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Creating a (Language) Learning Community in the Literature Classroom

The very nature of communicative language instruction generally requires students to react rapidly in their public voice from the beginning, rather than develop thoughts and ideas before speaking. In fact, by being prompted to communicate orally, students are asked to risk an educated guess or venture into unfamiliar linguistic territory, which can be a potentially stressful undertaking. Although they use their inner voice to prepare for outer voice communication in their L1, language students are usually not encouraged to cultivate an inner voice in their L2. Tomlinson (2000, 2001) therefore has suggested that instructors train students to use their inner voice as part of their target language communication and advised postponing language production activities and providing exercises or projects, thereby encouraging learners to talk to themselves before communicating with others. This approach, of course, routinely requires silence in the language classroom—a concept that makes many language instructors intensely uncomfortable.

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