

**Teacher Observations:  
Building a Unified System  
from Two Complementary Approaches**

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International Conference on Language Teacher Education  
May 14-15, 2015

# ESL Programs at SCSU

## Intensive English Center (IEC)

- Average 110 students / semester
- 6 levels of proficiency
- 30 graduate assistants
- 6 adjuncts
- 1 full-time teacher

## College English for Academic Purposes (CollEAP) Program

- Average 1275 credits / year
- R&W, L&S, cultural orientation
- 16 graduate teaching assistants
- 1 program coordinator

# Observation Format

## **IEC: 3 Day Process**

- Pre-Observation
- Observation
- Post-Observation

**Pre-Observation Worksheet**

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Please complete the rubric below and email back to me at least one day PRIOR to your schedule class observation**

<p>What are the <u>instructional objectives</u> for this class?</p>	
<p>What specific <u>tasks/activities</u> will you and your students do in class to meet your stated objectives?</p>	
<p>What <u>particular aspects of your teaching</u> would you like me to focus on? For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <i>Interaction</i></li><li>○ <i>Activities</i></li><li>○ <i>Time Management</i></li><li>○ <i>Classroom management</i></li><li>○ <i>Other</i></li></ul>	
<p>Provide any additional and/or background information about your class that you would like to share if you think it might be useful.</p>	

IEC  
Classroom Observation Rubric

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Language Objectives:	
Instructional Objectives:	
Key Vocabulary:	

<b>Preparation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Evidence of lesson plan</li> <li>○ Builds on previous knowledge</li> <li>○ Builds on previous lesson(s)</li> <li>○ Strategies             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lecture</li> <li>○ Demonstration</li> <li>○ Multi-Media</li> <li>○ Other</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>Instructional Options</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher-centered</li> <li>○ Student-centered</li> </ul> <hr/> <b>Organization</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Whole class</li> <li>○ Small group</li> <li>○ Partners</li> <li>○ Independent</li> </ul>	<b>Assessment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Individual</li> <li>○ Group</li> <li>○ Written</li> <li>○ Oral</li> </ul>
<b>Scaffolding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Modeling</li> <li>○ Guided practice</li> <li>○ Independent practice</li> <li>○ Clear &amp; Understandable instructions/explanations</li> </ul>	<b>Activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hands-on</li> <li>○ Engaging</li> <li>○ Reinforcement of objectives</li> <li>○ Meaningful, applicable</li> <li>○ Encourages student creation</li> </ul>	<b>Bloom's Taxonomy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Creating</li> <li>○ Evaluating</li> <li>○ Analyzing</li> <li>○ Applying</li> <li>○ Understanding</li> <li>○ Remembering</li> </ul>

<b>Integration of Skills:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reading</li> <li>○ Writing</li> <li>○ Listening</li> <li>○ Speaking</li> <li>○ Grammar</li> <li>○ Critical Thinking</li> </ul>	
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**Other:**

# Observation Format

## IEC: 3 Day Process

- Pre-Observation
- Observation
- Post-Observation

## CoIIIEAP

- Observation
- Observation notes to TA (same day)
- TA comment on Obs.Notes
- Commented Obs.Notes back to observer (within a week)
- Post-Observation (within 1~2 weeks)

# COLIEAP

## Commented Observation Note - Example

Time	Description	Comments / Questions
5:12	<p>arranged to find some Americans for you to interview?</p> <p>Two Ss express an interest, and other Ss say they want to find an American on their own.</p> <p>T talks about her own experience from undergrad, and becoming friends with the person that she interviewed for an assignment.</p> <p>T: So do you guys feel a little better since you now have an extra week?</p> <p>Ss: Yes.</p> <p>T: Maybe next Wed, just tell me who you're going to interview.... I think that would be a good goal for us to set.</p> <p>T: Okay, are there any questions about anything... going on in this class?</p> <p>Ss: Silent.</p> <p>T: Looks like the D2L discussion is ...</p>	<p>9/22/10 7:56 PM</p> <p><b>Comment [4]:</b> I hope that the deadline extension and offer to find interview subjects is a sufficient solution to this issue. I don't want the students to be overwhelmed by the work I am assigning them, but I also want to push them to get out of their comfort zones.</p>
5:14	<p>T: Okay, so we will do the reading questions. [T mentions that a S who is absent today sent her the R.Qs to be used in class, and she will lead the discussion.]</p> <p>T: Why don't we do this... Hmm... how to split you up... Okay, how about I have S1, S2, S3, why don't you three move to the table over here? And I will give you Q.#?.... [T puts the other Ss in another group and gives them a different Q to</p>	<p>9/22/10 7:57 PM</p> <p><b>Comment [5]:</b> I have been working on omitting this phrase from my teaching vocabulary for a while now, but it is difficult for me. I tend to use "you guys" a lot in normal conversation, so it is hard for me not to use it during teaching. I realize that it is gender exclusive and informal, but it is difficult for me to stop using it.</p> <p>9/22/10 7:58 PM</p> <p><b>Comment [6]:</b> Here I realize that I should be more specific with my instructions. I should not use words like "maybe" when I am giving instructions. I should clearly state what I want the students to do.</p> <p>9/22/10 7:59 PM</p> <p><b>Comment [7]:</b> I tend to do a lot of thinking out loud when I am teaching. Maybe instead of saying what I am thinking I should pause and come up with</p>

# Themes from Observer's Notes - IEC

## **Student Centered**

comments that encourage Teachers to create lessons where students are interacting with the language/engaged with the language

## **Classroom management**

comments about timing, preparation, technology, etc.

## **Language**

comments about the teacher's use of language, i.e. display questions, knowledge of English structures, production of language forms in class

## **Instruction**

comments about activities, delivery, methods

## **Reflection**

comments designed for teacher to critically think about their teaching

## **Teacher Presence**

comments about teacher confidence, interactions with students, comfort level



## **Student Centered**

comments that encourage Teachers to create lessons where students are interacting with the language/engaged with the language

- *What do you plan to help make it more concrete and to help Ss internalize? (Index cards- tactile)*
- *The sample sentences for the rules, were they contextualized, meaningful for Ss.*

## **Classroom management**

comments about timing, preparation, technology, etc.

- *Sitting behind desk- separates you from students. What is your agenda for the day? Put this on the board.*
- *Agenda on board*
- *Tell them they have X minutes to accomplish task*
- *Rotate to new partner, new 1-7 – I liked this. Keeps activity fresh, new partner, more practice, meet and interact with everyone in class.*
- *Work stations and groups- nice way to handle mixed abilities*

## Language Comments

- *T repeating structure over and over.*
- *Times when T asked a question, Ss trying to answer, and T either repeating or giving further examples. Give Ss time to answer. Listen carefully to what they say.*
- *S said “Respect all people” T said “Respect old people”*

## Instruction Comments

- *Might group words into categories according to spelling, i.e. double cc, drop –e, add –ing. If nothing else, this exposes Ss to a pattern.*
- *Model presentations on Corporate Corruption and Sunglasses. Ts model was a Tiger. Does rubric match models and expectations for S presentations? Is rubric from book? Suggestion: craft rubric for specific class assignment and your expectations.*
- *Introducing new unit right before break. Perfect context for CLT activity for future + going to.*

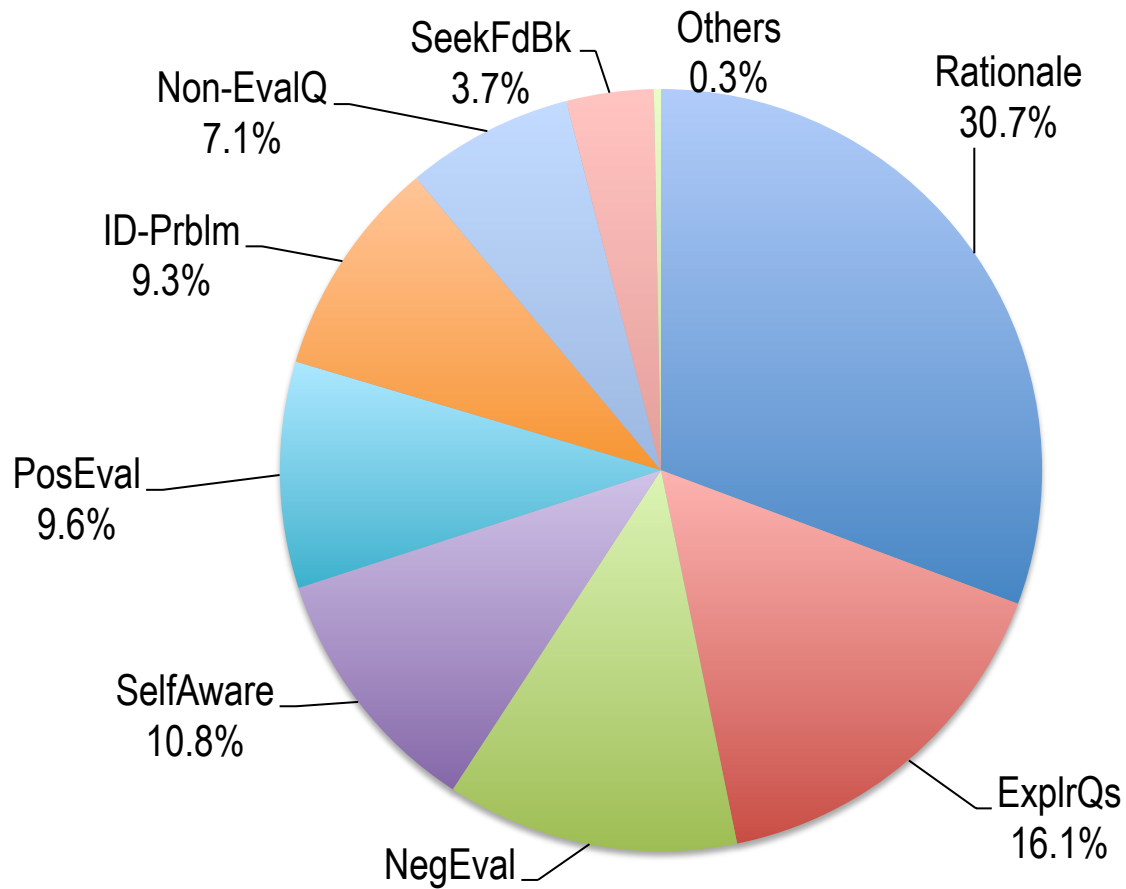
## Reflection

- *Seems like class is just going from page to page*
- *“Do you understand that” – What’s the typical response when you ask this question?*
- *Was today’s lesson teaching language or was it teaching about plagiarism?*
- *Do students know what vocab and structures you expect?*
- *After lecture, review and repeating/rephrasing almost entire lecture. Why do you supposed you did this? What might be more beneficial?*
- *What level of Bloom’s taxonomy was the lesson today?*
- *Mid-term exam. How will you evaluate? What criteria, rubric are you using? Have Ss seen this and been trained with rubric?*
- *How useful is fill-in the blank?*

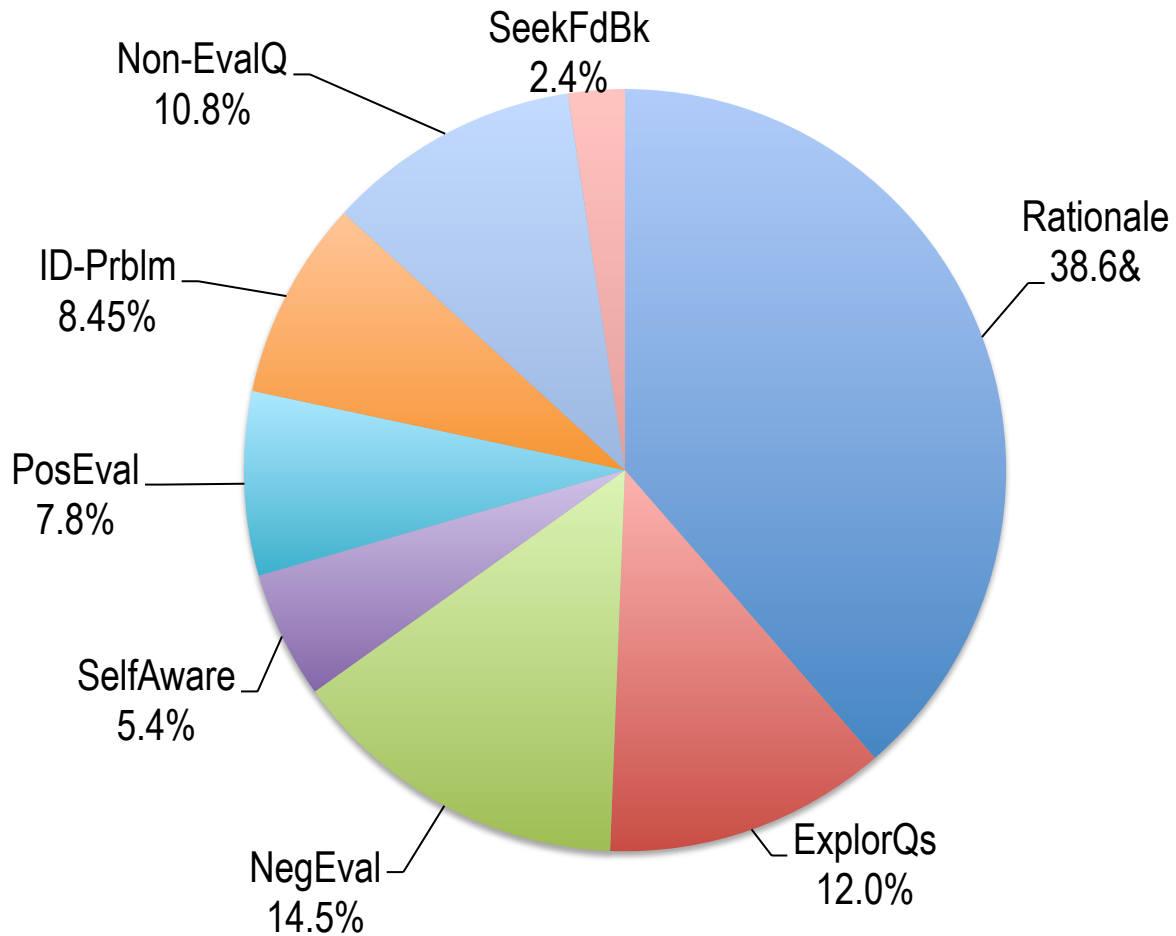
## Teacher Presence

- *Confident, relaxed, personable*
- *“Open books to page 30.” Be personable*
- *confident, comfortable, mingles between groups,*
- *T’s confident, relaxed, but in command.*
- *Interacts well with Ss*

# Self-Comments – 1<sup>st</sup> Semester TAs (n=15)

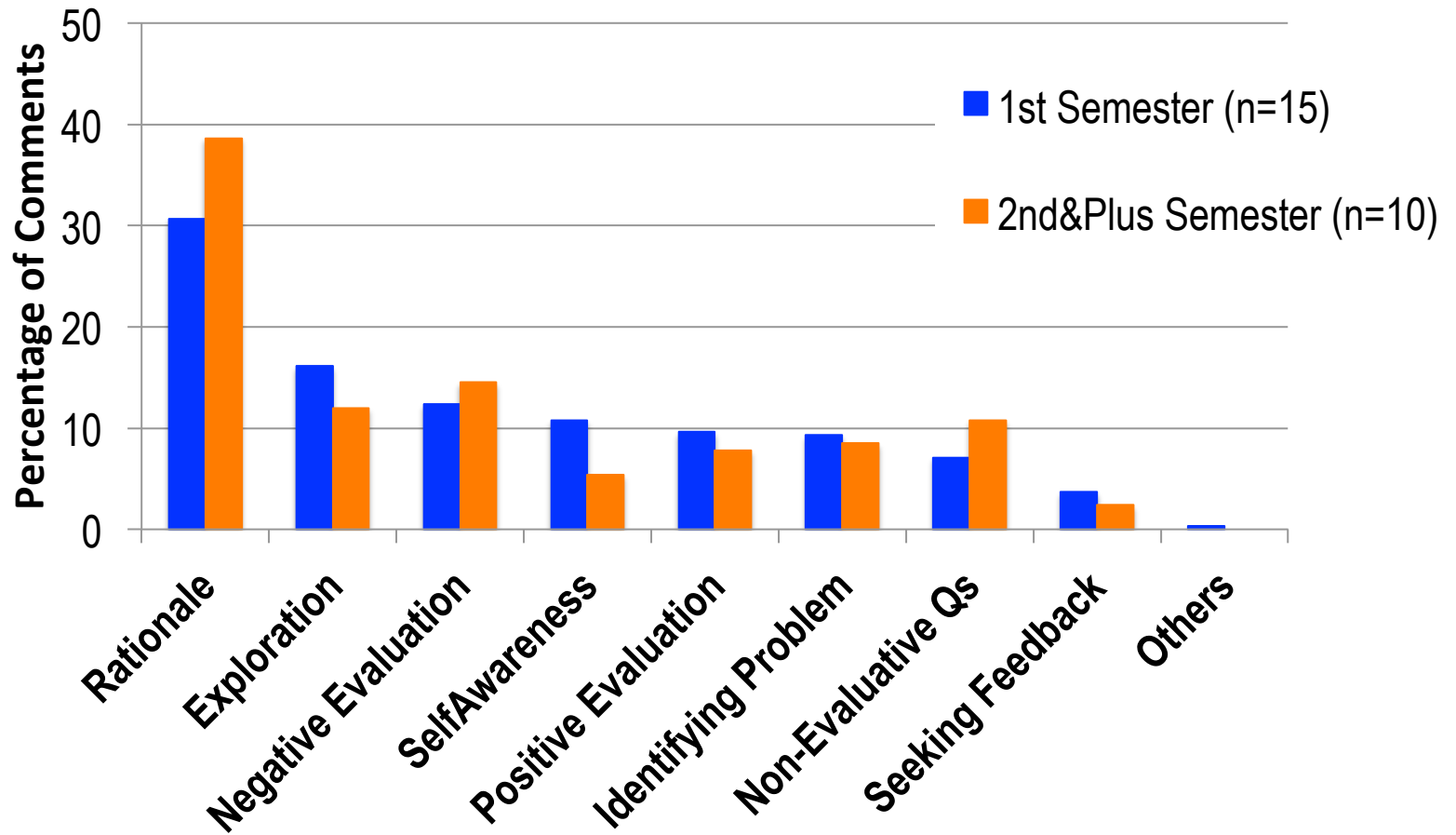


# Self-Comments – 2<sup>nd</sup>PLUS Semester TAs (n=10)





# Comparative Distribution of Comments



# ColIEAP Approach: Bottom-Up

## Strengths

- Provides opportunities to perform, reflect, & learn.
- Promotes analytical, critical, & reflective self-evaluation
- Promotes autonomous teacher-candidates

# ColIEAP Approach: Bottom-Up

## Areas for More Focus

1. Limited instances of explicit references to specific language teaching theories or principles in students reflective comments
  - Consistent with findings from published studies
  - Goals & reflections need to be explicitly matched.
2. Students are neither equally ready nor equally capable of reflecting on their performance.
  - Initial training seems useful and necessary.

# ColLEAP Approach: Bottom-Up

A quote from a student:

*“When I was assigned to teach for the first time as a graduate TA in the ColLEAP Program, it felt like I was only pretending to teach. Now, I really feel that I AM a teacher. I feel confident, and I know what I’m doing.”*

*Statement from the last Practicum meeting in the TA's final semester*

# IEC Approach: Top-Down

- **Areas for More Focus**

1. Allow more space for the emerging students to express themselves.
  - Revise Pre- Obs – & Post- observation process to give space for students to talk about and reflect on their teaching practices.
  - Goal is to link theory with practice.
2. Students are neither equally ready nor equally capable of reflecting on their performance.
  - Initial training seems useful and necessary.

# Observations – Two Different Approaches

## IEC

Primarily Top-Down

- Possibly leads to a deficit model of teacher mentoring
- Possibly necessary for some emerging teachers

## CoIIEAP

Bottom-Up

- Opportunities for open-ended exploration
- May need some modification for true beginners

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**THANK YOU!**

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