

ACTIVITIES FOR PAIR/GROUP INTERACTIONS

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ELT Methodology

Pair/group work: *“A generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self-initiated language”*

H. Douglas Brown

ADVANTAGES OF PAIR WORK

From the learner’s position, doing a task in pairs or groups has a number of advantages. Bearing them in mind will also guide you in your role as facilitator of learning.

- It gives learners confidence to try out whatever language they know, or think they know, in the relative privacy of a pair or small group, without fear of being wrong or of being corrected in front of the class.
- It gives learners experience of spontaneous interaction, which involves composing what they want to say in real time, formulating phrases and units of meaning, while listening to what is being said.
- It gives learners a chance to benefit from noticing how others express similar meanings. Research shows they are more likely to provide corrective feedback to each other (when encouraged to do so) than adopt each other’s errors.
- It gives all learners chances to practice negotiating turns to speak, initiating as well as responding to question, and reacting to other’s contributions (whereas in teacher-led interaction, they only have a responding role).
- It engages learners in using language purposefully and co-operatively, concentrating on building meaning, not just using language for display purpose.

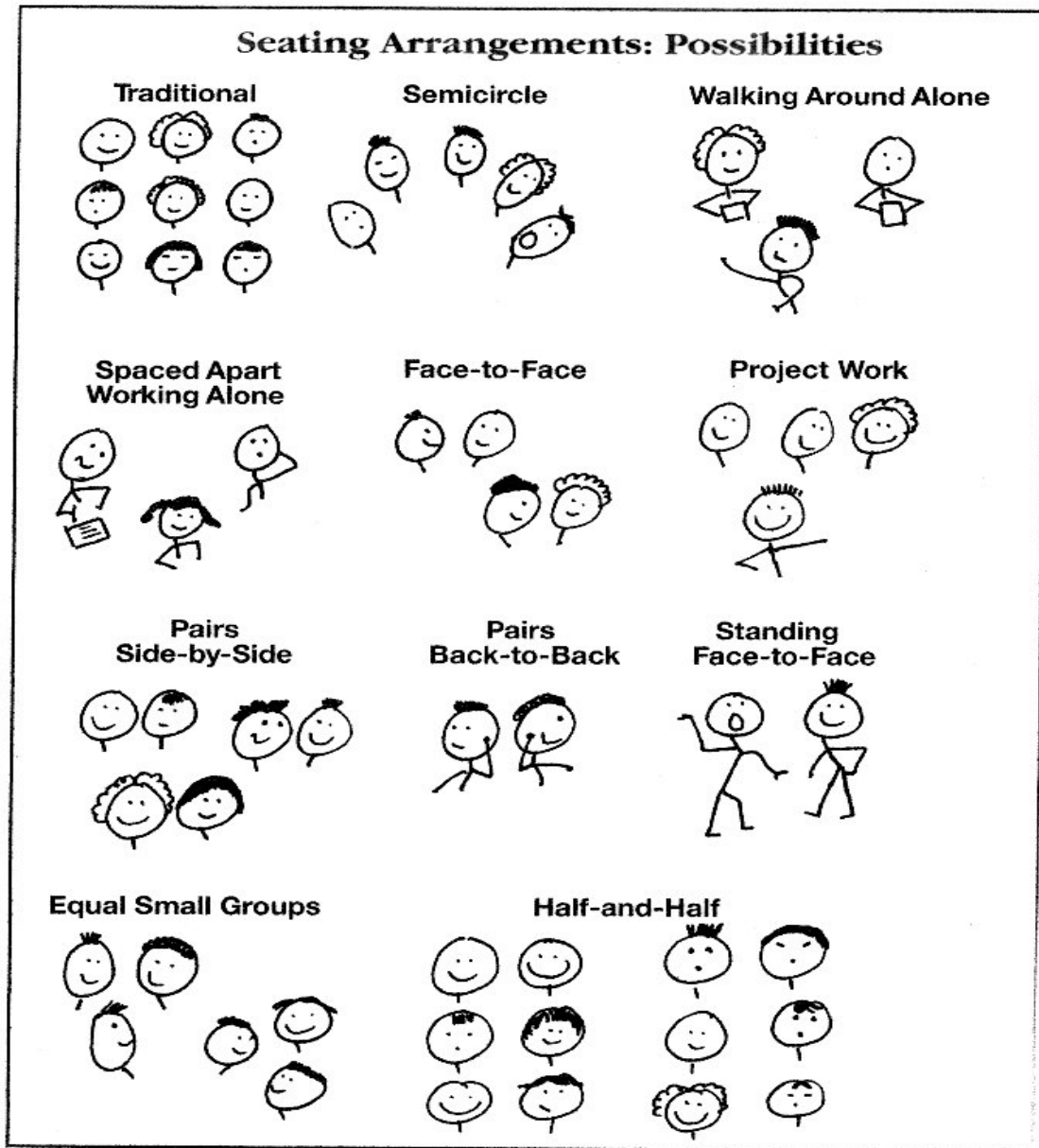
- It makes learners participate in a complete interaction, not just one-off sentences. Negotiating openings and closings, new stages or changes of direction are their responsibility. It is likely that discourse skills such as these can only be acquired through interaction.
- It gives learners more chances to try out communication strategies like checking understanding, paraphrasing to get round an unknown word, reformulating other people's ideas, and supplying words and phrases for other speakers.
- It helps learners gradually gain confidence as they find they can rely on co-operation with their fellow students to achieve the goals of the tasks mainly through use of the target language.

TIPS ON MANAGING GROUP WORK

- Do a few minutes of pair work every lesson until you and your students feel happy to try group work.
- Explain to your students why group work is a good idea.
- Check/pre-teach the vocabulary and grammar students will need to successfully complete the group work activity.
- Introduce the goal of the task/activity and explain the details of the activity. Make sure the goal of the activity is clear.
- Give a small demonstration of the group activity.
- Make sure that all the students know what to do in the group activity.
- Assign roles to each member of the groups and elicit their role responsibilities.
- Arrange the students into groups. Be sure to plan how you will make the groups, and prepare clear instructions, or there may be lots of confusion.

- Change the groupings on a regular basis. Varieties of groups give students a change of working styles and learning experiences.
- Give clear instructions and set time limit for the activities.
- Ask one or two students to repeat the instructions.
- Reinforce the instructions by writing them on the board.
- Always signal the start of the activity and the end of the activity. You may want to pre-arrange a special signal with your class.
- Tell students not to worry about making mistakes during the discussion phase.
- Do not stay at the center, in front of the class, because the students will keep looking at you, waiting for your reactions and responses to their English.
- Walk around slowly and quietly, just looking and listening carefully. Do not correct mistakes if it is the discussion phase of a lesson, but note the common problems to be addressed afterwards. Always see that the students are speaking in English.
- Try not to get too close to the groups or interfere with their attempts to communicate. Leave your students to work freely during the discussion phase, as this is an opportunity to practice the English they have learnt.
- Feel free to stop an activity to clarify instructions when students are confused or off-task.
- Finally, let students share results of the activity with other groups and get their feedback from them.
- Persist in doing group work, even if you find it a challenging teaching technique. It's a very effective way to let your students practice English in the classroom.

Pair/Group Possibilities



SAMPLE LESSON PLAN: GROUP WORK

FIND SOMEONE WHO

Procedure: The students walk around the room and find at least one person in the class who was born in the same month as they were; they make a note of the name. Then they have to find someone who was born on the same day of the month, and

so on down the list. At the end, the students with the most number of “matches,” wins.

Find someone who...

was born in the same month as you.

was born on the same day of the month as you.

has the same number of brothers as you.

has the same number of sisters as you.

ate at least two of the same things as you for breakfast.

has the same favorite color as you.

THINGS IN COMMON

Procedure: Students sit in pairs, preferably choosing as their partner someone they do not know very well. They talk to one another in order to find out as many things as they can that they have in common. These must be things that can only be discovered through talking – not obvious or visible characteristics like “We are in the same class” or “We both have blue eyes.” At the end they share their findings with the full class.