



## Micro-teaching activities

Interactive activities have multiple benefits: they engage students and thus support their learning and understanding, and they often enable the teacher to quickly assess the student level of knowledge, comprehension or mastery of the material. The activities listed below are not universal or strictly defined; they are to be adapted to various teaching contexts and teaching styles.

We can distinguish several basic types of student interaction:

- individual work escalating to pair-work or group-work
- pair-work
- group-work
- interaction via technology – Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Wikis/GoogleDocs, blogs, chat rooms, ...
- interaction through homework – learning logs, portfolios, ...

The following activities are divided into five categories (introductory activities, learning a new topic or reinforcing the knowledge, checking understanding, applying the knowledge/skill, closing activities), however, each activity can be readily shifted to another category if we modify its goal.

### 1. Introductory activities

Activities that help motivate and focus on a new topic:

- *pictures, movie clips* – the teacher shows a picture, or a brief segment of a movie to illustrate a point/start a discussion/point out a common misconception/...
- *controversial question, personalizing a topic* – the teacher poses a controversial question related to the day's topic, or asks for a personal experience connected to the topic
- *brainstorming on the board or in groups* – the teacher invites students to call out concepts and terms related to a new topic; the students work as a class (the teacher writes words on the board) or in groups with a person responsible for noting down the words; there can be a lot of variation – putting the concepts into categories, circling the main concepts, writing the words for the letters of the alphabet, ...
- *entry tickets* (prompts which provide teachers with student diagnostic at the beginning of a lesson) – students write answers to the teacher's question (e.g. "Based on the reading for class today, what is your understanding of ...") on small pieces of paper, the teacher collects the answers

Activities that revise previous lessons:

- *student pictures* – the teacher asks students to bring their own photos (in mobile devices or on paper) which illustrate a concept learnt or a problem debated, their peers in groups discuss the meaning of the picture first, and only then the author reveals their original idea behind the picture
- *imaginary show and tell* – students pretend they have brought an object/concept relevant to the topic learnt and “display” it to the class while talking about its properties/features
- *jigsaw crossword puzzle* – the teacher creates a crossword puzzle from words important for the topic, however, prepares two handouts which complement each other, each with half of the words filled in; students work in pairs (each having a different half) and ask for explanations of words they need to fill in (this type of crossword puzzle can be created online, e.g. <http://www.armoredpenguin.com/crossword/> using the “information gap puzzle” option)
- *definition cards* – the teacher prepares cards with key terms (a term for a card) and hands them out to students who then mingle creating pairs; in a pair each student explains the term in a card – if the other student identifies the term he/she takes this card, after exchanging the explanations, they search for a new pair

## **2. Learning a new topic or reinforcing the knowledge**

- *student presentations* – students work in groups, each group is given a different topic or source material, the teams work together to understand the assigned topic and to present it to the whole class; the audience is expected to take notes and ask questions
- *student videos* – instead of presenting a new topic in the class, students can make videos and upload them for others to watch
- *jigsaw reading (group experts)* - students work in groups, each group is given a different topic, the teams work together to understand the topic and to be ready to explain it; the teacher then re-mixes groups with one “expert” for each topic who has to teach his new group
- *board rotation* – the teacher assigns groups of students to each of the boards (posters) which has been set up in the room, and assigns one topic/question per board; each group search for the answer and write it down within a time limit, then they rotate to the next board, study what is already written, they can make corrections and they continue with answers; after each group complete the round and gets to their original board, they check the answer and report to the class
- *compare the results (pick the winner)* – the teacher divides the class into groups and assigns all groups the same problem; the groups record their answers on paper which is then switched and the groups evaluate the answers of other groups; the groups then merge and select the best answers which are then presented to the class
- *mind-mapping (concept mapping)* – students are asked to organize key words into a map indicating connections between them (the key words can be provided in full or

partly); the connections are then explained to the class (especially if there are more correct options)

- *describing a process* – teacher selects two processes which may be related (e.g. making beer and making wine) and prepares the main steps on slips of paper; groups of students are given the same sets of steps, first they identify the two processes, then they decide which steps belong to each of them; the teacher then asks half of the groups to focus on one procedure and the other half on the other procedure organizing the steps into correct order and then describing the process in class

### 3. Checking understanding

- *true or false?* – a popular activity with a lot of variations, e.g. the teacher prepares a card with a statement for each student (if possible, half of the statements are true, the other half false), students decide if theirs is one of the true statements or not and go to the assigned part of the classroom – if there are e.g. more truths, the “true” students should reconsider the answer
- *one-sentence summary/rephrasing/TV commercial* – students are asked to summarize the topic into one sentence that incorporates who/what/when/where/why/how OR students are to rephrase the topic for a layperson, e.g. a grandparent OR students are asked to create a 30-second commercial for a topic being discussed in class
- *defining features matrix* – if the course involves definitions, the teacher can prepare a simple table for students to decide if a defining feature is present or absent, e.g. whether the given theories refer to behaviorist or constructivist model
- *think-pair-share* – students work individually, then share and compare possible answers to a question with a partner before addressing the larger class
- *pair-share-repeat* – each student has a different question, after preparing the answer they pair and share their answers, then they are asked to find a new partner and share the wisdom of the old partner to the new partner
- *pass a question* – the teacher distributes a sheet of paper to pairs of students; pairs write 2 or 3 questions related to the topic and pass them to another pair who will write answers, then they pass them to another pair who will check if the answers are correct

### 4. Applying the knowledge/skill

- *role-playing* – depending on a topic the teacher assigns roles and scenarios, e.g. a doctor explaining a diagnosis to a patient; in order to have the role play more efficient, there can be another person evaluating the performance, e.g. a novice doctor talking a patient and a supervising doctor who is listening, making notes for the feedback (it is advisable to prepare a short evaluation form) and then giving feedback
- *debate* – students debate in class (with the set rules for speakers) or in pairs (each is assigned a position, e.g. pros or cons of a jury trial, students defending the same side can prepare arguments together, then each is paired with an opposing partner)

- *reported discussion* – students in groups of five discuss the same problem, 2 students are assigned special roles: 1) a spokesperson doesn't take part in the discussion, just listens, makes notes and after the discussion reports the results back to the class, 2) a discussion leader is in charge of the discussion, must make sure that everybody (except the spokesperson) has a chance to express their opinions and that the group arrives at a conclusion
- *press conference/panel discussion* – the teacher assigns roles (or the roles can be drawn): reporters/lay audience ask, experts give answers
- *ranking alternatives* – the teacher gives a situation/problem, everyone thinks up as many alternative courses of action/explanations/solutions as possible; students in groups compile a list and rank them by preference
- *simulation/problem solving* – this activity is usually long-term: students are placed into simulating a situation and solving problems which arise, e.g. setting up a business
- *case study* – students follow “real-life” scenarios from their discipline, they analyse a problem and arrive at a solution
- *Switch it up!* - students are asked to work on one problem for a few minutes and then move to a second problem without debriefing the first one, solve the second one and only then return to the first one for more work. A carefully chosen second problem can shed light on the first problem, but this also works well if the problems are not directly related to each other.

### 5. Closing activities

- *exit ticket* – students write answers to the teacher's question (e.g. “What was the muddiest point in today's class?”) on small pieces of paper, the teacher collects the answers
- *one-minute paper* – students write for one minute on a specific question (which might be generalized to “what was the most important thing you learnt today”)
- *harvesting* – students are asked to write reflectively about the implications of what they learnt, e.g. why it is important, how they can apply it, how it relates to their thesis/other subjects
- *advice letter* – the whole course closing activity - students write a letter of advice to future students on how to be successful students in that course

[Adapted from:

<https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/sheridan-center/teaching-learning/effective-classroom-practices/interactive-classroom-activities>

[http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingAndLearningResources/CourseDesign/Assessment/content/101\\_Tips.pdf](http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingAndLearningResources/CourseDesign/Assessment/content/101_Tips.pdf)]

## **Class talk - useful phrases**

### **Introducing next steps/Signposting:**

Let's revise the main points from last week.

Now I'd like you to imagine that ...

You're going to read a short text explaining ...

What I'd like to do now is ...

What comes to your mind when you hear the word ...?

We have already covered the theory, now let's work on the practice.

### **Class management:**

Work on the task on your own.

Work together with the person sitting beside you.

Work in pairs.

Form groups of five.

Here are some tasks for you to work on in groups of four.

Each group should appoint a spokesperson.

Brainstorm your ideas. Meanwhile, one of you should write down your ideas.

Go through each question as a group and write down the results.

Divide out the work among the members of the team.

### **Monitoring/Problem solving**

How are you getting on?

What question are you on?

So far so good?

May I make a suggestion?

Wouldn't it be better if you applied a different formula?

To solve this problem, I recommend you look at your class notes.

Where did you get stuck?

### **Results**

It's time for your feedback.

Who would like to present the solution?

Any volunteer?

Whose turn is it to explain the answer?

What conclusions have you reached?

Did you use the same method to get the result?

Did anyone come up with a different answer?

Those of you with this result, please raise your hands.

Let's see what approach each group took.

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## Checking answers

Exactly. Excellent answer.

Both answers are correct.

Well done. That's a good answer.

That's a good point. I'm glad you brought it up.

You aren't quite there yet. Keep trying.

It's not exactly correct, but you're on the right track.

I'm afraid that's not the right answer.

[Adapted from: <http://www.upc.edu/slt/classtalk/> ]

## Further reading:

Dale, Liz; Tanner, Rosie. CLIL Activities with CD-ROM: A Resource for Subject and Language Teachers, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

*(Activities organised into five chapters: Activating, Guiding understanding, Focus on language, Focus on speaking and Focus on writing. A further chapter provides practical ideas for assessment, review and feedback.)*

Deller, Sheelagh; Price, Christine. Teaching Other Subjects Through English (CLIL), OUP Oxford, 2007. *(Over 60 activities, each using a demo subject, which can be adapted to suit a variety of subjects and circumstances. Ideas to support the subject text book and reduce the language obstacle for teachers and learners. Appendix of classroom language for non-native speaker teachers.)*

Mehisto, Peeter; Marsh, David Mark; Frigols, María Jesús. Uncovering CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning in Bilingual and Multilingual Education. Macmillan Education Australia. 2008. *(A wide range of practical ideas and activities that can be used in the CLIL classroom.)*