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| <p>Abstract</p> <p>As an emerging movement, due to the influence of business globalisation, there is rarely any job offers without requirements in knowledge of foreign languages nowadays. Hence, foreign language education get lots of attention in order to improve, especially in education institute. The author, through years of studying foreign language at JAMK, has noticed the current JAMK language education's situation. With major in Facility Management programme background, she hoped to enhance language learning by renovating physical environment in classroom.</p> <p>Observation, qualitative and quantitative research method were used in research part. The writer hoped by using many research methods, various perspectives would be collected and applied. Participants were teachers and learners. After finishing survey and interview, combining with related academy studies, the writer established a blueprint of new classroom, with detailed description. For future development, the design may be adjusted for different usage, as well as an evaluation of learning efficiency after experiencing this new class room will be appreciated.</p> <p>All in all, the writer had great experience of researching and practicing in space management and interior design field. Theories resorted to the right way for continuing research, while using interior design software provided knowledge in practice.</p> |  |                                      |
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# Reconstructing classroom facilities to enhance communication in language learning

Case study: Classroom F207, JAMK Main campus

Nguyen Thi Nhat Minh

Bachelor's thesis  
November 2015

Degree Programme in Facility management  
School of Business and Service Management



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# 1 Introduction

In the present globalization situation, learning foreign languages has become more and more important in life. In economic and cultural activities, people use verbal language to exchange information. Therefore, foreign language plays a critical roles of education. At JAMK, the Language Centre provides several language and communication courses each year with hundreds of students taking part in them. Being one of those students, the author recognized the need of improving physical learning environment in order to support language studying, especially communication practice.

In this thesis, a new concept of a classroom for foreign language learning is proposed. At first, the literature review introduces studies and theories in this area is introduced. Next, the research methods and results, which consist of both qualitative and quantitative research, are presented. The implementation of this concept is shown as reconstructing classroom F207 facilities. Finally, the discussion will be demonstrated, followed by future research suggestion.

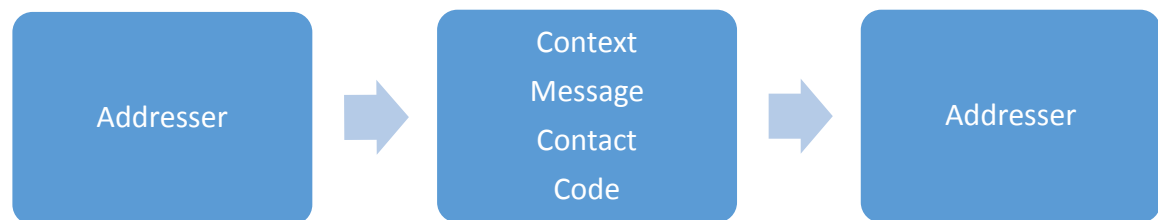
This paper aims at answering these Research questions:

- How do classroom facilities affect foreign language learning?
- How can renovating classrooms enhance foreign language learning?

## 2 Language, learning and facilities a theoretical perspective

### 2.1 Communication and the importance of language

One of the major purposes of the existence of languages is to serve communication (Medina 2005, 1-12). According to him, there are three main elements of communication (Bühler, 1933-1934): the addresser (the speaker, the message sender); the addressee (the audience, the message receiver) and the topic (the message, the context). Based on Bühler's theory of communication element, the analysis of communication acts was described by Jakobson (1990) in the following diagram:



*Figure 1. Communication acts diagram by Jakobson (1990)*

This diagram, however, only explain the principle of communication in theory. In reality, communication actually emphasizes many more purposes and motives. As generalized by Rubin, Fernandez-Collado and Hernandez-Sampieri (1992), regardless of the context it is in, the purposes of communication seemingly fit into five categories:

- To learn: as in the acknowledgement of facts, information and skills.
- To relate: as in interaction with other people, building relationships.
- To help: as in offering advices, solutions or comfort.
- To influence: as in inspiring others or changing behaviours.
- To play: as in leisurely enjoying and experiencing the surrounding.

The role of language within communication is vital. According to Medina (2005), Bühler (1933) stated that: "[...] Language is a medium that serves [...] communicative functions.". This did not mean people cannot communicate without languages; in fact,

the author of *A Man Without Words* – Susan Schaller, has met and interact with deaf people who had absolutely no acknowledgement of any form of languages, including sign language. She describes her experience when attempting to communicate and teaching sign language to Ildefonso – a profoundly deaf man since birth with no education – as “terribly frustrating”, since the man had no idea what language was and only managed to survive by copying others. Ildefonso, on the other hand, had always been frustrated as he could not figure out how people could understand each other by “moving their lips” as he had no idea what sound was like.

Language, however, had proven its miraculous purpose when Ildefonso finally figured out how to use sign language to get people to understand what he meant. To him, finally being able to have shared meaning of his surroundings with others after 27 years was the most amazing that ever happened, as quoted from Schaller’s book:

*The amazing thing is that the look on his face was as if he had never seen a window before. The window became a different thing with a symbol attached to it. But it’s not just a symbol. It’s a shared symbol. He can say “window” to someone else tomorrow who he hasn’t even met yet! And they will know what a window is. There’s something magical that happens between humans and symbols and the sharing of symbols.*

*That was his first “Aha!” He just went crazy for a few seconds, pointing to everything in the room and signing whatever I signed. Then he collapsed and started crying, and I don’t mean just a few tears. He cradled his head in his arms on the table and the table was shaking loudly from his sobbing. Of course, I don’t know what was in his head, but I’m just guessing he saw what he had missed for twenty-seven years. (Schaller, 1991)*

It is hard to imagine someone living without verbally communicating with others. Ildefonso is not the only one who was part of his life language-less; there are also



relatively many people like that. In one of Schaller's article published on Works & Conversations (2010), she wrote about people who grew up "missed everything", whose lives she described "as if in tiny, windowless closets". Some went through an isolated and painful childhood as they were sent to special schools far away from home, taught with rather strict speech-focused method in which the students were punished if they attempted to sign anything without any speech involved. All of this proved how extraordinary it is to have a language and how it must have been very depressing not being able to be understood or express oneself freely.

The connection between communication and language exists in everyday life, as part of the requirements for most jobs on the market. The reading and writing capabilities of a foreign language is not enough, communicative skill is something much more valuable to an employer. Being able to speak a language is not as effortless as repeating memorized dialogues or simply talk "words", it is a more complex system of sentence production and context recognition in order to produce a natural, socially acceptable conversation (Chomsky, 1961). In the field of foreign language education, speaking and listening, regarded as communication skills, are considered the most challenging to acquire – yet the most demanded among learners. Brown (2000) stated that, being able to speak a language means "to carry on a conversation reasonably competently", which somehow resembles Chomsky's standpoint, "a distinction must be made between what the speaker of a language knows implicitly (what we may call his competence) and what he does (his performance)." (Chomsky, 1966).

*One need only study a foreign language, or take a course in linguistics, to begin to appreciate the enormous complexity of human language. At every level— phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic— human language is an intricate system of abstract units, structures, and rules, used in a powerful system of communication. Once we appreciate the nature of language and the true depth of its complexity, we can also appreciate the remarkable, and in many ways fascinating, feat that children*

*accomplish in mastering it so easily in such a short amount of time. Language development occurs in all children with normal brain function, regardless of race, culture, or general intelligence. In other words, the capacity to acquire language is a capacity of the human species as a whole. A position held by many linguists is that even though different groups of people speak different languages, all human languages have a similar level of detail and complexity, and all languages share general abstract properties; for example, all human languages can be analysed as systems consisting of discrete structural units, with rules for combining those units in various ways. That is, even though languages differ superficially, they all reflect general properties of a common linguistic system.*

## 2.2 Learning method and implement in language learning

### 2.2.1 Learner-centered pedagogy

Has been widely known since 1990's under the name "student-centered", the learner-centered methods is more and more extensively applied in education nowadays. In contrast with the teacher-centered one, learner-centered is defined as "a concept and a practice in which students and professors learning from each other". Rather than minimizing the role of teacher's instruction in education, this method extends instruction to consist of more activities in order to reach learning outcomes. Teachers determine what kind of knowledge students will be able to achieve, arrange educational experiences and provide guiding for them. In addition, by studying in a learner-centered environment, students are encouraged to develop their interaction and engagement to lesson content, teachers and each other (University of South California). In other word, learner-centered is learning through experiences.

Impressively, not all the students agree with the change from teacher-centered to learner-centered (University of Southern California). They still prefer to get the information in class by passively listening to teacher. To explain this phenomenon, Weimer (2002) stated that those students want to have less insistence, which is put on

them as in learner-centered methods. In other word, the teacher will share the responsibility with student in class. Moreover, there is another argument by Zemsky, Wegner, and Massy (2005), which claimed that “students are not always motivated to maximize their learning; students choose schools on the basis of the “competitive advantage” they expect the school to provide after graduation.”. For that reason, there’s no need for them to enhance the quality of learning.

This table shows the differences between learner-centered pedagogy and teacher-centered pedagogy.

*Table 1. Comparison of teacher-centered and learner-centered paradigms by Allen 2004*

| <b>Concept</b>                 | <b>Teacher-Centered</b> | <b>Learner-Centered</b>  |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Teaching goals                 | Cover the discipline    | Students learn: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to use the discipline</li> <li>- How to integrate disciplines to solve complex problems</li> <li>- An array of core learning objectives, such as communication and information literacy skills</li> </ul> |
| Organization of the curriculum | Courses in catalogue    | Cohesive program with systematically created opportunities to synthesize, practice, and develop increasingly complex ideas, skills, and values   |
| Course structure               | Faculty cover topics    | Students master learning objectives  |

|                    |   |   |
|--------------------|---|---|
| How students learn | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listening</li> <li>- Reading</li> <li>- Independent learning, often in competition for grades</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students construct knowledge by integrating new learning into what they already know</li> <li>- Learning is viewed as a cognitive and social act</li> </ul>  |
| Pedagogy           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Based on delivery of information</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Based on engagement of students</li> </ul>   |
| Course delivery    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lecture</li> <li>- Assignments and exams for summative purposes</li> </ul>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Active learning</li> <li>- Assignments for formative purposes</li> <li>- Collaborative learning</li> <li>- Community service learning</li> <li>- Cooperative learning</li> <li>- Online, asynchronous, self-directed learning</li> <li>- Problem-based learning</li> </ul> |
| Course grading     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faculty as gatekeepers</li> <li>- Normal distribution expected</li> </ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grades indicate mastery of learning objectives</li> </ul>  |
| Faculty role       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sage on the stage</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Designer of learning environments</li> </ul>   |
| Effective teaching | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teach (present information) well and those who can will learn</li> </ul>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage students in their learning</li> <li>- Help all students master learning objectives</li> <li>- Use classroom assessment to</li> </ul>  |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | improve courses<br>- Use program assessment to improve programs |
|--|--|---|

Based on this comparison table and many studies, the author agreed on choosing learner-centered method to develop the idea of enhance foreign language learning, as it is the suitable one for encourage communication.

## 2.2.2 Cooperative learning methods

Among many learner-centered instructional techniques employed in the classroom, cooperative learning method has been recorded as an effective one for increasing learner retention, building communicative and social skills, and developing students' critical thinking ability (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Kagan, 1994; Richard & Rodgers, 2011).

### 2.2.2.1 Definition

Simply a group of people sit together while talking and doing group work is not defined as cooperative learning. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), in order to meet the requirement of "cooperative learning" term, the method must include these following elements:

- Positive interdependence

By mentioning the term "positive interdependence", it means that students have to perceive that they need each other to complete the group's task. They share the same amount of work, as well as the responsibility of the group's success. Hence, everybody acknowledge that each person's efforts benefit not only him- or herself, but all other group members as well. This setting can be described as "sink or swim together".

- Individual accountability

In 1994, Archer-Kath, Johnson and Johnson (1994, 681-689) claimed that perceived interdependence among group members can be improved by increasing individual accountability. All students in a group are held accountable for doing their share of the work and for mastery of all of the material to be learned. The purpose of cooperative learning groups is to make each member a stronger individual in his or her right. Students learn together so that they can subsequently perform higher as individuals.

- Promotive interaction

Students promote each other's learning by helping, sharing, and encouraging efforts to learn. They explain, discuss, and teach what they know to other members. Those activities can provide students the opportunities for communicating easily and oral practice.

In contrast with promotive interaction is oppositional interaction and no interaction. Johnson and Johnson (2009, 369) defined oppositional interaction as “individuals discourage, block, and obstruct each other’s efforts to achieve their goal”. They still keep being productive, while restrict other members from being more productive than they are at the same time. In the situation that individuals work separately without making any interaction with others, no interaction occurs.

- Social Skills

The effectiveness of a group cannot be formed without individual’s needed social skill. In this case, social skills include leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills. At first, students have to get to know and trust each other. After that, clearly communication is required. Finally, everyone must accept and support each other, while resolve conflicts constructively. Teachers teach these skills as purposefully and precisely as academic skills and encourage students to use in the classroom.

Social skills not only help increasing achievement, but also develop member's relationship positively. In 1989, Putnam, Ryders, Johnson and Johnson stated that during the process of learning and observing social skills and getting feedbacks on how often they apply, the positive relationship has been building. (550 – 557).

- Group Processing

After a series of group activity, member have been aware of other's learning method in a sufficient level. Based on that fact, "group processing" exists when members choose which actions were helpful and unhelpful and decide which to keep or change. Group processing help to enhance group effectiveness, in order to achieve group's goals. Reflecting on group members' actions can appear as giving feedback to each other.

#### *2.2.2.2 Rationale for cooperative learning*

According to Johnson and Johnson (2009, 365 – 366), different from other instructional practices which are never widely used, cooperative learning has been firmly "progressed to being one of the dominant instructional practices throughout the world." This success is not overrated. Back in 1940s to 1970s, the individualistic learning method was the mainstream in education system. At first, people followed the interpersonal competition method, which is promoted by the social Dawism. Such slogans as "It's a dog-eat-dog world" or "survival of the fittest" can illustrate well this theory. People believed that just "only the strong and powerful rise to the top to reproduce, recreate, and be rewarded, while all others are cast aside as big "L" losers in the game. Competition, we are told, is what drove us out of the primordial ooze and forward to our glorious and transcendent evolutionary, future." (The Socjourn, 2013). This ideology has dominated for a long time, until the late 1960s, when the individualistic procedure, originating from "rugged individualism", took over. Skinner (1968) explained that this method allowed students to learn independently with other classmates and under behavioural modification. However, because of lack of effectiveness in peer interaction practice while the relationship between socialization and learning is more and more attached, the individualistic method was gradually replaced by the cooperative one. Until the 1980s, the cooperative learning method has been broadly approved and put in use.

There were several studies and a lot of research on the benefit and effectiveness of cooperative learning. Johnson and Johnson, in 1989, claimed that by working in cooperative groups, students achieve better grades in test and improve their reasoning ability and critical thinking skills. Moreover, after a comparison to individualistic methods, they figure out three key outcomes of cooperative learning: increasing effort, positive relationships and improving psychological health. With the same result, Slavin (1991) reviewed 67 studies to sum up that 61% of the cooperative learning class got considerably higher test score than the normal one. McCombs (2000) also claimed that cooperative learning help the student to develop the cognitive and metacognitive skills, which is important in building true knowledge.

Richards and Roger (2001, 199) indicated that “learning is something that require students’ direct involvement and participation”. This hypothesis was stressed again in the explanation for the rationale of cooperative learning by The Journey to Excellence’s authors:

- *Learning is fundamentally a social activity. We often learn best by building our knowledge understanding and skills through working with other people*
- *Because people are social animals, most of our goals relate to those of the group or community*
- *Classrooms that operate as learning communities get better results*
- *Being able to learn and work with other people are highly regarded competencies, both in the world of work and in social contexts*
- *Cooperative learning helps young people develop the interpersonal skills and attitudes required in a world that is increasingly pluralistic and diverse.*

*(The Journey to Excellence)*



In their study, to confirm that cooperation enhances learning in several ways, Felder and Brent argued that by working cooperatively, a weak student has the motivation to keep up with the task and complete it in time, instead of giving up because of getting stuck.

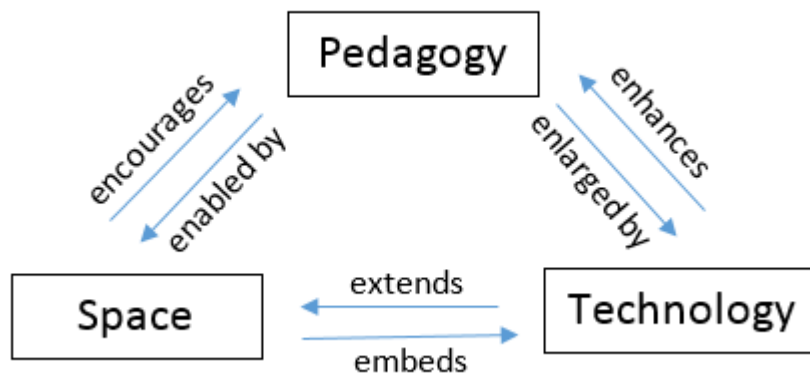
### 2.2.3 Implementation in foreign language learning

Despite most of the original studies of cooperative learning are not focus on language study, implementing this method in foreign language learning is highly possible, especially in communication practice. In previous section of this thesis, we discuss about how important communication is in language learning. The most basic purpose when study a foreign language is being able to communicate. On the other hand, cooperative learning method provides the chance to interact with other people while achieving more knowledge at the same time. An example of cooperative method is grouping. Dudek (2005, 68) believed that grouping can “encourage collaboration and support the interactions and discussions through which much learning and socialization develops”. Based on those results, cooperative method is highly recommend to apply in foreign language learning.

## 2.3 Relationship of facility and learning

Several studies has shown the coherent relationship between the learning-teaching process and physical environment. Sanoff, AIA, Pasalar and Hashas (n.d, 1) claimed that because of the power of space in organizing and promoting relationships between people of different ages, choices and activities, providing changes, the physical environment can be acknowledged as the second teacher. Furthermore, Woolner (2010, 1-14), after referring four school buildings constructed during 20<sup>th</sup> century, stated that physical environment does make difference in learning activities at school.

In 2006, based at University of Queensland, Next Generation, a project on national level, was conducted. The main goal of this project is to create a logically connected framework for directing and evaluating learning spaces design. Later, Radcliffe (2009, 13-14) proposed the Pedagogy-Space-Technology (PST) Design and Evaluation Framework as a key outcome of that project.

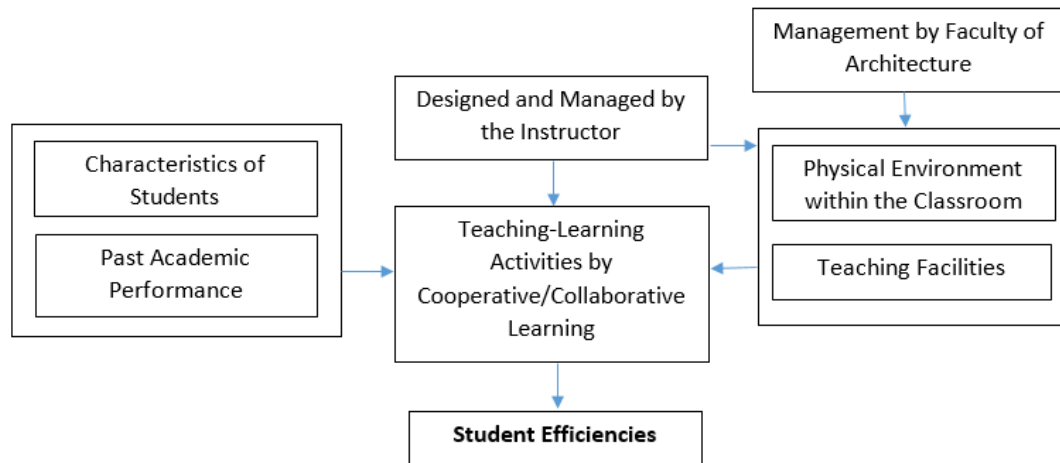


*Figure 2. The Pedagogy-Space-Technology (PST) Design and Evaluation Framework*

According to Radcliffe, these three aspects have influence on each other. Space stands for environs, furniture and fittings; while technology includes ICT, lab and specialist equipment. Therefore, pedagogy can be improved by changing those elements of space and technology.

On the other hand, in 1989, Dinham (80 – 88) has conducted a conceptual research framework about student effectiveness. . In the study, there are many factors that play critical roles:

- *Methods of teaching*
- *Knowledge base and diversity of students in the same class*
- *Teaching facilities which are high technologies*
- *Design of the physical environment within the classrooms*



*Figure 3. Factors effect on student efficiencies framework by Dinham (1989).*

As can be seen in this framework, the physical environment within the classroom and teaching facilities was mentioned as one of the components which affects to student efficiencies. Interestingly, he also recommended the cooperative learning method for attain students' higher efficiency in studying and used this method as central subject in the framework.

The author, originally, came up with the idea of improving the languages learning quality in JAMK. Throughout literature background of research process for this problem, more and more theories, which prove the relationship between physical environment and learning efficiency, has been discovered. Firstly, in order to enhance language learning efficiency, focusing on communication part since this is an essential one in language learning and finding the suitable pedagogy method is needed. As can be seen in the section 2.2, cooperative learning method, as a technique of learner-centered method, is advisable to be applied in communication educating. Therefore, by changing classroom facility to enhance cooperative learning, communication skill will be strengthened, which leads to improve learning language efficiency. With this hypothesis, the followed part of this thesis will answer the second research question, how does renovating class enhance foreign language learning. In addition, an implementation in classroom F207 will be shown.

### 3 Research design and Implementation

#### 3.1 The research problem and objectives

Based on achieved theories mentioned in the previous part, it is obvious that the physical environment has effect on learning efficiency, leads to learning efficiency can be enhanced by changing the facility. Nevertheless, in the scope of this thesis, how and in which way the classroom can be redesigned in detail in order to improve communication in language learning has not been analysed yet. The objectives of this thesis is finding a solution for reorganizing the classroom F207 to strengthen communication, including other aspects such as added value. The research questions in this thesis are:

- How do classroom facilities affect foreign language learning?
- How can renovating classrooms enhance foreign language learning?

#### 3.2 Methodology

The authors of the Glossary of Education Reform online resource described action research as “a wide variety of evaluative, investigative, and analytical research methods designed to diagnose problems or weaknesses—whether organizational, academic, or instructional—and help educators develop practical solutions to address them quickly and efficiently” (2015). The goal of action research is to achieving improvement after a series of action such as:

- *Identify a problem to be studied*
- *Collect data on the problem*
- *Organize, analyze, and interpret the data*
- *Develop a plan to address the problem*
- *Implement the plan*
- *Evaluate the results of the actions taken*
- *Identify a new problem*
- *Repeat the process*

Based on those definitions, the action research of this thesis will include almost the mentioned actions in the process.

In 2005, Hox and Boeijs stated that primary data is the original data collected for a specific research goal, which is conducted by the author. Primary data includes both quantitative research and qualitative research. On the other hand, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) defined secondary data as one “that already have been collected for some other purpose”. It can be raw data and published summaries, such as payroll details, minute of meeting or newspapers that have the information of that operation.

In the scope of this study, firstly, the author planned to achieve primary data in order to gain information and understanding of the research problem. Next stage is gathering secondary data for the implementation part. For the purpose of achieving primary data, the author intended to establish a survey for students who have been studying foreign languages (quantitative research) and interviews for language-teaching teachers (qualitative research). The reason for choosing both teachers and students as research participants is approaching the problem from both the learner’s and teacher’s point of view, since the learning process taking place in classroom is the combination of teaching and studying. The main goal of the interview was to gather experts’ opinion about the current language teaching situation at JAMK, as well as specify their requirement in classroom facility. On the other hand, the survey provided information about students’ attitude on a large scale, from which we can identify the majority’s trends. After getting the research results, the needed requirements for the classroom will be defined, followed by finding additional theories (secondary data) and creating the final implementation.

### 3.3 Collecting data methods

#### 3.3.1 Observation

In this thesis, one of the research methods is participant observation. In 2002, Gil and Johnson defined this method as “the researcher attempts to participate fully in the lives and activities of subjects and thus becomes a member of their group, organization or

community. This enables researchers to share their experiences by not merely observing what is happening but also feeling it” (144). There are four roles in this method which the participant can take part in:

- Complete participant
- Complete observer
- Observer as participant
- Participant as observer

Based on this definition, the author considered her observation role as a complete participant. Complete participant was distinguished from other roles as being a member of the research group without informing the true purpose with other members (Sauders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009, 293-294).

From August 2011 to May 2012, the author attended four language classes at JAMK: Finnish 1, French 1, French 2 and Spanish 1 as a course student. Unintentionally, with the collected perception and feeling through those courses, this experience has transformed into an experimental data collection type of participant observation methods. The reason for the missing primary observation and second observation, which is achieved by writing down exactly what has been done and said, is because that the observation time was a long time ago. Hence, the author cannot strictly take note these passed phenomenon. Moreover, this study excludes the evaluation of teacher’s teaching skill.

### 3.3.2 Qualitative research

In 2001, Nkwi, Nyamongo, and Ryan explained the term “qualitative research” as one that “involves any research that uses data that do not indicate ordinal values.”

According to this definition, the types of qualitative research includes texts, images and sounds. Regularly, qualitative research appears as individual interviews and group discussions. Qualitative research aims for providing an in-depth understanding to the problem. Moreover, it acts as a later hypothesis for quantitative research. Due to this characteristic, the author decided to establish individual interviews with language

teachers at JAMK, in order to gain in-depth information and form the hypothesis for later questionnaire.

In March 2015, four language teachers at JAMK have been interviewed. The average duration for each interview is 15 minutes, in which 5 main questions and additional open discussions were used. Those questions included:

- What are the usual activities that you have in class?
- How did students react to those activities?
- What are the difficulties when you're teaching in traditional classroom?
- Do you need any other facilities than traditional ones?
- What activities have you thought of doing but had no possibility to make it happen?

With those question, the author will be able to:

- Understand the current teaching foreign language situation in JAMK
- List out which learning activity is usually used in class, and as a result, the one which needs more support can be identified. Moreover, the author can check whether or not communication is one of the main teaching targets as mentioned in the theory background.
- Define difficulties and suggest improvements
- Enhance other aspects in foreign language teaching based on teacher's opinion

### 3.3.3 Quantitative research

Quantitative research is a type of research that explains “phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)” (Creswell, 1994). Furthermore, Trochim and Land (1982) defined quantitative research as one that is “used to structure the research, to show how all of the major parts of the research project—the samples or groups, measures treatments or programs, and methods of assignment—work together to try to address the central research question.” Common types of quantitative research are surveys (online surveys, paper surveys, etc.) and polls, which are conducted in large scale. The results of quantitative research helps the author not to bias with her opinion about research problems.

The online survey was conducted in March 2015 in two languages, Vietnamese and English. Questions are formed based on previous teacher interviews (qualitative research) and the author's own observation. Firstly, the survey was made in Google Docs. After that, the author promoted the survey through Facebook and Gmail. The result is the combination of two surveys on 179 participants in total, ranges from student to worker. All of the questions were presented under multiple choice form for less time-consuming for participant. The average amount of time spending for the survey is about from one to two minutes.

The purpose of this research:

- Collecting opinion from students who had experience in foreign language study
- Confirm if communication is the main purpose of studying foreign language
- Figure out how to change classroom in a way that students would have motivation to study in
- Determine which lesson content students would like to have

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Research results

#### 4.1.1 Observation

Based on the author's experience of attending those courses, she recognized that even though the duration and types of action could be different, the study activities are almost the same. They included:

- Pair work, group work (practice communication, play games)
- Lecture (grammar)
- Doing exercise
- Listening to audio/watching video

In the author's opinion, the existing learning activities already been sufficient enough for the learning outcome. However, the arranged facility in the classroom was not support



enough for studying activities. For example, in the Finnish 1, French 1 and French 2 course, most of the time, the lessons took place in a traditional classroom. It was quite difficult for the conservation and interaction activities since the students were only able to interact with those sitting close to them. Moreover, the students had to move a lot for doing group work. The decoration in the classroom also was not attractive enough for the motivation of the students' communication. Personally, the author considered that the monochrome theme reduced the students' interest in talking with each other.

#### 4.1.2 Qualitative research

##### 4.1.2.1 Usual in-class activities

Table 3. Usual in-class activities

|                  | Speaking | Listening | Reading | Doing exercise | Pair work/group work | Note |
|------------------|----------|-----------|---------|----------------|----------------------|------|
| <b>Teacher 1</b> | A lot    | ✓         | Little  | ✓              | ✓                    |      |
| <b>Teacher 2</b> | ✓        | ✓         | ✓       | ✓              | ✓                    | *    |
| <b>Teacher 3</b> | ✓        | ✓         | A lot   | ✓              | A lot                |      |
| <b>Teacher 4</b> | A lot    | ✓         | X       | ✓              | A lot                |      |

✓: do

X: don't do

\*: cannot say how many percentage since it's depend on lesson

As expected, the amount of knowledge is the same in every course, such as grammar, vocabulary as well as presentation and watch video. Communication skill was the core element in every lesson.

#### *4.1.2.2 Student react to those activities*

Almost course feedback was very positive, especially for pair work/group work activities. Beside those interesting activities, one of the main reasons that students gave nice comment for the class is because they have already loved that language before. Swedish class, however, was not perceived as student's favorite language. Instead of that, students reacted positively to big projects as it appeared as big challenge.

#### *4.1.2.3 Difficulties teaching in traditional classroom.*

There are more than one opinion about the setting of desk and chair in traditional classroom. According to one teacher, desks and chairs should be more easily to move around when students need to form a group. The old setting with row of tables and chairs took more time and effort in this problem. Another viewpoint is that traditional design is boring and stops students' creativity. This teacher also recommended round tables with chairs around, as well as nice decoration. Interestingly, one commented that students usually sit in the back in the class, as far as they can. Hence, it would be better if the class was organized in a way that could bring the students closer.

On the other hands, two teachers considered there is no difficulty when teaching in normal classroom, since they have done this for years. Despite that, they also agreed on more ideas for more beneficial development such as new furniture to light up the mood, having CD player or computer to play listening file.

#### *4.1.2.4 Extra facilities requirement*

Privacy space was highly requested since it is useful for group work (keep from around distraction) or giving feedback. Other requirements are a global map to show where students come from, map for each country in which the language was taught. For technological facility, computer and printer would be nice for printing hand-in assignment, while some laptops or tablets on the table will be helpful for teacher to communicate more easily with student.

#### *4.1.2.5 Desire to do something but impossible*

One teacher told that he always wanted to set a real counter or have some items for practicing acting some daily life situations. Nevertheless, he did not have the chance to

perform that activity. Besides that, he also need some items to record student's reading, as well as some board games for more interesting learning process.

In the German class, the teacher hoped that somehow they will be able to create the illusion experience to Germany with some videos, pictures, music, etc. On the other hand, the language class categorized for engineering demanded some specialized software, which is still unavailable at JAMK at the moment.

The most complaints was technology problem. Lighting and sound was reported cannot be adjusted easily as the teachers wanted. Usually, the problem can be fixed quickly. Sometimes, the teacher had to call the janitor people and it took quite much time. The frustrating thing is that even though it worked perfectly this time, next time, in the same room, it still did not cooperate. Moreover, too many cables can cause confusion for the teachers.

#### *4.1.2.6 Some more ideas*

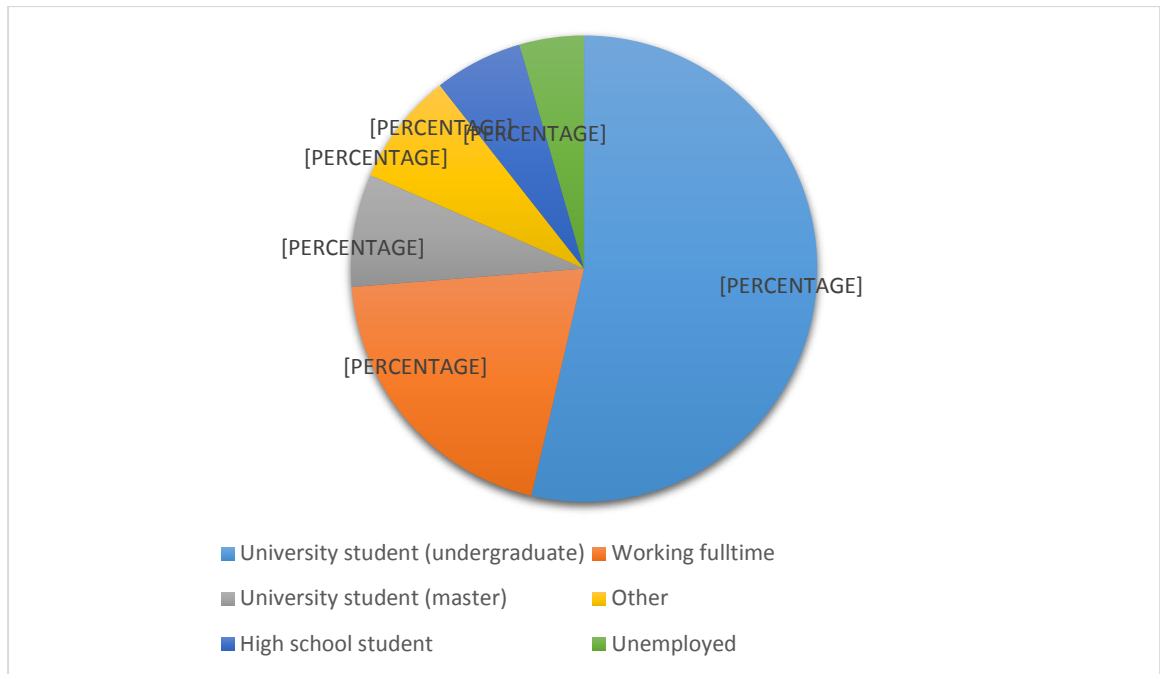
More than one teacher proposed that the wall should be covered with pictures of different countries, in order to give the impression of multicultural environment. In addition, the blue or bluish green colour should be used as classroom's theme, since it provides the calming and softness feeling effect.

### **4.1.3 Quantitative research**

#### *4.1.3.1 Participant background*

##### **Occupation**

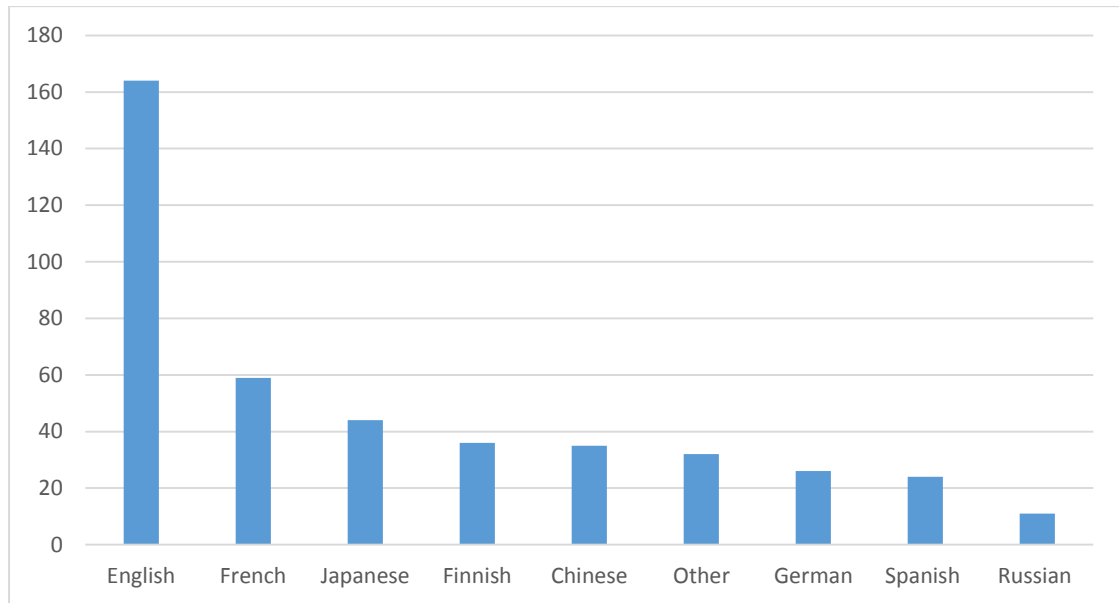
The majority of participant is university student (undergraduate) with 96 people, consists 54% of total. The portion of working full-time group is the second most with 36 people (20%). Other groups includes university student (master) (14 people - 8%), other (14 people - 8%), high school student (11 people – 6%) and unemployed (8 people – 4%).



*Figure 4. Occupation*

#### **Foreign languages customer had studied**

Based on the data of survey, English is the most common foreign language people had studied, which got 164 responses. On the other hand, there is not significant differences between other languages, such as French (59), Japanese (44), Finnish (36) etc.

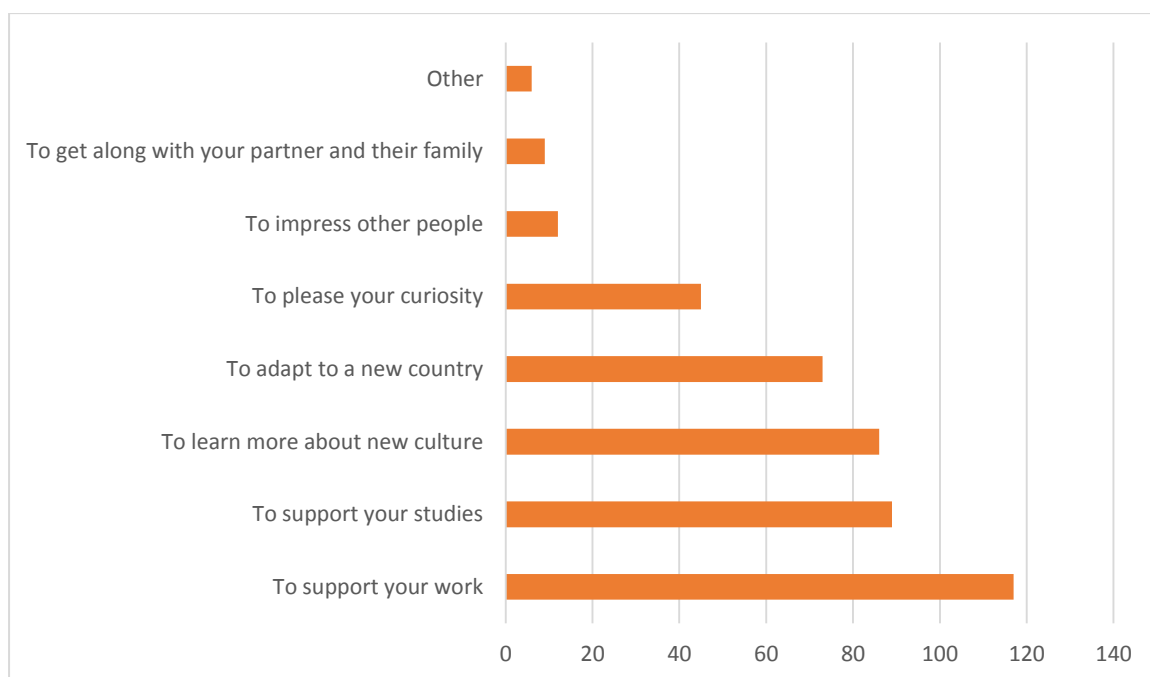


*Figure 5. Foreign languages customer had studied*

#### *4.1.3.2 Experiences in studying foreign language*

From question 3 to question 11, the focus area is about participant's experiences in studying foreign language.

**Q3: What are your main purposes when studying a new language?**

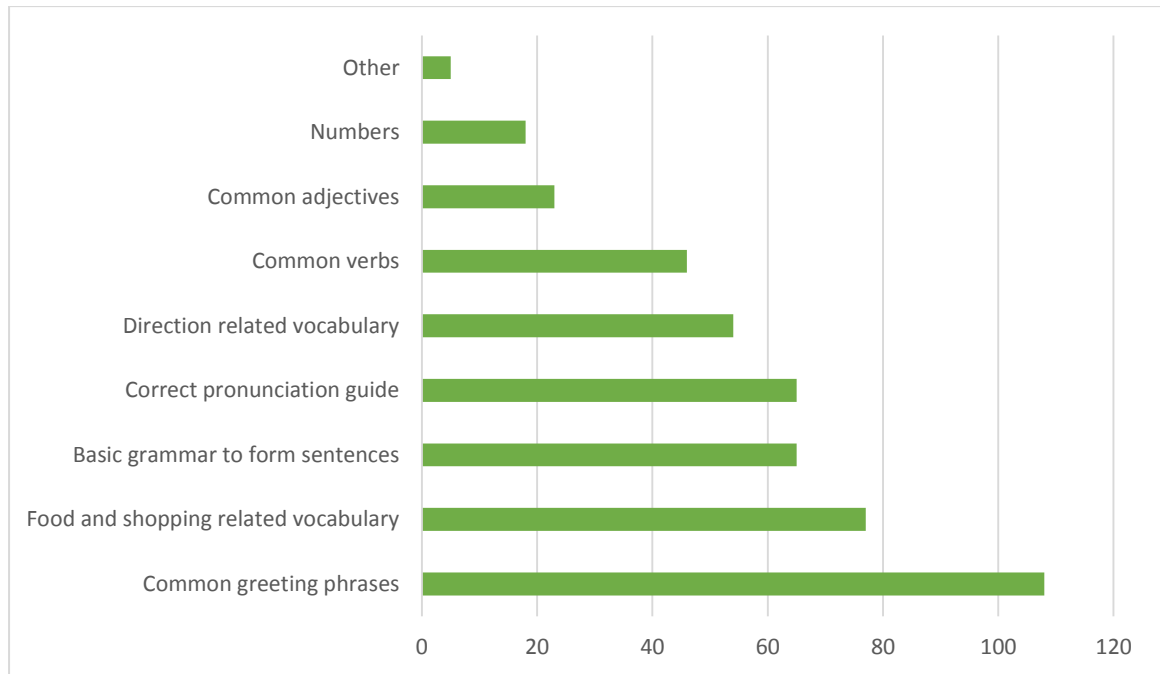


*Figure 6. Main purposes of studying new language*

As the result showed in above chart, people mostly study a new language to support their work (117 responses). The second and third most chosen purposes are to support their studies (89 responses) and to learn more about new culture (86 responses). Other ones got fewer responses, such as “to adapt to a new country” (73), “to please your curiosity” (45), etc.

The new classroom concept concentrates on supporting spoken communication skill. Nowadays, spoken communication skill plays an essential part at workplace, as well as at school. Therefore, the concept will be able to meet majority of people’s purpose.

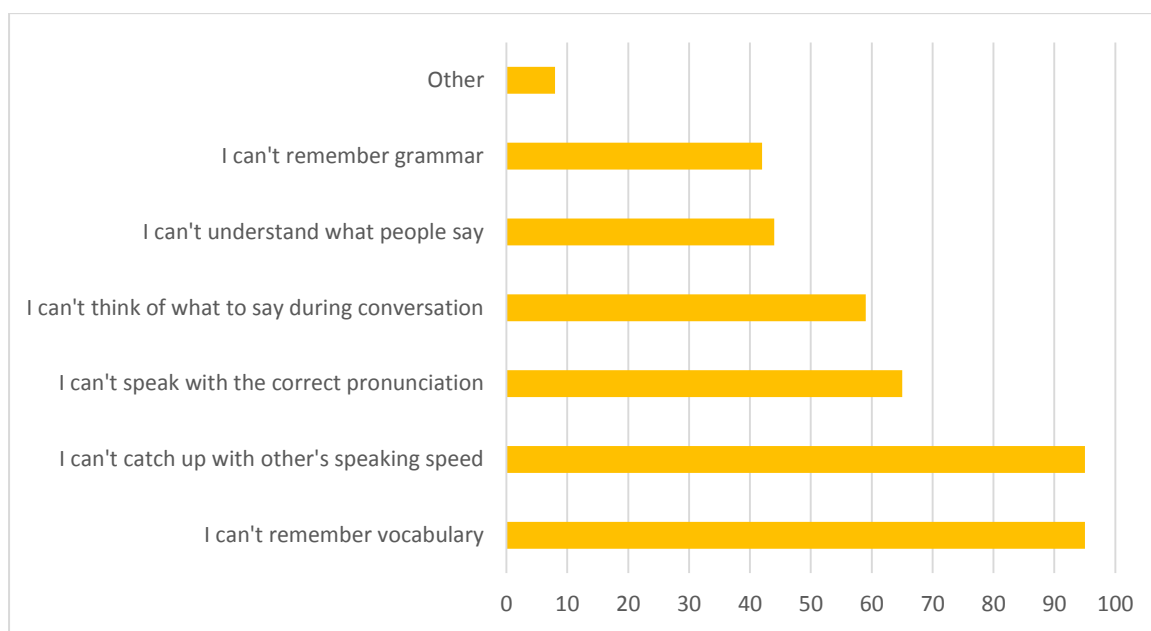
**Q4: What do you find the most helpful when using language in foreign country?**



*Figure 7. Helpful things when using language in foreign country*

The result of this question will narrow down the target lesson content. As the chart showed, people found that common greeting phrases are the most helpful things when they go abroad (109 responses). This is as expected because people usually want to speak, at least just a little, the language of the country they travel to. Unexpectedly, the food and shopping related vocabulary also scored high (77 responses). On the other hand, basic grammar to form sentences and the correct pronunciation guide received the same number of vote (65), which is quite high.

**Q5: What are the problems you usually have when trying to use a language?**

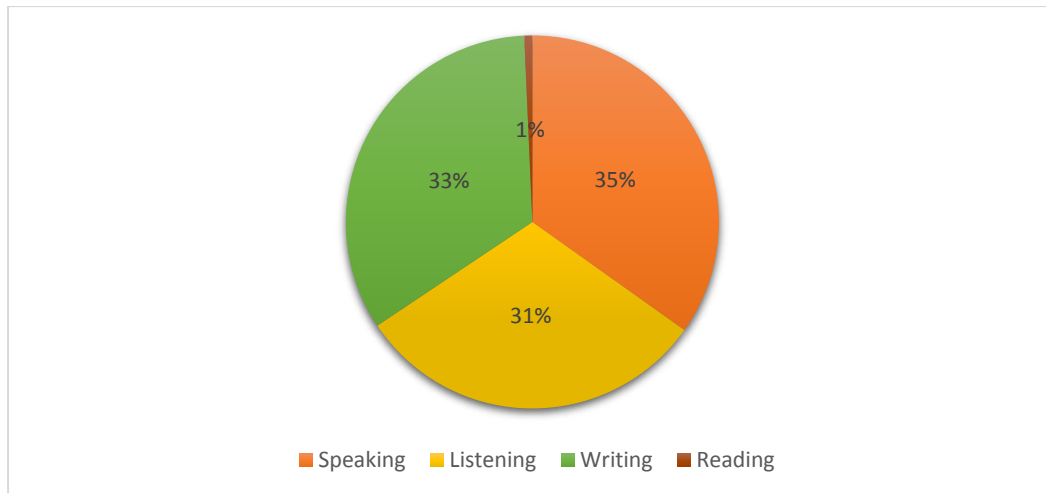


*Figure 8. Problems when trying to use a language*

The main purpose of this question is to identify which aspect in language studies should be improved. According to the result, people have the most problem with remembering vocabulary and listening (both had 95 responses). Furthermore, speaking with the correct pronunciation and not being able to think of what to say during conversation are also major problems (65 and 59 responses). Also, not understanding what people say and not remembering grammar were also accentuated with sufficient votes (44 and 42). Consequently, vocabulary and spoken communication (included pronunciation) are the core elements to put in consideration.

**Q6: Which aspect do you find the most difficult when learning a new language?**

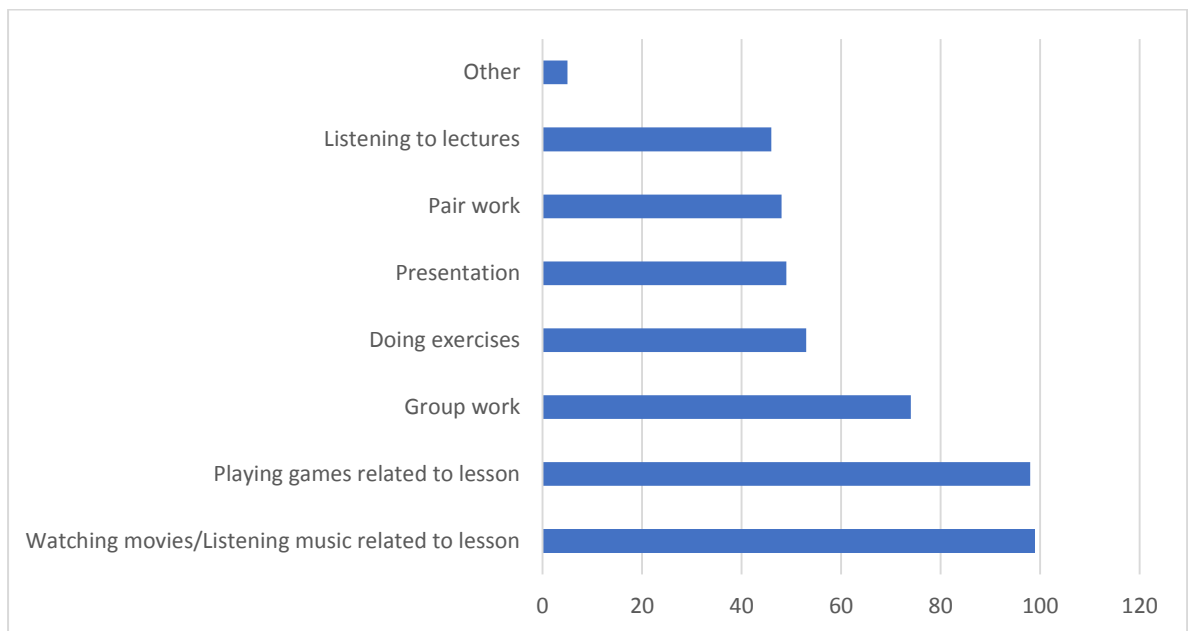




*Figure 9. The most difficult aspect when learning a new language*

As the pie chart above, speaking, writing and listening are almost tied in the percentage (35%, 33% and 31%). In contrast, reading holds just 1% of total response.

**Q7: What are learning activities that you would like to do in class the most?**

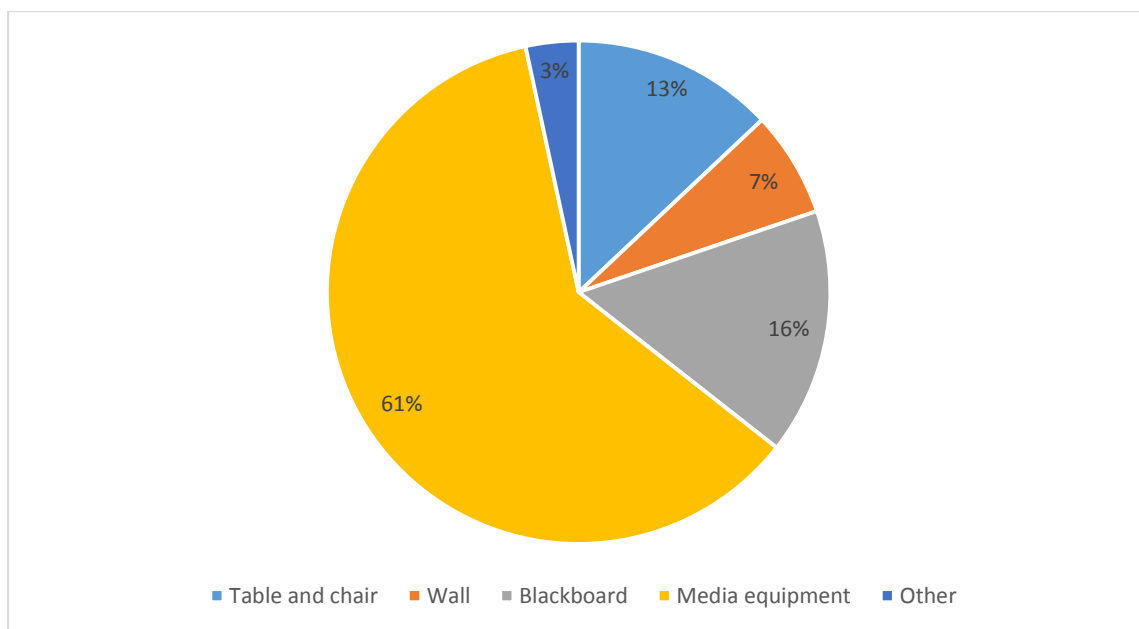


*Figure 10. Learning activities would like to do in class*

We can see that people are more interested in non-traditional classroom activities, such as watching movie/listening music (99 responses) or playing games (98 responses) which

related to lesson. Group work also got high votes with 74, which can be explained that people would like to practice more the communication skill. On the contrary, doing exercises, presentation, pair work and listening was not a favourite choice for class activities.

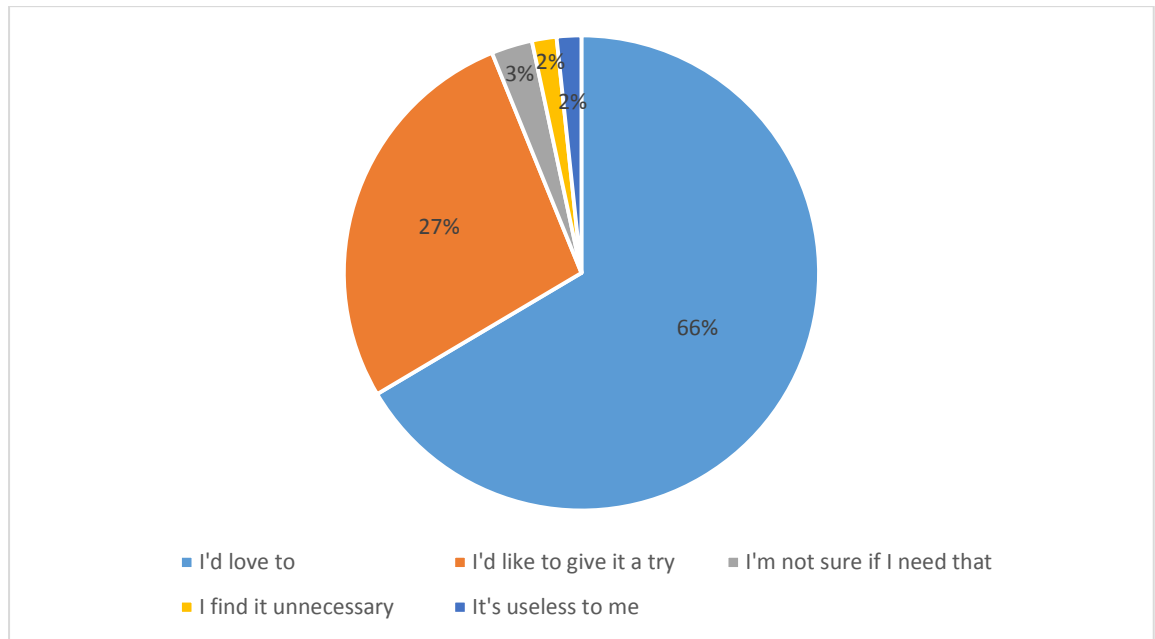
**Q8: What kind of facilities in a class room do you pay attention the most?**



*Figure 11. Classroom facilities in which pay attention the most*

Media equipment (computer, scene projector, etc.) caught most of people attention (61% with 108 responses). Blackboard and table and chair landed as the second and third most chosen with 16% and 13%. Wall and other are the least chosen.

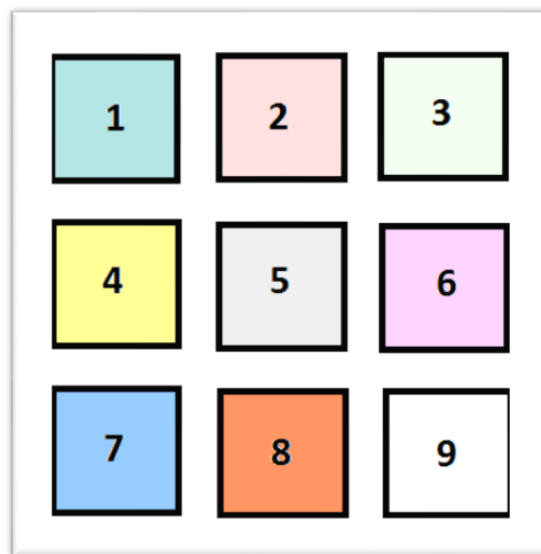
**Q9: Would you like to learn with extra materials (figures, colours, blocks, etc.) other than just books and pens?**



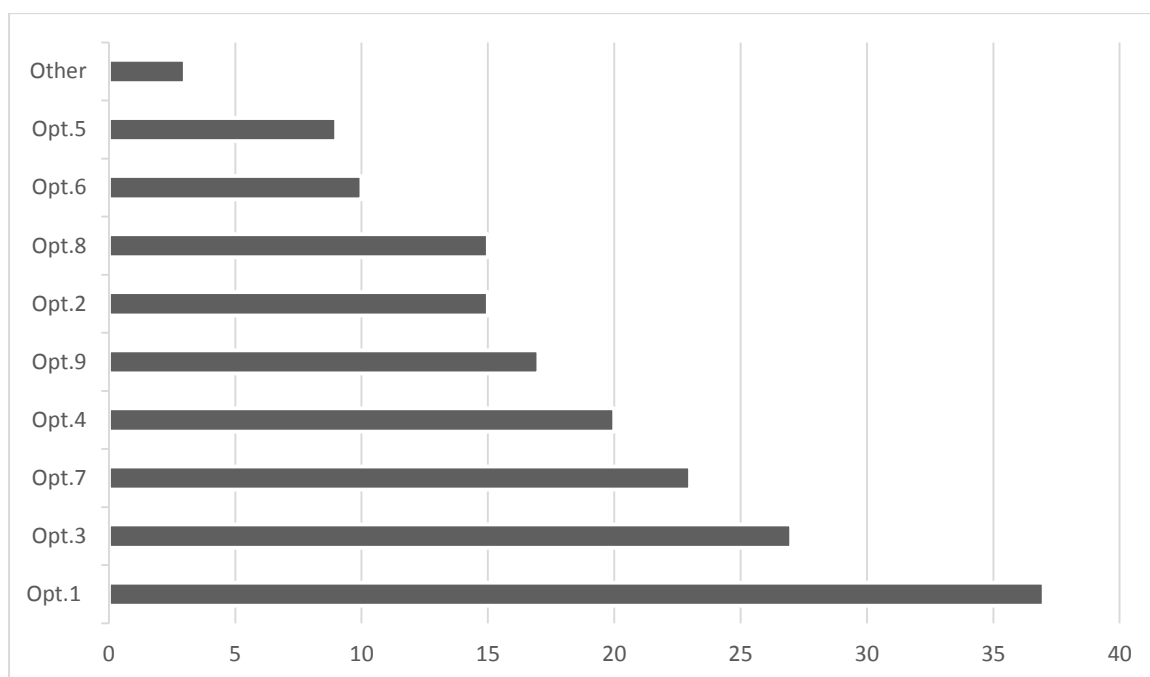
*Figure 12. Interest of extra materials*

The result showed that most of people would love to learn (66%) or willing to give it a try (27%) with extra materials (figures, colours, blocks, etc.) other than just books and pens. Just about 7% of total claimed that they do not interested in the idea.

**Q10: Which colour provides you the best studying/working environment?**



*Figure 13. Colour palette*



*Figure 14. Best colour for studying/working environment*

The author decided on the colour table based on teacher's recommendation and personal opinion, in order to find out the most suitable colour for classroom theme through the survey. People felt most comfortable with option 1 and 3.

#### **4.1.3.3 General result**

Based on the result of the survey, the author decided to suggest the following classroom design.

*Table 2. Quantitative research results*

| Goal  | Solution  |
|---|---|
| - Improving spoken communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to communicate in daily situation</li> <li>• Remembering vocabulary</li> <li>• Listening skill</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use the most comfortable colour for the theme of classroom</li> <li>- Decorate classroom motivate the learner</li> </ul> |

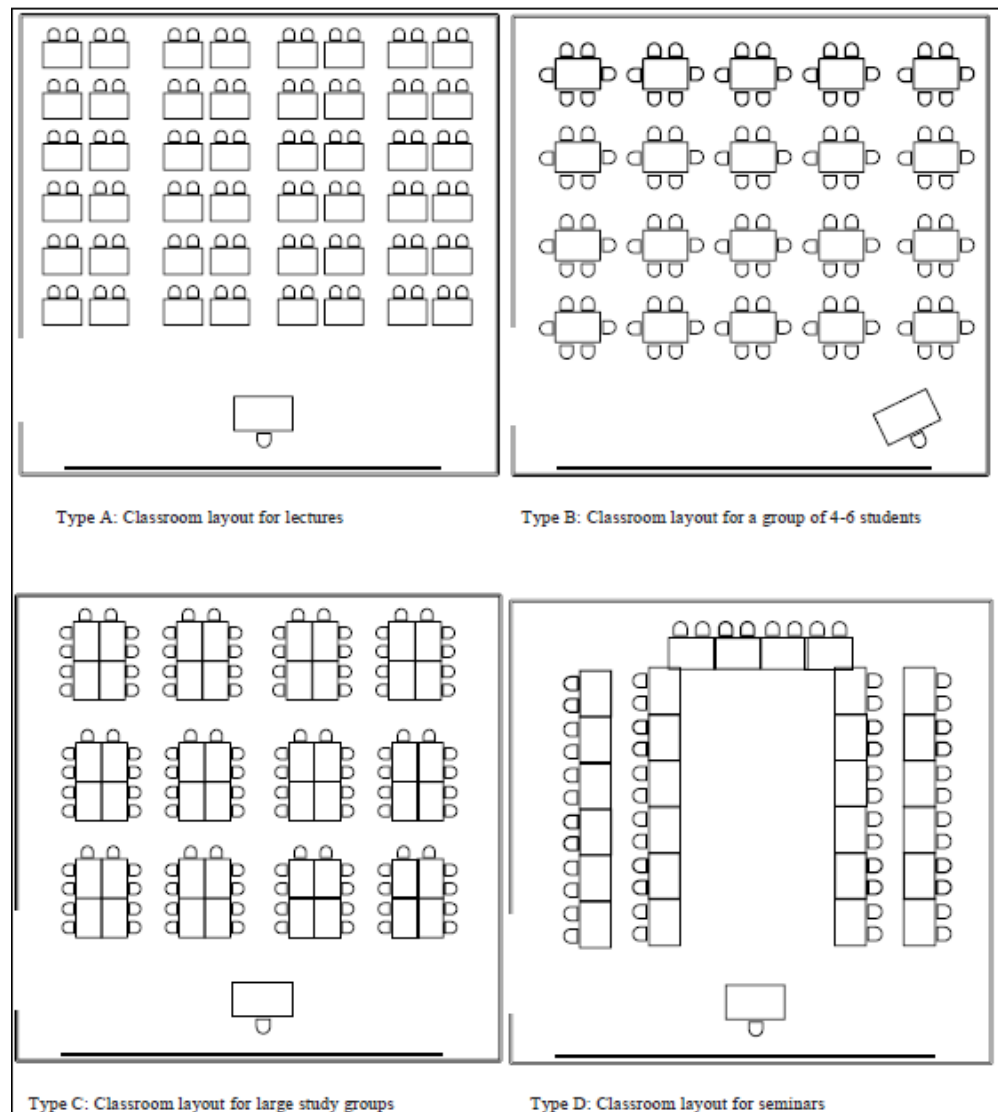
|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| - Supporting student's group work | - Create learning-supportive and ready-to-use education equipment in classroom |
|-----------------------------------|--|

## 4.2 Initial Implementation

### 4.2.1 Education place level

In 2012, Ruengtam (284 – 286) demonstrated Dinham's theory on practical level by effectuating a research. The result was recorded as "could be solved the problems in managing teaching-learning and designing physical environment within the classroom for learning efficiencies of the student." The scope of the research was the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> year students of Interior Architecture program, Faculty of Architecture Urban Design and Creative Arts, Mahasarakham University, Thailand. The research tools used were conducting assessment forms (before and after studies), observation forms, teaching-learning records and the result of mid-term/final examinations in the theoretical subjects. The accomplished results were significantly impressive. The students got higher final examination scores on the second semester than on the first semester. The logic behind this result is in the second semester teacher applying the cooperative learning techniques, while using the traditional learning method in the first semester. The students were recorded as having more positive attitudes (more interested in learning and doing assignment/presentation, which leads to achieving higher score). Based on this positive result, Reungtam established a guideline for designing interior physical environment. There are two main points of the guideline:

- Arranging desks and chairs in order to strengthen students' interaction with each other



*Figure 15. Recommended classroom layouts by Reungtam (2012)*

- Managing the physical atmosphere including clearness, cleanness, brightness, classroom size and decoration.

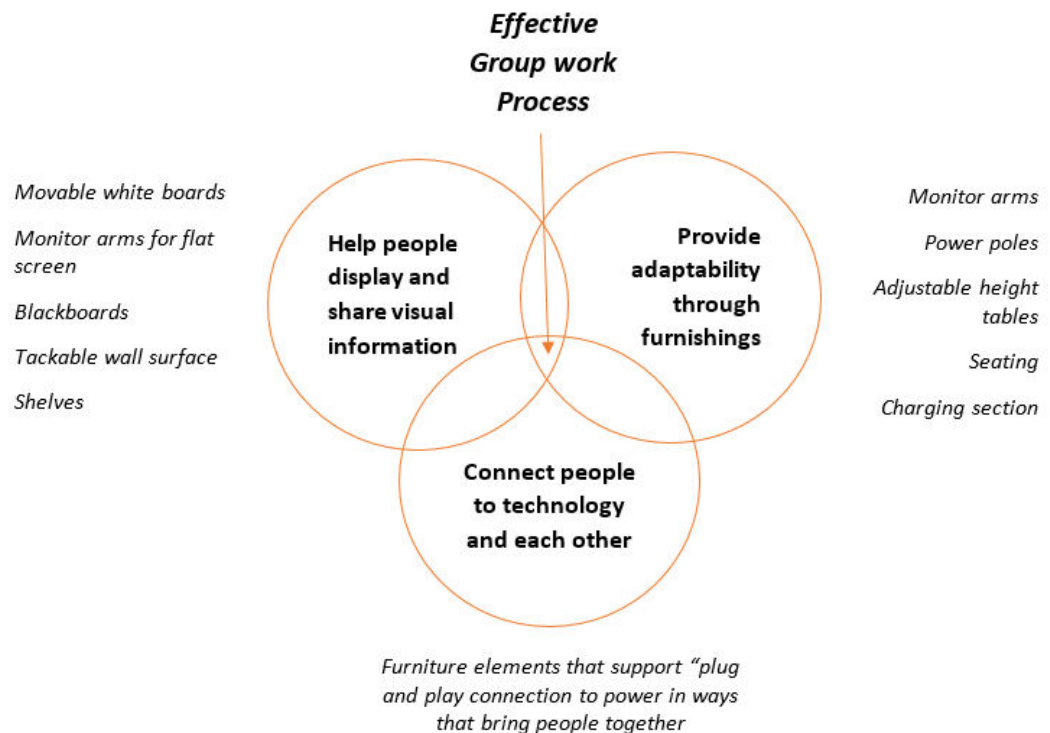
#### 4.2.2 Workplace level

The concept of cooperation has been recognized and researched in the modern workplace. Because of its benefits, more and more business have applied cooperative model. Knoll Inc., a design firm which was founded in 1983 in New York City, has discovered the relationship between human behaviour and workplace design. Especially

specializing in producing office and higher education furniture setting, Knoll Inc. has done a lot of research on creating collaborative spaces at work.

In 2013, Knoll Inc. established a study about collaborative spaces at workplace. The scope of this study spanned on 38 organizations with 300000 employees, which gave us a broad look to this field. Those organizations all desires to “foster interaction, broaden connection and enhancing cooperation” among workers at the workplace. Based on that expectation, the study published the guideline for planning the working environment to support:

- Equal exchange



*Figure 16. Required facility to enhance effective group work*

According to the figure above, in order to create an effective group work process, the designed space has to meet the requirement of providing people with the ability of easily connecting to the technology and each other, displaying and sharing visual information, and adapting well to the physical surrounding.

- Diversity exchange

In the guideline, Knoll Inc. stated that through diversity exchange, the connection between workers can be enlarged, as well as tightening up the cooperation work. Based on those conditions, the researchers have listed recommendations for the planning. One of those points was considered to encourage conversation, which is related to the goals of this thesis.

*Conversation is encouraged, and is not restricted among employees at different levels within the organization or between people of different personal backgrounds. These areas offer a “homey” feel with amenities such as beverage service, access to daylight, and visual connection to other work areas, encouraging people to feel ownership and connectedness to the space.*

Consequently, by implementing the “casual and public feel” into the physical environment, people are more likely to be opened and willing to communicate with others. Because of the similarity between the cooperative classroom and the cooperative workplace, it is possible to implement these guidelines in the case of this thesis.

### 4.3 Implementation in class room and analysis

The main purpose of this section is to show how to rearrange the classroom F207 for enhancing communication in language learning. This result is accomplished based on previous studies and research results.

#### 4.3.1 Original classroom F207

The classroom F207 was designed as a traditional classroom, mostly used for lecturing.



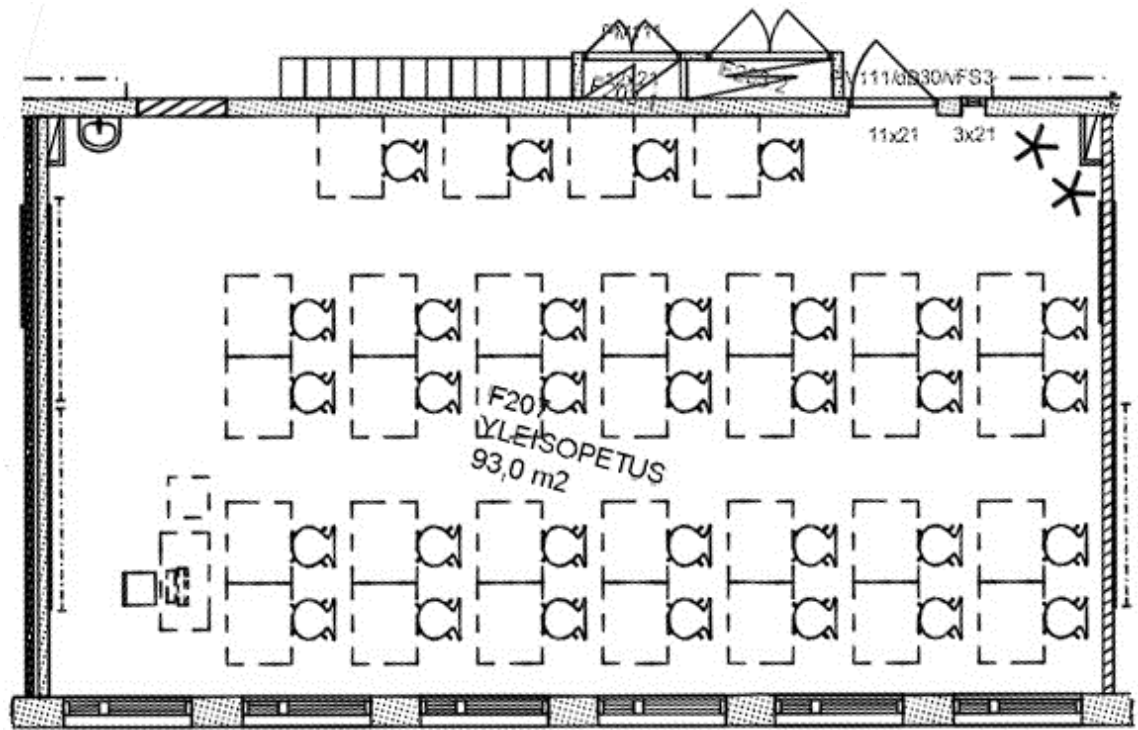


Figure 17. Original classroom F207 layout, provided by JAMK janitor



Figure 18. Classroom F207 perspective 1



*Figure 19. Classroom F207 perspective 2*

The classroom F207 was designed as a traditional one, mostly used for lecturing. The reason why the author choose this classroom for reorganized is because it is next to language centre, which make it highly possible to be used for language teaching purpose. Also, the author has attended classes in classroom F207 for spring semester 2015. Hence, she had the experience and observation from a student's point of view. In addition, this kind of setting is the usual one in JAMK. Therefore, if reorganizing work gets positive feedback, it is possible to replicate in other classroom.

### 4.3.2 New classroom F207

#### 4.3.2.1 Blueprint

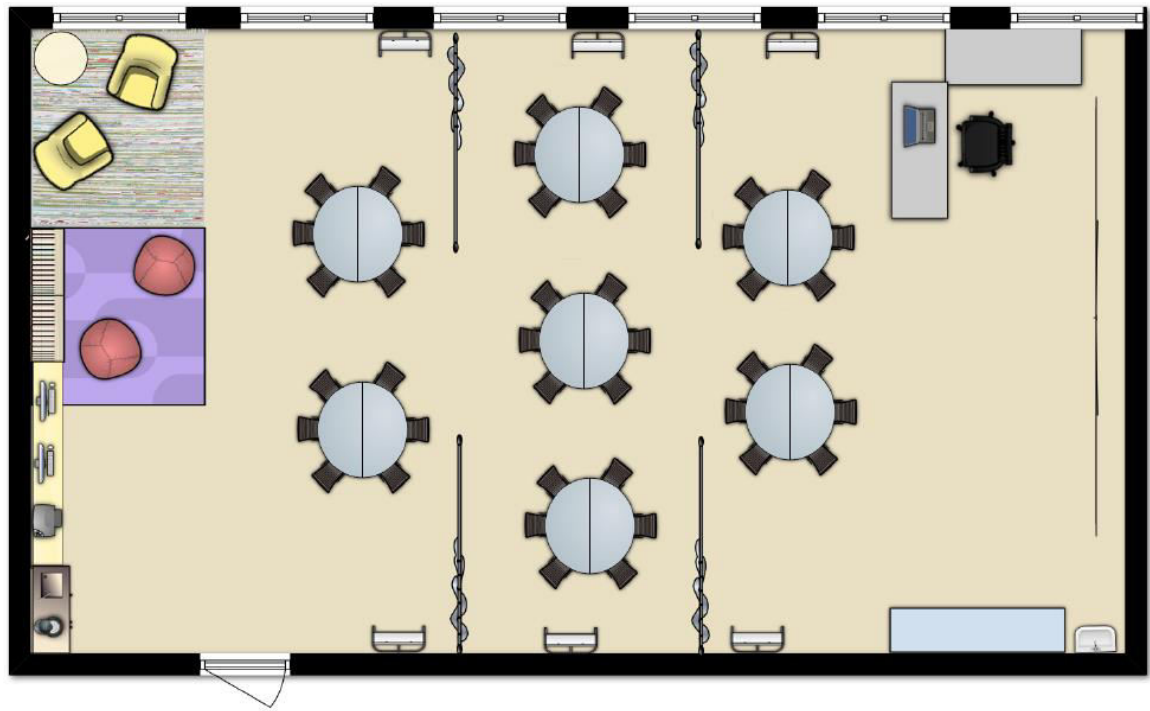


Figure 20. New design classroom for group work (Design A)

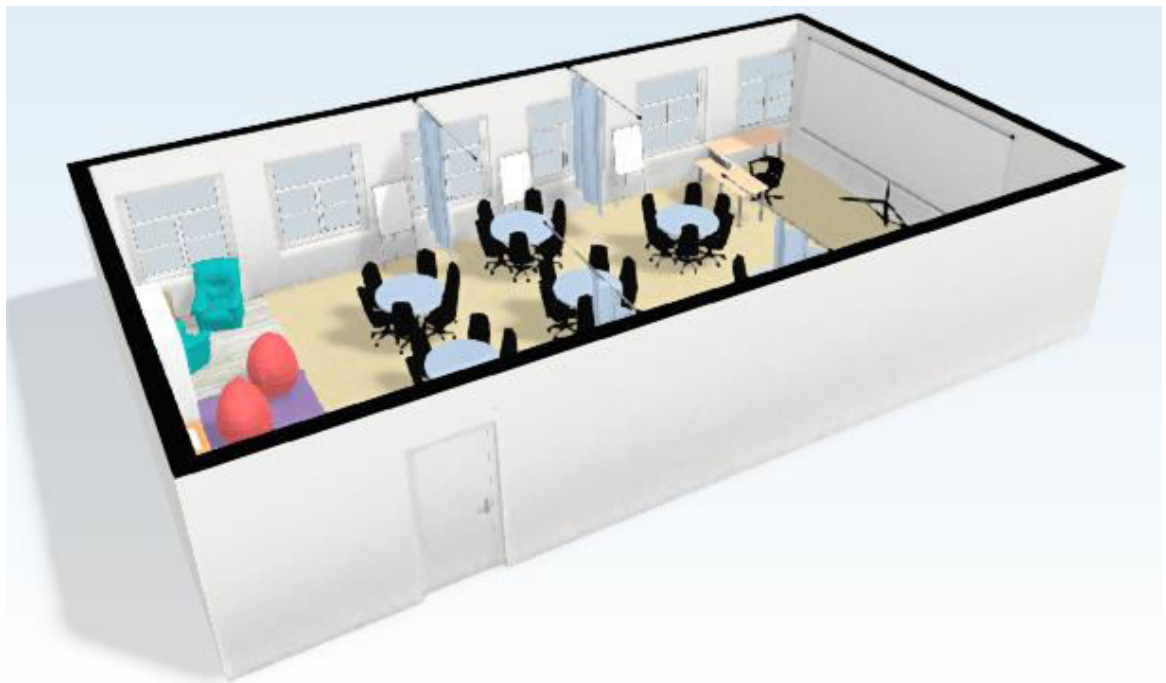


Figure 21. New classroom design A 3D version (perspective 1)



Figure 22. New classroom design A 3D version (perspective 2)

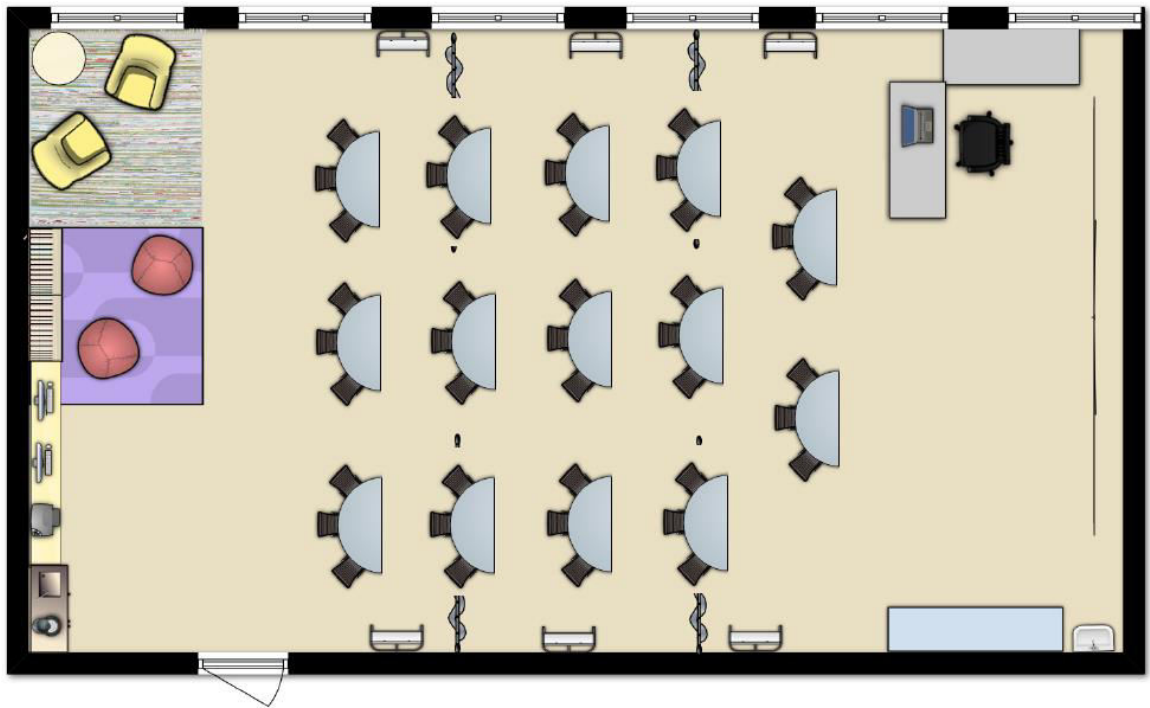


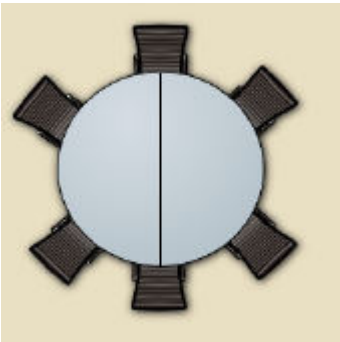

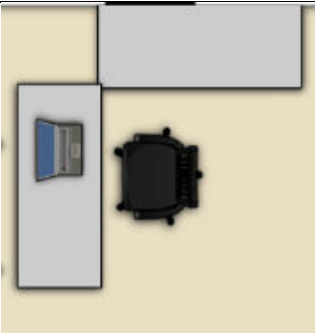
Figure 23. New design classroom for lecture (Design B)

#### 4.3.2.2 Description



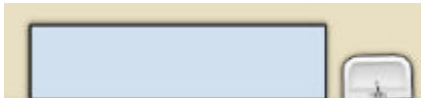
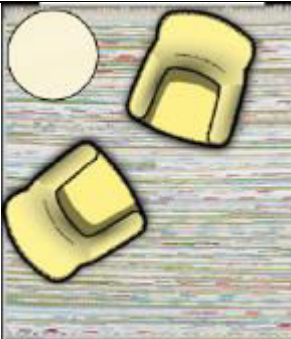
The blueprints were designed by the author, with the help of [www.floorplanner.com](http://www.floorplanner.com) website. After drawing by using available assets on the website, Paint software was used to edit the layout. New design layouts have the

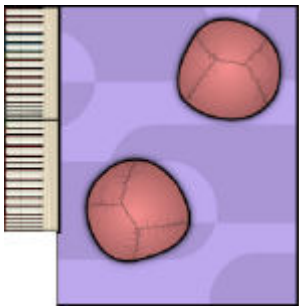


same ratio with JAMK's blueprints.

*Table 4. Classroom design detail description*

| Element         | Picture   | Description  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Table and chair |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Each table goes with six chairs.</li><li>- Made by combining two half-tables.</li><li>- Table and chair are movable, with wheels under each leg.</li></ul> |
|                 |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Half-table is made by splitting the whole one into two halves.</li></ul>   |
| Teacher corner  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Include two tables, one laptop and one movable chair.</li><li>- This setting is the same as in old classroom.</li></ul>                                    |



|                                 |   |  |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Curtain                         |    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To give more privacy when doing group work.</li> <li>- The fabric is made from light and opaque material for more friendly feeling effect (not to separated feeling as with thick material).</li> </ul> |
| Small white board               |    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Used for group work discussion or doing assignment.</li> </ul>  |
| Bookshelf and hand-washing sink |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher can store teaching tools and equipment on the bookshelf.</li> <li>- Hand-washing sink was installed permanent before and unchangeable.</li> </ul>   |
| Privacy corner                  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This corner is quite helpful when teacher want to give feedback in private, as well as just a reading corner.</li> </ul>  |

|                                 |   |  |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Break-out session               |    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This session includes bookshelf with some bean bags for relaxing or gathering in the break time.</li> <li>- Bookshelf can be replaced by a global map.</li> </ul>   |
| Computer station                |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As teacher's recommendation, there should be some computers with printer for printing out hand-in assignment.</li> </ul>  |
| Kitchenette with coffee station |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- With a kitchenette with coffee maker, student will be able to have a cup of coffee or tea in break time, which is really nice in the weather of Finnish long dark winter (from author's experience).</li> </ul> |

With round tables instead of rectangular ones, the classroom design A is suitable for group work and communication practice. Moreover, with wheels attached under each table and chair, changing classroom from design A to design B is much faster and easier.

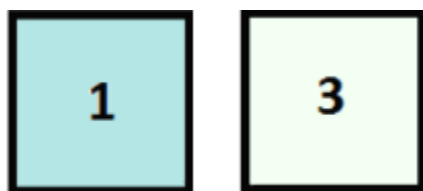
The setting is also helpful to make students come closer to the teachers, since there are less tables and chairs, as well as there is another used space at the back of the class.

### Technology

- One laptop for teacher is necessary.
- Technology equipment has to be simplified as much as possible. For example, instead of many cables for different usage, two cables are enough (one for network, the other for projector).
- The quality of these equipment needs to be checked regularly, especially the sound system.

### Decoration

- Theme colour: Light marine blue colour (#a0e2df in Colour Hex) or Saltpan colour (#eff6e1 in Colour Hex). Light marine blue brings the feeling of calming, relaxing, peace and softness, while Saltpan promotes the freshness, healing, spring and nature.



*Figure 24. Light marine blue and Saltpan*

- In order to encourage communication, classroom should be decorated to turn into a “public image” place, such as coffee shop, lounge, hostel lobby, etc., with a cosy feeling. Because this classroom is for language studying, another idea is that we can decorate with travelling theme.
- Décor inspiration
  - Global map:





Figure 25. Global map wall sticker



Figure 26. Global map wall sticker

- Café theme



Figure 27. Cornerstone Café by Paul Crofts Studio



Figure 28. Boutique Travel Cafe Gallery

- Coffee station



*Figure 29. Coffee bar detail by Carrie from The Vintage Wren blog*

- Privacy corner



*Figure 30. Privacy corner idea*

### **Education equipment**

- Vocabulary board games

Students can play vocabulary board games before or during lesson time. This method of memorizing new word is quite effective since playing with other people is like having experience with new words. In addition, during playtime, players will speak only in that language, which is good for practicing communication skill.

- Videos and pictures of current language learning country

As interviewed teachers' recommendation, by showing videos and pictures of current language learning country, students can picture and get more knowledge about that country. Videos and pictures can be about daily life, traditional festival, customs, etc.



## 5 Conclusion

### 5.1 Discussion

In order to answer the first question of this thesis – how classroom facilities affect foreign language learning – the author went through several related academic studies. They showed that the learning-teaching process in general, and language learning in particular, has a coherent relationship with the physical environment. In the case of communication practice, with the application of the cooperative learning methodology, properly reorganizing the physical environment properly can encourage student to be more active in interacting with other students. This leads to improving the students' communication skill in that language.

As for the second question, by getting inspiration from reality, different resources and personal observation and experience, the author conducted a general guideline for designing a classroom for language learning. This design can have various version depending which the language students are studying. For example, in a French course, the decoration may be in a French style including educational equipment for studying French. Furthermore, in order to strengthen the communication characteristic, this design may also be used for other innovation and development course.

### 5.2 Reliability and Validity

The research objectives were stated quite clearly in the beginning. Based on the theoretical background, the thesis goal was considered possible to obtain. In addition, the research data was gathered taking into account different point of views making the implementation more reliable.

During the research process, there were both limitations and opportunities. The data collected for qualitative and quantitative was done appropriately without much trouble. Due to the interesting thesis topic, the participants were willing to help the author. All the questions were answered clearly and authentically in a friendly atmosphere. Somehow, the interview turned into an opened discussion, which provided the author

with more information and ideas. Moreover, the teachers said that they were looking forward to have experience of the new classroom.

On the other hand, some limitations were also predictable during the process. At first, the author aimed for a broader scope of this thesis that is finding the guideline that can be generally applied in language teaching. However, maximizing all the four skills – reading, speaking, listening and writing – requires much more researches and experiments. Furthermore, it is complicated to harmonize all the different characteristics of studying those four skills. Therefore, the author selected one aspect – the communication skill – as the one to be developed, while keeping the others secondary.

### 5.3 Future Research

The reaction by both the teachers and students when the author told them about a new classroom design were positive. Teacher interviewed and the staff member of the Language Centre of JAMK stated that they were willing to test the new design after the classroom was completed. At the same time, the most students, through the survey, would like to study in or give the new classroom a try. Therefore, implementing the design on the large scale is highly possible.

At the moment, the implementation of the new classroom F207 has not yet been started. Nevertheless, for future research, after the implementing stage, an evaluation of the learning efficiency based on the PST framework would be appreciated. In addition, during the brain-storming phase, the author came up with the idea of establishing an application for JAMK language study. The application may contain a vocabulary check function, an updated schedule and sharing information. The innovative use of this application would directly provide interaction between teacher and student in class, such as playing competitive games. This idea is cooperated with a teacher's suggestion about having one tablet/laptop for each group table. IT student may consider this concept as a thesis topic and be the one in charge of designing this apps.

In Finland, many studies on developing the learning environment topic have been conducted. As an experts at this field, Olli Niemi from University Properties of Finland LTd. Is, from 2011 to 2015, assembled some researchers and published a book called *Learning campus – How to co-create campus?*, in which be discussed the future learning environment in Finland. According to the book, “The learning environments of the future are discussed from the points of view of campus co-operation, sustainable development, joint development, and multi-disciplinary learning.” (Niemi and Nenonen, 2015, 7). Several results and implementation of new learning environment concept has been shown from different perspective such as campus as a communal platform and campus as a sustainable platform. Furthermore, new concepts were mentioned with reality cases: digitally supported collaboration and communication place, how to co-learn in campus, etc. Noticeably, after the research program, researchers stated that both new solutions for the learning space and “how they are realized together with users” are important. According to this book, the situation of developing the future learning space in Finland has achieved significant results. This thesis was started with the same objectives as this book and the author hope that continued studies will be conducted and completed for the purpose of contributing to this field.

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## 7 Appendices

### 7.1 Qualitative research survey

#### Foreign Language learning experience

Hello there!

I'm a student from JAMK University of Applied Sciences, and I would like to conduct a survey to find out your experience with language learning as well as any suggestion to make it better in the future. I'm working on a concept of innovative classroom dedicated to language studies as my thesis; and therefore, your responses will help a lot.

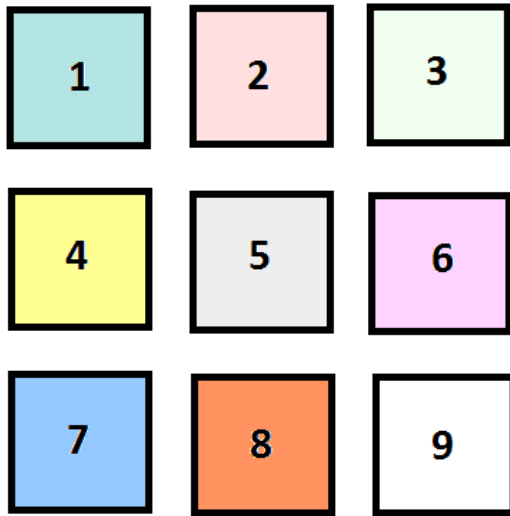
This is a very short survey that would take only 2 minutes of your time. Let's start with the first question!

1. Please tell a little about yourself. You are:
  - High school student
  - University student (undergraduate)
  - University student (master)
  - Working fulltime
  - Unemployed
  - Other
2. Which foreign languages have you studied?
  - English
  - Finnish
  - French
  - German
  - Spanish
  - Russian
  - Chinese
  - Japanese

- Other
3. What are your main purposes when studying a new language? Please select maximum 3 options.
- To support your studies
  - To support your work
  - To learn more about new cultures
  - To adapt to a new country
  - To please your curiosity
  - To impress other people
  - To get along with your partner and their family
  - Other
4. What do you find the most helpful when using language in foreign country? Please select maximum 3 options.
- Common greeting phrases
  - Food and shopping related vocabulary
  - Direction related vocabulary
  - Basic grammar to form sentences
  - Common adjectives
  - Common verbs
  - Correct pronunciation guide
  - Numbers
  - Other
5. What are the problems you usually have when trying to use a language? Please select maximum 3 options.
- I can't remember vocabulary
  - I can't think of what to say during conversation
  - I can't understand what people say
  - I can't remember grammar
  - I can't catch up with other's speaking speed

- I can't speak with the correct pronunciation
6. Which aspect do you find the most difficult when learning a new language?
- Reading
  - Speaking
  - Listening
  - Writing
7. What are learning activities that you would like to do in class the most? Please select maximum 3 options.
- Pair work
  - Group work
  - Listening to lectures
  - Doing exercises
  - Presentation
  - Playing games which are related to lesson
  - Watching movies/Listening to musics which are related to lesson
  - Other
8. What kind of facilities in a classroom do you pay attention the most?
- Table and chair
  - Wall
  - Blackboard
  - Media equipment (scene projector, computer, etc.)
  - Other
9. Would you like to learn with extra materials (figures, colors, blocks, etc.) other than just books and pens?
- I'd love to
  - I'd like to give it a try
  - I'm not sure if I need that
  - I find it unnecessary
  - It's useless to me

10. Which color provides you the best studying/working environment?



- Option 1
- Option 2
- Option 3
- Option 4
- Option 5
- Option 6
- Option 7
- Option 8
- Option 9
- Other

If you are interested in the concept and would like to share more of your experience, please leave your email and I will contact you ASAP!

## 7.2 Qualitative research interview

### 7.2.1 Petteri Ruuska's response

1. What are the usual activities that you have in class?

A lot of speaking, listening, little reading, doing exercises, pair work, working in small group (communication skills). Besides that also linguistic part, not only the vocabulary but the structures and grammar as well, basics of the grammar.

2. How did students react to those activities?

All of the feedbacks about the exercises or the pair work I got were very positive. They like them the best. Every now and then there are some students, maybe their skills level is a bit too high, or they are too tired to do exercises – but those are the students who do very well

3. What are the difficulties when you're teaching in traditional classroom?

The seating, the desks... We don't have the classroom for ourselves so we can't move the desks the way we'd like to because they have to be reorganized after the class so it'd take too much time and effort. [If we have desks and chairs that can be moved around easily], the students can be facing each other more, that'd be better.

About the lighting, sometimes we have technical problems. Usually we overcome those problems but sometimes they are annoying. For example the speakers can get too loud or sometimes we cannot adjust them.

[Are you afraid that the traditional classroom might be too big?]

Sometimes I'm worried about it [that the students in the back can't see the board], but they say they can see. A funny thing is the students always go to the back of the class, so I always tell them "Please move to the front of the class" so they can see better if needed.

[If the class is pre-organized in a way that could bring the students closer], it would be great, but usually there is no time and it would take too much effort to move the desks to a good position. However, there are always desks in the front but students but still students prefer to stay in the back. I don't think I smell that bad!

4. Do you think you need any other facilities than traditional ones?



Petteri: It would be great if we could sometimes divide or have a little bit more privacy for the groups in the classroom, but it is not very possible, at least in the classrooms where I teach. One way I do to provide students privacy is that I play some music during exercises so the students don't hear each other too well. I think that helped several students to express themselves more freely, so that kind of provides a fake kind of privacy.

[If the desks in the classroom were round, would it help the students to concentrate better?]

Yes, but also in every lesson the students need to have good visibility to the whiteboard. I like the setup of a classroom in Dynamo. The curtains, the setting and the furniture to separate the group, etc.; would be great in many activities.

5. What activities have you thought of doing but had no possibility to make it happen?

Petteri: For example setting a real counter so the students can act out some scenes, for example in a bar, in an elevator, with guests or clients and somebody who do the serving, attending the customers. To some extent we can do that but it would be too complicated to do. In order to save time usually we do the exercises just by sitting. At some phase, especially at the beginning phase of the course, I want the students to work with new students, to make new acquaintances so that they use Spanish, especially with new people; because if we don't they will only speak with one person. I always ask them to get up and find a new partner to speak to in the classroom.

Also in the more advanced courses, we practice so that they can make a phone call with one student in the classroom and the other go to the corridor. They make a conversation, and that kind of uses the corridor as a study space as well.

[We also think of preparing some toys for students to touch and interact with, that would be useful to practice speaking]

Yes! I have some games and board games so students can play, but usually, unfortunately, maybe I should reschedule the timetable or the lesson plan a bit so that

they can be used more in the classroom. But for that concept we also have a club “Language Café” so one could practice and play games, board games in Spanish there. I’m afraid we don’t have many toys but some linguistic materials that have many uses [We were actually thinking of some items like plastic fruits (orange, apple, etc.) or toy furniture so that they can set up a room and practice describing those or buying and selling]

Right, for that kind of props I’m afraid we don’t have. If we play, we use rubber and pencils and we play that they could be an orange, etc. Perhaps some plastic items could be used there.

I was also thinking there could be some items to record their speaking. It could be some mobile phones or similar, of course not for the beginning phase but the 2nd, 3rd or 4th courses. Of course they also use the computers to prepare presentation, they could prepare with the PowerPoint or Prezi with computers that are available in the classroom. And also, the students use the laptop or tablet especially with the vocabulary and also to see some links I provides on the Optima Workspace. Not that much in the classroom, they usually use it at home.

[Would you like to have special lessons that don’t follow the book? How about contest, acting or presentation?]

Petteri: At the time being, the Language Café is the only that can do it; but unfortunately the timing is not the best. I think it’s because, especially this year, there have been very few students attending those lessons – they are not really lessons; in fact, we get together here in this classroom so that they can have conversations or play games. Also I know that at the University of Jyväskylä they have this Language Café too so the students can go there if it fits to their timetable.

[We were thinking about contests, presentation or acting that may not need to follow the book]

Sure, the book is not really needed. I think the initial phase like Spanish 1 and 2, having a book is very hand. But out of the lesson, sure, you wouldn’t need the book – but of

course, you need to have the basic skills of the language and some vocabulary so that you could use it.

[We're coming up with an idea of an application with which you can use to create some questions on the screen and the students can use tablets or something else to answer them. You can use it in some contests to see who have the fastest answer, or two groups can compete against each other.]

That could be a good change because many students would love to use that for some tasks; but for the whole course in my mind I think it wouldn't work. However, doing a little exercises and competes against to create motivation; I think that would be fun.

[I have an idea for Learning through Senses concept, we could have some smelling bottles with different spices or ingredients inside so students can learn the vocabulary by interacting with the real objects]

It would be great especially for those students, who are specialized in, let's say food industry, or mechanical engineering students or those who are studying business administration. There could be something, but the thing is we don't have those optional language courses – all the students come together. On the higher lever like 3 and 4 that could be done – up to some extend they do that; but unfortunately we don't have those smelling objects so that the students can use more senses. It could be good. If we could create group for certain students in certain area, it could great. If we could have Spanish cooking group that could be absolutely fantastic to use stuffs like that.

[If we could save some audio or video files of different sounds like from weathers, nature, etc. for the students to study with or to present – what kind of audio or video would you like to have, preferably the sounds that can be used universally between language classes?]

Well, for the actual weather expressions I prefer to use some authentic materials, for example the weather forecast map of the world, Europe, Asia to see there, and then the students uses that. But of course, if they have a closer opportunity to use for example the tablet themselves, it would be much better because they could choose the areas

they could be interested in. Most of the time it isn't necessary to present but to practice in small group, especially for Spanish 1 and Spanish 2, but later yes, some presentation skill would be needed.

### 7.2.2 Tommi Ylkänen and Riitta Purokuru's response

#### 1. What are the usual activities that you have in class?

Tommi: So we do a lot of reading, we do a lot of normal old fashion activities: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and I do a lot of pair work and group work. Of course we do PowerPoint presentations, we watch video and stuffs like that. We also have group presentation.

Riitta: I do a lot of pair work, I don't do reading at all. Usually I have basic classes, there I do grammar teaching and after that the students start practicing those that I just taught. We do speaking a lot, pair work in small groups of bigger groups. So no reading, speaking, listening a little, presentation sometimes. I think that's about it. Basically communication skills.

#### 2. How did students react to those activities?

Riitta: I think they love them if you teach in non-traditional ways- it's the best you can do, at least when teaching in French, English.

Tommi: I think the most problematic is when they have to do bigger projects. Smaller tasks are very easy to get them excited; but if there's something bigger that you have to plan, do presentation or something like that then sometimes it gets more challenging.

Riitta: And I think there's a huge difference depending on the language that we teach. Because all the students in my French classes they're somehow very interested in this language so they chose to study French. That's why they are very motivated to come there and they like to study so they don't sit in the back. So they usually sit in the front or so.

Tommi: And I teach obligatory Swedish so it's always a "favourite" for student.

#### 3. What are the difficulties when you're teaching in traditional classroom?

Tommi: I haven't thought about it, but I don't think the traditional classroom are limiting me at the moment. But with all of those ideas Petteri had shared with you yesterday, I think I could have some benefits also - me and my teaching. We have a new classroom with new furniture, it make the atmosphere a lot different. (D148). They have new sofa and tables and chairs; already that made a bit difference comparing those we already used (light up the mood). But yeah I haven't really thought about any difficulties, I'm doing quite OK; but I'm sure I can do better in different classes.

Riitta: You know I think that traditional classroom are just boring; and I also think that the setting of the desks in 9 rows somehow stops my creativity. That's why I prefer at the moment the classroom at C114 with round tables and the chairs around them, so that kind of setting would be really lovely. Because I like to walk in the classroom when students do their little exercises, but it's not so nice and easy in the traditional classroom.

#### 4. Do you think you need any other facilities than traditional ones?

Riitta: well I think that some kind of private areas would be nice, because sometimes you want to give students some feedback or matters that you don't want the others to hear. So that would be really good to have space for that. And I think that could be a good idea to have a few computers so that the students could work on them and they could print out what they have created. Sometimes I might need that kind of method.

Tommi: we was at the staff meeting in Dynamo, and I think that's where Petteri took most of his idea to have private spaces. I really like that space. It was divided into 4 or 5 parts and there were curtains separating them. There were also curtains in the four corners that created a space in the middle with tables and sofas. You can do all of those things in an old classroom too, but you'll need to move the furniture around - which is a lot of work we don't usually end up doing because of lots of noise and inconvenience. It would be a lot easier to create discussion or different purposes for students to work in if that were all ready. It was also a good idea to have some sort of recording devices, but you're going to need some devices to play that back so that everyone could hear.

Petteri had this idea to have a counter for some simulations in shops or hotels, I don't have students like that - but if I have, it would be a really nice idea. Even adults I think would enjoy that too, to have some simulating rather than sitting at your desk.

Riitta: As we're living in a globalizing world and I have a lot of students from around the world, it would be nice to have a global, a really big one so the students could show "This is where I come from". And I often have French exchange students visiting my French classes, so it would be nice to have a permanent map of France so they could show a lot of things about France - because that somehow should be presented in school.

Tommi: And I teach a lot of Engineering students, we spend a lot of time in those computer classes. And that's good for doing things when we need the computer; but then when we need to sit down and talk, it was not very nice to study in a computer classroom as they all will sit behind the screen, so to combine a computer classroom with some space where you can sit around the table would be really helpful to me.

Perhaps you don't need a computer for every student, there would be a few computers in the class of tablets to hand out to, I think would be enough in most cases.

5. What activities have you thought of doing but had no possibility to make it happen?

Tommi: I'm a bit limited by software licenses at the moment. I'm teaching students who study media, and we would need Photoshop and software like this but they are not available in all computer classroom. When I teach there are just 2 or 3 classrooms with these software. So that's one thing that is limiting me right now. And they would like to do small workshop to teach each other to use Photoshop or video editing, but we can't do that because we don't have access to those classrooms.

Riitta: And I think one of the biggest problem in language teaching is that the computers don't work. Often we have to bring our own laptop but it takes 5 to 10 minutes sometimes to get it to connect correctly ;and if you can't do that then you have to call the IT manager to come - and that usually take like 15 minutes of your class. And I think

that is a serious problem. There used to be computer in every classroom but now it's not the case. Sometimes you can connect it correctly but then there's problem with the sound. You want to show a nice video clip but no sound. Then you have to call them again, so that's very frustrating.

Tommi: I think there's a lot of things to improve. There could be made as simple as possible. For example last night there was a classroom where I had to bring my own laptop, there were only 2 cables there - one for the network, and the other cable for the projector. I plugged those in and it worked. That's how I want it to work the next time too. They had speakers, they were hidden under the table. If I want to use them, I'll have to take them up and connect them too. But there have been classroom where I have to connect 5, 6 or 7 cables laying on the desk, and I don't know which one to connect. That is something we have to improve because we don't need that much to connect to your laptop.

Riitaa: Sometimes you can make it if everything works fine, and the next time you come there you don't know how to do it. And it's frustration, that's how I would describe the situation.

Tommi: In those classrooms, the system is somehow overly complicated, you have to know which boxes you want to choose, and which monitor you want to show, which audio devices, choose certain channel. I don't think it need to be that way. I need put the cable and show picture on the screen. I think it's can be that easy if you want.

[Would you like to have some audio files or video files ready that can be used universally between the language classes?]

Riitta: It could be just nice pictures or videos about the world, most beautiful places.

[Would you like to have special lessons that don't follow the book? How about contest, acting or presentation?]

Riitta: I think I do like them. Why not?

Tommi: Me too. I don't have the book at all most of the time. We do have presentation, some acting.

Riitta: Some kind of contest.

Tommi: And I don't think in old fashioned classroom we have now. We can make everything happens in those too. But I'm sure we could have a better time for more inspiring. Especially in design classroom.

Riitta: Yeah, we have more feel.

[We also focus on the design of classroom, like theme...]

Riitta: You know, one thing would be nice also, in some classrooms here, in fact I don't know about what to do with lighting. Because you press a certain button and then the light come up. And then if you want it to dim down, you press the same button or any button but nothing happen. So I don't know what to do with the light.

Tommi: I'm not sure if it works anymore in all the classroom. They are very nice and fancy system, but perhaps they've already broken.

Riitta: Could be. So the lighting is essential because sometimes I would like it to be dark or dim (if that's the correct word), and sometimes, you know I could switch the light easily. And if I show a Power Point presentation, it's bright and shiny, which makes the presentation screen hard to see it right.

[What colour do you think would work best?]

Riitta: I would say blue, or blue - ish green, not very dark. But no yellow, no orange, no red for me.

Tommi: I like the classroom I was in yesterday, there were grey chairs, white tables and some violet chairs too. And green too, green, blue and white.

### 7.2.3 Gerard Kolh's response

1. What are the usual activities that you have in class?

Knowing my case, usually both courses or 3 courses they are on the basic levels, so let's say now when we are talking about the German courses or German 1 and German 2 that begins with of course basic introduction in pair with students, that they have a sheet of



paper with certain questions, origin, ages, occupation or things like that. But that depends of course on the items we are working on, but I try – usually that's my general objective – to at least make the students able to express themselves in German, let's say, on a basic level of talking, about themselves, what they are studying, occupation and so on.

[So basically activities on communication, not like you focus on grammar or anything else?]

Of course, that we have also. I think I would say that in the beginning I would point out to the students that they should learn vocabulary, as it's necessary to have a certain amount of words, vocabulary in order to understand text, in order to express themselves. But then also I would say that I try to activate them to use the language. I explain the grammatical stuffs, the structure of the German language to focus in learning. Well, if you ask me how many percent on grammar, listening, reading comprehension – that's difficult. It depends on the lesson.

## 2. How did students react to those activities?

I would say usually they are interested, especially when they are asked to use the language skills. I would say they perceive them as something positive. Then we also have other activities – let's say – that we have some working sheets for them to work on the language, to form sentences, to translate something or whatsoever. So I would say they are positively perceived.

## 3. What are the difficulties when you're teaching in traditional classroom?

No, because I've done it so many years already, and I know the classroom, what they are. Of course I have to take usually, not every lesson or daily basis, a CD player for listening comprehension and something like that. That would be the only thing nice to have if it was in every class but it's not possible. Nowadays, if we use the computer, normally I'll have to take my own machine because nowadays we don't have computer in any classroom anymore. But otherwise, the classrooms as they are or something like that would be better.

[Do you have any group work or pair work in class?]

Yes, of course. Usually in pair, but it can be also small group like with 4 students for example.

4. Do you need any other facilities than traditional ones?

I haven't thought about that. Of course, I would need now – depending on the subject we are talking about – maybe to show something on the internet, that we have media, that we have maps or something like that. But otherwise, I wouldn't get in mind now what would be missing.

5. What activities have you thought of doing but had no possibility to make it happen?

Of course we can't go to Germany, that would be interesting for the students, but that would be an illusion to organize. But also (only) sometimes through the internet I show them the video clips about the certain area in Germany, the cities, certain countryside or areas in Germany – which might be interesting. But otherwise, I would say the language study happens in the classroom. Then I think also what the students like usually – especially in the beginning when I tell them something about Germany – which is related to certain subjects we talk about like health, health insurance in Germany, how it is to visit the doctor and so on. But that something which comes from me.

[How do you think about an innovative classroom for studying language? With new decoration and facility? For example small table for individual students that can be moved easily for group work.]

But that we can do also. Let's say there is a traditional classroom then we can also group the tables as we want, so that's always possible. But in term of equipment maybe, I would appreciate when the wall could be covered with pictures. Not only from Germany but also from other countries - let's say when we talk about major languages we have here like English, German, French, Spanish - there might be motives from different countries for examples, to show, to give the impression of multicultural environment.

[We have been thinking about decorating the classroom with the travel theme, because learning languages is related to travelling.]

Yes, definitely. In some classes, from term to term we have different classroom and it's not always the same. I remember one classroom with poster, but not in every classroom.

[Would you like to have special lessons that don't follow the book? How about contest, acting or presentation? ]

For German I would say there wouldn't be such a special need. Of course one classroom might be more convenient or cosier than the other one, but usually let's say for German, working on presentation is not really our concern. It's just really on the basic level and the language skill is also very basic.

[Do you have any difficulty when teaching students with different levels?]

It depends. Nowadays, what I appreciate is that we have multicultural classes. We have students from China, Vietnam, Russia, Estonia and different countries. The problem that I realised is let's say linguistic basis, for example pronunciation for Asian students. That's a problem. But that's not the case. It would be nice to have more resources in term of hours for example to focus on that but that we don't have. But then I advise the students, during self-study for example. Nowadays through the Internet to train and rehearse their pronunciation.