

Internationalising the Seminar

Please sit in groups with – where possible – at least one subject tutor and one EAP tutor in each

Internationalising the Seminar: Communicative Strategies from EAP Across the Curriculum

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Please discuss in groups:

- What is the purpose of a seminar?
- How do/should students learn in a seminar?
- What particular problems might international students face in seminars at a UK university?



Some Purposes of Seminars

- Explore, question and process key concepts (e.g. from lectures and readings)
- Active/interactive learning through group tasks, small group discussions, whole-class discussion, student presentations etc.
- Tutor can identify and address problems/gaps
- Direct access to tutor for questions and help

Some Typical Problems for I.S.

- Difficulty following the discussion
- Difficulty expressing own ideas
- **Difficulty understanding materials used**
(e.g. case studies)
- Difficulty understanding task instructions
- Unused to speaking out in class
- Unused to group learning/expect to receive 'knowledge' from the tutor
- Unused to questioning others' ideas

Importance of Seminar Participation for Academic Success

- [F]aculty believe that the behaviors most responsible for impeding international students' academic success are: (a) their lack of **participation in classroom discussions**, (b) their lack of **participation in debate with classmates or instructors**, and (c) their failure to **ask for clarification** of issues . . . that are unclear (Tompson & Tompson, 1996).

- These are seminar-style habits
- Improving seminar performance -> improving the international student experience

Seminar Issues - Research

Academic research focuses on:

- International students in seminars alongside home students (Lee 2009; Coward & Miller 2010)
 - Cultural barriers to participation (Leki 2001)
 - Linguistic inhibitions (Brown 2008)
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- But what about subject seminars in an international-only environment?

Internationalisation

- Recruiting more international students
 - International content for modules
 - EAP courses, e.g. teach seminar skills to international students
- We could also **internationalise teaching styles** to focus on international students' learning needs, even in subject modules/seminars.

Example: Case Study and Questions from Business Seminar

- Students are given a 3-page case study *New Coke: A Classic Brand Failure*, and asked to answer the following questions:
 1. The launch of New Coke turned out to be a nightmare for Coca-Cola. Discuss the marketing implications of introducing New Coke.
 2. Was it necessary to re-formulate New Coke?
 3. Where did market research fail in this case? What would you do if you were a market researcher?
 4. Class Debate: do you think the New Coke launch was a tactical market manoeuvre or an unintentional mistake? Give your opinion and substantiate it.
- What problems might a class of international students experience if given these in a seminar?

Case Study – New Coke: A Classic Brand Failure

Original lesson plan:

1. Tutor reads 3-page case study aloud to class
2. Students use case study to write answers to the accompanying questions
3. Whole-class debate on ‘was new Coke a tactical manoeuvre or a mistake’?

‘Ideal’ students can

- read the text quickly
- understand the content easily
- critically engage with the issues immediately

An EAP-Style Approach

EAP professionals:

- Attuned to the particular needs of international students
 - Used to adapting materials for international students
- EAP approaches can be used productively for academic subjects as well as language and academic skills

Workshop Task

- In groups, consider the case study *New Coke: A Classic Brand Failure*
- How would you adapt this material for a class of international students (approx IELTS 5.5) so that – by the end of the session – all are able to engage critically with the material?

15 minutes

Steps Towards Critical Engagement

Some suggested steps for second-language students:

- **Focus** (main idea)
- **Language** (key terms for comprehension and discussion)
- **Understanding Content**
- **Thinking** (about the key concepts/questions)
- **Engagement** (e.g. discussion)

1. Focus

Three-page text can be intimidating. Before reading, prepare the topic and give a focus:

- Warmer questions before reading, e.g.:
 - do you like to drink Coke?
 - what is failure?
 - what brands do you love?
 - how would you feel if your favourite product changed?

2. Language

- Plan a task to help students identify key words; help them to define/understand these
 - E.g. Give a list of marketing strategies used by Coke and have Ss scan text to arrange these in date order
 - Helps map structure of the text
 - Helps introduce key terms e.g. 'blind test'

3. Understanding Content

- Break up the text into sections
 - After each section, ask content questions to check comprehension
 - Predict what will happen in next section
- After reading, help Ss to process main ideas, using content questions such as:
 - Why did Coke introduce New Coke?
 - Why was it a failure?
 - How did Coke respond to the failure?
 - Was the outcome for Coke more positive or negative overall? How?

Discuss **in groups** so that all students speak

4. Thinking

- Give students chance to formulate a position on the main issue
 - Groups discuss a question such as 'What would you advise if you were a market researcher for Coke?'
 - Must back up their suggestions with reasons and/or evidence from the text.
 - Feedback from several groups, so they can compare strategies/positions.

This task prepares them to debate the question:
‘Was New Coke a tactical manoeuvre or a mistake?’

5. (Critical) Engagement

Students are ready to engage with the main issue: 'Was New Coke a tactical manoeuvre or a mistake?'

- Students can now self-select into 'tactical manoeuvre' and 'mistake' teams
- Engage in whole-class debate
- Back up their position with evidence from the text

Steps Towards Engagement

- **Focus** (main idea)
- **Language** (key terms for comprehension and discussion)
- **Understanding**
- **Thinking** (about the key concepts/questions)
- **Engagement** (with issues)

Thereby enabling students to:

- follow and contribute to the discussion
- speak more
- learn from and question others' ideas
- Improve international student experience

Internationalise the Teaching

- How can EAP tutors in your institution share ideas with subject tutors/lecturers for adapting subject materials?
- What sharing can happen the other way round (subject tutors -> EAP tutors)
- Could (some of) these techniques improve native speaker participation in seminars too?

Making it Happen

- How can EAP tutors in your institution share ideas with subject tutors/lecturers for adapting subject materials?
 - Workshops
 - Mentoring/buddy system
 - Teaching observations (formal/peer)
 - And ... ?

References

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