This is the accepted version of a paper presented at 45th European Conference EERA/ ECER 2016 “Leading Education: The Distinct Contributions of Educational Research and Researchers” in Dublin, 22-26 August, 2016.

Citation for the original published paper:

Kraus, A. (2016)
To Explore the Pupil’s Thoughts and Experiences during the School Lessons: The “Auricle” as an Artificial Listener.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:lnu:diva-68314
To Explore the Pupil’s Thoughts and Experiences during the School Lessons - The “Auricle” as an Artificial Listener

Auricles are ear-shaped material objects made of silicone rubber with a built-in MP3-player one can put on and off without changing the shape of the auricle. The MP3-players are equipped with an integrated microphone, line-in recording, USB 2.0.

They will serve as instruments for research in a class of 6 – 7 year olds and of their teacher for the period of one week. Each child and teacher will be given an Auricle to use it as a confidential listening device in the classroom.

The project will take place in 4 schools and countries, in the UK (Sheffield), Sweden (Växjö), Turkey (Nevşehir) and Germany (Stuttgart). The study is a follow-up study as the Auricles have been used in the years 2006-2008 for 14 years old in four other countries, there is also data about 7-8 years old in a school in Berlin. Several publications deal with different topics (like learning strategies, habitus, suffering during school etc.).

The project deepens understandings of how classrooms operate as spaces and places of belonging, exclusion and identity construction. It contributes to awareness of the flow and flux of classroom interactions and patterns. It enables new accounts to be made of what matters to a teenager or, now, a child out of their perspective. One gets access to pupil’s views of themselves and others, curriculum, assessment, pedagogy and knowledge in ways which are not normally possible.

The involvement of the class teacher in the project is a radical way of enabling a more inclusive and participatory project to be shaped, also in didactical regards. My own study project focuses on their attentive practices, also in terms of the question how listening practices may be enhanced through children’s interaction with the Auricle.
New methodological avenues for Artistic Research to explore human-object trajectories across time, space and place are opened up (cp. Taylor). In the following I will unfold some methodological references, the Children´s Studies, Open Artwork, attentive practices and the Thinking Aloud Method.

**Children´s Studies**

Mainstream Educational Research generally is used to see a child as an ontological, social and psychological entity (cp. Hackl 2008). In the last decades this perspective learnt from the sociologically oriented Childhood Studies, examining the conditions of a “changed childhood” (cp. James & Prout 1997 et al.). Childhood is shewn as a construction depending on social, cultural and economic factors as well as being submitted to historical change. Children´s Studies widened this perspective by also referring to Human Rights, claiming that children have to be viewed in their fullness as human beings. This involves the presupposition of their ability to participate in shaping their own lives already at an early age. However, while adults perform models of maturity, adolescents undergo maturing. Children´s Studies thus aim at the investigation of the manifold conditions of being a child or teenager by focusing on the one hand on material environments, social practices and discourses. On the other hand their very perspectives are collected. The main effort of Children´s Studies is thus to pave the way for young people to express themselves. In our case this is done by the Auricle.

`Open Artwork´

The Auricle functions as an `open artwork´ (cp. Eco 1989); that is to say, the artistic statement is completed by the recipients in a corporeal and interactive way. This openness is based on the artist’s decision to leave arrangements of some constituents of a work to the public or to chance. Eco (1989) describes interaction and interplay between the artwork and the recipient during the process of perceiving, thinking and, also, engaging with the artwork by referring to an open field of meaning internally dynamic and a psychological (and also physical) form of engagement rather than fixed. Eco´s concept resembles the general idea of art as not merely delimit systems of meaning. Art can, like all human
behavior, moreover be characterized by its provision of existential orientation. It is a specific form of world- and meaning-making that always includes corporeal judgments. Reflexivity in art is thus marked by emotions, subjective experience, memories, and personal values. By actively dealing with images of socially relevant concepts, features, rules, etc. in art, one’s ability to accomplish a task or to deal with certain challenges can be experienced. In terms of the reception of art as ruled by the task of gaining orientation, Nelson Goodman speaks of art as participating in `world-making´. The artist and the recipients are here the acting persons. Open Artwork may become clear especially in educational settings.

**Attentive Practices**

It is beyond doubt that, first and foremost, our body in its immediacy and authenticity opens up to the fields of the social, of history, nature, of art, culture, in short, to all phenomena of the world we live in. Martin Seel (1991, p.51) interpreted corporally transmitted experiences as distinct orientation knowledge in sensitive self-presence, he writes: `In aesthetic perception we are aware of ourselves as percipients, not merely as self-conscious beings but as beings, who let their corporeal sensorium be explicitly active.´ Accordingly, categorization begins with the demarcations and contrasts inherent to subjective aesthetical impressions, esp. in attentive practices.

Making pupils aware of certain facts and making sure that they continually and independently pay explicit attention to them lies without a doubt in the centre of classroom education. The term attention has a wide spectrum of meaning as disposition, sensualistically-intellectually as a composition of contents of consciousness, as competence or ability, cognitive activity or even as act of will. Since René Descartes ((1649) 1996) the empirically ascertainable performance of attention has been put into relation with consciousness. Since the 19th Century attention has been the subject of the empirical psychological and later on educational scientific research. Today attention is defined as selecting and absorbing of stimuli and mostly quantitatively empirically analysed in regards of features such as direction, size, intensity, duration, discrimination and topic. The focus has been mainly laid on the possibilities of a cognitive

The phenomenological term attention moreover stresses the diversity of attentive practices and looks at them in terms of a daily drama of doubting and self-finding that, at times, becomes manifest. In an attentive process, the respective relationship with oneself and the world is newly balanced. Starting from a moment of confusion attention has a specific, designing and structuring, respectively “construing”, explicative character, making an individual, non-verbal act of interpretation visible. Thoughts and available forms of behaviour and action apparently cross over here with yet nameless impressions. There are various sensual levels of attention founding relationships to the self, to others and to the world, not completely subordinated to self-control.

In pedagogical regards, Maria Montessori (1976) stresses the “polarisation of attention” as finally leading to a structuring of the child’s awareness. Niesyto (2004) points out the possibility to use media-didactical approaches for cultivating techniques and procedures of attention and hence train analysing and reflecting abilities. The form of the Auricle signifies attention and attentive practices are recorded by this instrument.

The Thinking Aloud Method

This research method was developed in the 1960s to gather data of thinking processes via speech. Its origins, though, are in the psychological research of the 1920s. Since the 1980ies the method was applied in the empiric school research to be able to find out how students solve problems of exercises or tasks – above all in science lessons. Thinking Aloud also has a history of being used in didactics of German linguistics, here: literacy research. The method offers the advantage that the researcher gets access to the personal life, to the experiences as well as the thoughts of informants in an unfiltered way. As they are neither participants nor actors in the field purposefully gathering material such as one does e.g. in an interview, (cf. Heinzl 2012) there is immediacy and closeness to the experiences of the informants.
Due to the Auricle’s usage, the researchers get insights into children’s educational processes and what children react to, what motivates them, what they find pleasant – and what not. The focus is on each unique child and its perspective, instead of focusing a group (age/gender/class/heritage). The didactical impacts of the project refer to the open artwork: By recording and following up attentive practices the pupils complete a never finalized portrait of attention.