

Analysis of Observation Lesson based on Oral-Communication Skills

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ABSTRACT

As the education system increasingly focuses on teachers and teaching, educators, policy-makers, and researchers need valid and reliable measures that can be used to evaluate individual teachers, provide guidance for improving teaching performance, and support research in ways that advance instruction and classroom dialog and practice. A new generation of classroom evaluation tools has recently been developed to support evaluation of teaching. Live observations tend to be the standard for studies of teaching and teacher evaluations in practice. They have the benefit of the observer being in the teacher's physical classroom. This is valuable for teacher evaluations because it gives observation scores credibility among teachers. My observation was focused on oral-communication skills and oral-communication assessment. So I observed a professor at International Burch university while having oral-communication class with the upper-intermediate level students, and took some notes. Two hours of observation. It was focused observation method; lesson was particularly focused on speaking skills and oral-communication assessment.

Key words: - communication, observation, methods, assessment, development

Introduction

Classroom observation became very important tool in evaluating teaching performance. It's designed not to evaluate the teacher but to improve teaching performance. When it comes to classroom observation there are different feelings and interpretations among teachers. Some professors/teachers are negatively inclined toward classroom observation. Why? Because they consider it as something bad; somebody is coming there to evaluate my performance. And as we know students don't like to be evaluated so professors don't like it, too.

Classroom observations are not designed for evaluation, the purpose of classroom observation is to improve teaching performance; it's designed for the purpose of professional development. In the last few years, classroom observations became very popular. The teachers are realizing their real purpose, the benefits of classroom observation and how important they are for their professional development.

Literature Review

“Classroom observation is an important part of initial teacher training and feedback providing an invaluable opportunity for trainee teachers to improve their teaching, to get advice from, and

exchange ideas with, experienced teachers. This practice should boost the trainee's confidence, enthusiasm and expertise and in this context, 'the observation should be arranged in an optimistic climate of professional trust ... and should be practitioner-led and not observer-led' (Harvey, 2006, p.11).

One approach is to reduce classroom observation to a part of the lesson focusing on a particular aspect of the teaching. The common purpose to all teaching observations is to raise the quality of teaching and learning, however, they are undertaken in three major contexts with different approaches and outcomes:

1. First, it is used for research purposes where scientists and practitioners study and theories on the processes of learning and the role of the teacher
2. Secondly, it is a major part of the assessment exercise monitoring the quality of teaching within an organization, undertaken by internal teams keen to offer help for development and assuring some degree of consistency across all schools and departments, or by external inspectorate bodies.
3. Thirdly, it is an essential exercise for the professional development of the trainee teachers. Lambert, director of quality assurance, stated that 'for the trainee teachers, the focal point of the classroom observation is the development of the teacher.' For Lambert, giving a grade to a trainee teacher is considered completely counter-productive (Harvey, 2006, p.3).

"Ewens and Cockburn both stated that observers develop their own styles of recording observations: they may use a list of prompts to help to keep the observation focused, but with experience they tend to rely less on the prompts and record in a narrative form, analyzing their notes against criteria afterwards. The narrative version of the lesson may render the discussion fresher and personal" (Ewens, 2001 & Cockburn, 2005, p. 15).

Ewens (2001) described three possible ways of giving feedback:

- To ask the teacher their thoughts about the lesson, then give a detailed analysis of the strengths and what needs attention
- To start with a summary of positive and negative points, with examples from the lesson and inviting the teacher to comment on key episodes, then to highlight the strengths and agree on development points
- To go through the lesson in chronological order with the observer and teacher giving comments and discussing items chronologically; the session ends with a summary from the observer (Ewens, 2001, p.13)

Methodology

This observation is conducted at Preparatory School, at International Burch University (IBU). Advanced level students were observed while having speaking lesson. It was focused observation method; lesson was particularly focused on speaking skills. Focused observations are used in shadow studies as part of the continuing professional development. It is an effective way for a teacher to learn more about his own teaching or about pupils' motivations, abilities and skills (Blythman & MacLeod, 1999, p.14).

Participants

Thirty (30) International Burch University (IBU) students, planning to study at various departments. Ages differ from 18-30. There were 20 female students and 10 male students.

Having speaking class for 2 hours, engaged in multiple tasks with main goal to improve their oral-communication skills.

Procedure

Teacher began the lesson with informal conversation; telling funny stories, jokes in order to relax them and encourage them to speak, and in the same time to make lesson as interesting as possible which I consider as an advantage. Everything that makes lesson more interesting is welcome. Teacher prepared 10-15 topics, and they discussed about them. Teacher-student interaction was present all the time. After teacher gave brief instructions about the topics and the rubric according to which they will be evaluated, she also gave them 15 minutes to choose one topic and think what they will talk about? After 10 minutes they performed the task one by one and teacher gave them brief feedback to each of them. She gave them positive and negative comments, and brief suggestions how they can improve their speaking skills.

Teaching strategies

One method was used for assessing speaking skills, in this class, and that were rubrics. Structured approach was used. The students were asked to perform one specific oral communication task. His or her performance on the task was evaluated according to rubric created by teacher. Tasks were focused on topics that all students can easily talk about.

Findings

Teacher used rubrics for assessing speaking skills in this class. Rubrics were performance-based assessments that evaluated student performance on any given task in this case it was used for assessing oral communication skills. It was good idea that teacher used rubric because rubrics have a lot of benefits. This rubric is used to evaluate the communication skills of each student in the class. The evaluation helped teacher to evaluate the extent to which the program achieves the outcome related to oral communication skills.

Evaluator's name:

Date of evaluation:

RUBRIC	0	1	2	3	Points assigned
GRAMMAR	Never used correct grammar	Once in a while you used correct grammar	Usually you used correct grammar	Almost always you used correct grammar	
SYNTAX	Never used correct syntax	Once in a while you used correct syntax	Usually you used correct syntax	Almost always you used correct syntax	
LEXICON	Never used vocabulary from the level they learned	Once in a while you used vocabulary we learned	Usually you used vocabulary we learned	Almost always you used vocabulary we learned	
OVERALL IMPRESSION	Your ideas were unclear	Good organization of ideas, but not always clear	Satisfactory organization of your ideas	Excellent organization of your ideas	
TOTAL					

Rubric for oral-communication assessment that professor used

Why it is good that teacher used rubrics? Because rubrics help instructors and students, too:-

Rubrics helped instructors:

- Assess assignments consistently from student-to-student.
- Save time in grading, both short-term and long-term.
- Give timely, effective feedback and promote student learning in a sustainable way.
- Clarify expectations and components of an assignment for both students and course
- Refine teaching skills by evaluating rubric results (Brookes & Lin, 2010, pp. 5-8).

Rubrics helped students:

- Understand expectations and components of an assignment.
- Become more aware of their learning process and progress.
- Improve work through timely and detailed feedback (Brookes & Lin, 2010, pp. 5-8).

Implications

But there were some implications that occurred while using the rubric, like:-

- Using the correct language to express performance expectation was very difficult
- Defining the correct set of criteria to define performance was complex
- They didn't really understand how they will be assessed so while performing their speaking task they made a lot of mistakes in grammar syntax, etc.
- Students didn't use their creativity for fear that it will work against them when measured by the rubric. Rubrics prevented students from thinking "outside the box," so to speak.
- Her rubrics do not explain the differences between the quality levels of Advanced, Proficient, Growing, and Starting in the standard.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, several hundred different observational systems have been developed and used in classrooms. There have similarly been hundreds of studies that have used classroom observation systems since the 1970s. "Large-scale observational studies such as Ken Sirotnik and Hersh Waxman, Shwu-Yong Huang, and Yolanda Padrón, for example, have examined instructional practices in elementary and secondary schools" (Padron & Waxman & Huang, 1999, pp.63–81).

Sirotnik examined 1,000 elementary and secondary classrooms and found that there was very little variety in teaching practices across subjects and grades. He found that the majority of class time was spent either with the teacher lecturing to the class or students working on written assignments "(Waxman & Hersh, 1995, pp.1-22).

Waxman, Huang, and Padrón observed ninety sixth-grade and eighth-grade classrooms from sixteen inner-city middle level schools and found similar results to those of Sirotnik. "Students were typically involved in whole-class instruction and not interacting with either their teacher or other students. Students rarely selected their own instructional activities, and they were generally very passive in the classroom, often just watching or listening to the teacher, even though they were found to be on task about 94 percent of the time. The teacher observation results revealed that teachers typically focused on the content of the task or assignment, responded to students' signals, communicated the task's procedures, and checked students' work. Teachers were observed spending very little time interacting with students regarding personal issues, encouraging students to succeed, showing personal regard for students, and showing interest in students' work." (Pardon, 1999, pp. 16–31)

If I compare these observations with my observation, I can say that I found a lot of similarities, for example most of the time students were passive, just looking at the teacher and listening to the teacher, although it was speaking class. Also teacher was focused on the content of the task, explaining task's procedures most of the time. However I can't say that teacher didn't show personal regard for students and that she didn't try to encourage them to speak, she did, but with little success.

Discussion

To solve this problem here are some suggestions for teacher how she can do it:-

- Use simple language to define and explain criteria according to which they will be evaluated. As teacher was native speaker students had difficulties in understanding the teacher.
- She could use more gestures, eye contact.
- Also the teacher could provide them a sample model of this speaking performance so that they could see how they are supposed to prepare it.

- Teacher could spend more time on feedback. Feedback wasn't so clear.
- She could give students a worksheet with the directions on how to complete a task, and then have them apply this knowledge by actually completing that task.

Conclusion

Being an observer in the classroom, rather than the teacher, gave me the freedom to look at the lesson from a range of different perspective. For the young teacher like me, this freedom is particularly important, it helped me gain a better understanding of teaching theories that were used in actual lesson. Wajnryb states observation as 'a multi-faceted tool for learning which can be learned and can improve with practice' (Wajnryb, 2002, p.1). And I really agree with her on this point because my observation helped me learn from more experienced teacher some new methods and how can I asses oral communication skills in a better and easier way. In this way I will save my time, help myself and my students, too. I hope that I will be able to improve on this area of teaching even more so that my students will have a more holistic education.

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