

Group dynamics

Trainer's notes

Aims	To review different interaction patterns To raise awareness of factors influencing choice of interaction pattern
Syllabus area	Grouping learners
Timetable fit	For use in an input session on grouping learners
Interaction pattern	Group work and pair work
Timing	30 minutes
Materials needed	One copy of the worksheet (3.5A) for each trainee

Instructions

1. Divide trainees into pairs. Hand out one worksheet to each pair. Ask trainees to identify the six different interaction patterns in A on the worksheet.
2. Lead feedback, and write the six different interaction patterns on the board as below:

Pair work	S ↔ S
Group work	Ss ↔ Ss
Open class, teacher leading	T → Ss
Individual help / feedback	T → S
Whole-class feedback, brainstorming	Ss → T
Individual work	S S S

(If your trainees are more familiar with variations on these symbols, you may substitute as necessary.)

3. Refer the pairs to the table in B on the worksheet. Ask trainees to decide for each one which interaction pattern they would use. Stress that several different interaction patterns are possible, and that there is no single correct answer.
4. As each pair finishes, join them with another pair to form a group of four. Ask each pair to compare their choice of interaction patterns with the other pair in their group. For each answer that they can successfully justify, a pair receives one point. In each group the pair with the most points wins. Monitor and act as referee where necessary.
5. Lead whole-class feedback by asking what factors influenced trainees' choice of interaction pattern. Ensure that the following factors are discussed:
 - Your teaching aims: main, subsidiary and personal aims
 - The activity: whether controlled practice, discussion or project work, the activity will lend itself to one or two different interaction patterns
 - Variety of interaction (balance): within one lesson, over a sequence of lessons

- Class size: prohibitively large or small, space available
- Students' learning styles: group learners and individual learners
- Students' abilities and level: stronger and weaker students working together or apart
- Students' personalities: whether shy or dominant
- Group dynamics: the behaviour, relationship and interaction between students
- Learners' previous experience: patterns they are used to

Variation

Elicit the factors which affect choice of interaction pattern before the trainees make their own choices in stage 5.

Answer key

A

1. S ↔ S
2. Ss ↔ Ss
3. T → Ss
4. T → S
5. Ss → T
6. S S S

B

Here are some suggested answers:

1. S ↔ S
2. Ss ↔ Ss, S ↔ S
3. T → Ss, Ss ↔ Ss
4. T → S
5. Ss → T, S S S, S ↔ S, Ss ↔ Ss
6. S S S, S ↔ S
7. S S S, S ↔ S, T → Ss, Ss ↔ Ss
8. S ↔ S, Ss ↔ Ss
9. T → Ss
10. T → Ss, T → S
11. Ss → T
12. S S S, S ↔ S, Ss ↔ Ss
13. S S S, S ↔ S, Ss ↔ Ss
14. Ss ↔ Ss
15. T → Ss
16. T → S, S ↔ S
17. Ss → T
18. S S S, S ↔ S, Ss ↔ Ss

Group dynamics

A

1 Students swap written homework with a friend and correct each other's spelling and grammar mistakes.

2

Students design a web page in small groups.

3

Students listen to details of a school outing planned and read out by their teacher.

4

Teacher monitors during individual work, stopping to feed in suggestions and lexical items at each desk.

5

In open class, teacher elicits answers after a reading comprehension and writes them on the board.

6

Students complete journal entries quietly in the last five minutes of class.

B

Activity	Possible interaction pattern
1. Doing an A-B communication gap	
2. Planning a role-play and presenting it to the rest of the class for fun	
3. Dictating some true/false questions for students to write down	
4. Giving a student feedback on behaviour	
5. Brainstorming the advantages and disadvantages of credit cards	
6. Students choose a graded reader and begin the first chapter in class time	
7. Revising vocabulary items for a forthcoming test	
8. Students ask each other about previous learning experiences	
9. Presenting the form of the second conditional	
10. Giving praise to one student for an improved score in a recent test	
11. Students voting on their preferred interaction pattern for the next planned activity	
12. Students complete a practice paper for a future external proficiency test	
13. Planning a talk which the teacher will assess the following week	
14. Doing a survey in the class about their musical tastes	
15. Students listening to instructions for the next class activity	
16. Giving extra help with pronunciation to one student who is having difficulty and is embarrassed to try in class	
17. Presenting a project to the teacher as part of their formal achievement test – the teacher watches and awards a grade	
18. Students read over a list of phrasal verbs, marking those they already know and don't know	