Visualizing and Making in an ELL Humanities Classroom

humanities

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Arroyo Pacific Academy is a learning institution where academic achievement has the highest priority within a learning environment that is supportive and encouraging.

Founded in 1998 by Philip Clarke, Arroyo Pacific Academy was opened to meet the needs of local parents who felt their sons and daughters were not best served in the traditional large-scale high school setting.

Cindy DeMesa, team teacher in visual art and humanities
Clark Center APA:
Visual Arts I & II
Humanities
HUMANITIES CLASSROOM

Student Composition:
- Ninth Graders - all of Chinese origin/Primary Language: Chinese (various dialects)
- Predominantly male (four female students in two sections)
- All new to US/English language (reading level K-1st grade)
- Most living with host families

"Experience with Humanities or Visual Art = Little to No Experience"

Educational experiences in China:
- Rote learning
- Memorization/Chants

"Students do not have opportunities to have classes within humanities/visual arts after a certain age...most have art class in lower primary school (grades 1-3)"

Rebecca Kroeger, Sino-Canadian Program Teacher, Guangdong Univ. of Foreign Studies
Challenges to learning: Language use and communication

Assigned textbook for teaching Humanities course...

...confounding and frustrating for these ELL students
Textbook: Asks students to interpret concepts too foreign for their experiential level, especially while translating to English and into "art specific" English

For example: The term "value" has one meaning in Google Translate that may not be appropriate for an art related learning exercise.

I say "value" and think of:

They hear "value" and think of:
Quickly noticed a need for a change in teaching strategy!

Moved from a reading/viewing/discussion/examination format...

...to a project-based learning format with an emphasis on language acquisition and appreciation

Strategies employed to help ELLs: (Scott, 2015)

- Empathy and shared experience (group work)
- Fluency in primary language to bridge new language
- Creative experiences to connect/express culture
- Graphic aids to communicate/explain language use

"PBL functions as a bridge between using English in class and using English in real life situations outside of class." (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998)
Chapter 1: Painting and Pictorial Art
No cultural context for learning strategies that US high schools expects learners to know, understand and employ (Jin & Cortazzi, 1993)

- taking notes
- participation
- project-based learning
- planning, preparation, time management

Critical skills need to be taught, practiced, and implemented during instruction
Chapter 3: Architecture

Flat Iron Building, NYC
Yamashita Face House, Kyoto, Japan
Students struggled with vocabulary and art terminology within textbook. Class time involved working together in textbook lessons to learn vocabulary, then implementing the vocabulary/terminology in project-based learning.

Classroom activities employed codeswitching to assist learning between communication forms and transmediate learning through interpretation, refinement, and discovery (Eubanks, 2003).

Time management had to be taught. Projects needed to be portioned for daily achievement goals - students were unaccustomed to having a block of time to complete work and would seek out distractions to fill time if goals were not set.
One group of students worked to produce a play loosely based on Disney's "Frozen", including a prince and princess and family turmoil, with a monster thrown in.
Theatre involved the following tasks (all measurable and time sensitive):

- ideation/teamwork to conceptualize a story for a play; students encouraged to adapt stories from their own cultural experiences and reinterpret in this new language/creative forum (most chose Disney!)
- writing a script (students had no idea what a "script" was nor how to create one)
- developing props and costumes (students needed to visually represent their written words)
- practice and performance (students were allowed to hold scripts during their play performances to assuage nerves)
Chapter 6: Opera and Musical Theatre

Puppets
木偶
Options to consider for your puppetry performance for Chapter 6
Humanities SQ2 2015
选择可以考虑为第6章的木偶表演

String Puppets
字符串傀儡

Sock Puppets
袜子木偶

Stick Puppets
棒木偶
Students worked with teachers to create an instructive Power Point to help illustrate types of puppets to make for group puppet performances.

Google Translate -
Not a fool-proof methodology for translation:
Needed to work with students to mediate between languages.
Students followed a similar development formula as in the theatre chapter to reaffirm learning and create their musical opera puppet performances.

One additional criteria:

Performances had to include songs and singing;
Students could use recorded sound/sound effects but needed to add their voices to their
Teaching Reflection - clarity and meaning after the fact

Lihong Wang & Michael Byram article:
"But when you are doing your exams it is the same as in China" - Chinese students adjusting to Western approaches to teaching and learning (Cambridge Journal of Education, 2011)

Emic views of learning - "views of those being studied"
- emic views of words used to explore meaning attached by students
- emic methodology to interpret learning practices as attached to cultural complexities of specific experiences

Inherited concepts of learning:

1. kuxin: effortful learning
2. yongxin: reflective learning
3. xuxin: humble learning
kuxin: effortful learning

Two characters: "bitter" and "heart"
Dictionary translation: "painstaking efforts or to extend much care and thought"

Abilities not thought of as fixed but malleable and ever changing - needing to be complimented by effort

Related to "xia kuxin" (make up one's bitter heart), to make up one's mind to embark on a journey of hardship to try, revise and review to make learning successful
yong xin: reflective learning

Meaning: "using one's heart"

Dictionary translation: "attentively or with concentrated attention"

Confucian saying: "Seeking knowledge without thinking is labor lost."

Learning requires students to have both an "emotional and an intellectual commitment" to the process, and that having knowledge requires "reflection" not just acquisition.
xu xin: humble learning

Meaning: "to learn with an empty head"

Linked to "humility" and the idea of the self that is always needing improvement

Overly confident students frowned upon in Chinese classes - often considered "a nuisance"

Taught to respect teachers but not to be too overreaching is showing off knowledge

True knowledge is when one knows the limitations of one's knowledge.
- Confucius
New concepts of learning meet inherited ones

1. Relating and rong hui guan tong: Breakthrough to integral comprehension
   - seeing relationships in and between ideas and subjects to form a more "holistic" learning style

2. biaoda geren guandian: Expressing/giving personal opinions
   - Chinese classrooms teach students to "absorb" knowledge: Only valuable for exams

3. canyu: Participating
   - Chinese students learn submissiveness: Participation is a trait that requires teaching & learning

4. pipan siako: Critical thinking
   - No Chinese term: a new approach to learning needing to be taught
Overall thoughts and benefits

As educators, we should, "encourage students to mobilize strategies transferable from their inherited learning culture whilst exploring and benefiting from alternative or new ways of learning." (Wang & Byram, 2011)

Students in these courses took away:
- new language skills
- an appreciation for the humanities
- critical thinking skills
- project-based learning and teamwork
- creative expression
- confidence

Thank You
thank you

questions, comments, feedback
What are the humanities? The humanities can be described as the study of how people process and document the human experience. Since humans have been able, we have used philosophy, literature, religion, art, music, history and language to understand and record our world. These modes of expression have become some of the subjects that traditionally fall under the humanities umbrella. Knowledge of these records of human experience gives us the opportunity to feel a sense of connection to those who have come before us, as well as to our contemporaries.


