

Part 1

Acquiring a second language in a forum can be a difficulty being a young learner. The key responsibility for us as teachers is to create a safe space for our students to speak freely within. To create a safe space for the students, we need a relaxed atmosphere, and this is what this activity is intended for. The aim is for every student to speak up even just a little. This is why it is based on some of the different communication strategies available (Færch, Haastrup & Phillipson, 1984, p. 154-165).

Divide the class into groups based on level of the L2 with 4-5 students in each group (assuming there are 25 students in a classroom, this will be approximately five different groups).

Make five different “stations” that the groups move around to. On each station there will be different activities based on the theory of communication strategies. This activity can be varied in level according to the grade of the class, but this particular example aims for students in 3rd-4th grade.

Station 1: The game Charades will be the main activity for the group. Each student in the group take turns miming the word on a card from the pile facing upside down on the table. If the card says the word “cow”, the student make use of the communication strategy “appeal” by miming a cows behavior (e.g. chewing, milking, or having a lazy or careless face expression). The rest of the group members are to guess the word “cow”. The teacher can vary the guessing phase by having the students guessing the words in turns, as the words pop up in their minds or by raising their hands. The students guessing the word, gets the word card and thereby a point. At the end the goal is to gain most cards. This way we strengthen the student’s knowledge about how to communicate, when you cannot say – or in real life – remember the word you wish to say.

Station 2: Once again there will be a pile of cards upside down. This time the cards hold an English sentence with a Danish word, and the structure of the game is similar to the one at Station 1 (students take turns in presenting the content of the card, the rest of the group take turns in guessing, and the student with the correct answer gain a point). The “presenter” reads the card out loud combining the English words with the single Danish word, and the rest of the students should now guess what the Danish word is in English. The students with the correct answer gains a card and thereby a point. This activity can demonstrate how to make use of the communication strategy Code-switching.

Station 3: This station is a replica of Station 2. Only this time, the “presenter” in the group is supposed to say the Danish word with an English pronunciation. This can be tough and a bit of a tongue twister. The rest of the group should guess the English word, but the correct answer should both contain correct Danish pronunciation AND the English translation. Once again the card represents a point and is dedicated to the student with the correct answer. Here we make use of the communication strategy “anglicizing”.

Station 4: This station is intertwined with Station 5 and will be a group activity – no winners or losers within the group. The group should make three or more different sentences using the communication strategy of “literal translation” and write a sentence on an individual card. The task will be for the group to create an English sentence which is translated literally and word by word from a Danish sentence. An example of a such sentence could be: “Jeg kunne godt tænke mig en blomst” → “I would good think me a flower”.

Station 5: Intertwined with Station 4. Once again, we have a group activity – no winners or losers within each group. The group will together correctly translate the former group’s literally translated sentences. With every correct translated sentence, the group altogether gain a point. This activity continuously focuses on the communication strategy of “literal translation”.

This Station activity can be used as a brain break (each station as one break for the whole class or even the same activity but with the class divided into groups) or as a full class activity going through all the stations in 90 minutes. The teacher gives around ten minutes per station as a full class activity and starts by introducing every station in plenum. Once the class has been through all the stations, the teacher sums up in plenum as well.

The key take aways for the teacher to present in class are the following:

- We are allowed to make mistakes – if we cannot find the English words, we can still communicate, and my surroundings will still understand
- There are different ways of reaching the goal: finding the correct word. If I cannot make my surroundings understand by using my first priority for communicating, I can look into this “handbook” of tools that I just received in class
- Every student in class has spoken during the activity, which according to Merrill Swains output hypothesis (Bjerre & Ladegaard, 2007, p. 53)

All five activities support a various of the language learning elements being input, interaction and output phases, expanding vocabulary and English pronunciation. Altogether they all support the Danish National Curriculum (FFM) by practicing writing, presenting, communication strategies, listening and verbal skills.

Part 2

As the performance culture continues to thrive in the Danish school system, the heavy weight of acquiring a new language and exceeding in it, whether it being L2 or L3, increases steadily.

How a language is learned is not defined in one single way and it depends on a variety of parameters. We learn our mother tongue and start the acquisition from the early life after birth – perhaps already by hearing it from the womb. It might be the only language we hear. Many human beings acquire a second language and some of us even acquire a third, even fourth and fifth language and become multilingual.

According to Rod Ellis language acquisition happens through dialogue. This does not necessarily mean the spoken word, but it can also be the written word, a learner reads. To learn a new language we are dependent on the input from our surroundings, combined with what we already know (e.g. L1), and our age and motivation. These factors give us the opportunity to create an output (Bjerre & Ladegaard, 2007, p. 17).

Stephen Krashen bases his input hypothesis on Rod Ellis' theory by hearing and reading a certain language, although this still need to be at a "reachable level", which is defined by Krashen as " $i + 1$ ". " i " refers to the interlanguage of the learner and " $+ 1$ " refers to the level right above (Bjerre & Ladegaard, 2007, p. 50).

Michael Long looks into the interaction hypothesis while relying on the input as essential, although he believes that the learner is dependent on the negotiation between the learner himself and the conversation partner, so that they together reach a common understanding and together reach Krashen's " $i + 1$ " (Bjerre & Ladegaard, 2007, p. 51).

Merril Swain is key when we speak about the output hypothesis, meaning that the learner learns just as much by creating an output in a situation where he is a bit stressed, as he or she depends on the input and interaction (Bjerre & Ladegaard, 2007, p. 53).

How the teacher acts is key to create a space where it is fair to make mistakes in language acquisition. That means by gently correcting – or preferably redirecting – students as they are in the process of acquiring.

This is done in many different ways and with different language views, and one may feel the urge to look to the Community Language Learning, more specifically the method of the “Human Computer”, where a student chooses a sentence or a word, they wish to improve, say it out loud, and then the teacher repeats after the student as often as the student wishes. This gives the student the ability to listen their way into a certain word or phrase and the opportunity to correct themselves, listening to a correct pronunciation (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The teacher stays neutral and does not correct the student on the mispronunciations, but simply repeat the phrase or word until the student him- or herself is content with their own output.

The teacher’s role is to prepare activities that has a broad spectrum and can be tailored to each level in class. This is possible by creating different activities with different focus areas as for instance described as a workshop with a handful of stations with certain purposes. Each station can have a certain goal that practices the students’ skills, both verbal and written. Practicing both written and verbal skills in many different ways will strengthen the students’ language acquisition, and it is possible to work even more in depth with these two by practicing presentation skills and communication skills. A safe atmosphere is always key, and the workshop described in Part 1 of this paper enhances this environment, as it makes the students aware of which communications strategies they can use, and that it is okay to use them even outside of class.

List of references:

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Færch, C., Haastруп, K. & Phillipson, R. (1984). Learner language and language learning. Gyldendals sprogbibliotek.

Larsen-Freeman, D. & Anderson, M. (2011). Techniques & Principles in Language Teaching. Oxford University Press.