

Observation of Lin Lin, Childhood Education

EDU 480: Social and Academic Curriculum II

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Observer: Michele Gonzalez, Literacy

As Dr. Lin walked in to the classroom smiling, she laughed and said, "I forgot this class existed." Dr. Lin had just returned from a conference in Atlanta so she had not seen the students for about a week. After enlisting the assistance of a few students to hand out materials for today's class she got the technology ready. Afterward, she talked to me about the topic for today's class (media literacy) and briefly reviewed the handouts with me.

Dr. Lin started the class by welcoming the students and letting them know that she appreciated reading their reflections of their professional growth. She laid the foundation for the topic of media literacy by focusing on the recent shooting at Fort Hood and some of the misconceptions regarding the shooter, a Muslim male. It was apparent that many students did not know about the incident and Dr. Lin provided the necessary information. Afterward, she moved to the topic, Media Construction of the Middle East by having the students complete a worksheet that required them to reflect on their understanding of some key concepts: assumption, misconception, generalization, stereotype, and media literacy (she returned to this worksheet near the end of the class). All 24 students were engaged in completing the worksheet.

Dr. Lin showed a series of pictures and asked the students to identify where they thought the pictures had been taken, choosing one of two choices: "in the Middle East" or "not in the Middle East" and why they thought so. After the students voted on each picture and explained their reasoning, Dr. Lin would elaborate on where each was taken. For example, one picture was of a street with shops that certainly could have been in a town in a Middle Eastern country, however, Dr. Lin informed that students that this picture was taken in Dearborn, MI which has a large Middle Eastern population. The point she was making was that we make assumptions based on what we see or what the media wants us to see. After the second picture, a student asked, "What countries make up the Middle East. I really don't have a clear understanding." (At this moment, Dr. Lin's cell phone rang. She made a joke of it and returned to the lesson. In just seconds, it rang again. She then turned it off.) Dr. Lin was ready for this question and had several large wall maps available to show the students which countries made up the Middle East and she also provided handouts of four smaller maps for each student to view independently. As the viewing of the pictures continued, Dr. Lin used the maps to point out the Middle Eastern countries shown in some of the pictures.

After all pictures had been viewed, Dr. Lin had the students return to the key concept worksheet mentioned above and provided definitions from <http://www.answers.com/>

Dr. Lin asked the students to reflect on the following questions: Why might people in the US carry stereotypes about Middle Eastern, Arabic, or Muslim people and the religion of

Islam? Where do stereotypes come from? How can we challenge stereotypes? An engaging and thoughtful discussion ensued.

Although Dr. Lin had more planned for this class, time was running out. She handled this by telling the students to log on to eLearning later in the day to complete another activity. To wrap up today's class, Dr. Lin brought the discussion back to the pictures viewed earlier and asked the students what teachers could do to combat stereotypes. The students provided many ideas, including: learning about cultures and decontextualizing media messages.

Overall, I thought this was an engaging class. All but one student appeared to be engaged throughout. Students paid attention, provided thoughtful contributions to the discussion, and stayed on task. I found Dr. Lin to be prepared, enthusiastic, and effective.