Passive Voice Lesson-Reflection

For any student, no matter the capability, quality teaching is of the utmost importance. After all, a teacher’s job is to do everything possible in order to foster student educational success. For English language learners (ELLs) this is an especially important goal for the teacher, because there are so many obstacles in the students’ way before they even get a chance to prove what they are capable of in any content area. The lesson I’ve created not sets the students up for success, but it also harmonizes with the major theories of teaching ELLs.

First, for any new concept there must be explicit, detailed instruction. The instruction portion of this lesson is based on a set of rules for passive voice developed by the makers of the New English File Series. These rules teach a leveled instruction that does not overwhelmed learners with too much, too soon. Ellis agrees that, “Instruction needs to ensure that learners develop both a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and rule-based competence”[[1]](#footnote--1).

Also, students not only work by themselves to prove their own knowledge, but they are given ample opportunities to both work and speak together in order to complete tasks and learn form one another, a practice highly encouraged by the makers of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) method of teaching ELLs. SIOP maintains that learning together is key for students understanding and internalizing a second language. Within the lesson, students work on simple grammar tasks together in pairs and then as a class to scaffold the learning for those who need extra help. The students help each other with translation when needed. Deborah Short, one of the leading names in ESL research in Washington D.C., believes that to utilize the students’ native language is to make the second language more accessible[[2]](#footnote-0). This is exactly what I have seen and exactly how it is used here. At the end of the day, competition is added to the group work in order to challenge their use of the language together.

Students are constantly given the opportunity to share their own creativity within the lesson. They are asked to create sentences of their own choosing, both within the instructional period, as well as the competitive activity at the end of the class.

Developing academic language is a part of this lesson as well. Students are given the chance to see how two different writing strategies work within their own context (passive and active voice). Each has it’s own place in writing and students learn how to utilize them in the best ways possible, such as a politician using passive voice instead of active voice sentences. Not only do they enjoy this section of the lesson, it allows greater flexibility within the students’ writing styles, as well as their formal speaking.

Overall, this lesson gives students a fun and open atmosphere in which to learn a topic that is not the most invigorating or enjoyable: grammar. Students apply the knowledge to their lives and to their writing, speaking and reading, knowing how to see through to the true meaning of this type of writing.

1. Hellman. [Lecture Notes] ED 380. 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref--1)
2. “Interview with Deborah Short”, Colorin Colorado (2011). Retrived from <http://www.colorincolorado.org/webcasts/middle/?trans=yes&theme=print> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)