Conducting a Thinking-Aloud-Pair session

Step by Step

1. Let the participants pair off.
2. Give a list of problems to solve to each pair.
3. In each pair, assign the role of "Listener" and the role of "Problem Solver".
4. Explain the participants how to play both roles: the Problem Solver should make the effort of explaining his solution in a clear way and the Listener should follow each step and ask for clarification if needed. The Lister is not allowed to help the Problem Solver to correct his/her mistakes.
5. Let the participants switch their roles with each new problem.
6. Be aware that the role of Listener is crucial.

Listener's role

- Listen carefully to the Problem Solver.
- If needed, ask the Problem Solver to repeat statements or to speak slower.
- Encourage the Problem Solver to verbalize his/her thoughts (e.g. ask "What are you thinking?").
- Ask the Problem Solver to clarify his/her ideas (e.g. ask "Can you add more on this concept?" or "What do you mean?").
- Avoid giving suggestions.
- Avoid solving the problem in your own way.
- Avoid correcting Problem Solver's errors.