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BE-IN: Best Innovative Practices for an Inclusive and Emotional Education to face early school leaving in Europe



The interpersonal function of language

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Remember!

The interpersonal aspect of language is reflected in how teachers talk with students and how students interact with one another. Modeling is very important and peer modeling is to be encouraged through group work and mentoring. The aim is to learn to work collaboratively and develop and maintain relationships together with a successful groupwork. The teachers provides and uses models of what (and what not!) to say in the context of group work.

Here are some examples:

disagreeing	I don't think that's quite right because...I understand you, but....
asking for clarification	I don't really understand. Can you explain it a bit more?
including others in discussion	Vanja, what do you think?
giving advice, making suggestion	maybe we could...? It might be a good idea if...
summing up,clarifyng the group's ideas	So, what we are saying is...



Suggestions for group work scaffolding



donut circles, hot seat, talking points, progressive brainstorm, opinion clines, problem solving (group or pairs)

Donut Circles

Children are in two concentric circles with equal numbers of students in each circle. The outer circle (circle A) faces inward, and the inner circle (circle B) faces outward so that each student is facing someone from the other circle. The pairs talk in turns to each other for a minute or two (or less for beginners) about a teacher-nominated topic. After both students have had a turn, one of the circles moves clockwise to face a new person, while the other circle stands still, so that everyone is now opposite a new partner. The process of exchanging information is then repeated, and the same circle then moves once more. This process continues as many times as the teacher feels is useful.

Hot Seats

Seat children in a circle, with one chair being designated the “hot seat.” The student in the hot seat portrays a character from a book that has been shared by the class or a historical character. Other students ask him or her questions to find out more about the character’s life. You can change the time frames, too, moving back into the past or forward into the future, so that the person in the hot seat imagines the character older or younger. Of course, if the character is historical, details must be correct.

Talking Points

This activity has been developed by Dawes (2008) and described by Mercer, Dawes, and Kleine Staarman (2009). It is a simple activity for stimulating speaking, listening, thinking, and learning. It consists of a list of statements that may be factually accurate, wrong, or contentious, all related to a particular topic. In the process of assessing the validity or otherwise of the statements, children’s understanding and thinking about the topic is stimulated. Through making their opinions explicit, and justifying them, they are helped to come to a better understanding of the issue. This small-group discussion is followed by a whole-class feedback session.

Progressive Brainstorm

This is an interactive activity where children share what they know about a topic. It can occur at the beginning or end of a unit of work (or both, as an evaluation for children of what has been learned). h Divide students into small groups. Each group has a large sheet of paper with the topic or a question written in the center (what we know about earthquakes, insects, spiders, healthy eating, etc.). Each group must have a different colored pen. h Children spend 5–10 minutes brainstorming what they know in the small group and write down words or concepts associated with the topic, as in a mind map or semantic web. h After 5–10 minutes, each group moves to the next group’s table, leaving their paper behind but keeping their own color pen. h On the next group’s paper they add ideas, using the ideas there as a springboard for things they hadn’t thought of earlier, adding things that are missing, or adding to the ideas already there with further examples or details. The groups continue moving every 5–10 minutes until they are all back in their original places. h Each group then discusses what is now on their original sheet, noting additions or critiquing anything they disagree with. Allow time for some whole-class discussion or a “show and tell” for each group. This activity generates a lot of talk, especially as children come to read what has been written on other papers and on their own.



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Opinion Clines

The aim here is for students to arrange themselves in a line representing a continuum from strongly agreeing to strongly disagreeing with a controversial statement. They will need enough knowledge to be able to make a decision that they can support. Those who strongly agree with the statement stand on the left, and those who strongly disagree stand on the right. Other students (with views in between) range themselves as a cline between the two extremes. To do this there needs to be considerable discussion among individual students about how their views fit in with those standing on each side of them. This activity requires students not only to give their opinions, but also to make explicit the reasons they have for holding these opinions. Opinion clines may be a precursor or a follow-up to a small group or whole-class discussion, and they are also useful scaffolding for a written essay or discussion.

Problem Solving

Contexts for group problem solving occur in all curriculum areas, often followed by students reporting back to the class about their solutions. Questions or problems where students are encouraged to think laterally, in unusual and creative ways that are less bound by the constraints of formal logical thinking, can also provide fun contexts for spoken language and can serve as useful warm-up activities. They allow all students to participate easily, especially if they are presented visually (as in the examples), or they use simple grammatical structures. Here are some examples: How can you combine two of the following to make something new: a paintbrush, a wheelbarrow, a garbage bin, four wheels, a spade, a tent? Sample answer: Put the tent on the wheels to make a mobile home. How many uses can you think of for an old car tire? Sample answers: grow flowers in it; use it as a swing. Think of five things that you can't photograph. Sample answers: the camera while you are using it to take the photo; the back of the moon. The answer is "midnight." What is the question? Sample answer: What time is it when the clock strikes 12 and it's dark outside?

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