

TESOL Certificate Program UCLA Extension

Things to Notice

LEARNER/ ENGAGEMENT

Motivated/bored?
Enthusiastic?
Group work? Pair work?
Talk encouraged?
Teacher centered?

STRATEGIES

Modeling?
Clarifying?
Repetition of words?
Clear directions?
Scaffolding?
Building background?
Making real life connections?
Realia?

MATERIALS

Paper?
Board & markers?
Interesting realia?
Visuals?
Posters?
Technology?

HIGH QUALITY LESSON

Lesson plan evident? Objectives & learning goals obvious/ stated?
Clear understandable opening hook?
Motivating topic? Phases of lesson evident? Direct instruction? Scaffolding of ideas? Transition between activities?

MONITOR & ASSESS

Comprehension check?
Clarity of presentation?
OK to ask questions?
Informal understanding assessed? Higher order thinking used? Assessments evident?
Formal or Informal assessment?
Ongoing assessments?
Rubrics?

TEACHING

Error correction?
Feedback?
Enthusiastic?
Quality of student teacher relationship?
Gestures?
Voice?
Pacing of lesson?

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Pair work & group work vs. whole class work?
Furniture arrangement & use of walls/space?
Student centered? Or, teacher centered?
Transition between activities smooth?
Students move around class? Or, sit?
Conversation encouraged?
Physical comfort (temp., air, lights)?
Visual support on walls? Low/ High stress environment?

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Classroom Observation

Observation Report

Observation Guidelines: An Observation Report from each core class is required. Question #6 on the Observation Sheet will be specific to each class and provided by the instructor.

- Arrange ahead of time with the school and instructor an observation of your choice and level
- Sit quietly and do not disturb the class while observing
- Bring the “**Things to Notice**” sheet to help guide your observation
- Final observations must be typed
- Students must complete a minimum of four (4) observations to include in the final portfolio class
- One observation will be done in EACH core class
- One of the four observations may be done by observing an online class (these URLs will be provided by your teacher)
- A recommended observation time is 25 – 50 minutes

- **Name:** William Hoversten-Davis
- **Class:** Linguistics
- **Date:** January 21, 2026
- **In-person:** East Los Angeles College, Monterey Park, CA
- **Class subject observed:** Reading and Vocabulary
- **Class level:** ESL 6B (High Intermediate)
- **Teacher’s name:** Professor Khetam Dahi
- **Time in observation:** 150 minutes

General Notes While Observing

- **Learner Engagement:** Thirteen students, eight women and five men, Chinese, mostly aged 20s, were attentive and responsive throughout. The teacher maintained a friendly tone, both asking and inviting questions. She related the text, which dealt with immigrants' journeys, to their own experience as immigrants - evoking also their cultural comparisons.
- **Monitor & Assessment:** To ensure they understood, the teacher regularly asked questions of individual students she called upon and of the class as a whole. She initially asked how many had read the assigned material, then how confident they were in their understanding of it: "60%? 50? 40?" She elicited honest responses ranging from a high of 100% to a low of 0%. The students trusted her enough, evidently, to be completely honest in their informal self-assessments.
- **Strategies:** The teacher modeled pronunciation of the target words, then repeated them and had students practice them - making real-life connections at every turn. Where possible, she demonstrated concepts to clarify the meanings. She had students work in teams and as an entire class.
- **High Quality Lesson:** The class participated in a reading, vocabulary, and grammar class filled with relatable references to their culture and their experiences as immigrants. The lesson plan was clearly laid out, with stated learning goals for the class. The topic and text chapter, centering on an immigrant's journey to the U.S., was one to which every student could relate.
- **Teaching:** This was a teacher-centered class. She directed the students smoothly and efficiently from one exercise to the next, and adjusted her expectations and set new goals in an unruffled manner when she learned that a number of the students had neglected the reading. She was enthusiastic throughout, without a touch of "shaming" criticism for students' neglect or mistakes. Students' respect for her was evident.
- **Materials:** Textbook *Uprooted* (Second Edition), authored by Prof. Dahi. Overhead screen Canvas presentation of the text, highlighted with target words and voiced by an AI voice. Printed quizzes: Chapter 3 - Critical Thinking Multiple-Choice Questions; Chapters 3 & 4 - (Applying Bloom's Taxonomy) Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating,

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Creating. Whiteboard and marker. In addition, the teacher used as a reference the *American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms*. Other materials used in other of Prof. Dahi's classes include her books *The Mulberry Tree* (an account of her childhood) and *Voices Unheard and Lessons Learned* (accounts of her students' emigration journeys to reach the U.S.).

- **Classroom Management:** The classroom was well-lighted and comfortable. Students were asked to form into four groups of three or four chairs each, to read and discuss the text. When the teacher learned that many students had not read the chapter, she said, "Okay - I'll let you read, and we'll do it here. You have one chance to listen, so pay attention." The text appearing on the overhead screen was read by an AI voice. The teacher asked the students if they'd prefer to hear a male or female voice; they wanted a female voice. Students were attentive and responded well to the teacher.

Essay Response

Learning Strategies

1. **What did you learn about teaching from this observation? Include at least one in-text citation from the current class readings to support your response.** This class was held at East Los Angeles College, in the Department of Language Arts and Sciences. The teacher used a textbook, *Uprooted*, which she had authored and which described her own immigrant experience. The chapter the students read dealt a great deal with the experience and details of travel, especially air travel. In the American Federation of Teachers publication *American Educator*, there is an article by Diane August titled "Educating English Language Learners: A Review of the Latest Research." In it August describes how effectively "authentic materials were used to support learning," and that "diaries, and historical and fictional accounts were used to teach students about immigration..."¹ Here there is a strong parallel to the teaching materials used in the class - not only the textbook chronicling the teacher's own experience, but another textbook of hers as well, *Voices Unheard and Lessons Learned*. This was a collection of (sometimes harrowing) immigration accounts contributed by her students over the years. The teacher modeled the pronunciation and usage of the terms she put on the board, followed by having the students repeat them.

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2. **What have you learned from this observation that relates to your current TESOL class? Discuss two strategies from your current coursework and readings that were evident in this lesson. Was there a section where learner engagement and student understanding could be improved?** The teacher broke down words into morphemes, which then seemed to be better understood by the students. She had them repeat vocabulary words and phrases, as well as idioms. It appeared from her lesson that she agreed with the concept that grammar should be taught as part of the communicative use of language, not as an end in itself. The communicative approach was augmented by her placing all the target words and phrases within the context of the subject of modern travel from a passenger's point of view. She also related what they were learning to their own (predominantly Chinese) home language acquisition. Her positive attitude seemed contagious, with students being very attentive. Her pace was effective in covering a good deal of material smoothly. I thought one practice that might increase learner engagement and student understanding would be to call on students by name. For one thing, it may tend to keep students even more alert. Besides, there is an intangible benefit in having students feel recognized.

Connecting to TESOL Classwork

3. **Discuss in detail the classroom management of this particular lesson.** The classroom was well-lit and comfortable. The class was structured in 15-minute increments, which the teacher adhered to precisely. She began by asking how everyone enjoyed the long weekend. Later, she had the students partner up by forming three groups of three or four with their chairs. The teacher advised the groups, "Remember to speak English, because we tend to speak our own language and get comfortable." The text appeared on a large screen as students read along. For the AI voice reading the script, she asked students if they would prefer a male or female voice; they chose female. Soon after, the teacher wrote on the white board, "Travel Idiomatic Expressions of the Day!" After an hour, the students took a non-graded quiz on Critical Thinking. After the 15-minute break, she checked in: "Your homework is what? ... Yes - Chapters 5 and 6." Sensing at one point some discouragement from students over quiz results, the teacher consoled them, "Don't worry so much about the grade; my main idea is to understand the vocabulary, which helps you in other classes." When one group displayed a good command of the material, the teacher joked, "I'm going to need you guys in my next class!" - which provoked a good laugh. Half an hour before the end of class, the students started to move around restlessly, and there was mumbled conversation. The teacher actually addressed this restlessness by complimenting their patience to that point: "Thank you for listening."

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4. **Were there informal assessments during this lesson that prove understanding and clarity on the part of the student?**

The teacher paid attention to the students, watching for any puzzled expressions concerning different passages in the text. To make sure they understood, she regularly asked questions of individual students she called upon, and the class as a whole. She initially asked how many had read the assigned material, then how confident they were in their understanding of it: "How much did you understand? 60%? 50? 40?" She elicited honest responses ranging from a high of 100% ("Wow! That's because you read it!") to a low of 0%. To this latter response, she repeated the number 0 and said, "Oh, really?" sincerely and without a critical tone. Then she asked the class about the chapter reading: "What part did you like best, and why?" She also welcomed questions at different points.

Things to Remember

5. **Is there something from this observation that really stands out?** I was most struck by the teacher's employing her own experience as an immigrant to the U.S., who had to learn English from scratch and negotiate many cultural barriers as well, as a way to connect with her students. Her experience went into the textbook she authored and into her ability to elicit and relate to the students' own immigrant experiences. In addition, she was conversant with the students' Chinese culture, referencing their traditional respect for elders in their own immigration experiences. In speaking of her own experience as a Syrian immigrant, she touched upon the inherent male bias in parental names ("Abu" or "Um") in the Arabic culture - emphatically stating the unfairness toward women. Students, especially the women, shared her perspective vis-à-vis their own culture. When she illustrated the subject of pressure in child-rearing using her own experience as an example, one otherwise reticent student was moved to cite some flaws in his own competitive upbringing in China and declare, "I want to teach my kids not like my parents (did)." That admission and others demonstrated to me her ability to relate to and even inspire her students in life, not just in academics.

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Classroom Observation

Current Classwork- Morphology, Phonology, Grammar

6. **What approach to teaching grammar did the instructor take? Draw upon class materials and readings. What would you do differently?** While a good deal of time was spent reading and comprehending the textbook, the teacher also devoted time to cover grammar specifically mentioned in the text. She used the whiteboard to write down, pronounce, and have various vocabulary words and grammatical phrases repeated back to her. She explained literary devices like simile and metaphor, and the difference between them. Corresponding to the chapter in the textbook, she also covered a range of travel-related idioms (hit the road, travel light, catch the travel bug) from the text. The lesson also included past and past perfect tense verbs, phrasal verbs, compound adjectives, and how to change adjectives into adverbs. It seemed effective, as students were engaged. The only thing I might have done differently would be to check with the quiet students via a self-assessment and ask if any specific grammar points still puzzled them.

Reference

- ¹ August, D. (2018, Fall). Educating English language learners: A review of the latest research. *American Educator*, p. 5.
<https://www.aft.org/ae/fall2018/august>