

want to give just one example of one of the possible ways of getting somewhere near natural verbal interaction — by transferring communication in the classroom to the meta-level.

Communication on the meta-level can take place in different ways; it can deal with the language to be learned, with the way that language is taught, with the information conveyed in lessons and exercises, with the conditions of learning given by the institution which organizes the learning, with the interaction in the classroom between learners, and between learners and the teacher, etc.

Making a video-film in a foreign language can be one way of metacommunication which may soften the effects of the impossibility of natural communication in an artificial environment. We produced one as a normal part of the curriculum, replacing an audio-visual comprehension class for 2nd year students of German. It took us two terms.

It started off with a kind of brainstorming, producing all kinds of possible and impossible ideas. Finally a rough structure emerged: there should be a twenty-minute film, satirizing the German-Irish relationships and the curriculum of our department. A serious announcer should try earnestly to sell the supreme quality of education and the amazing knowledge Germans have of Ireland and vice versa, and should be contradicted by a set of small filmed reports which he shows in order to illustrate his points.

The initial enthusiasm was followed by a 'low': How to organize all these ideas? After that was overcome, students formed small interchanging groups and started writing parts of the script. The ensuing discussions were mainly in German; being forced to invent texts in German helped to keep the discussions about the scenes in German. Of course, as always with homogeneous groups, excursions into English were inevitable; they should be tolerated in order to avoid the feeling that this is just another form of forced verbal interaction in the foreign language.

In this phase topics were discussed which are relevant for every student of German and which often do not arouse interest when dealt with in a different context, e.g.:

- What typical clichés about Germany

(Ireland) are in the minds of Irish (German) people?

- What kind of literature is taught in our department?
- What kind of information about Germany do we get from this literature?
- Why does it happen that when a text from a German language teaching textbook is read in a non-classroom situation the immediate reaction of the student is to laugh?
- What are the implications of this regarding the authenticity of that teaching material?
- Why is language teaching often boring and ineffective?
- Why is there such a discrepancy between the students' experience in Germany and that in their German classroom?
- How to write satirically in German.

Thus there were topics dealing with the curriculum (literature and language) which could be regarded within the context of the video-film as natural topics which belonged to the shared experience of the participants.

After the script was written the actual production of the film produced more than enough opportunity for natural communication. As the different film sequences which contradicted the announcer had different directors, and everybody played different parts in different sequences, produced 'inserts', discussed the selection of music, told our camera-person the details of the different cuts, organized props, etc., there was always plenty to talk about. Apart from results which I consider to be of utmost importance, such as

- consolidation of the interaction in the group
 - relaxation of inhibitions to speak in the foreign language
 - reflection of one's own studies and especially the language learning and teaching,
- this approach to foreign language teaching involves the development and improvement of a variety of skills which are usually conveyed separately and are awarded less motivation from the students:
- writing a text in the foreign language for a given group of recipients (fellow students) and in a certain style
 - acting in the foreign language

- discussing socio-cultural topics and literature and language teaching from the viewpoint of their own experience
- talking naturally in the foreign language in order to get certain activities done (and not because it is a conversation class).

Talking together as a result of *doing* something together is more effective than conversations which just appear in the curriculum as the result of a change in foreign language teaching research towards communication, however well prepared and intended they are. The importance of *having fun by doing something together* — in an environment which is dominated by note-taking, examination preparations, etc. — for the improvement of foreign language learning should not be underestimated.

This example suggests that 'naturalness' in foreign language teaching does not necessarily mean: Take a natural, authentic scene from a German family in Berlin and transport it via teaching material into the classroom. On its arrival it can be very unnatural for the particular group of learners if it does not relate to their interests, knowledge, etc.

Stimulating curiosity by doing something unusual which in itself makes it necessary to use the foreign language, however, and which is related to the actual experience of the learner, might well produce a motivational framework in which different skills can be simultaneously developed.

Note
1. Rösler, D.: "Konversationsklassen." *Zielsprache Deutsch*, Heft 3, 1980, 2-10.

MAKING A VIDEO-FILM IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE — AN EXAMPLE FOR THE SIMULTANEOUS DEVELOPMENT OF SEVERAL SKILLS

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At a certain stage, foreign language teaching is inevitably bound to be confronted with a paradox: How to enable natural verbal interaction in an artificial environment which is determined by the constraints of institutionalized foreign language teaching. I have considered this problem in some detail elsewhere; here I