To learn a language, you must use the language, and practicing with friends and classmates is a great way to do this.

In this webinar, we will:

- discuss how to structure pair and group work activities to increase student participation in language learning activities.
- explore fun icebreaker activities, the “think-pair-share” principle, and different strategies for grouping students.
- demonstrate how pair and group activities can be an enjoyable and interactive way for students to see classmates as people who can help them improve their English skills.
John has spent the last ten years teaching English to speakers of other languages. He has taught in Ecuador, China, and the United States and was a U.S. Department of State English Language Fellow in Moscow, Russia during the 2014-15 academic year. He currently works at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as a Lecturer in the Linguistics department.

His teaching interests include all levels of academic writing as well as materials design and development. Outside of teaching, he loves reading, playing games, watching movies, and hiking with his wife and their dog.
Classmates as Language Learning Allies: Activities to Encourage Student-to-Student Interaction
Checking In

How are you doing today?
The Joy of Student Discussion

What a great sound!
Webinar Outline

• Defining “interaction” and its importance
• Using “icebreakers” to get students talking
• Promoting pair and group work with “Think-Pair-Share”
• Sharing fun activity ideas
• Using different strategies for grouping students
Critical Questions

What does the term “interaction” mean?
Can you give an example?
“Interaction” Defined

When students are communicating naturally and focused on *sharing messages* and *information* and not on grammar and proper form (Krashen, 1981)
More Than Grammar and Vocabulary

I am...
You are...
He/She/It is...  +  Adjective
We are...
They are...

Repeat after me...
Critical Question

Why is “interaction” important in the English classroom?
The Importance of Interaction

1. To learn a language, you must use it
2. More like “real life” use of language
3. Shows that mistakes are a good thing and how to recover from them
4. Makes the most of class time
5. A **FUN** way to build relationships in class
Tips for Promoting Interaction

Tip #1
Create a sense of community in your classroom.
Instructor Introductions

A Little More About Me
Student Introductions

Where are you from?

What are your hobbies?

What’s your favorite word in English?

What do you like to study?

What is your favorite food?
What are some other good questions you can ask to get to know someone?
The Importance of Preparation

**Note:** Be sure to give students some time to think before asking them to share!
Community Building

Those who want to go fast, go alone.

Those who want to go far, go together!
Tips for Promoting Interaction

Tip #2
Using “icebreakers” to encourage fun interaction.
Critical Question

What is an “icebreaker”? Can you give an example?
Icebreakers

• Short, fun activities designed to get students in the mood to talk and interact more
• They help “break” through student hesitation to speak (the ice)
• Encourages more participation later in class
“Find Someone Who…”

1. Each student gets a question sheet.
2. The instructor gives them time to read the information they need to find.
3. Then, by asking questions, they try to find as many classmates as possible to answer the question.
4. The person who can get the most in 5 minutes wins!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Find someone who loves basketball...</th>
<th>Find someone who thinks computer games are a sport...</th>
<th>Find someone who loves running...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find someone who is good at soccer...</td>
<td>Find someone who thinks fishing is a sport...</td>
<td>Find someone who hates to exercise...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find someone who likes watching American Football...</td>
<td>Find someone who knows what sport LeBron James plays...</td>
<td>Find someone who has played or watched a game of baseball...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Name:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Find Someone Who…**

<table>
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[Student Note Sheet]
“Find Someone Who…”

Do you like running?

Yes! I love to run!

Cool! What’s your name?

Xiao!

Find someone who loves running...

Name: Xiao
“Guiding the Artist”

1. The teacher should select a picture, but don’t show it to the class!
2. Put students into groups of three or four.
3. One person in each group should volunteer to be the “artist”; everyone else will be a “guide.”
“Guiding the Artist”

4. Once each group has an artist, that person must turn around so they cannot see the teacher.

5. The teacher will show the picture to the rest of the class so the guides can see it.

6. The guides must describe the picture to the artist to help them draw. They can use gestures but must speak in English.
“Guiding the Artist”

How would you describe this picture?
“Guiding the Artist”
Tips for Promoting Interaction

**Tip #3**

Encouraging interaction with “Think-Pair-Share”
Critical Questions

How do you like to group students? Let us know your ideas!
A Helpful Grouping Strategy

Think

Pair

Share
Step One: Open-ended Question

I think that a good athlete should be...

A good athlete must...
Step Two: Think
Step Three: Pair
Teacher Monitoring & Scribing

As students **discuss in pairs**, the **teacher** should monitor the conversations by **listening** and **taking notes** (known as “scribing”).
Critical Questions

What should the teacher listen for during pair discussions?
Critical Questions

Why should the teacher take notes?
Benefits of Monitoring & Scribing

1. Hearing good answers (to share with the whole class)
2. Finding common questions
3. Finding common trouble spots
4. Timing

*Note*: try to listen without interrupting the flow of the discussion!
Step Four: Share

SHARE

Why? Can you give me an example?
Tips for Promoting Interaction

Tip #4
Building off of “Think-Pair-Share”
Keeping the Interaction Going

Types of Interactive Activities

1. Information gap
2. Role play
Information Gap Activities
A Simple Example Information Gap

Student A

1. There are _______ teams in the NBA.
2. The most famous teams are the Los Angeles Lakers and the Chicago Bulls.

Student B

1. There are thirty teams in the NBA.
2. The most famous teams are the Los Angeles _______ and the Chicago _______.

“Gap”
Information Gap and Role Play

Scenario

✓ You and your partner are the coach and owner of a professional basketball team.
✓ You want a new player, but are not sure who to pick between three options.
✓ Share information with your partner and then decide who you should pick to join your team!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jamal Jafari</th>
<th>Diego Delgado</th>
<th>Bobby Buckets</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Experience</td>
<td>Played every game in four years at Duke (the best U.S. college for basketball)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Was on a professional basketball team in Europe but only played in a few games in the last season.</td>
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<td>Performance</td>
<td>Excellent natural athlete but still learning the game of basketball. Very fast, great jumping, could be stronger.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The smartest player. Understands strategy very well. Strong, never been injured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Doesn’t really talk much, seems angry but follows orders well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Factors</td>
<td>Broke his leg in the final year of college.</td>
<td>Does not pass the ball to teammates.</td>
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Information Gap and Role Play

Can you tell me about Diego Delgado’s personality?

Sure! He’s polite and friendly. But, he jokes too much.
## Information Gap and Role Play

### Completed Chart

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**Student A**

- **“Team Owner”**

**Student B**

- **“Coach”**
Information Gap and Role Play

I worry that Bobby has a bad attitude and won’t work well on the team.

Yeah, I agree. But he’s so talented!
## Information Gap and Role Play

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<td>• Smart</td>
<td>• Good and natural athlete</td>
<td>• Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Experienced</td>
<td>• Friendly</td>
<td>• Smart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Good leader</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cons</strong></td>
<td>• Lots of injuries</td>
<td>• Not experienced</td>
<td>• Maybe not be a “team player”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Might not be strong enough</td>
<td>• Does not pass the ball to teammates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Jamal**: Smart, Experienced, Good leader
- **Diego**: Good and natural athlete, Friendly
- **Bobby**: Strong, Smart, Experienced
Information Gap and Role Play

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Information Gap and Role Play

Team A
We want Jamal!

Team B
We want Bobby!
## Information Gap and Role Play

**Winner!**

<p>| | | |</p>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>Jamal</td>
<td>IIII</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diego</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Analyzing Information Gap and Role Play

1. Clear situation
2. Partners must talk
3. All information is needed
4. Information helps discussion
5. Partners discuss first
6. Share with another group
7. Whole class sharing!

Start Here!  End Here!
Tips for Promoting Interaction

Tip #5
Using a variety of grouping strategies
Grouping Strategies

• Let students pick
• Group by proficiency level (same and different)
• Use a “Randomizer” to put students into random groups
• Grouping by themes (favorite sport, favorite type of movies, etc.)
Final Takeaway Points

To promote more interaction...

1. Create a sense of community in your classroom
2. Use “icebreakers” to get people talking
3. Use “Think-Pair-Share” to keep the interaction going
4. Build off “Think-Pair-Share” with information gap and role play activities
5. Use a variety of different grouping strategies
If we as teachers can show students the value of groupwork, then, hopefully, they can start seeing their classmates as allies and supporters in their language learning journeys!

Thank you!
References

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The Teaching Channel. (2020). *Participation protocol for academic discussions*. [Video].  
https://learn.teachingchannel.com/video/participation-protocol-ousd
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Reflection Questions

1. Consider how you group students. What factors might you consider when planning how to best group students for a particular activity?

2. What do you do while your students are speaking to each other during group and pair work activities? How might you, as the teacher, make the most effective use of this communication time?

3. How might you adapt the activities shared today for your classroom?