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The role of input and output in second language learning: observation as a research tool for investigation
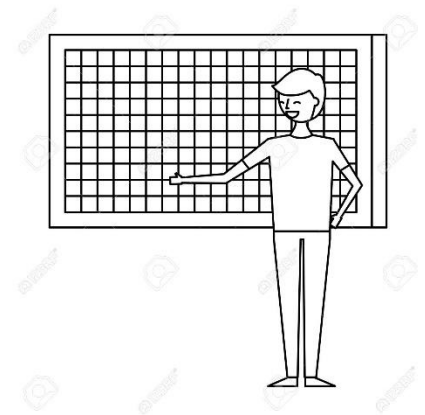
Contemporary Crossroads:
Studies in English Applied Linguistics Conference
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EÖTVÖS LORÁND TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM — EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY

Outline

- Issue of English instruction in Hungarian secondary education
- Key concepts: input & output
- Research tool: observation
- Main findings
- Conclusion and implications

Key concepts in LA

Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1981)
Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1985) → negotiation of meaning → interaction

↓

Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1985)

↓

combined input- and output-based instruction in FLL (Swain, 1985, 2005; Song & Suh, 2008; Uggen, 2012)

Background & rationale

Research project ➜ Individual differences and emotions as predictors of success in foreign language learning: a multi-perspective approach

Foreign language teaching in Hungary: low efficiency despite the favourable framework and several initiatives to develop school language education

➜ in-depth investigations are needed to explore classroom work

Aims of research project

- To identify specific problems that lead to low proficiency levels/efficiency
- Multi-perspective approach (learners, teachers, teaching process)
- Classroom observation
- Key concepts: elements of classroom teaching, task-based and task-supported learning; input & output

Widely used research tool in education:

➔ teacher evaluation

➔ professional development (in-service)

➔ professional learning tool (pre-service, peers)

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

Classroom observation 2.

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

(Campbell, 2017; Stallings & Mohlman, 1988)

6. piloting (expert opinion, rubrics, fine tuning)

Reasearch questions

? 	*What characterises language teaching in the classrooms observed in these secondary schools in Hungary?*

? 	Work modes & flow of information
? 	Task types: input & output

Research tool

The final observation guide

School & grade: _____   Number of lessons per week: _____
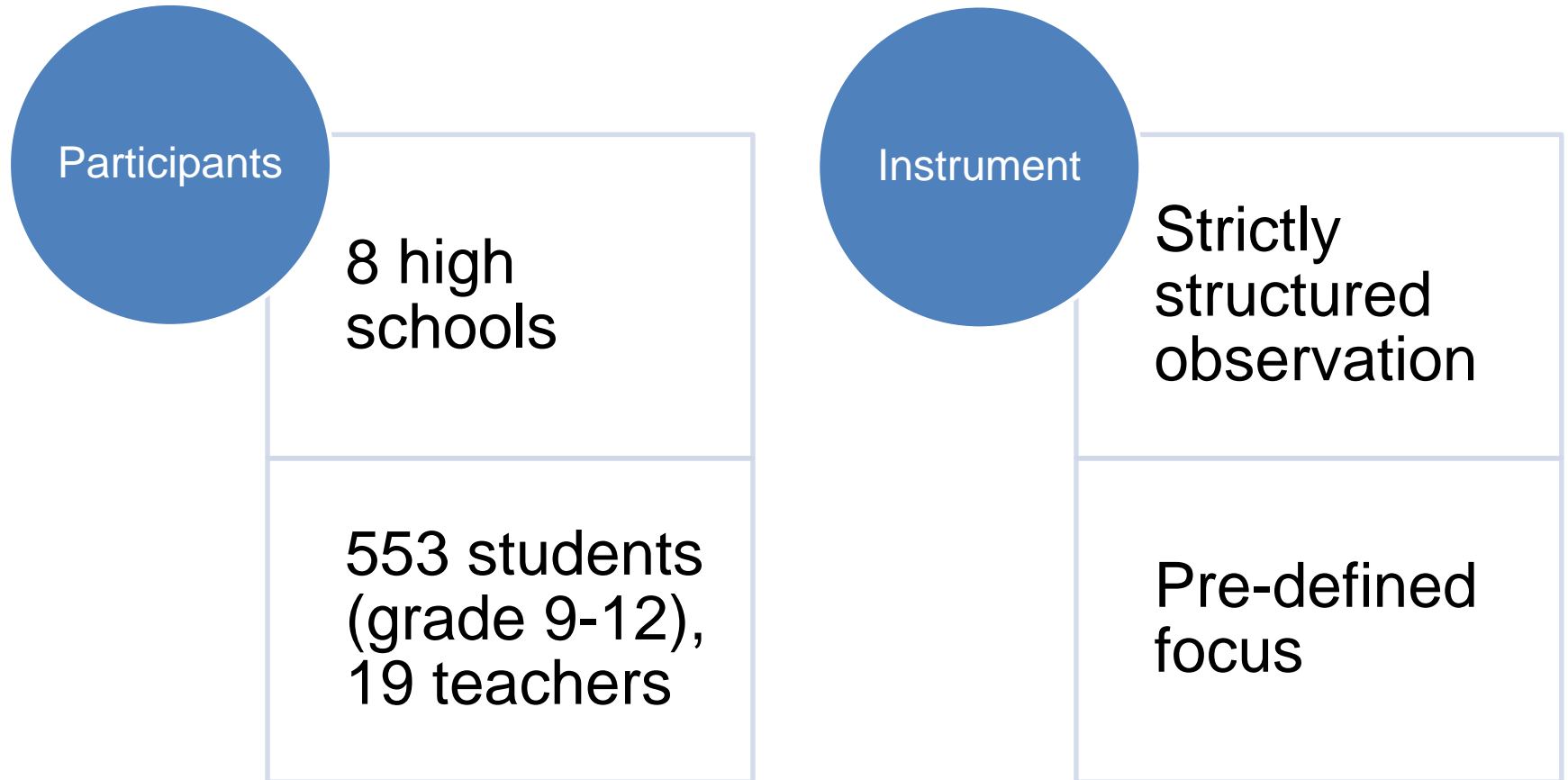
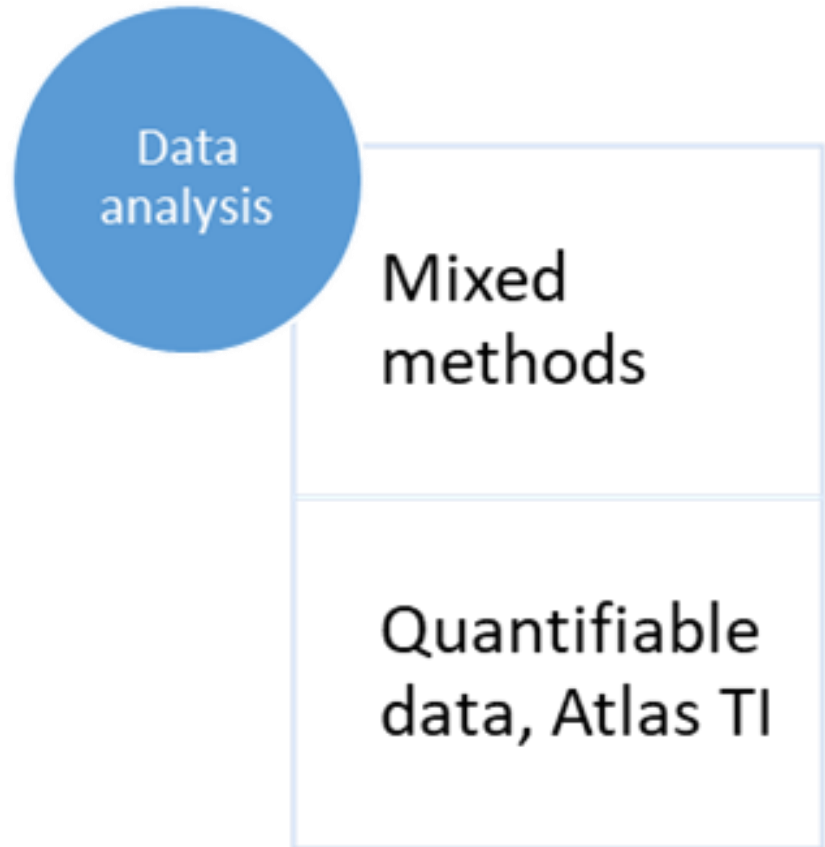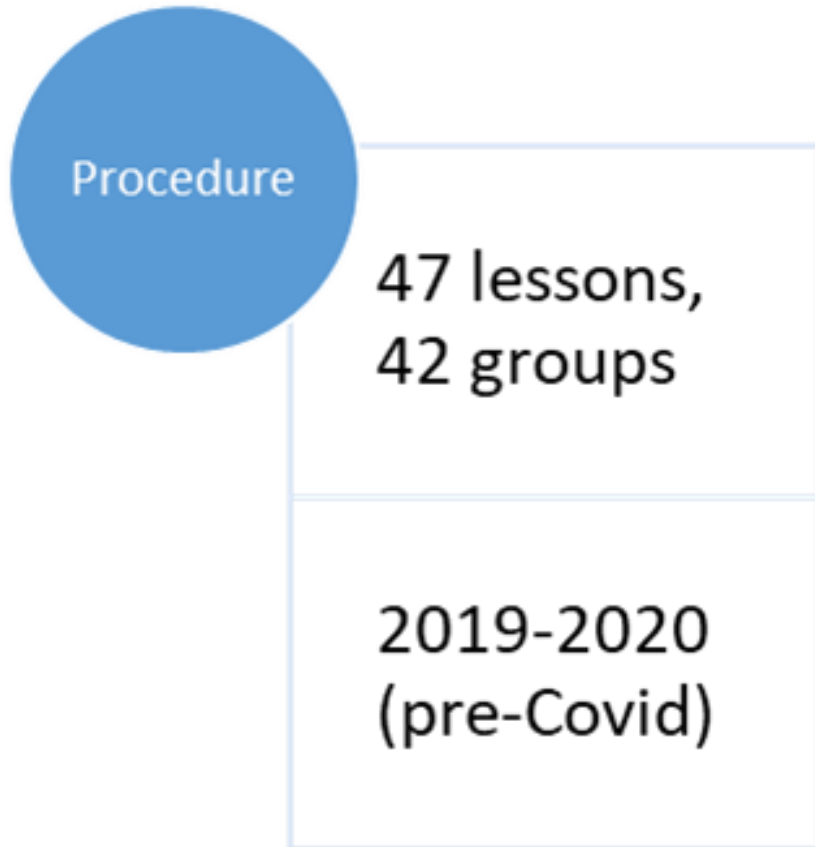Level of proficiency: _____   Date, time, which lesson: _____

Coursebook:_____   Number of students: _____

Task	Time	input						out-put1		work mode				out-put2		information flow				out-put3			langu age	
		listening text		reading text		oral task																		
		coursebook	extra material	coursebook	extra material	teacher*	student	spoken	written	frontal	individual	pair work (2 students)	group work (3 + members)	number of solutions: 1/more	group has to agree	student receives information	student gives information	student both receives and gives information	there is time for preparation (Y/N)	pre-defined content	own experience	pushed output	language of instruction: E/H	language of execution: E/H
	Notes [detailed description of the task]: *teacher is marked if no coursebook or extra material is used*																								

Method 1.

Participants

8 high schools

553 students (grade 9-12), 19 teachers

Instrument

Strictly structured observation

Pre-defined focus

Method 2.

Procedure

47 lessons, 42 groups

2019-2020 (pre-Covid)

Data analysis

Mixed methods

Quantifiable data, Atlas TI

Main results

? Work modes: frontal, individual and pair work; little group work

? Flow of information: multi-directional

? Input: teacher, course book, extra materials; a lack of student initiation

? Output: answer is pre-defined (107), given (100), open-ended (55), experience (37), based on own pushed output (11), agreement (9)

Conclusion & implications

- Varied input ✓ (BUT focus on language items and less on meaning) ←→ Less varied output
- Varied work modes ✓ (a lack of group work)
- Observation tool ✓

Limitations: challenges of data collection and analysis

Research directions: teacher & learner interviews, more observation on task-based and task-supported language learning

Thank you for your attention!

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