

Strategic Interactions in the Language Classroom

Saturday 2 September 2023 10:00 (40 minutes)

“Role-plays and other simulation-style activities are often used in L2 classrooms to give students chances to practice their speaking skills in a variety of situations. However, most role-plays take the form of prewritten scripts and become exercises in reading more than actual communicative language use. There is a need for a different angle on the traditional role-play, to allow students to use language in ways that are authentic and spontaneous. This presentation will introduce the concept of strategic interactions (SIs), which are role-plays created with built-in conflicts based around scenarios, described by Di Pietro (1987) as a realistic happening involving the unexpected and requiring the use of language to be resolved. In real world settings, language must often be utilized to negotiate and persuade, with approaches adapted to keep the dialogue moving toward a conclusion. SIs mimic this by presenting clear roles and specific conflicts that require communication to reach a solution. They also add the element of dramatic tension and spontaneity, along with opportunities for students to collaborate and co-construct language. Four stages of using SIs will be described: 1) Planning, in which the teacher creates the roles, scenario, and materials for the activity, 2) preparation, in which students work together to think about the scenario and try to predict what kind of language they will need to navigate the situation, 3) performance, in which students make pairs of opposing roles and try to find a resolution, and 4) reflection, in which teachers give feedback and also help students to reflect on their own language usage with transcriptions of their performances. Finally, there will be a discussion of both the successes and challenges observed by the presenter in using these activities with 1st year students at a private medical university.

Di Pietro, R.J. (1987). Strategic Interaction. Cambridge University Press.”

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