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## Section 1 . Germanic languages

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### TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES. LESSON OBSERVATION IN PRIMARY EDUCATION, KORÇA CITY

**Abstract.** Teacher- student interaction in the teaching-learning process, should function in such a way that they engage in those types of communicative processes, as if they were involved in the real world, and the assigned tasks should include cognitive processes, such as reasoning, classifying, sharing and transforming information.

This study is focused on a field observation of the teacher-student interaction in the Primary Education in the city of Korça. The class observed is a ninth grade class, during the implemenation of cultural activities.in an English language class. An English language textbook with foreign authors is analyzed and it is observed its impact on the English language acquisition. The study overviews the procedures how the textbook materials are used by the teachers and how they are adapted to the students' mentality and culture, how they convey intercultural knowledge to students and how well students are able to accept intercultural differences in the English textbook.

This study highlights as well the ways in which the teaching-learning process is characterized by methodological choices and contemporary practices in relation to the way of knowledge transmission, foreign language acquisition, communication and teaching content. Observing the teacher during the English class is a very good way for the teacher to become more aware of the options and possibilities in the teaching-learning process, and it helps to focus clearly on what actually happens in the classroom, by providing appropriate information for personal reflection. The aim of the observed class, is to establish discussion and cooperation, for a more efficient language acquisition.

**Keywords:** interaction, teaching- learnign process, observation, communication, textbook.

#### 1. Introduction. The complexity of teaching-learning process

The teaching-learning process is characterized by methodological choices and contemporary practices in relation to the way of transmitting knowledge, methods of

acquisition, new means of communication, teaching content, the change of the curriculum, and the professionalism of the students. But what is the interaction between teacher and learner? Teacher-student interaction has an impact on classroom management and affects learning and growth. The establishment of a positive teacher-student relationship helps a student's cognitive, social and emotional growth and enhances their mental well-being.

This study is a field observation of teacher-student interaction in Primary Education, Albanian context, during a cultural lesson and the observation of different elements of the teaching-learning process. Many teachers claim that their understanding of the concept is transformed due to the teaching. Therefore, care should be taken about the level of language used in the classroom, to ensure that students understand, and to illustrate various studied phenomena by meaningful examples [8, 215]. According to Astofli and Develay (1989) [8, 216] in the pedagogical situation, didactic thinking is processed by 3 major types of reflections: epistemological, to understand the logic of teaching; psychological, to understand the phenomenon of knowledge acquisition and pedagogical to understand the role of education sciences and the connections that are established in pedagogical situations.

The purpose of the teachers is to emphasize the importance of the meaning they have, and of what is transmitted in the classroom and to the students. This means that they must feel good about the "knowledge they transmit". The perspective of sharing the teacher's knowledge with the students is the goal of teaching. Teachers are competent mediators, carriers and animators of knowledge that they transmit in the classroom; these need to take the active role of the active manager of "knowing how to teach" [4, 3]. Clearly defined tasks involve cognitive processes such as reasoning, classification, information sharing, and information transformation. Robinson (2001) suggests that tasks in the classroom vary in their complexity according to the demands placed on students; Today, the environment is placed at the center of language didactics because it shows the socio-didactic development. Vygotski, (1997) states that teachers see the foreign language more as a means of learning than as a means of social communication. This is also true in the Albanian context.

## **2. The study. Lesson Observation**

Observing teachers during English classes is a very good way for teachers to become more aware of options and opportunities in the teaching-learning process [13, 381]. Observation has helped in this study because the focus is clearly on what actually happens in the classroom, providing the right information for personal reflection and post-lesson discussions. Observation is a natural activity in the teaching-learning process. Its aim is to notice what helps the students to learn, the interaction in the classroom, the decisions that are made, how a teacher can influence the teaching-learning environment,

the mistakes, the ideas and the questions of the students, and the language acquisition through cultural activity.

### **2.1. Aims of the observation**

The aim of this study is the students — teacher interaction during the realization of cultural activities, the impact that the English language textbooks have on English language, how they are developed by the teacher, how they are adapted to the students, to their mentality, to their culture and how they affect the language acquisition and transfer of intercultural knowledge to students. The observations is part of the performance management process at school and it had a developmental function. It is good for teachers as they develop a more reflective approach to their teaching and identify development goals ([www.teachingenglish.org.uk](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk)). It is intended to see if teaching is effective and, if the class is well managed by the teacher, if there is a good interaction among students, and whether teaching techniques and the appropriate strategies are well used are used by the teacher.

### **2.2. Methodology**

It is a descriptive and an observational study which consists in qualitative research and it follows a phenomenological approach. It explores the experiences of the actors of the teaching- learning process, seen from many different perspectives. This article offers an in-depth description of the phenomena.

### **2.3. Techniques used in the observational process**

The main technique used and recommended for ethnographers is the collection of data from the observational field, that is, direct observation and reflections on what is observed, written comments, decisions made by the observer, on methodology and any theoretical insight, which is confirmed, or denied. The observer must be analytical. In ethnographic observation, the observer is the research instrument and makes decisions about how and what to experiment and focus on issues that require attention. Ideas are drawn from the data obtained, and later they are exposed to different contexts. So theories and hypotheses emerge from observation. This is a focusing process, where the observer sets aside peripheral issues to focus on the central factors in the key contexts where he focuses his attention to obtain data [6]. The critical analysis of the observation is carried out in collaboration with the person or group that was being observed- the teacher and the students. The purpose of the observation process, is to delve into an issue by studying a specific case” (Stake, 1995, p. 3; Myers Lori Ann Arnold 2007; 67). The observation is made in the context of the actual acquisition of the English language in a randomly selected class in Korça. The idea and purpose is to observe the lesson from all aspects (specifically the topic where there is a transmission of cultures).

During this observation, qualitative approaches were followed, the purpose of which is to provide descriptive data, rich in information about what happens in the

reality of teaching, in the Albanian context [11, 44]. One of the techniques used during the observation was «written ethnography» [11, 45]. So it is given a detailed presentation of the lesson. In the given details, we have tried to be as descriptive and objective as possible. We are focused on: Classroom management, tasks analysis during classroom work, student interaction in the classroom, as well as the final evaluation of the lesson [11, 79–81]. There are observed the lesson objectives set by the teacher, the stages followed in the lesson, the teacher's belief about the nature of language, and about the nature of learning, the grouping of students and the percentage of the lesson referred to different organizational models (individual work, pairs, group, whole class.)

When they teach, teachers must overcome the technical side of teaching and think beyond the need to improve teaching techniques. They must move from «how» questions that have limited value to «what» and «why» questions that require managerial techniques as part of broader educational goals. By reflecting on the «what» and «why», teachers begin to exercise control and open the possibility of transforming the daily life of the classroom.

The controlling process is called critic reflective teaching. «Critic», does not mean critical; it refers to the position of enabling teachers to see their actions in relation to the social and cultural context in which teaching is embedded [11, 205].

The links between the teacher's expectations and the students' achievements, reflected in the study, show that the higher the teachers' expectations, the higher the students' achievements will be [9, 2] (Alvidrez & Weinstein, 1999; Hoge & Butcher, 1984; Jussim, 1989).

Foreign language teachers are different in the nature of the subject they teach, the content of the lesson, the teaching methodology and the teacher-student relationship [2]. They build an environment in which to communicate the language they explain. Many studies have come to a conclusion that teachers' knowledge and their ability to share this knowledge are among the most important teacher qualities that contribute to students' results and achievements [9, 4] (Arikan et al., 2008; Benson, Schroeder, Lantz, & Bird, 2001; Park & Lee, 2006; Young & Shaw, 1999). Other studies show that effective teachers must have a student-centered classroom, must be creative, and not follow strictly the curriculum (Arikan et al., 2008) [9, 5]. Actually, the teacher observed in our context, and Albanian teachers in general follow strictly the curriculum.

#### ***2.4. The position of the observer***

In a qualitative research, the observer has the central role and monitors carefully the factors which shape a qualitative process. There is no classroom recipe that will result in high student achievement. The teacher must believe in the power of expectations, in energetic, persistent and passionate work, and needs be more persistent in classes where expectations are high. During the observational process, there are disco-

vered many elements that are needed to ensure high achievements in the acquisition of the English language among students, and it is seen the role that play the teacher's expectations in the teaching-learning process.

### 3. The analysis of the observational process.

#### A detailed description of the lesson

Based on the Freire dialogical approach Freire (1970; 67) students become «active agents»- this is what teachers should aim to reach during their teaching. Only in this way, education is used as a form of self- development, rather than a memory test and students realise that knowledge is power. Authentic education is found in the act of intelligent exploration. Teachers' top priority is to provide the necessary conditions for autonomous teaching and for freedom of learning [11, 184].

Lesson observation in this study, is conducted in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade school, in Korca city during the second semester, academic year 2022–2023. The textbook used in this school is Spark 4, Express Publishing. The topic observed is “Dancing around the world” pp. 65 Culture corner section, 5e, Unit 5 Art. All the language skills are included. The observation is a concrete and current analysis of the lesson, by watching in detail all aspects of the learning process.

*Class organisation:* Students were placed in rows. They had the opportunity to work in pairs or even in groups. There was no possibility of movement to regroup or place them in other positions, because there was a big number of students (30) (Figure 1).

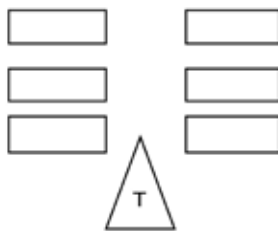


Figure 1.

*Lesson objectives:* They are presented at the beginning of the lesson on the board by the teacher and the students were informed about what would be developed during the lesson.

*Lesson stages:* Phase 1. The lesson starts with a warm- up motivation exercise, where the teacher directed students' attention to the pictures and read out the phrases, by eliciting the meanings of the unknown words and then asked various students to describe the pictures- people dancing. Within 3–4 minutes, students had to reflect and then there was a participatory learning and interaction among students. In the

pre-reading task, teacher asked and students answered according to the below scheme. (Figure 2):

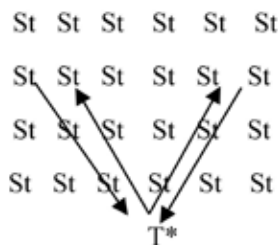


Figure 2.

\* Scrivener J. *Learning teaching. A guidebook for English language teachers second edition* Macmillian. 2005. P. 85.

Phase 2. Read and listen for gist- The recording was played. Students listened and followed the text in their books by naming the countries. They were referred to the check words box. First they were asked to guess the words and then the meanings of the words were explained with synonyms- some of the students preferred to use their online dictionaries and looked them up. Students spent more time than it was expected in practicing new words; they started asking individual questions, and for a moment the lesson went out of control, but the teacher very soon took the control again.

Phase 3 Reading for specific information. Group work: In this lesson phase, the teacher divided the class in groups of four. Students worked the exercise reading for information. About 7–8 students were not involved. The teacher moved around the class to control group work. Then after the exercise was finished the students shared solutions with each other.

Phase 4. Consolidating new vocabulary by finding synonyms in the text. The teacher gave students time to look through the texts again and complete the task, then students' answers are checked.

Phase 5. Personalizing the topic. At the end of the class, students were asked to say three things they have learnt. A variety of answers were elicited. Students developed the communicative skills and they demonstrated and discussed different kinds of traditional dancing, traditional costumes, musical instruments belonging to different cultures, by making comparisons with their own country.

Students-teacher interaction: There were interactive relationships during all activities and phases of learning. Questions and issues for discussion caught the students' attention and made them exchange ideas. The teacher spoke, clearly when giving the instructions. Questions were directed in order to encourage the interaction of the students in the class.

In terms of student-student interaction, in this class, we relied on the following scheme to show concretely the way exercises are developed, how the students asked questions and dialogued with each other, based on the figures and using the vocabulary that they learned (Figure 3).

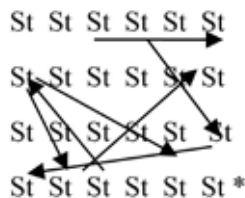


Figure 3.

\* Scrivener J. *Learning teaching. A guidebook for English language teachers second edition* Macmillan. 2005. P. 86.

*Comments:* There was an involvement of students in learning, sharing of opinions and maintaining certain attitudes. The teacher played the role of facilitator, leader, manager and organizer of the activities. The class was noisy. The teacher had to repeat the reason for listening to the students, so that everyone was clear about the task they would be dealing with. However, this teacher was supportive and dynamic. Time was perfectly calculated. Each activity has its own timing.

Based on some of the students' opinion at the end of the class, 80% of the students stated that they felt active, valued, cooperative. They developed the ability to engage in dialogues with each other and exchange ideas. They increased self-esteem. They improved the skills to build cooperative relationships with each other. The topic was fun according to them, and the text was interesting, where they had found interesting material on dancing in different cultures.

### 3.1. Discussion and results

What was noticed in the observed class was the interaction between the students. As Scrivener states: "Students usually learn best by trying things out for themselves and finding out what works" [13, 84].

The most efficient way for a student to learn is to engage in learning and this is the goal in the observed class; to establish discussion and cooperation, exchanging information and opinions, for a more efficient language acquisition. The student needs to challenge himself, by experimenting, practicing and taking risks. Specifically, the observed lessons contained these details and the teacher offered opportunities to the students to interact and become part of the lesson, so the teacher organized well the lesson by involving the students in communication; About 80% of the students listened carefully and made eye contact. The students were placed in rows and the teacher moved freely in the classroom [13, 154].

English textbooks nowadays offer students even websites within the text materials/topics, to explore, especially in cultural topics. In this way classes become more interesting with web integration with the textbook. Warm up motivation is a necessary phase for a positive or negative progress during the lesson class. However, a detail that lacked in the class and needs to be improved was that students had to help more each other and reinforce cooperation within their own group. Self monitoring and self-correction had to be elicited [11, 73].

The teacher mostly stood in front of the class when he explained and clarified the task assigned to the students. The textbook was the basic material for the lesson. In general, the students stood up when they answered.

Teacher generally gave positive feedback on students' answers and she followed the lesson plan. She investigated the classroom environment where and how work was done. Scrivener, points out some difficulties, which are also faced in this observed class with the large number of students [13, 331]. Students could not move freely, there was limited eye contact with students. The position of the seats prevented a number of activities, attention was not directed equally to all students, some of the students hid behind their friends, to skip answering. Teachers in Albanian context should try to activate among the students the concept of their cultural socialization that an individual functions best within the context of a group [12, 352].

#### **4. Conclusions and suggestions**

In order to manage a foreign language lesson well, it is good for every teacher to follow an "activity route map" [13, 44].

Before the lesson teachers should familiarize themselves with the material and activity. In class the teachers lead in and prepare the students for the activity. Then they set up the activity by giving instructions or make groupings. Students do the activity, maybe in pairs or small groups while the teachers monitor and help. They close the activity and invite feedback from the students. Teachers should try to leave time for any post- activity, so that English language can be best learned.

Regarding errors correction during this class, it is good for the teacher to keep a note of the main mistakes and point them out at the end of the lesson, in order not to interrupt the student's ideas, even though there may be reactions from the class. Errors should not be considered as gaps to be explained, but as hypotheses formulated by the student at a certain stage of the languages interaction [3, 53].

It would be perfect if teachers practice lesson observation among colleagues to share ideas, discuss, create a solidarity between them. It is necessary for them to share the needs of the students, their personal stories and professional experiences, in order to build their own teaching plans that respond to their requirements and the characteristics of the field [3, 144]. Observation of teaching leads to important insights

about the curriculum, about the assessments, and about instructional strategies. Observing leads to the development of reflective practices, evaluating and considering pedagogical approaches, gaining new insights on students' behaviour and calibrating expectations of students and learning outcomes.

Based on Hook opinion [7, 23], teachers will need an increase in awareness in establishing the relationship of classroom behaviors and "growth" of students, such as the ability of teachers to modify or change student behaviors based on their understanding of the classroom environment.

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