

Whole-Class Discussions

Techniques and Questions

Instructors who have used *Cultural Differences* in their classes have found the whole-class discussion about each unit to be not only stimulating but also an important opportunity to help students develop discussion skills and become more active as participants. Also, students are able to see that participating in a discussion about a reading assignment can help them write better answers on quizzes and write better responses (or essays) about the readings.

Please note that these activities are photocopyable.
They are also available free at www.ProLinguaAssociates.com

The materials in this section are designed to facilitate whole-class discussions about the units. *Please note:* These whole-class discussions are meant to be done **after** students have done the small-group discussions (as Students A, B, C).

Content

- ◆ **Discussion techniques:** These exercises help students practice ways to add depth to a discussion and to involve others.
- ◆ **Whole-class discussion procedure**
- ◆ **Individualized feedback/evaluation form** (See page 60.)

Techniques

Recommended as a supplementary exercise for Unit 1:

Responding to another student's comment

Recommended as a supplementary exercise for Unit 2:

Volunteering an answer

Recommended as a supplementary exercise for Unit 3:

Redirecting a question when you don't know what to say

Recommended as a supplementary exercise for Unit 4:

Reporting what someone else has said

Recommended as a supplementary exercise for Unit 5:

Summarizing what other group members have said

The concept of whole-class discussions can be an alien one to students from non-Western countries. Students are told that participation in class discussions is expected in Western academic settings and that if they are active participants, it can affect their grade in a positive way. Nevertheless, these students don't know what "active participation" means, other than to state one's opinion.

For teachers preparing students for mainstream, academic coursework, the recommended supplementary techniques introduced in Units 1-5 (below) could help students develop specific techniques that they can apply to be active. In Units 6 - 14, no new techniques are introduced, but students could be encouraged to continue to apply the five that they had practiced in Units 1 - 5. Giving the "Whole-class Discussion Evaluation" on p. 60 after one or more units can be an effective way to motivate students to apply the techniques and to be active participants.



Whole-Class Discussion for Unit 1

Students' Handout

In many college classes, it is common for the instructor to conduct a discussion with all the students. Some international students feel shy about speaking in these situations. However, instructors want you, as an international student, to participate because you have unique ideas and experiences that will be interesting to your classmates, and therefore, your comments will make the class more valuable for everyone. On top of that, instructors reward students who try to participate in class discussions.

One technique that you can use for successful participation is to listen carefully to your classmates when they respond. After they speak, you can comment on what they said by asking a question or by saying something about what they had said. By doing this, it shows the instructor that you are paying attention, and it will show your classmates that you are interested in their ideas.

Expressions for responding to another student's comment

- ◆ I'd like to ask (classmate's name) a question.
- ◆ I'd like to ask a question about what he/she just said.
- ◆ I'd like to say something about that. . .
- ◆ I agree with him/her. I think
- ◆ I'm afraid I disagree with him/her. I think . . .
- ◆ I think that he/she made a good point. I think . . .
- ◆ He/She said something very interesting.
- ◆ I had a similar experience.

Exercise: Responding to another student's comment

Exercise 1: *General-Topic Questions*

- 1) For this exercise, your instructor will ask some general-topic questions and choose a student to answer.
- 2) After a student answers the question, your instructor will choose another student to respond (or you can volunteer to respond). Use the "Expressions for responding to another student's comment" (in the box above).

Exercise 2: *Discussion about Unit 1*

Your instructor will ask questions about Unit 1 and then choose a student to answer. After that student responds, your instructor will choose another student to respond to the first student's answer.



Teacher's Script for Unit 1

Exercise: Responding to another student's comment

Exercise 1: General-Topic Questions

First, we will do some practice with this technique in a whole-class discussion. I will ask a question, and then I will choose a student to answer. After that student responds, I will choose another student to respond to that first student's answer.

1. Which do you prefer: sending emails, talking on a cell phone, or sending text messages?
2. Tell me about a part-time job that you had.
3. Where is the most beautiful place to spend some free time?
4. When you use a computer, what are you usually doing on it?
5. Are you "a morning person" or "a night person"?

Exercise 2: Discussion about Unit 1

Now, we will use this technique for our discussion about Unit 1. I will ask a question, and then I will choose a student to answer. After that student responds, I will choose another student to respond to the first student's answer.

1. Do you think that you are ethnocentric? In other words, do you think that your country is better than other countries? Explain your answer.
2. In ¶ 8, it mentions "norms" for how students should dress. Why do you think that in some countries, schools require students to wear uniforms?
3. Is polygamy taboo in your country?
4. In ¶ 9, about the people in Africa, do you think that it is strange that polygamy is the norm? Explain your answer.
5. What is one custom from your country that you think would be good for other countries to have?
6. What is one custom from another country that you think would be good for your country to have?



Whole-Class Discussion for Unit 2

Students' Handout

As was mentioned in the previous unit about whole-class discussions, college instructors tend to reward students who try to participate in these kinds of discussions.

One technique that you can use to participate is to volunteer an answer. This technique can impress your instructors, and it will help them during the discussion. If nobody tries to answer an instructor's question, everyone in the class begins to feel uncomfortable, so volunteering is very helpful.

Exercises: Volunteering an answer

Exercise 1: *General-Topic Questions*

For this exercise, your teacher will ask a question. You should raise your hand and volunteer to answer. If your instructor chooses you to answer the question, then don't raise your hand to volunteer for the next question. After everyone has had a chance to answer a question, you can raise your hand again to volunteer.

Exercise 2: *Discussion about Unit 2*

Your teacher will ask some questions about Unit 2. Try to volunteer to answer. Also, try to volunteer to respond to your classmates' answers by using "Expressions for responding to another student's comment" (in the box below) that we practiced in Unit 1.

Expressions for responding to another student's comment

- ◆ I'd like to ask (classmate's name) a question.
- ◆ I'd like to ask a question about what he/she just said.
- ◆ I'd like to say something about that. . .
- ◆ I agree with him/her. I think
- ◆ I'm afraid I disagree with him/her. I think . . .
- ◆ I think that he/she made a good point. I think . . .
- ◆ He/She said something very interesting.
- ◆ I had a similar experience.



Teacher's Script for Unit 2

Exercise: Volunteering an answer

Exercise 1: General-Topic Questions

First, we will do some practice with this technique. I'll ask you some general-topic questions, and you should try to volunteer to answer.

1. What time did you get up this morning?
2. When you were in your country, what did you usually eat for breakfast?
3. You can all speak English. How many other languages can you speak?
4. This question has two parts. First, where do you live: with a host-family, in an apartment, with your own family, or in another place? And second, are you happy with your living situation? Explain.
5. Who do you talk to on the telephone the most every day?
6. Most of the time, what do you use a computer for?
7. What is your favorite website?
8. What did you do during your last vacation?
9. What were you doing last year at this time?
10. What is a problem in the world today?

Exercise 2: Discussion about Unit 2

Now we will apply this technique to our discussion about Unit 2. I will ask some questions in a whole-class discussion. Try to volunteer an answer. Also, try to volunteer to respond to your classmates' answers by using "Expressions for responding to another student's comment" that we practiced in Unit 1.

1. If you were a four-year-old in the experiment with the pieces of food, would you behave more like an Asian or an American child as a receiver and sharer? Explain your answer.
2. When you were a child, did you treat your friends equally? Were there some children whom you did not like very much so you didn't treat them well? Or did you treat them well even though you didn't like them very much? Give some examples.
3. Are you surprised that you tend to be a collectivist or an individualist? Explain your reason.

4. In general, are your goals similar to individualists' goals or to collectivists' goals?
5. Imagine that you have a boyfriend or girlfriend whom you would like to marry. If your parents said that they didn't want you to marry this person, would you still get married? Explain.
6. Paragraphs 15 to 16 discuss independence. Concerning independence, do you think that your family has treated you more like a collectivist or an individualist? Give some examples.
7. In ¶ 17, it mentions nepotism. Is this custom very common in your country? Do you feel that it causes problems, or is it a good system? Give some examples.



Whole-Class Discussion for Unit 3

Students' Handout

During a class discussion, sometimes your instructor might ask you a question, but you don't know what to say. Or perhaps you want to answer it, but you need some time to think about how to respond. We will practice a technique that you can use if you are not sure what to say, or if you are not sure how to explain what you think. Instead of making your classmates wait a long time while you try to think of an answer, you can redirect the question to one of your classmates.

Expressions for redirecting a question to a classmate when you don't know what to say

- ◆ That's a good question. I'd like to think about it first.
Perhaps (a classmate's name) could answer it.
- ◆ I'm not sure, but (a classmate's name), what do you think?
- ◆ I have no idea. How about you, (a classmate's name)?

Exercises: Redirecting a question to a classmate when you don't know what to say

Exercise 1: *General-Topic Questions*

Your teacher will ask you some general-topic questions. However, do not try to answer. Use one of the expressions for "Redirecting a question to a classmate when you don't know what to say" (in the box above), and ask one of your classmates to answer it. Your classmate will answer the question.

Exercise 2: *Discussion about Unit 3*

Your teacher will ask you some questions about Unit 3. However, do not try to answer. Use one of the expressions in the box above, and ask one of your classmates to answer it. Your classmate will answer the question.



Teacher's Script for Unit 3

Exercise: Redirecting to a classmate

Exercise 1: *General-Topic Questions*

I will ask you some general-topic questions. However, do not try to answer. Use one of the expressions in the box above, and ask one of your classmates to answer it. Your classmate will answer the question.

1. What will you probably eat for dinner tonight?
2. Where is a good place to take a vacation in your country?
3. Who did you talk to on the phone, or send a text message to, most recently?
4. What type of job would you like to have in the future?

Exercise 2: *Discussion about Unit 3*

I will ask you some questions. However, do not try to answer. Use one of the expressions in the box, and ask one of your classmates to answer it. Your classmate will answer the question.

1. Do people in your country tend to stay in their hometowns most of their lives, or do many of them move away? Has your family stayed in the same hometown?
2. Paragraph 2 talks about being excluded from a group and conforming to a group. Let's say that your in-group members decided to take a trip together, but you really didn't want to go. However, if you don't go, your in-group might exclude you in the future. Which would be worse for you: to be excluded from the group, or to be forced to conform to the group and go on the trip?
3. In ¶ 2, there is an example of the woman and the coat. Do you feel pressure in your country to wear certain clothes as this woman did?
4. In your hometown, are there a lot of jobs to choose from, or are people mainly farmers?
5. Who are the members of your most important in-group?

6. In ¶ 4, the tenth sentence says, “An in-group is a group of people whose norms, goals and values shape the behavior of its members.” Give me an example of how your in-group has shaped you.
7. Would you ask your in-group members questions like “How much money do you make?” or “What kind of sex life do you have?”
8. In your culture, are students expected to join many groups or just one? In high school, did you join any clubs?
9. In ¶ 10, it mentions calling a friend at 2:00 a.m. Would you think that it is strange to call a friend at 2:00 a.m. to talk about a problem?
10. Does your culture use teknonyms? If so, can you give me an example?
11. In ¶ 13, the Greek secretary sounded rude on the phone because she thought the call was a member of her out-group. Are people in your culture more polite to members of their in-group or to members of their out-group?
12. Do you agree with Dr. Chao that Dr. Douglas should have repaid the favor and hired Ms. Wang?

❖ Note to instructor for this Unit 4 discussion technique: Before students start their small-group discussions (as Students A, B, C), it will be helpful to tell them that after the discussion, they will tell the whole class what one of their group members had said that was interesting. Therefore, they should listen carefully to what their group members say.



Whole-Class Discussion for Unit 4

Students' Handout

A useful discussion technique is to tell what you heard someone else say. This technique shows that you listened to others, and it will make the other people feel good that you thought their ideas were interesting.

Expressions for reporting what someone else said

- ◆ (A classmate's name) had an interesting idea. She/he said ...
- ◆ (A classmate's name) had an interesting experience. She/he said ...
- ◆ I like what (a classmate's name) said about this. She/he said ...
- ◆ One of my group members said ...
- ◆ One of my group members had an interesting opinion. She/he said ...

Exercise: *Reporting what someone else said*

Choose one of these questions to discuss. However, instead of giving your opinion or ideas, use one of the “Expressions for reporting what someone else said” (in the box above), and tell what a classmate had said in your small-group discussion.

Also, try to respond to other students by asking a question, or adding a comment about what they said.

1. When you are in your country, would you avoid ordering a special kind of drink because people might think that you are hard to get along with?
2. Did your parents teach you that it was very important to obey your elders, respect traditions, and follow social norms? Can you give an example of how they taught you this?

3. Let's say that your classmate dresses differently from the others, has an unusual hairstyle, and eats unusual food for lunch. Would you think that this person is immature and unnatural? Or would you think that they are interesting? In other words, would you have a positive feeling about them? Explain.
4. According to the Asch experiment, 33% of the time, subjects gave the wrong answer in order to conform to the group. Do you think that this is bad for society, or is it good? Explain.
5. Do you think that you tend to make conformity choices, or anti-conformity choices, when you are in your country?

❖ Note to instructor for this Unit 5 discussion technique: Before students start their small-group discussions (as Students A, B, C), it will be helpful to tell them that after the discussion, they will summarize what their small group members had said. Therefore, they should listen carefully to what their group members say.



Whole-Class Discussion for Unit 5

Students' Handout

A good discussion technique to use is to summarize what your small group had said. It's interesting to other classmates to hear how other groups had answered a question.

Expressions for summarizing what your group members said

- ◆ My group members all agreed about this. We said ...
- ◆ My group members didn't agree about this. Some of us said ..., but the others said ...
- ◆ In general, my group members said ...

Exercise: *Summarizing what your group members said*

Choose one of these questions to discuss. However, instead of telling your opinion or ideas, use one of the "Expressions for summarizing what your group said" (in the box above) and explain what your members had said in your small-group discussion.

Also, try to respond to other students by asking a question, or adding a comment about what they said.

1. Does your culture have a norm about special colors for males and other colors for females?
2. Is your culture tight or loose? Give some examples.
3. Do you like living in a tight culture or a loose culture?

4. In the study about the \$200-bonus distribution, some people felt that it should be distributed equally to all the workers. Some said that more money should be given to the workers who needed it the most. And others said that the bonus should be given to the hardest workers. Who do you think that it should be given to? Explain.
5. In the study about the negative distribution, some people felt that all the workers should get the pay. Some people felt that the workers who needed the money the most should not have their pay cut. And some people felt that the hardest workers should not get their pay cut. Who do you agree with? Explain.
6. Do you think that there is more stress in your country or in the U.S.? Explain.
7. When you are in your country, do you feel that you have good social support? Explain.
8. When one of your group members has a problem, does it cause you a lot of stress? Explain.



Teacher's Script

Whole-class discussion procedure for Units 6 to 14

I will ask some discussion questions. Try to volunteer to answer. Also, after a classmate has answered a question, try to respond with a comment or question. Also, you can tell the class something that your small-group members had said, or summarize what your group had said. If you don't know what to say, you can redirect the question to another student.

To the teacher:

In each unit of *Cultural Differences*, you will find a section titled "Preparation for Discussion," which can be used for these whole-class discussions. It is recommended that the students not look at these questions during the discussion. Instead, only you, the teacher, should read them.

Whole-Class Discussion Evaluation

Name _____

1. You ____ make an effort to volunteer to answer questions.
a) often b) sometimes c) rarely d) never
2. You ____ answer the questions with enough details that show that you understood the text well.
a) often b) sometimes c) rarely d) never
3. You ____ responded to other students' comments by asking a question or adding a comment.
a) often b) sometimes c) rarely d) never

Extra credit: You tried to report what someone else had said.

Extra credit: You tried to summarize what your group members had said.

Other comments:

Whole-class discussion grade _____