Exploring engagement with classroom activity, ‘together’: Learners as active practitioners of learning

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Engaged learning and classroom activity
What kind of engagement?

engaged learning through practitioner enquiry
Engagement as understanding our context of practice

- learners’ self-esteem
- sense of ownership over learning
- self-efficacy
- shared understanding and empathetic environment
practitioner research

teachers and learners as practitioners of learning
research as classroom enquiry

(Allwright & Hanks, 2009)
Why and what type of practitioner research?

- Action Research (AR)
- Educational Action Research (EAR)
- Participatory Action Research (PAR)
- Reflexive Practice (RP)
- **Exploratory Practice (EP)**
- ...
The project

- Introduction
- EP methodological frame and principles
- The LTR project (2014 – present): objectives and participants
- How EP has been implemented
- Students’ voice and our understanding(s)
- Some of the challenges and benefits
- Conclusions: inputs/feedback
What is Exploratory Practice (EP)?

puzzle-based classroom inquiry
Puzzles

*questions* (‘why questions’) by teachers and learners

about *counter-intuitive phenomena* related to the (language) *teaching and learning experience*
Learners’ puzzles: emerging occurrences

**struggle with activating knowledge (from passive to active)**
Why is it sometimes difficult to find the right words at the right moment to speak fluently?
Why can’t I remember vocabulary when I am talking, even though I know the word?
Why can’t I conjugate verbs in an appropriate way when I talk?

**Quality of Life**
Why some of my classmates don’t engage with classroom activities? / Why there is so much noise in this classroom?
struggle with applying (canon) methodology
Why don’t the students make the most of the written feedback?
Why do I feel that I do not obtain from students sufficient high quality, usable feedback and evaluation of course content and methodology?
Why do my students fail to see the point of language learning strategies?

Quality of Life
Why do students use the mother tongue during the class?
Why do students use their mobiles during the class?
Why EP?

‘Quality of life (QoL)’ prioritised for (language) teachers and learners.

Make working for understanding a continuous enterprise. (sustainability)

Integrate the work for understanding into classroom practice. (use of normal pedagogic activities as investigative approaches)

The work needs to be conducted in the spirit of mutual development. (inclusivity)

Work primarily ‘to understand’ classroom life prior to bringing any change.

‘Involve everybody’ in the work for understanding through teacher and/or learner puzzles.

The work needs to bring teachers and learners together. (collegiality)
LTR Project 2014-

• LTR project 2014-16 focused on teacher-initiated inquiry
• LTR project 2016-18 focused on **learner inclusivity**
  MFL (French, Spanish, Italian) & EAP

‘Learners are capable of developing as practitioners of learning.’ (Allwright & Hanks, 2009, p. 7)

‘[...] being in a group is likely to be far more enjoyable and far more productive because of the mutual support such a group can provide.’ (Allwright & Hanks, 2009, p. 5)
Working on **learner inclusivity**
  • including learners as co-researchers for understanding(s)

Working **collegially** with other EP teacher-researchers
  • sharing understandings with other teachers

Working **sustainably**
  • deploying conventional classroom activities as investigative tools (PEPAs), and qualitative research means as classroom activities
Investigative tools and sustainability

**PEPAs**

(Potentially Exploitable Pedagogic Activities)

qualitative enquiry tools
Investigative tools and sustainability

Understanding(s)

- keeping a diary in the target language (auto-ethnography)
- engaging with literature related to the puzzle
- class conversation
- interviewing fellow students or experts (target language or English)
- bricolage / artwork / songs / videos / l-Poem / picture narrative / a/r/tography
Investigative tools and sustainability

- reporting on understanding(s)
- artwork
- poster
- final presentation (individual / group)
- narrative
Natasha
managing increased workload sustainably
lack of space-time for reflection (Ts & Ls)
syllabus fit vs non-prescriptive practice

(by Cristina)
Learning opportunities via understanding

- Developing capabilities
  - fluency in the target language, reflecting on learning, self-reflection and creativity, sight translation, reporting information into another language, teamwork

- Engaging with divergent perceptions of our practices
  - unpacking learners’ and teachers’ mutual views
  - illuminating aspects of our teaching practice

- Working towards understanding
  - fostering a sense of ownership over learning against the backdrop of ‘life’, of an embodied classroom
Thank you for your attention & Questions

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References (1)


