Strategies to Make Interaction Work in Mixed-Ability Classrooms

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WELCOME

Please Sign In

Classroom Challenges
• Take 3 cards and a marker.
• Think about 3 challenges that you face in making oral interaction work in your classroom.
• Write 1 challenge per card and make it large enough that your text can be seen across the room.
• Post your cards on the sticky board and return your marker to the basket.

Access the Powerpoint: www.stmarys-ca.edu/node/3863
Google search: St. Mary’s TESOL
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WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

PARTICIPANTS WILL

- Identify challenges in implementing effective language development practices in their classrooms.
- Learn and practice skills to make interaction strategies work with mixed-ability English-language learners.
IDEA BOARD

Idea Generation

Scrunching

Labeling the Categories

Small Group Discussion
 Modifications for Group Size
EXPERT GROUPS

PARTICIPANTS WILL

*Individually*
1. Decide which category you have the most knowledge/expertise about.

2. Go to the poster designated for that category.

*With Group Members*
3. Discuss the strategies that you have tried in response to this challenge category.

4. List the ideas generated by the group.
CATEGORY: OFF TASK BEHAVIORS

Example of challenge generated on Idea Board:
Students texting during class

Example of strategy tried in response to challenge:
Mingle

Discussion/description of Strategy:
Students stand up and meet with a partner at another table in order to share ideas; at a pre-determined signal students switch to a new partner.
EXPERT GROUPS

PARTICIPANTS WILL

1. (Individually) Decide which category you have the most knowledge/expertise about.

2. Go to the poster designated for that category.

3. (With Group Members) Discuss the strategies that you have tried in response to this challenge category.

4. List the ideas generated by the group.

5. Share ideas with whole group

Modifications for group size/number of responses
THE “IT-DOESN’T-WORK” GROUPS

PARTICIPANTS WILL

**Individually**
1. Select a strategy you’ve tried but found unsuccessful

2. Go to the poster designated for that strategy.

**With Group Members**
3. Discuss the student behaviors that you have experienced when you’ve tried this strategy.

4. List the student behaviors generated by the group.
“IT-DOESN’T-WORK” GROUP EXAMPLE

CATEGORY: OFF TASK BEHAVIORS

Example of strategy you tried but found unsuccessful:
Mingle

Discussion/description of unacceptable student behaviors:
Students only “mingled” with friends.
Students’ conversations were off-topic.
Students took too long to get into groups.
THE “IT-DOESN’T-WORK” GROUPS

PARTICIPANTS WILL

1. (Individually) Select a strategy you’ve tried but found unsuccessful

2. Go to the poster designated for that strategy.

3. (With Group Members) Discuss the student behaviors that you have experienced when you’ve tried this strategy.

4. List the student behaviors generated by the group.

5. Share ideas with whole group

   Modifications for group size/number of responses
WHEN YOU CAN PREDICT IT, YOU CAN PLAN FOR IT

GIVE CLEAR AND CONSISTENT EXPECTATIONS

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENT

PLAN FOR EXPECTED UNACCEPTIBLE BEHAVIOR
CLEAR AND CONSISTENT EXPECTATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before the Lesson:</th>
<th>Beginning the Lesson:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have a clear learning outcome in</td>
<td>Tell the students why they are doing the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mind for each activity.</td>
<td>activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagine what an acceptable</td>
<td>Explain activity expectations in multiple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student product of the activity</td>
<td>ways: oral, written, models and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will look like.</td>
<td>demonstrations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualize each step that the</td>
<td>Explain what students should do when they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student must complete to</td>
<td>are stuck or don’t understand the next step.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achieve the learning outcome.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CREATING AN EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Planning the Course:

Think about all possible grouping arrangements, including pairs, triads, small groups, and half class.

Create a transparent and semi-permanent system for these groupings that can be reused for any interactive strategy.

Beginning the Course:

Explain interaction expectations for each possible grouping strategy.

Model various grouping combinations using students.

Teach students how to move into and out of these combinations.
Setting Up the Classroom for Interaction
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning the Lesson:</th>
<th>Beginning the Lesson:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consider and acquire all materials needed for the activity.</td>
<td>If needed, direct students to desired grouping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan for how those materials will be distributed to students.</td>
<td>Explain and manage material distribution and collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider whether modifications are needed for the familiar classroom groupings.</td>
<td>Teach and model (or revisit) behavior expectations associated with the grouping.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table Captain
★ Textbooks
★ Whiteboards
★ Markers
PLAN FOR EXPECTED UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

Common Student Behaviors That Cause Teachers To Shy Away From Interaction In The Classroom:

✧ Students are off-task.
✧ Students disengaged from instruction.
✧ Students produce little evidence of learning.
✧ Students become dependent on scaffold and can’t do work independently.
Managing Off-Task Behaviors

✧ Get to know the student(s).

✧ Consider what’s motivating the behavior.

✧ Consider rewards/consequences (individual or class) to motivate student to exhibit desired behavior.

✧ Talk to student(s) about the off-task behavior, the reward/consequence system, and what the students will gain by changing behavior.
Things to Consider

✧ **Implement reward/consequence system consistently**
   Don’t make promises that you don’t follow through on

✧ **Know that behaviors may get worse before they improve.**
Engaging Students in the Activity

✧ **Revisit suggestions from off-task behavior**
  
  In particular, getting to know the student’s life situation and future aspirations

✧ **Consider whether the student(s) has the necessary prerequisite skills**
Things to Consider

✧ Know the available support services and pathway for students to access those services.

✧ Provide a safe space for students to disengage for a short period of time.
   
   Identifies teacher as ally, not teacher as adversary
   
   Reinforces that engagement is an expectation
Getting Evidence of Learning

✧ Get to know the student(s).

✧ Consider what’s motivating the behavior.

✧ Consider whether the student(s) has the necessary prerequisite skills
Things to Consider

✧ Create a realistic expectation of what “acceptable” work is for that student.

  Consider modifying amount of work expected.

  Consider providing scaffold to support successful completion (e.g. sentence frames, sentence starters, or visual cues).

✧ Give student(s) additional time to complete work, in or out of class.

✧ Create an expectation that all assignments must be completed at an acceptable level.
Letting Go of the Scaffold

✧ Consider the match between language demands of activity and the students’ language ability.

✧ Teach, model and practice essential vocabulary for skills for expected language functions (compare-contrast, describe, sequence).

✧ Modify the language demands of linguistic input (readings and questions)

✧ Create tiers of expectations for most activities and assignments

✧ Encourage students to work in their zone of proximal development ($i+1$).
WRITE down 1 strategy that you would like to try over the next week.

PREDICT 2 unacceptable behaviors you expect from your students.

DISCUSS with a partner 3 ways that you plan to manage this behavior.
Key Take-Away Idea: Anticipate the Unacceptable

Careful planning and creating effective environments for interaction will meet the needs of the majority of students.

However, there are always exceptions – a single student or a large percentage of the class. This might happen either consistently or inconsistently.

In addition to planning and creating an effective environment, teachers must have procedures in place for managing unacceptable behavior. Much of this behavior can be predicted.