

Assignment 8: Ethnographic Description

The goal of our trip to Ark Charter School on October 31st, 2011 was to continue observing how the students interacted and learned from the newly designed prototype provided from our respective groups. The intention of the prototype was to have partial or full incorporation of our final learning system. This was a critical step to improving upon our design model before the finished product was to be pursued. Before departing to the Ark School a hypothesis was developed by each person in studio. The hypothesis was to be a guideline for observation on the ways that the prototype and system were going to help the students learn the intended material. The prototype that our group developed integrated pop songs with English language arts lessons that stemmed off the 5th grade New York public school curriculum.

A PowerPoint with 10 songs was created with the lyrics of certain sections (with suitable language), and another computer was cued with each song. Two identical playing boards were also made for two teams to use. The boards were divided into five sections which corresponded to five word types (noun, adjective, verb, conjunction, and preposition). The lyrics had four highlighted words that needed to be marked on the board. The song was played, the students needed to match the word with the word type before the next song was played. The goal is for each team to get as much right as possible for the 10 total songs. My hypothesis was that the students would be more inclined to learn during this lesson being that music that they could connect to and liked was being played simultaneously. The competition among the two teams participating also would provide incentive for the children to perform well.

Once we arrived at Ark School, the children were broken up into four groups to pair up with the four PDI groups assigned to grade 5. We had 20 minutes to work with each group of students which ended up being a perfect amount of time to explain the rules of the game and finish all 10 songs. The students showed some eagerness once they were aware that music was going to be played. The instruction to the game itself took approximately five minutes then playing commenced. The students soon caught on to the process of the game. First, listening to the song and reading along with the lyrics, then deciding what board piece to place where. The game came very easy to a few students, one in particular being a student in a green polo shirt. He was a part of the first group and ended up taking over control on his team. Before each song finished, this student already finished the board. This is when I first observed that some students on each team were noticeably more inept with the word type concepts and others

were left watching. However, when there was a moment when a team seemed unsure of the answer to a word, we would provide subtle hints in order to steer them into the right answer. The students in group one seemed to all be involved in the game and seemed to be enjoying the music as well. Another observation made during this time was that we did not come properly prepared with a music player to provide sufficient volume so that the group could easily hear the lyrics. Especially in the beginning of the group work when all the groups were explaining their games, the background noise was flooding the songs were they were being played. Numerous comments were said about not being able to understand the words.

The groups then shifted to a new PDI group. We became better at explaining the key points of the game more clearly to the students. I could see the excitement some students had once they realized that they were going to the station with music. It took less time to get started with the gameplay. The same problem with the audio volume occurred as soon as the game started. Nevertheless, the students tried their best to listen and read the words at the same time. After watching the few first songs and how the children were progressing with their grasp on the concept of the game, I noticed that there wasn't a student who was outstanding this time. This gave all students the chance to actively be a part of the decision making process. The students needed more help than the previous group which we were happy to provide. The students did not seem to have as much of a competitive edge which could have been attributed to the fact that the score of each team was not being recorded. This gave no team the incentive to do better than the other. This could have possibly been a good thing because it could have caused the groups to become too competitive where they would have lost sight in the learning objective.

After observing and interacting with each group, I was able to confirm that hypothesis was partially correct. The students were enticed by the music and seemed more willing to play the games. This was a simple way to connect them to the lesson by giving them something to relate to. However, the children did not seem to change their attitude once knowing that the teams were playing *against* one another. Perhaps the students did not see the need to win the game because there was no score being announced to each team or even being recorded. Also, there was no reward for the winning team. The trip to the school answered some questions that our group had in regards to what our final learning system should keep and what else needs to be combined. We can use our observations as a way to induce exactly what reactions and involvement we want from the kids the next time we visit.