

Open-space Learning in Real World Contexts*

Workshop Practice: Thinking Aloud

1. Description

Stream-of-consciousness is a useful device for generating ideas and warming-up the voice. We have used this activity in work for student performers, literature students and academic staff. Firstly, you should ask participants to stand in a space of their own and think about a topic about which they can talk without hesitation, repetition or pause. Once you have given some examples you should re-assure the group that this is a collective task and they won't be exposed during the task ("we will all be speaking at the same time"). You should carry out this activity once through and listen to participant feedback before moving on. If the learning focus is on the use of voice and/or communication skills, then you could introduce a scale of intensity, modelling different choices but using the same text. Alternatively, you could suggest a topic relevant to your curriculum and use this high energy activity to liberate as many thoughts as possible on a given theme. Once completed, the students could then make a selection of more organised thoughts to present to the group or a partner.

2. Learning Possibilities

„Thinking aloud“ has proven particularly valuable to literary and philosophical workshops and we are currently exploring its transferability to other disciplines, e.g. psychiatry.

3. Examples

English Literature: Originally devised for a workshop on Samuel Beckett for students of Literature in the Modern World, this task activates various ideas about the relationship between language and meaning.

Teacher Training: We have used this activity when training academics and educators in experiential approaches to learning.

International groups: A central advantage of this activity is that it allows the student to use their own voice in the learning space without worrying about right or wrong answers. They should also be encouraged to use the language they feel close to in relation to the topic selected. This will highlight the international dynamics and language needs of the group.