

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION AND RESEARCH

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Abstract

There are so many methods which can be used in conducting a research. Every method has its own strength and weakness. Before a researcher conduct a research, they must choose which method or techniques is more appropriate. This paper explains that there are at least for methods that can be used when a researcher wants to conduct a research in teaching and learning development. Those methods are formal experiment, stimulated recall, observation schemes, and interaction analysis. The focus of this paper is not about how the method is but how researchers observe on what is going on inside the classroom using those methods.

Key words: research, method, teaching and learning development, classroom

Abstrak

Ada begitu banyak metode yang dapat digunakan ketika kita ingin mengadakan suatu penelitian. Setiap metode penelitian memiliki kekuatan dan kelemahan masing-masing. Sebelum seorang peneliti meneliti sesuatu, dia harus memilih metode penelitian manakah yang paling sesuai. Tulisan ini menjelaskan bahwa setidaknya ada empat metode penelitian yang dapat digunakan dalam meneliti di bidang perkembangan pengajaran. Metode tersebut yaitu *formal experiment*, *stimulated recall*, *observation schemes*, dan *interaction analysis*. focus dari tulisan ini adalah bukan tentang penjelasan dari masing-masing metode, melainkan tentang bagaimana seorang peneliti dapat mengamati apa saja yang terjadi di dalam kelas ketika menggunakan metode-metode tersebut.

Kata kunci: penelitian, metode penelitian, perkembangan pengajaran, ruang kelas

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2. INTRODUCTION

A development of science cannot be separated from doing research. A research can be done in any way especially in linguistics. We can use any method in doing a linguistics research such as experimental method, ethnography, and case study. In term of teaching and learning development, classroom can be a perfect place to do a research.

As a researcher, we can observe on what is really going on in a class and doing a research at the same time. It means that as a researcher, we are not only observing and then gives some comments or advices; but we can also collect the data for our research. Walker in Stenhouse (1975: 150) said that the secret of good observation is to create the unusual from out of the commonplace.

There will be a method in every research. Classroom observation and research also has some methods, those are formal experiment, stimulated recall, observation schemes, and interaction analysis. Those methods are the most common methods used by researchers who are interested in teaching and learning development. Even there are some methods involved in doing classroom observation and research, the writer is not focus on the methods itself but rather on the research context which is the classroom itself. This paper wants to talk about how the researcher can observe a research in a classroom.

3. Methods of Classroom Observation and Research

There are so many methods which can be used in doing research.

The writer is going to look at formal experiment, stimulated recall, observation schemes, and interaction analysis.

3.1. Formal Experiment

This kind of experiment is used to compare two different methods by randomly assigning students to two different groups and providing differential instruction to these groups. At last, all students are tested to determine which method is the most effective.

One of the most famous projects that involved the formal experiment is called Pennsylvania Project. The aim of this project is to determine whether audiolingual instruction is better than 'traditional' language instruction or not. Clark in Nunan (1992: 92) said that the researchers who involved in that project assumed that audiolingualism is more superior to the 'traditional' one. The subjects of the research are over 2000 students of French and German language learners. The researcher divides them into 3 groups based on the method they use, those are traditional, audiolingual, and audiolingual plus grammar. After two years of research, the result was shocking and disappointing that there were no significant differences between the 'traditional' method and audiolingualism in listening, speaking, and writing. The result also showed that the 'traditional' method was still a little bit superior to audiolingualism in reading.

The reason for the failure is because the researcher used different rating scales for different method and also the teacher did not do what they must do. There is also no specific focus in this project. Ellis (1990) suggested three different categories

of empirical research with its own goal and principal as seen is the table below.

No.	Category	Goal	Principal
1.	Classroom process Research	The understanding of how the 'social events' of the language classroom are enacted	The detailed, ethnographic observation of classroom behaviors
2.	The study of classroom interaction and L2 acquisition	To test a number of hypotheses relating to how interaction in the classroom contributes to L2 acquisition and to explore which types of interaction best facilitate acquisition	Controlled experimental studies; ethnographic studies of interaction
3.	The study of instruction and L2 acquisition	To discover whether formal instruction results in the acquisition of new L2 knowledge and the constraints that govern whether formal instruction is successful	Linguistic comparisons of L2 acquisition by classroom and naturalistic learners; the experimental studies of the effects of formal instruction

3.2. Stimulated Recall

Nunan (1992: 94) said that stimulated recall is a technique in which the researcher records and transcribe parts of a lesson and the gets the teacher to comment on what was happening at the time that the teaching and learning took place. This technique is useful in term of collaborative research because it needs the teacher and students as well as the researcher to explain about what is going on inside the classroom. The explanation must be linked with the lesson that the teacher gave. There are at least 2 researches which used this technique. One is done by Woods (1989) and the other is done by Nunan (1991).

Woods conducted a research on how eight ESL teachers make

their decisions within classroom. The data were collected in three following ways: ethnographic interviews, ethnographic observation, and stimulated recall. Woods recorded the lesson done by the teacher with a video tape, and then he replays it over and over while the teacher giving comments about what is going on in that video. After that, Woods came up with 4 results: (1) the process of decision-making is very complex; (2) lessons were sketched out only in very vague terms; (3) each teacher's course was internally coherent; and (4) different teachers had different approaches in teaching.

Nunan conducted a same research but on different subjects and types of collecting the data. The

subjects of Nunan's research were five experienced teacher (4 – 15 years experience) and four inexperienced teachers (less than one-year experience). As it is said before that Woods make a video tape in collecting the data, Nunan collected the data by making an audio tape. This technique is still making sense considering that the lesson is listening. In the end of the research, Nunan (1992: 96) said that stimulated recall is useful to be done because the teacher can retrospect on what they have been taught and make introspection. It can also be used with other techniques to make the research more reliable and more valid.

3.3. Observation Schemes

Classroom interaction is good to be taken as data beside the teaching and learning method itself. There are so many schemes that have been developed for documenting classroom interaction. The researcher cannot choose any scheme randomly, but they have to match which scheme is appropriate. Tucker (1990: 222) said that it is important that we have some scheme to observe, to capture and to characterize what goes on in the classroom, because teachers are always in dynamic interaction with their students, their materials, and their programs.

There is one famous scheme that often used for observing language teaching named COLT. COLT which stands for Communicative Orientation of language Teaching was first developed by Nina Spada, Maria Fröhlich and Patrick Allen in 1984. COLT was developed within the

context of a project investigating the nature of L2 language proficiency and its development in classrooms. It is rooted within a theory of communicative language teaching and can capture the complexity and variety of instructional events in L2 classroom settings, such as the variety of activities and modalities used, and the kind of language that learners produce in pair or group work.

The COLT observation scheme used in this study contained categories derived from theories of communicative competence, from the literature on communicative language teaching, and from research in first and second language acquisition, which suggests a number of factors thought to influence the language learning process. (Fröhlich et al. 1985: 27)

COLT is divided into two parts; those are classroom events and communicative features of verbal exchange between teachers and students and/or students and students. Gunduz (2004: 9) said that the categories in the scheme are defined in order to describe as precisely as possible some of the features of classroom interaction in language classrooms.

Part one which is classroom events consists with five major parts; those are activity type, participant organization, content, student modality, and materials. Activity types are important variable in classroom interaction it helps the observer identify the kinds of tasks and exercises that students need to do during the class. Participant organization is a must since the observer should know the participant of the research. Gunduz (2004: 52) explained that participant organization is a major variable in classroom interaction, and it should be included in any observation scheme in classroom-based research. It is divided into two types; those are student-centered activities and teacher-centered activities. Another part is content which focused on form and meaning. Gunduz (2004:

57) described that the relationship between form-focused (analytical) and meaning-focused (experiential) activities in the classroom has recently emerged as one of the key issues in second language pedagogy. Student modality consists of four language comprehensions which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing while materials focused on information regarding type, length, and source of texts being used.

Part two is communicative features of verbal exchange between teachers and students and/or students and students. This part consists of seven sections; those are (1) use of target language; (2) information gap; (3) sustained speech; (4) reaction to code or message; (5) incorporation of preceding utterance; (6) discourse initiation; and (7) relative restriction of linguistic form. In this section, each of the students' utterances is marked in terms of the target language. The original COLT scheme has two alternatives, first language (L1) or second language (L2). Part B is analyzed according to each activity or episode. Researcher usually uses check marks and then they are counted and divided with total amount of marks in the same group. The examples of COLT form are also presented below.

institution in which people affect each other's lives. It means that the point of teaching and learning activity at school is to create a good social relationship among students and teachers. The effort of students and teachers in build a relationship is valued.

Lemke proposed two important things of this method; those are activity structure and thematic analysis. Activity structure shows how the process of teaching and learning activity is while thematic systems show how the teacher

delivers the subject. Lemke in Nunan (1992: 98) said that the aim of this method is to develop a system of analysis which captures the dynamics of social interaction at the same time as analyzing the thematic content of the subject being taught.

3.5. Comparison between Methods

After all, four methods are being explained, Nunan (1992: 102) makes a comparison to see which method is appropriate for your research. That comparison can be seen below.

No.	Method	Typical questions
1.	Formal experiment	Is method A superior to method B?
2.	Stimulated recall	What is the basis upon which teachers decide to depart from their lesson plan in the course of a lesson? Why do teachers decide to correct some errors and not others?
3.	Observation schemes	What is the range and distribution of language function by teachers and pupils in the language classroom?

4. Interaction analysis How do teachers maintain power and control through classroom discourse?

4. Conclusion

It has already been known that there are so many methods or techniques that can be used for doing any research. There are at least four methods which can be used when we want to conduct a research on teaching and learning development; those are formal experiment, stimulated recall, observation schemes, and interaction analysis. Formal experiment is used when we want to compare two or more different teaching and learning method. Stimulated recall can be used to make introspection on how teachers teach their students. When researchers want to observe communicative features of students, they can use observation scheme. If the research aim is to know how the social relationship between students and teachers is, researcher can use interaction analysis technique. We have to remember that we have to choose a suitable method before we conduct a research.

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