

The Classroom and the Language Learner

by Leo van Lier, published by Longman

In the late eighties we were paying closer and increased attention to learning as a process and therefore, to the many different ways students learn. I believe the book *The Classroom and the Language Learner* meant a turning point in my professional development

Having been trained in the technical/rational models of expert knowledge, for me, this book by van Lier was crucial as one of the first approaches to study second/foreign language classrooms from an interpretive and contextual rather than an experimental and casual point of view.

Van Lier's clarity helped me understand the communicative potential of the classroom and direct my own efforts to try to improve my own learning environments.

He forced me to rethink the notion of objectivity as well as the complex issue of what is meant by context.

His orientation to the social context of classroom interaction pushed me into paying more attention to the nature and quality of this interaction between teachers, learners and materials in my roles as a teacher educator, visiting teacher and regular classroom teacher.

His multidisciplinary stance also helped me understand more clearly how a language curriculum needs to be drawn from a variety of disciplines and how teaching methods are seen as only a part of the complex, interactive network of classroom activity.

Reading this book over and over meant developing new understandings of my own teaching. I began recording my own classes on audio tape then, collecting my own data, documenting my findings, and getting used to the idea that classroom research belongs to teachers.

In sum, when I look back, I can say *The Classroom and the Language Learner* helped me move into my next developmental stage by increasing my awareness of the importance of continuing learning teaching.

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