

Samidinova P.H., Jal. S.U.

INTERACTIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING: SUSTAINING INTERACTION THROUGH GROUP WORK

Самидинова П.Х., Жал С.У.

ИНТЕРАКТИВНОЕ ОБУЧЕНИЕ ЯЗЫКА: ПОДДЕРЖАНИЕ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ ЧЕРЕЗ ГРУППОВУЮ РАБОТУ

This chapter is about the usage of group work in teaching foreign languages. And we will look at as central to maintaining linguistic interaction.

Group work is a generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self initiated language. Note what we commonly call pair work is simply group work in groups of two. It is also important to note that group work usually impalas “small” group work, that is students in groups of perhaps six or fewer. Large groupers defeat one of the major purposes for doing group work: giving students greater opportunities to speak.

Group work is solidly grounded in research principles (see long and porter? 1985? For an overview).

Group work helps to solve the problem of classes that are too large to offer many opportunities to speak. Closely related to the sheer quantity of output made possible through group work is the variety and quality of interactive language. With traditional methods, language tends to be restricted to initiation only by the teacher in an artificial setting where the whole class becomes, a “group interlocutor” small groups provide opportunities for students initiation, for face to face we and take, for practice in negotiation of meaning.

Each students in a classroom has needs and abilities that are unique. Usually the most salient individual difference that you observe is a range of proficiency levels across your class and, even more specifically, differences among students in their speaking, listening, written and reading abilities. Small groups can help students with varying abilities

Impulsive learners get easily frustrated with the group process, which they perceive as circuitous.

4. competitive members of a group are reluctant to share information with others.

5. Talkative students dominate the process.

In fact, when group members know their task and know their roles in the group, learning style differences can be efficiently utilized and highly appreciated- much more so than in whole- class work.

We know, that group work can go wrong if it is not carefully planned, well executed, monitored throughout, and followed up on in some way. The differences between pair work and group work have

not been emphasized. There are, in fact, some important distinction. Pair work is more appropriate than group work for tasks that are short, linguistically simple, and quite controlled in terms of the structure of the task.

Appropriate pair activities include.

- a) Practicing dialogues with a partner.
- b) Simple question and answer exercises.
- c) Performing certain meaningful substitution “drills”.
- d) Quick (one minute or less) brainstorming activity.
- e) Checking written work with each other.
- f) Preparation for merging with a larger group.
- g) Any brief activity for which the logistics of assigning groups, moving furniture, and getting students into the groups is distractive.

So pair work enables you to get students engaged in interactive communication for a short period of time with a minimum of logistical problems. We shouldn’t misunderstand the role of pair work. It is not to be used exclusively for the above types of activity .

The first step in promoting successful group work, then, is to select an appropriate task. In other words, choose something that lends itself to be group process. Lectures, drills, dictations, certain listening tasks, silent rendering, and a host of other activities are obviously not suitable for small group work.

Typical group tasks include:

1. Games.
2. Role- play and accumulations.
3. Drama
4. Projects
5. Interview
6. Brainstorming
7. Information gap.
8. Jin saw
9. Problem- solving and decision- making
10. Opinion exchange.

Each of these types of task is defined and briefly characterized below.

So a game could be an activity that formalizes a technique into units that can be scored in some way.

1. Guessing games are commonly language classroom activities “twenty questions”, for example is easily adapted to a small group. One member secretly decides that he or she is some famous person; the rest of the group have to find out who within 20 yes/ no questions, each member of the group taking turns asking questions. The person who is “it” rotates around the group and points are scored.
2. Role- play. In the class the teacher gives the role of a foreigner to one or more members of a group and some members of the class will be given the role of native people, some of them may be interpreted. In groups, similar dual roles could be assumed with assignment to others in the group to watch for certain grammatical or discourse elements as the roles are acted out. Or a group role- play might involve a discussion of a political issue with each person assigned to represent a particular political point of view.
3. Drama. Small group may prepare their own short dramatization of some event, writing the script or rehearsing the scene as a group. This may be more commonly referred to as a “skit”. Dramatic performances may give positive effects on language learning.
4. Projects. For learners of all ages, perhaps especially for younger learners who can greatly benefit from hands- on approaches to language, certain projects can be rewarding indeed. You may adopt an environmental awareness theme in your class, for example, various small groups could each be doing different things. Group A creates an environmental bulletin board for the rest of the class; Group B develops fact sheets; Group C makes a three- dimensional display; Group D puts out a news letter for the rest of the class; Group E develops a skit. And so on.
5. Interview. A popular activity for pair work, also appropriate for group work, interviews a useful at all levels of proficiency. The goal of an interview could at this level be limited to using requesting functions, learning vocabulary for expressing personal data, producing etc. students might ask each other questions like.
 What’s your name?
 Where do you live?
 What country (city) are you from?
 And lean to give appropriate responses.
 At the higher levels, interviews can probe more complex facts, opinions, ideas and feelings.
6. Brainstorming. Brainstorming is a technique whose purpose is to initiate some sort of thinking process and it gets students “creative juices” flowing without necessarily focusing on specific problems or decisions or values. Brainstorming is often put to excellent use in preparing students to read a text, to discuss a complex issue or to write on a topic. Brainstorming involves students in a rapid- fire, free- associating listing of concepts or ideas or facts or feelings relevant to some topic or context.
7. Information gap. All these types of technique are quite commonly used in adult classes around the world, up and down the proficiently continuum. The term information gap covers a tremendous variety of techniques in which the objective is to convey or to request information. The two focal characteristics of information gap techniques are (a) their primary attention to information and not to language forms and (b) the necessary of communicative interaction in order to reach the objective.
8. Jigsaw. Jigsaw techniques are a special form of information gap in which each member of a group is given some specific information and the goal is to pool all information to achieve some objective. One very popular jigsaw technique that can be used in larger groups is known as a “strip story”. The teacher takes a moderately short written narrative or conversation and cuts each sentence of the text into a little strip phallus the strips, and gives each student a strip. The goal is for students to determine where each of their sentences belongs in the whole context of the story, to stand in their position once it is determined, and to read of the reconstructed story.
9. Problem solving and decision making. Problem solving techniques center students attention on meaning full cognitive challenges and not so much on grammatical or phonological forms. Decision making techniques are simply one kind of problem solving where the ultimate goal is for students to make a decision.
10. Opinion exchange. An opinion is usually a belief or feeling that might not be founded on empirical data or that others could plausibly take issue with. Opinion are difficult for students to deal with at the intermediate level, certain techniques can effectively include the exchange of various opinions. As reporters or representatives of each group bring their findings, you may entertain some brief discussion but be sure not be let that discussion steal time from other groups. If you want to ask questions about how smoothly the task proceeded, how comfortable people were with a topic or task, or problems they encountered in reaching their objectives, now in an excellent time to encourage some whole- class feedback. This gives you feedback for your next group work assignment.

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