

Observation Report by Tanya Romero-González (Peer Observation)

I. Pre-observation

- What are the objectives for the lesson: Continue practicing and the instrumental case
- How does the lesson fit within the overall course: The introduction and revision of the instrumental case completed the case system of Russian.
- Are there any special activities on the day of the observation? The final task included authentic material.

II. Observation.

LING 564: Language Classroom Observation form

- Class and level: RUSS 125 Intensive Elementary Russian
- Observation date and time: November 12th, 2013 10:30-11:20
- Class location: WLH 012
- Number of students: 6

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 clearly very well-organized with a clear goal which was successfully achieved. The instructor arrived before class with plenty of time to set up the laptop and connect to the projector, get ready and turn in the homework before the class started. Once this was done, students were interacting with each other in English. The instructor could offer some opportunities to practice in the target language by engaging in some basic questions or small talk before the beginning of the class.

2. Language use

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

Comments:

The target language was used to provide examples and practice and communicate. English was also used, mainly for grammatical explanations. Since grammar explanation seem to be the focus of some of the classes, I think students could benefit from the integration of some basic grammatical terms in Russian (for example, the instructor repeatedly asked for students to state the plural form of a word when this term could be easily understood and substituted for the target language equivalent).

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:

Technology was an important aspect of the class. First, to offer visual aid regarding the grammatical topic that was covered. The slides were very clear and succinct and seemed to be very helpful for the students. In the final task, pairs of students had to decide how they were going to a concert, what time they had to leave, etc. The instructor substituted the outdated map in the textbook for an authentic, modern, and colorful map that was displayed in the projector. This substitution made the task more authentic and students were clearly excited to see that this was a map they could use in a real-life setting.

The warm-up activity at the beginning of the class consisted of the instructor asking one question to each of the students. In order to promote more student-student interaction (rather than teacher student-interaction), after a couple of questions in order to serve as a model for the class, it would be more beneficial for students to interact and circulate around the classroom asking and answering this question. The instructor can be a facilitator and circulate around the class. In this manner, we turn a teacher-centered activity into a student-centered activity.

This last task could have been preceded by a series of pre-tasks were students could practice other skills (students didn't seem to have much opportunities to practice their reading and writing skills) and the cultural aspect could have been exploited. For example, what kind of concert were the students planning to attend?

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 interaction between the instructor and students was relaxed and it was clear that students were very comfortable to participate and express their opinions. At some points, however, students did not pay attention to what their peers were saying. This was clear in the presentation of the final task when, rather than sharing with the rest of the class, pairs of students reported back to the instructor, without the rest of the class paying attention and speaking in English. In this case, the instructor would ideally be able to re-focus the attention of the class and ask the students to listen to their peers. It is great to have a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom but you can have this and at the same time ask them to pay attention to what their peers are saying, since this is an important aspect of their learning. Also, one of the students seemed to dominate part of the class with a lot of questions on grammar. This shows a lot of interest but it is important for the instructor to keep a balanced participation.

5. Affective factors

- ✓ There was active and lively participation in the classroom.
- ✓ The instructor encouraged student participation and divided his/her attention equally.
- 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:

For the impact of the affective factors in class management, see my comment above.

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:

I didn't have an opportunity to see the homework but, by the end of the class, the instructor told students that he was going to send a link with some extra practice through an online activity. This seems like a very good way of keeping students engaged outside the classroom. At the same time, it provides them with an opportunity to integrate a computer-mediated activity.

Two examples of the instructor's major strengths were the feedback and monitor strategies that he used throughout the classroom. He was always encouraging and his corrections did not interfere with the students' fluency and participation. When students were working in pairs he circulated among them, providing feedback without interfering more than necessary.

III. Post-observation report

The instructor is very organized and passionate about language and teaching, transferring his interest to his students, who were very curious about Russian language and culture and lingered after the class was over to keep talking about Russian-related topics. The effort and planning that he put behind class preparation was obvious and it paid off.