Teaching English Through English
Module 5
Increasing Classroom Interaction

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Module 5: Start Here

"A mouse saved her young from a ferocious cat by barking 'bow-wow.'
After the cat ran away, the mouse said to her offspring 'See, children, it pays to
know a second language.'" - Efstathiadis

English language students need to speak out! English teachers everywhere struggle to increase the quantity and the quality of English spoken by students in their classrooms. In global contexts where English is not commonly spoken in everyday life, students may only have your classroom to practice speaking. This module will help you explore different activities to promote meaningful interaction in a classroom. You will learn new strategies to create an interactive and communicative classroom that includes promoting more student-to-student interaction.

By the end of the module, you will be able to:

- describe the importance of student-to-student interaction in a language classroom
- examine and use a variety of effective activities that promote meaningful interaction in a classroom
- share different communicative activities that are effective for English learners
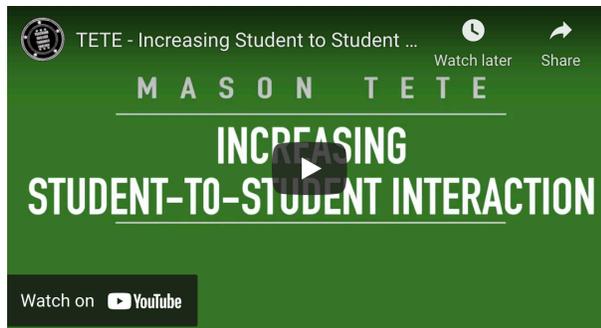
Explore

▶ 5.1. Watch

Explore ideas for increasing classroom interaction by watching three videos.

- ▪ **Video 1: Increasing Student-to-Student Interaction**

  - o This video will suggest some useful tips for increasing student-to-student interaction in your language classroom. Click here for a PDF of the script for Video 1.
  - o Link to YouTube: https://youtu.be/GfzQJdsbC2o

  ![TETE - Increasing Student to Student Interaction video thumbnail with text "MASON TETE INCREASING STUDENT-TO-STUDENT INTERACTION", Watch on YouTube]

- ▪ **Video 2: Find Someone Who Bingo**

  - o This video will suggest ideas to increase student-to-student interaction using an icebreaker activity. Click here for a PDF of the script for Video 2.
  - o Link to YouTube: https://youtu.be/VgjhXvCafC4

  ![TETE - Find Someone Who Bingo video thumbnail with text "MASON TETE FIND SOMEONE WHO BINGO", Watch on YouTube]

- Video 3: Guiding the Artist

  o This video presents steps to promote students' communicative interaction in your classroom through Guiding the Artist activity. Click here for a PDF of the script for Video 3.
  o Link to YouTube: https://youtu.be/bdIK_k83QPg
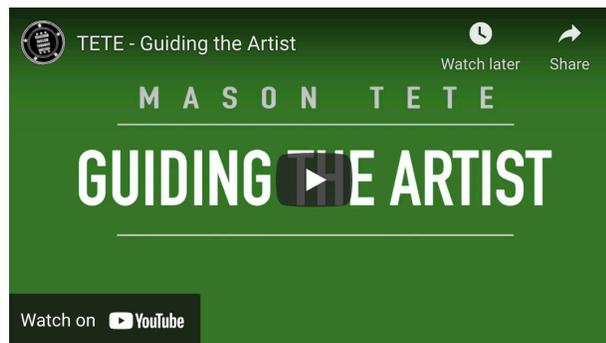
Teaching English Through English
Module 5 Video 1 Script
Increasing Student-to-Student Interaction

Hello English teachers! Are you ready to power up your English class? Here are some tips for you to consider on increasing student-to-student interaction in your classroom.

We know that to learn a language, we need to *use* language. Our classrooms can become an important and safe space for our students to practice English through interactions. When you encourage students to speak out and communicate, don't put too much emphasis on being perfect. Mistakes are fine and a part of the language learning process.

But why is classroom interaction important for language learning? It's time for a **brainstorm**! I am going to give you 15 seconds to write down ideas on a piece of paper. Write down as many ideas as you can. Write down reasons why classroom interaction is important for language learning. Ready? Go! [Time for 15 seconds]

Welcome back! What ideas did you come up with? Here are some reasons why classroom interaction is so important for language learning. As I have stated in the very beginning, in order to learn a language, we need to use it. Classroom interaction can be one way to provide opportunities for "real life" use of English, especially if English is not commonly used where you live. Even if your students make grammar and vocabulary mistakes while speaking, don't worry! Mistakes can be a good thing. If you create a communicative classroom, students can learn how to recover from those mistakes as they practice in a more natural setting with you and their peers. As you increase classroom interaction, your students may see learning English as an enjoyable way to exchange creative ideas and build collaborative relationships.

Here are some tools and strategies to promote the interactions.

One useful tip is to create a sense of community in your classroom. This means that students will get a chance to get to know their teachers. Yes, that means you! Also, students will get a chance to get to know each other.

Getting to Know You activities are a great way to begin increasing classroom interaction. Students get to share information about themselves, as well as anything unique or special about them. Have a set of questions ready for students to ask each other, such as "Where do you live?", "What are your hobbies?", "What is your favorite food?", "What is your favorite word in English?". And the last one can be an open-ended, student choice question. "Getting to know you" activities can be a good first-time interaction activity.

Using a **graphic organizer** like this is very helpful. Having them mingle around the room, speaking to at least three people in the classroom in 5 minutes will create a friendly atmosphere right from the start! So, I encourage you to try it out with your students! First, read through each question with the whole class. Then have your students write their own question they want to ask their classmates or which is number five. For example, my question is, "Who is your favorite music group and why?" When everyone is ready to mingle, it's time to stand up and go greet someone hello. Students will introduce their names and then begin interacting! Once they finish interviewing one person, they can say goodbye and move onto the next person.

Questions	Name of Classmate	Name of Classmate	Name of Classmate
1. Where do you live?			
1. What are your hobbies?			
1. What is your favorite food?			
1. What is your favorite word in English?			
1. Write a question you want to ask:			

Do you feel that there will be plenty of real-life communication going on in the classroom? To extend further, the information your students collect can be used for a follow up communicative activity. Your students can collect this information and see what hobbies, foods, and words their entire class likes best. It's also a great way for teachers to get to know a bit more about their students to plan future activities! I really hope you get to try this activity out soon.

Thanks for watching, learning and doing! See you next time!

Teaching English Through English
Module 5 Video 2 Script
Find Someone Who Bingo

Hello, English Teachers! Are you ready to power up your English class? This video is about an Icebreaker Activity called Find Someone Who Bingo. This will help you increase student-to-student interaction in your classroom.

To learn a language, we need to *use* language. Our classrooms should be comfortable and inviting spaces that foster effective and meaningful interactions in English. Icebreakers are a perfect way to achieve this!

Icebreakers are short, communicative activities that can be used in English language classes to get students in the mood to talk and interact more. Icebreakers are actually used in a variety of contexts to help students in a class, participants in a program, or even people at a party to get to know each other better. Imagine the cold feeling you may have when you don't know anybody in a room. It may feel as cold as ice! How can you break the ice? By doing an activity that helps everyone get to know each other better. After an icebreaker activity, the feeling in the room will be warmer and people will feel more comfortable. In an English class, these activities can be used to help "break" through students' hesitation to speak, which is "the ice". By doing Icebreakers at the beginning of class, you can encourage more participation later.

I will show you one Icebreaker activity called **"Find Someone Who…Bingo"**! In this Icebreaker, we need to prepare a Bingo Board for every student. Here is an example of a Bingo Board:

1. Loves basketball **Do you…?** Name:	2. Thinks computer games are a sport **Do you…?** Name:	3. Likes summer **Do you…?** Name:	4. Good at soccer **Are you…?** Name:	5. Thinks fishing is a sport **Do you…?** Name:
6. Hates to exercise **Do you…?** Name:	7. Likes to watch American football **Do you…?** Name:	8. Knows what sport Serena Williams plays **Do you…?** Name:	9. Write your own question **Do you…?** Name:	10. Has a pet **Do you…?** Name:
11. Speaks more than two languages **Do you…?** Name:	12. Visited another country **Have you…?** Name:	**FIND SOMEONE WHO… BINGO!**	13. Plays a musical instrument **Do you…?** Name:	14. Watches Hollywood movies **Do you…?** Name:
15. Is an only child **Are you…?** Name:	16. Rides a bike to school **Do you…?** Name:	17. Write your own question: **Have you…?** Name:	18. Gets up before 6 am **Do you…?** Name:	19. Loves running **Do you…?** Name:
20. Drinks tea **Do you…?** Name:	21. Is left-handed **Are you…?** Name:	22. Loves to read books **Do you…?** Name:	23. Likes spicy food **Do you…?** Name:	24. Write your own question: **Are you…?** Name:

The goal of this game is to find classmates who fit the description in each box. The person who has names written in five boxes in a row vertically, horizontally, or diagonally can shout out, "Bingo!". [add graphics to slides] The person who shouts out Bingo must say which classmates like or do each of the 5 activities. Then she or he will be the winner! Let's look at this activity step by step.

Step 1: Introduce students to the Bingo Board
Before you begin this activity, you will need to hand out the bingo board and introduce the activity.

"Class, we are going to do an Icebreaker Activity. It's called 'Find Someone Who Bingo.' Here is the bingo board."

Step 2: Students prepare their Bingo Board.
Next, give your students some time to read the information they need to find in each box. Notice in this activity, students have to create their questions with the cues. In this example bingo board, there are three boxes where students can have a chance to ask their own questions. There is also one free box in the middle. Be sure to give them a model before they begin.

"Class, read each box and write down the questions you will ask. For example, in the first box, number one says, Loves basketball. Do you...? What is the correct question? Right! Do you love basketball? Write that down in the box. Now, write down one question per box, except the middle box is free. See the gray boxes? For numbers 9, 17, and 24, you can write your own questions. I will give you five minutes to write questions in each box. Ready? Go!"

Then, go over the questions with them, by having different students volunteer to read their questions out loud.

"Class, let's go over your questions. Jina, what did you write for question number two? Correct! Do you like to watch American football? John, what did you write for question number three?"

Step 3: Give instructions for the "Find Someone Who Bingo" Icebreaker
After students complete the bingo board, it is time to play Find Someone Who Bingo! Here is an example of the instructions.

"Class, it's time to play Find Someone Who Bingo! Here are the instructions:
1. *Stand up and mingle around the room. Mingle means walk around and talk to someone near you.*
2. *Stand with one classmate, introduce yourself, and take turns asking each other a question.*

3. *If the person responds "Yes", then write that person's name in the box. If the person responds "No", then ask another question. Ask questions, until you get a "Yes". After both partners respond Yes, start mingling again.*
4. *As soon as you have five in a row with different names, yell Bingo! Remember, the names in each of the five boxes have to be five different classmates. If not, you can't win! Ok, now stand up and mingle!"*

This Icebreaker Activity will help your students get to know each other better and encourage real communication in English. Here are a few additional tips for using this icebreaker.

If your students are more advanced, you can prepare them to ask a follow up question to generate more interaction. For example, Student A can ask Student B, "Do you love to read books?". If the answer is "yes," Student A can write down Student B's name in the box. Then, Student A can ask, "What is your favorite book?" or "What book are you reading now?".

Finally, I have a good wrap-up tip for this activity. At the end of the icebreaker, you can collect responses as a whole group. There are questions that will naturally encourage more communication, such as who thinks fishing is a sport or who hates to exercise. Students who gave these responses should be encouraged to explain why. This wrap-up extends communication and helps your students get to know each other even better.

I hope you found Find Someone Who Bingo useful. Remember you can adapt this kind of Icebreaker activity with different topics and questions to align with your curriculum.

Thanks for watching and learning. Now, let's go do it!

Hello, English Teachers! Are you ready to power up your English class? This video is about an activity called Guiding the Artist. It's a great activity for increasing student-to-student interaction in your classroom.

"Hand" by HeatherPaque from Pixabay

"Guiding the Artist" is an activity that encourages pair interactions. It promotes listening and speaking skills in English. This is an information gap activity. Information gap means that one student has information, and the other student doesn't. They have to communicate with each other to fill that gap.
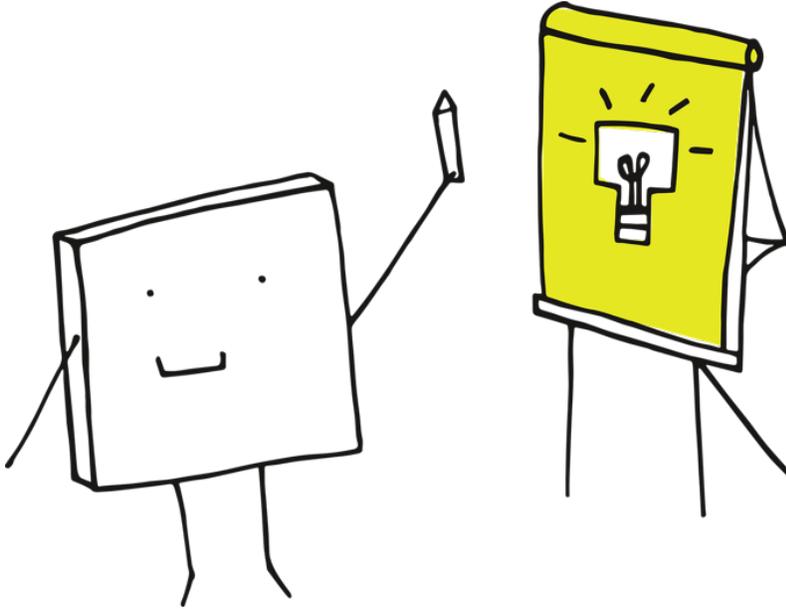
"Pixel Cells" by Manfred Steger from Pixabay

In Guiding the Artist, Student A is looking at a picture, and Student B can't see it. Student A describes the picture, and Student B has to draw it based on Student A's description. In this example, Student B is the artist, and Student A is guiding the artist to draw the picture as accurately as possible. Let's try it step by step!

Step 1: Each student chooses a photo with a simple scene.

First, ask students to bring a photo that has a simple scene they can describe. Make sure they do not share their picture with anyone in the class. Tell them it's a secret! It is a good idea for you to prepare a variety of photos ahead of time, as many as the number of the students you have. In this way, if any of your students forget to bring a photo, you are prepared with many photos for them to choose. It can be a photo of someone eating with friends at a restaurant or engaging in a sports activity. It can even be a photo from a magazine.

"Images" by Simon from Pixabay

Don't forget! The photo should be simple! For this step, you can say,

"Bring a photo that has a simple scene. If you do not have a photo of your own, find a photo from a newspaper or magazine. Make sure it is a simple photo! It has to be something you can describe to someone in English. Don't share the photo with anyone in class. It's a secret!"

If someone forgot to bring one, you can say,

"Please come up to the front if you forgot to bring a photo. I have some you can choose from. Again, do not show people what you pick out."

Step 2: Once they have chosen their photos to describe, pair them up with a partner who is sitting near them. In each pair, designate students as Student A and Student B. Remember – students should not show their photos to their partner at first! If possible, have students sit back to back. This will prevent the artist from seeing the picture. For pairing, you can say,

"This will be a pair activity. You will work with a partner. Please find someone sitting near you."

Step 3: Give each student 10 minutes to describe their picture to their partner.
After students are back-to-back, ask Student A to describe the scene in their photo to Student B, one detail at a time. Student B will draw on a piece of paper what Student A is describing. Don't worry! The drawings do not have to be complex or perfect! Your drawings can be a rough sketch. After 10 minutes, compare the picture with the drawing and see how close they are. Then switch and have Student B describe a photo and Student A listen and draw.

For Step 3, you can say,

"Student A, take 10 minutes to describe your photo. Describe one detail at a time. Student B, please draw on the paper what your partner is describing to you. Don't worry about being perfect. Listen to your partner's description and draw the best you can."

"*After 10 minutes…*"

"Okay, 10 minutes is up! Now compare the photo and the drawing! Are they alike? Now, switch roles. Student B, take 10 minutes to describe your photo, one detail at a time. Ready?"

Let's try one together! Pretend you are my partner for this activity. I will call out the details from my photo. Please get a pen and paper. Ready? Okay! First, listen - in the middle of the photo, there is a snowman. Just draw the snowman's body. Listen - the snowman has eyes, nose, mouth, and one arm. They are all made with broken sticks. Now, begin drawing again. The snowman's eyes look closed. His nose is in between the two eyes. The snowman is smiling. The snowman looks happy. Last, his one arm is sticking out from his side.
Are you finished? Let's compare my photo to your drawing! Is your drawing similar to my photo?

"Snowman 2018" by Woomee Kim is licensed under CC BY 4.0

Here are two drawings completed by my students. Pretty good, right?
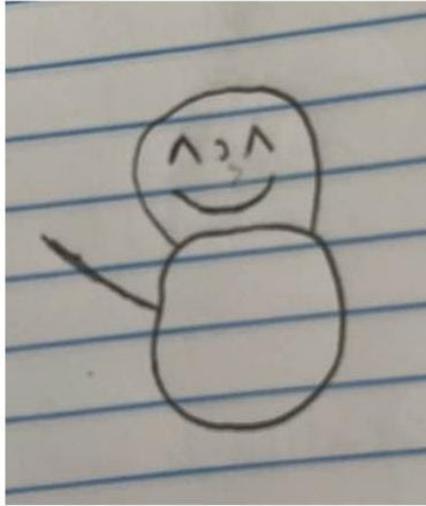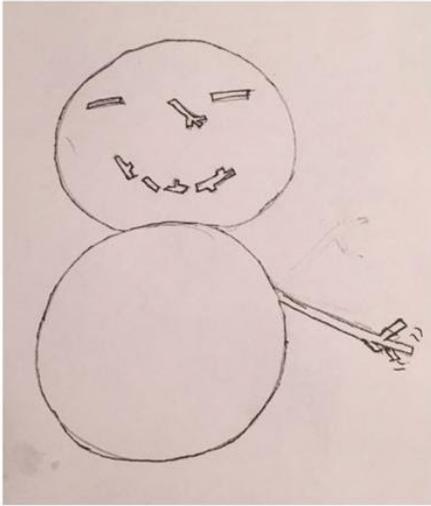
"Snowmen" by Anthony Yu and Ryan Chong is licensed under CC BY 4.0

Remember, this activity is as easy as 1-2-3! One, find your photo. Two, pair up with a partner. Three, give yourselves two minutes each to draw out what your partner sees in her/his photo.

Thanks for watching and learning. Now let's go do it!

5.2. Read

Explore ideas for increasing classroom interaction by reading at least two articles.

- **Article 1:** [Reconceptualizing Interactional Groups: Grouping Schemes for Maximizing Language Learning](#) by Judith A. Rance - Roney

    o This article shares theory and practice of language acquisition through student interactions during instruction. It also emphasizes group work as a way to promote effective student interactions.

    o Source: Rance - Roney, J. A. (2010). Reconceptualizing interactional groups: Grouping schemes for maximizing language learning. *English Teaching Forum, 48*(1), 20-26. https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/10-48-1-d.pdf

- **Article 2:** [Incorporating Opportunities for Interaction and Sharing](#)

    o This article introduces simple ways to incorporate interaction to your lessons. The strategies described are Turn and Talk, Think-Pair-Share, and Stand Up/Sit Down. These strategies can keep learners moving and talking!

    o Source: U.S. Department of State, American English. (n.d.). *Incorporating opportunities for interaction and sharing.* https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/sept_week_3_interaction_and_sharing_final.pdf

Judith A. Rance-Roney

Reconceptualizing Interactional Groups: Grouping Schemes for Maximizing Language Learning

*Group work. When it works, we are pleased. But when it does not—
when the learners stare at each other without speaking or when two learners
begin an argument that threatens to disrupt the whole lesson—
we know we should have done it better.*

In the field of English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL), it has long been recognized that for second language acquisition to occur learners must use English to construct meaning and interact with others in authentic contexts. The importance of learner interaction in acquiring a second language has made the *teacher-directed student-centered* classroom the standard for effective instruction, in print if not in practice. While this standard may seem contradictory, effective teacher directives can optimize student autonomy and facilitate effective cooperative learning, which is at the core of a student-centered environment. These principles have led to the increasing use of group work in the second language classroom, wherein students work in teams to construct knowledge and accomplish tasks through collaborative interac-

tion. However, not much has been written about the classroom management strategies that underlie the practice, and less has been written about directing the membership of small groups as students engage in learning tasks and activities.

For many teachers, group activity planning is often based on last-minute decisions or left to chance. When there is forethought, it mostly surrounds putting problem students in the "least-likely-to-cause-trouble" group. Teachers frequently comment that they have not been given clear guidance in the management of groups; in fact, a quick survey of current TESOL education and methods texts reveals little information about how to accomplish this complex classroom management task beyond the recommendations that teachers use interactional groups because of

the multiple benefits for English learners (Diaz-Rico 2008), use a variety of groupings tied to the instructional purpose (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short 2008), and make the process for cooperative groups (task orientation, roles, appropriate behaviors, etc.) explicit to students (Herrell and Jordan 2008).

However, drawing together information from a range of educational areas including curriculum, second language acquisition studies, and effective school research, we can create some reasonable guidelines for reconceptualizing the process of forming groups. An exploration of the types of collaborative tasks and activities that most successfully meet the instructor's objectives will go a long way towards optimizing the effectiveness of groups, and will affect decisions about successful strategies and group size and configuration. After discussing the rationale for collaborative interaction, this article will offer examples on how to deal with these group management issues when coordinating collaborative work in the ESL/EFL classroom.

What the research says

Language acquisition research has long supported the benefits of student interaction, which include useful language practice (Doughty and Pica 1986, among others), student-to-student scaffolding during challenging tasks (Storch 2001, among others), and the formation of personal agency in academic settings (Morita 2004). However, research also yields a conflicting picture of what happens when students interact in groups and even questions the effectiveness of collaborative groups. While early research suggested that language manipulation increased in small-group activities (Doughty and Pica 1986), other research found that "negotiating for meaning" was not an often-used strategy and that some learners chose to remain disengaged in the group setting. In other words, while the teacher may strive to foster engaging student interaction during the lesson, students may have other ideas. Recent research points to an intricate web of factors that affect the types of interaction and level of learner participation in group activities. The role of personality, sense of agency, and collaborative orientation (Storch 2001; Morita 2004), and proficiency level (Watanabe and Swain 2007)

suggest that the picture is more complex than what had previously been assumed.

Nevertheless, even though the research on the quality of interaction in groups is not altogether clear, teachers generally do agree that a well-planned group activity holds great potential value. Small-group collaboration allows learners to rehearse for the larger whole-class discussion to follow, to practice pronunciation of words, to structure conversations conceptually, and to build conversational efficacy in a less formal and less anxiety-ridden context. In addition to increased language practice, the ability to appropriately interact in groups has become a goal in itself, in part because many students will be required to work on team projects in courses such as global business, science, and other academic subjects taught in U.S. classrooms.

How many students in a group?

The first decision the teacher must face involves the optimum number of learners per group. Bell (1988) suggests a range of three to seven students. One misconception of teachers is that all groups must have the same number of members. In fact, a group of reticent students may be capped at three to force all to speak, while a larger group of six dominant students will receive valuable practice at social turn-taking. There is no instructional rule that demands equal group size.

Fixed vs. flexible grouping

The second decision that teachers face is *fixed grouping* (consistent group membership for extended periods) vs. *flexible grouping* (the teacher decides group membership for each lesson or task). Fixed group rosters allow learners to get to know others in a deeper way and to develop tolerant and trusting relationships; it also saves the teacher valuable planning time. However, when groups remain together for too long, learners may be missing out on a diversity of viewpoints and language interactions. Thus, the balance between the security of established groups and the chance to work with most members of the class becomes a goal of grouping strategies. One solution proposed by Bell (1988) joins the two conflicting goals: each student belongs to three or four different fixed groups and rotates among them based on the learn-

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ing objectives and the type of task that is assigned.

Planning for group membership

Twenty-five years ago, the use of small interactional groups was designed to facilitate communication in a new language, which acknowledged the important role of socially situated interaction in the development of communicative competence (Savignon 1983). As educators, we focused on student personalities in grouping decisions or perhaps decided to group according to relative language proficiency. However, the current focus on academic pre-university preparation in many programs, both in the United States and in international settings, demands that we take a new look at the way in which we form collaborative groups to ensure that all learners engage deeply with the academic content, develop spoken literacy for academic interaction, and assert themselves and participate effectively in the academic conversation.

Most educators believe that the skills needed to participate in group discussions and team decision-making can be explicitly taught and practiced. The membership of the interactional group is a critical consideration. A group that is well matched to the task will talk a lot even if the task is weak. Conversely, a teacher could design a rich learning experience, but if the individuals choose non-involvement because of the group membership, it fails. Choosing group membership requires much artistry, as it demands sensitivity to cultural contexts, to individual personalities in the class, and to the variety of skill levels.

I experienced this challenge firsthand when structuring interactional groups in my multilingual class of university students. (While my teaching context was an ESL program for international students in the United States, the same principles apply in EFL contexts.) My students had a wide range of language proficiencies and English experiences, and an even greater diversity of specific language skill levels and personality types. Some students had great oral fluency but were less strong in reading and writing; others lacked proficiency in speaking but were advanced learners in reading, and to a

lesser extent, writing. For example, Edgardo, a student from Venezuela who had spent a year in a U.S. high school, was orally fluent but scored significantly lower on his English reading test. He sat next to Pongsak, a quiet student from Thailand, who had been in the United States for only a few weeks when the class began. While Edgardo's spoken English was nearly as fluent as a native speaker's and he spoke with confidence, Pongsak's speaking was hesitant and often difficult to comprehend. However, both Edgardo's and Pongsak's writing differed substantially from standard academic English, and both had similar reading proficiencies that limited their access to academic texts. My instructional objective was to prepare both students for college-level work in an English-medium university and to provide them with the collaborative speaking skill and academic English experience necessary to participate in the student-led team projects advocated by U.S. colleges. While my goals were the same for each of these learners, their ability to progress towards acquiring language and collaborative skills in group work would have been limited had I only considered my goals and not the complex interactional patterns that would help or hinder acquisition as Pongsak and Edgardo worked together in the group.

There are several bases on which experienced teachers form groups: language proficiency, personality, friendships, shared native language, and academic orientation. However, one of the variables not often considered by the classroom teacher is the objective of the task itself. While general guidelines may point the teacher in the direction of conventional wisdom, the content of the task may point a different way. Several options on how to plan group membership around task objectives follow.

Oral language proficiency grouping

One of the first instincts of a teacher is to group students heterogeneously so that the members with higher proficiency can support the learners with lower proficiency. However, without intervention and planning, the students with higher spoken English proficiency often will take over the conversational workload, giving the less proficient little practice in speaking. This replicates the typical conversation pattern when my low-proficiency English

learners are put on collaborative teams with native English speakers. The English learners sit silently at the periphery of the circle, marginalized from the group. Thus, in the ESL classroom, it is often better to group individuals by similar proficiency so that all will have equal opportunity and responsibility to speak. One technique for quick implementation is to keep a list of students ordered by proficiency level, with the most proficient students in the class at the top and the least proficient at the bottom. If you choose to form triads, for example, count down the list by three, draw a line, and group by three until you reach the end of the list. This gives you ready-made proficiency groups.

Another instructional strategy, if you do group heterogeneously, is to use a multiresponse format by arranging a series of tasks in increasing levels of difficulty. Assign specific students to the tasks that best fit their proficiency levels. For example, if I want students to discuss the causes of the American Civil War, I might list and number five questions at increasing levels of linguistic challenge. Question 1 might ask simply, "In what years did the Civil War happen?" Question 5, for the highest proficiency student, might read, "How did the differing cultures of North vs. South contribute to the causes of the American Civil War?" Each student is assigned a question number to report on, based on his or her proficiency level.

Personality grouping

Personality grouping is based on dominance vs. reticence. In other words, in a homogeneous scheme, active students are grouped together to fight it out, allowing reticent learners to interact more casually. If you have designed a task that has a defined outcome and learners understand that there is a job to be accomplished, then grouping the reticent learners together forces them to take the initiative to complete the task even though there may be a minimal use of English. Noise does not always equal shared participation. In fact, when groups are less loud, often it is because all learners are giving a respectful space to speak. The loudest groups sometimes signal the owning of the conversation by an argumentative few. When the objective is for learners to work with a problem and achieve consensus on a solu-

tion, this homogeneous grouping scheme will maximize chances for all group members to engage in conversation.

When forming groups based on personality, it is important for the teacher to designate a group leader who possesses the positive traits of high task orientation, negotiating ability, and leadership. In following this plan, the group leader models effective leadership for other members so that later they may take over the leadership role.

Controlled affiliation grouping

What is the level of trust among group members? How important is diversity of opinion and diversity of perception? When friends are grouped with friends, trust will be high, but diversity will be limited because of the likelihood of common experiences and viewpoints. In general, asking learners to work with members of the class whom they do not know well fosters more on-task learning, allows multiple viewpoints to be considered, and nurtures the growth of a class community as individuals get to know and trust one another. However, if the topic is emotionally charged and controversial, creating a safe space to allow free discussion may make instructional sense. For example, in the discussion of a piece of literature that contained chapters of violence and sexually suggestive scenes, I grouped by gender and close affiliation, which allowed for a safer, deeper, and more authentic literary analysis. This was the case in the class reading of Maya Angelou's (1971) *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The affiliation grouping allowed me to speak privately with a group of female students about skipping one chapter that might have been uncomfortable or objectionable, and allowed the students to discuss those parts of the book that were personally engaging but topically safe.

Shared first language (L1) groupings

Do you have a multilingual class of English learners? Generally, it is prevailing wisdom to group learners together who do not share a native language since this fosters maximum communication in English. Students then have no other choice but to use English as the medium of conversation to accomplish a task. However, there may be an academic task for which you want your

learners to use academic resources and terminology in the L1 to assist the task in the L2. When the objective is to master challenging content with language learning as an auxiliary goal, grouping learners by L1 groups is reasonable. For example, when you are teaching the finer points of English punctuation, allowing learners to use some L1 to discuss the nuances of punctuation leads to more efficient learning, in addition to the value-added discussions of punctuation differences between languages. Paradoxically, English accuracy may be facilitated through the use of the L1 to scaffold the L2. Furthermore, when the academic task requires the cognitive processing of highly abstract information, allowing the shared language groups to codeswitch during discussion leads to greater analytic depth. For example, identifying elements of deconstructionism within a novel demands that learners codeswitch in order to fully analyze literary factors.

Academic orientation groups

Are there class members who are less prepared academically than others? Does the task suggest that a mix of students will allow the stronger to scaffold the less strong, enhancing the academic conversation for all? For example, when integrating challenging academic content, such as science, with language learning, learners with strong academic backgrounds (irrespective of proficiency) can supply needed content expertise that allows all group members to learn the content and concurrently focus on language development. If the goal is for learners to develop collaborative knowledge, heterogeneous grouping based on content knowledge makes sense.

Although the intricacies in group work planning may seem overwhelming at first, much of the process can become routine. Establishing a variety of grouping schemes at the beginning of the year, giving each grouping scheme a name, and listing the learners in that scheme on a chart posted in the classroom leads to more efficient teacher planning.

Planning the interactional group task

The critical approach to planning for groups is to focus on what key outcomes you hope to see in your learners and to plan rich, thoughtful, and interesting tasks for group work. On the surface, designing a group task appears relatively easy, but to achieve outcomes beyond simple language practice the teacher must construct tasks and implement strategies that address not only language practice, but also support content learning, foster critical thinking, and develop a hoped-for supportive classroom community. Table 1 lists several instructional strategies that can be used to achieve five desired learner outcomes.

Assigning group roles

Again, it is important to assign each group member a role within the group. While the teacher may select the *leader-facilitator* or may have each group choose the leader on its own, other roles are also needed:

- Choose a *scribe* to take notes and organize the group discussion on a large piece of paper so every group member can follow the discussion threads.

Table 1: Effective Instructional Strategies for Desired Learner Outcomes

Desired Learner Outcomes	Effective Instructional Strategies
1. Foster a sense of community, belonging, and safety.	• Begin your class with community-building activities for the explicit purpose of having students learn one another's names, personalities, and cultures. This develops tolerance for cultures and ethnicities that have experienced mutual attitudes of bias or conflict. • Design tasks and activities that are personally meaningful and capture the teachable moment of a learner engaged in the difficult task of communicating in a new language. Embed the task in a narrative to foster personal connections.

2. Maximize opportunities for rehearsing, practicing, and engaging in creative manipulation of the language.	• Design group tasks so that *all* learners *must* participate and contribute to the group. Design and assign tasks that compel the group to find a solution to a problem, resolve a conflict, or reach consensus on an issue. • Provide the linguistic input necessary for learners to fully perform and benefit from the task. Teach vocabulary, idioms, and structures needed for meaning-making. Give learners the opportunity to individually prepare and rehearse the language before it is called into use by allowing five minutes of study time before the group discussion begins. • In a classroom with diverse proficiencies, create multiple response formats related to the topic (easier tasks for lower proficiency, harder for more advanced learners).
3. Utilize functional language to accomplish a linguistic, academic, or managerial task.	• Explicitly teach functional language and conversational strategies that learners will likely need, such as how to disagree and interrupt in a polite manner. Teach learners awareness of body language appropriate for English-situated conversations (leaning slightly forward, making eye contact, etc.).
4. Increase awareness of other cultures and tolerance for diverse personalities. Engage in appropriate social practices for the context.	• Define specific but revolving roles for learners (discussion leader, notetaker, etc.) so that all learners are secure in expectations but have an opportunity to engage in differing roles and at times assume leadership. • Make the *rules of engagement* explicit to solidify expectations for tolerance of diverse viewpoints, respectful use of language, equality of turn-taking, and the right to speak. Consider writing these rules down on chart paper and posting them during group work.
5. Develop new knowledge about a content area or cultural topic. Engage in critical thinking and problem solving.	• Integrate important academic or cultural content in the design of activities so students are not only growing linguistically, but are gaining knowledge. Design tasks that replicate the kind of academic tasks that students will need outside the classroom in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or U.S. K–12 settings, which facilitates the conceptual bridge between the ESL/EFL classroom and academic contexts. • Foster critical thinking through a task design that requires students to read, write, and listen to academic or other information sources before engaging in the academic conversations required for the task. • Design tasks that engage and challenge students on a deep linguistic and knowledge level involving problem solving, predicting, critiquing, applying, and other cognitively challenging manipulations of language and information. • Choose topics of interest that will engage and excite the learners to know more and discuss more freely.

- Appoint a *reporter* to report back to the class during a whole-class debrief.
- Assign a *vocabulary monitor* to compile new words from a discussion and give each group member a list the following day.
- Appoint a *time monitor* to keep track of the time allowed for the discussion.

Depending on the task and the number of members in each group, roles may be added or deleted. Remember, however, that even though each student might have a different role, all group members must still participate in the assigned task (for example, the time manager should not simply sit and look at the clock). And, to make sure that all students know what each role entails, teachers should clearly explain the responsibilities of each role before group work begins.

Reconceptualizing interactional groups

With the increasing complexity of the ESL/EFL curriculum amidst a push for content-infused language teaching, it is crucial to reconceptualize interactional groups and to consider a greater sophistication of decision-making, not only in the intentional choices we make in membership but also in the tasks that we construct for group work. Certainly, while the examples above represent only a small sample of potential schemes, each educator must reflect on the unique classroom context and class membership when directing group work to meet objectives. The bottom line is that the quality of learner interaction is too important to be left to chance. If we intend to maximize language learning and use, greater reflection and planning will certainly be needed.

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JUDITH A. RANCE-RONEY is a teacher educator and Chair of Education at DeSales University in Pennsylvania. She has taught English for twenty-five years both in the United States and Asia. Her interests lie in training teachers in the techniques and technologies for the effective English language classroom.

INCORPORATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERACTION AND SHARING

The attention span of young learners is a lot shorter than that of older students. Young learners need frequent opportunities to move around, take breaks, and interact. They also love to share information about their lives and experiences. In this week's Teacher's Corner, we will examine some simple ways to incorporate movement and interaction into any lesson in the young learners' English classroom.

TURN AND TALK

Turn and talk may already be familiar to some teachers, but it is very significant when working with young learners. In this strategy, students have a partner toward whom they physically turn and talk about a question asked or topic stated by the teacher. For instance, the teacher could say, "I want you to turn and talk to your partner about something fun you did over the weekend." Then, partners turn to each other and discuss the topic for a set amount of time. This simple strategy is great to use with young learners because the more frequently you provide opportunities for young students to share about their experiences or opinions, the more they will feel connected to content and valued in the classroom community.

This strategy is quite easy to integrate throughout the school day and requires very little preparation. The most important aspect is to rehearse procedures and expectations with your students. This will train your class to start and stop talking efficiently so that you can get back to your lesson. This strategy can be used with any topic or content. For instance, if you are reading a book to students, follow these steps:

Steps	What to say and do
Link the content to students' lives with a question.	"Wow, (name of character) feels very surprised right now! Can you think of a time that you felt surprised? What made you feel that way?" Give students about ten seconds to think quietly.
Remind students of the proper procedures to follow.	"In just a moment, I will signal you to turn and talk to your partner about a time you felt surprised. Be sure that you both have time to share. When you hear the signal, start talking. When you hear it again, it is time to stop."
Give students a signal to begin.	Ring a bell, clap your hands, or loudly say a special word to signal students. Listen in on their conversations and be sure both partners share. They should have about one minute for both partners to speak, depending on the question.
Give students a signal to stop talking.	Ring a bell, clap your hands, or loudly say a special word to signal students. Quickly acknowledge some of the conversations you heard by saying, "I heard that (student's name) was surprised once because _____." Return to the lesson by saying, "Let's keep reading to find out why (character's

	name) is so surprised."

When you introduce this strategy in your classroom, you will likely have to review procedures many times and remind students of your expectations. However, if you remain consistent, students will master the procedures. For very young students, it is helpful to assign partners ahead of time and have them seated next to each other. Initially, you may also want to plan and write 2 or 3 *turn and talk* questions into your lesson plans where you see opportunities for students to share information. Once you have done this several times, you will be able to quickly come up with *turn and talk* questions while you are teaching or when you feel that students are becoming restless and need to interact.

THINK-PAIR-SHARE

Think-pair-share is similar to turn and talk because students have time to think individually before they discuss a question or idea in pairs. As with *turn and talk*, the more well established the procedures are, the more efficiently this strategy can be integrated into your teaching. The difference here is that pairs have an opportunity to share with the whole class after their discussion.

You can follow the same procedures outlined above. After students finish their discussion, each pair should have time to share their ideas. For this reason, this strategy works best when you give students an opinion question, a question with specific answer choices, or when you ask them to make predictions. Again, if you are reading students a book, a question to ask for a *think-pair-share is*, "What do you think (character's name) will do next?" or "Do you think (character's name) is right to feel so angry?"

Once you have followed the steps above, you can quickly restate the question and then call on one student from each pair to provide the answer or conclusion reached during the partner discussion. To make this run smoothly, you can pre-assign partners (as noted above) and designate one partner as A and the other as B. Give each pair a number. Then you can easily say, "We are going to share, starting with pair number one. I would like partner B to tell the class what you and your partner predict (character's name) will do next."

If you rehearse the procedures each time you use this strategy, it will become another easy way to quickly give your young learners a chance to interact and share their experiences.

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STAND UP/SIT DOWN (OR THUMBS UP/THUMBS DOWN)

You can also give young learners a chance to share opinions or information nonverbally. You can ask learners to stand up or sit down, or show thumbs up or thumbs down according to their opinions and experiences. This is a very easy strategy to integrate, and the questions can be simple, such as:

- Stand up if you like _____. Sit down if you do not like _____.
- Show thumbs up if you have been to _____. Show thumbs down if you have not been to _____.
- Stand up if you think (character's name) did the right thing. Sit down if you think what (character's name) did was wrong.

You can extend this strategy by asking students to quickly find someone who is displaying the same response or the opposite response and explain why they made their choice. Or you can use this strategy to collect data about different topics for use during an activity. You can also use this to review information by making true/false statements and asking students to respond according to what they think is correct/incorrect.

While many of these strategies are likely familiar to many English teachers, the difference lies in how often you should use them if you teach young learners. As mentioned before, young learners have trouble sitting and listening for long periods of time. The more frequently you can include opportunities for young students to move around, talk, and share ideas, the more they will learn. The strategies presented this week require very little planning and are therefore a quick and easy way to incorporate interaction and sharing into your lessons.

5.3. Search

Explore more web resources for increasing classroom interactions in your English classrooms. You can also search these websites for more teaching resources:

- [American English Resources page](#)

- [Open Educational Resources Commons](#)

- [British Council Teaching Secondary Resources page](#)

(Hint: Try using these keywords in the American English site search box - student interaction, group work, communication. Type the keywords in the "Search Our Resources" space located in the middle of the web page. Explore the other sites using a similar approach.)

Take notes here:

Do

5.4. Think

Have you ever developed any useful activities (or strategies) of your own to give your students practice in spoken English? If yes, write some thoughts down in your journal about one activity (or strategy), and explain why it has been effective and useful in promoting interaction among your students.

Consider the following questions as you think about your interaction activity (or strategy):

- What stage of the lesson have you used this activity (or strategy)and why?
- How has this activity (or strategy) promoted meaningful communication?
- What visual aids did you use, if any, to make your activity (or strategy) more interesting and meaningful?

Take notes here:

5.5. Create

Create an activity (or strategy) that will generate communicative interactions among students. The purpose is to share one idea and receive many others that you can use in the classroom. This is an opportunity to learn new teaching ideas from each other and improve your practice. Use the template below when creating your activity.

Activity Name:

Activity Description:

- This activity is effective because…

- Here are some steps to help you use this activity in your classroom:

   Step 1:

   Step 2:

   Step 3:

   Note: This will be added to your Portfolio.

5.6. Share

Share the activity (or strategy) you created in the group chat. Be sure you post an activity that you have not seen already in the group chat. Please post a brief message and attach a Word document, PDF, or PPT slides with your activity. You may use the following message as a template.

Example

Hello, Colleagues! The activity I want to share to increase classroom interaction is called _____ (activity title). This activity is effective because_____ _____. See the three simple steps in the attached file for an example on how I use this activity in my classroom to increase interaction. (Be sure to attach your activity file.)

5.7. Apply

After you share an activity in the group chat, read through your colleagues' activities. Find at least one or two **new** activities in the group chat that you can use in your next class. Apply a new activity from this module in your next class. If it was a success, be sure to send a message and tell your colleague "Thank you!" and why it was effective.

Take notes here:

5.8. Reflect

Write 1-2 paragraphs to reflect on Module 5 (300-500 words). You may use what you have created, shared, and applied in the previous tasks.

Note: This will be added to your Portfolio.

Take notes here:

Module 5 Checklist:

- ☐ I watched three videos.
- ☐ I read two articles.
- ☐ I searched for a few new web resources to help my teaching.
- ☐ I thought about my favorite activity that generates communicative interactions among my students and wrote down some reflections.
- ☐ I created a new activity or adapted an existing activity to promote interaction among my students.
- ☐ I shared my activity/strategy with my colleagues on Telegram.
- ☐ I applied at least one new activity/strategy from my Telegram group in my teaching context.
- ☐ I wrote 1-2 paragraphs to reflect on my learning in Module 5.