

“Zero oddness, please!” Checklists for teaching and learning self-assessment

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DESCRIPTION

Awareness and self-assessing in language learning need a straight alignment with teaching strategies.

Since it is really difficult to assess the students' level properly, there are some points that teachers bring into the following questions:

- how can we make decisions in the best pragmatic and effective ways?
- is *the learning content* or *the process for learning* essential for awareness and self-assessing?
- how helpful could grids and/or checklists be both for the teacher and the students?

In order to draft some answers to these key questions, the following teaching-pathway introduces a mock-module which is a means for a general concern and reflection about self-assessing both by the teacher's and by the students' at some stages of the teaching / learning tasks. Therefore, it does not pretend to be exhaustive in all its steps, but we try to interface the perception of learning at such a stage according to the teacher's and the students' point of view. Consequently, the teacher is involved in a careful observation in the way of the educational action research, so that he/she can collect data on several areas:

- affective;
- cognitive;
- operational;
- curricular.

On the other side, the students are involved in improving their study skills for *learning to learn*.

The classroom becomes a *workroom* where the students perform their interactions, whereas the teacher-observer moves from the realization of the learning problems towards an organized collection of data to reflect on his/her doings.

In this way, the teaching strategy tries to create a system which enables the students to practise the four integrated skills with a deeper attention to the oral interaction and the treatment of data from some checklists.

The content topic of the unit "Zero Oddness, please" is launched by a A. Blacc's song "I need a dollar" and expanded by using some tasks about Human Rights. This choice is based on the fact that if the teacher wants the students to talk simply but clearly in English and be able to manage with an emotive mood in the social interaction, it could be advisable to have them

work about concrete topics and about a content which they could feel the truth and reality of it. So that, for instance, today's problems of social inclusion and conditions of poorness due to unemployment are topics which young people feel, know and understand as familiar.

The teacher:

- thinks over what, how and when fostering the students' awareness in *learning to learn* and how monitoring their gradual progress in the core linguistic competences according to the levels A2/B1 as required by the European Framework and the Italian Ministerial National Suggestions;
- plans and makes use of grids and checklists to self-evaluate the validity, suitability, flexibility of his/her way of teaching. He/she is able to search for and refer to sources from the Web, such as online agendas, educational websites, interactive blogs, diaries and data sharing programs or apps.

The students:

- diagnose and self-assess both their own ways of learning and how their study skills, strategies and methods are suitable and functional to the purpose;
- are self-critical respect to their errors and mistakes in learning; moreover they are able to manage grids and checklists on their own and together with peers both in presence and shared on-line. They focus on how to be right and which strategies they could adopt to foster their autonomy in learning and to keep on going successfully even in the future as adult learners.

Let us begin with a:

- presentation of the problem case for the teacher, that is: a students' poor and low performance in speaking;

It follows the drawing up of:

- checklists for the teacher and for the students in order:
 - to analyse the starting and problem situation;
 - to estimate the teacher's time of speaking respect to the interaction with the class;

- to observe the students' communicative attitude during the performance of the tasks;
 - the simulation of using the checklists at some stages of the lesson plan whose title is "Zero oddness, please!".
1. Awareness and motivation raising tasks:
 - pre-listening: Brain storming and cold questioning about social problems (alcoholism, drug-addiction, unemployment, ...); mapping and scaffolding activities on LIM using a web 2.0 tool;
 - listening and watching from Youtube "I need a dollar" by Aloe Blaac; comprehension activities.
 2. Practising language and content in integrated skills.
 3. Fostering extensive oral production and self-studying skills; students' metacognitive analysis and teachers' metacognitive analysis.
 4. Achievement/accomplishment testing and evaluation:
 - students' metacognitive analysis;
 - teachers' metacognitive analysis.

In order to achieve the outcomes previously stated, the unit is based on an integration of strategies and techniques mainly centred on a case study / problem solving and interaction among peers, such as:

- **Cooperative learning:** students work together to complete a task, to surf the net in order to get information or documents useful to the topic, to train themselves in a linguistic activity, to check their mutual learning;
- **Cross-disciplinary teaching on themes:** working on topics in common with other subjects;
- **Monitoring of progress through group and individual observation:** using grids and checklists to build up awareness and motivation in progress for students. The prominence here is on progress so even weak students can map their significant gains;
- **Peer tutoring:** students work in pairs or small groups (at least 4) with one student (2 when in group) coaching the other student/s on a given task;
- **Response agenda:** Students record tips about what they have learned, strategies, doubts, problems, positive spots. Students share their data in the class, with partners and with their teacher, writing their reports in Dropbox by Google or in a sheared folder created by Zoho app in their tablets.

ACTIVITY

Step 1

Why

“Zero Oddness, please!” is the title of the teaching pathway you are presenting. Why that..., let’s say, oddness for these teaching tips?

The title has a twofold aim: on one side it is a call for the teacher to elicit a real-data-based assessment with no “oddities” and no personal sensitive evaluation; whereas on the students’ hand, it aims at capturing their curiosity and interest (*let’s hope!*) while working with the learning material of the unit; moreover, the word “oddness” could be linked with the idea of something “strange”, even “transgressive”, therefore appealing to young people, even because the word in question is not common in their vocabulary!

Respect to the single item of the title, you consider two different prompts, one for the teacher and the other for the students. Why that? Is this perspective extendible to other teaching situations in the following pathway?

The case-study we are going to analyze is centred on the strict relationship between the two sides of the same coin: the teaching action and the suitability of the students’ response to it (in this specific case, the receptive and productive oral skills, that is interactive speaking). However, it is crucial to clarify that even if the teaching and learning processes evolve more or less at the same pace, each participant’s perception and point of view of the event in action are never closely coincidental; so that it is reasonable that the teacher has a proper view of what and how things are going on and the students are aware of their learning process. That is why, I consider both the roles at the same stage and I advise the use of check-lists or grids to collect more accurate data.

Why is it worth to consider the procedures of cooperation and sharing between the teacher and the students essential to the teaching/learning process?

They are crucial, because a teacher should not assume to be neutral or distant respect to the results of the learning process; he has to foster and elicit a positive raise of learning, sharing the process with the class above all in the phase of recognition of the learning obstacles. For example, in the situation in which the students have difficulties in communicating in English spontaneously, the teacher has to dig deeper for the reasons why the students are reluctant in speaking; instead, the students need to realize that, since they are the performers and the participants to a positive adjustment, they should fully understand *what they can really do and how to do that*.

To round up, the teacher has to:

1. work out effective solutions to the potential problems;
2. choose or create devices and mechanisms for the solutions of the learning problems;
3. elicit some accurate and appropriate actions for the consideration of the learning difficulties;
4. plan actions for the students' involvement;
5. read the data, to realize the results and to give clear feedbacks.

Why do you say that the students in your class have difficulties in speaking?

The students' communicative level could be worked out thanks to a bottom up analysis of their level in speaking. That is to say, the teacher starts answering to the items of a checking list about his general teaching procedures. A similar metacognitive checklist could be given to the students in order to perceive both the common and different points of the same situation. The students' checklist could even be anonymous, in order to let them freely express their own ideas about the subject and their approach to it and it is quick to answer. The comparison of the data from both the checklists focuses on the study of the processes and strategies that the students activate, of their awareness of the purposes and procedures which make them able to know how to do, how to interact and how to know. It is advisable, however, to monitor the students' communicative behaviour and their linguistic performance.

Why is monitoring the students' communicative behaviour and their linguistic performance crucial?

The teacher should be persistent in monitoring the students' communicative behaviour and linguistic performance, because he needs to measure the students' progress and their possible problems in order to give them feedback. Feedback is significant to show their learning process. Without a doubt, we give feedbacks in an objective and reliable way, pointing out the achieved goals; the data are gathered by a proper check list.

Now, a passage to the details of the module in question, which is the focus and the content of your teaching activities?

The module is mainly based on the investigation and interpretation of the facts of some social experiences and then on their description according to the student's personal view. In this perspective, the student should not acquire only any notions by heart in English, but she/he has to realize how to use the content learned to solve the case-study proposed as final activities. At the same time, the teacher sets off all the possible strategies to make active his class in the mood of an experiential laboratory; that is to say teaching versus learning as actions in progress. Therefore, the written, audio and video teaching materials are appealing for the students and attractive even in their format to allow an untroubled students' involvement.

How and what

How can you assume that the students have difficulties in speaking?

The best way is using some checklists for:

- a metacognitive analysis by the teacher;
- a metacognitive analysis by the student.

Having students involved in the assessment process is greatly helpful, not only for the teacher, but also for the students, allowing them to assume the responsibility for their learning and for the recognition of their weak points.

Some examples of checklists follow:

Checklist for a metacognitive analysis of the teacher's behavior

Points of thought	My answers
What I do not admit from my students is...	
What I do which makes easier their studying is ...	
What I do matches with what I would do ...	
How I can monitor my doings during the class:	
How I can revise my doings during the class:	
How the students act during the class:	
How they could study at home:	
Which experience the students have of the school-work:	

Checklist for a metacognitive analysis of the student's attitude

Points of thought	My answers
What I do not like about my teacher is ...	
What I do to make my studying easier is ...	
What I do at school matches with what I would do	
How I can monitor my doings during the class	
How I do my homework	
How I can monitor myself when I do my homework	
My opinion about my doing homework is	

How can teachers monitor the students' communicative and linguistic performance?

A checklist for the observation of the student's communicative performance helps to build up an objective perspective of the student's attitude to the oral interaction while speaking the foreign language in the learning context.

The student	Yes ✓	No ✓	How many
Can understand the task/the question.			
Can answer properly			
Can talk using full sense sentences			
Can recognize time sequences in the speech act			
Can use other items or sentences for words he /she does not know			
Can use extra-linguistic codes to substitute expressions he /she does not know			
Can ask for the meaning of those words he does not know			
Can explain the meaning of a word			

Can deduce the meaning of an unknown word from the context			
Can ask for help from classmates			
Can ask for help from the teacher			
Can write notes as an help for his/her discussion			
Makes active the following transversal competence/s ...			
Makes active the following compensative speaking strategies			

How can you manage with the experiential/laboratorial approach in your class?

I start by saying that the experiential approach makes students the self-makers of their learning. Studying becomes reliable if they perceive that what "they are studying" implies their valuable action. The students are put to the challenge of discovering the content and the concepts through their personal reasoning, breaking up and building up the linguistic materials pre-arranged by the teacher. Moreover, they should be able to realize which linguistic register or tone to choose and which linguistic functions to promote for getting a pragmatically logical speech act. In doing so, they work out and elicit all the communicative functions linked with the macro-categories of the following list:

list of the macro-categories

- ☐ Hypothesis and suppositions
- ☐ Links between cause and effect
- ☐ Sequence of facts
- ☐ Comparisons and oppositions
- ☐ Analysis and synthesis
- ☐ Inference of implied contents
- ☐ Transfer from other contexts or subjects
- ☐ Interpretation and personal conclusion

Within those macro-categories, the students explore and investigate the linguistic expressions and the chunks relevant to the following speech acts and the linguistic functions:

SPEECH ACTS AND LINGUISTIC FUNCTIONS

- **Hypothesizing**
- **Classifying**
- **Comparing**
- **Exemplifying**
- **Describing**
- **Sequencing and ordering**
- **Defining**
- **Expressing cause/effect, degree**
- **Expressing reasons, results, conclusions**

Summary

This teaching pathway introduces a mock-module about self-assessing by the side both of the teacher and the students at some stages of the learning/teaching tasks. It points out how to handle with checklists at some stages of the teaching/learning process, even if it does not pretend to be exhaustive in all its steps and development.

Following the format and the strategies suggested by action-research, it focuses on the treatment of data from some checklists or grids, meanwhile the practice of the four integrated skills persists deeply in the oral interaction.

Based on today's social problems and conditions of poorness due to unemployment, the content topic is launched by A. Blaac's song "I need a dollar" and is expanded by using some tasks about social and human rights. Transversal strategies and references to other subjects are practical and valid.

Step 2

Description

Target class

II year of I Biennio of the secondary school, linguistic level A2+/B1 of the European Framework.

Final goal

The student can talk in English as an independent user (B1) about some social problems (unemployment and social rights), highlighting differences and similarities among different countries.

Time

6 hours.

Key competence to be developed

1. for learning to learn the students can:

- get hold of a learning method based on appropriate study skills;
- improve their studying strategies anchored in observation, classification, rounding up and expansion of contents;
- interpret tables, graphs, drawings, etc.;
- adopt learning skills to infer and generalize linguistic models or a deeper content and message.

2. for interpreting the information and for allocating linguistic-communicative links and relationships the students have to:

- learn linguistic devices to increase their communicative competence up to the B1/B2 level of the EF;
- consolidate their awareness of the learning strategies and of their capability to transfer methods and techniques from other subjects;
- communicate, cooperate and take part in groups responsibly and improve their oral communication by the interaction among peers;
- be aware of the metacognitive systems so as to enhance a reliable self-assessment.

Communicative pre-requisites

In order:

- to speak about the content of the unit – Unemployment and social rights;
- to comment on and to discuss some pictures or images from a video with simple but correct language;
- to assume a personal thought respect to the documents with peers;

the students have:

- to understand and talk in English;
- to make hypothesis, to plan their speech, infer meanings of unknown words;
- to use cohesive devices to underline the logical sequence of their talking.

ITC competences for the teacher and for students

In order to search for information, to write texts, for self-learning, for writing checklists and planning what to do and to say, the teacher and the students have:

- to be familiar with the computer or tablet pads and with managing MP3;
- to become familiar with the internet tools and with 2.0 sites, such as YouTube, Dropbox by Google, Moodle and other LIM devices, etc.;
- to create slides with Power Point and share them.

Techniques to support speaking

Interactive and social-oriented:

- role-play/simulation in debate performances;
- manipulation of texts.

Oral explanatory and individual presentation:

- demonstrating;
- responding;
- explaining;
- replication.

Promoting several communicative functions:

- discussing one's own point of view
- giving explanations;
- asking questions;

- proposing ideas;
- arguing;
- accepting, etc.

Study skills and metacognitive checklists.

Lesson plan

Step 1	1 h	Introducing the topic and awareness raising.
Step 2	2 h	Practising language and content through the integrated skills.
Step 3	2 h	Fostering extensive oral production and rounding up the content in a debate performance.
Step 4	1 h	Assessment and achievement test.


Task 1 – Introducing the topic and awareness rising


What the teacher does

The teacher makes the students aware of the aims to be achieved here and of the vocabulary linked with the content (metacognitive aspect and scaffolding); he/she posts them in the class-forum (or hands out a leaflet if there is not a computer in the class) where he introduces the new items. This is advisable for saving time in the presentation of the lesson, to appeal the students' curiosity, to make the comprehension easier of the texts the students are going to work on. The class-forum could be created either in DROPBOX by Google or it could be suitable to create an account in ZOHODOC, a very friendly application to save and share documents online.

Some of the new words could be presented in a pyramidal graph, wherein some blank spaces and missing letters could create curiosity in the students' mind and could be a scaffolding material.

Some examples for the handout or for the online forum of the Moodle platform DOC or in any on line sharing application:

Aims	At the end of the module you have to talk in English about unemployment and its causes and consequences, highlighting differences and similarities among some countries worldwide.
Time	6 classes
Materials	Your book Your folder Your pen-drive Internet
Key words and New words	

 unemployment di giovanna claudio - venerdì, 17 gennaio 2014, 19:39	
Aims	At the end of the module you have to talk in English about unemployment and its causes and consequences, highlighting differences and similarities among some countries worldwide .
Time	6 classes
Materials	Your book Your folder Your pen-drive Internet
Key words and New words	Unemployment, Anguish, Anxiety No work, to reap, to sow, glitter, job hunting troublesome, load, disappointment buddy, democracy, poorness, equality, rights, discrimination derightsequality,

The teacher warms up the class by starting a discussion which elicits mental images and possible situations linked with the semantic area of the content topic – unemployment and social rights. Here the aim is to start a

brain storming, which is informal from the linguistic point of view and symmetrically balanced on the level of the class/teacher humanistic relationship. This is essential to create a positive and energetic atmosphere for a participative interaction; in fact the teacher poses simple questions in the form of the “cold call questions” (asking simple quick questions randomly to each student) to be sure that everyone is involved and he/she tracks a mind map writing on the LIM and using a proper program such as CMap or FreeMap, just to name a couple. To create worksheets, the teacher could use an online worksheet generator *Quickworksheets*.

Furthermore, any grammar or linguistic mistake is admitted in order to let the communication flow. After this first approach to speaking, the teacher gets the point of the class-situation through the completion of the following Checklist for a metacognitive analysis of the teacher’s behaviour.

Points of thought for the teacher	My answers
What I do not admit from my students is ...	
What I do which makes easier their studying	
What I do matches with what I would do	
How I can monitor my doings during the class	
How I can revise my doings during the class	
How the students act during the class	
How they could study at home	
Which experience the students have of the school-work	

What the students do

All of the students take the double role of speakers and listeners and not in a passive receptive way, because they are the makers of the learning acts in the classroom which is a *workroom*. They work all together on

scaffolding tasks; they help each other in solving the tasks and make use of their tablet pads or some computers to work on, otherwise they write on leaflets given by the teacher:

- answering to the teacher's cold questions;
- taking notes about some new words or new sentences;
- create family word-trees, graphs or maps;
- drag and drop the new words from a list in order to remember them accurately.

Examples of the tasks for the group-work.

- Read the list of the words in the pyramid and tick the ones you know; discuss with your friends the words you do not know and add other words linked with the topic area.
- Focus on the key words and build up a map on the computer; then send it to the class forum and save it in the folder in the ZOHO APP.
- Drag and drop the words in the mind map
- What is the word that does not fit in?

The class ends by watching and listening to the video from YouTube: *I need a dollar*, official video HQ.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iR6oYX1D-0w&feature=youtu.be>

This song fits well with the topic of the module and it could be the starting point for the activities in the following steps.

At home the students think about their attitude towards the teaching-learning section following the headings in the *Checklist for a metacognitive analysis of the student's attitude*.

Points of thought for the students	My answers
What I do not like about my teacher is ...	
What I do to make my studying easier is...	
What I do at school matches with what I would do	

How I can monitor my doings during the class	
How I do my homework	
How I can monitor myself when I do my homework	
My opinion about my doing homework is ...	

Task 2 - Practising language and content through the integrated skills

What the teacher does

The teacher sets up the situation in which the students might be able to speak by allowing them to work at their own pace and elicit their own participation, their talking and interaction. At this step, the aim is to practise the new words and the items through some tasks which support even the weak students. The teacher plans the activities to be covered at this section and follows the points in the following checking list in order to have an overall view of things before starting the lesson:

A reminder of the actions before a speaking practice class	YES	NO
▪ To Plan all the linguistic materials accurately in order to save time		
▪ To Plan scaffolding materials for speaking		
▪ To Think to give all the students opportunities to do practical things		
▪ To Schedule time so the students have the space and the opportunity to speak in real linguistic performances		
▪ To Give the students occasions and moments to be aware about their way of speaking, investigating their procedures and approach to speaking		
▪ To Consider the students' mistakes as the starting point for learning		
▪ To Prepare clear rubrics for each task		
▪ To Prepare a grid to note down the students' difficulties and the linguistic expressions avoided by them in speaking		
▪ To Prepare grids for an informal check (while checking)		

Since the main aim is to get the students speak, then the teacher should talk as less as possible during the practice activities and he/she intervenes at the end with his/her contributions. The system is:

1. the teacher introduces and makes the students familiar with the activities;
2. the students do the activities supervised at a distance by the teacher;
3. the teacher gets conclusions and feedback.

However, it is difficult for a teacher to be short-spoken in a speaking class, because the students are lazy or weak speakers and so he/she could easily intrude on their time of speaking.

A checklist to monitor the teacher's attitude could be:

Items	Yes	No	Notes
I talk first.			
I use an informal English.			
I always speak English.			
I always speak Italian.			
I speak Italian only if it is necessary.			
My talking time in introducing the class is too long.			
I start with a dialogue.			
I comment on how many students are working in English properly.			
I have planned fully interactive tasks.			
I have planned scaffolding aids.			
I comment in Italian.			
I comment in English.			

A helpful aid used to think over the teacher's actions self-assessment is the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL). Even if the document has been thought for student teachers, it is suitable for experienced teachers, too, because it offers a pathway to the professional observation.

An example of a self assessment grid from it follows (EPOSTL:2012, pg. 21).

EPOSTL		SELF ASSESSMENT
A.	Speaking/Spoken Interaction	
1.	I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in speaking activities.	<input type="text"/>
2.	I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners of differing abilities to participate.	<input type="text"/>
3.	I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners to express their opinions, identity, culture etc.	<input type="text"/>
4.	I can evaluate and select a range of meaningful speaking and interactional activities to develop fluency (discussion, role play, problem solving etc.).	<input type="text"/>
5.	I can evaluate and select different activities to help learners to become aware of and use different text types (telephone conversations, transactions, speeches etc.).	<input type="text"/>
6.	I can evaluate and select a variety of materials to stimulate speaking activities (visual aids, texts, authentic materials etc.).	<input type="text"/>
7.	I can evaluate and select activities which help learners to participate in ongoing spoken exchanges (conversations, transactions etc.) and to initiate or respond to utterances appropriately.	<input type="text"/>
8.	I can evaluate and select various activities to help learners to identify and use typical features of spoken language (informal language, fillers etc.).	<input type="text"/>

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What the students do

This is a two hour class. The students consider the scaffolding materials given by the teacher:

- list of the functions they are going to practise and a grid to be filled in with the communicative expressions (new or known but to be revised), for example:

List of functions	Communicative expressions (exponents)	New Words	Words to be revised
Hypothesizing			
Classifying			
Comparing			
Exemplifying			
Describing			
Sequencing and ordering			
Agreeing / Disagreeing			
Expressing cause/effect, degree			
Expressing reasons, results, conclusions			

- the lyric of the song is in a folder or as an attachment in the group-page of the Zoho App, for example:

The screenshot shows the Zoho Accounts interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Profilo', 'Impostazioni', and 'Gruppi'. The 'Gruppi' section is active, displaying a list of groups. The group 'liceo linguistico IIBL' is listed with the description 'worksheets and homework' and 1 member. The interface includes a sidebar for user profile management and a main content area for group management.

Logo	Nome del gruppo	Descrizione	Membri	Azioni
	liceo linguistico IIBL	worksheets and homework	1	Invita Modifica Elimina

- The running order of the tasks to be accomplished with clear and simple rubrics and the clear statement that they have to speak in English could be shown on the desktop of the LIM and sent to the class forum; for example:

Tasks to be done Speak in English, please!	Mode	Medium	Time
1. Go to YouTube to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iR6oYX1D-0w&feature=youtu.be Watch the video, grasp the general meaning of the song and take some notes about the singer's main problem.	In pairs	Tablet/computer	5 minutes
2. Go on the internet and look for the lyric of the song. Then follow the instruction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • save it on the desktop in a doc. file; • read the text • highlight with a red line what the singer needs • highlight with a green line why he is in trouble • etc. etc. 	In pairs	Tablet/computer	20 minutes
3. Draw a content map with CMap or any tool you know best. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save it and share with your classmate in the class-forum; write a comment about your impression. 	In group of 4 people	Tablet/computer	10 minutes
4. Homework: set up a list of points for a class-discussion about the content of the song. 5. In the video there are	Individual	Tablet /leaflet	The time you need to think over

many techniques to support
the song; choose a key
moment and comment on it.

For example, **SmartDraw**:



Task 3

What the teacher does

Starting from the assumption that learning is effective whenever it is linked to the learner's factual participation, the teacher's action plays on the students' feeling of self-awareness at this stage. In few words the teacher takes into account that the learners are apt to use their restricted code even because they are strongly influenced by their mother tongue, by shyness when talking to the whole class, by linguistic uncertainty due to a limited knowledge of lexis. Therefore, the teacher has to train them in

practising common communicative sentence-patterns, so the linguistic chunks become a stored language and not a short term learning.

This step aims at eliciting the students' speaking autonomy, therefore the teacher invites them to be as autonomous in speaking as possible; he/she arranges supporting tools both for monitoring studying skills and for working on the expansion of the content. Metacognitive checklists for the students are put together with a list of speaking activities which occur in sequence:

Speaking Tasks	Suggestions
Small group discussion	No more than 5 people.
Student-guided discussions	One is the leader and gives the inputs for the discussion.
Role-plays and simulations in debate performances	Elicit real situations and information gaps.
Information gap discussion in debates	Each student in the group has a card with a part of the information necessary to complete the task. Students must work together and share information to build up a content table.
Feed-backing.	Students share their work and comment on each others to get/ give feedback and also learn critical analysis skills.

What the students do

Students are required to talk about the content topic to the class paying special attention to:

- their language proficiency;
- the plan of their oral presentation;
- the use of adequate linkers for a logical sequencing;
- a reliable content presented through a free spoken language (language in action) and an adequate grade of information gaps.

Here are a few examples of some possible tasks to foster or extend the oral production either as class activities or homework.

Moreover, a great impulse is given to the **debate performance**, since that technique is well adapting to foster the students' competence in negotiation and awareness in the social interaction, mainly in oral communication. It is remarkable to the teacher to structure a frame for the debate in order to avoid confusion or a scrambled talking; so that he draws the students' attention to the main parts of a debate:

- **Introduction:** presentation of the general topic and of the message conveyed by that topic;
- **Rebuttal:** supporting the positions of the pros and cons in the debate and discussion of the points
- **Round up:** meditating on and evaluating one's own position vs. the opponent's one.

Task 1

Download from Youtube another version of the song and explain:

- the reasons of your choice;
- the message of the video;
- the main artistic devices of the video.

Task 2

- Choose an article about the situation of work in another European country from the web.
- Plan a pros and cons performance for a debate with your classmates.
- Outline the introductive speech, the development of the rebuttle, the conclusive report.
- Support your discussion with a map and a graph.

About debate in the ESL Classroom:

INDIRE

<http://www.indire.it/content/index.php?action=read&id=1825>

TESOL Tutorial on Teaching Speaking Skills - Debating in the ESL Classroom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaE472sOvZ0>

Teaching Speaking Skills: Debates in The ESL Classroom

<http://how-to-teach-english.ontesol.com/teaching-speaking-skills-debates-in-the-esl-classroom/>

Doable Debate in the ESL/EFL Classroom

<http://www.slideshare.net/Hikarigaoka/doable-debate-in-the-eslefl-classroom-3599139?related=1>

Debate format

http://www.niu.edu/facdev/resources/guide/strategies/classroom_debates.pdf

Task 3

Plan a Power Point presentation of one of the following topics:

- if you were an unemployed young man or girl, which problems do you face? Which solutions would you propose?
- if you were an unemployed father, which problems would you face?
- if you were an Italian governor, what would you do to help young people?

Task 4

Simulate in a group of four a UE commission working on young people's unemployment in Europe. One of you is the president of the commission, so he leads the discussion. Debate about that topic.

Task 5

Imagine you have invited A Blaack to give a performance of some of his songs to your class. What songs would you ask him to sing and why do you think they would appeal to your classmates?

Task 6

You are a reporter and you are presenting a short talk about youth unemployment as part of a radio programme. Mention the name of the radio show and of your four guests.

When they are working on their own at home, they tick the points in the following checklist:

What I have to do at home for my speaking training	✓
• I have to read and study the material in order to be prepared for the class-discussion.	✓
• I have to draw a concept map about the content of the text.	✓
• I have to learn the new words in the text.	✓
• I have to reflect on the points under discussion.	✓
• I have to highlight the main points which match with my ideas.	✓
• I have to highlight the main points which do not match with my ideas and explain why.	✓
• I have to be ready to answer some questions about the text and give personal comments to contribute to the class discussion.	✓
• I have to review and sum up the key ideas and talk about the multiple viewpoints through my speech.	✓

Task 4 - Assessment and achievement test

What the teacher does

At this stage, the teacher has the response if his/her teaching actions have been effectively planned and if they have induced an increase in the level of the students' learning. The measurement through scales or descriptive grids is compared with the aims and the goals fixed at the beginning of the teaching pathway. Furthermore, an honest feedback is

helpful not only for an open-minded discussion with the class, but also to enable long-term benefits for the teacher him/herself and the class, let's say "a double side feedback", that is the same fulfilled both by him/her and the students.

In my opinion the students	YES	NO	HOW MANY
Can understand the task/the question			
Can answer properly			
Can talk using full sense sentences			
Can recognize time sequences in the speech act			
Can use other items or sentences for words they do not know			
Can use extra-linguistic codes to substitute expressions they do not know			
Can ask for the meaning of those words they do not know			
Can explain the meaning of a word			
Can deduce the meaning of an unknown word from the context			
Can ask for help from classmates			
Can ask for help from the teacher			
Can write notes as an help for their discussion			

Activate the following cross-curricular competences			
Activate these compensative strategies in speaking			

In the end, by cross controlling the data, the teacher could get information about:

- what he/she did during the class;
- what the students did during the class;
- the comments by the students;
- his/her comments on the interaction students/teacher, students/students;
- the balance between his/her speaking and the students' speaking;
- the not well planned time;
- the not efficient task/s;
- etc, etc.

What the students do

The students work on a metacognitive level and fill in the following checklists:

I can	Yes ✓	No ✓	How many
Understand the task/the question			
Answer properly			
Talk using full sense sentences			

Recognize time sequences in the speech act			
Use other items or sentences for words I do not know			
Use extra-linguistic codes to substitute unknown expressions			
Ask for the meaning of those words I do not know			
Explain the meaning of a word			
Deduce the meaning of an unknown word from the context			
Ask for help from my schoolmates			
Asks for help from the teacher			
Write notes as a help for my discussion			
Activate the following cross-curricular competences...			
Activate the following compensative strategies in speaking			

As a final self-assessment the student could refer also to the items of the European Portfolio. There are many examples to choose from, but one of the most advisable is the PEL-Puglia, validated by the Council of Europe (n. 64.2004) and the Italian Ministry of Education. It is intended not only for secondary school students, but also for the use of language for specific purposes, for instance, the language of literature, of commerce, of tourism and also in a plurilinguistic vision.

Step 3

The teacher gets going with the procedures of monitoring and evaluating the results of the tasks which are aimed at promoting the students' speaking and interactive competence. For practical purposes, we could state that there is not a factual separation between the practice stage and the checking actions and the testing one; what makes the difference is:

- **the grade of the students' autonomy** in carrying out the tasks required in reference to his own communicative competence;
- the moment **wherein** the tasks are required to be performed.

At this moment, the checking activities verify not only the linguistic devices, but also how the content is conveyed through the integrated skills.

The support of images, graphs, etc. are a suitable reinforcement for the students' outcome. Furthermore, each test is introduced by the evidence of the aims and goals practised during the development of the teaching unit.

Communicative-linguistic general aims

- Check of the linguistic levels reached respect to the starting ones.
- Check of the speaking autonomy.
- Acquisition of the new words and communicative expansion.
- *Improving of the communicative interaction in context.*

Transversal goals

Students could make evident:

- the autonomous, orderly and efficient method of studying;
- the improvement of their study strategies and skills;
- the development of their abilities in analyzing, interpreting, summarizing different kinds of texts;
- the inference of rules and linguistic models from specific contents;
- the approach to written and oral texts supporting their awareness of the transversal knowledge;
- *their awareness in the metacognitive analysis of their competence.*

Operative abilities

Students can:

- face more and more complex communicative situations;
- show their learning of the content topic;

- identify the kernel of the content making hypothesis, observations, discussion;
- plan reading techniques, such as working on the general and detailed meaning ;
- infer meanings from the context;
- use connectors for sequencing while speaking;
- use paradigmatic features to make their language emotive during the interaction.

A final metacognitive checklist for the student

Final analysis	Your answers	Your notes
How many tasks did you get right?		
Did you have problems in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading the text; • in the new words or difficult vocabulary; • in understanding the questions of the tasks; • speaking; • calculation. 		
You were wrong because:		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you did not understand the text; • you did not understand a word; • you did not understand a structure; • you answered a question without thinking; • you did not have enough time to answer the questions; • you did not understand the instructions. 		
Do you think the result reflects your level?		
What can you do to improve your communicative competence?		
Etc. etc.		

An evaluation grid for the students' speaking performance - DEBATE

Indicators	Fair	Well	Sufficient	Average	Poor
<i>Linguistic competence</i>					
Linguistic awareness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar • Vocabulary • Cohesion 					
Appropriate register to the discussion of the content					
Accuracy and coherence					
Pronunciation and intonation					
Use of the paradigmatic features					
<i>Speaking performance</i>					
Speaking attitude and adequate behaviour during the debate					
Achievement of goals					
Awareness of the content					

Presentation of the content					
Correctness and broadening of information					
Coherence of rebuttal					
Transversal linkers and expansion					
Analysis and synthesis					
Critical and personal thoughts					
Participation of the team members in the rebuttal					
Creativity in the execution of the tasks					

RESOURCES

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Krashen, S. (1982) *Principles and Practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon Press, Oxford 1982.

Nunan, D. (1989) *Designing tasks for a communicative classroom*. Cambridge university press, Cambridge 1989.

Phillips, D., Burwood, S., Dunford, H. (1999) *Projects with young learners*. Oxford university press, Oxford 1999.

Websites

Adapting materials for mixed ability classes.

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/language-assistant/teaching-tips/adapting-materials-mixed-ability-classes>

Common European Framework of Reference for Language.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/common_European_framework_of_reference_for_language

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment.

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/elp/elp-reg/Source/Key_reference/Overview_CEFRscales_EN.pdf

Grammar points for each CEF Level.

http://www.examenenglish.com/CEFR/cefr_grammar.htm

Learning styles and teaching.

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/learning-styles-teaching>

Photographs.

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/lesson-plans/photographs>

Popplet for School: a tool to capture and organize your ideas.

<http://www.popplet.com>

Socialising 1: Breaking the ice.

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/lesson-plans/socialising-1-breaking-ice>

Syllabus writing.

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/syllabus-writing>

The traditional and the holistic syllabus.

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/which-syllabus-traditional-holistic-syllabus>

SINTESI IN ITALIANO

La trattazione ha cercato, in estrema sintesi e senza alcuna pretesa di esaustività, di far emergere la costruzione del pensiero metacognitivo dell'alunno in una lezione di *speaking*, evidenziando:

- quanto sia stata promossa la consapevolezza dell'azione educativa orientata al contesto e in quale misura sia stata auto-correttiva;
- quali approcci, quali tecniche e strumenti abbiano contribuito al superamento o, eventualmente, revisione dei processi di apprendimento e autovalutazione in itinere;
- quanto l'azione dialogica e relazionale nella classe abbia fortificato i partner nella gestione della responsabilità dei ruoli e quali cambiamenti siano stati apportati dalle parti specialmente attraverso il *debate*.

Inoltre, abbiamo considerato alcune problematiche sull'efficacia dell'insegnamento desunte dalla raccolta dei dati, quali:

- strategie di insegnamento non adeguate al livello della classe;
- scarsa attenzione alle tecniche di apprendimento, dando per scontato il possesso da parte degli alunni delle strategie di studio (*study skills*);
- carenza di una programmazione ben organizzata;
- limitata o diversa percezione delle difficoltà incontrate dagli allievi;
- metri di valutazione alquanto soggettivi;
- coinvolgimento emotivo non adeguato;
- eccessiva velocità o limitata chiarezza nell'espone i messaggi di esecuzione di compito;
- ripetitività o non consequenzialità dei discorsi.

La raccolta e lo studio dei dati di input e output, pertanto, hanno verificato l'efficacia:

- delle realizzazioni dei piani didattici;
- del controllo delle variabili di tempo e risorse rispetto ai protocolli operativi stabiliti;
- della spiegazione del come e perché si è giunti a quel livello di performance;

- degli aspetti che hanno contribuito all'individuazione di punti di forza e margini di miglioramento del processo progettuale.

Si è desunto che, affinché la raccolta di dati e la documentazione siano adeguatamente affidabili è importante che:

- le informazioni ottenute non si limitino ai soli risultati, ma esplorino anche aspetti relativi a più settori;
- gli esiti della triangolazione siano interpretativi, oltre che valutativi;
- gli strumenti di raccolta dei dati siano diversificati per consentire uno studio diacronico e sincronico;
- i destinatari dell'osservazione e gli stessi osservatori siano molteplici: il/i docente/i, gli alunni, ecc.;
- i risultati siano trasparenti, condivisi e comprensibili per tutti, al fine di agevolare le future innovazioni di processo;
- i tempi di realizzazione siano consoni ai tempi sia dello sviluppo del progetto di apprendimento o modulo, che al tempo di studio della documentazione, in modo da consentire ogni possibile accomodamento del progetto in corso d'opera.

Il compito dell'insegnante si è configurato, in successione, come osservatore e osservato e orientato verso la consapevolezza di capacità nella creazione di strumenti per *insegnare ad apprendere in situazioni di interazione cooperativa degli alunni*.

L'utilità a livello formativo delle strategie di ricerca-azione si è riscontrata nella percezione dello sviluppo in progressione e, conseguentemente, nell'abilità del docente nel riuscire a trasformare la situazione problematica in un fattore di crescita.