

ECAD4019 Professional and Pedagogic Studies:

Researching the Learning: what, how and why am I teaching?

Session 6:
Theory of observation

Yr Athrofa Research Dispositions

Being sceptical

- Understand **empirical evidence** in contested fields
- Being aware of political, economic and social drivers for 'evidence'

Being ethical

- Knowing and using ethical principles of research
- Understanding **positionality**

Being a skilled researcher

- Understanding **qualitative** and **quantitative** methods
- Be able to construct an argument based on evidence
- Employing **critical reading** skills

Being part of an inquiring profession

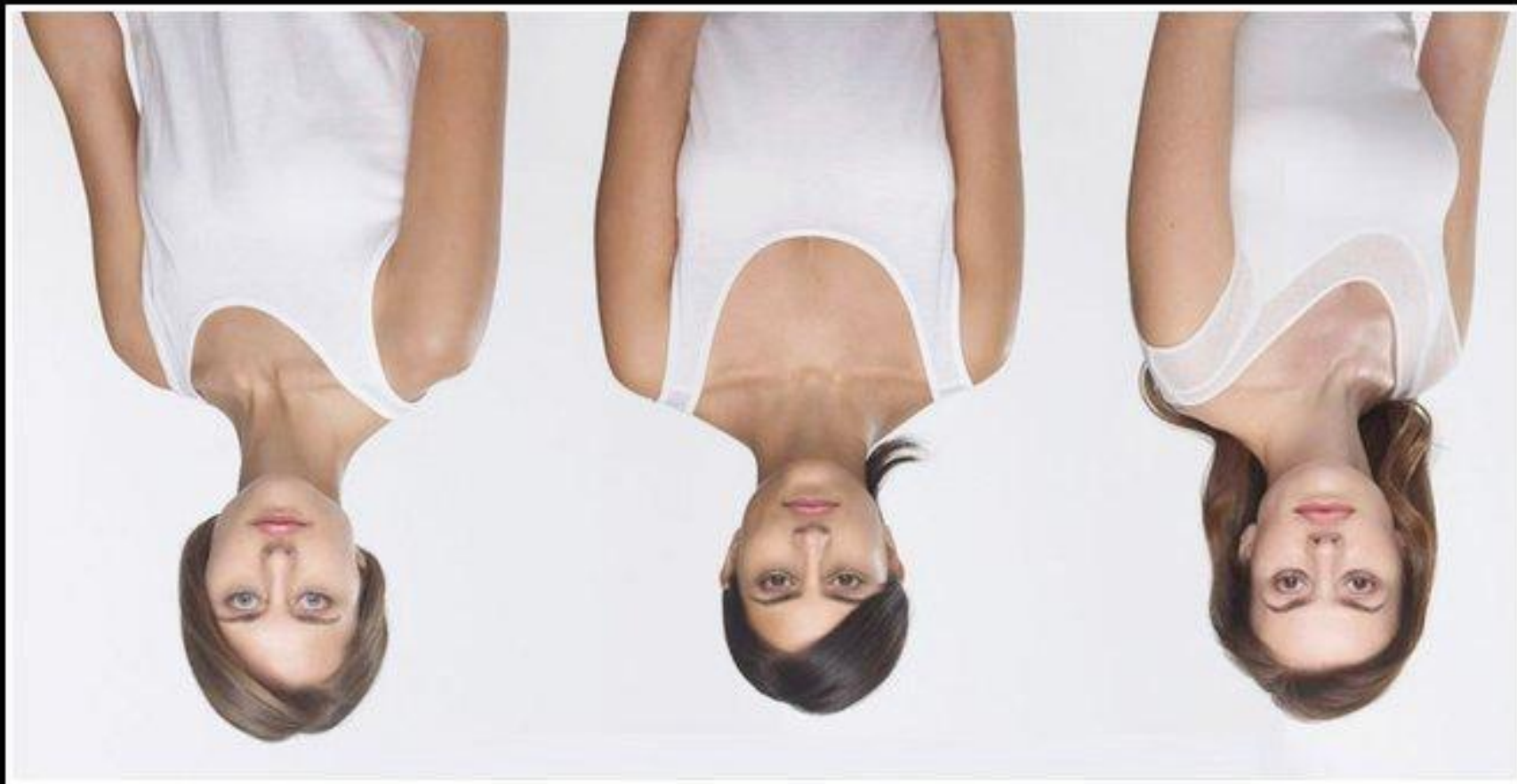
- Proactively contributing to a range of audiences
- Actively engaging with the inquiry and findings of others

Session Aim



- To develop an understanding of observation strategies





WHEN YOU FLIP IT

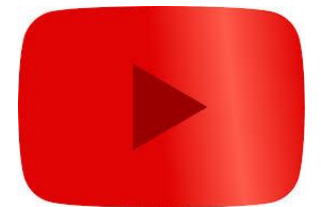
WHEN YOU FLIP IT



A light blue t-shirt is displayed against a white background. It features a black text design on the chest that reads "I've Never Noticed That I'm Not Very Observant" followed by a small lightbulb icon. The text is arranged in four lines: "I've Never Noticed", "That I'm Not", "Very Observant", and the lightbulb icon.

I've Never Noticed
That I'm Not
Very Observant

Watch the following YouTube clip and follow the instructions



Types of observation

Narrative
observation

Critical incident

Observation
schedule



Types of observation

Narrative observation...

- A narrative observation is a detailed account of behavior that has been observed in a classroom
- Narrative observations are written in chronological order and told in standard story form
- The observer's task is to record everything she sees and hears – not to limit the scope of the observation to a predetermined list of issues or topics

When might narrative observation be appropriate within a FL class?

Can you think of any negatives about using this research tool?



Types of observation

Observation schedule...

- An **observation schedule** is a form prepared before data collection and is filled out by researchers during observations
- Observation schedules are used mainly in education, psychology, speech and language therapy and market research
- Schedules can range from very complex multi-page examinations to simple tally sheets

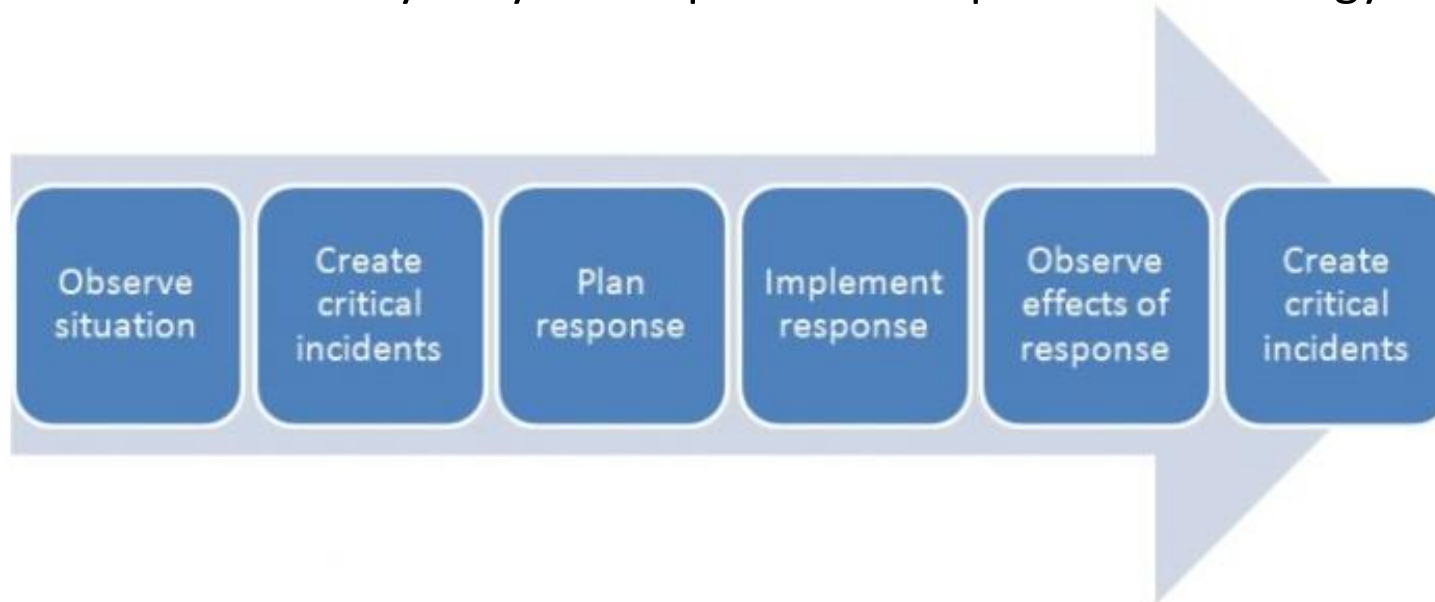
Using your own experiences within a FL class, can you think of any advantages and disadvantages of using an observation schedule, compared to a narrative observation?

Types of observation

Critical incident...



- Tripp's (1993) approach to learning is via what he considers "critical incidents" that come out of observations of what happens in classrooms.
- A critical incident does not need to be a serious or dangerous event; rather "critical" is to be interpreted as relevant or important.
- Once the situation has been analysed you can plan for a response or a strategy.





Critical incidents...

Can you think of any critical incidents you have observed within your teaching? How could you use the diagram below to enhance your practice?



Observation - summary

Research method	Advantage	Disadvantage
Observations	• Natural settings can afford a more realistic study. • Schedules can eliminate bias. • As participant observers, it's possible to see things from group's perspective. • Video recording observations can stimulate open discussion and reflection.	• As participant observers, it's difficult to take notes during observations. • As non-participant observers, more difficult to see things from the group's perspective. • The analysis of findings from the use of technologies, such as audio-visual recordings, is time-consuming.

An informative guide for the teaching profession – an easy read and well worth exploring!

Source: Grigg and Lewis, 2015

https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/24313/2/150814-effective-use-of-data-en_Redacted.pdf

Introduction to the Leuven Scale

- First pioneered by Ferre Laevers and his team at Leuven University in Belgium, the Leuven Scale helps you to understand how focused and comfortable children are in the setting.
- According to Laevers, high levels of both well-being and involvement allow children to experience deep learning. A happy, involved child is one who can experience the world at its fullest.
- Well-being focuses on the extent to which pupils feel at ease, act spontaneously, show vitality and self-confidence. It is a crucial component of emotional intelligence and good mental health.

The Leuven Scale for Well-being (in learning)

It's time for an honest observation of your students

Based on: <http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/documents-ldtoolkit/leuven.pdf>

Let's hope teachers are designing and evaluating classroom activities with an aim that every learner might reach a state of **flow**.



Extremely low

The child clearly shows signs of **discomfort** such as crying or screaming. They may look **dejected**, **sad**, **frightened** or **angry**. The child does not respond to the environment, avoids contact and is withdrawn. The child may behave aggressively, hurting him/herself or others.



Low

The posture, facial expression and actions indicate that the child does **not** feel at ease. However, the signals are less explicit than under level 1 or the sense of discomfort is **not** expressed the whole time.



Moderate

The child has a **neutral** posture. Facial expression and posture show little or **no** **emotion**. There are no signs indicating sadness or pleasure, comfort or discomfort.



High

The child shows obvious signs of **satisfaction** (as listed under level 5). However, these signals are not constantly present with the same intensity.



Extremely High

The child looks happy and **cheerful**, smiles, cries out with **pleasure**. They may be lively and full of energy. Actions can be spontaneous and expressive. The child may:

- talk to him/herself,
- play with sounds,
- hum, sing.

The child appears relaxed. The child expresses **self-confidence** and **self-assurance**.

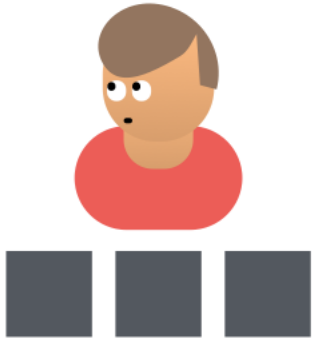
[The Leuven Scale for Early Years : What Should Childcare Providers Know \(cheqdin.com\)](http://cheqdin.com)

The Leuven Scale for Involvement (in learning)

It's time for an honest observation of your students

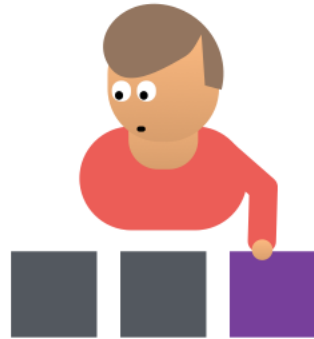
Based on: <http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/documents-ldtoolkit/leuven.pdf>

Let's hope teachers are designing and evaluating classroom activities with an aim that every learner might reach a state of **flow**.



Extremely low

Activity is simple, **repetitive** and passive. The child seems **absent** and displays no energy. They may stare into space or look around to see what others are doing.



Low

Frequently interrupted activity. The child will be engaged in the activity for some of the time they are observed, but there will be **moments of non-activity** when they will stare into space, or be distracted by what is going on around.



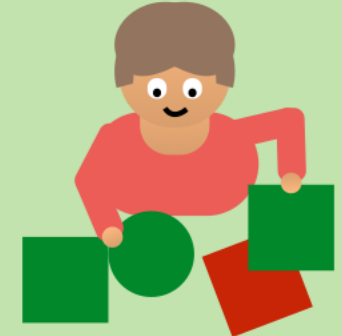
Moderate

Mainly continuous activity. The child is **busy** with the activity but at a fairly **routine** level and there are few signs of real involvement. They make some progress with what they are doing but don't show much energy and concentration and **can be easily distracted**.



High

Continuous activity with **intense moments**. The child's activity has intense moments and at all times they seem involved. They are **not easily distracted**.



Extremely High

The child shows **continuous and intense activity** revealing the greatest involvement. They are concentrated, creative, energetic and persistent throughout nearly all the observed period.

Possible signs of well being and involvement?



- **Openness and receptivity** – receptive to the environment around them and open to new situations and external interest
- **Flexibility** – adapt easily, especially in new or different situations. They can quickly move on from problems and consider alternatives
- **Self-confidence and self-esteem** – display confidence and can express themselves well. Can tackle new challenges and risk failure, not letting them affect their sense of self-worth
- **Enjoyment without restraints** – They are showing genuine enjoyment and seem generally happy. They understand rules and still express their happiness with smiling or humming quietly



Evaluation of the Leuven Scale

Advantages	Disadvantages
Useful to make assessments of targeted children you are concerned about	A one-off observation is not enough as children change over time
Observation and assessment are a key part of the Leuven Scales. Making them part of your reflective practice will give you a much deeper understanding of the children you care for.	“If we’ve got well-being, we’ve got the lot,” says Laevers. But... a child can be happily getting on with tasks, and never cause any problems, but it doesn’t mean they’re being challenged and finding opportunities for focused learning.
May change the learning environment in response to your findings	Danger of becoming another ‘checklist’ in your observations

Directed Task 6

- ✓ Read Walker and Solvason (2014), Success with your early years research project. London: Sage.

Chapter 1 – Considering your research question

- ✓ Create the first draft of your own research question (RQ)



