



Module 4

Pairwork / Groupwork

Approaches to Language Teaching: Foundations

Video Length: Approximately 12 Minutes

Notes to the Trainer

For best results, have participants go through the readings for this module prior to viewing the video. As you go through this module, try to use pairs and group work whenever it seems appropriate. For this module, especially, it serves as a good model. After each group activity, debrief answers and use them for further discussion as appropriate. Refer back to the main points as needed. It is important that teachers apply the concepts in the module to their own classrooms and situations. The goals for this module are to demonstrate some ways in which pair and group work can be used effectively in the language classroom.

See Appendix A for additional handouts that can be used for general observation and discussion tasks with any of the modules.

Before Viewing

The following photo is by Laurie Minor-Penland and is from Smithsonian's web site *Award-Winning Photos* <<http://photos.si.edu/prize/prize.html>>.



Work as a whole class or in pairs or groups. Ask participants to view a picture that you have chosen without making any comments. It should be one that will act as a stimulus (i.e., likely to arouse emotions, trigger intense curiosity, raise questions). However, it's best to avoid images with obvious political or religious overtones as they can be challenging to manage and do not always yield simple results. Photos such as this one (*left*) lend themselves well to this process.

Then, introduce the trainees to interculturist Stella Ting-Toomey's Describe, Interpret, Evaluate process.

Deductive approach. You can use a deductive approach with this activity. Tell trainees about the whole process in advance, and then walk them through it step-by-step.

Inductive approach. Or, you can use an inductive approach. Immediately immerse trainees in steps in 1 through 3, guiding discussions and results as you go. After you have all completed all the

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steps, conduct a debriefing. Step back during the debriefing period to summarize the process and draw conclusions about it as a whole.

Both approaches can work equally well. Choose the one that seems the best fit for your own teaching style and for what you know (or guess) about the participants' learning preferences.

An overview and summary of the steps in the Describe, Interpret, Evaluate process follows.

Overview of Stella Ting-Toomey's Describe, Interpret, Evaluate Process

Language teachers can use Ting-Toomey's Describe, Interpret, Evaluate process as a learning tool both for themselves and in the classroom for their students. Stella Ting-Toomey created this simple guide to help people observe and understand cultural experiences. If we think of "culture" in the broadest possible sense—something like "a shared set of behavior patterns" among any group of people—then we can see that it applies as a concept not only to ethnic cultures, but to workplace cultures and even classroom cultures as well. When we see something new and different, we tend to go straight to "evaluate." We can gain a deeper understanding if we keep an open mind and pause long enough to first see if there might be a different interpretation of our experience. By following the Describe, Interpret, Evaluate sequence, we are more likely to make sense of new situations and perhaps feel more comfortable with them.

Steps for the Describe, Interpret, Evaluate process follow.

1. **Describe.** Describe in concrete terms what you see in the picture. For example: the upper body and head of a female, approximately 25-40 years old, with brown hair, wearing a white blouse, with five insects on her, and so on.

It is very important at this stage to separate observation from interpretation (feelings) and evaluation (judgment). For instance, *she has lots of disgusting, live insects on her* is more accurately expressed in neutral descriptive terms as *there are five insects on her: one on her hair, one on her arm, and three on her body*. This takes practice! Participants are likely to interject opinions and assumptions at this point. They may require extra guidance in this first step as they learn to set aside initial reactions and separate fact from opinion (interpretation) and judgment (evaluation).

2. **Interpret.** Once the physical (factual) description is fully complete, brainstorm as many "what if..." statements as possible to try to explain or "interpret" what you see. For example: *maybe the insects are alive / dead, maybe she likes / hates insects, she seems to be nervous / calm*, and so on.

3. **Evaluate.** After completing steps 1 and 2—and only then—try to analyze the actual basis of your interpretation. Keep in mind that yours is only one possible interpretation of many that could be made of the situation. To get insight into other possibilities, you can discuss your interpretation with others. Only then should you proceed to "evaluate" what you see and—if necessary—to take action as a result.

For more on this process, see the following Web sites.

- Google Scholar <<http://scholar.google.com>> and run a search for Stella Ting-Toomey.
- Cultural Stereotyping
<http://www.expatica.com/source/site_article.asp?subchannel_id=41&story_id=2228&name=Cultural+stereotyping>

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For more ideas for photos, consult local newspapers, posters, billboards, brochures, photos, and magazines. On the Web, you may also find photo galleries, news sites, and image search engines such as the following to be useful sources of images:

Flickr Photos	http://www.flickr.com/photos/
Google Image Search	http://www.google.com
Smithsonian Institution Photographic Services	http://photo2.si.edu

Preview Vocabulary

Terms	Definitions
Accommodate	To allow for; consider the educational or emotional needs of.
Collaborative Learning	Collaborative Learning is a method of teaching and learning in which students team together to explore a significant question or create a meaningful project. A group of students discussing a lecture or students from different schools working together over the Internet on a shared assignment are both examples of collaborative learning.
Cooperative Learning	Cooperative Learning is a specific kind of collaborative learning. In cooperative learning, students work together in small groups on a structured activity. They are individually accountable for their work, and the work of the group as a whole is also assessed.
Deductive (reasoning)	Taking a known idea or theory and applying it to a situation.
Describe, Interpret, Evaluate process	A step-by-step interpretation process from interculturalist Stella Ting-Toomey. It's a way to slow down the response and reaction to new ideas or experiences, and to view them with a more open mind.
Inductive (reasoning)	A type of type of reasoning which involves observing patterns and using those observations to form an idea or make generalizations.
Jigsaw activity	A group work activity in which different members of the group have different tasks related to the same topic. Students perform the tasks individually, then come back to the group to put the information or pieces together "jigsaw puzzle" style.
Praxis	A customary practice or conduct.
Rubric	A scoring guide or template for giving feedback on student work and performances.
Sockeye salmon	A large fish with reddish meat.

Now start the video. Listen to the introduction. Complete the guided observation and reflection tasks for each of the video segments. The next part of the manual is for trainees and is available on separate pages for ease of copying.

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Module 4, Pair and Group Work

Module Focus

The focus in this module is on pair and group work. Pair and group work incorporates principles and themes from the Cooperative Learning and Collaborative Learning theoretical frameworks. In the video, you will look at some real classroom examples of this. You can use Ting-Toomey's Describe, Interpret, Evaluate process to analyze what is happening with pair and group work in these classes.

Video Segment #1, Pairs and Groups, Example A: Observation Guide [Read before viewing.]

Observe the following class. Look for answers to the questions...

1. How is the class organized (chairs, tables, desks)?
2. How are the pairs and/or groups organized?
3. What kinds of interactions occur between the groups and teacher, and within the groups themselves?

Use the Describe, Interpret, Evaluate (steps 1 through 3) process to analyze the class events.

Reflection

[Read and answer after viewing.]

1. What were your results with the Describe, Interpret, Evaluate process? Was there anything about the class that surprised you or was new for you?
2. In what sequence did the activities occur, and why?
3. What kind of learning do you think took place among students during the small group work? During the contest (game)?
4. If you are working with a partner or group, in what ways were your results similar to other participants' results? In what ways were they different? Did you make any revisions to any of your steps after comparing your results to theirs?

Video Segment #2, Pairs and Groups, Example B: Observation Guide [Read before viewing.]

1. What is the role of the teacher? The students?
2. What kind of group management techniques do you notice?
3. What is the purpose of using group work in this case?

Reflection

[Read and answer after viewing.]

1. What kinds of direction did the students give each other? Did you notice any examples of student self-corrections?
2. What kinds of spontaneous communication took place between students?
3. What were some of the pros and cons of an all-class writing event like this one?

Module 04 Summary Discussion

1. This module showed examples from a class of younger learners and from a university-level class.

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Which of the activities could work well for both age groups? What kinds of adjustments or adaptations might be necessary?

2. What role does assessment play in the classroom activities that you saw? How might the students' performance affect the future lessons that the teacher plans for these classes?

3. The focus in the questions up to this point has mainly been on what you notice happening in the foreground of the scenes. Watch the classes again and notice what is happening in the background. What do you notice about the teacher? About other student groups? About the classroom itself?

Notes

Both classes in this module are also good examples of an integrated skills approach. See Module 03 for more details on Integrating Skills, and for examples of other classes that use pair and group work for comparison.

See Module 06 on Classroom Management for more scenes from this same thematic language lesson on sockeye salmon.

Now You Try It—An Action Plan

Step 1

You can read some of the articles on the topic of contextualizing language (see Module 4 Readings A through D plus the List of Additional Readings and Resources in *Shaping the Way We Teach English: Readings and Resources*). Using the video, you have seen a few examples and ideas from other teachers' classes.

Now, think again about your own classes and how you could use some of the activities shown to:

- Encourage collaborative thinking and writing;
- Motivate students;
- Review lesson content (stories, characters, vocabulary) in an enjoyable way;
- Provide opportunities for authentic communication;
- Create an active, interesting classroom.

Talk about your ideas with your group.

Step 2

By yourself or with a peer, design a 15-minute segment of a lesson that includes the use of some of the techniques and activities you listed.

Step 3

Share your plan with your group. Explain what activities would come before and after your segment. Get your group members' ideas and feedback.

Step 4

Rewrite your design. Try it with your class. Share your results with others, as applicable. If you are not teaching, ask the trainer or another experienced teacher for feedback.

Module 4: Pairwork / Groupwork

Answer Key to Module 4, Pair and Group Work

Before Viewing Activity, Photo

This photo comes from the <<http://photos.si.edu/prize/prize.html>>Web site *Award-Winning Photos from the Smithsonian Staff: A Selection of Work from the Office of Printing and Photographic Services*. It is Smithsonian photo #92-13506. The photo was taken by Laurie Minor-Penland. This photograph was a 1992 winner in the Kodak Impact Through Applied Photography contest.

The woman in the photo is Sally Love. She is an exhibits developer and the former director of the Insect Zoo in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History. She has a selection of insects walking on her. You can see these insects:

- A New Guinea Walking Stick (*Heteropteryx dilatata*)
- An Australian Walking Stick (*Extatosoma tiaratum*)
- A Madagascar Hissing Cockroach (*Gromphodrhina portentosa*)
- A Unicorn Beetle
- The dragonfly is a jewelry brooch

Module 4, Video Segment #1, Pairs and Groups, Example A Answer Guide for Observation

Here are some suggested directions for answers to the questions for this module. Actual answers may vary depending on local context and the kinds of experience that viewers bring to the task of interpreting and applying video and text concepts.

1. Group formation: The class was grouped in two different ways. First, the teacher put students into small groups of 3-4. Students used a green handout as a discussion guide. On it, they wrote details about the characters that they had encountered so far in the story and accompanying movie that they were using in class. The second time, the teacher split the class in half ("count off 1-2-1-2...") and they played a game in teams. They used the information from the green sheets in order to answer the True / False game questions.

2. Game structure: The game had "rules." For example, all students who answered correctly got one point, and the student who answered correctly first got a second point. Any incorrect answer got zero points. Another rule was that team members could not shout out answers or help.

3. Interactions: During small group work, the teacher circulated around the room and talked with groups one by one. Students stayed on task and asked for clarification as needed.

4. The following table gives examples of some non-judgmental descriptions of classroom actions or behaviors, with corresponding possible interpretations.

The final debriefing or "evaluation" part of the process takes place only after participants have thoroughly discussed what they saw (i.e. described it in as neutral terms as possible) and then tried to interpret the description in as many ways as possible. Be sure to allow enough time to do this in two separate steps. The first time people go through this process, they tend to jump straight to interpretations and evaluations (making assumptions). It's important to go carefully through the steps in their intended sequence and to sort out what is fact and what is impression.

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Description of Action or Behavior <i>I saw student X...</i>	Possible Interpretation(s) <i>Maybe student X was...</i>
Lean forward in the chair	Engaged, motivated, or attentive...
Lean back in the chair	Relaxed, bored, or attentive but hanging back...
Jump up and down	Anxious, nervous, excited, or happy...
Smile	Happy, nervous, embarrassed, or apologetic...
Description of Action or Behavior <i>I saw the teacher...</i>	Possible Interpretation(s) <i>Maybe the teacher was...</i>
Repeat the instructions three times.	These were low level students; it was the first time they had ever played a game like this; or, maybe the students were hard of hearing...
Give points for correct answers to everyone, and give additional points to the student who gave the first correct answer.	She wanted everyone to feel successful; she wanted the students to write answers quickly; or, maybe she thought it would encourage more competition...

Module 4, Video Segment #2, Pairs and Groups, Example B **Answer Guide for Observation**

1. Teacher instructions: The teacher gives clear instructions at the beginning, both about the task itself and about the type of group behavior she expects (one person is writing, but everyone is contributing).

2. Lesson plan: The teacher uses an over-arching framework, a paragraph, to structure the writing task. She uses a "jigsaw" approach for the information and writing. Each group has a different sub-topic to create as a piece of the whole paragraph.

3. Student behavior: Students get quickly to work and stay on task. They spontaneously read together. They self-correct spelling, word choices, and subject-verb agreement.

4. Evaluation: The all-class editing session at the end (with students on the floor) involves everyone. No one person is to blame for mistakes that are made, and everyone takes part in the corrections. Note that one group in the background is still working on their sentence. In the actual class, they needed more time than the other groups to complete their work. When they were ready to participate, they quietly joined the rest of the class and added the final sentence to the paragraph. This is a good example of flexible pacing, and accommodating different student needs.

Note: The hanging holder with plastic slots that the teacher uses for the sentence strips is a useful, lightweight piece of equipment for organizing student work and classroom items. Teachers who do not have their own classrooms could consider making inexpensive versions of these from cloth and/or plastic.

