

FACILITATING STUDENT INTERACTION

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Interaction


Do not get students talking, get them communicating and help them to jump from classroom to the outside world (Alderson 1984:152).

Innocence: Teacher and students' goal should be **successful COMMUNICATION**. Students need opportunities to practice the language in the classroom.


- Avoid controlled drills or controlled practice.
- Exploit interesting, open, collaborative tasks. For instance, describing pictures, asking questions (find someone who... have you ever) or discussing questions, planning something, amongst others (McIntyre 1984, Alderson 2015 and Sinclair 2012:178-180).

Interaction involves management of learning. Therefore, it should be managed by teacher and students.


Conditions for successful interaction:




Appropriate atmosphere and reasons to speak (motivation)




Resources (Images, Internet, games)



Control (pay attention to why or weak students)



Anticipation between and prepare students (Instructions, time, vocabulary)



Consider students' culture, introduce appropriate portions in a clever and subtle way

Considerations while grouping students

"There is not a best way of doing it"

- ✓ Learners preferences and control
- ✓ Teaching approach
- ✓ Type of activity and its aim. For instance, surveys vs a role play
- ✓ Stage of the lesson

For these reasons, the way in which students will be grouped should be planned before the lesson. Of course, teachers always need a bit of flexibility.

(Spitt, Pulverness and Williams 2011:204)


Grouping students


Groupwork provides more **talking time for each student** as it allows people to **speak at the same time** (Alderson 1984:152 and Johnson 2010:188). It also provides students with **more confidence to talk**. However, **monitoring is essential** in order to ensure students are communicating (in fair amounts), completing the task and using the target language.

Type	Advantage	Disadvantage
Whole class or "traditional way"	Students gain more information	Students misbehave, have limited opportunities to interact and depend on the teacher
Individual	Students work at their own pace	Students could make more use of their L1
Pairs, groups, sample	Students practice task-taking and sharing. There is place for learning from others	

⚠ A common disadvantage: some students dominate the class. Collaboration and monitoring should be established from the beginning.

(Enhancing 2015, Johnson 2016:295 and Spitt, Pulverness and Williams 2011:204-205)





Issues

1. **Arranging groups might take some time from your class.** However, there are some options that could facilitate the process:
 - ✓ Talking to the person next to you, talking to a friend, giving numbers, giving colors.
 - ✓ Try to avoid chaos and integrate levels.
2. **There are some emotional and contextual factors beyond the teacher's control which could affect the learner's willingness to interact and share their thoughts.** Teachers should not take this as an excuse, instead, they could **integrate interlanguage strategies** and have a positive effect on the factors they can control (Lau and Ho 2002: 305-306).
 - ✓ **Facilitator-oriented:** strategies that facilitate authorisation. For example, personal material, repetition, feedback
 - ✓ **Focused on context**
 - ✓ **Learner-oriented:** interaction without teacher's intervention.
3. Sometimes, it is difficult for teachers to listen to the **learners' needs**. Mostly because paying attention to the learners' needs means not focusing the class on the teacher and sharing power and control.

References

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