
STRATEGY FOUR: COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Collaborative learning plays an important role in maintaining learner engagement. Collaborative activities are structured to facilitate learning through peer-to-peer interaction, which results in greater on-task engagement and motivation. When structuring collaborative tasks, English language teachers must consider how learners will work together to accomplish a task or complete an activity.

In this week's Teacher's Corner, we borrow from a common collaborative activity called *Think-Pair-Share* and ask students to interview a partner about an important person in their life. This collaborative activity promotes learner engagement in a number of ways.

LEVEL

Intermediate and above

LANGUAGE FOCUS

- Spoken Fluency
- Writing Summaries

GOALS

During this activity students will be able to:

- Practice asking and answering questions, including follow-up questions and questions of clarification.
- Write a one-paragraph summary of an interview with a classmate.

MATERIALS

- Pencil/paper
- Suggested interview questions (Appendix A)

PREPARATION

- Prepare copies of Appendix A for all students, or write the suggested interview questions on the board for all students to see.
- Plan a strategy for pairing students. One option is to allow students to choose a partner. However, if allowing students to pick a partner would be problematic for some learners, prepare a list of partners in advance.

PROCEDURE

1. Explain the activity to students. You might say, “Today you will talk about a person that is important in your life. Working with a partner, you will describe an important person in your life and answer questions about this person. When you finish talking with your partner, you will switch roles. You will then interview your partner about someone important in his/her life. When finished, you will write a paragraph that describes who your partner discussed.”
2. Tell students to spend 1-2 minutes quietly thinking about someone who is important in their lives.
3. Turn the students’ attention to the suggested interview questions and review as a group.
 - a. Remind students that the questions are a guide to the discussion. Students can use the list of questions or create some of their own questions.
 - b. Ask the class what questions they would add to the list. Write these additional questions on the board or have students add them to their printed copy.
4. Once the questions have been reviewed as a class, put students into pairs either using a prescribed list or letting them choose partners.
5. After students find their partner, tell them that for the next 5-7 minutes they will discuss one student’s important person. The partner that is describing an important person will answer questions and give additional information about this person. The student listening will take notes and ask additional questions to learn more.
 - a. When the time is up, tell them to switch roles and repeat the task.

6. After students have completed their discussions, they will write a one-paragraph summary about what they discussed.
 - a. Give students a guideline for the paragraphs depending on their level. For example, intermediate students may write 3-4 sentences, and more advanced students may write 8-10 sentences.

This activity provides an opportunity for students to connect and share some personal information with classmates. It also gives teachers a chance to know more about each student. If you want more information about similar projects, check out American Teens Talk from American English. This series invites American teens to talk about some of the issues and challenges they face as teenagers in the United States.

[American English: American Teens Talk](#)

APPENDIX A

Suggested Interview Questions

- Who is an important person in your life?
- Why is this person important?
- What is your relationship with this person?
- Tell me about a special memory or experience you have had with this person.
- Describe some of this person's characteristics or qualities.
- How and when did you meet this person?
- What does this person do to inspire you?
- How old is he/she?
- What is his/her job?
- How is he/she connected to you?
- When you see this person now, what do you talk about or do together?

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