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TEACHING, LEARNING, AND SPEAKING: OBSERVATION AND ASSESSING ORAL LANGUAGE PRODUCTION OF THE NON-LITERATE ADULT LEARNER IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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1   Introduction

This paper is about an ongoing research project concerning observation in the second language classroom for non-literate adult learners and the oral assessment of these learners. At this moment the tools used to find out what goes on in such a classroom will be described and illustrated. About the learning processes of second language acquisition of the low-educated, non-literate learner little is known. Studying their learning processes is a complex matter. These learners are not only handicapped by their illiteracy, as the written word is not available to them, but their competence in the L2 oral skills can be just as limited. This means that the intrinsic knowledge of sounds, words and sentences is inadequately developed to be put to use in the process of learning to read. Consequently, the low educated learner has a double handicap: learning to read and write while at the same time working on the oral skills, the latter being the building blocks on which the former materializes. For many learners formal education, the school, is their major source for developing these skills. If, for whatever reason, their access to the second language is restricted, the classroom is their only source. For this reason knowing what goes on in the second language classroom in terms of teaching and learning is of special importance.

A second reason as to why it is important to look into the learning processes of the low educated non-literate learner is the current situation in the Netherlands, where the research project discussed in this paper is located. In January 2007 the Integration Act (Staatsblad number 625, 2006),[1] which requires newcomers as well as oldcomers[2] to the Netherlands to take both a language and a knowledge-of-the-Dutch-society test, was enacted. Within three and a half years, with the possibility

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[1] This is a translation of the Dutch: *Wet Inburgering*.

[2] The term newcomers (*nieuwkomers*) is also used in the Netherlands to refer to those immigrants who came to the Netherlands from outside the European Union on or after January 1, 2007, when the Integration Act was enforced, in other words the recent arrivals. Analogous to the term newcomers, the term oldcomers (*oudkomers*) has been created to refer to those immigrants who arrived before the Integration Act was enforced and are legal residents, in other words, the longterm residents. Before this new law, the difference between new and oldcomers was defined by a previous law, enforced in 1998. This study, which started before the new law was enforced, will adhere to the definitions of new and oldcomer of 1998.

of an extension to five years,[3] all testees, irrespective of previous educational training, must attain CEF[4] (Council of Europe, 2001) level A2 for the oral and written skills. For the oldcomers, level A1 for the written skills is sufficient, but A2 remains the minimum for the oral skills. The question that subsequently arises in connection to the low-educated and possibly non-literate adult learner is: is the attainment of the said CEF levels a realistic demand for these learners, particularly when so little is known about the learning processes of second language acquisition for adults with low literacy? The study discussed below hopes to shed some light on this matter.

2   Background of the Study

This study addresses the problems of non-literate adult learners learning to speak a second language in a second language classroom. The data for the classroom processes are obtained through direct observation and recordings. Over the years, many second language classrooms have been observed (Allwright, 1988; Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1990; Van Lier, 1988). Most of these studies were concerned with literate learners of English as a second language and very few with non-literate learners and classroom observation. In the United States there have been, to my knowledge, three extensive national research projects which did focus on the non-literate and/or the low literate L2 learner through classroom observation. The first one was *Last Gamble on Education* in 1975 (Mezirow, Dakenwald, & Knox, 1975).[5] This project was concerned with classroom behavior in the adult literacy classroom. Through classroom observation of basic literacy and ESOL classes, fifty-nine classes in five different cities were studied. The study focused on forms of information exchange, bonding of groups, and modes of instruction. The researchers noted that because of classroom diversity, bonding through sharing of experience and peer learning was limited. Mixed-level classes and continuous enrolment were common. The mode of instruction was mainly teacher-directed and marked by routine exercises such as drills and recitation. To enhance

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[3] The new and oldcomers must finance schooling themselves. A certain amount is reimbursed if the stipulated level is attained before the three-year limit. If the level is not reached in five years, then a fine can be levied. Further obligation can be waived if sufficient effort has been put in without achieving the desired results.

[4] CEF, the abbreviation for Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, are rating scales developed by the Council of Europe to describe one's (second) language proficiency. The scales are divided into three main levels from basic user (levels A1 and A2) to independent user (levels B1 and B2) to proficient user (level C1 and C2). Although these scales were not developed for non-literate second language learners, they have been applied to this group in the Netherlands.

[5] This report was mentioned in Beder and Medina (2001).

attendance failure, in-class performance was kept to a minimum by simplifying and reducing task levels.

The second national study, *Classroom Dynamics in Adult Literacy Education,* was carried out from October 1997 to April 1999 by Beder and Medina (2001). The literacy classes in this study were comprised of L1 as well as L2 learners. Twenty different classes in eight states took part in the project. The classes were selected on basis of location, class size, type of school/provider, type of program and type of instruction. More than 200 students were involved. Each class was observed twice, the second observation occurring a week after the first. The focus was on the content and organization of classroom instruction, social processes that characterize the interactions of teachers and learners, and the forces outside the classroom that shape classroom behavior. The findings demonstrated strong teacher-directed teaching with a focus on the exchange of concrete, factual information. All the observed lessons were of the IRE form of instruction: Initiation, Reply, Evaluation. Learner-centered activities were only manifested in the social interactions between teacher and student. Rarely was there free-flowing discussion with the teacher or among the students, an important activity for developing oral literacy skills. Continuous enrolment and mixed-level classes had, as was also seen in the Last Gamble project, a negative impact on classroom behavior. Funding and the limited possibilities for professional development were also seen to add to this effect.

The most recent study in the United States was the extensive *What Works* project of Condelli, Wrigley, Yoon, Cronen and Seburn (2003). The objective of this project was to identify through qualitative and quantitative research which instructional activities help to develop and improve literacy and communicative skills in English. As in the Classroom Dynamics study, the classes were selected on a broad basis. Thirty-eight classes from thirteen different locations with a total of 495 students were involved. Within the domains of instructional practices, program practices and student factors, the study showed that several features can be related to student learning. Three instructional practices emerged as being most influential for positive language development. These were the bringing of the outside world into the classroom, use of the L1 for clarification, and varied practice with focus on communication. Positive program practices were seen in the longer classes for reading comprehension and oral communication. For student factors associated with positive language development, the most outstanding were regular attendance, prior education, and age.

In the Netherlands, a closer look at the second language literacy classrooms has, to my knowledge, only been done once. In years 1984-1986 Kurvers and Van der Zouw (1990) studied the literacy processes of selected students in intensive (fifteen hours per week) and non-intensive

classes (between one and a half to six hours per week). On onset there were respectively twenty-four and thirty-seven students. The study showed that better literacy results were obtained in the intensive groups. Although the oral skills and vocabulary development were not the focus of this study, it did show the importance of a strong language base in developing literacy skills. The study at hand is thus the second study in the Netherlands concerning second language classroom observation and the non-literate learner. The study is of importance for two reasons. First, it can illuminate classroom practices: what are the teachers and students doing in the classroom? Second, it addresses the question: what insights into processes of second language learning by the non-literate learner can be gained from these observations?

3   Focus of the Study

By the end of the study, six classrooms at centers of adult education will have been studied during a period of approximately one school year, or 40 weeks. The observations of three classrooms started at the beginning of October 2006, a fourth started in mid-January 2007, and the last two started at the beginning of February 2007. In the study, there are two major points of focus: classroom events and the development of the oral skills. These two components concern the teacher and the learner (or student) in a L2 literacy classroom for Dutch (DSL). Classroom events pertain to those events that take place within the confined space of a classroom where the teacher and the students interact for the purpose of learning to speak Dutch. They concern all the events which the teacher provides as opportunities to promote learning, in other words, the act (or the art) of teaching. They include aspects such as the setting, participant organization (who interacts with whom), activities performed, control within the classroom, and the materials used. The focus on the oral skills concerns the verbal interactions that take place within this setting: who speaks with whom, and why and which language is used, the L1 or the L2. In particular, the focal point will be those types of interactions concerning feedback, in other words, when and how feedback is given and what the student uptake is.

In order to develop some kind of understanding of the events and language interaction in a classroom, it is necessary to observe them in progress. Only then can an attempt be made to answer questions concerning if and which classroom events facilitate or even promote language learning. Research has indicated that even though instructed language learning does not alter the route or developmental stages of acquisition, it does have a positive effect on vocabulary learning, the rate of learning, and, to some extent, the accuracy of production (Ellis, 1990). In addition, second language acquisition research has shown that

classroom interaction contributes to language learning (Doughty, 2003). Certain kinds of interaction promote comprehension, such as real and natural communication and topic control by the learner (Ellis, 1990). If this is so, then language learning in the classroom should be characterized by ample interaction.

In the following section, six major components of the study will be discussed: the historical sketch, the survey of centers of adult education, teacher characteristics, learner characteristics, classroom observation, and the pre- and post- oral assessment.

3.1 Historical Sketch

In order to be able to understand the developments which have taken place (and still are taking place) within the field of DSL (Dutch as a second language) for this target group, it is necessary to put these developments into perspective. Since the arrival of the first migrant workers in the Netherlands in the 1960s, the teaching of DSL has taken enormous strides. Teaching has progressed from a situation of "kitchen table" education with socially motivated volunteers to one with professionally organized programs and trained teachers. Educational materials for DSL have had a comparable development. Insights into language learning were more often applied in teaching. The syllabi focused more on functional and communicative language use. Aspects such as realistic tasks and practical language training outside the classroom became more common. Nationally developed tests for Dutch as a second language entered the scene. Soon scales for five levels of competence for each of the four skills were defined – even for the low educated. Looking back, it can be seen that progress has been made in the field of teaching DSL, but can this also be said of the educational developments for the non-literate? The historical sketch will focus on the non-literate and the educational possibilities for him to learn to speak Dutch.

3.2 Survey of Centers for Adult Education

Questionnaires were sent to the centers for adult education where programs for non-literate learners of DSL are organized. From a total population of thirty-five such centers, twenty-seven responded. The objective of the survey was twofold: 1) to map out the educational situation of literacy teaching and 2) to serve as a base on which centers were to be selected for this project. The questionnaire concerned matters of enrolment, target groups, organization of the curriculum, types of programs or courses, placement, testing, materials used and teacher characteristics. From this questionnaire surfaced three types of program organization. The main characteristics central to these three types were:

the lesson time allotted to the oral and literacy skills, the placement criteria for the students, and the materials used for the oral skills. The time allotted to each skill was of particular interest because it could reflect a certain view on literacy acquisition and teaching practices in the classroom, which in turn could have an effect on the learning processes. One could assume that if more time is given to the oral skills this would result in an increase in the oral production of the student. The three most common types of organization with the three main characteristics are described in Table 1.

Table 1: The three types of program organization in centers for adult education in the Netherlands in terms of time allotted to the oral/literacy skills, student placement and materials used.

Organization type	Lesson time allotted to oral/literacy skills	Placement of students	Materials used for the oral skills
Type 1	Fixed 50-50 marked by the break.	Placed according to oral or literacy level	Use materials specifically developed for the oral skills.
Type 2	Teacher aims at 50-50	Class stays together; often mixed levels.	Often apply functional literacy materials for the teaching of oral skills.
Type 3	Varies according to lesson topic	Class stays together; often mixed levels.	Use a mixture of literacy materials and self-made materials for oral skills.

From this information, the six centers for adult education were selected. For each type of program organization, two centers were chosen – also keeping in mind a spread in terms of locality and size. In Table 2, the centers participating in the project with their main characteristics are listed.

3.3   Teacher Characteristics

Teaching the non-literate demands certain qualities and expertise of the teacher. In an interview, each teacher was asked about her (all the teachers happen by chance to be women) schooling and teaching experience. All the teachers, except one, have a BA in either education or social work. The exception has an MA in Dutch language and literature. All the teachers have had at least six years of experience in adult education, of which at least five were in teaching literacy classes. Half of the teachers

Table 2: Selected centers and their characteristics as to organization type, region, size and type of students.

Center of adult education	Organization type	Region	Size of center of education	Type of students
Center 1a	1	NW	Medium	Newcomers
Center 1b	3	NW	Medium	Oldcomers
Center 2	2	E	Small	Mixed
Center 3	2	S	Medium	Mixed
Center 4	1	W	Large	Newcomers
Center 5	3	Center	Large	Oldcomers

have had special training to teach Dutch as a second language and all of them have had some training in teaching literacy. The teachers did mention that, in spite of any training, most of their expertise was obtained through the act of teaching itself. All the teachers were Dutch by birth. In three centers, the teacher had the luxury of having an assistant. Two of these assistants were themselves former students of DSL.

Each teacher was asked in the interview to characterize a strong and a weak learner and what particular steps she takes in her teaching to accommodate these learners. According to these teachers' own impressions, a weak learner was one who: had poor concentration, frequently used L1, was slow in comprehension, had limited study skills, had a limited learning capacity, had little self-confidence, had little home support, had limited contact with the world outside the school and the home, and was often older than fifty years of age. To accommodate these learners, the teacher would use modelling techniques, give a lot of positive feedback, be very patient and repeat frequently. In contrast, the teachers saw the strong learner as one who: is an attentive learner who is focused, is active in the lesson, takes initiative, is motivated, does his homework and has generally good study skills. The teachers had more difficulty in wording what teaching strategies they use with such learners. In general, the teachers said that they would stimulate self reliance, give more vocabulary, give more difficult exercises, and give homework.

3.4 Learner Characteristics

Learner characteristics are compiled from four main sources: teacher's impressions, school records, my own impressions during classroom observations, and the results from the assessments. Information in the school records varies from center to center, but they all note such background information as marital status, country of origin, date of entry in the Netherlands, first (and sometimes second) language, literacy in L1

and L2, and schooling in the country of origin. Some test results are also kept track of, particularly the placement tests. Most centers keep a record of the schooling history of the student within its own institution, but the records of a student who has transferred from another center are often very sketchy and incomplete.

Certain basic characteristics of these learners are common to the group as a whole and are of particular importance in a formal learning situation such as a classroom. Of these basic characteristics, being non-literate in the first language is the foremost reason these learners form a separate group within the centers of education. Written material cannot be used as a support in the learning process, even if the basic decoding skills have been mastered. Being non-literate carries with it a second problem, that of schooling. These learners have had virtually no schooling experience. The lack of learning skills, normally developed during the early years of schooling, can seriously hamper the learning process in a formal school setting. Apart from these impeding factors, non-literate learners are also confronted with yet another problem – receiving instruction through the target language. It is known that hearing and seeing the target language spoken outside the classroom definitely can have positive effects on the learning process (Condelli et al., 2003). Outside the classroom, the learner has ample opportunity to experience the target language in use and to practice using it. On the other hand, using the target language as the medium of instruction in the classroom can avert learning. Giving instructions for exercises and explaining vocabulary and grammar can be misconstrued or not comprehended at all (Van de Craats, 2000). In short, the learner characteristics which this study deems to be important are that of age (being an adult learner), having had no or a limited formal education in the country of origin and thus no previous experience of formal learning, and being non-literate or low literate in the first language.

3.5   *Classroom Observation*

The main focus of this study is the classroom for non-literates where oral language skills are taught and practiced. The data for the processes that occur in the classroom are obtained through direct observation and recordings. Classroom observation in the field of second language teaching was of particular interest in the 1980s. During that time, several observation schemes were developed to capture those elements which seem to enhance language learning (Allen, 1989; Allwright, 1988; Chaudron, 1988). Of those schemes, COLT Observation Scheme (COLT meaning Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching) was developed at a time when communicative language teaching was at its peak (Allen, Fröhlich & Spada 1989). The construct of communicative

competence (Hymes, 1972), later expanded by Canale and Swain (1980), had an enormous impact on second language teaching and consequently on these observation schemes, including that of the COLT scheme. The aim of the COLT observation scheme was to be able "to examine the effects of classroom treatment that is of L2 instruction on the acquisition of the target language" (Allen, Bialystock, Cummins, & Mougeon, 1983:71). Even now, more than twenty years later, the COLT observation scheme is relevant, for it is not geared to a specific type of language instruction, but directs itself toward classroom processes and language production – precisely those elements concerning this study. The flexibility of the scheme has proven advantageous in product as well as process oriented research (Spada & Frölich, 1995). For this reason, the COLT observation scheme will be used as a guide in the classroom observations to capture those elements sought after. In other words: what does the teacher do? What do the students do? What is said to whom and why? Because the COLT Observation Scheme addresses these same questions, it is used as a starting point in the classroom observations.

The classroom observations consist of two components. The first concerns all that is seen but not heard. This includes visual observation such as seating arrangement, materials used, participant organization and with whom the interactions occur. The second component concerns all that is heard but not always seen. This is achieved by means of recording the classroom procedures. For this, a MP3 recording device is used. It is unobtrusive and produces good quality sound. The MP3 was pinned to the teacher's upper garment at shoulder level where it would not hinder her movements during teaching. Her voice and that of her student or students with which she was interacting could be clearly heard. These recordings were later transcribed orthographically, after which the transcriptions could be analyzed.

The most outstanding characteristic during the observations, which I have noted in the observations made thus far, has been the strongly teacher-directed teaching. In these groups, the classroom events, including the topic, interaction flow (the language used and who speaks), and activities were determined by and under control of the teacher. In the Type 1 and 2 classes, in which the oral skills take up 50% of class time, the teachers used materials especially developed for the teaching of the oral skills (see Table 1). In the educational centers of Type 3, where most of the classroom time was spent on interacting in Dutch, a variety of materials was used. In those groups, the teacher, in spite of an already prepared lesson plan, often followed whatever subjects the students brought up. Even in those cases, the teacher frequently steered the conversation in a particular direction. The topics in all these classes, Type 1, 2 and 3, were "close-to-home," fore example, health, shopping, or

public transportation. In order to make learning even more realistic, the teacher often brought in real materials, including folders from the neighbourhood grocery store, city maps, newspapers or even an assortment of groceries.

Next to the mode of teaching, the use of feedback was focused upon. The most common type of feedback which seemed to be used in the observed lessons was recast. In this type of corrective feedback, the teacher implicitly corrects the error a student makes in his utterance by reformulating or correcting it without explicitly stating that an error has been made. Such a form of recast is illustrated in the following role play, buying in a small grocery store, with the teacher as the shopkeeper. The recasts are printed in bold type.

Teacher:	*Goede morgen Mevrouw. Zegt u het maar.*
	Good morning, Ma'am. Can I help you?
Student:	*Goede morgen. Ik wil een pak melk.*
	Good morning. I want a carton of milk.
Teacher:	*Een pak melk. Ja, uuuh, wilt u uuuh daar staat de volle en daar staat de halfvolle.*
	A carton of milk. Yes, uuh, do you uuh there is the whole and there the 2%.
Student:	*Ik wil vol.*
	I want whole.
Teacher:	*Een volle. Ja, o.k. Anders nog iets?*
	Whole milk. Yes, o.k. Anything else?
Student:	*Ik wil 'n stuk oud kaas.*
	I want a piece of old cheese.
Teacher:	*Oude kaas. [….]*
	Old cheese. [….]
Student:	*Hoeveel kost?*
	How much cost?
Teacher:	*Nou dat is dan bij elkaar, ja, hoeveel kost het?*
	Now that is all together, yes, how much does it cost?

In the three recasts in this fragment the teacher reformulates the words of the student by repeating them in the correct form. The first two recasts are somewhat dubious. In such a setting, a grocery store, the shopkeeper could just be repeating the customer's order, as also occurs in a restaurant by the waiter taking an order. Nevertheless, I am inclined to mark these occurrences as true recasts. The third response is definitely a recast. In that response the teacher starts to answer the posed question naturally only to interrupt herself by reformulating the question correctly. This certainly does not occur in a normal conversation.

3.6   *Oral Assessment*

The aim of the assessment is to capture any kind of language change (development) that has occurred during the forty week period of classroom observation. Even though national language tests for the low-educated have been developed, these tests are insufficiently fine-tuned to capture the small progressions in learning these learners make during the time span covered in this study. "Development" in this study refers to any kind of observable change in language use: expansion of vocabulary, fluency, or even greater effective use of language. In order to extract language to be analyzed, the learner has to execute various tasks. Each task requires general and specific vocabulary depending on the topic or setting. The entire assessment is taped with a MP3 recording device. These recordings are also transcribed for easy analysis. The assessment is to be administered at the start of the observation period and at its conclusion. All the pre-assessments have been completed. In total, seventy-four learners participated. The assessment constitutes five parts: an interview, vocabulary, a retention task, a description task, and a story-telling task. The entire assessment takes about fifteen minutes. Each of these parts is explained below.

3.6.1   *Interview*

The interview extracts spontaneous language use. The form is not strictly defined. How the interview develops depends largely on the learner. Each interview begins with general close-to-home topics with which the learner is very familiar: country of origin, number of years in the Netherlands, the family situation, hobbies or interests, and schooling experience. Besides extracting language, the interview is also important in gaining the confidence of the learner by breaking the ice. This facilitates language production. I usually followed the student where (s)he would lead me only to ask questions when the conversation seemed to stagnate. Misunderstandings occurred regularly. Sometimes it was not clear if the student or I was the one who misunderstood. The following episode, translated from Dutch, is such an occurrence.

Teacher: How many children do you have?
Student: Children? Twenty-five.
Teacher: Seven children? All in Holland?
Student: No not in Holland.
Teacher: But they do live in Holland?
Student: Yes.

At this point I decided to shift the conversation.

Teacher: How old are the children?
Student: Old?
Teacher: How many years?
Student: Big boy Mahmet seven, uuuh twenty-six years. [And so
             forth.]

3.6.2   *Vocabulary*

To elicit some general vocabulary knowledge, real objects and pictures are used. During the assessment the vocabulary items are presented five times, calling for receptive and productive knowledge. The first time real objects are presented; thereafter pictures are used – twice at a beginner's level and twice at an intermediate level[6] – both in the receptive and productive mode. Each level contains nouns and verbs.

3.6.3   *Retention Task*

The retention task is based on the assumption that if language is internalized, retention is easier. The task consists of five sets and each set contains three cards. On each card, there are pictures of single noun words. The first three sets have three pictures on each card, the fourth has four pictures, and the fifth five pictures. The cards in each set differ from the other cards in that set by only one picture. The sets build up in increasing complexity. In the first three sets, the number of syllables per word is increased. In the last two sets, the number of pictures on each card is increased. The execution of the task is simple. The assessor verbalizes the pictured words without pausing between the words. The cards are then laid before the student. The student has to determine which of the three cards corresponds with the words the assessor just said.

3.6.4   *Description Task*

The aim of the description task is to extract connected language, not just single words. The learner is stimulated to talk about four different photographs. The situations are familiar, and each requires its own vocabulary to tap as much language as possible. The situations are: buying bread at the market, a family picnic in the park, a family with a newborn baby and a literacy classroom.

In the assessments, the students seemed to focus more often on the items (the nouns) in the pictures rather than on the action depicted (the

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[6] In order to determine which words are beginner or intermediate level vocabulary, a vocabulary inventory of the five most-used textbooks for beginners (according to the survey) was made. If a particular word appeared in three of the textbooks, it was labelled beginner vocabulary.

verbs). If a verb was used, it was usually not inflected. An example of such a description task is the following, in translation, where the student tries to describe a photograph of two women buying bread at the market:

Store. Eggs. Woman. Shopping. I bread. Cake. Eggs. Yes.

It is not always easy to interpret the student's intent and, for an outsider ,almost impossible. Relying on my own teaching experience, I would assume the following interpretation. The picture is a colored photograph of a market stand where bread is being sold to two ladies. Here the student described the setting with a single word "store." Either she did not know the word for market (which I doubt, it being a basic and much-used word), she just forgot the word at that moment, or she did not observe the picture closely. The student also sums up a few items on the picture: eggs, woman, cake, and again eggs. When the student said "I bread," I presume she was trying to repeat the words the woman in the picture would use to buy bread (often practiced in the classroom). Finally, with a gesture, she made clear that the task was finished by resolutely saying "yes."

3.6.5 Story-telling Task

The aim of the story-telling task is similar to the description task, to extract connected language, but now by telling a story. Three picture sequences, each with four pictures, are presented. The situations are easy to interpret and, as with the description task, each sequence requires its own vocabulary. The picture sequences depict: receiving and opening a gift; washing and drying one's hands; and a robber stealing a purse and being pursued by the police.

In the story-telling task, the differences in language skill can be seen in the build-up of the story sequence as well as in the language used. In the example below (see Table 3), two students tell the same story. Both students are long-residence citizens. Student 1 is of Chinese of origin, literate in Chinese and with six years of basic education in China. According to the school records, she has been in the Netherlands since 1974. During most of this time, she worked in her husband's restaurant. Now, recently divorced, she attends language classes and in her free time enjoys the Chinese opera. Student 2 is of Moroccan origin. She has lived in the city of Haarlem for almost 23 years. During those years, she stayed at home to take care of her six children. Her social contacts are mainly limited to family and close friends with whom she converses only in Berber. Just recently she started attending classes in adult education.

Table 3:   Two students telling a picture story

The story sequence	Student 1	Student 2
(Picture 1)		
A man hands over a gift to a woman.	*Man geven vrouw cadeau.* Man give woman gift.	*Cadeautje….cadeautje.* *Ik uuuh geef.* Gift, gift, I uuh give.
(Picture 2)		
The woman has the gift in her hands.	*Vrouw pakken die cadeautje.* Woman take gift.	*Ik hier naar huis.* I here to house.
(Picture 3)		
The woman tears the wrapping off of the gift.	*Papier open, kijken.* Paper open, look.	*Kapot.* Broken.
(Picture 4)		
The woman takes a vase out of the box.	*Wat zit in? Zit 'n vaas in.* What is in? Is a vase in.	*Kan uuuh kan.* Jug uuh jug.

4   Summary and Conclusion

The study is still in progress. Data collection began in October 2006 with three classes in centers of adult education and will continue to the end of 2007 with three other classes. The data is being collected through classroom observation and assessment. The six different classrooms represent three different types of classroom organization. The main characterization of the classroom organization is the time allotted for the oral and literacy skills. All observations are recorded and will be transcribed orthographically. The focus of the study is on the development of the oral skills and the verbal interactions in the classroom. The oral skills are assessed by a specially developed oral assessment. The pre-assessments, although not yet analyzed, have been completed and already show a great variety in language production between the three types of classes, as the examples cited above illustrate. One of the focal points of the verbal interactions will be interactions concerning corrective feedback and student uptake. By looking at feedback, an opportunity is created for a better understanding of the teaching and learning processes of the non-literate in learning a second language. The study discussed in this paper hopes to shed some light on this matter.

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