Improvisational Task-Sequences for Formative and Summative Assessment

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Status Quo in German Secondary ELT

• Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram 1997) as a main pillar of ELT
• Communicative forms of oral (dialogical) assessment for all school-types
• Predominance of IRF in classroom discourse (Kurtz 2011: 136f)
• Teachers perceive need for in-service-training
Aim of Project

• To sustainably promote oral unscripted communication
• To foster a different kind of classroom discourse to IRF
• To provide learners with meaningful socio-cultural tasks for which they have to acquire the appropriate language and affective skills.
• To empower teachers to incorporate this in their day-to-day teaching and assessment.
Methodology

• Empirical, mixed-methods, action-research longitudinal (2 years) study (cf. Altrichter & Posch 2007, Dörnyei 2007).

• Close collaboration with teachers with the aim of continuing the project independently and disseminating results:
  – Development of a Task-Sequence based on:
    • Improvisational theatre methods
    • The individual needs of the classes and teachers
The Improvisational Task-Sequence

• **Improvisational Theatre** (cf. Johnstone 1999, Beecroft 2008) provides:
  – Games which require unscripted, spontaneous communication

• A **Task-Sequence** (cf. Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-von Ditfurth 2011) provides:
  – The opportunity to structure, tailor and scaffold these games to different learner groups
The Improvisational Task-Sequence

• A structured sequence of games promoting unscripted oral communication
• Ranging from one-word games to improvised scenes
• Contents are based on textbook and curricular requirements as well as the needs of the class
The Improvisational Task-Sequence

Pre-task warm-up:

• Greeting forms, tongue-twister, poem or sentences in varying emotions

• Statues: Small groups of students build a “statue” to activate vocabulary on a current (textbook) topic.

• Small Drill-Improv: Focus on spontaneous use of a grammatical form, e.g. question tags

Main Improvisational Task: Improvised scene with a minimum of 2 students, e.g.:

• An improvised 4-line dialogue in varying emotions

• An improvised dialogue with an opening sentence as a prompt

• An improvised role-play with topical roles (e.g. antisocial teens)

• An improvised scene with role/setting/ object suggestions from the audience or including current vocabulary

• A spontaneous story /dialogue with two pupils using randomly picked current vocabulary

Post-task cool down:

• Whole group “statue” or “association chain” on a current topic

• Whole group reflection on lesson
CBLA Opportunities

• The ITS provides opportunities for:
  – The elicitation of meaningful communication
  – Alternative communicative language assessment
  – Performance/Task-Based assessment
    • Interactive performance
    • Process-oriented
    • Formative and summative long-term assessment and individualised feedback
    • Criterion-referenced scores (class-tailored assessment schemes)
Formative

Classroom Observation

Weekly discussion:
Teacher + Researcher
(communicative validation with assessment criteria)

Feedback for students

Summative

• Assessment scheme for each student

• Monthly oral grade: average = half-yearly grade

• End-of-year reports

• Graded Improvised Role-Plays (last task in the Task-Sequence) – Assessment Scheme
Conclusion

• The nature of the tasks yields different assessment possibilities than would normally occur in a traditional classroom environment
  – Teachers can observe different facets of their students’ learner personalities

• The task-sequence provides a structure for both teaching and assessing unscripted oral communication
References


Thank you for listening!