

## Professional Development

### Why Groups?

Long's Interaction Hypothesis states that language proficiency occurs with face-to-face interaction/communication.

Because peer interaction allows learners more opportunities to talk than teacher-learner interaction, it also allows them to make their processing more automatic (Philp, 2014, 59)

Donato (1994) coined the term "collective scaffolding" to describe learners being able to internalize information that they are able to gain from engaging in discourse with each other, regardless of their language abilities.

### Why Group Dynamics in SLA?

Success depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom (Stevick, 1980, p. 4)

I am convinced that a successful group dynamic is a vital element in the teaching/learning process (Hadfield, 1992, p. 10)

In a 'good' group, the L2 classroom can turn out to be such a pleasant and environment that the time spent there is a constant source of success and satisfaction for teachers and learners alike. And even if someone's commitment should flag, his or her peers are likely to 'pull the person along' by providing the necessary motivation to persist (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 4)

In contrast, when something 'goes wrong' with the class- for example conflicts or rebellious attitudes emerge, or there is a sudden lethargy or complete unwillingness for cooperation on the students' part- the L2 course can become a nightmare. Teaching is hard if not impossible and even the most motivated learners lose their commitment (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003, p. 4)

### Teaching Task Matrix

Learning about group dynamics and organizing well-functioning groups will go a long way toward facilitating smooth classroom management and enhancing student performance...the more time we invest in Important/Not Urgent activities, the less we need to worry about crisis management.

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	Using discipline and control strategies (controlling distracting students and stopping arguments) Finding short-term solutions "Fast food" class preparation Combating student apathy	Socialization Community/group building Planning, seeing the big picture Engendering motivation Teacher development

Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003, p. 10-11

### Most common unpleasant feelings that learners may experience in a new group

- General anxiety
- Uncertainty about being accepted
- Uncertainty about their own competence
- General lack of confidence
- Inferiority
- Restricted identity and freedom
- Awkwardness
- Anxiety about using the L2
- Anxiety about not knowing what to do (comprehending)

Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003, p. 15

## **Key Elements to Group Dynamics**

- Group formation
- Group development
- Group characteristics
- The physical environment
- The role of the teacher as the group leader

Dörnyei and Malderez, 1997

## **Role of Teacher as Facilitator**

Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) researched autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, and laissez-faire leadership and found democratic groups had friendlier communication, were more group-oriented and had better member-leader relationships. This study has been reproduced many times in the past 50 years and there is general agreement that the evidence is consistent and clear in support of democratic, participatory leadership.

In a second-language classroom, “it is recommended that group-conscious teaching begins more autocratically to give direction, security and impetus to the group. Then as the students begin performing, teachers can initiate increasing democratic control of the process. When the group further matures and begins to show their initiative, more autonomy-inviting leadership might be the most conducive to encouraging student independence and initiative” (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003, p. 107)

Empathy, acceptance, and congruence are important in being a good facilitator (Rogers, 1961)

Being a transformational leader is better than being a transactional leader because a transformational leader provides vision and inspiration to the members so that they can transcend their ordinary achievement level and go the extra mile in the service of the collective interest (Brown, 2000).

The four attributes of being a transformational leader are trust in the group, enthusiasm, commitment to the students' learning and skills in building rapport with the students (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003)

## **References**

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