CLASS OBSERVATION REPORT

1 Introduction

This paper aims at summarizing and reporting what was observed during two classes of English as Foreign Language. It is one of requests for the conclusion and grading of the course Second language teaching Methods, of the under graduation Language and Arts Program of the Federal University of Ceará, supervised by Professor Lidia Cardoso.

I observed two classes of a mid-beginner level course at UFC. These classes took place on May 29 and June 12. The teacher has a Master degree in Linguistics and is currently a PhD student in the same field. She has been teaching at UFC for more than 20 years and has experience in teaching different courses at the under graduation program.

This report is composed of the descriptions of teacher’s and students’ interactions and behavior, while they are part of a communicative class of English. Sometimes, I am going to base some observations on some concepts and ideas studied during the course Methods.

At the end, I am going to present my own considerations about the whole teaching-learning process that I could observe during these two classes.

2 Observations

2.1 Class 1 - May 29

This class started at 2 p.m sharp, but I arrived 5 minutes late. When I entered the room, the teacher told that she was revising the last content seen in the previous class, which was the difference between Present Perfect and Present Perfect Continuous. The teacher revised the subject mentioned above following examples in a grammar that the students apparently do not have the copy, but it is said that that was the material of the previous class. According to her, this part of the class was to link the previous class to the present one, because there were many doubts about Present Perfect tense. She wrote sentences in both Present Perfect and Past Simple to explain the difference. During this part of the class, students were in silence and apparently paying attention to what the teacher was explaining. As I could observe, this part of the class was completely teacher-centered, although it served as a warm-up. It took fifteen minutes of basic grammar explanation.

Then, the teacher asked the students what the difference between Present Perfect and Present Perfect Continuous was. Students continued in silence and did not make effort to answer, but looked at each other, without answer. Then, the teacher explained it creating a sentence about a student of the class to give an example. She kept presenting sentences on the board to exemplify the difference between the two tenses. She used
funny situations from the class to contextualize the sentences. Meanwhile, students were in silence or laughed once in a while, but did not ask anything.

The teacher asked a student for an example of Present Perfect Continuous and the student answered correctly and the teacher made some comments. This part of the class longed around twenty-five minutes, and ended by 2:40.

After the review (and supposed warm-up, that longed 40 minutes), the teacher started a listening activity from the book, which is World English I. Before starting the activity, the teacher asked the students about what an ad was. She mentioned that in English it is common to make abbreviations to shorten large words or with difficult pronunciation. She gave the examples of (re)fridge(rator), sis(ter), bro(ther), and so forth. Students did not answer what an ad was, the teacher, however, did. Besides that, she told them the difference between commercial and propaganda. She presented a situation of propaganda, which is political election propaganda.

The teacher gave the students one minute to think about the ad that illustrates the listening activity of the book. Students did not answer, but listened to the first part of the listening record on a stereo. The teacher asked them what they understood and some students talk a little about the audio. At this moment, students showed more interest in speaking and talked much in a small discussion about some aspects of what they had just listened.

The teacher gave students 1 minute to read the questions and then, she played the second part of the audio. Students discussed about the audio, because there was another person talking about the same ad and then students compared both dialogues. Students showed in this moment that they have a fair domain of the language and can express their ideas quite well. Although they presented some mistakes in the structures, they had good pronunciation.

Then, the students listened to the whole audio and the teacher got students answers for the questions of the book. There was much discussion to wrap the activity up.

The third part of the class was to cover the pronunciation section of the book. The teacher talked about reduction in pronunciation in the English language, and, using the example of the book, explained what the book had brought about the subject. Then, students listened to the tape and said if there was reduction or not in the sentences. After that, they practice the same sentences and the ones in the exercise that followed the explanations.

To finish the class, the teacher gave instructions for the next class, which there was going to be students' individual presentations, so I was advised not to go because there would not be teacher's participation in the class.

2.1 Class 2 – June 12

There is a gap in the period of observations due to the fact there had been students' presentations and a holiday on the dates between the first observed class and this one.

This class covered the last grammar topic of the book, which was zero and first conditionals, or real conditionals. The teacher started the first part of the class making a
summarized presentation of the four kinds of conditionals in the English language. This took around twenty minutes of grammar presentation. Students during this part of the class did not participate, but listened to the teacher’s explanation.

Then, the teacher continued the grammar presentation, but focused her explanations only on zero and first conditionals. She gave several examples to make students understand the difference between these two kinds of conditionals. Students made questions once in a while, but most of the time was spent by the teacher’s presentation.

She used several times some students as example for the explanations, sometimes with “funny” examples. But students seemed not to understand it completely, so the teacher explained everything again.

The second part of the class was spent with the exercises of the book. This took the last fifteen minutes. Students answered some few questions, using conditionals. The class ended with a discussion about the imminent strike of professors. Before finishing, the teacher proposed the students voting to have the exams during or after the strike and the majority of them chose to have them all after the strike.

3 Considerations

The observations showed us that the teacher had not planned the class to be communicative, but grammar ones, especially the second. The first class was the one which tangentially approached to the CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) approach, because of the listening activity, students could express themselves about the topic that was being discussed in the audio.

We could perceive that most of the time the class was teacher-centered and students could or would just answer some of the teacher’s questions. Most of the time, the environment of the class was a complete silence, in which the only person who made comments was the teacher.

As an undergraduate class of English, I believe that students should have more opportunities of talk in class, because, according theories, students do not need only input (teacher explanations), but they need output moments, that allow them to put in practice what they already know. These moments are important because, depending on the task, students can share and negotiate meaning, so they can build language without being preoccupied with grammar schemas, but trying to convey some meaning in order to communicate.

The only moment of output I could slightly perceive was the moment of exercises, in which students should complete or write sentences using the grammatical topic of the class. This kind of output serves only to drill students on grammar aspects, but not always these drillings are meaningful.