

Encouraging adolescent learners' active interaction in the FL classroom

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Foreign language (FL) learning in high schools is an under-researched yet vital area, particularly in countries where contact hours are limited, and the target language is not spoken in the community (Block, 2012). The focus of this study is on classroom oral interaction and ways in which teachers support and/or inhibit target language use among adolescent learners. Based on second language acquisition research, features of interaction have been empirically demonstrated to support learning, including the quality of teacher input and opportunities for student output (Mackey, 2012), provision and use of corrective feedback (Lyster, Saito & Sato, 2012; Tognini, Philip & Oliver, 2010), and controlled meaning-based practice (DeKeyser, 2007). Yet few studies have investigated the extent to which these four features are characteristic of oral interaction in high school FL classrooms, or the role of peer relations and classroom environment. This paper explores the incidence of these features, the everyday challenges and successes of encouraging adolescent learners to participate in the target language, and the importance of the classroom environment.

Data includes observation of four classes in two regional schools in Croatia, and follow-up interviews and questionnaires with two teachers and 75 students, as well as interviews with teachers and students in high schools elsewhere. The paper concludes with reflection on best practice among teachers in their use of oral interaction to support language learning among high school students.