Backwash of DIO Classroom Observation Model in EFL

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Abstract. Classroom observation is widely used in the EFL for different purposes by various people. In order to help teachers or researchers effectively observe the classroom teaching in a scientific and feasible way, a new classroom observation tool has been put forward by us. Its content can be simplified into design, implementation and outcome (DIO for short). This paper will make further explanation from its application on three cases in order to illustrate its backwash effect in EFL.

1. Introduction

Classroom observation is widely used in the EFL for different purposes by various people. It refers to a kind of scientific education research method in which researchers or observers, with a clear purpose, rely on their own senses (eyes, ears, etc.) and related auxiliary tools (observation tables, audio or video recording equipment etc.) to directly or indirectly collect data from classroom situation, and then make corresponding analysis and research based on the data [1]. Although many observation dimensions are involved in the process of classroom observation, we still can find some common things. As a result, concerning the continuity of teaching process, we’d like to focus on design, implementation and outcome (DIO for short). That’s the origin of our DIO. Our DIO classroom observation tool consists of eight items, including teachers’ qualities, teaching objectives, teaching implementation, teaching outcomes, and so on.

For the sake of verifying the feasibility, validity and reliability of DIO and make clear its backwash effect, we apply it into three cases of primary school, junior school and senior high school by analyzing its six aspects, covering teaching objectives, teaching content, teachers’ qualities, teaching implementation, teaching methods, and teaching outcomes. Sometimes only one case will be analyzed in detail for each dimension here because of the length limit.

These three cases are different scales of teaching contests. They are 3 different lessons from 3 teachers (Man-ping Hu, Bin Gao and Huan-jun Xia) who got the 1st prize respectively in national English teaching contest. The teaching materials they’ve used is from PEP edition of English books.

2. Cases Study

Next, we’d like to focus on analyzing 3 cases to illustrate the application of our DIO. Six dimensions will be discussed in detail.

2.1. D-Design

We can know the underlying designing ideas of teachers by observing classroom teaching situation and some auxiliary materials, such as instructional design. It mainly covers teaching objectives, content and methods. Next these three dimensions will be analyzed combining with three cases.

2.1.1. Teaching Objectives

It is known that the teaching objectives, to a large extent, decides the difficulties and level of designed activities. According to our DIO, teaching objectives should be set scientifically in line with the curriculum goals and students’ cognitive abilities. Meanwhile, teaching objectives are
better to be operable, attainable and measurable. The supporting theory is Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development Theory. He states that cognitive development stems from social interactions from guided learning within the zone of proximal development as children and their partner's co-construct knowledge [2]. So, teacher should set up teaching objectives in accordance with the learner’s psychological features and learning styles.

From the instructional designs, we can have a general understanding on the teaching objectives of these three teachers. Take Hu’s lesson for example, the verbs she used is read, speak out, use ‘make me’ to express, express and share, which are easily operated and measured through certain activities. The objectives are well-defined because its difficulty level accords with primary students.

![Figure 1](image1.png)

2.1.2. Teaching Content

The teaching content has great influence on students’ learning effect owing to their different cognitive level and learning styles. Based on our DIO, four categories should be considered, that is, adaptable, comprehensible, informative and interactive.

By adaptable, it means that teaching objectives should be taken into account when teachers adapt teaching materials and develop extensive and proper teaching resources. The following is the teaching content of Gao’s revision lesson. Obviously, in order to promote students’ better understanding on feelings and moods, Gao integrates the teaching content of different books, which shows his ability to analyze and integrate teaching materials on the basis of teaching needs and students’ actual level.

![Figure 2](image2.png)

By comprehensible, it means teaching content should match with students’ cognitive level. According to Krashen’s views of The Input Hypothesis and Effective Language Input, learners acquire language as a result of comprehending input addressed to them [3]. In Sightseeing in London, Xia uses the story of “Journey to the west”, which is quite familiar for the students in China as the Pre-reading input. It’s easy to understand and express their ideas.

By informative, we want to stress that teaching content should provide a certain amount of information in order to maintain students’ learning interests, involving information gap to arouse students’ curiosity for further development as well. In Hu’s lesson, when presenting the new words about feelings, such as happy, excited, tired, sad, angry, and the sentence pattern “…. makes me happy...”, she uses different ways like pictures, video and situation. The vocabularies are limited, but the latent information is more than that.

At last, the teaching content should be interactive. The primary purpose of English teaching is to develop students’ communicative competence. That’s the reason why teachers should choose proper content to promote students’ meaningful interaction. Still in Hu’s lesson, in order to present the new words “tired, sad”, she creates the situation that Sam lost the running race, and then provides a
meaningful interaction by setting a realistic situation and raising a question “If you are Sam’s classmate, what will you say to him?”.

2.1.3. Teaching Methods

Teaching methods are of great significance for the realization of teaching objectives and tasks. Choosing appropriate and reasonable teaching methods can stimulate students’ initiative, develop their intelligence and cultivate their abilities. To sum up, teaching methods should be flexible, students-centered and multi-modal.

Teaching methods should serve to fulfill the teaching objectives. Bearing these objectives in mind, there should be flexibility in selecting appropriate teaching methods. Therefore, teachers need to choose appropriate methods after making sufficient students’ analysis. For example, different kinds of activities should be designed like individual work, group work, etc. Hu uses her own experience, video, situation, picture books and so on to present the vocabularies about feelings “happy, excited, tired, sad, angry”. The types of activities she used are individual work, pair work, group work and whole class work.

The teaching method should be student-centered as shown in humanism theory, which emphasizes the importance of human in learning process, respecting learners’ initiative and dignity. Through our observation, these three teachers design different activities for the whole students to match the students’ cognitive level and focus on their output.

The last requirement of teaching method is multimodality, which means the diversity of communicative sign in the oral or written communication. With the development of modern science and technology, especially the widely use of media and internet, the multimodal feature of discourse is becoming increasingly obvious. As a result, teachers should provide multimodal input for efficient construction of meaning. These three teachers use different teaching aids to enhance the teaching effectiveness, such as texts, pictures, picture-books, videos films etc.

2.2. I-Implementation

Teaching is itself a contrivance, and event that is structured and planned, means that it is in its very nature a process affected by the parameters and constraints of time [4]. We observe the teaching implementation in DIO in four aspects, i.e. teachers’ qualities, procedures, activities and assessments.
2.2.1. Teachers’ Qualities

Teachers’ qualities can be observed from many perspectives, such as sounds, postures and their basic skills like blackboard design, classroom management, etc.

These three teachers have good pronunciation and intonation. The sounds are clear enough and the volume is moderate. Their postures in the class are natural and contagious. From the teaching fluency and the positive participation of students, we can know that these teachers have basis management ability. As for the classroom atmosphere, all classes are relaxing, happy and enthusiastic. Besides, the blackboard layouts are structural, clear and informative.

2.2.2. Procedures

The teaching procedures could be shown with three words of accordance, coherence and cohesion, which should focus on the pre-determined objectives and emphasize key points. The teaching procedures should have clear phases and levels, with a smooth progression from one stage to the next. Teachers should allocate teaching time sensibly and control the pace of teaching.

It is easily found that the procedures and structure of Gao’s lesson are complete. With these progressive procedures, students’ comprehensive language abilities can be trained, like speaking, reading, writing and so on.

2.2.3. Activities

The teaching activities in an efficient class should be rich, deep, extensive and communicative. More specifically, teachers need to properly consider the depth, density, width and types of activities. Also, it should be consistent with students’ differences and personality development. The teacher should provide students with opportunities to experience success in the learning.

In Gao’s lesson, he designs different activities such as showing the latest news (IG wins LOL world championship, the owner of a Benz car cries for right, Sri Lanka bombings). Then he lets students express how they feel to apply what they’ve learned. Through reading comprehension of a passage, students deeply know and feel the meaning of “anger”. Meanwhile, he sorts out the structure of reading passage to provide scaffolds for writing. Finally, group work is carried out to discuss how to regulate mood and finish the writing. Therefore, the activities are arranged from easy to difficult, the types are diverse with suitable depth and width.
2.2.4. Assessment

According to our DIO classroom observation tool, the teaching assessment should be clear and various. The language should be encouraging and inspiring as well in order to stimulate students’ subjective role and learning interests.

It is mainly embodied in the teachers’ feedback and assessment ways. Take Xia’s lesson as an example, when students perform in output activity, she uses some encouraging and prompting words, like “You just give us some hows” “You can do it…. thank you” “do you like this...” and so on.

2.3. Teaching Outcomes

The reason why we use “outcome” rather than “output” is that we believe “outcome” can symbolize the students’ role of active learners in learning activities. We can judge it from three aspects of students’ performance, classroom atmosphere and objectives attainment.

About students’ performance, it reveals the basic qualities of learning in a large part. According to the observation on Gao’s lesson, students participates quite positively in the activities. Meanwhile, they are willing to communicate with others in group work in which they show a strong sense of cooperation and make good use of information to support or express their opinions.

About the classroom atmosphere, we can see it from relationship between T-S (teachers and students), S-S (students and students). In Xia’s lesson, the relationship between teachers and students is democratic, relaxing and harmonious because they have smooth interaction on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. She not only plays the roles of organizer and guider, but also instructor, helper and negotiator because she equally treats all learners and even join the activity together with students. Of course, the relationship between students is harmonious and enjoyable.

Objectives attainment is important for teaching outcomes, which contains acquiring knowledge, improving linguistic skills and developing intelligence. In Hu’s lesson, there are three objectives, the first and second objectives can be attained in presentation step. From the teacher’s experience, students can share her happiness. By watching the video of school sports meeting, students can learn and feel the moods of excited, tired, sad and angry in different situations. The third objective is attained in step 3 and 4 by listening and answering, filling in blanks with picture book.

![Figure 8.](image)

3. Conclusion

In general, the DIO concept have condensed our painstaking efforts and accumulation of teaching experience. When we determine the observation dimensions and detailed items, we strive for considering factors in the classroom situation as much as possible, respecting the learners, teachers, environment and cultures, etc. Luckily, it is proved to be practicable and valid for teachers or researchers through analysis of three cases here and applications by others of many times. Also, it presents the backwash effect on our English teaching or class evaluation in the new era, which needs time for further popularization and application.

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