

## **Literacy Project: Examples for Qualifying Reading Competency (Focus: Improving Reading Skills)**

Example: Feature – “Das Parfüm” (Patrick Süßkind)

### **1. Theoretical Background**

Starting point: *Teachers have to be professionals for teaching and learning.*

If competency means meeting the demands of a practical field (c.f. Wilke) in the sense of acquired skills which one can apply and thus act successfully in a certain area, with respect to the learner this can be thought of in the following way: Learners have to have acquired certain knowledge and skills (as individual potential) in a certain subject at a certain stage of learning. This means for the teacher that he/she has to be able to act appropriately and pedagogically with respect to the subject. Therefore, the following basic competence of a teacher can be derived: A teacher has to be able to open up the topic for the students and to open up the students for the subject.

Behind this formula are certain notions of learning and teaching.

On the basis of cognition theories, *teaching* is the ability to induce, organise, initiate, correct, and evaluate processes of learning. *Learning* is seen as a circular, active, and constructive process. Thus, learning can only be stimulated and accompanied, but not determined.

This means, the teacher has to constantly observe the balance between **It** (the topic), **We** (the group) and **I** (his/her individuality) in an educational environment. (c.f. R.Cohn, Themenzentrierte Interaktion)

This already implies that the following examples can only be of a stimulating character and have to be specially modified according to the concrete classroom situation.

Field of interest: Qualifying reading competency of disadvantaged students (or: upskilling persons)

Hypothesis: It can not be assumed that the virtue of reading patiently is not very well pronounced *only* for students who live in an environment where reading plays only a minor role. Therefore, we decided for the interactive approach to improve reading skills.

### Literacy/Improving reading skills: interactive approach

Reading is a cultural basic skill and is inevitable for participating in everyday life. It facilitates the acquisition of knowledge. Reading skills (handling texts) develop only in connection with interdisciplinary competencies and provide basic skills for other subjects, topics, and the whole lifestyle. Reading skills are developed throughout the process of socialisation in interaction with individual dispositions and situational conditions.

Reading skills include cognitive, emotional, motivational, and interactive (social) dimensions.

The interactive approach means the ability to communicate after reading a text by reifying the world of fictional text and the presentation of the results. (The process of interpretation is conducted by the group via visual, acoustic or physical techniques of presentation.) Thus, interaction can also be thought of as acting in a role (c.f. Goffman). The interactive approach demands tasks which are: varied, close to reality, offer a possible application to real life. Moreover, these tasks should require an intensive text analysis and improve the skills needed for further learning.

With respect to the interests of the learners and their individual goals in knowledge acquisition they have to design their own choreography/plan for the processes of

understanding texts, and their own activities – the quality and success of them can then be seen later in the presentation phase. The teacher gives only impulses, advice, etc. The manifold reasons for this approach are obvious. The most important three are outlined here:

- Contextualised tasks give room for positive experience, which become positive landmarks in the long-term memory and have a lasting effect on learning in general.
- The possible application to real life situations of a task leads to the formation of “intelligent”, linked up knowledge, which can be accessed and used even years later – this is in contrast with “inert” knowledge, a form of knowledge which is inaccessible once students have left school and is therefore useless.
- Fostering of self- and social competencies (with a mutual influence, co-ordination and co-operation between members of a group and the negotiation of meanings [e.g. of texts]).