

Observation of a lesson

Biology

Level : 7 grade bilingual English (5 grade in France)

Duration : 2 times 45 mn (once a week)

Number of pupils : 21

Teacher : P. Junge

The lesson occurs in a biology classroom. The arrangement of the classroom is classic for a front teaching lesson. The pupils have special biology tables with electricity and water that can be provided from the teacher desk

Purpose of the lessons : During the first semester the program is about insects, the pupils have to characterised them and to learn their main functionalities

Preliminary knowledge : during the first lessons the pupils have made some practical manipulations like observing insects with a microscope and drawing of sketches.

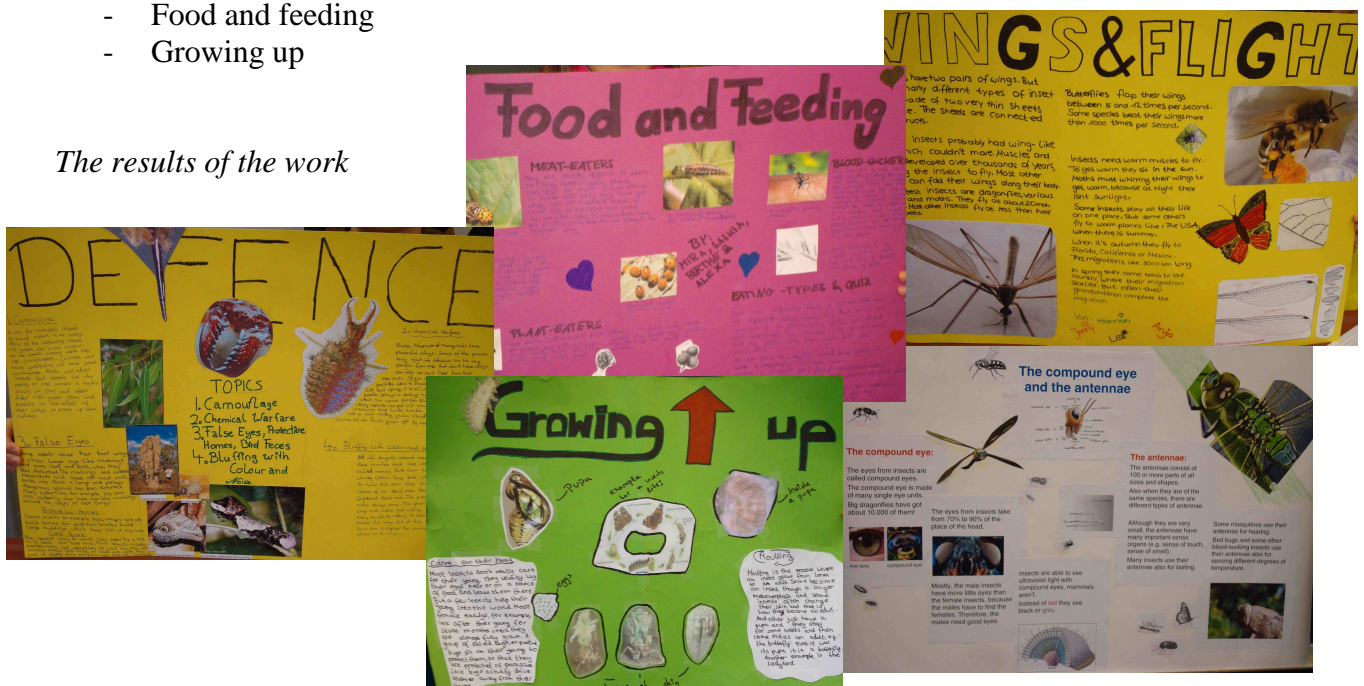
Running of the lessons :

The lessons that have been observed deal with a presentation about a subject upon the insect's world. This activity last 5 lessons, it involves two phases of validation. At the end of the first two lessons the pupils have to present a poster. During the last lesson they have to make an oral presentation with the possibility to use multimedia tools such as PowerPoint, sounds, videos...

The first part, the realization of a poster is a training for the presentation that comes at the end. For this bilingual class the work and the lessons have to be in English.

The subject proposed by the teacher are the following :

- The compound eyes and the antenna
- Wings and flight
- Defense
- Food and feeding
- Growing up

The results of the work

The children work by group of 4 or 5. Once the pupils and the teacher agree with the choice of the subject, the main activity is to begin to imagine the poster. This one consists of a sheet of paper in format A2. The teacher gives to the pupils a paper with the main points on which they will be evaluated, relevance of the poster, lay out, communications with the rest of the classroom etc. The teacher gives advices and helps them mainly for the translation in English of some specific words. It's up to the pupils to find the different information, the main part of the work is made at home. The next week each group presents his poster. Every pupil speaks and argues or details the poster. At the end the group who makes the presentation asks some questions to the whole classroom. These questions are about some particular points treated before. Finally some pupils and the teacher give a feedback, telling what they think about the poster and making criticism, mainly on the negative or positive points.

The two next lessons the pupils prepare their presentations. The subjects are once again distributed. This time the presentation can be done with any kind of media, the other rules are quite the same as before.

A presentation using PowerPoint is the most used by the children, but we find also a few things more original like for example a song that has been sang by all the classroom.

The preparation and the researches last 2 lessons, the presentation of the work to the entire classroom is done on the last week. This is rather similar to what was done during the first part with the posters.

Analysing the work

Most of the pupils have a very good level in English, more than half of the classroom have enough knowledge not only to do the presentation but also to ask questions or to make criticism. Many technical words concerning the insects are introduced by the teacher, and rapidly assimilated and used by the pupils. However there is a big difference between the pupils with a good or rather good level and those who are not so sure of them, but generally speaking, the leaders of the class act as a motor and the whole level is increasing.

The first part, the production of a poster, before the presentation is like a training for the pupils, and it could certainly be possible to improve even more the level of the presentation, which is quite good, by formalizing the remarks that has been made at the end of the first one.

Of course the pupils are quite good with the subject of their own presentation, but despite a few questions at the end, the other part of the classroom has much less knowledge upon this subject and this has to be corrected during complementary lessons with a written resume of each presentation.

We can notice the enthusiasm of the pupils during these lessons, and they also want to offer the best to their companions, with a very positive competitiveness. The fact that these lessons are in English even seems to be more attractive for them.

But we must take in account that this classroom has a very good level, indeed the same lessons occur in another classroom where the level is not so good and then the pupils are much less enthusiastic, while the work done by the teacher is quite the same. The teacher has to limit the knowledge that are taught during the presentation. But the autonomy of the pupils, the possibility of searching information by different ways, and the restitution by themselves of what they have learned, play an important part in the pleasure of learning and the teacher is much more here to give advices and to organize than to hold the knowledge