

26 May 2014

11:10am – 12:00pm

Room A307

Roundtable: Writing Self-Reflective Journals about Language and Cultural Exchange

Leader: Elsie Christopher, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Discussion: <http://todaysmeet.com/wrtec>



Abstract

The Language Exchange Program (LEP) was launched in the fall semester of 2012. The program is a 6 week semi-structured program which involves the language and cultural exchange of students wishing to learn and/or improve a target language, namely: English, Cantonese, and Putonghua. During the course of the program, students attend weekly workshops, meet with their assigned groups outside of the classroom (usually 4 - 5 students/group), and participate in culturally related activities. Through the LEP groupings, students become peer tutors for others in their respective groups. Themes that are taught and discussed during the classroom sessions include culturally relevant topics such as: films, travel, food, festivals, customs and places of interest etc. In each case, students are asked to write weekly self-reflective journal entries about their progress with regard to learning their target language and also with regard to developing a greater sense of cultural awareness.

This roundtable will invite participants to discuss the following questions in relation to students' ability to write reflective pieces and the parameters to assess this type of writing.

1. Do students need a specific level of linguistic competence and/or proficiency to be able to produce a meaningful written reflective piece of writing? Why or why not?
2. Structured writing – vs – Unstructured writing: How much freedom should the writer have? How do we determine guidelines for this type of writing?
3. How can we assess this type of writing fairly? How can we compare and evaluate this type of writing across classes/sections/various EAP/ESP courses etc.?
4. Does reflective writing really demonstrate deeper and more meaningful learning? How do we know as teachers? How do students know?
5. How can we avoid descriptive reflections –vs – analytical reflections?
6. How do we encourage students to write about their “good/successful” learning experiences as well as their “bad/unsuccessful” learning experiences in their reflective writing?
7. Self-reflection/Examination/Observation/Exemplification/Evaluation/Goal Setting: A “repeated recursive cycle” - How do we measure the learning impact of this cycle?
8. How can we 'sell' them the idea or have them discover that reflections, whether big or small, whether it's good or bad can be meaningful?

Biodata

Ms. Christopher's academic and research interests include Student Learning, Teaching Methodologies and their Applications in English for Professional and Academic Purposes, Academic Writing and Online Web-Based Technologies for Business, and the Integration of Case Based Teaching in Communication Skills Development. She has written, created and managed a number of credited courses, multi-media websites and various innovative learning programs at The Hong Kong University of Science & Technology (1993 – 2008), The University of Hong Kong (2008 – 2011) and The Chinese University of Hong Kong (2011 – present). As well as having received recognition for course, program and teaching innovations, she has published and presented numerous papers on her teaching and research both locally as well as internationally.