

# Language development through student interaction

## Rationale / underlying principles

- Language is intrinsically linked to the construction of knowledge
- Language is an inherently social activity
- Meaningful interaction is critical to the development of language and communication skills

### Whole group interaction

1. Use icebreakers when students in a group don't know each other; use activities that require students to move around the room and speak to a number of people.
2. At beginning of the class, ask students what they remember from last session; brainstorm the topic to build context; have a 'focus question' that allows students to 'warm up' to the content.
3. During class check on understanding at regular intervals; ask students to predict outcomes, suggest possible solutions, and offer explanations in relation to the topic.
4. End of class, ask students what they have learned; what was the most important point and why; ask students to predict where the topic is going next.

### Small group interaction

5. Students in a group create a glossary of terms and concepts in a group which they add to each week; the glossary includes a formal definition, and informal use of the term and concept by students.
6. Organise regular 3 minute talks within groups on aspects of the topic; have 3 minute brainstorming of a topic; ask students in groups to come up with questions requiring critical thinking by the group. the glossary includes a formal definition, and informal use of the term and concept by students.
7. Give students a problem-solving task and time limit after which they report back to the whole group; student engage in a mini-research task to be completed within a time limit; information sharing task with each group member contributing one piece.

**Pair activities**

8. Provide true-false quizzes for students to complete in pairs.

9. Give students a quiz in which they match terms and concepts with definitions and meanings.

10. Pair research work: each student reads a section of a chapter or article; they discuss and pool their summaries of the arguments and evidence, or main points, or categorise information under headings.

11. Use the FSLC technique:

F: students formulate an answer on their own;

S: share their answer;

L: listen carefully to their partner's answer;

C: create a new answer that is superior to their individual answers; then share those with the larger group.

**Resource for student project work**

12. Take students through the resource 'Groupwork' on the RMIT Learning Lab. It provides students with practical and effective strategies to follow when working on a group project at <http://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/group-work>