Appendix 1.1 Etiquette Guidelines for the Nonsupervisory Observation of L2 Classrooms

BACKGROUND
1. The observation/visitation of classroom teachers is serious business; it should not be approached casually.
2. Classroom observations are not easy for the classroom teachers involved.
3. Knowing how to teach a second language (L2) and knowing how to observe L2 classroom dynamics competently are two very different abilities. An experienced L2 teacher is not necessarily an effective or well-informed observer.
4. Learning how to observe in a manner acceptable to all parties involved is a slowly developing activity. It takes time, careful reflection, personal tact, and creativity. Visiting and visited teachers should expect that this ability will develop, change, and improve over time.
5. An observer is a guest in the teacher’s and the students’ classroom. A guest in the classroom should not attempt to take away even a modest degree of classroom responsibility, control, or authority from the classroom teacher or L2 students.
6. A guest’s purpose for visiting is not to judge, evaluate, or criticize the classroom teacher; it is not necessarily even to offer constructive advice.
7. One option is for the guest to envision his/her role as that of an interested visitor, someone who has entered into a long-term process of learning to observe.
8. One potentially useful, though provocative, theme of the literature on L2 teacher education suggests that observing others as they teach provided invaluable opportunities for “visiting” teachers to learn to see more clearly in order to increase awareness of their own classroom practices. Reflecting upon what we see other teachers do in classroom settings sometimes helps us become more aware of our own classroom behaviors.

PROCEDURES
9. Visitors should contact the teacher well in advance whose class they would like to visit; a minimum of 24 hours in advance is recommended. This is a crucial procedural concern that prospective visitors need to work out with the classroom teacher directly. Some teachers may prefer significantly more than 24 hours’ lead time.
10. A visitor who is planning to observe a class should arrive in the classroom a few minutes ahead of time.
11. The classroom teacher should always reserve the right to say, “No,” when a nonsupervisor inquires into the possibility of visiting his/her class. A teacher who withholds permission on one occasion might change his/her mind at a later date.
12. Visitors need to discuss with the classroom teacher how long they are planning to stay in the classroom. It is important to negotiate a suitable length of time that is acceptable to both the visitor and to the classroom teacher. Once the teacher and visitor have agreed upon a suitable length of time, the visitor should stay in the classroom for at least that long.
13. If something unexpected comes up and the visitor is not able to observe a class at the agreed upon time, the visitor needs to explain this to the classroom teacher at his/her earliest convenience. If the visitor has said that s/he is coming to the class, and then s/he does not show up, classroom teachers sometimes feel rejected. It is a visitor’s responsibility to keep the classroom teacher informed.
14. Once having entered a classroom, the visitor should try to be as unobtrusive as possible. If possible, s/he should try to “blend into the woodwork.”
15. If an L2 student in the class asks the visitor a direct question (e.g., What are you doing here? Are you a teacher, too?), the visitor should answer as briefly as possible. The visitor should not monopolize classroom time. It is important for a visitor to bear in mind that s/he is not a regular member of the class. Visitors should not initiate or pursue conversations unnecessarily.

16. The role of the participant observer is a special exception to numbers (14) and (15) above. This role can be adopted but only if it is initially suggested and encouraged by the classroom teacher directly. In this regard, a general rule of thumb is for the visitor to wait for an unsolicited cue from the classroom teacher.

17. A visitor should be appreciative and polite. At the earliest opportunity, s/he should thank the classroom teacher for having made possible this generous opportunity to visit an L2 classroom. In order to be unobtrusive, it is often necessary to express this appreciation in a setting other than the classroom setting.

18. A visitor who is taking written notes or collecting information in some other way should do this as unobtrusively as possible. The visitor must make sure that the teacher and students are comfortable with any procedures s/he may follow for data collection (e.g., audio or video taping).

**POST-VISITATION**

19. It is imperative for visitors to keep whatever impressions they have of a visited teacher’s style, effectiveness, or personal demeanor to themselves. These impressions should remain private and confidential.

20. Visitors should explain to the classroom teacher that his or her name will not be used in any discussions with other people. Visitors should let a visited teacher know that their policy is to keep any direct referenced to teachers, in either formal or informal settings, anonymous.

21. If visitors produce any retrievable artifacts (e.g., written notes, audio or video recordings) during a classroom visit, the classroom teacher should have access to these materials.

22. Even well intentioned feedback to classroom teachers often misfires. Visitors need to bear this point in mind during their post-visitation interactions with teachers.

23. For this reason, visitors should monitor carefully and keep in check the natural inclination to offer advice. Unless visitors are observing in the capacity of a professionally trained supervisor, their role is not to assist, evaluate, or judge.

24. At times, discussions and collaborations between a visitor/observer and a classroom teacher are appropriate and useful. In fact, teachers sometime expect and even request feedback from classroom visitors. The point is that such exchanges should only be pursued if they are initially suggested and encouraged by the classroom teacher. it is not the visitor’s place to initiate or overemphasize the role of such exchanges.

25. Bearing items (23) and (24) in mind, visitors should be aware that if a post-observation discussion with the visited teacher does take place, it needs to be approached with great care, sensitivity, and tact.

26. Those who plan to visit L2 classrooms should read and discuss with others the literature on classroom observation etiquette. Becoming familiar with this tradition in the literature is important for visiting and visited teachers alike.