Making Connections and Inspiring Wild Thinking
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The Many Meanings of Color

The Teaching for Understanding course has helped me to pay more attention to the lesson planning and try to make teaching/learning more creative, more novel and more interesting. For example, I used a “spider net” (mind map) when I taught the unit of “Many Meanings of Color.”

This map helps students learn English words through categorization, extending and making associations. I also ask students to think “How is color associated with your life?” … This method of vocabulary teaching not only increases students’ interest, but also strengthens their understanding of the words because this helps students make connections to their life.

“I am a wolf from the north”

The TfU ideas also help me realize the importance of developing students’ “wild” thinking. When I taught the unit of “Some facts on wolves”, I asked such a question to my students, “What do you know about wolves?” Many students gave answers about the wolves’ appearance, habitat and features. But one student’s answer was “I am a wolf from the north.” This answer was unexpected, but very interesting because this is the name of a pop song. So I invited this student to complete his story: “I am a wolf from the north. I feel very lonely because all the members of my family were killed. I had nothing to eat so I had to eat snow... Now I am in danger. Please help me.” Inspired by this story, I designed a new performance, which asked students to provide more information about wolves. “Please imagine you are a(n) ______ wolf and tell us your habitat, your food, your family, your situation and your wish. You can work individually, in pairs or in groups.” … So a good teacher should be able to capture those ‘teachable’ moments which naturally occur and use them to lead students to deeper, wilder thinking and understanding.