

Designing Discussion Activities

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Abstract: The article provides insights on how the design of discussion activities can be used to facilitate alternative learning objectives in the marketing curriculum. A review of the literature provides insight for making choices with regards to two aspects of discussion design: (a) the choice between face-to-face and online (i.e., threaded bulletin boards) delivery modes and (b) the choice between structured and unstructured discussion. Exploratory research is explicated that lends support to recommendations made relevant to matching desired learning outcomes and discussion activity design.

Key points: designing, classroom, discussion activities, ideal classroom, language corners, authentic opportunities, language skills, real-life situations, conducive environment.

We encourage you to custom-design your discussion prompts and activities if you feel confident running open-ended class discussions! Here is some advice:

- Provide questions that help students make connections between content, themes, goals, and/or skills (as relevant to your class)
- Encourage students to work together to figure out difficult content (and be prepared to follow up with redirection if needed)
- Give opportunities for making real-life connections: for example, by having students provide a relevant example from their experience or the news, suggest an application for a skill, or apply their learning to a scenario you provide
- Avoid asking yes or no questions
- Balance the questions' complexity; consider using a strategy like a snowball or pyramid discussion to establish the basics and build toward complicated ideas and applications

If you are teaching a new course, building your skills as a discussion facilitator, or want to experiment with new strategies, there are many resources available online for choosing and running different types of discussion activities. Some of our favorites include:

- Jennifer Gonzalez's "Big List of Class Discussion Strategies" (developed for in-person and adaptable to hybrid and virtual)
- Jay Howard's "How to Hold a Better Class Discussion" (discusses disrupting norms of discussion that are low-energy, disengaged, and/or dominated by only a few voices)

- Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching's guide to discussions (includes links to resources on starting good discussions, handling difficult moments, and building community through strategically learning names)

An ideal English classroom will have: A bookshelf or a reading corner. Manipulative, posters, and student work posted around the classroom. desks arranged so students can easily see the teacher and the board. Resources and extra books available for students.

Using materials such as English language videos, podcasts, and articles can also create an English environment. Additionally, using English language games and activities in the class can make English language learning more interactive and engaging for students. "To be honest, I prefer learning with video materials to learning with the course books. I think the videos are more authentic..." (Student 16) Thanajaro (2000) emphasized the impact of using authentic video materials on English learners' learning achievements. Using video materials encourages English learners to interact with others from all around the world.

Setting up English language corners or bulletin boards with English language materials and resources such as posters, books and magazines can also create a more interactive and immersive learning experience.

It is important to remember that creating an English atmosphere in the class is not just about using English as the language of instruction, but also about creating authentic opportunities for students to use English in different contexts and situations.

Continuing to use authentic materials is key to creating an English atmosphere in the class. Teachers can incorporate real-life situations and scenarios into their lessons, such as ordering food at a restaurant or giving directions on a map. This not only helps students practice their language skills but also gives them practical knowledge that they can use outside of the classroom.

Another way to create an English atmosphere is by inviting guest speakers who are native English speakers. This allows students to interact with someone who speaks English fluently and provides them with a chance to practice their language skills in a more natural setting.

Major finding indicates that a conducive environment created by the teacher helps students to enhance their speaking skills. For elementary students to be fluent in speaking the target language, the teacher needs to give them opportunities to talk about their own experiences.

Additionally, teachers can encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities that involve using English, such as joining an English club or attending an English-speaking event. This not only gives students more opportunities to practice their language skills but also exposes them to different cultures and perspectives.

Overall, creating an English atmosphere in the class requires a combination of using authentic materials, incorporating real-life situations into lessons, inviting guest speakers, and encouraging participation in extracurricular activities. By doing so, teachers can provide students with a more immersive and engaging learning experience that will help them develop their language skills both inside and outside of the classroom.

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