CHECKLIST FOR OBSERVING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

INFORMAL OBSERVATION FORM

TARGET LANGUAGE USE

Both the TEACHER and the STUDENTS speak in the target language (TL)

□ Less than 50% of the time   □ 50% to 75% of the time
□ 75% to 90% of the time   □ 90% or more of the time

WHY? *Students cannot acquire spoken language if they do not hear it.*
Over 90% target language use is recommended by ACTFL (since 2011)
Not using the TL in a language class is like a band teacher letting students play ping pong every day instead of playing music.

The teacher checks for comprehension frequently (many times per class period)

□ by asking questions to the whole class   □ by listening for responses from the whole class
□ by observing the response time and confidence of students
□ by asking differentiated questions to individual students, depending on their ability
□ by asking for translation occasionally

WHY? *Students cannot acquire language if they do not understand what the teacher is saying.*
The teacher must speak in the TL and it must be comprehensible to the students.

The teacher offers opportunities for sophisticated language use

□ by embellishing the basic statements that students make
□ by asking a variety of questions in a variety of formats and levels
□ by inviting students to create with the language rather than simply:
    a) repeating   b) responding with formulas, or c) memorizing dialogues

WHY? *Students should be expected to think and perform at high levels—even in beginning courses*
Memorization is the LOWEST level of thinking in the New Bloom's Taxonomy.
We need to encourage students to analyze, evaluate and design at all course levels.

BEST PRACTICE TEACHING METHODS

The teacher raises the level of student attention

□ by involving students in the narration   □ by allowing student input to direct portions of the lesson
□ by talking *to* individual students   □ by talking *about* specific students
□ by referring to places/locations/people/topics that are of interest to the students

The students are actively engaged in the lesson

□ by gesturing   □ by acting
□ by contributing ideas to the lesson   □ by responding to questions
□ by interacting with one another   □ by drawing responses

The students are held accountable for the lesson

□ by speaking the target language when asked   □ by helping each other
□ by retelling material in their own words   □ by translation, when asked
□ by unannounced quizzes   □ by writing in the target language or in L1

The teacher promotes grammatical accuracy
☐ by briefly explaining the meaning of unfamiliar or new items
☐ by using the unfamiliar or new items multiple times & in different contexts
☐ by asking students to predict correct grammatical usage
☐ by requiring increased accuracy as students progress in fluency

The teacher demonstrates appropriate correction techniques
☐ by modeling accuracy: Rewarding the student's attempts while acknowledging the content of the student statements
☐ by demonstrating the value of accuracy: Stating the meaning of the inaccurate construction
☐ by allowing students to correct themselves

The teacher promotes higher-level thinking skills
☐ by asking students to synthesize the language by retelling material in their own words (not memorized speeches)
☐ by asking students to create imaginative situations
☐ by asking students to supply motivation for actions in the story

The teacher differentiates by tailoring tasks to individual student ability
☐ by being aware of ability levels of students
☐ by asking many types and levels of questions
☐ by expecting multiple levels of answers to questions from different students
         (one-word answers, short phrases, complete sentences, extended discourse)
☐ by requiring longer, more detailed, and more accurate narration from the most capable students

EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

There seems to be a routine to begin the class
☐ teacher greets students as they arrive   ☐ students arrive on time
☐ students are on task   ☐ students are prepared
☐ students are working by the time the class officially starts

The teacher models proactive classroom management
☐ by showing genuine interest in students   ☐ by remaining calm and in control
☐ by taking the time to listen to student suggestions   ☐ by looking at individual students with a calm demeanor
☐ by moving closer to potential disruptions
☐ by using body language to control student behavior non-verbally
☐ by using facial expressions that are appropriate to the situation (smiling, not angry, blank expression, etc.)
☐ by offering choices to students who fail to co-operate

There seems to be a routine to end the class
☐ students are not waiting by the door to leave class
☐ students are working and/or attentive until the bell rings
☐ students are not packing up 5 minutes before the end of class
☐ students wait to be dismissed by the teacher, not the bell

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