

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Observer: Maripaz García, Ph.D. SPAN110 Course Director (first semester).
Teacher: Tanya Romero González, graduate student. Dept. of Spanish & Portuguese.
Place: WLH 115. Yale University.
Time: Monday, October 31, 2011. SPAN110 class from 1:30pm to 2:20pm.

General impression

This was a good class. Objectives were accomplished. Spanish was used at all times, although some students asked their questions in English a couple of times. Students seemed to follow the teacher and understand the lesson. There was a wide variety of exercises and activities.

Classroom management

The teacher maintains the floor well and recovers it without a problem after students have been working on an activity. She reminds students occasionally to speak Spanish among them.

Class activities

As students enter the room, the teacher gives them a sign in sheet for the oral exam next week. They do not have questions, so I assume the details of the exam were explained sometime last week. The teacher also reminds them to bring the corrections of their compositions tomorrow.

1:32 The teacher shows a powerpoint presentation with some feedback from the composition. For example, she points out that the pronoun “lo” means “it” but only as direct object. It cannot be subject. The teacher wants to make sure students can differentiate direct objects from indirect objects that are persons and writes an example on the blackboard: “mi madre manda una carta a Felipe” and “yo visito a Felipe”. She asks students questions to make sure they know the difference.

1:35 The teacher shows a powerpoint to explain how indirect object pronouns work. It is a presentation that requires input from the students before she reveals the answer of some examples. She asks for volunteers and also calls on people. When a student asks if both pronouns can be done at the same time, she answers “yes” but she also mentions that they will study that some other time. When the trick question arrives, the student made error—as expected—and the teacher, instead of correcting them, approved the answer. However, when she revealed the correct answer, she realized that it was incorrect and admitted to her students that her “leísmo” confuses her sometimes. She apologized and continued with the lesson.

1:50 The teacher shows another document with images of people dressed up in Halloween costumes doing actions to other people. She asked students to write a sentence with a pronoun in it. Example: “la señora Picapiedra le da un beso al señor Picapiedra”. She asks for volunteers.

1:54 The teacher asks students to go to page 243 and do exs. A and C with a partner, and then go to pg. 244 and do exercises D and E. After working with the partner, they share. When a student asks why there is redundancy, in other words, why we use a pronoun and also we mention the indirect object, the teacher explains that we prefer pronouns to be faster, but that the object must be repeated sometimes for clarification. The student seems satisfied with the explanation.

2:08 The teacher asks for a volunteer to read the instruction of a particular exercise. She tells students not only to do the exercise orally with a partner, but also in writing. After 4 minutes, she asks for

volunteers. When a student uses a pronoun that she wasn't expecting, she re-reads the instructions quickly and realizes that the pronoun "te" was actually right and praises the student.

2:14 Students are asked to write a paragraph about a Halloween party. They have to use 3 pronouns in the story. They work in pairs to do this faster. After 5 minutes, one or two couples share with the rest of the class. She tells them that they can read the rest tomorrow and dismisses the class reminding them to bring the corrections to their composition tomorrow.

Techniques

When a student asked what "verdad" meant, she gave other meanings in Spanish ("like verdad/falso", "lo opuesto de mentira", etc.).

When a student says "hablar la verdad", the teacher clarifies that the verb "decir" is more appropriate for that expression. The student re-phrases his sentence. Most of her corrective feedback techniques include the use of metalinguistic clues to indicate the student where the error is so that the student self-corrects. Another example: When one student reads the paragraph they wrote with the 3 pronouns and made a mistake in the verb, the teacher waited until she was done reading to correct the stem change error, saying that it is a stem-vowel changing verb.

Suggestions

When explaining the difference between direct object "a Felipe" and indirect object "a Felipe", the teacher mentioned that the verb is what tells us if it is direct or indirect. I think she was referring to transitive verbs vs. intransitive verbs, but the examples that she gave both had transitive verbs. This could have been confusing, but I think students were not paying that much attention to that short comment, because they did not ask questions or asked to explain that further.

At one point, the teacher explained that we know what the direct object of a sentence is when we turned the sentence into the passive voice, because the direct object becomes the subject. This explanation is unnecessary, since Americans in general have such a poor knowledge of grammar. I suggested the teacher to avoid such explanations and only use them for those students who are grammar-savvies.

The teacher and I already met and discussed the class.

END OF OBSERVATION