

Stories of Cultural Differences and Adjustment

General Overview

It is assumed that the majority of EFL Korean students who have come to Fort Collins, thanks to their parents' job or academic work, have faced many unexpected problems in learning, communicating and socializing in a different situation from Korea. Two of the main reasons for such problems are derived from language differences itself and from cultural differences. Therefore, it is noted that they might have difficulties at school adapting to school life in America while learning subjects in English and encountering a different school life. Our project focuses on the differences between Korea and America based on the students' writing, and it is narrowed down into differences in their school life with the aim of improving cultural awareness between Korean EFL students and the Fort Collins school community.

Project Goals

The project product is designed for teachers who are in charge of EFL/ESL students at school and it is expected to contribute to the understanding of Korean EFL/ESL learners at each school. The specific goals are as follows:

- Develop authentic material for EFL/ESL teachers at Bennett Elementary School, Laurel Elementary School, and Leshner Middle School to help them understand EFL/ESL students from Korea in terms of language and cultural differences;
- Facilitate Korean EFL students' literacy by teaching contrast/compare paragraph writing in English;
- Foster cultural awareness between Korean students and the Fort Collins elementary and middle school community.

Project Description

Timeline

↓	~ 9. 24	Planning of field-based project
	10. 13	Introducing the project to the Korean ELLs and giving the first writing assignment
	10.17	The first draft due
	10.17 ~ 10. 19	Making lesson plans and teaching material based on the students' needs
	10. 20	Teaching (S-V agreement, count/non-count nouns, and punctuation) + Brainstorming about the next topic
	10. 24	The second draft due
	10. 27	Peer editing & teaching (The structure of a paragraph)
	10. 31	The third draft due
	11.3	Teacher-student person-to-person editing for the final draft
	11.4 ~ 11.25	Making a product and preparing for the presentation

Subjects

Five EFL learners participated in the project. All of them speak Korean as their first language and they have been in the United States from 9 months to two years. One student was enrolled at Laurel Elementary School, one at Bennett Elementary School, and the remaining three at Leshar Middle School. They have never previously lived outside of their home country. Their current English proficiency levels were between low-novice to high-intermediate, but when they came to the U.S., their proficiency levels were much lower than their current ones. Project members team-taught them every Saturday for 4 weeks from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm, which amounted to 8 total hours of contact with the students.

Procedure

1st Meeting with Students: Needs Analysis.

Group members met the English language learners (ELLs) on October 13th and introduced themselves. Group members then explained to the ELLs the general overview, the goals, and the timeline of the project. The ELLs were asked to discuss freely what has been the most difficult thing since they came from Korea. This offered the students the opportunity to brainstorm possible ideas for their future writings. Finally, the students were instructed to write a

first draft about their American lives for their homework assignment by October 17th. They were informed that the writing would be used for their needs analysis: What is their English proficiency level? What should be taught to improve their literacy? What are their main interests concerning the topic?

Total meeting time: 2 hours

2nd Meeting with Students: Literacy Teaching and Learning part 1.

The second meeting began with the explanation of the result of their needs analysis and what the teaching and learning activity would be like. One of the group members taught them count noun/non-count noun and the other member taught writing conventions including punctuation. Because the number of students was small, there was a great deal of discussion between the students and teachers. Finally, the students were instructed to brainstorm for their second draft, which was assigned for their homework due on October 24.

Total meeting time: 2 hours

3rd Meeting with Students: Literacy Teaching and Learning part 2

The third meeting began with the review of the previous lesson. Students were asked to proofread peers' second drafts, but they were asked to focus on what they learned in the previous lesson, which were count/non-count nouns and writing conventions. Next, group members had the students do a hands-on activity, in which students made their own hamburger and learned that the parts of a hamburger illustrate the ingredients of a paragraph. For example, the top bun symbolizes the "topic" of a paragraph and the bottom bun the "conclusion", and the other condiments of a hamburger the "details." Group members next gave an explicit explanation to the students about the structure of a paragraph using the handouts. With the handouts, students did many activities: finding transition words in a paragraph; identifying the three parts in a given paragraph; filling in the blank with an appropriate supporting statement; rearranging the sentences to make a well-formed paragraph. Finally, the students were instructed to brainstorm for their third writing, which was assigned for their homework due on October 31.

Total meeting time: 2 hours

4th Meeting with Students: person-to-person proof reading.

Group members met each student separately to proofread their third draft for the final

draft. Group members had each student read their writing aloud to find and correct some grammatical mistakes. They also talked about the structure of their writing. Group members finally asked many questions about the student's intended meaning for the somewhat unclear sentences and let the student correct them. Total meeting time: 2 hours

Producing a Booklet.

Group members made a booklet by using Publisher, which consists of 12 pages based on the students' final writings. The booklet includes its purpose, publisher, and prospect users on the second page. The copies of the booklet will be distributed to the EFL/ESL teachers at schools in Fort Collins.

Reflection

It has often been said that young students adapt to a new environment more easily compared to an adult. However, we realized that these Korean EFL/ESL students have had many unexpected difficulties adapting to new school environments, which were derived from language and cultural differences: learning difficulties and making friends. Considering the increasing number of Korean EFL/ESL students in Fort Collins, the product will help EFL/ESL teachers at each school understand their Korean EFL/ESL students and it is expected to lead the students to a more successful life in America.

Resources

Hogue, A. (2003). *The essentials of English: A writer's handbook*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.

Azar, B.S., & Hagen, S.A. (2009). *Understanding and using English grammar* (4th ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.

Hawkins, R. (n.d.). *How to help elementary kids write paragraphs*. Retrieved from http://www.ehow.com/how_8549804_elementary-kids-write-paragraphs.html#ixzz2AXrSGvjA