



CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Beginning Spanish 120 (second semester)

Observer: **Juliana Ramos-Ruano, Spanish 120 Language Director**
Instructor observed: **Tanya Romero-González**
Place: **WLH 203**
Date and time: **April 8, 2011 at 10:30 a.m.**
Size of class: **16 students**

General observation:

Tanya Romero-González is passionate, focused, motivated, and organized when teaching Spanish. Not a single minute was wasted in regards to having students involved in the learning process. She fostered high expectations on the part of the students, who in turn produced output that was both accurate and precise. She selected materials carefully in order to present not only the grammatical aspects to be covered during class time, but also cultural material relevant to the Hispanic world. These cultural topics were introduced so as to be easily relatable to our students, giving them the opportunity to identify with the topics on different levels. She established a balanced “affective” filter and expertly maintained classroom organization and discipline at all times. Also, Tanya encouraged students to participate actively. Her pedagogy showed a well thought-out sequence of topics and procedures which enhanced the lesson flow. Students interacted in small groups several times, and there was ample opportunity to negotiate meaning during class time. She responded positively to students’ input and provided excellent feedback on students’ performance.

Class content:

The class centered on the presentation and practice of the “*imperfect subjunctive*”.

Tanya projected a PowerPoint slide with the day’s topic: *the imperfect subjunctive*, and asked students to produce the endings used with this tense. Students answered and Tanya then projected a table with the different conjugations. First with the conjugations in -ar/-er/-ir of regular verbs, and after with irregulars. The tables were well organized and easily read, with different colors to show the roots of the verbs and their endings. After that, Tanya briefly explained the three main uses of this tense (with a different slide).

Five minutes later, Tanya asked students about Yale and its relationship with the city of Machu Picchu. Students brainstormed about this topic. Who discovered it? Why is it so important for our university? etc. Tanya then showed a one-minute video about Machu Picchu. The video explained that all the artifacts that used to be at Yale were now in Cuzco. For many students this was completely new cultural information. The video, it bears mentioning, did not have Spanish subtitles. Nevertheless, students could understand it as the narration was appropriate for their level. As a follow-up, students working in pairs had to answer a set of true/false questions about the video. Although this seemed to be focused on listening comprehension, Tanya had incorporated the day’s grammar lesson into the questions. In the exercise’s sentences, the subjunctive was in boldface to be more readily identified. Up to this point, students had not been asked to produce the imperfect form, only to identify it.

Five minutes later, Tanya asked students to open their books to do an exercise. This activity was related to childhood. All relevant information was provided within the exercise. Students, working in pairs, had to change the infinitive into the imperfect subjunctive. For instance: *Mis padres no querían que yo... jugar (jugara) en la calle*. Students had a few minutes to do the activity. Tanya then took to the floor to quickly correct it. Students made some mistakes and Tanya asked them to refer back to the PowerPoint slide and correct themselves with

the information on the screen. Tanya did not give the correct answer immediately, encouraging the students to come up with the correct form on their own.

Next, Tanya showed another slide with authentic headlines taken from a newspaper. She asked several students to read them. In pairs, students had to match the headline with an explanation of the event that contained the imperfect subjunctive form. No production of subjunctive was required in this case, although students did have to come up with the logical answer. From headlines related to the Arab world, Tanya introduced students to Spanish politics and current affairs. She asked three students to read from a slide about what José Luis Zapatero and Mariano Rajoy (two Spanish politicians) were thinking. It is important to note that these sentences were in the present. Students then had to change the sentences into the past tense. This activity entailed not only the production of new grammar, but also cultural awareness about the sociopolitical situation of present-day Spain.

From that activity, Tanya made a very astute transition upon asking students: *are politicians similar in the United States?* Students brainstormed and gave different answers. In pairs, now with a different classmate, students were asked to write a short paragraph incorporating the imperfect subjunctive for the Yale Daily News about Barack Obama and Sarah Palin. Five minutes later, the instructor returned from listening in on student's pair work and asked for volunteers. Students shared grammatically-sound and oftentimes creative/humorous sentences.

The final activity was a repeat explanation of the use of *ojalá*. Student had learned it at the beginning of the semester while studying the present of subjunctive. Tanya designed two sets of activities to practice using this word: a short discussion in groups of three, and then writing a short dialogue. Tanya threw a die to select the groups. Both activities were appropriate for two reasons: firstly because students felt more confident about the use of this tense with a familiar word, and secondly because the topic was now personalized.

After circulating and observing, Tanya returned to the front of the classroom. Students produced some oral information regarding their discussion or read their dialogue. The class seemed quite satisfied with this activity. As a final cool-down, Tanya asked them: *¿qué hemos aprendido hoy?* [What have we learned today?] Students gave different answers. All the goals for the day were fulfilled.

Pedagogical techniques:

Tanya presented input that was comprehensible and meaningful for students. Moreover, she went beyond their level of competence (CI+1) to challenge them while listening to oral input. Although Tanya used the textbook, she employed her own activities to reinforce grammar points. Also, she incorporated technology to bring authentic material to class to promote and teach cultural aspects of the target culture. What I enjoyed the most was that the Power Point presentation was used as a vehicle to create a whole set of activities, covering the material established for the class. Although the focus of the class was a grammatical topic, Tanya embedded culture into almost every activity. In addition, all the material was authentic and extremely current (no more than three days old). Her segues were outstanding.

Tanya is a Spanish native speaker. The class was conducted entirely in the target language with clear and distinct pronunciation. Moreover, Tanya used direct and indirect corrective feedback during class time and circulated constantly to offer spontaneous explanations or to answer specific questions. She used a student-centered methodology that allowed them to work on tasks individually and in pairs. She did such a great job that the class applauded her when she ended the lesson.

Suggestions:

I honestly have no suggestions. It was an excellent class. I could not have done any better myself!

Juliana Ramos-Ruano
April 10th, 2011

Tanya Romero-González
April 10th, 2011