

Communicative Group Activity: What's Your Opinion?

Mark Coughlin
tokyo11[at]hotmail.com
Keio University (Tokyo, Japan)

Introduction

This activity is designed to focus on communication in a classroom environment. The major objectives are to encourage students to communicate in a small group setting.

The Learner English Level:

All levels

Activity Time

20 – 30 minutes

Preparation Time:

You will need to set aside approximately twenty minutes before class to create the necessary question sheets for that day's activity. Then allot five minutes to make the number of copies needed for the class.

Material

Topic sheets should be created by the instructor before the start of class. Type or write each topic (one word or a short sentence) on a sheet of paper. The more topic sheets created the better and whatever might be of interest to the class. Example: money, dating, marriage, sports, smoking and the family.

The Problem:

As teachers know, many ESL students often have difficulty conversing in small groups unless guided by a topic. Here's a fun activity which helps direct students into short English conversation and is easy to play.

How the Activity Works

Step 1

Have the class stand up and arrange the chairs or tables so the students can sit together in small groups. You might consider manipulating the groups to ensure a "talker" is placed with those who might not be so outgoing. Also, be sure to stress the importance of answering in a complete sentence before starting.

Step 2

Once the groups have been arranged, a team captain is selected. Students often are reluctant to volunteer so you might do this yourself. I've found students enjoy being chosen even if they initially seem hesitant. The team captain chooses who picks up the first topic sheet.

Step 3

The game begins by placing the topic sheets placed in a pile on the table or the team captain's desk. A student (chosen by the

captain) picks a sheet from the pile and reads the topic. The student then gives an opinion on what was read.

Step 4

After the student has expressed a view point, he or she asks others in the group to offer their thoughts on the subject. If no one volunteers, a student is then picked by the person who read the question. That student can either offer an opinion or elect to choose a new subject from the pile of topic sheets.

Step 5

While the students are working, circulate about the room, listening to be sure they are speaking in complete sentences or helping those who seem stuck on a question. The groups continue working until everyone has chosen a topic sheet or the allotted time for the exercise has expired.

Conclusion

The success of this exercise is dependent on the quality of the topics sheets. The more interesting the topics, the more fun the game. The key is to be flexible with the topic sheets exchanging those which you find don't work well with new ideas. After a while you'll find yourself with enough popular topics that you can use in many classroom settings.

The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. XII, No. 4, April 2006

<http://iteslj.org/>

<http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Coughlin-Opinion.html>