

What would you particularly like feedback on?

- Timings allocated for each stage/activity.
- Appropriateness of the questions for discussion (preparing students for main courses).
- That there is an adequate variety of student activities.

How will feedback be exchanged?

In written form.

Part Two

Observer to note down observations, suggestions and questions:

This course is incredibly fascinating and offers valuable insights into the art of rhetoric conversation, specifically in the context of writing. The lesson itself is highly engaging, even within the limited time frame that you have had as the class tutor. The way you have structured the session is extremely beneficial, as it encourages dialogue, conversation, and critical thinking. I can't imagine a moment where participants would feel disengaged, which is often the case in many other disciplines. This course serves as an excellent introduction to the art of conversation using the English language to develop a specific writing context.

There is an opportunity to incorporate a question that prompts participants to summarise each film in a single sentence, which can serve as a way to assess student understanding. Alternatively, providing a brief context for each film to the students can also be helpful. It is important for students to take notes to support their memory of each film. The activities included in the lesson offers a good variety, and the timings seem appropriate, although it would be ideal to have a contingency plan of at least 10 minutes. It can be challenging to gauge the suitability of timing, especially with larger class sizes that may cause sessions to run over.

My only query is whether you have taught this session before during your time in UAL. This is because you may have gained an understanding of the level of engagement and depth of conversations or questions that may arise. Thank you for sharing this!

Part Three

Observee to reflect on the observer's comments and describe how they will act on the feedback exchanged:

Thank you so much for your comments – I do think it is difficult to gauge a lesson only from the paperwork! Your comment on incorporating a question to encourage students to summarise each video is an interesting one, and this caused me to see that whilst the writing will be assessed (in a manner intended to give meaningful feedback), I have perhaps omitted any direct assessment of the students' grasp of the video content, only indirect through monitoring the ensuing conversations. But in addition to an assessment purpose, I can see that it may be helpful in focusing the students upon what they understand, which will aid critical discussion. But more than this, you suggest in a single sentence. As a linguist I want to ask how many clauses can be in that single sentence! Because of the language abilities of the students, I might modify this idea, but utilise it in some form nonetheless.

Have I taught this session before? In essence, yes, but online and with some changes to content. I've adapted the session to be delivered face-to-face in a classroom, and provided some more scaffolding, particularly around pre-teaching lexis.

The Lesson

Overview

In this activity, students are to watch three short news stories on YouTube. Before doing so there is an introduction to the idea of a *prodigy*, and a short vocabulary exercise of words and phrases taken from the videos. Each video features a child being celebrated for their prodigious artistic talents. It is worthwhile pointing out that these are from regular TV news-type programs, and are aimed at a general audience: their purpose is to entertain, not educate.

After watching each of the three clips, student groups are given a sequence of questions for discussion which relate to the video. There is an additional, fourth, set of questions to tie things together and form some opinions on the topic of child art prodigies.

Procedure (Pro forma plan as used in the Pre-sessional English Program)

Stage	Aim	Procedure	Timing	Interaction
Introduction	Establish lesson theme	Show word 'prodigy' (and speak so as to model pronunciation), and ask if anyone can suggest what it means (open question, no delegation). Show definition from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English: <i>"a young person who has a great natural ability in a subject or skill"</i> Ask if Ss can suggest examples (perhaps from their field, if appropriate) (again, open, no delegation)	00.00	T -> Ss Ss -> T Ss -> T
Pre-teach vocabulary	Provide Ss with an opportunity to familiarise themselves with some of the lexis used in the 3 videos.	Around the room have been placed 24 cards: 12 have words or phrases, and 12 have definitions. Ss are to move around the room, work collaboratively and match words/phrases with definitions. Ss, either alone or in small groups, can keep their paired cards. Once cards have been paired, Ss share their results. Answers provided on board for all to see. Model pronunciation and drill.	00.05	T -> Ss Ss <-> Ss T <-> Ss

The 12 pairs of cards:

commission - a request for an artist, designer, or musician to make a piece of art or music, for which they are paid

correspondent - someone who is employed by a newspaper or a television station etc. to report news

hype - attempts to make people think something is good or important by talking about it a lot on television, the radio etc.

hyperrealism – an artistic work that seeks to create illusions by enhancing reality

in your element - to be in a situation that you enjoy, because you are good at it

lack - when there is not enough of something, or none of it

photorealism - a style of painting very like photographs, usually showing very ordinary objects from everyday life with very exact details

pint-sized - small – usually used humorously

poise - carefully balanced in composition

scramble - to struggle or compete with other people to get or reach something

subjective - a statement, report, attitude etc. that is influenced by personal opinion and can therefore be unfair

take by storm - to be very successful

Stage	Aim	Procedure	Timing	Interaction
The Seminar – a reminder	To establish how a seminar functions	Having already looked at how seminar discussions work, elicit from Ss what they remember. The salient points are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You need to respond to the questions You need to respond to, and expand on, what others have said (this requires active listening) You should question other Ss on their contributions, and if necessary challenge Try to bring in any student who is not contributing very much 	00.15	T -> Ss Ss -> T
Video 1	Ss to watch video and gain the gist of the content.	Arrange Ss into groups of ~4 (if seminar groupings have already been established, check that Ss know who they are working with). Introduce first video: <i>Twelve-year-old girl producing art so realistic people question if she really did it</i> , https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzr_dodDuzw New Zealand, July 2021, Isabella Brazhnikova, hyperrealism, started around age 4 with sea wildlife; “I want to show people how beautiful wildlife is”, 3m16s. Play video once.	00.20	T <-> Ss Ss <-> Ss
Video 1 discussion	Ss to discuss the questions provided on the board.	Show first question and read it aloud: 1. <i>Her mother is an artist, and there is a comment about this ability running through their genes. Do you think artistic ability is genetic? Can you think of any examples that demonstrate your position?</i> Allow Ss to discuss for 2-3 minutes. Ideally Ss should be left to keep the conversation going by themselves, but circulate the groups and intervene if necessary.	00.25	T <-> Ss Ss <-> Ss

Stage	Aim	Procedure	Timing	Interaction
		<p>Repeat procedure for questions 2, 3 and 4:</p> <p>2. <i>Do you think hyperrealism, or photorealism (they are not the same thing, but you can consider both), can be seen as a reaction to the abstract art of the 20th century?</i></p> <p>3. <i>Should a work of hyperrealism be approached as a painting, or as a photograph? Give reasons for your views.</i></p> <p>4. <i>Some hyperrealists paint everyday images and objects (Roberto Bernardi has painted tins of Campbell's soup!), Isabella paints animals, portraits and fantasy. Which subject do you feel is most interesting, and why?</i></p>		<p>T <-> Ss Ss <-> Ss</p>
Video 2	Ss to watch video and gain the gist of the content.	<p>Introduce second video: <i>Meet the 2-year-old artist whose paintings are shaking up the art world</i>, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAyaSkpsNKM USA, March 2019, Lola June, abstract art, 3m58s. Play video once, but stop at 3m00s, as after that it's awful banter from the presenters, but include part where they mention where the money from sold paintings goes.</p>	00.35	T <-> Ss
Video 2 discussion	Ss to discuss the questions provided on the board.	<p>Show and read the 3 questions, following same procedure as for Video 1:</p> <p>5. <i>Why do you think that (according to the presenter) the work of Lola is being compared to artists such as Picasso and Pollock? How would you compare her work to established artists?</i></p> <p>6. <i>A family friend contacted a local gallery because he believed "Lola's art would sell": do you think that Lola is being exploited? If so, by who? The word 'hype' is used: is that a good thing, or a problem? (although the money is being saved for her future, others are profiting now)</i></p> <p>7. <i>How do you envisage Lola's work developing as she gets older?</i></p>	00.40	<p>T <-> Ss Ss <-> Ss</p>
Video 3	Ss to watch video and gain the gist of the content.	<p>Introduce third video: <i>7-year-old artist a 'mini Monet'</i>, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cd0l5_6eEig UK (but American channel), August 2010, Kieron Williamson, 2m58s. Play video once.</p>	00.50	T <-> Ss

Stage	Aim	Procedure	Timing	Interaction
Video 3 discussion	Ss to discuss the questions provided on the board.	Show and read the 3 questions, following same procedure as for Video 1: 8. <i>Why do you think Kieron's parents were concerned about his first paintings, when he would cover the paper in black paint? (1:09) [A connotation question!]</i> 9. <i>Kieron rejects the comparison to Monet: why could this be and is he right to reject it? (1:31)</i> 10. <i>Kieron says he paints every day, even if he doesn't "feel like it": is this a good or a bad attitude for an artist? [some say that you should do your thing everyday if you want to be good at it]</i>	00.55	T <-> Ss Ss <-> Ss
Final discussion	Ss have the opportunity to discuss some more general points related to art, children, and education.	Show and read the final 4 questions, one by one as before, informing Ss that this is for a final, general discussion where they can share their views and some personal stories, as seminar practice: 11. <i>There are a great many videos like this on YouTube showing prodigious child artists of different genres and from different parts of the world (although mostly the USA!). One opinion is that the viewers and buyers are ignorant or pretentious: do you agree?</i> 12. <i>How old were you when you became interested in art and design? What were the first things you created?</i> 13. <i>As a child/teenager, did parents or teachers recognise your abilities? How did you respond to the encouragement or discouragement of others?</i> 14. <i>Is art education for children (thinking of all children, not just potential artists) valuable? If not, why not, and if so, in what ways? [child development, learning to express yourself, etc.]</i>	01.05	T <-> Ss Ss <-> Ss
Further research	If Ss wish for more (up-to-date) information on Kieron, they can utilise these resources.	Share the following information for Ss to optionally learn more about Kieron: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Making of a Master</i>, BBC documentary from 2016 on Kieron, now aged 14, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=St5ciUhjRCQ Kieron's own website – he is still active today https://kieronwilliamson.com/ 	01.14	T <-> Ss

Stage	Aim	Procedure	Timing	Interaction
Writing	Ss to develop their skills in taking a critical stance in writing.	<p>Introduce task to Ss:</p> <p>Write a short polemic (~400 words) to support a debatable position. You should present the two sides of the argument, but support one side and demonstrate the weaknesses of the other. You are writing a response to this statement:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Photorealism is not a valid art form.</i></p> <p>You may find it useful to include a short definition of what photorealism is, and ensure that you do not confuse it with hyperrealism, which is similar but not the same.</p> <p>Your structure should look something like this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • paragraph 1: Introduce the topic, and perhaps define photorealism. State what your thesis is, that is, whether you agree or disagree with the statement, but don't give supporting reasons. • paragraph 2: Weaknesses, and perhaps some strengths, of the position that you do not agree with. Ensure that weaknesses outweigh the strengths. • paragraph 3: Strengths, and perhaps some weaknesses, of the position you agree with. Ensure that strengths outweigh the weaknesses, and that this paragraph is more detailed (longer!) than paragraph 2. • paragraph 4: Summarise your findings, and restate your thesis. <p>Ss are to begin planning the essay, and complete it as homework. They will receive feedback on their general writing abilities and on their criticality.</p> <p>Circulate and check that Ss are on task, asking questions and aiding as necessary. It is OK for Ss to discuss their ideas.</p> <p>End of Activity.</p>	01.16	T <-> Ss
			01.30	Ss <-> Ss