**Chapter 1**

**Introduction**

* 1. **Teaching Practicum in Kazakhstan**

Teaching Practicum is compulsory for student teachers of graduate level enrolled in the English Language Teaching Department. Student teachers take Teaching Practicum at state schools, and follow the Teaching Practicum Curriculum issued by the Department of High Education of Kazakhstan. According to the foregoing Curriculum the Teaching Practicum consists of two periods: five-week period for the third-year students at the end of the 5th semester, December, and seven-week period for the fourth-year students at the beginning of the 7th semester, September and October.

Lesson observation is one of the major components of the Teaching Practicum. Both Teaching Practicums involve observation weeks: two weeks for the third-year students and one week for the fourth-year students. Observation weeks are devoted to observing lessons and familiarising with the school’s facilities, policies, procedures, pedagogical practices, and the preparation of timetable.

During the Observation Weeks student teachers have to observe lessons given by their monitor teachers to be aware of the methods and techniques of her/his teaching. In addition to it they observe the relationship between the teacher and students, students’ learning styles and their behaviour. To get better understanding of the learners’ personalities student teachers are recommended to observe lessons across other subject areas that are taught for the class they are allocated. At the same time pre-service teachers observe lessons of other experienced teachers who display exemplary teaching practices, and novice teachers to evaluate various teaching techniques at different levels of professional experience.

During the Observation Weeks student teachers are required to record their observations of fifteen English language classes for the third-year students and ten classes for the fourth-year students to be assessed. Students must have daily entries of their observations reflecting on various types of teaching or participation experience. Moreover, student teachers are strongly recommended to conduct peer observation and provide feedback on at least one lesson per day, and written feedback on at least two lessons per week during the Teaching Weeks.

**1.1.1 Types of records at the Teaching Practicum and trainees’ problems**

There are no fixed observation instruments in the National Teaching Practicum Cirriculum. Every English Language Teaching Department compiles their own, in ethnographic or structured format. Some Departments prescribe that student teachers must keep diaries, whereas others provide trainees with observation schemes. The former technique requires that pre-service teachers have to describe their reaction to the lesson observed, learners, the relationship between teacher and pupils, school policy in general and their initial teaching experience in the form of narration. The latter ones are introduced in different formats; it is either a detailed structured check-list with pre-specified categories of the teacher’s or learner’s behaviour and the trainee’s role is to record their occurrence, and accompany with evidences or jotted comments that they consider relevant to the observation, or a general lesson reports where student teachers make notices about plusses and minuses of the lesson observed.

As a teacher trainer at the state University in Kazakhstan I have read, analysed and assessed more than 200 diaries and observation sheets for six years. This work has raised my doubts about usefulness of observation as a learning tool. The comments of trainees are mainly descriptive; the student teachers note down what the teacher and the learners have done during the lesson and whether the learners are "interested", "involved", "active" or not. I have noticed that trainees face problems with identifying the aims of the lesson, means of transition, teacher’s prompts and learning outcomes. There is very little analysis or reflection. They observe that the teacher has no problems with discipline but do not ask themselves why it has been so. Very few trainees have made any connection between observations and their own teaching.

I can name some reasons of these problems. The main one is in the little amount of time that is allotted to TESOL course in Kazakhstan. Due to this reason, pre-service teachers are formally introduced to observation skills and strategies. Student teachers need help in observation, but university supervisor and educational psychology instructor are far too often in the classroom with pre-service teachers to guide them and conduct observation, further analysis and reflection in collaborative way. Another reason is that the format of the observation schemes seems to limit the student teachers very much. They feel obliged to fill in the space often repeating the same remarks in subsequent observation sheets. Finally, observation sheets prescribe categories or tasks in the form of broad statements without explaining the reason of observation, what to write and in what sequence. Teaching process is a complex procedure that covers teaching behaviour, learning behaviour, patterns of interaction, and patterns of group dynamics. Some aspects of these procedures are overt, for example, question-answer work, but sometimes it is far more covert, such as learner’s interest. So student teachers face the dilemma what is noteworthy to mention, how to interpret teacher’s, learner’s remarks or behaviour, what size the notes should be.

**1.1.2 Tasks as solution of the problem**

In my paper I am looking for some help for my students to make their observation experience more meaningful. Student teachers should know that the reason of observation and filling the observation sheets is that we want them to learn something from doing so, and only then grade them. The features of a good observer should be made clear to them. They should realize that the skills of observation can be learnt. The university supervisor should try to transfer some of her observation skills by observing a lesson, and analyzing observation sheets after a lesson she has observed with the trainees in a collaborative and consulting way.

The main suggestion concerns the format of the observation schemes. Numerous schedules of observation have been introduced: the Flanders System of Interaction Analysis (FIAC) by Flanders (1970), the Foreign Language INTeraction (FLINT) system by Moskowitz (1971), FOCUS by Fanselow (1977), COLT by Allen, Frölich and Spada (1984), the Stirling system by Mitchell, Johnstone and Parkinson (1981). They are valid and do not require trials. But the main problem with these instruments is that they were originally designed for educational research and for in-service teacher development. Some of these instruments, they are described in Chapter 2.5.2. are recommended for teacher training education. However, the researchers do not deny the fact that all of them are complex and require intensive training. Thus for teacher training education we need reliable observation instruments based on scientific grounds that develop observation skills gradually and improve them with practice.

Observation tasks have been introduced by the Professor Wajnryb (1992) and are widely used in a modified way round the world in teacher development programmes. She clearly identified the advantages of observation tasks. They limit the scope of observation and allow an observer to focus her/his attention at one or two particular aspects. Concrete subsequent statements provide a convenient means of collecting data and free student teachers from interpreting the behaviour and making evaluation during the lesson. A list of questions after a lesson guide them what aspects of the teaching/learning process they should reflect on. What is more they allow student teacher to personalize the data and to view their own teaching experience. Thus the nature of the task-based experience is ‘inquiry-based, discovery-oriented, inductive and potentially problem-solving’ (Wajnryb 1992:15).

However, initially classroom observation tasks have been introduced for teachers’ professional growth but not for teacher training education. That is why they need to be adapted for this purpose as well. Learner observation tasks offer samples of categories to the student teachers without restricting them. Student teachers could decide in which form to take notes, either putting down actual utterances or jotters. It is important because it allows student teacher to be independent and autonomous. Other modifications are described in Chapter 3.

The two main purposes of the tasks can be formulated as to raise trainees’ awareness about the aspects of the teaching process and guide student teachers to make their own decision about the teaching process. In addition to them observation tasks may occur as the basis for further deeper case study research and provide student teachers with data for writing a course work according to the National Programme for Teaching English Language Department.

**1.1.3 The problem of assessment of observation documents**

At the end of the Teaching Practicum observation sheets or diaries must be included in the Practicum Folder to be assessed. There is another problem a supervisor faces. There are no explicit criteria for assessment student teachers’ observation sheets. Gill S., a university teacher from the Czech Republic, in his feedback to my request about Teaching Practicum experience in different countries noticed: ‘What we use to arrive at these decisions (assess or not assess student’s observation schedules) is our internal and doubtless highly subjective criteria’. These criteria include the full answer to the questions, evidence of student teachers’ ability to describe what they have seen and link it to the activities of the lesson, evidence of reflection, and language explicitness. It is evident that all these criteria sound ambiguously. What should we treat as ‘the full answer’, ‘evidence of reflection’ and ‘language explicitness’? In my paper I am going to introduce scientific criteria for assessment of observation for research purpose and adapt them to observation as a learning tool for teacher training education.

* 1. **Learner as a central focus of observation**

**1.2.1 Learner’s central role in the teaching process**

For my dissertation I have designed observation tasks which are directed to observe and study learner’s behaviour, their attitude to each other, the teacher and the subject, and guide student teachers to contemplate about their motives, reasons of these behaviours. There are many reasons to set a learner in the centre of the observation. Historically, due to the teacher-centered approach in education, observation was focused to the aspects of teacher’s behaviours: opening /closing procedures, use of voice, handling discipline problems and many others. But all humanistic, language acquisition theories approach to the teaching process that an individual learner can bring his/her own experience, knowledge, ideas to the classroom. One of the main aims of the present teaching process is to help learners to be responsible for their learning progress, to promote their autonomy in language learning. To accomplish this aim, student teachers should know individual differences, learners’ subjective needs and preferences. This knowledge will help them ‘to make instructional procedures more flexible to individual learning pace and needs’ (Tudor 1996:11) that enhance learners’ involvement into learning process and learners’ progress accordingly.

**1.2.2 Reasons to observe learner’s behaviour**

Another motive that drives me the idea to design learner observation tasks is the reports of my trainees after the teaching practicum. They have noted that ‘students are of different levels but they are given the same tasks; tasks for students with lower level should be adapted; students should have not only group work but individual work; pupils demonstrate lack of interest in doing some tasks’. These quotes clearly indicate student teachers’ awareness of individual differences and importance of individual approach to every learner or a group of learners. However, student teachers enter the classroom with ‘a critical lack of knowledge’ (Kagan 1992:131) about pupils. To acquire knowledge of pupils, direct observation appears to be crucial. This requires structured guided observation that allows trainees to study pupils’ behaviours, to know their differences and needs to respond them appropriately through a variety of learning activities in their future lesson planning.

In an extensive review of hundred studies of beginning teachers Veenman (1984:144) ranked classroom discipline, motivation of students, and individual differences among students as their first three concerns. The purpose of compiling learner observation tasks is to change in the trainee’s knowledge of a class in terms of a progression: beginning with classroom climate and management, moving to motivation of students and their individual learning styles, and finally turning to students’ language proficiency.

**1.3 Overview of chapters**

The dissertation is intended to provide university supervisors and student teachers at Teaching Practicum with four observation tasks that are directed at observing learners’ behaviours.

Introduction explains the background situation in teaching practicum of TESOL Departments in High education in developing countries, particularly in the Kazakhstan Republic. I introduce the motives that have brought me the idea to develop materials for observation during the teaching practicum. The subsequent chapters have been divided into specific areas.

Chapter 2 gives a detailed account of observation in educational research and in the language classroom studies. Observation is defined as a direct research methods and a learning tool for data collecting. It emphasized characteristic features of observation as a scientific method and its difference from the natural process of looking. Some weaknesses of observation are specified, among which errors in representing data, objectivity of data recording and limitation of observable items are classified and described. Reliability and validity are two key processes that can enhance the ‘trustworthiness of reported observations, interpretations, and generalizations’ (Mishler 1990:419). Typology of reliability and evidences of validity introduce methodological strategies and judgment criteria for objective assessing of observation data. To ensure scientific observation an observer must clarify focus of observation, approach to data collection, and ways of recording observation data. The paper presents four perspectives on a lesson for pre-service teacher education: teacher-centred, learner-centred, curriculum-centred and context-centred focus. Two approaches (system-based, ethnographic) are described in opposition, and ad-hoc instrument as a combination of both. Method and techniques of observation focus on the main instruments that have been developed for pre-service teacher education: field notes, anecdotal records, diaries, journals, personal logs, case studies, and checklists, observation schedules, observation tasks, selective verbatim, rating numerical scales. They are classified as procedures of a low degree and high degree of explicitness (Seliger and Shohamy 1989:158) respectively. Data evaluation is a late and crucial stage in observation method. For teacher training education evaluation of observation records constitutes a part of the teaching practicum assessment. In qualitative and quantitative research two approaches to analysis of the documents are presented: manual and computer based. A set of procedures and criteria is specified for manual evaluation.

Chapter 3 describes the details of the learner observation tasks design. It explains the choice of area for learner observation and the reasons of modification of classroom observation tasks elaborated by Wajnryb (1992). Description of the task frame, categories is provided.

Chapter 4 gives self-evaluation account of the designed materials in the context of the literature review. It explains the choice of the ad-hoc approach as the most appropriate instrument for teacher training education. I emphasise the combined features of ethnographic and structured approach to the design of the learner observation tasks. It is followed by the evidences of reliability and validity of the documents.

Chapter 5 introduces a brief background about the particular facet of learner behaviour that is to be focused on doing every observation task. This is followed by the actual description of the task, its objectives and the procedure of the work on the task before, during and after the lesson. I explain the choice of categories and symbols of the task that student teachers are recommended to employ in their descriptive notes.

Chapter 6 indicates further implication of the learner observation tasks into the Teaching Practicum Curriculum. Also three phases how to work with the tasks are given for university supervisors. I have adapted evaluation criteria proposed by Scott (1990) for manual assessment of trainees’ documents. Finally, some recommendations for future improvement of assessment procedure with the use of computer packages are introduced.

**Chapter 2**

**Literature review**

1. **What is observation?**
2. **Observation in scientific research**

Repeated reference refers observation as a method of data collection and a process involving representations and recordings in which reality is depicted. Techniques of observation are not themselves new: they have been used in scientific research for studying the behaviour of men and animals. Anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists were concerned primarily with describing ‘observable behaviours and activities’ (Seliger and Shohamy 1989:118) with the ‘systematic recording in objective terms of behaviour in the process of occurring’ (Jersild and Meigs 1939), and describing these in their entirety from beginning to end.

One could treat observation as a familiar and natural phenomenon that does not need any definition. Hutt and Hutt (1974) give no definition of observation in their book ‘Direct observation and Measurement of Behaviour’. The definition of general observation is given by Wright (1960:71) ‘research methods… rest upon direct observation as a scientific practice that includes observing and recording and analysis of naturally occurring events and things’. According to Wright (1960:71) observation is direct as no arrangements stand between the observer and the observed, and the records are usually compiled immediately after the observation. In a review article, Weick (1968:360) defines an observational method in more elaborative way as ‘the selection, provocation, recording and encoding of that set of behaviours and setting organism’ ‘in situ’ which is consistent with empirical aims’.

So, the characteristic features of observation as a scientific method I can define as there should be a limited amount of information to be collected; the data should be recorded systematically and analysed over a period of time; the data should be congruent with the aims; the observation session must be planned; and, finally, the observation and analysis must be objective.

1. **Approaches to observation in the language classroom studies**

Observation in the language classroom is treated either as a research procedure for in -service professional development or as a learning tool for pre-service teachers. Hargreaves (1980:212) suggests that the 1970s were a ‘notable decade’ for classroom studies thanks to the number of projects and the wide range of methodological approaches, and he identified ‘three great traditions’ of studying classrooms - systematic observation, ethnographic observation and sociolinguistic studies. Sociolinguistics studies the aspects of linguistics applied toward the connections between language and society. These aspects are not of prime interest for pre-service classroom observation that is why I do not dwell upon this approach in this paper.

Hammersley (1986:47) proposes that systematic observation and ethnography are treated as ‘self-contained and mutually exclusive paradigms’. The further description of both of these approaches supports this idea. Croll (1986:5) illustrates some fundamental aspects of systematic observation as follows: explicit purposes which are worked out before data collection; explicit and rigorous categories and criteria for classifying phenomena; data should be presented in quantitative form to be analysed with statistical techniques; any observer should record a particular event in an identical fashion to any other. Ethnographic approach involves a complete cycle of events that occur within the interaction between the society and environment. Lutz (1986:108) defines ethnography as ‘a holistic, thick description of the interactive process involving the discovery of important and recurring variables in the society as they relate to one another, under specific conditions, and as they affect or produce certain results and outcomes in the society’. So, systematic observation is described as highly eclectic studies of an event with pre-specified categories and detailed analysis is presented in quantitative manner whereas ethnography describes and interprets events holistically in their naturally occurring contexts. More detailed characteristics of systematic and ethnographic approaches are provided in Chapter 2.3.

1. **Observation as a problem**
2. **Classifications of errors in the process of observation**

There is always the possibility of error in the observation process. Fassnacht (1982:43) reviews Campbell’s (1958) classifications of errors in representing data in psychological and social studies. Some of these errors frequently occur when making judgements and primarily concern language behaviour:

1. error of central tendency
2. error of leniency or generosity
3. primacy or recency effect
4. halo effect
5. logical error

A first error occurs in using a rating scale. Hollingworth (1910) called the effect ‘central tendency’ in a series of judgements about objectivity of quantifiable stimuli, when the large stimuli are underestimated and the small ones overestimated.

An error of leniency or generosity could arise in making favourable verbal judgements using personality scales. Fassnacht (1982:40) clarifies that in the personality scales a number of questions relating to one particular personality trait are drawn together and the answers to these questions are given in the form of ‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘sometimes’, ‘often’ which might not reflect objective reality.

A third error occurs as a result of the order in which perceptual events happen. The problem is that in behaviour testing the first impression could have a distorting effect on later data collection and thus lead to errors. Bailey (1990:218) admits that in diary keeping, events that are embarrassing or painful when they occur ‘often lose their sting after weeks of reflection’.

A fourth error, halo effect, is described by Mandl (1971) when the evaluator ‘has the tendency when judging a personality trait to be influenced by a general impression or a salient characteristic’.

Logical errors or error of theory reveals due to the theoretical assumptions of the observer. It is now widely accepted that observation is always ‘theory-laden’ (Phillips 1993:62). He continues that observations can not be ‘pure’, free from the influence of background theories or hypotheses or personal hopes and desires. Ratcliffe (1983:148) supports this assumption in that ‘most research methodologists are now aware that all data are theory-, method-, and measurement-dependent’. As Bailey (1990:226) suggests in conducting 'pure research' it is better to avoid reading the research literature in the field, to keep from biasing the results.

1. **The problem of ‘observable’ items**

The item ‘observable’ in the definition given by Seliger and Shohamy (1989:118) mentioned above emphasizes the problem of what items to be treated as observable in classroom setting. Thus, Smith and Geoffrey (1968) make valid assertions criticising systematic observation systems:

The way the teacher poses his problems, the kind of goals and sub-goals he is trying to reach, the alternatives he weighs … are aspects of teaching which are frequently lost to the behavioural oriented empirical who focuses on what the teacher does to the exclusion of how he thinks about teaching. Smith and Geoffrey (1968:96)

McIntyre and Macleod (1986:14) generalize the problem of observable items and limitation of data obtained through systematic observation claiming that there is ‘no direct evidence on the actions of participants which are not overt’. The detailed criticism of systematic observation is given in Chapter 2.6.2.

1. **Data recording problems**

The problem of accurate recording

Data collection, description procedures face problems of the accuracy and explicitness of records. ‘The crucial problem is to be able to render interpretable the process of events and behaviour as it occurs naturally’ (McKernan 1996:60).

Hutt and Hutt (1970:34) emphasise the difficulty of accurate description of the behaviour. They emphasize the problem with the vocabulary choice in that there are many thousands of words which describe motor and language behaviour but ‘unfortunately, the words are injunctive concepts, learned by usage rather than by definition’ (Hutt and Hutt 1970:34). Other than that, it is frequently found that some definitions are over encompassing in that they cover patterns of behaviour for which ordinary language has two or more terms. Lofland and Lofland (1995:93) recommend employing behaviouristic and concrete vocabulary rather than abstract adjectives and adverbs, which are based on paraphrase and general recall.

The problem of objective recording

Another problem with the written commentary to be discussed is the problem of objectivity. All researchers agree that the data are often subjective, reflect personal impressions, inferential and interpretative. Events may not be viewed the same way by different observers. ‘It is common to find that witnesses to an accident give differing accounts of what happened’ (Lofland 1995:127).

Eisner (1993:49) defines objectivity as being ‘fair, open to all sides of the argument’. He considers that to reduce subjectivity the observer must achieve correspondence not only in what s/he perceives or understands but how she or he represents it. Schaffer (1982:75) continuous the problem of vocabulary choice saying that there are some aspects of reality which can be described fairly objectively and those which can only be described subjectively, and ‘it is difficult to know where the borderline between objectivity and subjectivity lies’. Scheurich (1997:161) doubts in ‘the very existence of gross material reality’. He claims that research mainly addresses interpretation of meaning or constructions of ‘reality’.

To sum the problems with data recording I can suggest that an observer may describe and interpret an event in subjective way due to personal bias, theoretical assumptions, s/he can experience difficulty in the choice of an object/behaviour to observe and words to record an event in accurate and explicit way.

* + 1. **The choice of an approach to observation**

An observer faces the dilemma in choosing systematic or ethnographic approaches. The main problem of ethnographical approach lies in its very nature – it is so broad that it demands a highly trained observer to do a competent and reliable observation. ‘An untrained observer may be overwhelmed by the complexity of what goes on and not be able to focus on important events in the classroom’ (Day 1990:44). Pre-specified coding systems in systematic observation are exclusively concerned with ‘what can be categorized or measured’ (Simon and Boyer 1974). Thus they may distort or ignore the qualitative features which they claim to investigate. At the same time limiting the attention of the observer can help improve reliability.

1. **Reliability and Validity**
2. **Types of reliability**

Reliability and validity are the most important criteria for assuring the quality of the data collection procedures. The criterion of reliability provides information on whether the data collection procedure is ‘consistent and accurate’ (Seliger and Shohamy 1989:185). The researchers suspect that observers may unintentionally impose their own biases and impressions on the observed situation. Seliger and Shohamy (1985:185) claim that for different types of data collection procedures different types of reliability are relevant. Thus they determine for the ethnographic approach the following types:

1. inter-rater reliability (to examine to which different observers agree on the data collected from the observation);
2. test-retes reliability (to check stability of data collection over time);
3. regrounding (to repeat the data collection and compare both results);
4. parallel form (to examine to which extent two versions of the same data collection procedure are really collecting the same data)

To assure reliability different methodologists suggest involving at least two observers to carry a ‘sequential analysis’ (Becker 1970:79), or to achieve ‘inter-observer agreement’ (Croll 1986:150). The idea of the former procedure is to carry out the analysis concurrently with data collection in the sense that ‘one may ‘step back’ from the data, so as to reflect on their possible meaning’ (Fielding 2001:158). Thus further subsequent data gathering will direct the observer either to abandon or pursue the original hypothesis. In the later procedure two observers look at the same events from different locations to categorise these events and compare the outcomes. Using systematic schemes with pre-specified categories they refine, or ‘index’ (Fielding 2001:159) the definitions and categories of observation by ‘applying in a consistent manner the procedures for data selection, collection, grouping, inclusion, exclusion etc.’ (Simpson and Tuson 1995:65).

**2.3.2 Types and evidences of validity**

Just as there are different types of reliability, Seliger and Shohamy (1989: 102) suggest that there are different types of validity which provide ‘evidence’ for validity. Thus, their typology of ‘evidences’ of validity comprises

1. evidence on content validity which demonstrates appropriateness of data collection against the content to be measured;
2. criterion validity which provides an indication as to whether the instrument can be measured against some other criterion and compared with the previous results (concurrent validity), and whether the procedure is capable of foretelling certain behaviour (predictive validity);
3. construct validity which examines whether the data collection procedure is a good representation of and consistent with current theories underlying the variable being measured.

Chaudron (1988:24) gives another term to the content validity and suggests ‘treatment validity’ which relates to the process component of process-product study and demonstrates that the treatment was in fact implemented and that it was identifiable different from whatever it was being compared with.

For the results of the second language research Seliger and Shohamy (1989:104) identify internal and external validity. They propose that a study has internal validity if the outcomes of the observational data can be directly and unambiguously attributed to the treatment that is applied to the observed group, and that the interpretation of these data is not dependent on the subjective judgement of an individual researcher. Internal validity in this sense relates to three areas: ‘representativeness, retrievability, and confirmability of the data’ (Seliger and Shohamy 1989:104). External validity involves the extent to which the findings of a study can be generalized and applied to another situation and the categories of the study are treated as basic, applied, and practical.

To achieve evidences of validity items or questions of an instrument must be analyzed in the process of data collection. A researcher or observer should obtain information on whether the items are of ‘low-inference’ or ‘high-inference’ (Long 1980), too easy or too difficult, and whether the items are phrased and easily understood by the respondents. All these aspects are recommended to examine in the pilot phase of the research that is likely to be proved by evidences from a variety of sources, such as additional questionnaire data from pupils or teachers, interviews, surveys. Another way of examining the validity of observation is to ask colleagues to study the categories and to define the purpose of the observation. Simpson and Tuson (1995:65) treat this method as a useful check on face validity. Thus to achieve reliable and valid observation an evaluator should take into account the spatial location of an observer, engage more than one observer, involve ‘low-inference’ categories that do not require complex interpretation and check agreement of key aspects against independent studies.

* 1. **Items of observation**

**2.4.1 The importance of items**

In so far the language classroom observation ‘does not simply mean watching classes’ (Wallace 1991:123). An observer may record either very narrowly defined data such as a specific speech act, or more general kinds of language learning activity such as turn-taking, group work.

Any scientific research or observation is characterised by terms as ‘structured’, ‘organised’, ‘methodical’, and ‘systematic’. To follow these characteristics any data collection obtains a structure or format, and guided by some questions or variables. Croll (1986:55) notifies a variable as a basic unit that represents the process by which a concept of interest is turned into a set of working definitions whereby the results of observation or some other data collecting process can be categorized and measured.

**2.4.2 Items of observation in the language classroom**

For classroom observation as a learning tool Richards (1998:143) proposes three perspectives on a lesson for pre-service training to develop a deeper understanding of how and why teachers teach the way they do and the different ways teachers approach their lessons. They are:

1. Teacher-centered focus: the teacher is primary focus; factors include the teacher’s role, classroom management skills, questioning skills, presence, voice quality, manner, and quality instructions.
2. Curriculum-centered focus: the lesson as an instructional unit is the primary focus; factors include lesson goals, opening, structuring, task types, flow, and development and pacing.
3. Learner-centered focus: the learners are the primary focus; factors include the extent to which the lesson engaged them, participation patterns, and extent of language use.

Wallace (1998:68) substitutes the focus on the curriculum with the focus on the context in which the teacher teaches: the classroom layout, the teaching aids available and how they are used.

Low-inference and high-inference categoreis

The presentation of items involves constructing sets of categories into which occurrences must be coded unambiguously. In this respect Long (1980:3) introduces low-inference and high-inference measures. Low-inference categories include things that can be counted or coded without the observer having to infer their meaning from observable behaviour. Such categories according to Allwright and Bailey (2000:73) involve the number of times the student raises her/his hands, or the frequency with which the teacher uses the student’s name. High-frequency items demand that the observer make a judgement that goes beyond what is immediately observed. The samples of this type of categories cover factors like learner’s attention, or the social climate. I can conclude that observation data should cover categories of observable behaviour that does not require much interpretation.

* 1. **Typology of observation**

Typology of classroom observation instruments is worked out by Wallace (1991:66) and he presents the following oppositions:

1. system-based, ethnographic or ad-hoc
2. global or specific
3. evaluative, formative or research-related
4. teacher-focused, learner-focused or neutral in focus
5. quantitative or qualitative

He admits that some of the oppositions are not clear-cut and overlap. For example, observation techniques which are primarily evaluative may be employed for formative purposes, ethnographic approach is treated as global and qualitative. System based approach can focus on teacher’s activity and learners’ activities. System-based (systematic), ethnographic and ad-hoc approaches encompass other characteristics of the classification provided. Thus, I outline the features of the first opposition.

**2.5.1 System-based approach**

By system-based observation Wallace (1991:67) means the observation that is based on a system of fixed and pre-specified categories. They are global in nature, i.e. ‘they are intended to give general coverage of the most salient aspects of the classroom process’ (Wallace 1991:110). Any system contains a finite array of categories. The endeavour of all system-based observation instruments is the analysis of teacher-class interaction. The two most influential systems are devised by Bellack (1966:267) and by Flanders (1970:314). Wallace (1991:112) has identified the characteristic features of the first system as:

1. the data are measured from a transcript, i.e. the data have to be first recorded and then transcribed;
2. the central place of labelled units of discourse are structure, solicit, response, reaction.

In the ‘Flanders tradition’ there is a form of documented recall where tallies are made every three minutes under one range of categories. In chapter 2.6 the analysis of a range of interaction schemes, their advantages and disadvantages are presented with more details. They are widely used by researchers as they are ready-made, well known and ‘it does not to be trialled and validated’ (Wallace 1991:111).

**2.5.2. Ethnographic approach**

The observation techniques share many of qualities of ethnographic practices. Ethnography is a detailed sociological observation of people which immerses the researcher in an intense period of observation ‘which guides and informs all subsequent data gathering’. (Radnor 2002:49)

Ethnographical approach is originally developed from the methodologies of field anthropologists and sociologists concerned with studying human behaviour within the context in which that behaviour would naturally occur. Methodologically, ‘anthropological’ classroom studies are based on participant observation, during which the observer immerse him/herself in the ‘new culture’. Initial data gathered by the ethnographer are open-ended and relatively unstructured that ‘allows and encourages the development of new categories’ (Delamont and Hamilton 1976:13). An ethnographer uses a holistic framework. S/he makes no attempt to manipulate, control or eliminate variables. At the same time s/he reduces the breadth of research problems systematically to give more concentrated attention to the emerging salient issues.

The great strength of the ethnographic research is that it gets away from the simplistic behavioural emphasis of the pre-specified codes. (Delamont and Hamilton 1976:37).

The main purpose of the ethnographic approach is the search for meaning and is based on the description of the studied phenomenon. However, Lutz (1986:112) warns that not everyone who can write a paragraph describing an encounter between a teacher and a student is an ethnographer, and he points out that an observer should be trained in ethnographic methods, particularly participant-observer field methods.

**2.5.3 Ad-hoc approach**

The term ‘ad-hoc’ is used to describe something that has been devised for a particular purpose, ‘with no claims to generality’ (Wallace 1991:113). The ad-hoc approach relates to structured approaches but the categories derive from a particular problem or research topic. That is why this system is more popular with practising teachers. What is more this approach is flexible and eclectic, and involves both quantitative and qualitative data where each seems appropriate. Wallace (1991:113) assumes that each different area of concern will yield a different system of analysis. Ad-hoc approach is considered to be the most appropriate in teacher-training education as it is basically guided discovery approach that drive student-teachers to focus and reflect on an important area of language teaching, and provide a meta-language with which to discuss. The instrument of ad-hoc approach is known as observation tasks (Wajnryb 1992) and is described in Chapter 2.6.2.

* 1. **Methods and techniques of observation**

**2.6.1 Classification of data collection techniques**

Seliger and Shohamy (1989:158) present classification of data collection procedures according to the degree of explicitness. On one end of the scale they set broad and general techniques which do not focus on a particular type of data and are considered to be of a low degree, while at the other end they tend to put procedures which are more explicit and structured and thus reveal high degree of explicitness. Collecting data by procedures of a low degree of explicitness is done by means of open and informal description, which tends to be done simultaneously with its occurrence. Typical procedures of this kind are field notes, records, diaries, journals, lesson reports, personal logs, life history accounts, informal interviews with the subjects of observation. Collecting data by means of procedures of a high degree of explicitness involves the use of formal and structured types of data collection procedures. Examples of such procedures are interaction schemes, checklists, observation schedules, observation tasks, formal interviews, surveys, structured questionnaires, case studies, rating numerical scales. Different procedures imply different techniques for data collection. Data obtained from more structured observations are presented in the form of checks, tallies, frequencies, and ratings, while data obtained from the informal observations are presented in the form of narration, field-notes, or transcripts.

According to this classification I am going to describe a range of procedures that are applied to pre-service classroom observation.

**2.6.2 Observation instruments**

Field notes

Field notes are records of naturalistic observation in the natural context of the behaviour researched through direct listening and watching. The main focus of observation notes is accurate description rather than interpretation. An observer can write down interesting details on various aspects of school life in general and of the teaching process in particulars. ‘Each observational note represents a happening or event – it approximates the who, what, when, and how of the action observed’ (McKernan 1996:94). McKernan considers field notes as a useful tool as

1. they are simple records to keep requiring direct observation
2. no outside observer is necessary
3. problems can be studied in the teacher’s own time
4. they can function as an aide-memoire
5. they provide clues and data not dredged up by quantified means.

At the same time an observer should consider some drawbacks in the use of this technique presented by McKernan (1996:96) as follows:

1. It is difficult to record lengthy conversations
2. They can be fraught with problems of researcher response, bias, and subjectivity
3. It is time-consuming to write up on numerous characters
4. They are difficult to structure
5. They should triangulate with other methods, as diaries, analytic notes.

The case study

Elliot and Ebbutt (1986:75) treat case study as a research technique in which teachers identify, diagnose and attempt to resolve major problems they faced in teaching for understanding. Richards (1998:73) considers case materials help students to explore how teachers in different settings ‘arrive at lesson goals and teaching strategies, and to understand how expert teachers draw on pedagogical schemes and routines in the process of teaching’. McKernan (1996:76) reminds that the researcher or an observer should use a ‘conceptual framework’, which can relate to existing science. So, the researcher employs various concepts to make sense of the observed data.

Richards (1998:76) enumerates advantages for using case studies in teacher education:

1. students are provided with vicarious teaching problems that present real issues in context;
2. students can learn how to identify issues and frame problems;
3. cases can be used to model the process of analysis and inquiry in teaching;
4. students can acquire an enlarged repertoire and understanding of educational strategies.
5. cases help stimulate the habit of reflective inquiry.

Diary/journal

Some research employ both terms equally. Allport (1942:95) has made the point that ‘the spontaneous, intimate diary is the personal document par excellence’. Many researchers have kept diaries as self-evaluative tool of their own experience. The most notable study of a diary keeping method is described by Bailey (1990). She has used the diary study approach as one option for the classroom-centered research project required in the practicum. The resulting journals have focused on issues related to lesson planning and creativity, time management, problems faced by non-native teachers of English, classroom control, group work, and difficult student-teacher relations. Baily's (1990:218) sense of result is that diaries were often extremely useful exercises for the teachers-in-preparation, both in generating behavioural changes and in developing self-confidence.

Requirements to write the diary entries she identifies as follows:

1. to set aside time each day immediately following the class, in pleasant place free of interruptions;
2. the time allotted to writing about the language teaching or learning experience should at least equal the time spent in class;
3. to set up the conditions for writing so that the actual process of writing is or can become relatively free. It's difficult in getting started;
4. in recording entries in the original uncensored version of the diary, one should not worry about style, grammar, or organisation. The goal is to get complete and accurate data while the recollections are still fresh.

Her studies reveal some problems in keeping diaries. In actual practice, students experience difficulties in describing events freely, the process of writing seems to be tedious for them; they do not get used to criticize, reflect, express frustration, and raise questions in written form. Some students were reluctant to edit their private journals.

Porter, Goldstein, Leatherman, and Conrad (1990:240) consider the journal is not a personal diary. They emphasise that the journal is a place to go beyond notes made during observation by exploring, reacting, making connections. The journal entries are intended to be polished pieces of writing. But as diaries, as journal are not assessed. The problem with assessment is in that there is no rigid regulation about the frequency of entries per day or week. It depends on the nature and structure of the course. At the same time writing every week is considered to be productive since the journal is meant to be ongoing. Sometimes students need to process what they are reading and make connections among a number of readings.

Benefits of using journals Porter et al. (1990:287) sees as:

1. students can get help with areas of course content where they are having difficulty; get a teacher’s response;
2. they promote autonomous learning, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning and to develop their own ideas;
3. students can gain confidence in their ability to learn, to make sense of difficult material, and to have original insights;
4. the journal encourages students to make connections between course content and their own teaching;
5. the journals create interaction beyond the classroom, both between teacher and student, and among students. It allows an ongoing dialogue between teacher and students;
6. the journals make class more process oriented. Students input can in part shape the curriculum. The teacher can use this information to restructure the course.

Anecdotal records

Anecdotal records McKernan (1996:67) refers to narrative-verbatim descriptions of meaningful incidents and events which have been observed in the behavioural setting. They focus on narrative, conversation and dialogue and provide short, sharp incisive summaries of points that stick in the mind after the event. Anecdotal records are treated to be useful in teacher training education because they directly observe behavioural data which enable students to ‘see’ the incident and gain ‘inside’ perspective. One of the key tasks for the observer is to watch for the beginning and ending of ‘episodes’ of behaviour. McKernan (1996:68) sets some disadvantages of anecdotal records that are similar to diary keeping and journal as any piece of descriptive writing, such as:

1. they require extensive time to observe, write and interpret;
2. maintainenace of ‘objectivity’ is difficult;
3. observers require training in the use of anecdotes;
4. they are often reported without taking accounts of setting;
5. read out of context, they can be misunderstood and misinterpreted;
6. some observers focus on ‘negative’ or ‘undesirable’ events only.

Personal action logs

Personal action logs McKernan (1996:110) defines as record sheets which document a researcher’s activities over a lengthy time period ‘to get a full-blown representation’ of a day. Thornbury (1991:141) clarifies the purpose of log-keeping as ‘to direct trainees’ attention towards areas they may have overlooked or avoided; to measure the trainees’ assessment against our own; to make adjustments, if necessary, to the course design and/or content’. Logs may be kept in chart summary form, describing the main events with time sampling or in a more descriptive form similar to a diary. At the same time personal logs (McKernan 1996:111) are recommended to keep over a lengthy period of time and in connection with more extensive accounts, such as field notes, diaries and audio transcripts to validate findings.

Check-lists

The use of check-lists suggests the formulation of well-defined and ‘clearly delineated behaviour categories, which in turn presupposes more than a superficial acquaintance with the data’ (Hutt and Hutt 1970:38). It is used to focus ‘the observer’s attention to the presence, absence, or frequency of occurrence of each point of the prepared list as indicated by checkmarks’ (Hopkins and Antes 1985:467). Thus a prerequisite for obtaining reliable and valid data from check-lists is a set of clearly defined categories. For this reason a check-list would be unsuitable for recording behaviour with which the observer was not completely familiar or for recording the complete range of activities in a free-field situation. The researchers confirm that although in principle a large number of categories are feasible, in practice an observer is unable to cope reliably with more than fifteen. Different methodologists notice that as the number of categories increase, the problems involved in scanning these. That is why Hutt and Hutt (1970:69) offer from a practical view to have check-lists as compact as possible, since they are most commonly used in those situations where the observer is attempting to record unobtrusively and with the minimum of distraction to the subject.

The greatest advantage of check lists is the facility and speed with which they can be analysed, as observer just ticks off phenomenon against an appropriate category by mere observation. Measures that might be easily obtained are as follows:

1. frequency with which there is a change in activity;
2. number of different activities;
3. number of stimuli encountered;
4. duration of specific activity;
5. changes in nature and duration of activities with time.

However, McKernan (1996:108) admonishes that the arrangement of the points is crucial in that sequence in task completion should be logical and sequential. An observer or designer of this instrument must ensure that:

1. points to be observed are listed in their actual sequence of happening;
2. all similar attributes are included in categories;
3. all the relevant and specified points are listed.

Observation schemes

Over the years numerous schemes have been developed for recording classroom interaction. Chaudron (1988:19), modifying the analysis originated by Long (1980), identifies twenty-four various schemes. In his review Chaudron (1988:17) points out that Long (1980) has included only those instruments which were designed to observe verbal interaction in a classroom, whereas the range of categories is great due to various purposes of observation. Chaudron interprets categories as

1. social interactive (Allwright (1980:169) turn-taking and turn-giving, Moskowitz’s (1970) ‘jokes’, ‘praises or encourages’)
2. pedagogical (Jarvis’s (1968:336) ‘classroom management’, ‘repetition reinforcement’, or Fanselow’s (1977:18) ‘solicit’, ‘respond’)
3. objective behaviour (Naiman, Neil, Frölich, Stern, and Todesco’s (1978) ‘student hand-raising’, ‘student callout’, or Moscowitz’s (1970) ‘student response -choral’)
4. semantic or cognitive content of behaviours (Fanselow’s (1977:31) ‘characterize’)
5. type and grouping of participants (Mitchell et al. (1981:19) ‘whole class’, ‘individuals doing the same task’)

For teacher training purpose Chaudron (1988:18) recommends to apply eleven schemes among which Capelle, Jarvilla, and Revelle (n.d.), Moskowitz’s (1970), Politzer (1980), Seliger (1977) are conducted in real time coding and categories of schemes refer to low degree of inference.

Advantages of interaction schemes as the basis of reflection in experiential knowledge are described by Wallace (1991:121) and he claims that these systems

1. objectify the teaching process;
2. provide a reliable record (by a trained observer);
3. promote self-awareness in the teacher;
4. provide a meta-language, which enables teachers to talk about their profession;
5. make teacher training more effective by improving the quality of teaching.

At the same time systematic observation schemes have some critics. Delamont and Hamilton’s (1976:3) main critique is levelled at the use of pre-specified categories to ‘code’ or classify the behaviour of teachers and pupils, which can not capture and reflect the whole complexity of classroom life.

Delamont and Hamilton (1976:8) identify seven criticisms of systematic observational systems:

1. Systematic observation provides data only about ‘average’ or ‘typical’ classrooms, teachers and pupils.
2. All the interactional analysis systems ignore the temporal and spatial context in which the data are collected as most systems use data gathered during very short periods of observation the observer is not expected to record information about the physical setting.
3. Interaction analysis systems are usually concerned only with overt, observable behaviour. In the case if intentions lay behind the direct behaviour an observer must himself impute the intention.
4. Interaction analysis systems are concerned with ‘what can be categorized or measured’ (Simon and Boyer 1986:1). They may obscure, distort or ignore the qualitative features which they claim to investigate, by having ill-defined boundaries between the categories.
5. Interaction analysis systems focus on ‘small bits of action or behaviour rather than global concepts’ (Simon and Boyer 1986:1). Delamont and Hamilton clarifies that there is a tendency to generate a superabundance of data which must be linked either to the complex set of descriptive concepts or to a small number of global concepts.
6. The systems utilize pre-specified categories.
7. Placing arbitrary boundaries on continuous phenomena obscures the flux of social interaction.

Walker and Adelman (1976: 136) emphasize the problems of recording child-child talk and objectivity of incorporating this kind of talk into the normal flow of teacher-centred classroom. They illustrate that there is no research instrument to code the spontaneous talk or social function of jokes and humour. ‘Talk is seen to be a highly complex, problematic activity, rich in contradictory and bizarre meanings and frequently with difficulties and confusions’ (Walker and Adelman 1976: 137). This organisation is taken for granted in observation schemes.

Rating scales

McKernan (1996:118) reviews various styles of rating scales – category, numerical, graphic and pictorial. They all share the common feature of having a rater place an object, person or idea along a sequential scale in terms of estimated value to the rater. Rating scales are treated as helpful instrument to measure non-cognitive areas where an observer is interested in cooperativeness, industriousness, tolerance, enthusiasm, group skills. At the same time McKernan (1996:119) notes that all rating sheets need to

* 1. include observable behavior;
  2. rate significant outcomes as opposed to minor or trivial behaviours;
  3. employ clear, unambiguous scales – never to use less than three, nor more than ten points on a scale;
  4. arrange for several raters to observe the same phenomena to increase reliability of ratings;
  5. keep items short and to the point.

Rating scales are opposed to direct observation as an assessment strategy. Nevertheless, Sattler (1982:33) points out that rating scale may not correspond with data obtained by the way of direct observation. He suggests that the internal consistency and ‘inter-rater’ reliability are important features of behaviour rating scales (Sattler 1982:34). Another criticism of observational data obtained through ratings is in that they involve human judgment and the sample of behaviour may be limited.

Selective verbatim

This technique is described by McKernan (1996:170). Unlike interaction analysis the selective verbatim techniques is directed at studying ‘selective’ verbal reactions. These are interactions that reflect effective or ineffective teaching. The procedure involves recording of the actual words and further analysis. The main advantage of the selective verbatim technique is in that it allows an observer to concentrate on one aspect of the teaching/learning behaviour at a time and it provides an objective non-interpretive record of verbal behaviour, which can be analyzed later.

Observation tasks

An observation task is ‘a focused activity to work on while observing a lesson in progress’ (Wajnryb 1992:7). Like a selective verbatim technique it focuses on one or a small number of aspects of the teaching/learning process but covers nonverbal behaviour as well. The purpose of the task is to collect actual facts or patterns of interaction that emerge in a lesson. The advantage of the collecting information with the help of selective tasks is that ‘it provides a convenient means of collecting data that frees the observer from forming an opinion or making a non-the-spot evaluation during the lesson’ (Wajnryb 1992:7).

To draw general conclusion about the techniques of observation I can say that some of them suggest either too broad or too narrow studying of the teaching process. It does not suit the main objectives of the Observation Weeks at the Teaching Practicum that are targeted to acquaint trainees with all the facets of the complex teaching/learning process gradually, to practice and develop trainees’ observation skills.

**2.7. Evaluation of documents**

**2.7.1 Criteria for manual evaluation**

The data evaluation process in qualitative and quantitative research is complex, laborious and time consuming procedure. In social research there are two main approaches to analysis and evaluation of data: manual and computer based. In the former case qualitative research evaluation is treated as ‘intuitive, idiosyncratic and creative’ (Stroh 2000:226). Due to the immersive nature of the participant observation and closeness to a subject a researcher is inclined to see things from the member’s perspective. Thus Cohen and Mannion (1994:52) suggest evaluating materials by means of two stages: ‘external’ and ‘internal criticism’. External criticism is concerned with establishing the ‘authenticity’ (Scott 1990:37) or genuiness of material. It is aimed at the document itself rather than the statements it contains and endeavors to analyse forms of the data rather than the interpretation or meaning. That is way it sets out to discover frauds, inventions or distortions. A set of questions proposed by Platt (1981) can be employed to test observation material on its authenticity:

Does the document make sense or does it contain glaring errors?

Are there different versions of the original document available?

Is there consistency of literary style, handwriting or typeface?

Has the document been transcribed by many copyists?

Does the version available derive from a reliable source?

Internal criticism deals with the accuracy of the data presentation and an evaluator has to establish ‘credibility’, ‘representativeness’ and ‘meaning’ (Scott 1990:53) of the document.

Credibility refers to the question of whether the task is ‘free from error and distortion’ (Macdonald 2001:204). The later may occur when the comments and discussion were made long time after actual observation, or when the account has been made through different hands and the author was not present at the lesson. The task is considered to be representative if all the aspects of the task have been taken place in an accurate way. But missing of some categories might occur, then the question of what is missing, how much and why should be considered.

Representativeness can be affected by the interest or bias of the author to please the reader, or being under pressure, from fear or vanity the writer can distort or omit some facts.

The meaning of a document should be established at two levels: ‘the surface or literal meaning, and the deeper meaning arrived at … interpretative understanding or structural analysis’ (Macdonald 2001:205). The first type embodies the form of the text whereas the second one analyses the content of the message from the point of view of ‘tendencies, sequences, patterns, and orders’ (Ericson, Bareaneck, and Chan 1991:55). Arguably textual analysis should draw to discourse analysis and concentrates only on language features regardless of social setting. Whereas Scott (1990:64) claims that a text is deprived from its real meaning in isolation from the social context. So ‘texts must be studied as socially situated products’ (Scott 1990:65).

**2.7.2 Computer-based evaluation**

Computer application in qualitative research analysis arguably brings some organisation and system into unstructured material and various paper forms, but definitely is helpful in storing and managing a large amount of materials in ethnography and statistics in quantitative data collection. Sophisticated software packages have been generated for the last years, for example, the Ethnograph (Seidel), QSR NUP∙IST (Richards and Richards), Hyper-RESEARCH (Biber, Kinder) ATLAS/ti (Muhr), SPSS. Computer programmes are of great help for a researcher and can assist in simple functions such as text processing and speed search as in more complicated ones: coding or indexing words and further retrieving them, building theories, making descriptive statistics and inferential one. But Gayle (2000) admonishes that a researcher should remember that computers do not produce results as such, they ‘merely take some of the laborious data management tasks away from the researcher’ Gayle (2000:415).

**Chapter 3**

**Design of the learner observation tasks**

1. **The area of the observation tasks**

The area of observation and the structure of the tasks are modified forms of the classroom observation tasks proposed by Wajnryb (1992). The learner area covers the same focuses as were originally proposed, such as ‘the learner as a doer’, ‘the learner motivation’, ‘the learner level’ except the ‘classroom climate’ task. I have shifted the focus of ‘teacher’s attending behaviour towards the learners’ to ‘classroom climate’ as this is the first meeting with the group of pupils and it is crucial to grasp the idea of social relationship between learners and teacher-learners, to make up a general impression about the degree of learner’s involvement into the lesson activities, their attitude to the language studying and the nature of language use at the lesson, either ‘drill’ to practice grammar or ‘real’ (Allwright 1988:13) to communicate. It should help trainees to become aware of other specific questions that influence learning process and learner development.

The focus of every task is sequenced according to its complexity from more general to more specific category. For example, the variable ‘learning styles’ requires higher inference categories than ‘motivation’ as student-teachers have to observe not only the language behaviour but the manner of approaching and processing the activity, and more descriptive language is entailed in their comments accordingly. Although, the evidences of language level seem to be easier to notice but student teachers are recommended to reflect upon the linkage between all the facets of the previous focuses and their influence upon the leaner level.

* 1. **The frame of the observation tasks**

Generally, the frame of every task is similar to the foregoing tasks and follows a standard procedure. Every task consists of three phases: before the lesson, during the lesson, and after the lesson. Typically, the instructions for the ‘Before the lesson’ phase deal with some preliminary activities. First, pre-service teachers are recommended to get acquainted with the classroom design, to arrange their own seating position to observe learners and to contact with the teacher. Sometimes, student teachers are asked to review some theoretical knowledge in phsycholinguistic area concerning learners’ motivation factors and learning styles. Then, to fulfil the tasks successfully student teachers have to make themselves familiar with an aspect of learner’s behaviour this or that task is targeted at.

I have modified ‘Before the lesson’ phase and introduced some concrete samples of learner’s behaviour description, whereas Wajnryb (1992) provides an area of observation in general. I have borne in mind two essential factors that drove me in so doing. First, pre-service teachers are inexperienced teachers; most of them have no practical teaching experience. That is why they are not aware of the importance of every detail in learners’ behaviour that they should consider during the lesson. Second, student teachers are non native speakers. Unfortunately, the level of language proficiency of many student teachers is low intermediate, and they experience problems in the use of foreign language appropriately and give precise description as it is required by the task. Arguably, the classroom observation tasks can be fulfilled in mother tongue but perceiving instructions and making field notes, jotters in English promotes additional practice in second language acquisition, furthermore it enhances metalanguage practice as well.

‘During the lesson’ phase requires collecting data and event sampling. A grid or a chart is provided to enable student teachers to do this with ease. Student teachers are recommended to make some field or jotted notes in the form of graphic symbols, actual utterances or descriptive language to recall events easily as the longer period of observation the more things they need to attend to and ‘the more details is forced out’ (Fielding 2001:152).

All the tasks are provided with examples within the charts so that the idea is quite clear. Again, some modifications of the charts were taken place. For example, in the ‘Learner motivation’ task I have added ‘signs of high/low motivation’ instead of the column ‘Motivation’, as it sounds more concrete and more comprehensible for inexperienced trainees. ‘High and low’ variables expose two extremes in learners’ behaviour but make the task feasible. Typically, pupils demonstrate respect towards their teacher and obey her/his commands and instructions automatically as classroom norms of behaviour require. Ccompliance and obedience might refer to motivating factors but they less help students ‘become responsible and caring’ (Meece and McColskey 2001:7) pupils. Highly motivated and low motivated students deserve special attention of teachers and researchers as the former ones are gradually inclined to lose their interest to studying without teacher’s support but the last ones according to numerous research tend to disrupt classroom behaviour and demonstrate poor results and knowledge. In the ‘Learner as a doer’ task I have substituted the column ‘Teacher’s purpose’ with ‘Learning activity’ as this notion introduces stages of the lesson, makes student teachers familiar with metalanguage and assists them with formatting their own lesson plans in future. The column ‘What learners do’ is added with the question word ‘how’ as describing the manner of doing an activity student teachers become aware of the reasons of pupil’s acting in this or that way. Then I recommend putting down learners’ names as it will help student teachers to keep in mind individual preferences of every pupil and to plan lesson activities accordingly.

‘After the lesson’ phase invites pre-service teachers to discuss with the teacher, analyse and interpret the data they have just collected. Student teachers are provided with some guided questions to assist them to draw conclusions and make some useful inferences while their memory of events is fresh. Reflection phase will encourage pre-service teachers to contemplate over the events and the reasons of various variables of behaviour with a view to exploring alternatives which might be implemented in the future (Gore and Zeichner, 1991:121).

**Chapter 4**

**Self-evaluation of the learner observation tasks**

1. **Learner observation task as an ad-hoc instrument**

Learner observation tasks refer to the ad-hoc instrument and share the features of ethnographic and systematic observation. The most prominent ethnographic feature of classroom observation tasks is that student teachers intensively observe learners in natural setting during sufficiently long period of time. Another feature that relates to ethnographic approach is in that structured tasks, items of charts promote detailed and subsequent data collection which student teachers have to document in the form of field or jotted notes using descriptive language. In addition to these notes observation tasks presuppose collaboration and consultation with teachers, supervisors and peers at the pre-observation and post-observation phases to infer meaning from the data and comment on them. Thus, learner observation tasks combine descriptive note and interview techniques that are typical for ethnography.

Observation tasks possess features of systematic research as the area of observing is specified and every task follows the same structure: ‘before’, ‘during’ and ‘after the lesson’ phase. In its turn every phase consists of some instructions which are similar in format, such as ‘before the lesson’ instructions consists of some practical guides to actual observation and invites pre-service teachers to review some theoretical knowledge of the focused area to back up or abandon theoretical hypotheses; the ‘during the lesson’ phase introduces a chart with some aspects of the teaching/learning process to observe and fill in with jotted notes, symbols, or actual utterances; the ‘after the lesson’ phase involves some tasks in the form of statements to do immediately after the lesson and some inference questions to reflect on during post observation session. Student teachers are recommended to comment on some events immediately after the lesson to avoid the ‘primacy or recency effect’ (Campbell 1958) that can distort the first impression and misjudge the behaviour. Every chart is introduced with some categories. But these categories do not refer to pre-specified codes as student teachers have the right to change or add any characteristics or description depending on the context. They function as samples that student teachers can refer to while describing this or that behaviour, help to describe it in accurate and objective manner and avoid the influence of background theories and personal bias.

* 1. **Test on reliability and validity of variables**

Every task presents one aspect to focus on. These aspects can be observed separately with different groups of learners and in sequence one by one at different meetings with the same group. An observer sets the aims to investigate one particular aspect in depth and to have a holistic view of a specific group respectively. Observation of the next aspect can add some new data and comments to the previous one, and subsequently can bring some changes to the hypothesis made before. Eventually, at final observation student teachers can combine all the aspects to judge and analyse consistently the learners’ behaviour from the point of their physical position in the classroom, their motivation factors, learning styles and language level. The ‘sequential analysis’ (Becker 1970:79) technique allows student teachers to draw objective conclusions. Objectivity is enhanced by guided categories. The language of categories is concrete, unambiguous and reflects observable physical and learning behaviour of learners in accurate manner. But additional category ‘others’ makes the guidance open and in pilot studying the language of categories can be modified and added.

The learner observation tasks can be conducted by two observers simultaneously from different positions. Spatial location of observers is essential in direct observation (Lofland and Lofland 1995:59), which is why student teachers are recommended to take positions at teacher’s desk in the straight-row arrangement or at a learner’s desk in the horseshoe or modular settings, where they can observe learner’s physical behaviour, facial expressions and grasp learners’ utterances during the learning process. Different location of student teachers can bring additional details to the description of the learner’s behaviour, and the test of congruency of descriptive data of both observers can check the ‘inter-rater’ (Seliger and Shohamy 1989:185) reliability and internal validity of observation. The degree of inter-observer agreement can be easily calculated in percentage agreement according to the formula proposed by Simpson and Tuson (1995:64):

number of agreed observations

Percentage agreement = —————————————× 100% total number of observations

The ratio should not be lower than 80% to consider the observation tasks to be reliable. Further discussion with each other and interviewing the teacher after observation can verify and refine the original description of learner’s behaviour and categories where the incongruence has occurred.

Appropriate comments of student teachers to the categories in the charts during actual observation and coherence between the comments and the focus of the observation task will reveal the evidence of the content validity of the tasks. Moreover, field and jotted notes, comments while and after the lesson should examine the consistency of tasks with the current theories on learning styles and motivation, and reveal the evidences of the construct validity. Criterion validity of the tasks can be easily measured against parallel questionnaires on learner’s personality that student teachers conduct doing the assignments recommended by the Department of Psychology for the Teaching Practicum. Before applying the learner observation tasks into practice the tasks are supposed to be checked on face validity, by consulting with colleagues and methodologists who have some experience in supervision of the Teaching Practicum.

**Chapter 5**

**Discussion**

* 1. **Classroom climate**

**‘Classroom’ and ‘social climate’ are two constituents of this notion.**

**5.1.1 Classroom as a space and its design**

Typically a classroom consists of a group of individuals who work together in an enclosed room space over a period of time. Numerous methodologists agree that a place plays an important role in ‘encoding the cultural and social understanding of the behaviour and actions appropriate to an environment’ (Lee, Danis, Miller and Jung, 2001:62). In this view, the classroom is a social and pedagogical entity. It is the place where a structure of social interactions develops and evolves, where a number of events happen and influence students' behaviour. In other words classroom environment involves more than the interaction between teacher, learners, and learning materials or activities: ‘they are social as well as educational actions which will be conducted in a real-world setting which is characterised by a number of pragmatic and attitudinal factors’ (Tudor 1996:155). Classroom size, light, furniture, classroom design, equipment constitute pragmatic factors.

The layout of the classroom with the pragmatic factors inclusively is supposedly designed in a way that supports social climate in the classroom and teaching/learning process. While there probably is an infinite number of ways of arranging a classroom, three are most common: traditional (three or four straight rows), horseshoe (semi-circular rows), and modular (a small-scale design).

Seating arrangement, teaching methods and patterns of behaviour

The particular seating arrangement determines as the teaching method as the students’ behaviour. The traditional straight-row arrangement which is predominating in most educational settings is designed for information delivery methodology. It places the primary interaction focus on the teacher and minimizes student-student communication. With regard to the horseshoe arrangement, it would be the best if both student-student and student-teacher interactions are important to the learning in the class. Classes such as those enhance problem solving discussion and increase ego involvement of most students. The modular arrangement is advocated for classes in which student-student interaction is most important. If groups are formed in the class, this arrangement permits maximum interaction among students within a group while minimizing the interference of one group with another. This arrangement is also recommended for classes which require that the teacher work closely with individuals or groups rather than primarily with the class as a whole.

Location within the seating arrangement implicitly verifies patterns of behaviour and student-student, students-teacher relationship. The classroom patterns involve traditions, set of beliefs and recipes for both teachers and students ‘in the sense that there are tacit understandings about what sort of behaviour is acceptable’ (Holliday 1994:24). The straight-row arrangement requires highly motivated students who demonstrate respect and obedience towards the teacher. In the horseshoe arrangement teacher and students share the focus, and students are supposed to demonstrate mutual respect and tolerant behaviour towards the teacher and each other. In modular arrangement the focus is shifted towards students. The behaviour within a group is more complex as every student with his/her specific character may take active position. Thus every student may exhibit as verbal as emotional behaviour and bring some alteration into relationship and social climate over a span of time.

* + 1. **Social climate**

Emotional atmosphere and group cohesiveness

The term ‘social climate’ refers to the emotional atmosphere present in the classroom. Classroom climate can range from a non-threatening, supportive, free atmosphere, to classrooms where hostility, frustration, tension, and anxiety dominate all relationships.

In social and psychological studies the key tenet is the assumption that the emotional atmosphere, or ‘climate’, in which a group works, exerts a directive influence on behaviour and people’s relationship. In classroom situations where conditions of good climate exist, there is opportunity for students to express themselves freely; moreover, they work more cohesive as a social group. Group cohesiveness determines to a high degree the development of cognition of its members. This idea is traced in various learning theories, such as Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of social development, Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory, Johnson and Johnson’s (1989) theory of cooperative learning.

Group power and individual behaviour

Psychological studies of group behaviour have found that individuals behave differently in groups than they do when they are alone. ‘All groups posses a power to influence and establish their own norms of behaviour and attitudes within their community’ (Bany and Johnson 1964:39). What is more all groups tend to make members conform to these norms and values approved by the group. The values established by the group can vary in extremes. A group may display an atmosphere in which the members feel free because of prevailing kindness and friendliness. In another group, an atmosphere of suspicion, jealousy, or high competitiveness may exist. The kind of pressure that operates to influence individual behaviour can be overt and subtle. It can range from mild teasing to strong ridicule if the group member fails to conform. But an observer should take into account that a classroom group does not always give overt evidence of being a cohesive unity. Sometimes a quarrel over an incident that happened during the play period does not indicate the class group is not friendly, or a vigorous disagreement over group work shows a lack of solidarity. That is why every situation should be treated and reflected within a specific context.

**5.1.3 Gender differences in behaviour**

There are some stereotypes of gender differences in behaviour such as that boys are generally more aggressive, physically and verbally, and enjoy taking risks whereas girls are more sociable, more nurturing and more compliant. Teachers are aware of this phenomenon and they tend to challenge ‘disruptive’ boys and not girls during questioning sessions. Children's interaction with each other is also affected by the gender composition of their working groups. An anonymous reviewer in the studies of Pica, Holliday Lewis, Berducci, and Newman (1991) has noticed that ‘the concept of gender is a relational construct and very much influenced by interlocutors’ perceptions of each other during social interaction’ (Pica et al., 1991:369).

* + 1. **The description of the task**

The overall task (see Appendix 1) is targeted to raise awareness with student teachers about the factors that enhance positive classroom climate and classroom discipline respectively. The second task relates to gender differences in physical behaviour and attitude to each other, the teacher and the lesson in general. Another concern of the task involves studying students’ preferences for seats within different types of seating arrangements. The more advanced aim is to give student teachers a hint about the type of communication as well as the amount of communication that learners produce in different classroom arrangement.

This task is accomplished during the first meeting of a trainee with the class group. Student teachers are recommended to take a position aside from the pupils’ desks to notice facial expressions, emotions and any other physical motions every time the teacher attends to an individual or small group of learners. I have chosen the procedure of teacher’s attendance to learners as a measurement of learners’ behaviour. Although it does not indicate the frequency of occurrence of learners’ behaviour but it gives a student-teacher the idea about the techniques of classroom management, student-student, and teacher-students relationships in particular. For example, if a learner is doing another task different from the lesson objectives the teacher keeps the situation on alert and might attend to the pupil immediately.

A grid of learners’ seating arrangement should give student teachers a rough idea about the method that the teacher employs as it is described above. Gender indication is important as it provides a good picture of social climate and relationship, and teacher’s techniques of classroom management.

Student teachers are guided with some graphical symbols that reflect this or that physical behaviour which typically occurs in the classroom. At the same time pre-service teachers feel free in adding any other symbols for different behaviour than is indicated in the case if they notice during observation. I have introduced graphic symbols to put against every student on the grid without verbal description as symbolic indication is more feasible. This technique permits pre-service teachers to capture non-verbal behaviour that occurs very fast in real time. The system provides graphic symbols that are internationally recognised and comprehensive. Moreover, graphic symbolic indication simplifies the design and further analysis. Graphic symbols reflect concrete non-verbal behaviour and allow an observer to keep and recall the events that have happened during the lesson very easily. After the lesson student teachers have more time to describe the behaviour they observed in more precise words while reflecting on the influence of physical behaviour of students on the classroom climate.

Student teachers are guided with three additional tasks. They are recommended to make some field notices on the learner’s response to the teacher’s attendance. Fixing actual utterances that are produced by learners should promote further recollection of the type and the amount of language produced by the pupils in different positions. Another task provides the idea about learners’ behaviour and comfort while changing their positions. Pre-service teachers should capture the ‘action zone’ (Shamim 1996:123) of students where they feel free in movements without disturbing each other physically. Finally, student teachers are asked to notice and fix the behaviour of learners in two time intervals, at the beginning and at the end of working on the task in a new seating arrangement. In so doing student teachers should infer learners’ preferences for seating arrangement and the amount of time they can work together comfortably.

After the lesson student teachers are recommended to comment on all the tasks mentioned above immediately. During further post-observation discussion they continue their reflection on the relationship between seating arrangement and social climate in the classroom. Analysing gender-related differences in physical behaviour pre-service teachers will infer learners’ attitude to each other, the teacher and studying process in general. As it was mentioned above analysis of the type of utterances and their amount will lead student teachers to infer the influence of seating arrangement on learners’ involvement into the lesson and their progress in learning accordingly. Finally, student teachers will plan their future lesson in accordance with learners’ comfort and preferences for seating positions that provides effective classroom management and eventually enhances pupils’ learning progress.

* 1. **Learner motivation**

**5.2.1 Types of motivation**

Motivation is an internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of action. If we define the goal and if that goal is sufficiently attractive we will be strongly motivated to do whatever is necessary to achieve that goal. A positive relationship between motivation and second language achievement is arguable among researchers but in general language teachers acknowledge that strongly motivated learners are easier to teach than those who have no such goals.

The best known categorization of motivation in language learning is the distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation. An integrative motivation involves an interest in learning foreign language because of ‘a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group’ (Gardner 1985:6). The term ‘instrumental’ describes a situation in which students believe that mastery of the language has ‘some practical value and advantages of learning a new language’ (Gardner 1985:10). The language is treated as an instrument in their attainment of such a goal. Learners can, of course, have both integrative and instrumental motivation as it is impossible to separate two kinds of motivation in every situation of the learning process. Muchnick and Wolfe (1982:273) found evidences of both strong integrative and strong instrumental motivation in the same students.

**5.2.2 Constituents of motivation**

Constituents of integrative motivation

Motivation is ‘subjective experience’ (Good and Brophy 2000:217) that cannot be observed directly, but it can be inferred from students’ physical behaviour. The key dimensions that demonstrate strong motivation are ‘effort’ which learners put into their learning, ‘persistence’ with which learners continue doing their work in a determined way, and ‘activeness’ which is defined as frequency of participation in classroom contexts. But the first two variables demand high inferences from more observable learning behaviours such as working independently on the task for a long time, consulting with the teacher or the peer when uncertain, working at home with additional material, or display of hilarious emotion in response to the teacher’s reward. Although the relationship between frequent participation and second language achievement remains uncertain it clearly indicates interest to foreign language studying.

The choice of tasks according to the difficulty, the level of aspirations, the amount of effort exerted, and the persistence that learners displayed while working on the task reveals one of the variable of learner’s motivation, their sense of efficacy. As Dörney (1998:119) in his review of Bandura’s (1993) article asserts that people with a low sense of self-efficacy tend to dwell on the obstacles they encounter rather than concentrating on how to perform the task. In contrast, people with a strong sense of self-efficacy approach threatening situations with confidence, they are focused on the task rather than ‘self-diagnostic focus during task-involvement’ (Dörney 1998:120). Student teachers can easily infer this variable from overt learner’s cues on their immediate reaction towards the task they face; learners might complain and mumble about the difficulty, or they approach to the task immediately with or without accompanied exclamations about interesting challenge.

Constituents of instrumental motivation

Instrumental motivation variables are in some way more direct, and more observable. Learners’ attitude to teacher’s rewards and feedback make these variables salient. These variables link task performance to the product that students appreciate, and corresponds to the ‘expectancy + value’ theory (Feather, 1982:33) which holds that the effort students are willing to expend on a task is a product of ‘1) the degree to which they expect to be able to perform the task successfully, and 2) the degree to which they value those rewards’ (Good and Brophy 2000:221). Numerous researches confirm that students do not invest much effort in tasks that are not assessed and valued even if they know that they can perform the task successfully. But it must be admitted that rewards are more effective for increasing effort than for improving quality of performance. Moreover, most researchers agree that praise and rewards are motivating with routine work rather than novelty.

Commonly used types of rewards include: 1. material rewards; 2. activity rewards and special privileges (opportunity to play games, use special equipment); 3. grades, awards, and recognition (honour rolls, displaying good papers); 4. praise and social rewards; 5. teacher rewards (special attention, personalized interaction). Williams and Burden (1997:135) in their extensive review of research on the place of rewards in motivating people notice that material rewards gradually decrease interest in the activity. Whereas system of rewards set up as classroom management motivates towards good behaviour and positive changes, informational feedback rather than controlling is likely to increase motivation towards certain tasks as it enables learners ‘to identify specific aspects of their performance that are acceptable and capable of improvement … and helpful to them to move into the zone of next development’ (Williams and Burden 1997:136).

Finally, we should not deny the role of competition which is seen to be the predominant way to encourage learners to strive to improve their performance as the nature of competition with its prizes and rewards drives learners to volunteer an action and actively participate.

**5.2.3 Description of the task**

The aim of the task (see Appendix 2) is to raise awareness of student teachers about overall role of motivation in the learning process, and the degree of learners’ motivation to the learning process. Another aim is concerned with factors that are likely to exert a significant influence on learner’s willingness to make personal contribution to the task fulfillment and learning process in general.

This task is accomplished during the second meeting with the class after they have made their first impression about the pupils’ behaviour and relationship with each other and the teacher. Student teachers are recommended to observe six pupils of different gender and language level. The restricted number of target pupils will focus student teachers attention and makes the task more achievable, as they need some time to outline the learning situation and make some descriptive comments. Student teachers are free in choice of the number of female and male learners as it depends on specific a class. The number of female and male pupils can be equal or different.

Student teachers are guided with some observable evidences of low and high degrees of motivation. The choice of these signs reflects various factors that determine pupils’ commitment or lack of it. For example, the facts when a pupil ‘attends the task at once/ after the teacher’s reprimands’, ‘does not obey teacher’s instruction’ reveal pupils’ positive or negative attitude to the task, or the learning process. Observing the behaviour when a pupil ‘complaints about the difficulty of the task’, ‘enjoys working on difficult task’ student teacher can infer pupils’ sense of efficacy whether they under-estimate their capabilities or not. When a learner asks the teacher or his/her neighbour when uncertain it is likely to exert positive attitude to the task. But student teachers should be careful in labeling this desire as integrative or instrumental motivation since pupil responds to the teacher instruction, which might be formulated as getting a good mark, or interesting challenge. The fact when a learner works independently on the task for a long time demonstrates her/his effort invested in the task. But at the same time working for a long time seems to be ambiguous in determination this motivation as integrative or instrumental as it closely relates to students’ language competence, his/her attitude to the task and task instruction. So, student teachers are asked to comment on the manner of working on the task, and emotional behaviour. The fact when learners are glad or upset with teacher’s reward overtly displays pupil’s instrumental motivation, whereas attitude to the feedback should be treated in accordance with the context. Student teachers should judge whether negative or positive feedback is given and its effect on learner’s behaviour. It might raise positive emotions and hilarious exclamations, or frowning and mumbling on the part of learners. The last sign ‘pleas teacher to get a better mark’ is the salient evidence of instrumental motivation.

The frame of the task involves four columns. In the first column the names of learners should be put down beforehand. It allows student teachers to start their observation from the very beginning of the lesson. In the second column opposite the names of the target learners an observer makes some notes about physical, emotional and language behaviour. This task seems to be similar to the previous one. But this time student teachers have to be concerned with student’s willingness and interest to the task and learning process. In the third column student teachers have to outline a specific learning activity. After the lesson they will analyze which tasks promote negative or positive attitude with learners. In the last column an observer has to give any other comments on the situation and motives that caused this behaviour, and defines whether this situation refers to the instrumental or integrative motivation.

After the lesson pre-service teachers are recommended to make brief comments on the relationship between learners’ behaviour and learning activities in order to define which learning activities, instructions promote instrumental or integrative motivation. The third comment that students have to make concerns attitude to the task with different gender. They should be aware of whether motives of female and male students are different in approaching and accomplishing the tasks or the same.

At the post-observation session student teachers should reflect on the role of motivation in the learning process and its influence on the task fulfillment. They might think of the degree the pupils judge their learning capabilities, and the level they value their efforts invested in the task. It will direct pre-service teachers to take into account the degree of challenge pupils face and adequate feedback they expect. Finally, student teachers should consider all these factors in their further planning of lesson activities, formulating their instructions and anticipate appropriate rewards for every task.

**5.3 Learner as a doer**

**5.3.1 Learner as an active participant and reasons of participation**

Humanistic, communicative language teaching theories advocate the assumption that learners should be actively involved in day-to-day teaching practice. In its turn in order to encourage learners to take active position in learning process and be more responsible for their progress teachers should take into account that learners perceive, approach tasks, process and solve problems in divergent ways. The reason of it arises out of learners’ intelligence, expectations, aptitudes, strategies and learning styles.

Learning styles, or some learners’ preferences in approaching and processing tasks, are considered to be salient and can be obtained through observing learners’ behaviour. Tudor (1996:114) considers that learning style is characterized as ‘a practically-oriented construct: it is based on … the analysis and grouping of observed behavioural preferences’.

Various researchers define learning style as ‘a consistent pattern’ (Gregoire 1970:234), ‘relatively stable indicator’ (Keefe 1979) which consists of distinct behaviours or characteristics a person learns from and interacts with his/her environment. This definition shows that the term ‘cognitive style’ refers to a very complex set of processes and involves different psychological and cognitive variables. Birkey and Rodman (1995) point out that, just as there are ‘striking differences in the way people learn and process information...there are significant differences in how learning styles are defined and measured’. Different researchers have constructed a great range of bipolar schemes and numerous measuring instruments, such as questionnaires, scales, surveys, to investigate student learning styles.

**5.3.2 Areas of learning styles**

Reid (1995:x,xi) have grouped different dimensions of learning preferences into three main spheres: cognitive styles, sensory styles, affective/temperament styles. Cognitive learning styles refer to how people learn rather than what they learn. It relates to learners’ ‘habitual modes of processing information and, in a general sense, of organizing their perceptions of and interaction with their environment’ (Tudor 1996:108). Keefe (1979:4) defines learning style as a ‘characteristic of cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment’. Thus, the term ‘cognitive style’ is used to refer to a very complex set of processes, and encompasses various stylistic variables. The most famous and developed variable with application to language learning is field dependence – field independence (FD - FI). Sometimes called global versus analytical thinking this variable reflects on how learners think and process information. The FD learner is one who processes information globally. This learner is less analytical, not attentive to detail, and sees the perceptual field as a whole. This whole resists analysis or decomposition. The FI person on the other hand can easily break the field down into its component parts. S/he is typically not influenced by the existing structure and can make choices independent of the perceptual field. FD persons are more socially oriented, they ‘benefit from positive peer interaction’ (Violand-Sanchez 1995:53) and tend to be sensitive to approval (Chappel 1995:160). They also need more explicit instructions when material to be learned is disorganized. FI learner, because s/he does not need the approval of others, ‘might be the more confident language learner, actively speaking out in class and taking risks’ (Day 1984:74).

Sensory style refers to how people use their senses (seeing, hearing, touching, testing or smelling) in perceiving new information and materials. In learning context the first three of these senses dominate learners’ perception. That is why learning styles are often categorized to a person’s strongest sensory system: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile. Visually oriented learners prefer to read and to obtain information by means of visual stimulus; such learners react fast to stimulus provided by posters, flashcards and charts. Auditory learners are comfortable with oral teacher’s instructions, listening activities and discussions. Kinesthetic/ ‘hands-on’ (Oxford and Ehrman 1993:196) like lots of movement and enjoy working with tangible objects. These learners are good at dramatizing dialogues, playing games, especially which involve physical motions.

Affective learning styles involve temperament of a person. Temperament refers to basic dimensions of personality that are grounded in psychology and explain individual differences in the developmental process. Buss and Plomin (1984) developed a measure based on the following three dimensions: emotionality, activity, and sociability. One of the polar dimensions of affective learning style is extroverted-introverted style. Extroverted learners enjoy conversation, role-plays and other highly interactive activities. They are very expressive and speak a lot, but do not mind being interrupted. Whereas introverted learners are stimulated most by their own inner world of ideas and feelings. In the language classroom they prefer to work alone, listen carefully, but dislike interruption.

**5.3.3 Description of the task**

Although, learning style according to the foregoing definition is viewed as relatively fixed and non-changeable, Singleton (1989:157) argues that it is possible to help adult learners to explore their own preferences and to shape their learning approach to suit the requirements of a particular learning task. Thus the main goal of observational tasks (see Appendix 3) is to help student teachers to get to grips with pupils’ learning preferences, and thereby to be able to adjust teaching materials and respond to learners’ subjective needs in their future planning, and apply some techniques that can enhance natural learners’ capabilities, habits and develop other skills through training.

Student teachers are recommended to obtain information about learning styles during the third meeting with the group. This time pre-service teachers have to observe language and learning behaviour of students, which is accompanied by emotional and affective state. Linguistic behaviour comprises language production that is organisation of speech, complexity of utterances, pitch of intonation, and speed of production. Observing these variables student teachers can reveal affective styles of their learners. For example, if a learner produces utterances in a low voice without haste and emotions, an observer can assume that this learner refers to introverts and thus s/he requires patience to be listened to. Observing learning behaviour that is the way students approach and process a task, materials they use, manner of solving a problem, their social behaviour student teachers can obtain information about pupils’ cognitive and sensory styles. Trainees should notice whether a pupil uses additional aids such as pencils or fountain pens to highlight some information in the textbook, or whether s/he faces her/his partner during pair-, group work. These situations characterise a visual learner and a FD learner respectively with regard to Violand-Sanchez (1995) and Oxford and Ehrman (1993) research mentioned earlier.

Student teachers are given some examples which describe the language and learning behaviour, and the manner of approaching and processing a task. These examples cover all three groups of learning styles. It is noteworthy to mention that one example might comprise more than one learning style. Thus the characteristic ‘respond in a low voice but accurately’ might describe an introvert and FD learner, whereas ‘speaks fast but with errors’ includes features of an extrovert and FI pupil. But the expression ‘produces long utterances without haste and emotions’ may define an introvert but FI learner. Some examples display sensory preferences only. For example, the behaviour ‘highlight some passages with fountain pen or marker’ reveals a visual leaner, ‘gives the answer to the comprehension question after first listening’ is the feature of an auditory learner. The characteristic ‘volunteers to go to the blackboard’ displays the feature of a kinaesthetic learner but at the same time s/he might be an extrovert as well. Thus all these characteristics make student teachers be aware about the complexity of a child’s personality and give them a hint about affective, cognitive and sensory preferences of learners in accomplishing learning activities.

During the lesson student teachers are recommended to make notices in a chart with four columns: learning activity, name of learners, what and how learners do the activity, comment on the learners’ preferences. Columns are given in the sequence of the typical lesson and observational procedure: the activity is nominated by the teacher by giving instructions, then a learner either volunteers or is nominated by the teacher to fulfil the instruction, after it a student teacher observes the way of doing the activity, and finally s/he comments briefly about student’s manner of doing and infer learner’s preferences.

After the lesson a student teacher should discuss with the teacher and group students according to their learning preferences. This information will be very important for student teacher in their future planning of activities, in grouping of students particularly. They should take into account whether the activity presupposes grouping extrovert and introvert pupils together. The information about sensory preferences is important in planning the techniques to accomplish a task. If the number of visual learners prevails pre-service teachers should prepare some visual support to their oral instructions.

Later, during post observation session, student teachers are recommended to reflect whether learning activities and instructions that they have observed coincide to learners’ preferences. At the same time student teachers should consider the objectives of the lesson whether they were achieved successfully with or without catering for learners’ preferences. More advanced task for student teachers is to think about the learning activities which suit student’s natural learning styles and develop other skills through proper instructions.

**5.4 Learner level**

**5.4.1 The multilevel class: reasons, teacher’s/learners’ problems and solutions**

Teachers and researchers have polar opinion to multilevel, heterogeneous, or ‘mixed capacity’ (Bruton 1997:109) classes. If some of them advocate placement of students with different levels of proficiency and capacities in one group others strongly disagree with this approach. Arguably, every class is multilevel because learners begin with varying degrees of literacy in their first language as well as in English experience. Other factors that add to diversity in the classroom and to rate of progress in learning English are the learning style preferences, learner expectations of appropriate classroom activities, motivation factors, interests and initiatives that were discussed above. Bruton (1997:112) refers these factors to ‘natural’. Another source of wide ranges of capacities in one class he named as ‘institutional, since grouping is institutional’ (Bruton 1997:111). The attitude of teachers to multilevel classes constructively depends on whether ‘mixed capacities classes are intended … for pedagogical or economic reasons’ (Bruton 1997:111). If the arguments are pedagogical the teacher goals will be convergent to reduce the gap between learners, whereas economic considerations might increase this gap.

The problem of multilevel classes is related to teachers and to learners as well. Teachers face the pressure of catering for differing learning needs, interests, motivations and abilities. It is with this implicit goal in mind that they plan their teaching strategies. For learners, heterogeneous classes might result in boredom and frustration; and the feeling that there is inconsistency and injustice in assessment. Many teachers admit that they try to meet everyone's needs in their classes, all the time, even though they know it is ultimately impossible. However, it is not denying that most of the teachers in planning their lessons and activities meet the needs of only those learners whose skills fall somewhere in the middle. Thus, they deliberately frustrate those with lower skills, and bore the more advanced learners (Boyd and Boyd, 1989; Wrigley and Guth, 1992). Other researchers and teachers confirm that low level students are catered in more degree than bright students. Bova (2003) in her conversation with other teachers suggests that ‘the exceptionally bright are being left to survive without the attention that the lower level pupils get’. She has proposed that ‘typically learners of lower level achieve beyond the expected levels commensurate with their abilities, whereas gifted children do not achieve at the same differential’ (Bova 2003).

**5.4.2 Criteria for grading learners’ level**

There is another question that arises from the discussion. What are the criteria that teachers use in grading students’ level as low or high, bright or poor? Millrood (2002:131) draws to teachers’ opinion about unsuccessful learners and lists key features of low level learners as poor communicative skills (both receptive and productive), low language competence, which covers ungrammatical structures, limited vocabulary, mispronunciation; and knowledge - processing problems, which involve low memory capacities and poor meaning comprehension. To overcome these learner problems there is a great number of teaching ‘supportive’ (Millrood 2002:132) strategies, such as increasing the teacher’s waiting time, giving the learners short and clear explanations, offering them cues, and building their confidence by praising them for their participation and achievement, the grading of questions and expected responses, the types of prompting and probing; individual tasks with private and public feedback; group-, pair- work; categorizing home study activities, self-access activities and project work (Bruton 1997:115). A more general approach was found in the role of classroom context, which is viewed as a facilitating resource capable of creating a zone of proximal development with supportive ‘scaffolding’ (Vygotsky 1978) necessary for the learner to progress.

**5.4.3 Description of the task**

The main concern of the task (see Appendix 4) is to raise awareness of student teachers about the extent the task or activity match pupils’ level of capacities. Student teachers will observe the teacher-class interaction. In the case if there is an opportunity to observe and record pair-, or group- work students can make some notes of pupils’ language production as well.

Before the lesson pre-service teachers are recommended to consult with the teacher about the language and communicative level of pupils in the class. Full description of pupil characteristic about their language production and perceptive skills, communicative abilities might be time consuming. That it is why grades of pupils can be helpful as a rough measurement of pupils’ level of competence. At the same time an observer can judge objectivity of these grades while making records of actual pupil’s utterances.

During the lesson student teachers should observe language and communicative behaviour of pupils. The aspects of the language behaviour cover the accuracy in the use of grammar, and pronunciation, the size and organization of vocabulary (Meara 1996:37, 45), the complexity of grammar structures and construct of utterances; in so far communicative behaviour covers fluency of speech production, the choice and combination of ‘grammatical forms and meaning’ (Canale and Swain 1980:12), adequate initiation and response in actual performance.

At the lesson student teachers put down all the notices in the chart with five columns. The first two columns they should fill in before the lesson, where they fix the names of pupils in the class, and their grades provided by the teacher. In the third column an observer outlines the learning activities. It will help to recall the context and join learning activities with the teacher’s strategies. Later student teachers might refer to them as a sample in their own teaching practice. In the fourth column student teachers should fix concrete facts or evidences of the pupil’s level of competence, such as concrete grammar mistakes, mispronunciation, speed of production, or make some jotted notes of actual utterances. These records should help student teachers in their judgment about the level of pupil competence. Finally, in the last column student teachers are recommended to observe teacher’s strategies that s/he employs to adjust the learner level of comprehension. There are some examples of teacher’s strategies that are set before the chart. I have appealed to the ‘supportive’ (Millrood 2002:132) strategies mentioned above.

After the lesson student teachers are recommended to share their findings with the teacher and discuss the language behaviour of the learners whose level appears to be different from the designed before. An observer can present a fresh look at the situation and it should help to create new techniques and approaches that suit learner’s expectations and level. Another task for student teachers is to comment on the congruency of the student’s level of competence and the level of difficulty of the tasks. In the case if these levels do not coincide, student teachers should comment on the overt linguistic or communicative problems that pupils faced at the lesson.

At the post observation session students should reflect on the extent the task should be challenging for learners. Considering the data they have student teachers are recommended to contemplate over the appropriate activities and instructions that match learners’ levels and capacities and develop their progress in the language and communicative competence. Finally, pre-service teachers should reflect on the connection between learner’s social and physical position in the classroom, learner’s motivation, learning styles and learner level.

**Chapter 6**

**Implementation of the learner observation tasks**

1. **Phases of the observation period and their objectives**

Learner observation tasks can be easily embedded in the Teaching Practicum Curriculum. To conduct observation effectively student teachers need to be prepared to the observation period itself. So, observation period consists of three phases: pre-observation, actual observation and post-observation. During the pre-observation period a supervisor is recommended to explain the key elements of the learner observation tasks, such as active reflecting, constructing of personal meaning through thinking about new ideas and comparing previous own learning experience and ‘reappraising old assumptions in the light of new information’ (Wajnryb 1992:9), initiating that is encouraged by guided-discovery and inquiry nature of the ‘before the lesson’ and ‘after the lesson’ tasks. At the same time a supervisor should explain that samples and categories provided do not limit the range of learners’ behaviour and student teachers should generate their own categories. Learner observation tasks do not require special training but some introduction about the general structure of the tasks is recommended. The actual observation student teachers should conduct with the groups of learners that they are supposed to teach in active phase of the teaching practice. But observation of other groups of learners can enlarge student teachers’ experience in observation and increase their knowledge about learners’ behaviours, styles, and motivation factors.

Learner observation tasks are recommended to conduct one per lesson in the sequence provided. Finally after fulfilling all the tasks separately the combination of all of them can expose the whole picture of the learner’s characteristic and the group as a social setting. To achieve this aim four observers are given one observation task but different from each other to do during the lesson. After the lesson they combine and discuss their data about learners from different angles to draw the holistic picture about their physical and learning behaviour, and refine descriptions of categories observed. At the post-observation phase which is conducted once or twice a week student teachers and their supervisor discuss and analyse the data collected. Debates and analysis of the tasks will serve as a ‘resource base for their (teacher student) own teaching and classroom decision-making’ (Wajnryb 1992:16).

* 1. **Criteria for assessment of learner observation tasks**

To assess the learner observation tasks I suggest using four criteria for evaluation of research observation proposed by Scott (1990) which were described in Chapter 2.7.1. and can be adapted to learner observation tasks: authenticity, credibility, represententativeness and meanings. Authenticity tests a task whether it is genuine, complete and of ‘unquestioned authorship’ (Macdonald 2001:204). Unfortunately quite often student teachers deliberately present deceptive data, they tend to copy descriptions and comments of their peers rather than conduct their own observation. Sometimes due to the lack of language proficiency and analytical skills student teachers experience difficulty in describing events and interpreting their data. Therefore supervisors are recommended to check whether there is cohesion between aspects of observation and comments; a sense in comments and reflection; consistency in literary style; and compare different versions of the student teachers tasks. To test observation data on credibility a supervisor should take into account who produced the document, why, and for whom, so as to be assured of its quality. The problem is that pre-service teachers tend to present data in more pleasant way not to hurt her/his teacher monitor, or from the fear of revenge. So I draw to Scott’s (1990) social nature of the text and assume that classroom climate, student teacher’s relationship with pupils and a monitor should not be neglected. The classroom observation tasks constitute a representative sample if they reflect all the aspects of the original document. At the same time they should be treated as guidance so not every aspect of observation might occur at the lesson. The blank can emerge due to the teaching approach or inattention of an observer. The latter version can lead to wrong assumptions and destroy accuracy of data presentation. That is why a supervisor should consider every case objectively.

Meaning of the observation data involves two levels: ‘literal’ and ‘deep’ (Scott 1990:58). The first meaning can be derived from the level of language proficiency of student teachers. Learner observation tasks are recommended to write in the target language. The reasons of it have been explained in Chapter 3.2. It is rather complicated for student teachers to make notes in foreign language. But student teachers must possess the intermediate level of the language proficiency, so descriptive language of behaviour and manner of doing should not reveal great problems for them. Thus, a supervisor should take into account the language literacy of pre-service teachers. The deeper meaning is more difficult to assess. Here a supervisor should analyse the content of the text, and coherence between the aspects of observation and comments to them.

To sum everything up I can suggest that a supervisor should assess the tasks from different angles. Nothing can be taken for granted. The layout of the tasks, the amount of the comments and their appropriateness, method and additional sources for data collection should be considered. To ensure objectivity of assessment tasks can be assessed by two supervisors.

Computer assessment of ad-hoc observation needs further investigation and research. I should not deny practical problems in implementation of software packages in assessment of observation tasks: poor material and financial resources of institutions in developing countries. Moreover, most supervisors are computer illiterate and it requires much training for them to become competent users of software packages. But in future it is highly recommended to include computer packages in the evaluation process as it can assist and complement ‘manual’ approach and present valid data analysis and assessment.

**Appendix 1**

Classroom climate

Before the lesson:

1. Arrange to observe a lesson. Make sure you are seated in a position where you are able to observe students’ physical and emotional behaviour when the teacher attends to individuals.
2. Make familiar with the sample chart. Be aware that you will probably have to modify it.

During the lesson:

1. Make a grid of learners’ seating arrangement. Note on your diagram whether the students are male (M) or female (F).

e.g.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S1οM | S2ο M |  | S7ο F | S8ο M |
| S3ο M(Phil) | S4ο F | S9ο M | S10ο F |
| S5ο F | S6ο M | S11ο F(Angela) | S12ο F |

1. Notice and put the symbols according to student’s physical or emotional behaviour every time the teacher attends to him/her. You may like to add others as you observe.
2. Try to record some field notes on student’s response to the teacher’s attending strategies.
3. Notice any changes in seating arrangement during the lesson.
4. Try to put symbols of physical behaviour when students attend to each other working in pairs or in a group at the beginning and the end of the task fulfillment.

- eye contact with the teacher

- hand raising

- smiling

- no emotions

- boring

- daydreaming

🎧 - doing another task different from the lesson objectives

🖏- physically bothering other students

- other

After the lesson:

Comment on:

1. the seating arrangement, classroom discipline and social climate;
2. balance between teacher’s attendance to the students’ at the back and at the first desks;
3. balance between teacher’s attendance to female and male learners;
4. gender-related differences in physical behaviour;
5. comfort and attending to the task by the students at the first and the back desks;
6. the type and the amount of speech production by students at the first and the back desks;
7. any changes in students’ behaviour after seating arrangement was altered (if happened)

Reflect

What is the relationship between seating arrangement and social climate at the lesson? Does seating arrangement influence on classroom management?

How female and male learners’ behaviour is different?

What is the relationship between learners’ physical behaviour of different gender and their attitude to each other, the teacher and learning in general?

What is the relationship between location of students, and the type and amount of utterances they produce?

What is the relationship between seating arrangement and the nature of the learning process? (teacher-centred or learner-centred)

**Appendix 2**

Learner motivation

Before the lesson:

1. Arrange to observe a class.
2. Make yourself familiar with the chart below. Consider the evidences/signs of physical and language beahaviour that indicates students’ willingness and interest to the learning process. For example,

- asks the teacher when uncertain;

- attends the task at once;

- attends the task after the teacher’s reprimands;

- does not obey teacher’s instruction;

- enjoys working on difficult task;

- volunteers to participate in a competition (game);

- complains about the difficulty of the task;

- work(s) independently on the task for a long time;

- is glad with a teacher’s reward;

- is upset with the teacher’s feedback;

- presents additional material for home work;

- pleas teacher to get a good mark;

- other

You may wish to add some other signs.

1. Choose a range of six students of different gender and language level to comment on their motivation for learning.

During the lesson:

1. Consider these students’ behaviour in class and describe the learning activity in which this behaviour occurs. The far right column is for any other comments, such as the manner or emotional behaviour, whether the motivation is descried as instrumental, or integrative.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student’s name | Signs of high/ low motivation | Learning activity | Comment |
| Mark | a) e.g. Finishes the task first  b) | Filling the gap in grammar exercise | The desire to get a good mark, as he enquires about the grade he can get, instrumental |
| Peter | a) e.g. volunteers the answer  b) | Comprehension check after first listening | Is fully involved into the lesson, integrative. |

After the lesson:

1. Consider the data you have collected. Comment on the linkage between the columns 2 and 3.
2. Which learning activities enhance integrative motivation and which of them promote instrumental one?
3. Which type of motivation prevails with female and male pupils.

Reflection

How important is that the teacher should know different motivations of her students for learning the language?

How important is the role of feedback and rewards. What activities should be praised?

How do students judge their own learning abilities? Do they over- or under-estimate their capabilities? What is the degree they value their efforts to the learning activity.

How does students’ motivation influence on the task performance?

In what way might this data effects you when you plan a lesson with this group of learners?

**Appendix 3**

Learner as doer

Before the lesson

1. Arrange to observe language and learning behaviour of students at a lesson. Describe the manner of doing and materials they use. For example, students might

* 1. respond in a low voice but accurately;
  2. speak fast but with errors;
  3. produce long utterances without haste and emotions;
  4. think for long time before giving the answer
  5. highlight some passages with fountain pen or marker;
  6. volunteer to go to the blackboard;
  7. give the answer first to the comprehension question after first listening;
  8. finish fill-in the gap exercise on the blackboard first;
  9. face his partner during the pair-, group work;
  10. use colloquial expressions in the cues;
  11. volunteer to dramatize the dialogue

1. Think of the learner’s affective (extroversion, introversion), cognitive (Field-dependent, Field-independent), and sensory (auditory, visual, kinaesthetic) preferences in accomplishing learning activities.
2. Make yourself familiar with the chart below.

During the lesson

1. Observe the lesson from the point of view of what and how the learners actually do.
2. Make notes in the chart below.
   * outline the learning activity;
   * describe the action and the manner of doing;
   * comment on learners’ preferences, for example, whether the learner is good at working independently, or in cooperation with the partner, receiving or producing the language.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Learning activity | Learner’s name | What & how learner does | Comment on learner’s preferences |
| e.g. presentation of the dialogue | Philip | dramatizes a dialogue with emphatic intonation | Enjoys and good at acting, prefers to produce language. FI, kinaesthetic |

After the lesson

1. Together with the classroom teacher group students according to their learning preferences.

2. Considering the data you have collected which activities in the lesson do you consider the most valuable for the learners? Explain your thoughts.

Reflect

What is the congruency between learners’ behaviour, preferences and learning activities?

To what extent the teacher should cater for learning preferences in planning a lesson? In what way learning activities can develop students’ learning styles?

Which approaches, materials, or techniques are you going to employ which suit student’s natural learning styles and can develop other skills in future planning of the lesson?

**Appendix 4**

Learner level

Before the lesson:

1. Arrange to observe a class.
2. Meet with the teacher and find out the learner’s language level. Have the student’s grade as a key. You might have made your assumptions about their level during previous observations.
3. Make yourself familiar with the chart below.

During the lesson

1. Look for overt evidence of the students’ level. Consider language competence (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation), communicative competence (fluency of speech production, initiation, adequate response). Try to make records of students’ speech production.
2. In the far right column, record the strategies used by the teacher to adjust learner level. For example,
   * varying speed of speech;
   * varying complexity of language;
   * varying length of wait time;
   * calling on stronger students’ for ‘model’ answers;
   * other

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student | Level/grade | Learning activities | Signs of level | Teacher’s strategies |
| Angela | 3 | vocabulary work; matching pictures and words | 3 mismatches among 6 total words | appeal to another student as a model |
| Farid | 4 | Text reading | speed of the reading is fast but mispronounced two words | repeats with raising intonation, asks to correct;  reminds the rule of reading of –ph combination |

After the lesson

1. Share your findings with the teacher. Talk about any students whose level appears to be different from that designed before.
2. Consider the data you have collected. Is there the linkage between students’ level and the level of difficulty of tasks?
3. Was the level of difficulty of learning activities appropriate to the level of students?
4. What were the overt language problems during the lesson?

Reflect

To what extent the task should be challenging for students?

How can you construct the instructions of the tasks in accordance with the level of competence of your students?

Is there any connection between seating arrangement, learners’ motivation, learning styles and learner levels?

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