Summary of lesson observations at VMU

Lesson observations at VMU proceeded in April and May, after the teachers had evaluated their formative assessment practices by filling in introductory surveys for teachers and after the teachers attended two or all three training seminars/workshops on Formative assessment. In total, 18 lessons were observed by 12 teachers who teach 5 languages: English, German, French, Spanish and Norwegian.

Main insights from the lesson observations, as based on lesson observation protocols

Establishment of a classroom culture that facilitates learning
The analysis of the lesson observations shows that all teachers create an atmosphere that promotes active learning and motivate their students to actively participate in the learning process. This is in part due to active learning and student-centred policy accepted at our university and particularly for teaching languages at the Institute of foreign languages. Besides, establishment of a classroom culture that facilitates learning has been on the agenda since the re-establishment of the university in 1989 and is based on university principles. On the other hand, discussions during the Formative Assessment training sessions also contributed to the use of active learning methods.

Establishment of learning goals, and tracking of individual student progress toward those goals
As indicated in lesson observation sheets, not all the teachers present the objectives of the lesson and their rationale, some teachers present the outline of the lesson at the beginning of the class period, but do not specify its objectives. However, at the end of the lesson all the observed teachers, together with the students, summarised the class content and activities as well as the importance of the skills acquired in this particular class.

Use of varied instruction methods to meet diverse student needs
As the main focus of the observations was to observe lessons which focus on the development of speaking skills, it can be stated that the teachers used various methods which enhance speaking skills. The teachers used independent work to prepare for the task, used pair and group work as well as the whole class discussions. The change of different classroom organisation methods allowed all the students get an equal chance to speak.

Feedback on student performance and adaptation of instruction to meet identified needs
In this area the responses differ. In A1 or A1.1 and A1.2 and even A2 level courses there was a lot of corrections of the students’ mistakes made while trying to speak. The teachers mainly corrected their pronunciation and word order, helped with lack of vocabulary. The observers noted that the corrections were as a natural process; the students repeated after the teacher and in some cases corrected their mistakes themselves. Teachers praised the students for different active participation. During the speaking activities in higher levels, there was more communicated which proceeded without teacher corrections. Teachers chose not to interfere, seeking not to hinder the
communicative process. In English C1 class the teacher was taking notes of students’ mistakes during their discussions in groups and later presented them on the screen and discussed in a generalised way. What regards to feedback, there were some lessons when teachers asked students to evaluate each other’s contribution to discussion and speaking skills on slips of paper autonomously - "Students had to evaluate each other anonymously". The teachers told the observer that these evaluations will be analysed with the students individually.

**Strengths of the lessons, as noted by observing teachers:**

1. “When discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the legal education system in Lithuania, every student was involved - they first discussed the issues in pairs and then briefly presented their common or individual points of view."
2. “Self-assessment and peer assessment activities were well organized. There was a lot of encouragement from the teacher."
3. „Various vocabulary learning games fostered student active involvement into the learning process, made them communicate and cooperate trying to win. By this free from stress atmosphere was created, students felt safe, everybody was involved, even those who are more individualistic and are not very keen on socializing."
4. "Role-plays allowed learning the content and becoming aware of cultural aspects, e.g. how to order meals, how to ask for the bill, to leave tips or not, etc."
5. “Discussion of students’ strengths and weaknesses of their speaking skills made them become aware of their progress and not to make mistakes next time."
6. “I liked the jigsaw activity (not new, but efficiently organized here) which allowed students to speak a lot – discuss the key ideas of the text in one group, then present those key ideas and answer questions in another group."
7. “I liked self-assessment and peer assessment activities – students assessed each other according to the given criteria – teacher encouraged them to be honest and critical”
8. “A very interesting activity was used which involved all students in doing different tasks on the basis of the same text – combination of reciprocal reading and speaking - a good way to motivate students to try to read the text without a dictionary.”
9. “A blessing in disguise – during the first steps the students were nervous, but after the task they were very motivated to make it again.”

**Other comments of the observing teachers:**

- Students were constantly reassured and encouraged to share their opinions and honestly assess themselves and their peers.
- Дестятоja suteikė studentams galimybę įsitvirkinti savo daromą pažangą, tačiau akivaizdžiai nebuvo pastebėta, kaip ir kur jie tai užfiksavo.
- I would distinguish a good atmosphere in the classroom, ability of the teacher to involve everybody into various activities.
- It seems that the class atmosphere is safe, students feel free to comment and express themselves, the activities made them all be actively involved.
- Interesting and innovative activities, engaging all students and allowing (self-)assess each other during the process and afterwards.

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