

Week 6 - Coach Students to Mastery

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Summary

After reviewing the the student performance data I have organized the data into a table for a better graphical view of the strengths and weaknesses of my students. In figure 1.1, we can see that each student has one or two areas they are doing well in and understand in practice and one or two areas they are struggling in. These areas are different for each student and for different reasons.

Only one student was having no trouble with spelling. This is not surprising because this is their second language (L2) and English spelling is much less ordered than their first language (L1) of Korean. This is a common problem, so I added the more specific problems with each spelling problem. There are three major problems - missing letters (usually dropped sounds they do not hear when listening to the word), letter order (usually caused by not hearing the sounds accurately when hearing the word), and vowel confusion (which even I have a hard time with sometimes because of vowel sound similarities and pronunciation variations).

Grammar is a common problem we try and address constantly in class because of the drastic difference in grammar from Korean to English. In general, the students made very common mistakes - missing articles (they do not use articles before words in Korean), verb tense (a common problem with L2 learning), and word order (Korean grammar is mostly backward from English, so this is very common in Korea).

The organization was mostly well done. The minor mistakes were that several students did not use sequence words consistently and that can cause confusion. This was the strongest area for the students overall.

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In the concrete language section, the goals (mentioned in the rubric) were to use all five senses when describing something, in our case characters and setting. Many students had trouble using all five senses. This could be that they are having trouble thinking about the senses or that they lack the proper vocabulary to express their ideas.

Student Performance Table (Figure 1.1)					
	Spelling	Grammar	Organization	Concrete Imagery	Rubric Score (Wk1/Wk2)
Student 1	No spelling mistakes	No significant grammar mistakes	Needs to work on beginning, middle, and end	Needs to use all five senses for better sensory detail	18/16
Student 2	A few spelling mistakes (missing letters)	Needs to work on verb tense	Good use of beginning, middle, and end	Uses most senses, but needs to add more description	13/14
Student 3	A few spelling mistakes (missing silent 'e')	Needs to work on word order in a sentence and use of articles	There is a beginning, middle, and end but needs to make it more clear with sequence words	Good use of five senses to describe a character and setting	16/16
Student 4	Many spelling mistakes (letter order and incorrect vowel usage)	Needs to work on verb tense	There is a beginning, middle, and end but needs to make it more clear with sequence words	Uses most senses, but needs to add more description	14/14

Student Performance Table (Figure 1.1)					
	Spelling	Grammar	Organization	Concrete Imagery	Rubric Score (Wk1/Wk2)
Student 5	A few spelling mistakes (letter order)	A few grammar mistakes (tense and word order in a sentence)	Good use of beginning, middle, and end	Uses most senses, but needs to add more description	15/19
Student 6	A few spelling mistakes (incorrect vowel usage)	A few grammar mistakes (incorrect form of the 'be' verb)	Good use of beginning, middle, and end	Good use of five senses to describe a character and setting	15/18
Student 7	A few spelling mistakes (incorrect vowel usage and letter order)	No significant grammar mistakes	Needs to work on beginning, middle, and end	Needs to use all five senses for better sensory detail	16/16
Total %					76% / 81%

Overall, I think the improvement is being seen already because the students are having to prepare to fill out the error analysis sheet. They are getting used to it and getting more detailed in the data they are offering on the sheet as well. Only one rubric score went down, but this is only based on two weeks, so there is not enough data to claim any sort of trending. I will have to keep watching to see what data trends I can see forming.

Action

One method for helping my students develop and practice their spelling is word study. Students can use the patterns of spelling to learn the rules. They can “investigate and understand the patterns in words. Knowledge of these patterns means that students needn't learn to spell one word at a time” (Leipzig, 2000). I can use a list of words they can investigate and look for similarities and differences. This allows for differentiation because each child can have different lists to work on at a time. Spelling is not specified in the curriculum for our grade, so allotting some time for this and reviewing will be a priority. I can continue the correcting and error analysis as well. The students will be more motivated to work on their spelling as they take more responsibility in their learning.

Unlike spelling in particular, we have grammar lessons in my curriculum. This is something we have been teaching the traditional, prescriptive, way. If that method is not working for particular students, and the evidence suggests that, then I will need to differentiate my methods for these students. In an interview with Education World, Les Parsons said, “we are so attuned to syntax and to making sense out of what we read that we tend to fill in the missing parts when we're presented with sentence fragments. Cloze passages rely on this tendency and can be used to increase students' awareness of and sensitivity to the grammar of written language. They also help students make appropriate substitutions as they focus on the meaning of text. And students do all this with the language competencies they already possess” (Education World, n.d.). I can use different methods using small groups to unlock the prior knowledge the students have with grammar and get them used to applying this knowledge. They tend to do well

when doing homework or worksheets with grammar, but struggle transferring that knowledge into writing. If I use more authentic grammar practice, it will blend more seamlessly into actual writing. Using cloze passages and then rewriting them in their own hand will give them some practice using the grammar they are struggling with. Each group will be put together to work on different grammar issues, like tense or word order.

The main focus for organization in this class was using sequence words for clarity in the writing. Most of the students either did just that, or mostly did that. Since this was a minor problem, I will do a quick re-teach to clarify the ideas and work with the two students that were struggling separately to help them catch up with the class.

Concrete imagery is an ongoing lesson, so I do not expect them to master it yet. This is something that will continue for life. The focus of this particular lesson was to use all five senses to describe a character and a setting respectively. In order to generate better use of the senses, I will use more examples of work that they can model their work on. The students can also get into groups and use teacher-generated word lists to create first draft ideas together (Reading Rockets, n.d.). The students will also continue using self-assessment and error analysis to revisit their work and see what they are missing and how they can fix their work to make it more clear and concrete.

Reflection

This is an on-going affair collecting data. I have not reached the point where this is a normal occurrence in my class yet, but after completing the self-assessment and error analysis worksheets twice with the students I can see that they are starting to integrate

the skills they are learning from analyzing their work. Those skills will help them as they create new work and allow them to internalize the corrections they have struggled with and correct them before they happen.

Having the students participate in their work more completely with this method has also helped me see how important this is for the students. Sometimes it can be difficult to plan certain ideas because we get stuck in a rut or are focused on other things, but this is showing me that there is so much information I could be gathering in order to help shape my instruction and I have been missing out on some of it. Usually, more data is only going to be helpful in tracking the students' progress. Sometimes it can be hard to see what certain students need help with so data like this can "make the invisible visible, revealing strengths and needs which are easily concealed" (Ideas into Action, 2013-4, p. 9). Sometimes trends or patterns can slip by a teacher, even if we are checking their work, so having numbers to look at can make the trend seem more obvious to the teacher and can help them adapt their instruction. I have seen this from my work, even in just two sessions. I do not have enough data to make a claim about a trend, per se, but I can see some strengths and weaknesses starting to emerge that were not as easily noticeable before.

It seems clear that having a larger pool of students to cull data from would be more beneficial; however, I would need to make an effort to bring in more teachers and talk with the administration. I will continue to use the data to try and shape my instruction and if it continues to go well, I will make that attempt.

Stephen Katz said, "there is not enough time for adaptation by trial and error or for experimentation with fads that inevitably lose their appeal. In today's 'knowledge

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society' evidence, data and information have become critical elements in decision making" (as cited by Ideas Into Action, 2013-4, p. 4). There is no need to reinvent the wheel every year, we can work with each other and use data to get the best instructional design decisions we can for our classes.

References

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