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Lesson Study research and initial teacher education: how to teach interactive speaking in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in primary school?

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Abstract

Our contribution presents an experimental course project developed by teacher educators and student teachers from two partner institutions (Switzerland and France) in a collaborative study. The research group objective was to implement a Lesson Study seeking to improve interactive activities for young EFL learners at primary level. Each research lesson included a pairwork activity, which contributes to enhance English speaking time for every learner in class. Our analyses of two research lessons show a marked improvement in the way the student teachers implemented the key-phases of an EFL lesson integrating an oral pairwork activity. By combining research work in the academic institution with teaching experience in schools, Lesson Study seems to be an efficient way of helping student teachers acquire professional skills and didactic knowledge.

Keywords

Lesson Study, Didactics of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Joint Action Theory in Didactics (JATD), Pairwork activity, Initial teacher education (ITE)

1 Introduction

Designing lessons and teaching are very often individual activities that require teachers to refer to the curriculum and available teaching resources. Both activities are quite challenging for student teachers who have to acquire multiple professional skills during their training. Consequently, taking part in a collaborative international research project surely represents a very valuable learning opportunity. This is what PEERS (Students and Researcher Social Networks Projects¹) mobility projects offer, thanks to inter-institutional partnerships that allow teams of teacher educators together with student teachers to collaborate on research projects.

In our partnership between the Breton School of Education (ESPE of Brittany, Rennes, France) and the School of Education of the canton de Vaud (HEP-Vaud, Lausanne, Switzerland), we adopted a collaborative approach in order to design, implement, analyse and improve an English as a Foreign Language lesson. This lesson, including a pairwork activity, focused on the development of oral interactive skills for elementary level francophone learners. Teacher education systems are not the same in France and Switzerland. However, beyond a number of significant differences, the two training systems do share the fact that they are both based on principles combining the acquisition of academic and didactic knowledge, together with practical training in schools. Whilst practical training conditions are different in both institutions, they both enable all the student

¹ See on the HEP of Lausanne website: <http://etudiant.hepl.ch/cms/accueil/campus/etudes/mobilite/mobilite-des-etudiants-out/projets-interculturels/peers.html>

teachers involved in the project to have the possibility of implementing teaching sequences. This is the reason why we chose a research approach based on the Lesson Study principles: it consists for a group of teachers in designing, implementing, analysing the effects of teaching on learners, and then improving the efficiency of teaching in a future lesson. Once the lesson study project was completed, we looked (as researchers) at how this work process could lead to improvements in teaching. We used the framework of the Joint Action Theory in Didactics (from now on, JATD) to analyse the data collected during the lesson study process (video recordings of implemented lessons, lesson plans and documentations) to explore very concretely from a didactic perspective how the implementation of a Lesson Study in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (from now on EFL) for elementary francophone learners could help student teachers acquire specific teaching skills.

2 Theoretical and methodological background of the training and research approach

2.1 *The Joint Action Theory in Didactics*

We begin our contribution by presenting the theoretical framework on which we rely as researchers and teacher educators to make teaching and learning activities more comprehensible. The project of JATD consists in theorising teaching and learning practices as they occur in class, during didactic interactions (Ligozat & Leutenegger, 2012, Sensevy, Gruson & Forest, 2015). In JATD, teaching and learning are considered a *joint action* in which teachers and learners develop interdependent purposes and expectations. For learners to learn, the teacher must design an activity made of material and symbolic objects. Comparative didactics, which is at the origin of JATD, opened a way to go beyond specific didactic divisions, to study the specificity and genericity of every didactic activity (Mercier, Schubauer Leoni & Sensevy, 2002). To make it possible to analyse how the fundamental didactic acts are structured (Sensevy, 2007), the following stages are identified: i) By *defining*, the teacher makes sure the learners understand what they have to do in the learning situation, ii) *Devolution* is the action that allows the teacher to ensure that learners will be involved into the activity adequately to learn, iii) The act of *regulation* allows the teacher to respond to learners' ongoing contributions and productions and to facilitate the adoption of appropriate learning strategies for the situation, iv) The act of *institutionalization* enables the teacher to recognize as new legitimized knowledge what the learners have learned.

As pairwork activities aim at enabling all learners to acquire new language skills in EFL, our study focuses on the complementary dialectics between the *devolution* and the *institutionalization* processes. The devolution process describes what the teacher does to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning. To get involved in didactic situations, students must activate their prior knowledge and be confronted with the knowledge embedded in these situations so as to acquire new knowledge, in this case new language skills. In a complementary movement, formulating, memorizing and acknowledging cultural and social values are necessary to qualify the knowledge-in-use thus recognized as institutional knowledge; this corresponds to the *institutionalization* process. These concepts coming from comparative didactics are used here to compare

some significant phases of two English lessons implemented during two Lesson Study cycles.

In the rest of this paper, readers should keep in mind that the terms *devolution* and *institutionalization* are used in a specific sense coming from the francophone theoretical field of comparative didactics and not in the anglophone sense of institutionalization². This is why, from now on, they are written in italics.

2.2 Lesson Study: a way to improve teaching

Lesson Study comes from a Japanese model of a teaching improvement process that spread widely in Asian and Western countries, in particular thanks to WALs³. In the Lausanne School of Education, the research lab 3LS⁴ was created in 2014 in order to promote this approach, combining research and training, in initial teacher education and in-service training.

In this approach aiming at professional development, a group of teachers is set up to study, plan, implement and evaluate the teaching and learning undertaken during a collaborative research lesson (Takahashi & McDougal, 2015). The succession of six phases – i. selecting a topic, ii. studying the curriculum and knowledge in relation to a specific goal, iii. planning and iv. implementing a live research lesson, v. analysing and reflecting on the lesson in order to improve it, and vi. sharing of results – form a Lesson Study cycle. Building on a first cycle, a new one can begin, integrating improvements proposed on the basis of the group reflections. Each new cycle provides an opportunity to improve the impact of teaching on learners.

The Lesson Study approach and its impact are documented in a great number of quite recent books (e.g. Hart, Alston & Murata, 2011; Dudley, 2015; Lewis & Perry, 2015), most of them written about math education. Fernandez (2005) shows, for example, that Lesson Study cycles lead to an improved understanding of knowledge of both the subject and related pedagogical content knowledge, as well as of learning processes. These cycles also foster a greater focus on pupils' learning, the development of an inquiry stance and a reflective attitude towards practice, and the development of teachers' professional skills. One of the characteristics of this approach which contributes to its success, is the multi-purpose style of the approach that enables teachers to learn and transform their practices together with flexibility, in a way that is both relevant and adapted to their context (Xu and Pedder, 2015).

We have applied with some success an adapted Lesson Study approach to the context of initial teacher education (ITE) to improve teachers' talks in didactic dialogues (Ducrey Monnier, 2016). We rely on the power of this method to build stronger links between the training field, where student teachers can develop teaching practices, the academic courses and the practical experience in class. We promote this method as a way to

² In English, institutionalizing can mean placing someone in a residential institution.

³ World Association of Lesson Study: <http://www.walsnet.org/>

⁴ Laboratoire Lausannoise Lesson Study: 3LS.

achieve training through research because it enables us to elevate the teaching experiment to a scientific level (Mialaret, 2011) and to see teaching as the quest for an optimal solution to help learners learn.

Finally, we chose this method because it seemed to us very congruent with the organization of our collaborative research project, including mobility periods and the issues of training to teach through research. Although the scientific literature offers a wealth of research related to mathematics teaching and learning, it seemed to us that the approach could also be tested for teaching and learning a foreign language.

2.3 Pairwork activities: issues and conditions of success

As explained above, the lessons designed by the research group all included an oral communication activity conducted in pairs, based on an information gap (pairwork activity). The main teaching objectives of pairwork activities are to provide learners with more speaking time and to promote more autonomous interactions. Several authors highlighted a number of specific conditions pairwork situations have to meet if they are to encourage learning for all learners. More specifically, they insist on the phases to follow when a pairwork activity is implemented in class.

Thus, Ellis (1997) describes three principal stages when using and/or designing task-based activities (pre-task, during-task, and post-task) to indicate how such activities develop. As for Willis (1998), he highlights the importance of following these phases, stating in particular that the pre-task stage gives learners exposure and a chance to recall things they know. In a more detailed manner, Gruson (2006, 2007) describes four phases, which, in her view, are necessary to ensure that all the learners benefit from a pairwork activity: i) activating the vocabulary and the structures needed during the interaction; ii) demonstrating the pairwork with the whole class; iii) implementing the pairwork activity; iv) providing feedback on the pairwork.

The two phases preceding the pairwork activity are acknowledged by several authors as crucial phases. Thus, Kersten and Rohde (2013) explain that “it may be intuitively clear that practising linguistic structures is a necessary prerequisite in order to enhance one’s L2 skills” (p. 110). In line with this author, it can be read in the CEFR (2001, p. 84) that “planning for spoken interaction involves the activation of schemata or a ‘praxeogram’ (i.e. a diagram representing the structure of a communicative interaction) of the exchanges possible and probable in the forthcoming activity (Framing) and consideration of the communicative distance from other interlocutors (Identifying information/opinion gap; Judging what can be taken as given) in order to decide on options and prepare possible moves in those exchanges (Planning moves)”.

The research group used the four phases described by Gruson as guidelines to design the lessons. However, the implementation of these phases raises a great number of didactic questions and forces teachers to make choices: what is to be expected from the learners in terms of vocabulary and structures? How best to articulate what they already know and what they do not yet know? In other words, what learning skills will the pairwork activity enable the learners to develop? How best to implement the demonstration phase and in doing so how best to play a learner’s role temporarily while staying in the position of the teacher? How best to organize the pairs of learners while taking into account the learners’ heterogeneous knowledge and attitudes? How best to monitor

the learners' activity and keep a record of their interactions so as to evaluate their productions? How best to organize a feedback activity that will help all the learners acquire learning skills?

To address all these issues, the student teachers had to go beyond their common sense assumptions about the teaching and learning of ESL and activate professional content knowledge with the confidence that they could rely on the teacher educators' contributions and help to do so.

2.4 The Lesson Study process

The conditions prevailing for the organization of the collaborative research projects include two periods of a one-week mobility, one for each team, in each institution. The first week (January 2016), teams from both institutions met in France to work on the first Lesson Study cycle. The second week (April 2016), they met in Switzerland to work on the second Lesson Study cycle.

The research group followed the phases of a collaborative research lesson (see above):

First cycle

1. Selecting a topic: at the beginning of the process, the research group chose to design a research lesson (from now RL), including a pairwork activity, on the theme "at home".
2. Studying the curriculum and knowledge in relation to specific goals: the lessons have to be designed in such a way as to fit young beginners' needs and foster the production and the comprehension of oral utterances. These objectives meet both the French and the French-speaking Swiss curricula requirements, both of which insist on the necessity of helping learners develop their communicative skills thanks to the implementation of interactive activities based on everyday situations.
3. Planning a research lesson: RL1 is planned in detail for learners aged 7 years, beginners in English. It will be their first lesson on that theme.
 - a. lesson planning includes the four phases described by Gruson (2006, see above) to make a pairwork activity a real opportunity to learn how to speak English.
 - b. A pairwork activity is designed such as to constrain the learners to produce sentences such as "is there [a table/a TV/a sofa] in [the kitchen/ the bedroom]?".
 - c. Material has been prepared to incite learners to elaborate their own questions and control their understanding: each one is given a two-room house plan (bedroom and kitchen) and three furniture stickers (table, TV and sofa).
 - d. The pairwork is prepared so that learners have to produce a new dialogue with several sentences: to start the activity, learner 1 places three furniture stickers on his home plan; then learner 2 asks a question (is there a [table] in the [bedroom]?); learner 1 answers yes or no; learner 2 places the furniture stickers in the room according to the answer. At the end, learners check if their house plans are similar and change roles.

- e. Learners work in pairs defined by the teacher to take advantage of the learners' heterogeneous levels in English
- 4. Implementing a live RL: RL1 is implemented in the class of one of the student teachers, in France. He is the teacher for this lesson.
- 5. Analysing and reflecting on the lesson in order to improve it: RL1 is analysed immediately after RL1 and with the use of the video recording by the group soon after the lesson. Proposals are made to improve the impact of the lesson on learners' learning in the second Lesson Study cycle. Two points in particular are highlighted: i) the demonstration phase should be more explicit so that the learners know precisely what they are expected to do. ii) the research group has to find a way to improve the feedback activity so that reflection is really based on learners' productions.

Second cycle

- 1. firstly, we had to adapt the activity to the progression of the class in which the second research lesson (LR2) was implemented. The theme was changed to "at school".
- 2. Learning objectives remained unchanged but LR2 took place at the end of the sequence, so that learners could use the vocabulary they had learned previously.
- 3. RL2 is planned in detail for learners aged 10. They are beginners in English as a second foreign language (German is the first foreign language studied at school since the age of 8 in the Vaud Canton).
 - a. The lesson is planned according to the four phases described above. The issues for the group are to improve the demonstration and the feedback phases.
 - b. Two pairwork activities are planned to constrain learners to produce 1) a description of their school material (my [pen/ruler/book/...] is [red/green/...] and 2) a dialogue to know the school material chosen by the partner.
 - c. Material has been prepared: desk plans outlined on sheets of paper with all the school material items drawn on them (12 words) and a box of 11 colored crayons for each pair.
 - d. Since there are several English-speaking learners in the class, the teacher establishes heterogeneous pairs.
- 4. RL2 is implemented in the class of another student teacher of the group, in Switzerland.
- 5. and 6. The student teachers work on the research process to write and present their research essay.

The chart below summarizes the pairwork activities designed for each class.

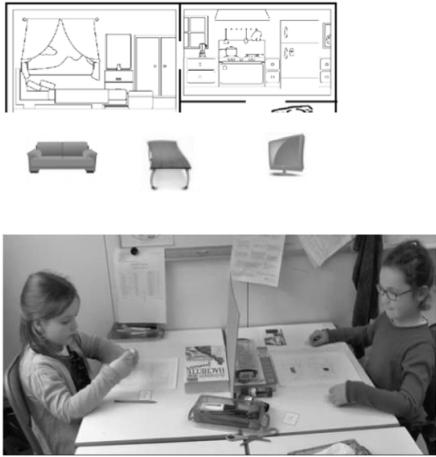
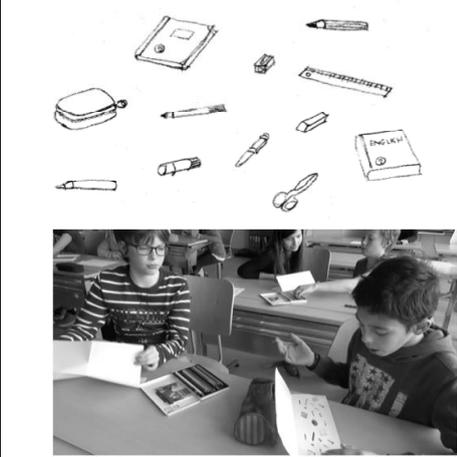
Context in the process	RL1, Rennes (F), Jan. 29th 2016	RL2, Lausanne (CH), April 21th 2016
Degree	CE1 (= 4P) 7 yrs, beginners in English L2	7P (= CM2) 10 yrs, beginners in English L3
Learning progression	Beginning of teaching unit: "at home"	End of teaching unit: "at school"
Linguistics contents	5 words to describe a house: <i>kitchen, bedroom, sofa, table, tv</i> A question: <i>Is there a table in the kitchen ? – yes/no.</i>	12 words to describe school materials and 11 colours. Several sentences: Pairwork 1: <i>My ruler is blue, my book is green...</i> Pairwork 2: <i>on my desk there is a pen, a glue stick, etc. – Is your glue stick red ? – no it isn't, my glue stick is yellow.</i>
Materials	A house plan, 3 stickers	A desk plan, coloured pencils
		

Figure 1: pairwork activities implemented in each class: RL1 & RL2

2.5 Research data and analysis tools

All the team meetings that took place to study, design, analyse and improve the research lessons were video recorded. The two research lessons were also filmed, and audio recordings were made to access the learners' actual productions uttered during the pairwork activities. For this paper we will focus only on remarkable moments of the RL1 and RL2 that are related to the processes of *devolution* and *institutionalization*.

The analysis of the research lessons was conducted at two different levels, at different times. On one level, the student teachers took note of some valuable information from their observations both in class and from the video, so as to modify the second research lesson and then write their research essay. This first analysis level is carried out according to the fifth phase of any Lesson Study. It provides a setting where student teachers have the opportunity to describe the teaching and learning activity they have experienced and observed. The teacher educators monitor them throughout the process so as to help them evaluate the effects of teaching and its impact on learners' learning.

On another level, the two teacher educators, who are the authors of this contribution and who monitored the student teachers throughout the process, analysed the corpus more systematically so as to demonstrate, from the class situations designed and imple-

mented by the research group, how the professional acts of the student teachers improved concretely during the Lesson Study process. From now on, our article will focus more specifically on this level of analysis.

For the analysis of the lessons, we use concepts borrowed from comparative didactics (see above) and we decided to focus our study on the complementary dialectics between the *devolution* and the *institutionalization* processes.

This choice seemed particularly interesting as a means to analyse two crucial phases: first, the demonstration of the pairwork and second, the feedback activity.

The challenge of the demonstration lies in the teacher's ability to involve learners in the pairwork activity. While using English, the teacher shows and mimes what he expects from the learners about the use of the material, the organization of the pairwork activity, the distribution of roles and the sentences to be produced. An efficient demonstration allows learners to imitate the teacher, that is to say to plan and perform the activity adequately. In that way, demonstrating the pairwork activity can be analysed as an act of devolution.

The aim of the feedback activity is to help learners acknowledge which sentences are intelligible enough to be understood in English (pronunciation, intonation, correct vocabulary use and the linguistic structure). An efficient feedback activity is a means of developing learners' higher competences related to reasoning about the foreign language system in comparison to the way the language they use at school is structured, thereby highlighting language norms.

A harmonious functioning of the *devolution* and *institutionalization* processes (Margolin & Laparra, 2011) enables all the learners to better encounter and build knowledge in a specific situation (here producing sentences in English), and then to recognize that the learning acquired during this particular activity is validated and thus can be reinvested in new situations.

To compare the *devolution* and *institutionalization* phases of the two research lessons, we transcribed the interactions related to these phases.

3 Results

3.1 Demonstrating the pairwork activity

As explained previously, the role of the demonstration is to facilitate the devolution to the learners. It is supposed to enable them to understand what the teacher expects them to do and to incite them to become involved in the learning process embedded in the pairwork activity.

Now if we compare more precisely the way the two student teachers implemented the demonstrating phases, we can notice some considerable differences, as can be seen in the following extracts. In these extracts, the column "L" indicates the lines corresponding to the speech turns and situates the interaction in the time line of the lesson. The column "who" indicates who speaks, "AN" and "SA" both being student teachers (ST). "L" refers to a learner whose name is unknown to us. "Ls" refers to several learners talking at the same time. "Class" refers to the whole class talking in chorus.

AN (LR1, Jan. 2016) Demonstrating phase (3 min 20)			SA (LR2, April 2016) Demonstrating phase (7 min)		
L	who		L	who	
243	AN (ST)	ok so (hangs the plan on the board and puts the stickers on the plan while talking) ok so that's a question is there.. a table... in the bedroom?.. Is there a table in the bedroom? Yes? yes? or no? Is there a table in the bedroom?	56	SA (ST)	Franck vient [<i>come here Franck</i>]... .. alright Franck everybody listen... ok... Franck you have to choose five objects.. alright. You have to choose five objects.. ok .. ok... and you have to circle with five different colours (time to do the work)
244	Ls	no yes no	57	SA	(to Franck) yes ok... now.. (to the class) Franck va décrire ses objets [<i>Franck is going to describe his objects</i>] alright et vous vous allez devoir entourer avec la couleur qu'il dit l'objet [<i>and you will have to circle the object he said with the right colour</i>]..ok... ça marche [ok ?]? (to Franck) comment tu vas décrire ton [<i>how are you going to describe your</i>] xx
245	AN	no?	58	Fr (L)	these are green scissors
246	Ls	yes no	59	SA	my scissors are green
247	AN	yes yes is there a table in the bedroom?	60	Fr (L)	ah my scissors are green
248	L	no no	61	Ls	on n'entend rien [<i>can't hear anything</i>]
249	AN	no? why?.. where is the table?	62	SA	plus fort [<i>louder</i>] Franck
250	L	no no yes (noisy)	63	Fr (L)	my scissors are green... .. my book is yellow... .. my pencil sharpner is orange..
251	AN	yes ?... who said yes? yes?	64	SA	attends [<i>wait</i>]
252	Ls	yes yes no no	65	Fr (L)	my pencil sharpner is orange... .. and my pencil is grey... ..
253	AN	no? who said no ? who said no? ... so alors [then]... c'est [<i>this</i>]... on pose des questions, je vous ai posé la question est-ce que ..? [<i>we are asking questions, I've asked you is there..</i>] is there..?	66	SA	repeat
254	L	c'est la table [<i>it's the table</i>]	67	Fr (L)	my pencil is grey
255	AN	a table? is there a table in the bedroom?	68	Ls	ah.. grey... ..
256	L	est-ce que la table elle est dans la chambre? [<i>is there a table in the bedroom</i>]	69	Fr (L)	my ruler is purple oh is pink
257	AN	sh...	70	Ls	quoi? [<i>what</i>]
258	L	est-ce que la table elle est dans la chambre? [<i>is there a table in the bedroom</i>]	71	Fr (L)	my ruler is pink
259	Ls	no
260	AN	no ok	76	SA	alright Franck said my pencil is grey.. grey... this is grey right... .. my ruler is pink.. pink.. .. yes no my scissors are green.. green euh my pencil sharpener is orange.. ok and.. my book is yellow.. yellow... .. C'est bon pour tout le monde? [<i>ok for everybody?</i>]
...
286	AN	ok very good ben maintenant on va faire la même chose par deux alors vous prenez votre feuille et vos 3 vignettes et vous allez à la place que je vous indique. [<i>so now you are going to do the same in pairs so you take your plan and your 3 stickers and you go to the place I'm telling you</i>]	81	SA	(writing on the board) ok my nanana is... and the colour (on the board : My ___ is ___) ok? Maint'nant, vous allez faire pareil, en binôme [<i>is it ok for everyone ? Now you do the same in pairs</i>]

Figure 2: extracts from interactions produced during the demonstration activity

During RL1, the student teacher AN takes over the demonstration activity without involving the learners: he chooses where to put the stickers on the plan and asks the question (“is there a table in the bedroom?” L: 243). In doing so, he assumes both roles as designed in the pairwork activity: he is the one who has the information and the one who asks questions. Thanks to the analysis of the interactions produced during this demonstration phase, we can perceive that the devolution of the activity to learners will be problematic and that the learners will have difficulties in understanding exactly what they will have to do when working in pairs. During the demonstration activity, ST AN asks the key question “is there a table in the bedroom?” five times (L: 243, 247, 255) and organizes the interaction so that the learners produce the expected answer “no” (there isn’t a table in the bedroom). But he does not explain that a learner will have to ask questions, and the other to answer them, according to the position of the objects on the house plan. Furthermore, we can observe that he does not show the possible variations of the question according to both the selected object and the room in which this object is placed. Finally, ST AN simply gives the instructions in French (L: 286) to start the pairwork activity as he is not sure whether or not the learners have understood what they have to do.

The way the demonstration activity is implemented during RL2 reveals significant changes between the two Lesson Study cycles. Those changes follow the observation and analysis of the RL1 made by the group and the reflection phase on the lesson produced in order to improve learning (phase 5 of the first cycle).

First, it can be noticed that all the learners have the sheet of paper showing the desk plan and the objects. Moreover, each learner has the coloured pencils that were used during the activity focused on reactivating the vocabulary (“show me your red coloured pencil. Put it on your desk...”). An important change also lies in the fact that ST SA asks a native speaker learner to do the demonstration. She puts a desk plan behind a hidden part of the board and asks him to “choose five objects...and to circle them with five different colours” (L: 56). Then she asks him to describe these objects and each learner to circle the same objects with the same colours on his/her desk plan (L: 57). Then she repeats the sentence used by the native speaker learner five times (L: 76) introducing variations to illustrate the different possible questions the learners will have to ask. At the end of the demonstration activity, she repeats the key sentence and writes it on the board (L: 81).

There are, of course, several advantages to this implementation. The way the demonstration activity is implemented is closer to what the learners will have to do when in pairs. Moreover, asking a native speaker to do the activity allows the learners to hear good pronunciation and authentic language (even if this learner speaks English a little too fast). Another aspect that is strongly contrasted is the fact that AN’s learners have no documents to work on whereas SA’s learners can keep a record of the information given during the demonstration activity. Finally, the way both student teachers put an end to the demonstration activity and introduce the work in pairs is also very dissimilar. AN simply gives the instructions in French to start the pairwork activity (L: 286), whereas SA gives the learners the opportunity to check their answers (L: 76). More noteworthy still, she highlights the structure of the sentence that she writes on the board (L: 81). Thus, for the pairwork activity, the learners can refer to what is written on the board if necessary. Thanks to this demonstration activity, the learners become acquainted with the document and to the linguistic items, which helps them focus on their work more rapidly in RL2 than in RL1.

3.2 The feedback on the pairwork activity

After comparing the implementation of the demonstration activities, we now present the analysis of the feedback activity. Gruson (2006) insists on the necessity of analysing with the learners the oral interactions produced during the pairwork activity so as to develop their ability to reflect on their action and to firmly establish the key language elements they have to remember. We consider feedback activities as a possible act of *institutionalization*, as explained previously. That means that in doing so, the teacher recognizes as new legitimized knowledge what the learners have learned by doing the pairwork activity.

AN (LR1, Jan. 2016) Feedback phase (4 minutes)			SA (LR2, April 2016) Feedback phase (4 minutes)		
L	who		L	who	
320	AN (ST)	Alors on va revenir sur ce que vous avez dit... Comment on pose la question, qu'est-ce que vous avez posé comme question? Donnez-moi un exemple de question que vous avez posée. [so we are going to come back to what you said... How should we ask the question, how can we ask the question? Give me an example of the questions you've asked]... Kelly ?	288	SA (ST)	je vais demander à un groupe de faire un petit exemple... qui veut faire un exemple [I'll ask one pair to show a little example... who wants to show an example]... Lisa et [and] Pablo ... sh, sh, sh...
321	Ke (L)	Eh XX sofi/ in the bedroom	289	Li (L)	what is your.. desk?
322	L AN	C'est pas sofi [it's not sofi] Sofa, sofa in the bedroom.. alors il manque un truc au début... Béatrice, c'est quoi la question ? que tu as posée ? tu l'as bien posée au début.	290	SA	what is on your desk?
323	Bé (L)	...	291	Li (L)	what is on your desk?
324	AN	Et Noémie aussi	292	SA	right... what is on your desk
325	No (L)	je sais plus [I can't remember]	...		
326	AN	ah... alors c'était [ok then it was] is there	304	Pa (L)	no it isn't. My felt tip pen is red
327	Ca (L)	is there a sofa ta ta ta	305	SA	my felt tip pen is red
328	AN	oui ! continue [yes! keep going] Carlo	...		
329	Ca (L)	is there a sofa	310	Li (L)	o our ruler is euh blue blue?
330	AN	in? the?	311	SA	is your ruler blue
...		(Asking for the learners' attention)	...		
334	AN	alors on reprend ensemble [Ok let's repeat together]. Is there	320	Li (L)	is your pen it's euh wello?
335	Class	is there	321	SA	yellow... Lisa? Yellow
336	AN	a sofa	322	Li (L)	yellow
337	Class	a sofa	323	SA	yellow
338	L	on the bedroom	324	Pa (L)	no it isn't. My pen is blue.
339	AN	IN the bedroom, ok Caroline?	325	SA	my pen is blue, alright, perfect. Tout le monde a bien compris l'exercice hein? [everyone has understood the exercise, haven't you]
			326	Class	ouiiii [yeeees]

Figure 3: extracts from interactions produced during the feedback activity

Once more, the comparisons between RL1 and RL2 show that these activities are strongly contrasted. As the transcriptions (below) illustrate, no real feedback is provided during RL1. AN simply asks the learners to recall the question used during the pairwork activity, which they do not succeed in doing (L: 325). As a consequence, AN has to produce the question himself, one word at a time (L: 326, 330, 334, 336, 339) and the learners simply repeat the words after him (L: 335, 337).

In contrast, SA asks two learners to redo the pairwork activity in front of the class (L: 288). PAB, who is a native English speaker, accomplishes the task very easily. However, we can observe from the transcription that LIS, the second learner, encounters several difficulties. She is unable to formulate the questions correctly (L: 289, 310) and to pronounce the adjective “yellow” correctly (L: 320).

As for ST SA, she uses reformulations or repetitions to either correct (L: 290, 311, 325) or validate (L: 292, 305, 321) what the learners say. At the end of this phase, we note that some recurring mistakes are not corrected (L: 320).

Asking the learners to listen to a pair of learners re-doing the pairwork activity orally in front of the whole class was much more efficient than simply asking them to recall the key-questions. With this new way of organizing the feedback activity, the student teacher, who implemented LR2, was able to assess both the syntax and the pronunciation of the learners’ productions, either by repeating them, correcting them or reformulating them. We consider that these speech acts can stand for an *institutionalization* process as they allow the learners to hear and repeat expressions that correspond to language norms.

4 Discussion and conclusion

4.1 An effective improvement of professional skills

With this didactic analysis of the two research lessons implemented during the Lesson Study process, we wanted to show how the student teachers’ skills have developed from RL1 to RL2. The Lesson Study approach allowed the group to design and implement a second lesson in which the handling of teaching actions really improved. Clear issues were identified by the group of student teachers from the observation of the first lesson. Following this identification, important adaptations were introduced in the implementation of the second Lesson Study cycle, for two key-moments of the lesson: the demonstration and feedback activities that are related to the processes of *devolution* and *institutionalization*. Despite this improvement, we think that it would have been even more efficient to implement a metalinguistic activity that would have required the learners to analyse the expressions themselves, as well as to criticize and reformulate them. This last observation clearly indicates where the new group of student teachers who will be involved in the PEERS project for the next university year should concentrate their efforts: improving the feedback activity so as to better involve all the learners and to develop their learning skills.

4.2 Lesson Study: an effective training and collaborative research approach to improve teaching English as a Foreign Language

This experience has shown us that the Lesson Study approach is an efficient means of training student teachers to analyse and improve teaching English as a Foreign Language. Collaborating with student teachers in a Lesson Study seems to us an excellent way of discussing and documenting, from a didactic perspective, the main issues of the teaching and learning of foreign languages. During the Lesson Study project such issues were discussed: Is teaching and learning a foreign language about reproducing everyday situations in class, as the curricula sometimes suggest, even though the generalist teachers are not regular users of the foreign language they have to teach? How best to develop communication skills when learners' linguistic knowledge is very uncertain?

We think indeed that this kind of process could have an important impact on the development of a real professional community, able to share and exchange on important professional issues (Schneuwly, 2013) such as the resources of the profession, the contents and their organization, learners' potentialities and possible difficulties in acquiring knowledge.

Since teachers are increasingly encouraged or required to collaborate, without knowing exactly what they should collaborate about and why collaborating is useful, Lesson Study opens a way to train student teachers to develop effective collaborative practices. Our research project also opens up a possible way to organize the collaboration between novice and expert teachers together with researchers who can document the teaching and learning of EFL from a didactic perspective.

Furthermore, our study is original in the sense that few lesson studies on the teaching of foreign languages have been published in the scientific literature.

4.3 Perspectives

At this stage, we have simply analysed the transformation of student teachers' professional skills, relying on the evolution of their implementing abilities. At a later stage, we should be able to return to the learners' actual productions during the pairwork activity, in order to show the impact of teaching on learners' learning. It should also be possible to show with the data gathered during the whole process, how the joint analysis by the student teachers and the teacher educators led us to improve teaching practice in order to promote the learning of all learners.

A new research group is currently designing new lessons focused on communicative skills in English, which include pairwork activities. This work relies on the research data produced by the previous group, in particular on the contrasts analysed between two research lessons, in order to improve the devolution of the learning situation to learners and the *institutionalization* of linguistic knowledge. The renewal of the group has led to a further exploration of the iterative cycles specific to the Lesson Study approach. At their level, student teachers conceptualize and re-conceptualize a lesson with regard to communicative skills. At another level, we as trainers conceptualize and re-conceptualize a training process based on research. Thus, the insights emerging from the first cycle lay the foundation for the improvement of the second cycle.

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