

**I. Pre-observation**

- What are the objectives for the lesson: Grammar: El pretérito (preterite).
- How does the lesson fit within the overall course: Students who took SPAN 120 at Yale University studied the preterite. We are revisiting this grammatical point. In the following classes we will revisit the imperfect and, after that, we will devote two more classes to compare and contrast both past tenses.
- Are there any special activities on the day of the observation? No.

**II. Observation.**

**LING 564: Language Classroom Observation form**

- Class and level: SPAN 130, Intermediate Spanish I
- Observation date and time: Fall 2012
- Number of students: 18

**1. Lesson preparation**

- ✓ The instructor had a clearly developed lesson plan.
- ✓ The instructor achieved the objective(s) of the lesson.
- ✓ The various parts of the lesson connected in a coherent way, building toward increased ability to understand or express meaning on a given topic or theme.

Comments:

The class was carefully planned. It included the textbook and powerpoints with authentic (and adapted) reading material.

**2. Language use**

- ✓ The instructor used the target language in the classroom appropriately and effectively.
- N/A The use of English was appropriate to the students' needs.

Comments:

The instructor's language was natural and very expressive. The class was entirely conducted in Spanish.

**3. Methods/instructional strategies**

- ✓ The instructor used a variety of activities.
- ✓ The tasks/activities focused on different skills.
- ✓ The learning activities were contextualized.
- ✓ The activities were appropriate to the students' skills level.
- ✓ The lesson was appropriately paced for the level and needs of the students.
- ✓ The type and amount of teacher feedback was effective
- ✓ Explanations were clear, brief, and accurate.
- ✓ There was an appropriate balance of structured and open-ended activities.
- ✓ The instructor made use of appropriate teaching materials (e.g. board, visuals, technology).

Comments:

The activities centered on the same kind of activity: Reading out loud and drills. This resulted in high accuracy on the part of the student and a "focus on form" approach. There were no open or creative activities for the students' to interact.

#### 4. Classroom management

- ✓ The instructor divided his or her attention among students appropriately.
- ✓ Student participation was on task.
- ✓ The time allotted for activities was appropriate.
- ✓ The instructor was able to deal with unexpected issues or problems both during and outside the lesson period.
- ✓ There was an appropriate balance between student talk and teacher talk.

Comments:

The instructor constantly provided input and feedback. Students were engaged but the dynamic was eminently teacher-centered.

#### 5. Affective factors

- ✓ The instructor encouraged student participation and divided his/her attention equally.
- ✓ There was active and lively participation in the classroom.
- ✓ Students were engaged in the lesson.
- ✓ The students were comfortable and relaxed.

The use of small groups/pair work encouraged student participation in the lesson.

- ✓ The instructor was sensitive to students' difficulties and abilities.

Comments:

This was the most positive aspect of the class. The instructor has a gift to make her students feel at ease.

#### 6. Assessment of student learning

- ✓ The instructor used informal strategies to monitor student learning, such as comprehension and confirmation checks.
- ✓ The instructor provided adequate feedback to students.
- ✓ The homework allowed for additional meaningful practice and extended learning.

Comments:

Error correction was constant. This results in high accuracy but there is not much interaction among peers.

### III. Post-observation report

The most effective aspect of the class was language use. The instructor has extremely balanced "teacher talk": it is both natural in cadence and comprehensible to the students. This skill goes beyond the linguistic aspect and includes a wide array of cues (body language, facial gestures, intonation, etc.). The instructor's experience as a theater professor is exploited in the sense that there is a great deal of emphasis on comprehensibility, intonation, pronunciation and accuracy. As a result, students' interaction is highly accurate and fluent. I noticed that students were clearly interested and actively engaged with the teacher. They also seemed to desire to communicate more amongst themselves. In order to make interactions in the classroom more balanced, the instructor could consider introducing more pair or group work and open-ended tasks. A highlight of the class was the instructor's success in making the class environment inviting. Students were communicating in Spanish even before the class started. This is linked to another paramount aspect of her teaching style that is definitely beneficial: the affective factor. The enthusiasm of the teacher is transferred to the students, who are actively engaged in the lesson. Students seem to appreciate the constant and explicit feedback that the instructor provides –mainly in the manner of metalinguistic feedback. I could observe, however, that some of the corrections interrupted the lone pair-work activity among the students as a result of the instructor bringing the progress of the activity to a brief halt in order to comment on one or more of the students' error(s). In this regard, it might be more beneficial for students to be able to conduct the entire activity without

being interrupted. The pace of the class was constant and balanced. All students seemed to be able to follow and be on the same page without anyone showing any signs of being either overwhelmed or drifting off. I found the use of authentic (slightly adapted) texts to be particularly enticing. Their inclusion made it possible for students' activities to combine a grammatical topic (the objective of this class) with additional information related to the target culture. I also think that it was positive to adapt this activity to a less challenging style (the original text displays some anachronistic linguistic forms that might have only confused the students). The text was simplified in a way that it maintained both its authenticity as well as its challenging aspects. In the future, it might be positive for the students to be exposed to different types of activities that could focus on a more rounded integration of the four skills, since reading out loud was the main focus of all of the activities. Overall, I was captivated –right along with the students- by the instructor's enthusiasm and knowledgeable comments. This being said, it might be the time for the instructor to let the students' occupy the spotlight.