

**Assessing Perneth's (2012) Case Study on Activities to Foster Oral Participation  
among Beginner-Level Learners** Paper summary

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**Perneth (2012) Summary**

Perneth's (2012) article entitled "Identifying Classroom Activities to Foster Oral Participation among Beginner-Level Learners in an English Class" published in *Opening Writing Doors Journal*; aimed at "identifying the activities an EFL teacher uses to encourage oral participation among beginner-level learners" (p.1). The paper was organized into seven main sections, namely, Introduction, literature review, methodology, data analysis, findings, conclusions, discussion and implications.

The researcher provided a brief introduction where he stated the research question that guided this research: "What strategies do teachers use to encourage oral participation among beginner-level learners in an English classroom?" A series of concepts and previous studies were described: a) the classroom interaction, phenomenon in which students practice oral and written speech in the language they are acquiring (Bishop, 2000, p.16), b) motivation, which is the positive implication and contribution in the attitudes on learning environment (Winke, 2005, p.18): c) oral participation, that is the cognitive and socio-linguistic communication developed in the classroom interaction considering the nature and conditions of speech, (Carter and Nunan, 2001, p.19); and d) teaching strategies, described as the way where teacher has the opportunity to bring the students a faster and more



efficient learning process, a greater retention, and feel more positive about the learning experience (Bishop, 2000, p.20).

The author continued with the methodology section, in which he explained why he adopted a qualitative case study to facilitate the exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. In order to collect data, the author used two interviews, which followed a specific protocol, a questionnaire consisting of five questions on students' perceptions of class, teacher and thoughts on their own involvement; seven non-participant observations two conducted in a foreign language laboratory and five in a regular classroom. The author focused on carefully describing the environment in which the phenomenon was present. Participants were 27 beginner-level students of an English course at a public university in Colombia.

To analyze the data gathered, the author followed Hatch's (2002) interpretive analysis. He organized the data using MAXqda, a computer software program; and after having reduced the main aspects into a set of domains that reflected the pillars of his findings. Perneth (2012) identified two themes: 1) Teachers' activities to encourage students' participation, in which the researcher mentioned the main tasks developed by the teacher in class. For example, reading comprehension, role plays, translations and songs, based on two books, namely, the student book, "New English File" for elementary students and a book named "kidnapped". When using the material the teacher focused on several methodologies, reading, repetition, and evaluation by asking for pronunciation and conjugation of the texts. In addition, the author described how the teacher encouraged the students to answer orally, and tried to motivate them giving positive grades when participating. Participants prepared the readings at home and the teacher provided them with a questionnaire as homework. The author inferred that teacher's attitude, and strategies might have influenced the student interest towards the class. 2) Influence on the students' oral participation in class: the author noticed that the teacher did not encourage students by



implementing new or different activities in the class. Therefore the teacher did not focus on the use of activities to improve the students' motivation while teaching.

As concluding remarks, Perneth's (2012) research revealed that "students' oral participation depended not only on the grammar and vocabulary knowledge of English, but also on which and how the class activities were implemented by the teacher in the classroom" (p.27) classroom" (p.27). Some activities for example role plays and song translations encouraged students' oral participation.

For the discussion and implications section, the author referred to Williams and Williams (2011) who stated that "Motivation is probably the most important factor that educators can target in order to improve learning" (p.28) identified five key aspects as follows: the student, the teacher, the content, the method/process, and the environment. However, Perneth was able to find only two of these key aspects: The teacher, who is not only a guide but the person in charge of observing and analysing the students' learning; and the lesson procedure, which must be focused towards the needs and expectations of the students.

### **Assessing Perneth's (2012) Case Study**

This critique attempts to assess the qualitative case study conducted by Perneth (2012), and will be based on areas: positive and negative aspects and suggestions. There are several strengths found in this study, for instance the theoretical framework, and an updated and concise literature review, which provided the necessary foundations for a better understanding of the study. In doing so, the author defined key terms, such as: classroom interaction, motivation, oral participation, and teaching strategies. Additionally, the instruments used were appropriately chosen, gathering information from various perspectives through the interviews and collecting first hand data from observations. Likewise, the conclusions were brief and clear; the author was able to narrow down the

main aspects taken into account for understanding the phenomenon, revealing the importance of the teachers' role in the classroom and his encouragement which influences directly students' oral participation and motivation. Similarly, the discussion and implication were helpful at demonstrating the pertinence of the teachers and their teaching procedures.

A few weaknesses, for example, for example the lack of information about the participants, were identified in this research. Although the author provided the number of the participants, and their proficiency level; he failed to inform their gender, race or age. Another flaw of this sample was its size; it was quite small making it difficult to relate and to understand various perspectives on the phenomenon in this particular context. Although data collection was concise and the interview structures were clear the author did not specify the length of the observations or the protocol followed to gather data through this instrument. Regardless of the organization of data through MAXqda, -a computer software program- he failed to mention the amount of domains analysed, he mentioned the interpretation and the used of Hatch's (2002) analysis but did not state the exact domains he focused on.

The researcher should have provided more detailed information about the participants, in order to have a better view of the individuals affected by this issue and the sort of population in which these methodologies might be helpful. The observation protocol should have been included; these documents could be useful for other researchers who attempt to conduct similar studies. Although Perneth (2012) used two instruments, video-recordings would have been useful as a way to gather data, providing him with more than one opportunity to go over the teacher's strategies, the students' reactions and the influence of the teacher's, methodology and motivational techniques. Besides, the researcher should have given more detailed information about the set of domains analysed, making it easier for the reader to understand the amount of domains identified in the data analysis process.



To sum up, this critique provided a general perspective of Perneth's (2012) case study, its main parts, and its key ideas. The author described thoroughly the main concepts considered to better comprehend oral participation in a classroom. He also identified, as findings, two major themes: Teachers' activities to encourage the students' participation; and activities that influence on the students' oral participation; he reported relevant data about the students' interaction with the teacher, the environment when speaking and mentioned various implications when fostering oral participation, paying special attention to the motivational skills of the teacher.

Generally speaking, this paper is clear and helpful to those in the educational field who need to understand how FL teacher's role should encourage and improve students' oral participation.

References:

Perneth, E. (2012). Qualitative case study: Identifying Classroom Activities to Foster Oral Participation among Beginner-Level Learners in an English Class.

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