Teaching a Discussion Lab

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How to Incorporate and Moderate Engaging Discussion

1) Communicating your attitude
2) Creating a sense of community
3) Modeling expectations
4) Facilitating discussions
5) Providing feedback

Classroom Background

EALL 282: Modern Korean Literature in Translation

Number of students: 20
Independent instruction
Student-centered (instructor as facilitator)

Communicating Your Attitude

Methods:
 - small group discussion
 - class discussions
 - interactive/fun activities
 - lecture
1. Communicating Your Attitude

- Be present! You have to *want* to be there
- Convey interest in the subject and your students
- Show up to class prepared
- Be engaging (attentive listening and thoughtful responses)
- Focus on collaborative learning

Class Activity

Once the music starts, stand up and move around the room.

When the music stops, turn to the person closest to you and listen for the question to be answered. You cannot choose the same person twice.

For each round, share your name and department first before sharing your response. You will be given about 1-2 minutes to share your responses.

When the music starts up again, thank your partner and continue moving around the room.

2. Creating a Sense of Community

- Learn everyone’s names and get to know them
- Understand the local culture in Hawaii and the unique student body
- Incorporate fun activities to gradually build camaraderie and mutual support
- Arrange mixed small groups
- Emphasize the value of learning through the sharing of diverse perspectives/ideas
3. Modeling Expectations

- Demonstrate quality work
  (i.e., presentation and thought-provoking discussion questions)
- Foster positive interactions
- Thoughtful feedback regarding students’ contributions to class discussions:
  Call students by name, clarify points made, comment specifically on either content/method (way of critical thinking) and/or make connections by referencing to points shared by students
- Hold yourself accountable as an instructor to your own standards, expectations, class rules, etc.

4. Facilitating Discussions

- Consider framework and come prepared with guidelines: What are the goals for today’s discussion? What needs to be explored/analyzed? What do you hope for students to learn?
- Guide discussions by asking open-ended questions within the context of the discipline and encourage students to conduct their own dialogue.
- Refrain from asking questions just for the sake of asking and resist the urge to reveal “the right answer”.
- Thoughtful responses take time; don’t be afraid to wait.
Providing Feedback

5. Providing thoughtful feedback

- Specific rather than general
- Constructive: Rather than criticizing students’ work, focus on ways to help them improve. Show how to analyze through critical thinking in order to strengthen their argument.
- Consider the needs of each student. Provide feedback for improving performance to help achieve success.
- Timely and in appropriate amounts (e.g. verbally in class, by email, feedback on written assignments, etc.)

Today’s Takeaways

- your attitude → students’ attitude
- safe and positive learning environment → engaging discussion
- thoughtful feedback → improves students’ learning

Thank you and have a wonderful semester!

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