Observation Report I

I.   Pre-observation

- What are the objectives for the lesson: Grammar: telling the time, prepositions, verbs of motion.
- Are there any special activities on the day of the observation? A Pair of students prepared a dialog that they read and enacted for the whole class.

II.   Observation.

LING 564: Language Classroom Observation form

o Class and level: Elementary Modern Hebrew
o Observation date and time: Tuesday, October 16th, 2012. 9:25-10:15
o Class location: HGS B-11
o Number of students: 11

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 handouts with illustrations. These handouts were also projected in the screen.

2. **Language use**

    ✓ The instructor used the target language in the classroom appropriately and effectively.

    ✓ The use of English was appropriate to the students' needs.

    Comments:

    > The instructor's use of English was pertinent; it was also used as a tool to successfully introduce humor in the classroom. Students used English to ask questions.

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:

> Students had ample opportunities to use the target language. Most interactions were Teacher ↔ Student, although there were also some interactions among students.

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:

> The instructor created a comfortable space in the classroom. Even students who had some more difficulty using the target language felt at ease, since the instructor provided them with some extra time and came back to them for an answer.

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.

N/A The homework allowed for additional meaningful practice and extended learning.

Comments:

> The instructor monitors students and resorts to error correction. Her approach to correct errors is trying to elicit student's self-correction or peer correction.

III. **Post-observation report**

The experience of observing a class of a language of which I had absolutely no prior knowledge was interesting and fruitful, since, instead of focusing on the content and the meaning of interactions, I was able to focus on class dynamics. Also, it was eye-opening to be placed in a position similar to that of the "true beginner" student, seeing the class environment from this perspective. The instructor created a relaxed environment where the use of the target language was both encouraged and expected. Ten minutes before the class officially started there were a few students informally interacting with the instructor. A couple of students arrived a few minutes late, an occasion that the instructor took advantage of; one of the topics for the classroom was telling the time. The most interesting aspect of the classroom was the instructor's use of both the target language and English. I think that the instructor's use of the target language was understandable for students and was accompanied by some visual cues (pictures and gestures), as well as making connections with students' shared knowledge (for example, she explained the word for "store" by referring to Barnes & Noble, Starbucks, Macy's...). Most of the interactions were carried out in the target language, but the instructor – and sometimes the students– resorted to English at times. The instructor's use of English was limited and was mainly used as a means to either give specific grammatical information and translations or to make humorous comments. At the same time, I think that some of the English translations and explanations could be seen as superfluous (especially when the meaning of prepositions could be easily conveyed through the use of media, realia or even a TPR-esque approach). However, I found that the comments that were not linguistic-related had a positive impact on students (usually prompting laughs) and helped foment the comfortable, relaxed environment. These comments, since they were measured and scattered throughout the class, did not overshadow the use of the target language. Even with the relaxed environment, a couple of students seemed to struggle when they had to create open-ended questions in front of the whole class. The instructor let them know that they could think about it a little bit longer and she would come back to them. The students seemed to appreciate this extra time and seemed happy to be able to ask their questions when the instructor asked them again. In this sense, the instructor proctored to the individual needs of her students and, at the same time, made them responsible for their own learning by letting them know that they

would be asked again. In this manner, the instructor made her expectations clear and did not avoid asking students who seemed to struggle more than others, thus integrating them. The dynamics of the class, although mainly teacher-centered, also created opportunities for students to interact with each other. At one point, some students had to present a (previously prepared out-of-class) dialogue in front of their classmates and, in turn, each student in the classroom was expected to ask a question to the pair of students who had presented the dialogue. Another activity involved some pair work, which students seemed to enjoy. Hence, providing them with more meaningful opportunities to interact among themselves would be beneficial for their learning.