Virtual Gaming Simulation (VGS) in the Teacher Training Program

Fostering Counseling Competences in L2 Teachers

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Teachers, let’s counsel language learners!

- Status quo: counseling learners as a “tailored approach” (O’Reilly, 2012, p. 440) for strategy instruction in L2 classrooms.
- Goal in the teacher training program: enabling preservice teachers through counseling competencies to promote students’ language learning autonomy.
- Implication: conceptualization of a theory-practice seminar, training preservice teachers in systemic-constructivist counseling before they conduct actual online coaching with school students.
- Seminar structure: blended learning
  - Asynchronous units (learning theories and strategies, learner variables, motivational theories, and the systemic approach)
  - Practice-oriented in-person lessons with a focus on self-reflection and exercises, in which the participants encounter the effect of systemic conversational techniques, and practice sentences from the counseling process

Argh, that’s challenging.

- Discrepancy between artificial role-plays during seminar sessions and actual, meaningful counseling sessions with children.
- Difficulty of promoting comprehensive reflection of conversational techniques in class.

Will VGS do the trick?

- The idea: creation of a virtual gaming simulation (VGS) via Branching Scenario of HSP of a counseling session where preservice teachers are guided through different conversation phases.
- VGS’s functionality: at meaningful moments during the simulation, the video stops, and the student – taking in the counselor’s perspective – is asked to consider and choose the most appropriate behavior towards the coachee from a pool of possible reactions. Subsequently, the resulting flow of the conversation will help them to evaluate the suitability of the reaction.
- Benefits: learning inductively and autonomously about the functionality of conversational techniques; expanding counsellors’ interactional scope as they begin to anticipate the consequences of their actions (Brookfield, 2017).
- Realization: development of a VGS prototype of a counseling session, including 18 single video clips and 4 branches in total.
- Implementation: Nov 22 – Feb 23: VGS in 4 counseling courses at the U of Bamberg: For homework, students were assigned to work their way through the VGS while filling in their observations and reflective thoughts on a worksheet.

What preservice teachers think of VGS

Quantitative evaluation of the application:
- N = 20 preservice teachers (6th semester) played the simulation and 18 (17 female) took part in the online survey.
- Interest scales: the VGS triggered (M=3.3; SD=0.7) and maintained (M=3.0, SD=0.9) situational interest (Siedel et al., 2022, 4-point scales). In addition, the participants found that the simulation promoted their topic interest (Staudinger, 2000), 6-point scale; M=4.8; SD=1.3).
- Finally, preservice teachers assessed the perceived utility of the VGS positively.

Qualitative in-class evaluation:
- 🌟 “motivating”, “activating”, enjoyment of autonomous learning process and the choice of possible reactions.
- Room for improvement: Even deeper level of interactivity, longer video sequences for observation purposes, and some rearrangements of the application’s settings.

Sources


Time consuming: 2 hours each.

Tbd: The future of VGS

- Conclusion: VGS in counseling seminars provide a promising way for preservice teachers to gain close to practical experience in a protected setting without harming the school student body. With VGS, they feel better prepared for actual counseling sessions than through mere role-playing.
- Further development of the application necessary
- Time-consuming shooting of the video clips
- Sustainability of the application: ease of implementing the application in other courses.
- Attractive teaching method: for psychological counseling skills not only at university, but also during all phases of the teacher-training program.