



What's going on in secondary EFL classrooms? Developing an observational tool to trace the use of tasks

Brigitta Dóczi
Enikő Öveges

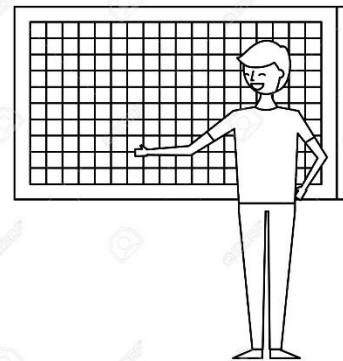
Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

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Outline

- Context
- Aims & RQs
- Theoretical background: observations & TBLT
- The observational tool
- Conclusions and further plans





Context

- Research project: Individual differences and emotions as predictors of success in foreign language learning: a multi-perspective approach
- Low efficiency of FLT in Hungarian school education despite the favorable framework and several initiatives to develop school language education ⑨ in-depth investigations are needed to explore classroom work ⑨ individual variables proven to predict FLL success

Aims of research

- identify specific problems that lead to low proficiency levels/efficiency
- explore related learner variables in concert
- do the above
 - with a multi-perspective approach (teachers, teaching process)
 - involving classroom observations
- enhance differentiation in teaching
- key concepts: motivation, autonomy, self-regulation, self-efficacy, emotions in SLA
- novelty in approach: task based learning
- novelty in perspective: teachers' perceptions as well





Research methods

- Participants
 - subsamples of a larger representative nationwide sample (N=1,500) of students between the ages of 15-17
 - a smaller number of students (n=200): to longitudinally provide data on their language learning motivation, self-regulation, autonomy, self-efficacy, and emotions over a period of two years
 - teachers (n=20): randomly selected from baseline sample
- Instruments
 - students: paper-and-pencil questionnaire, recordings of language output
 - teachers: structured observation checklist, interview
 - document analysis

Relevant research questions (observation)



1. What kind of tasks and activities do teachers typically use in secondary school English lessons? What role do teachers assign to emotions, self-efficacy, self-regulation, learner autonomy, and motivation in the tasks, and to what extent/how do they consider them while planning their lessons?
2. What kind of language output do students produce on language learning classroom tasks and activities in terms of accuracy, fluency and complexity? What skills are developed with the help of these tasks and activities? What classroom interaction patterns are typically used while implementing these tasks and activities?



Theoretical background: observation

Widely used research tool in education:

- K-12 **appraisal** for teachers
- professional **development** (in-service)
- professional **learning tool** (pre-service, peers)



(Elmendorf & Song, 2015; Ahmed et al., 2018; Fletcher, 2018)



Theoretical background: observation

Aspects of structured observation that specify procedures:

- 1 **setting**
- 2 **observational schedule**
- 3 **unit of time** → recording in real time
- 4 **method for recording data** → quantifiability for research purposes
- 5 **logistics of observing & training observers**

(Stallings & Mohlman, 1988; Campbell, 2017)



Task-based language teaching

Basic Characteristics of TBL

- Student-centeredness
- Meaning-focused instead of form-focused
- Authenticity
- Teamwork
- Outcome
- Feedback and evaluation
- Learning takes place inside and outside class

(1) PRE-TASK

(2) TASK

(3) POST-TASK

(see Ellis, 2003, 2009; Willis, 1996)



Task-based language teaching

TBLT & vocabulary

- Laufer and Hulstijn's *Involvement Load Hypothesis* (2001) → involvement by the learner
- vocabulary acquisition → incremental
- all **three dimensions** of vocabulary knowledge (breadth, depth and fluency) → promoted

(Dóczy & Kormos, 2016)



Task-based language teaching

- repeated exposure
- rich engagement
- various input & output tasks
- *Focus on meaning* (rather than *Focus on Forms* instruction (FonFs))
- both isolated & integrated types of instruction are useful

(Dóczy & Kormos, 2016)

Pilot aims, schedule

Aims:

- to produce quantifiable data
- to train observers

3 versions (spring, 2019)

1st: based on prior tools & research; long & exploratory → **expert opinion**

2nd: shortened with **rubrics** on task types → piloted in 2 high schools in Bp. with 4 lessons and 2 observers in each lesson

3rd: **fine-tuning** → piloted in 1 school with 2 lessons and 2 observers





Observational tool: version 1

- Major focuses: structure of the lesson, notes, task types, questions to teacher
- To be amended before pilot
- Problems, concerns
 - too long, too complex, hard to take notes
 - our aim was to collect mostly quantifiable data
 - inter-rater reliability is key

Feladattípus	INPUT				OUTPUT	
	hallott szöveg alapján	olvasott szöveg alapján	szóbeli feladat alapján	írásbeli feladat alapján	szóbeli	írásbeli



Observational tool: version 2

iskola & évfolyam: Madarás 9.o. 2. Dátum, idő, hányadik óra: 4. óra (2019.05.17)

Feladat	Idő	input <i>diák</i>						out-put1		munka-forma		out-put2		info-áramlás		out-put3		nyelv							
		tankönyv	segédanyag	hallott szöveg	olvasott szöveg	szóbeli feladat	írásbeli feladat	szóbeli	írásbeli	frontális	egyéni	pár (2 fő)	csoport (3 + fő)	egy megoldás van: E/T	csoportnak meg kell egyeznie	diák információt ad	diák információt kap	diák információt ad és kap	van felkészülési idő (I/N)	tartalom előre meg van adva	saját tapasztalatok	kreatív feladat	instrukció nyelve: A/M	feladatmegoldás nyelve: A/M	
pre-	11:31							✓	✓					E		✓			N	I				A	A
while-	11:38:																								
post-																									

Megjegyzés [ide jön a feladat részletes leírása]:

* tanárt csak akkor pipáljuk, ha nincs se tankönyv, se segédanyag;

Watching presentations (eg based on previous class)
 ↓
 group presents a "guess"
 others have to guess what it might be

Source of info: Student / minta a "tanár" (de úgy az gyerekek)



Observational tool: version 3 (final)

Minor corrections related to

- practical considerations (note-taking in real time)
- task types

Observers finalize notes individually and discuss & compare notes right after class.



Conclusion

- Data collection is ahead of us
- Conclusions can be drawn after data collection
- Version 3 seems to meet the major requirements:
 - get genuine insight into classroom work from a task-based perspective
 - ensure optimal inter- and intra-rater reliability
 - quantifiable and valid data to be collected with a user-friendly instrument



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Thank you for your attention!

doczi.brigitta@btk.elte.hu

oveges.eniko@btk.elte.hu