

Listening Comprehension and Instructor Input in American and Gymnasium Foreign Language
Classrooms: An International Comparison

Submitted by
Steven Anthony Wynne

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Mentor: Christopher Clason, Professor of German
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures
Oakland University

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Introduction

This study is an international comparison of teacher talk, i.e. the instructor's use of the target language, and its effect on student listening comprehension. Comparing both the German Gymnasium and an International Baccalaureate American High School, this examination will evaluate first- and second year English and German classrooms, respectively. To evidence the influence of the instructor's speech in the classroom, the amount and quality of the instructor's speech were observed and qualitatively recorded. To compare the instructional input against student listening comprehension, students completed a dictation exercise, which included content both from the instructor's own speech and previous content in the schools' respective textbooks.

Definition of "teacher talk"

"Teacher talk", as Krashen, Terrell, Ehrman, and Herzog (1984) defined the term, is one of the modes of comprehensible input that a student perceives in the classroom; such language, is only slightly above the proficiency level of the students. The characteristics of "teacher talk" in the classroom include more careful articulation, frequent use of vocabulary items, and frequent affirmations and assurances of student responses (Hadley 2000). Simply put, teacher talk is the foreign language that the instructor generates for the students to supplement, enhance, and provide context for the language in the classroom. The instructor input, for many students, is the sole source of the target language (Frey 1988).

The use of "teacher talk" in the classroom is a long-supported teaching strategy: instructors have practiced the method at least since the nineteenth century (Cook 2001). Batemann (2009) also reviewed a number of empirical studies which established and supported a correlation between the amount of foreign language spoken by the instructor and the improvement of student listening comprehension. Turnbull (1999), one of these researchers, conducted an

examination of secondary French classrooms in Canada and observed the improvement of student listening proficiency due to the instructor's use of the target language.

While the use of the target language is vital for listening comprehension, instructors must carefully articulate their speech, especially in beginner-level classrooms, both to ensure that it is culturally relevant and that it matches the students' level of listening proficiency (Bacon 1989). Indeed, Cullen (1998) asserts that the classroom environment should not attempt to imitate social encounters, but rather create communication that deals with the classroom subject matter.

The importance of listening comprehension for beginners

Gilman and Moody (1984) outline the three advantages of developing early listening comprehension proficiency: student listeners can develop more meaningful vocabulary before they practice spoken language, student listeners must be able to comprehend input from another speaker, even if the student is at a lower speaking level, and student listeners experience less stress having less emphasis on multiple areas of foreign language, e.g. simultaneously speaking and listening. Listening is also the most common activity when communicating; adults spend 30-40% of their time listening, while they spend significantly less time speaking, reading, or writing (Rivers 1981).

Improving beginner listening comprehension through “teacher talk” In the beginning stages of language instruction, on which this study focuses, there are three levels of student listening comprehension that “teacher talk” develops: *comprehension, early speech, and emergence of speech*. In the preliminary comprehension phase, teachers audibly introduce students to the target language. The goal of the instructor during this phase is to put forth enough vocabulary items to provide a lexical foundation for the students later on. The instructor does not encourage

the students the speak during this phase until they are able to comprehend the instructor's speech (Krashen 1984).

The second phase of beginning listening comprehension, which instructor input develops, is *early speech*: students are able to respond with minimal answers, usually consisting of one-word responses or short phrases. The aim of the instructor is to use and convey more lexical items to the students, thereby focusing on listening comprehension skills. This method therefore rejects previous cognitive techniques which enforce repetition and explanation in the native language. The third phase of listening comprehension, the apex of beginner proficiency, is the *emergence of student speech*. At this stage, students are able to structure coherent sentences beyond simplistic responses and generate basic discourse (Krashen 1984).

Significance of International Baccalaureate foreign language and German Gymnasium

English curriculum

This study focuses on the English language instruction in the German Gymnasium as a model for foreign language pedagogy, especially for listening comprehension, because of the prominent status the English language has achieved in Germany. Reichelt (2009) asserts that the strong relationship that Anglophone countries built with Germany after the Second World War prompted the creation of several student and teacher exchange programs. A report by Busse and Görlach (2002) indicate that for at least the past fifty years, all German students between 10 and 19 have had at least some English instruction. This emphasis on English instruction qualifies the German Gymnasium as an invaluable source for this pedagogical study.

In order to create a fair comparison, this study evaluated a like secondary institution, one with a heavy emphasis on foreign language learning: an International Baccalaureate school. As

part of the IB (International Baccalaureate) learner profile, the exemplar characteristics of an ideal student of the International Baccalaureate program, is to be a “communicator”. Under this trait, the IB learner is not only multilingual, but “can express ideas confidently and creatively” in a foreign language (IBO 2007). Indeed, Doherty (2009) asserts that “language education takes a central and symbolic place in the [International Baccalaureate] curriculum” (pg. 78).

This comparison between two secondary institutions that both emphasize foreign language learning and place second language study as their priority will provide an analogous transnational study of foreign language learning.

The Study

To evaluate the instructor’s speech in the German Gymnasium and the American International Baccalaureate classrooms, this study recorded the number of minutes the respective first- and second-year language instructors spent speaking in the target language over the period of ten days. Qualitative observations of the type of instructor speech (explanation, managerial, disciplinary, miscellaneous) supplemented this quantitative data. To measure the effect of the teacher talk that the instructors presented in the classroom, students in each school and grade completed a 100-word dictation, consisting of words the instructor frequently used in the classroom and content from their respective textbooks, *Green Line* and *Neue Horizonte*. After calculating the total number of words correct in each student’s dictation exercise, this study averaged the totals of each classroom and compared the American and German student scores to their respective language level.

Based on the rigor and emphasis of English language instruction in Germany, the hypothesis this paper tests is whether English language instructors in the German Gymnasium use

more of the target language than American instructors teaching foreign language. The students in the German Gymnasium, in turn, would have higher listening proficiency than American students at the same level of instruction.

Observations at the German Gymnasium

This study conducted observations of fifth- and sixth grade English instructors in the German Gymnasium over the period of ten school days. Observations in the German Gymnasium included five fifth-grade teachers, two sixth-grade teachers, and one seventh-grade teacher, this paper focuses on one fifth grade and one sixth-grade instructor. The German Gymnasium English classes lasted 45 minute each and took place three times each week. The approximate age range of the students was nine to eleven and the students originated from the city of Oldenburg and surrounding villages in Lower Saxony.

The qualitative observations conducted in the classrooms focused on the on the instructor's teacher talk, i.e. target language used during instruction, which fell under four categories: the classroom speech used to explain content, manage students, discipline misbehaving students, and to tell opinions or anecdotes in class. While categorizing the instructor's speech, the observations also provided quantitative data: the amount of class time the instructor spent speaking in the target language.

The following pages will detail the amount of time the fifth and sixth-grade English teachers spent using the abovementioned types of teacher talk and provide examples of the speech the instructor used in the classroom.

Day	Amount of Instructor Foreign Language "Teacher Talk" Used in Classroom	
	Minutes of Class Time in English	
	German Gymnasium	
	Fifth Grade Instructor	Sixth Grade Instructor
1	40	37,5
2	40	37
3	41	32
4	42	34
5	40	34
	Average Amount of English Instruction (Per Class Period)	Average Amount of English Instruction (Per Class Period)
	40,6	34,9

Figure 1: The amount of classroom instruction (in minutes) in English and the average amount per class period over a two-week period.

Fifth Grade Gymnasium Instructor

On the first day of observations, the fifth-grade teacher spent 40 of the total 45 minutes speaking in English. Of the total 40 minutes of instruction, the teacher spent approximately 20.5 minutes (51.4%) of time managing the students, 12.5 minutes (31.4%) of time explaining content to the students, and approximately 7 minutes (17.2%) of the time making miscellaneous comments, and no time disciplining students.

Managerial utterances from the instructor included commands to sit up, sit down, to shut the door, to remain quiet, to speak louder, and assignments for speaking, listening, and writing exercises. When instructing students to listen from a tape recorder, the instructor commanded: “hear it on the tape from native speakers, then repeat”. When assigning a writing exercise to the students, the instructor commanded: “each of you write down what people on farms do”. When addressing the students, the teacher told one student to speak louder: “speak up a bit louder,

otherwise they cannot hear you in the back”. In these previous three examples, the instructor used slightly more advanced dependent clauses to conduct classrooms business; “then”, “what”, and “otherwise” indicate intermediate grammatical constructions, which are slightly above the listening level of the students.

Explanatory speech from the instructor includes elucidating vocabulary, grammatical, and syntax items, introducing modal verbs, and asking questions to clarify listening activities. The instructor provided multiple examples of sentences containing modal verbs: “can we milk the cows?”, “I can’t answer”; “You needn’t feed the cows, silly”; “you mustn’t shout like that.” The teacher also asked additional questions to clarify a reading exercise: “Why mustn’t Emma go near cats?” It is important to note that, while these utterances are meant to supplement vocabulary and grammar lessons, the instructor spontaneously generates these sentences for the students; the teacher did not read these from a script or prepared notes.

A much broader category of classroom speech, the miscellaneous utterances from the instructor included affirmations of student responses, encouragement of student comments and questions, and indications of previous classroom activity. To affirm a student response, the teacher responded to a student: “you used the correct pronunciation”. If the students proved to be quiet or unresponsive, the teacher encouraged questions: “if there’s something that you don’t understand, you can ask, of course”. When remarking upon a student comment, the teacher responded to a student: “that is the same as what [he] said”. As with the managerial speech, the teacher used dependent clauses, which are intermediate grammatical constructions, to communicate with her students; “if” and “as what” indicate higher-level instructional speech.

On the second day, the fifth grade instructor spent 40 minutes teaching in English: about 48% of speech was managerial, 37% of speech was explanatory, and about 14% consisted of

miscellaneous remarks. Examples of managerial speech include directing students to read assigned texts and to read vocabulary words associated with them, asking students to repeat themselves when speaking the target language, and directing student to go on break. The instructor's managerial statements include: "Please write out the sentences if they're wrong", "there are some words in the text, which are in the green box". To explain curriculum content, the instructor explained difficult narrative points in the text, and asked the students to clarify the title of assigned texts, as well as certain phrases within the text. Examples of this explanatory speech include clarifying particular vocabulary words: "in the morning, when you sleep in bed, there's an alarm clock", as well as "he has his new sweatshirt on and everything is ready". The instructor's miscellaneous remarks include affirming student responses; the instructor often remarked "thank you, good read".

On the third day, the fifth grade instructor spoke in English for 40 minutes during the lesson. 47.2% of the instructor's speech was managerial, 36.1% was explanatory, 11% were miscellaneous remarks, and 5% were disciplinary commands.

The instructor's managerial speech included directing students to pay attention to a listening exercise, subsequently to complete a writing exercise, and to let students know of the time. Such managerial statements included assigning a specific exercise: "you write down this text, draw a small picture, and invent your cyberpet" and urging students to finish their assignment: "try to get ready within this time, try to get ready within a few minutes". Explanatory speech from the instructor included explaining the idea of household pets and pronunciation of certain vocabulary items; the instructor asked the students: "can you tell me what is a cyberpet?"; "where it is, what you do with it?"; "what can you do with a cyberpet?" When explaining the textbook exercise, the instructor directed the class: "you can choose the color of the eyes. Look at the picture. What does

it look like?” The instructor’s miscellaneous and disciplinary remarks included affirming student responses and commanding the class to quiet down, respectively. To issue praise, the instructor repeated the phrase “thank you so far, very good” and to discipline the students, the instructor commanded the students to “quiet down” and told one student “that is not okay; I see what you do with your feet”.

The fourth day, the fifth grade instructor spoke in English for 42 minutes during the lesson. About 30% was managerial speech, 55% was explanatory, and 15% were miscellaneous remarks.

The instructor’s managerial speech included directing students to complete textbook exercises, facilitating student questions, and reminding students of the time. These utterances included “you only have to look into your exercise books” and “did you have time to read this in English?”; “Let’s read this together”. The explanatory speech included explaining recipes, food, quantities and uncountable nouns; the instructor introduced the subject, “what you can do with recipes is of course practice ‘quantities’...for example, words like much, many, a few, a little”, and directed the class for additional examples, “what other words can we use in English to express quantity?” The instructor’s miscellaneous remarks consisted of affirmations of student responses; the teacher’s common phrase was “very good”.

On the last day of observations, the fifth grade instructor spoke in English for 40 minutes. 46% of classroom speech was managerial, 46% was explanatory, and 8% consisted of miscellaneous remarks.

The instructor’s managerial speech included assigning homework for the next class and directing a vocabulary game for the class. The managerial utterances included: “you’re up”, “you’re out”, and directing the flow of students. The teacher’s explanatory statements include:

“you must use the present progressive form of the verb” and several other corrections of students during the course of the game. The instructor’s disciplinary remark during the game enforced appropriate student behavior: “You can’t manage how to behave; you know how to behave”.

Sixth Grade Gymnasium Instructor

The sixth-grade English class took place concurrently. The instructor spoke in English for 37.5 out of the total 45 minutes of class time. Out of the 37.5 minutes spoken in English, the sixth-grade instructor spent approximately 18 minutes managing students, 13 minutes explaining content to students, 6 minutes making miscellaneous comments, and approximately .5 minutes (30 seconds) disciplining students.

The instructor’s managerial speech included assigning books to read, starting a reading assignment, and directing students to complete a concept map. Examples of managerial utterances during class time include: “I’ll walk around as you complete your web chart” and “you may have one until these books are gone”. Explanatory speech from the instructor included explaining English colloquialisms, reviewing correct pronunciations of vocabulary, explaining cultural aspects of Scottish cities, and guiding student through selected stories in the textbook. When guiding students through the selected reading, the teacher remarked: “the end is not here”, “the English have a big army”, and jokingly, “there were no atomic bombs back then”. As the instructor explained the cultural aspects of Scottish cities, the instructor remarked: “there are things to do in certain places” and “Scotland is not really famous for that”. While the sixth grade instructor’s sentences are simpler than those of the fifth grade instructor, the former still includes dependent clauses, e.g. “until they are gone”, “as you complete your web chart”, which nevertheless indicate

intermediate sentence constructions. There were few disciplinary or miscellaneous remarks on the first day of observations; the instructor did command one student to “stop flirting” with another.

The sixth grade instructor on the second day conducted class in English for 37 minutes. About 29% of the instructor’s speech was managerial, 57% was explanatory, 7% were miscellaneous remarks, and 7% were disciplinary commands.

The instructor’s managerial speech included prompting questions about homework and transitioning between units in the textbook; examples include “anyone else have confessions to make about homework?” and “you can change that and in the meantime, we will listen to this”. The explanatory speech included explaining the weather in their country of study (Scotland), the plot of a selected text (King Arthur legend), and the vocabulary and grammatical items within the text. The statements about weather included: “we can talk about the weather in Edinburgh” and “we are talking about the weather in the future”; the statements concerning the story included: “he pulled a sword out of a stone”; “a lot of strong men tried to pull the sword out but they couldn’t”. The instructor’s miscellaneous and disciplinary remarks included a remark about the window in the classroom and commands to quiet down the class, respectively: “I keep forgetting how to close the window” and oft-repeated, “don’t scream”.

On the third day, the instructor spoke in English for 32 minutes. 46% of the instructor’s speech was managerial, 46% was explanatory, and 8% were miscellaneous remarks. The instructor’s managerial speech included transitioning between listening exercises and directing students to read sentences; these utterances included “I want to go on and I’m going to go on” and “read it and say the right sentence”. The explanatory speech included pronunciation and meaning of vocabulary items, and explaining the meaning of a selected song; such statements included:

“here are some Scottish Gaelic songs, just for the fun of it” and when asking the students about the meaning of a song: “what is this song about?”.

On the fourth and fifth day, the instructor spoke in English for 34 minutes. On the fourth, the instructor’s speech was 46 % managerial, 43% explanatory, and 11% were miscellaneous remarks. On the fifth day, the instructor’s speech was 48% managerial, 41% explanatory, and 11% were miscellaneous remarks.

Dictation Exercises at German Gymnasium

The Gymnasium students, having listened to their teacher as a source of authentic language, completed a dictation exercise to test their listening comprehension. The dictation consisted of 100 words and was based on content learned previously in their textbook, *Green Line*, and the instructor’s own speech.

The dictation exercise for the fifth-grade class, including modal verbs, forms of politeness, dependent clauses, and previously-learned vocabulary items, was the following:

Dear John, I just made my mom’s birthday cake with your recipe. It looks very tasty and it was quite easy to make. Thank you so much. The supermarket was out of eggs, flour, and baking powder, so I got some from my aunt instead. She is also very excited for my mum’s birthday and I hope she will see her. Are you sending her a present? I know you do not have much money, but she would like to see one from you. Her birthday party is next Thursday. If you have some money, you should send one soon.

Your friend, Mark.

In the fifth grade classroom, 22 students completed the dictation exercise. Their scores ranged from 77 to 100 and had an average score of 92.6 (see figure 2).

The dictation for the sixth-grade class, including dependent clauses, present progressive verb tenses, and relevant content from their Scotland unit, was the following:

Dear Mom, I am living in Scotland now. I arrived here about two weeks ago. I really like it here. The people are very friendly. I have seen so many places here. It has been quite

Dictation Exercises - First and Second Year Gymnasium Students	
Number of Words Correct	
<u>German Students</u>	
Fifth Grade Students	Sixth Grade Students
93	92
91	91
93	93
96	94
100	91
97	90
94	85
96	82
94	88
98	85
90	86
91	90
93	96
97	90
77	96
91	94
92	90
90	88
89	90
91	95
84	90
100	88
	98
	97
	97
	94
	100
	98
	98
	97
Average	Average
92,59090909	92,1
Highest Score	Highest Score
100	100
Lowest Score	Lowest Score
77	82
Number of Students	Number of Students
22	30

Figure 2: Student dictation scores from fifth- and sixth grade Gymnasium students

fun. My favorite place so far has been Edinburgh. There are so many things to do in this city. I also cannot believe the weather. It changes every day. One day, it rains; the next day, the sun shines. If you come to Scotland, you should bring an umbrella. I will see you and Dad in a couple months when I finally come home.

In the sixth grade class, 30 students took the dictation exercise. The student scores

ranged from 82 to 100 and the class had an average score of 92.1 (see figure 2).

Observations at the American International Baccalaureate School

To compare against the German Gymnasium fifth- and sixth-grade instructors, this study also observed two German language classes in an American International Baccalaureate High

School, one ninth-grade and one tenth-grade (first- and second-year) classroom. These observations took place over ten school days, and like the observations at the German Gymnasium, evaluated the amount of foreign language spoken during class time and differentiated the types of instructor input (managerial, explanatory, disciplinary, and miscellaneous).

The following pages will detail the amount of the target language spoken in the ninth and tenth grade classrooms, provide examples of target language usage, and calculate the amount of target language used for each type of instructional input.

Day	Amount of Foreign Language "Teacher Talk" Used Per Classroom Session	
	Minutes of Target Language Usage (Instructor)	
	American School	
	Ninth Grade Instructor	Tenth Grade Instructor
	7	5
1	5	20
2	6	10
3	8	2
4	5	5
5		
	Amount of Foreign Language Instruction (Average)	Amount of Foreign Language Instruction (Average)
	6,2	8,4

Figure 3: The amount of classroom instruction (in minutes) in English and the average amount per class period over a two-week period.

Ninth Grade German Instructor

On the first day of observations, the ninth grade instructor spoke in the target language for seven minutes; the instructor spent 100% of this time making miscellaneous remarks and asking the students about their free time activities. Examples of these miscellaneous remarks include greeting the class, “Guten Morgen, Klasse: wir haben uns lange, lange nicht gesehen”!, affirming

student answers, often replying with “sehr gut [very good]” and singing happy birthday for one particular student (zum Geburtstag viel Glück).

On the second day, the instructor spoke in German for five minutes; 50% of this time were miscellaneous remarks, 29% of the time was managerial instructions, and 21% of this time was explanatory speech. When beginning class, the instructor remarked upon the students’ activities over the weekend; such remarks included: “was hast am Wochenende gemacht?”; “Was hast du im Auto Show gesehen?”. Of the managerial speech, the instructor directed the students for a vocabulary game: “Machen wir jetzt eine Aktivität mit einer Flasche. Wir drehen eine Flasche”. Of the explanatory speech, the instructor responded to a student question about the game, and subsequently directed the answer to the class: “Er hat gefragt, wenn man null Punkte hat und die Aktion nicht machen kann, dann verdient man negative Punkte? Die Antwort ist ‘ja’! [he asked if you have zero points and cannot perform that action, then you earn negative points? The answer is ‘yes’]”

Tenth Grade Instructor

On the first day of observations, the instructor spoke in the target language for five minutes. Of these five minutes, the instructor spent 80% making miscellaneous statements and 20% giving managerial instructions. The instructor’s miscellaneous remarks included greeting the class and prompting and responding to student activities over the weekend. The managerial instruction was to tell the class about their exams: “Ihr bekommt eure Examen zurück [you are getting your tests back]”.

On the second day, the instructor spoke in German for twenty minutes. Of this instructional time, 52% was explanatory speech and 48% were managerial directions. The explanatory

utterances included reviewing and reinforcing previous vocabulary; the instructor posed such questions to the students: “wer ist oft frech [who is often cheeky]”?, “wer ist oft ehrgeizig [who is often ambitious]”?, “wer ist oft aufgeregt [who is often excited]?” Of the managerial directions, the instructor distributed and explained instructions for a vocabulary worksheet, introduced a new chapter, and assigns homework for the following class. These managerial directions include: “Heute bekommt ihr eine neue Adjektivliste. Danach werdet ihr sie lernen. Sie sind anders als die andere Liste. Diese Liste hat mehr mit Persönlichkeit zu tun [Today, you’re getting a new adjective list. After that, you will learn them. They are different than the other list. This list has more to do with personality]”. When introducing the chapter, the instructor directed: “wir sind fast fertig mit Kapitel 9. Bald fangen wir an mit Kapitel 10. Heute lesen wir nur ein bisschen über die Umwelt. Was ich will, ist dass ihr diese kleine Geschichte mit einem Partner lest. [We are almost finished with chapter nine. Soon, we will begin with chapter ten. Today, we’re reading a little bit about the environment. On the third day, the instructor spoke in German for 10 minutes; of these ten minutes, the instructor spent 44% of time managing students, 44% explaining content, and 12% making miscellaneous remarks. The managerial instructions from the instructor included checking homework, introducing a grammar exercise, and announcing a quiz taking place the following class. When evaluating the students’ homework, the instructor directed: “Ich möchte die Hausaufgaben sehen, und ich möchte die Adjektivendungen wiederholen [I would like to see the homework, and I would like to go over the adjective endings]”. When introducing the grammar exercise, the teacher instructed, “Ich habe hier eine kleine Wiederholungsaufgabe; ich habe ein

paar Übungssätze für euch [I have here a small review worksheet, I have a few sentence exercise for you all]”.

The instructor’s explanatory speech included reviewing their environment unit, and discussing a text related to the unit; the teacher asked the class: “Wie können Umweltkatastrophen für die Natur gefährlich sein [how can environmental catastrophes be dangerous to nature]” and followed up her question with multiple examples: “Wir benutzen zu viel Energie [we use too much energy]”, “Wie verschmutzen die Ozean [we pollute the ocean]”, and “manchmal werfen Leute Papier auf der Straße [sometimes, people through paper on the street]”. The miscellaneous remarks by the teacher included greeting the class and affirming student answers.

On the fourth day, the instructor spoke in the target language for two minutes. Of these two minutes, the instructor spent 60% of the time managing students and 40% making miscellaneous remarks. The instructor’s managerial speech includes distributing quizzes from a previous class and introducing a new song to the class. When distributing the quizzes, the teacher directs the students: “Zuerst habe ich die alten Quizen von letzter Klasse [first, I have the old quizzes from last class]“. When introducing the song to the class, the instructor tells the class: “hoffentlich haben wir dieses Lied schon gelernt, wie letztes Jahr machen wir es so nochmal. Was wir hier zuerst machen ist, dieses Lied abzuspielen [Hopefully, we have learned this song by now. Like last year, we’re going to do it like that again. What we are doing here first is playing this song]”. The miscellaneous remarks from the instructor include greeting the class and affirming student responses.

Dictation Exercises at American International Baccalaureate School

The American students at the International Baccalaureate school, having listened to their instructor as a main source of the target language, completed a 100-word dictation exercise in German. The dictation exercise consisted of speech from the classroom instructor and previously learned content from the students' textbook *Neue Horizonte*.

The dictation exercise that the ninth grade students completed consisted of content from previous chapters in their textbook, including modal verbs, clothing, school, and family vocabulary. The dictation read:

Hans wohnt in München und hat drei Schwestern. Er hat keine Brüder, aber er kennt viele Jungen. Am Wochenende hat Hans leider keine Zeit. Er muss jede Woche nach Berlin fahren und seine Familie sehen. Hans mag auch seine Klamotten. Er hat viele Turnschuhe, Pullis, Jeans, Jacken, Mützen und er hat sie alle getragen. In der Schule ist Hans sehr populär. In der Schule hat Hans viele gute Noten bekommen. Er ist besonders gut in Mathe und Biologie. Hans ist auch sehr fit. Er joggt jeden Tag für eine Stunde. Manchmal läuft er bis acht Uhr abends, aber das ist nicht typisch.

In the ninth grade class, 33 students completed this dictation exercise. The student scores ranged from 76 to 100 and the average score was 90 words (see figure 4).

The dictation exercise that the tenth grade class completed consisted of future verb tenses, past perfect verb tenses, unpreceded adjective endings, dependent clauses, and prepositions using the dative case; all content originated from previous chapters in *Neue Horizonte*.

The dictation read:

Hans ist ein berühmtes Kind in seinem Dorf. Er spielt Fußball mit seiner Mannschaft, bekommt gute Noten in der Schule, und hat sogar das Abitur bestanden. Er macht auch

viele Dinge für seine Familie. Er hat Lebensmittel gekauft, leckeres Abendessen gekocht,

und gute Geschenke zu seinen Eltern gegeben. Seine Familie und Freunde glauben, dass er ehrlich, höflich, und hilfsbereit ist. Hans gefällt vielen Menschen in seinem Dorf, weil er so großzügig ist. Wenn Hans Zeit hat, hilft er immer seinen Nachbarn. Nächstes Jahr wird Hans an der Universität studieren. Sein Plan ist Biologie zu studieren. Sein Dorf wird ihn vermissen.

In the tenth grade class, 23 students completed the dictation exercise. The student scores ranged from 69 to 97 and the average score was approximately 87 words (see figure 4).

Analysis

When comparing both the first- and second-year German Gymnasium and American International Baccalaureate instructors, one first notices the sizeable difference in the amount of target language during instruction. The Gymnasium instructors boast an average of 40.6 and 34.9 minutes in their fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms (figure 1), respectively, while the ninth- and tenth-grade American

instructors demonstrate an average of 6.2 and 8.4 minutes per class period (figure 3). When comparing the dictation exercises, however, the difference in student scores does not display such a significant difference. Although the first- and second-year Gymnasium students scored

Dictation Exercises - First and Second Year American Students	
Ninth Grade Students	Tenth Grade Students
94	87
86	97
96	95
92	69
99	96
88	85
98	81
93	84
89	92
96	87
81	89
93	92
93	88
82	93
80	83
85	92
94	88
100	86
94	83
98	79
92	90
98	91
80	92
90	
84	
86	
95	
82	
89	
87	
97	
91	
76	
Average	Average
90,24242424	87,7826087
Highest Score	Highest Score
100	97
Lowest Score	Lowest Score
76	69
Number of Students	Number of Students
33	23

Figure 4: Student dictation scores from ninth- and tenth grade IB students

somewhat higher, they scored an average of 92.6 and 92.1 words (figure 2), respectively, while the first- and second-year American students scored an average of 90.2 and 87.8 words (figure 4).

Despite this lack of distinction between the student scores, the study also investigated the quality of the instructor's speech in the classroom. Both quantitatively and qualitatively, this study evaluated the instructor's speech in both the German Gymnasium and the International Baccalaureate school. When initially comparing the qualitative observations between foreign language classrooms, the respective American and German Gymnasium instructors had different purposes for the classroom speech; the American instructors used the target language primarily for anecdotes and commenting on student responses, while the German instructors used English primarily to manage and explain curricular content to the class. Also noteworthy is that the Gymnasium instructors used the target language to discipline students, while the American instructor used the primary language, if the instructor. Although the usage of the target language is varied, the instructors in each school used a similar level of sentence complexity when addressing their first- and second-year learners.

Evidence of these intermediate-level sentence constructions is visible when one compares the respective first-year language instructors. The fifth-grade Gymnasium instructor used dependent clauses when managing the students; such complex managerial constructions include "speak up, otherwise they can't hear you in the back" and "if there's something that you don't understand, then you can ask, of course". Subordinating conjunctions such as "if", "then", and "otherwise", and also the relative pronoun "that" certainly evidence complex sentence usage in the German Gymnasium classroom, and subsequently, student exposure to such intermediate-level speech.

The American International Baccalaureate instructor also evidences complex language, although such speech occurred less often and was in the form of anecdotes and affirmations of student responses. On the second day of observations, the teacher evidences complex sentences during instruction, particularly when responding to student questions. Such dependent clauses included: “Er hat gefragt, wenn man null Punkte hat und die Aktion nicht machen kann, dann verdient man negative Punkte?” [he asked, if you have zero points and cannot perform the action, then do you receive negative points?]” The subordinating conjunctions “if” and “then” certainly indicate subordinate clauses in the instructor’s speech, and in turn, student exposure to such grammatical constructions.

While the first-year foreign language instructors demonstrate similar sentence complexity and amount of dependent clauses, the second-year American foreign language instructor presented more complex sentences to the second-year learners than the German Gymnasium counterpart. While the American instructor did not use many dependent clauses, the instructor did use several independent clauses, coordinating conjunctions, and spent particular periods in class speaking in German. Such complex managerial utterances include: “Ich möchte die Hausaufgaben sehen, und ich möchte die Adjektivendungen wiederholen” [I would like to see the homework, and I would like to go over the adjective endings] and “Ich habe hier eine kleine Wiederholungsaufgabe und ich habe ein paar Übungssätze für euch” [I have here a small review worksheet, I have a few sentence exercises for you all]. The instructor evidences complex structures by connecting multiple clauses together with “und [and]”; not only did the instructor do this, but the instructor also provided the students pertinent information. The teacher and students did not merely engage in discourse about an inconsequential topic, but the former managed the classroom, directed students to accomplish varied activities, in the language of instruction.

While the second-year Gymnasium teacher used significantly more of the target language than the American teacher (see figures 1 and 3), the former did not use as many complex sentences as the latter. The most complex constructions the second-year Gymnasium instructor used were explanatory statements, speech to convey curricular content. Such explanatory utterances included: “a lot of strong men tried to pull the sword out but they couldn’t”, “the English have a big army”, and “there were no atomic bombs back then”. The instructor did, indeed, use independent clauses and coordinating conjunctions as the American instructor did, but these instances were few; most of the sentence constructions, as the latter two sentences indicate, were simple SVO (subject-verb-object) sentences. While the sentences were often simple in construction, the mode of speech is noteworthy: the instructor used primarily the target language to convey curricular content to students. Not only do the students receive exposure to the language of instruction in this way, but they also perceive the language during the primary function of class: the lecture.

Given the complexity of the sentence constructions that the American and Gymnasium instructors provided the first- and second-year learners, the immediacy of the student dictation scores is certainly explainable. While this may not be the sole factor, the similarities in the instructor’s speech are both certainly notable and also provide their respective students with reasonable context and lexical bases for target language usage.

Conclusion

This study examined two particular first- and second-year English classrooms at a German Gymnasium and two at an American International Baccalaureate school over a two-week period. Because of the specificity and timeframe of the study, it did not seek a grand comparison between

American and German foreign language teaching methods and subsequently to make pedagogical recommendations to either thereafter. The purpose was rather to display and provide suitable images of two different secondary schools that represent the pedagogy and emphasis on foreign language learning that their respective governing institutions instigated and maintained.

Focusing on one particular teaching method, instructor input, i.e. “teacher talk” in the classroom, this study chose an aspect of foreign language teaching that second language instructors utilize most often, especially for beginning language learners. The instructor’s speech is vital because not only is it often the sole source of the target language for novice learners, but it is a source that the instructor can best attune and manipulate to the learner’s proficiency. “Teacher talk” is the foreign language instructor’s most effective asset.

Through this precise intercultural comparison, this study strived to demonstrate not only the amount of target language that effective instructors used for language learners, but also the sentence complexity in which the instructors presented it. By speaking at a level that beginning learners understand and interspersing their speech with new lexical items during instruction, teachers from both institutions truly demonstrate effective listening comprehension strategies, despite their varied manners of usage.

This study, examining specific instructors at separate, yet pedagogically related institutions, aims to introduce and provide a foundation for more longitudinal and comprehensive international comparisons of instructor input. Further research into this comparison, incorporating additional instructors and second language students from like secondary schools, will shed light onto this cross-cultural comparison, and ultimately, ascertain a better model for beginning-level instructional speech.

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