**Report on a lesson with some active work forms - Sander Verwerft**

*After our visit to Amersfoort (Netherlands), I went back to Belgium with several idea’s on ‘active learning’, which I could use in the classroom. The school principals asked me to give an ‘open lesson’ in which other interested teachers could join to take a look at some work forms. I thought this was a nice way to learn from each other, so I accepted. This was a lesson in Latin in which we commented on a poem of Horace (Odes, I, 4). Four other teachers showed up to follow the lesson.*

**The lesson**

In the lesson I used four different active work forms. We started with the rhythm of the poem. Since it is a difficult job for students to know which syllables have the emphasis, I started by pounding the floor with my foot with every stressed syllable. The students had to stand up and needed to beat the floor together. Through this **sort of ‘dance’** they started to feel the rhythm of the archilochian verses, that start as dark and lofty verses, but end in a cheerful and frivolous way. This is very meaningful, because it is also the theme of the poem: the transition of winter to spring, the change of life and death. By starting the lesson with this ‘dancing’ on the rhythm of the poem, the students were activated and enthusiast to go deeper into the poem.

Thereafter, in a second work form, I asked the students to search the structure of the poem and divide the poem in pieces and think of the theme of every piece. I used ‘**placemats’** for this. First the students were divided in groups of three and they had three minutes to think individually on this question. During these three minutes, they needed to write their answers in the outter circle. When the time was over, they had five minutes to compare and discuss their individual answers. They needed to write their final answer in the middle of their placemat. At last, I asked a random student from every group to present their findings. For this work form, I projected a timer. So the students could see how much time was left.

Example of a placemat for groups of four

When we found the structure and themes, I turned to ‘**active questioning**’. I asked different smaller questions, on which the students could discuss for one minute (again with the timer) in the same groups of three. Then I always gave some random students a turn to report on the group’s answer.

Finally, I gave the students some **assertions on which they could agree or disagree**. The ones who agreed, needed to go to the left of classroom, the others to the right. When everybody was on the side they had chosen, I asked some students why they agreed or disagreed. So the pupils gave arguments pro and contra their selves and maybe even convinced the other students.

After the lessons, I asked the students and other teachers to fill in an evaluation of the lesson.

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| **Active work forms** | **Time** | **Curriculum goals (VVKSO – Latin – third grade)** |
| Introduction and ‘dance’ to feel the rhythm | 15 min | Goal 7: Distinguish text types and text genres through specific characteristics of texts, and use this distinction in the interpretation of the text. (SET 8, 14) |
| Placemat | 15 min | Goal 8: Analyze the structure of a text(fragment). (SET 4) |
| Active questioning | 10 min | Goal 8: Analyze the structure of a text(fragment). (SET 4)Goal 11: Recognize different types of information and use it in the interpretation of the text. |
| Assertions on which they could agree or disagree | 10 min | Goal 8: Analyze the structure of a text(fragment). (SET 4)Goal 13: Have a motivated opinion on the relation between the content of the text and its form. (SET 9, 15, 18)Goal 14: situate a fragment in the whole of the works of the author and of antiquity.  |

**Personal findings**

Because I wanted to use many different active work forms during one lesson (50 minutes), I was a little bit scared that it would become a little bit messy, but after all it turned out rather fun. I think it was a nice way to comment on a poem, because this is not really an exact science. It is important for the students to form an opinion and to give arguments for it. In this way, it was possible to learn from each other and maybe even find things which the teacher did not realize yet. I think active work forms are very usable for this kind of lessons.

On the other side, I would not have spend a full lesson on this subject, if I did not use active work forms. But I think it was worth the time, since the students were more involved during the lesson. I will use these different work forms more often in the future, especially when we comment on poems. I will, however, not always use these types of work forms, since I think that variation of work forms is the best to keep students interested.

**Comments of visiting teachers**

After the lesson, the teachers were rather enthusiast. They all said they had some useful ideas for lessons of their own. I asked them to write their pro’s and contra’s for every used work form. They were convinced that students would better remember the things they found their selves. Furthermore, they found it interesting that the students worked together on teams and that they learned to argue with each other, to get better solutions. By using a timer, the students were very focused on their task.

All teachers also had some remarks, mostly of a practical kind. One of the things they came up with, was that this lesson took more time than another lesson. This is true, but I think it is best to use one or two active work forms in the beginning or the end of a lesson. So the students are activated and more concentrated during the rest of the lesson. Another remark was that I had a small and calm class group. They were scared that this kind of lesson would become a chaos with bigger and noisier class groups. Another observation was that some classrooms in our school were too small for this kind of lessons.

However this lesson was for active work forms in the first place, the teachers were also interested in my use of the Ipad for projection. During the lesson, I used a PowerPoint to present the questions. When the students answered, I supported their findings by making notes on the Latin text, which I projected with the app Explain Everything. A third app I used was a timer. The teachers found it interesting how easy you can switch between these apps and how this can make a lesson more interactive.

**Comments of students**

I gave the students an evaluation form, with 6 closed question and 1 open question. On the closed questions, they needed to give a number from 1 to 5.

1 = I fully disagree with this assertion

2 = I rather disagree with this assertion

3 = I am not sure, I am neutral

4 = I rather agree with this assertion

5 = I fully agree with this assertion

 The six questions were:

1 I find an ‘active lesson’ like today more pleasant than a ‘normal lesson’

2 I can focus better during an ‘active lesson’

3 I feel more involved during an ‘active lesson’

4 I like it better when I can just sit down and the teacher offers me the content.

5 I think that I better remember the material after an ‘active lesson’

6 Sometimes we go to slow over answers that are obvious during an ‘active lesson’

Above that, I also asked their pro’s and contra’s on this type of lesson. Most students only came up pro’s. They found it more fun, they could get rid of their energy, were more focused and thought they would better remember the material. But some students noted that it was fun for one time and good for variation but not for every lesson, mostly because it was a bit more chaotic than other lessons.