

## COUNSELLING AS A TOOL TO SATISFY THE ACADEMIC NEEDS OF DIVERSE LEARNERS



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**Abstract:** Counselling has impacted unprecedentedly many people. This professional relationship between the counsellor and the clients has entered a great number of domains including education. The article is designed to promote counselling integration in TEFL. In the rationale, the importance of counselling is thrown light on. Being analytical research, it underlines the similarities between counseling and teaching. They both encourage the clients to continue their path and look for opportunities to gain independence. The strategy that can empower Generation Z and Alpha with counselling and language skills and develop dispositions is the Socratic Seminar. The paper describes the adjusted Socratic Seminar implementation at the classes of English. Going through all the stages, the learners are exposed to collaborative work and, consequently, the assigned counsellor facilitates the understanding of the counselee. This strategy helps the teacher to make the class academically homogeneous.

**Key words:** counselling, Socratic Seminar, English, academically diverse learners

Counselling is a strategy that has been used for centuries. It is an act of helping and trust of a person to another one and, at the same time, it is an educational tool to support learning. It is a facilitating process that will lead to the educational, vocational and socio personal development and growth of the learner [4]. In schools, counsellors are indispensable as they assist self-growth of pupils and help them to become self-fulfilled and well-adjusted adults. Egbo (2013) mentions that the development of a child can only take place in a setting conducive for teaching and learning. The counselling services, in this respect, promote

learning and teaching and create a foundation for the training of the life skills.

### **Rationale**

Counselling aims at supporting learners. These face-to-face therapies require certain skills from the lead. The International Career Institute mentions the following vital skills a counsellor should possess: communication skills, interpersonal skills, patience, trustworthiness, research skills, observation skills, problem-solving skills, reasoning skills, and computer skills. Tracing a parallel, it is to underline that the above-mentioned idea characterizes the teaching profession. Additionally, the strong connection between counselling and teaching is supported by another fact. Historically, teachers provided with counselling services. Some most important examples are Plato and Socrates. Socrates was Plato's teacher and counsellor.

The aim of counselling in schools is to motivate students to continue their educational path and to look for opportunities to gain independence. The specific objectives are:

#### **-To contribute to the realization of students' potentialities.**

The most important purpose of education is to explore the potentialities of students. The counsellor assists the students to distribute the energies correctly into the provided opportunities.

#### **-To assist children with problems.**

Every single child might go through difficult times in the learning process. The counsellor pays more attention to the 'pupil in need' and helps him to resolve the problem encountered.

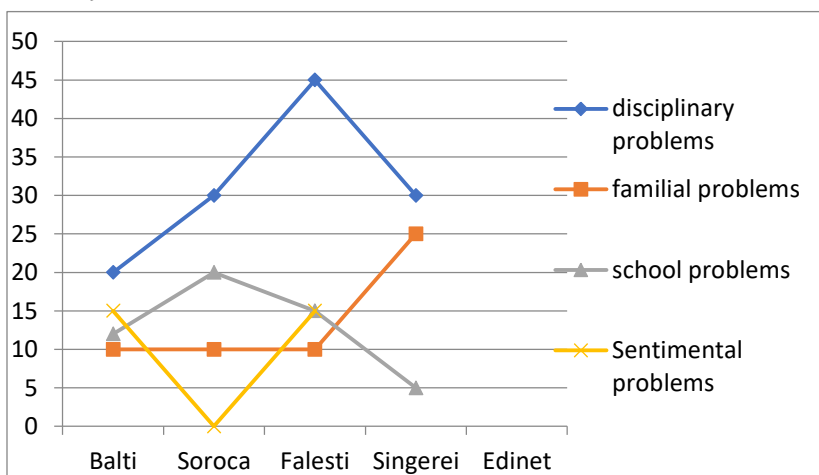
#### **-To contribute to the adjustment of students into the learning environment.**

The counselor maintains a cooperative relationship between school and student (Gibson, 2009 cited in Lunenburg, 2010).

The recent study focusing on elucidating tangible characteristics that unite teaching and counselling says that these two professions solve the same types of problems. Among the cited ones are: school problems, familial problems, problems of sentimental nature, identity and self-

knowledge problems, disciplinary problems, and preconceptions [2, p.1083]. Referring to Moldova, the teachers of English and the counsellors from five high schools from the Northern part of Moldova (Singerei, Falesti, Soroca, Balti and Edinet) reported that the most frequent problems encountered by their students are:

Diagram 1. The most frequent problems students encounter (data provided by counsellors)



The modest data underlines the idea that the most frequent problems stated are disciplinary and school ones. In this vein, it is to remark that both teachers and students themselves can solve these problems. The only condition is to train these counselling skills.

## Description

The present research is an analytical one. This means that a problem will be stated and some limited analysis will be presented. The research questions formulated are as follows:

Can the students be exposed to the development of counselling skills?

What techniques should be used to develop counselling skills at the learners at the classes of English?

The hypothesis that summarizes the investigation is that ‘the counselling skills can be trained at the classes of English’ and, consequently, students will support each other throughout the learning process. This fact will contribute to the development of life skills of

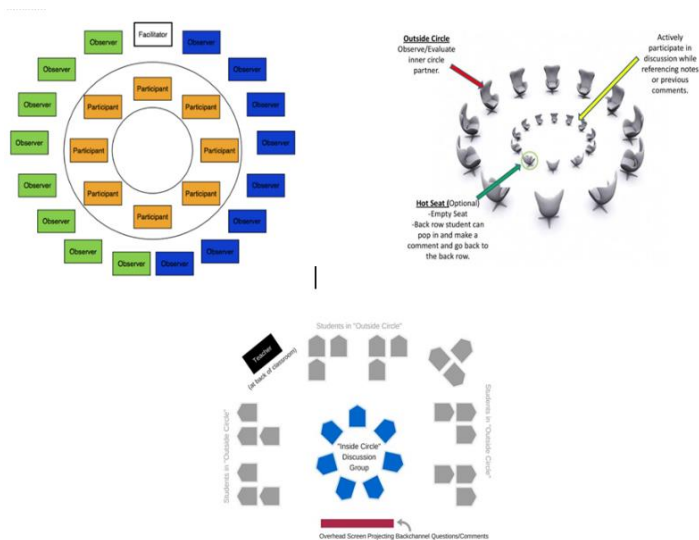
each individual and will develop humane dispositions such as empathy, perseverance, resilience.

Teaching is a transformative process; it is to bring a positive change in the life of any individual. One of the most efficient student-led strategies that can be used with a double objective: (1) to develop dispositions and counselling skills and (2) to develop language skills at the classes of English is the Socratic Seminar.

Rooted in the conversations Socrates had with disciples, Socratic seminar is defined differently by a number of scholars. Billings and Roberts (2006) underline that the Socratic Seminar is an instructional method that targets at facilitating understanding through active discussions. Socio (2015) attributes to the Socratic Seminar an additional characteristic; that one of inquiry. Kessels (2009) believes that ‘it is a collective deliberation of ideas aiming to achieve consensus on the answers to fundamental questions’ [3].

The procedure of the Socratic Seminar implementation resumes to four stages: (1) planning, (2) questions creation, (3) setting inner and outer circles, (4) simulation. The simulation can be made in different forms. Below there are only a few classroom set-ups to be used.

Picture 1. Classroom set-ups for the SS



The second element to consider is types of questions. These questions refer to the Bloom's Taxonomy. In this respect, Saran and Neisser (2004) point to the following questions to be asked when the Socratic Seminar is used:

- Clarification questions (remember level);
- Clarification of concepts questions (understand level);
- Probing evidence questions (apply level);
- Implication and consequence questions (create level).

### **Personal Contribution**

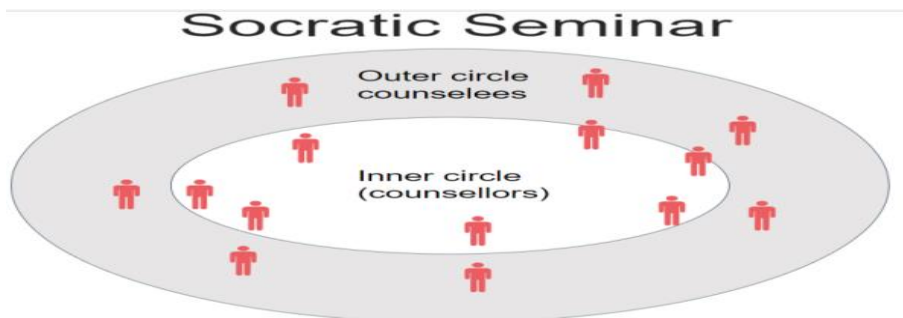
I am sure that this educational strategy can help at achieving the goal under the condition that the traditional form is adjusted to synchronize with the objectives. I have adjusted the traditional structure of the Socratic Seminar to the English class objective – training the language skills – and the development of the counselling skills at the learners. The procedure consists of four stages:

#### **-information presentation**

This is a mandatory stage at a class of English. It generally relates to a certain domain. The learners get familiar with certain information, included in a fiction excerpt, an informative text, a dialogue, or a video.

#### **-pair work counselling**

Following the class set-up presented in *Picture 2.*, the counselors, those learners with a higher English language proficiency, facilitate the understanding of the counselees, the learners that are behind the curriculum requirements.



Picture 2. Adjusted traditional structure of the SS

### **-back-and-forth exchange**

The counselees are active respondents. The four types of questions are asked by the counsellors.

### **-feedback**

Critical analysis of the work is made by both counselors and counselees.

Coming to a detailed planning, the adjusted Socratic Seminar looks as follows:

#### **Stage 1.**

The teacher presents the content that refers to the social domain. This text makes a historical retrospection of the concept of ‘world web’. The text is informative and can be used for the A2 level of English language proficiency. The sample is submitted:

*Sir Tim Berners-Lee is the co-founder and CTO of Inrupt.com, a tech start-up which uses, promotes and helps develop the open source Solid platform. Solid aims to give people control and agency over their data, questioning many assumptions about how the web has to work. He is a Director of the World Wide Web Foundation which was launched in 2009 to coordinate efforts to further the potential of the Web to benefit humanity.*

*Sir Tim graduated from Oxford University, invented the Web in 1989. He wrote the first web client and server in 1990.*

*He is also a Professor in the University of Oxford, UK. He is President of London's Open Data Institute.*

*In 2001 he became a Fellow of the Royal Society. He has been the recipient of several international awards including the Japan Prize, the Prince of Asturias Foundation Prize, the Millennium Technology Prize and Germany's Die Quadriga award.*

*In 2017, Sir Tim was awarded the Turing Prize for inventing the World Wide Web, the first web browser (Credit: [Tim Berners-Lee \(w3.org\)](https://www.w3.org/))*

#### **Stage 2.**

This is the counselling stage. The form is pair work. The assigned counsellor helps the counselee to read the text and fill in the provided worksheet:

- #1 Summarize the text in no MORE THAN 3 sentences.
  - #2 Write down three phrases that have caught your attention.
  - #3 Knowledge-based information (draw, talk, sing).
- Draw the 'world web'.  
 Describe the 'world web'.  
 Find words that rhyme with the word 'web'.

**Stage 2.**

The simulation starts. The counsellors, who do not move, ask questions and the counselees, who exchange opinions and places, answer the questions. The teacher provides the inner circle learners with samples of questions. Every counselee gets two questions to be expressed opinion on.

**Stage 3.**

Evaluation is an integral part of the counselling and learning process. The counselee comes to the counsellor that has assisted him in Stage 2. and they evaluate their level of comprehension and performance.

Criteria	Evaluation	Self-evaluation
Attempt to share the opinion at least once (20 points)		
Use the details from the text for support (20 points)		
Use of analytical language / In my opinion; I believe (10 points)		
Speak clearly (5 points)		

The findings are spoken out to class.

## Conclusion

Counselling and teaching are two professions that share the same goal. They aim at making a positive change in the lives of learners or those involved in these processes. Generation Alpha and Z are those learners who believe that knowledge is equivalent with the experience they get. Moreover, big companies look for soft skills at their employees and these are, namely, those that we have to train at these learners together with teaching content. Unfortunately, today's generation of pupils have diverse academic performance, and an X class will not be homogeneous at all. The teacher has to deal with: (1) training the hard skills, (2) training the soft skills, and (3) reaching academic homogeneity in class.

Our job as educators is to satisfy their necessities fulfilling our primary job – teaching. When formulating the first research question, acknowledging the tough job of an educator, I realized that there is a necessity to choose a strategy that will not interfere with the development of language skills, but will contribute at making a positive change in every single learner. The Socratic Seminar reveals the great internal potential of learners, their dispositions are refreshed and the educational goals are attained. The usage of this strategy at the classes of English offers the possibility to every learner to get the experience s/he needs to be 'attractive' (to possess soft skills) on the labor market and to be a community-driven citizen.

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