Individualized categories of verbal reports in think-aloud classroom tasks

Anna Michonska-Stadnik
University of Wroclaw, Poland

Introspection is one of the most popular qualitative research methods in psychology and it consists in asking participants to report verbally on their cognitive and/or emotional states while performing a specific task or activity (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 53). In second language acquisition studies introspection is frequently used to observe and analyse learners’ mental processes while being engaged in a language task. This type of research has an interdisciplinary character as it employs data gathering techniques used primarily in social sciences. Such verbal reports, either audio- or video-recorded, are often referred to as talk-alouds (Ericsson & Simon, 1993). The collected data, often quite extensive, must be then analyzed and categorized in order to define learners’ mental and emotional states. Different sets of categories for coding talk-alouds have been proposed, e.g. monitoring, signaling, elaborating, reasoning (Brown and Lytle, 1988).

This paper presents an analysis of the recorded set of talk-alouds done by secondary-school students during a translation task from L2 (English) to L1 (Polish). Apart from categories suggested in different coding schemes for verbal protocols, some new categories emerged, e.g. abandoning the message, commenting on other students’ work, asking for help, planning for task, and many others. They reveal a wide spectrum of learners’ emotional states which may contribute to a better understanding of task demands, classroom interaction patterns, and may allow to broaden the repertoire of coding categories in talk-alouds analysis.


Keywords: coding, introspection, talk-alouds.