

Observing learning and teaching in the second language classroom

Natural and instructional settings
 observation schemes
 Classroom comparisons: Teacher-student interactions
 Classroom comparisons: student-student interactions
 Corrective feedback in the classroom
 Questions in the classroom

Natural and instructional settings

Characteristics	Natural acquisition	Structure-based instruction	Communicative instruction
Learning one thing at a time			
Frequent feedback on errors			
Ample time for learning			
High ratio of native speakers to learners			
Variety of language and discourse types			
Pressure to speak			
Access to modified input			

Classroom observation schemes

- Qualitative or quantitative
- Throughout a lesson or on selected samples of classroom interaction
- Observers in the classroom or analyze audio or video recordings or transcripts.
- Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) Observation Scheme
 - Part A describes teaching practice in terms of content, focus and organization of activity types
 - Part B describes aspects of the language produced by teachers and students

Goals

- To examine the relationships between differences in teaching practice and differences in second language learning.
- Observation schemes have also been used in the training of new teachers and in the professional development of experienced ones.
- Observing teaching can lead to a greater understanding of the complexities of the teaching process as well as to more critical reflection on our pedagogical practices.

Teacher-student interactions

	Teacher	Student
Errors		
Feedback on errors		
Genuine questions		
Display questions		
Negotiation of meanings		
Metalinguistic comments		

Student-student interactions

	Student 1	Student 2
Errors		
Feedback on errors		
Genuine questions		
Display questions		
Negotiation of meanings		
Metalinguistic comments		

Corrective feedback in the classroom

- Explicit correction
- Recast
- Clarification requests
- Metalinguistic feedback
- Elicitation
- Repetition

Study 1: recasts in content-based classrooms

- Recasts occur most frequently.
- Student uptake was least likely to occur after recast and more likely to occur after clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback and repetitions.
- Elicitations and metalinguistic feedback not only result in more uptake, they were also more likely to lead to a corrected form of the original utterance.

Study 2: Recasts and private speech

- Adult foreign language learners of Japanese
- Language focused
- Learners noticed recasts provided by the instructor.
- Learners were more likely to react to a recast with private speech when it was directed to another learner or to the whole class.

Study 3: Recasts and uptake

- Adult learners of English
- Explicit grammar instruction
- Learners notice and respond to recasts in ways that may contribute positively to their second language development.

Study 4: corrective feedback in context

- Content exchange
- Management exchange
- Communication exchange
- Language-focused exchange

Study 5: Teachers' questions in ESL classrooms

- Teachers asked more display questions than information questions
- In the native speaker/non-native speaker conversation outside the classroom, referential questions were most frequent than display questions.
- Teachers have been encouraged to ask more referential questions since they require more cognitive processing and generate more complex answers.

Study 6: scaffolding and display and referential questions

- Scaffolding: a process in which a more knowledgeable speaker helps a less knowledgeable learner by providing assistance.
- Functions of scaffolding
 1. drawing the novice’s attention to the task
 2. Simplifying or limiting the task demands

Study 7: Open and closed questions

- Closed questions usually lead to simple one-word responses, making them quick and easy to respond to.
- Open questions lead to longer and more complex answers.
- Students produced a greater quantity and quality of output after open questions.

Study 8: wait time

- Teachers typically gave students no more than a second or two before they directed the question to another student or answered the question themselves.
- Finding a balance between placing too much pressure on students to respond quickly and creating awkward silence seems to be a real challenge.

Ethnography

- No predetermined categories
- Take extensive field notes
- Qualitative studies
- Learning, teaching, social, cultural, political realities and their impact on learners’ cognitive, linguistic and social development

Study 9: language in the home and school

- Children’s socialization experience at home is a factor for failure at school.
- i.e., parents negatively portraying their experiences at school, expressing fears about their children’s ability to succeed and raising fundamental questions about the value of school in their lives

Separating second language learners in primary schools

- ESL children’s desks were placed close to the teacher’s desk
- Removed from the class to obtain assistance from an ESL teacher
- Instances which learners interacted more with each other usually involved borrowing or lending materials.
- A rule in the classroom that children should not copy one another’s oral or written productions

**Study 11: Sociopolitical change
and foreign language classroom
discourse**

- Ritualized recitation is associated with Soviet-oriented policies
- After the fall of communism, it was replaced by student lecture.
- A large number of spontaneous comments and questions produced in English.
- Students incorporate feedback provided by the teacher and other students in their subsequent production.