Handout 1: Managing Whole Group Interactions – Teacher Impact

When Calling on Students, Avoid Bad Teaching Habits.

- **Don't call on the same three students.** This is a common teaching bad habit. Call on others. If you keep a seating chart with you and check off each student's contributions, this will help. Remember, if a student doesn't produce the language/information, s/he will have trouble retaining it. Also, if you only call on volunteers, you can't be sure of overall class progress, only those students who are most engaged.

- **Allow enough wait time.** Allow several seconds of silence before asking an alternative question or providing the answer. Students need time to form answers and to get up the courage to provide answers, especially in a second language. Many teachers feel very uncomfortable in the silence and they tend to jump in with the answers too quickly. Acknowledge to yourself that wait time can feel very heavy and burdensome as you stand up front, but it is essential to learning. Try allowing **eight** seconds of wait time, even for native speaking students! Count it off silently in your head.

- **Reflect before asking the class a question.** Take a second to decide if you would have trouble answering the question. If you have trouble finding an immediate answer, don't expect students to find an answer! Also, when you realize that you've asked a question that's too difficult, simply admit your mistake, provide the answer, and possibly apologize for asking a question that's too hard.

Keeping Whole Group Interactions Focused

- **If you have shy speakers.** Warn them that you will call on them soon while you ask other students questions. This gives them time to prepare.

- **Repeat answers so that all may hear.** If students don't quite hear the answers of others, they can't build on them.

- **Rephrase comments.** When students are commenting, you have to manage the interaction. It is very important to rephrase comments to reveal (1) the gist of the comment and (2) to relate them back to the initial point.

Dealing with Wrong Responses in General Discussions

It's hard to put a positive spin on a wrong answer. However, here are some strategies.

- Evaluate the response. Not the speaker.

- Try to scaffold the student to the correct answer. Give hints or recast the question. However, if you are giving too many hints and the student still can't provide the answer, don't humiliate them. Just drop it and give the correct answer.

- Tactfully acknowledge an incorrect response. You can say, "That's not quite right but that's okay," or "Nobody learns without making mistakes; you know the answer now so you probably won't make this mistake again. Thank you for doing your best!" or "I appreciate you volunteering" or simply "Nice try."

Handout 2: Classroom Interactions – Pacing

In general, strive to appear "in charge" instead of "stressed and worried" in terms of time management interventions. If your students feel that you are in control they will tend to behave with more control.

Pacing

- **Stick to your lesson plan:** A major reason for doing lesson plans is to imaginatively recreate carrying out the activity in your head before class so you can have some idea how long the activity will take. Then the timing on your lesson plan helps you stay in control.

- **Use your watch:** If you find you can't remember to look at your watch, buy yourself a cheap mechanical timer. Set it to go off a couple of minutes BEFORE you need to finish the current segment of your lesson.

- **To keep the class moving briskly, think of snapping your fingers, "click, click, click" to mark the pace.** That's the way you want your class to move. To help do this, give directives—use imperatives—clap your hands once to get attention: as long as your tone is neutral you can be firm about what you want students to do. People like to be told what to do as long as they feel respected. If you are telling people what to do (and not enjoying it or being angry about it), students will appreciate that you're not wasting their time.

- **Teachers love to talk:** They love to share experiences and anecdotes. These anecdotes often do have good information in them. Students may seem to enjoy them (why not, you're doing all the work and they aren't!). So be careful! Digressions may be interesting (to you?) but they are rarely helpful. Stick to the lesson and the activity at hand. Remember, the more new or different information a student needs to process in one class the harder it will be for her/him to keep focused on the teaching point of the lesson.

Tricks for Staying on Schedule

- **Cut off activities early:** If activities are not quite completed at the time you had planned on—cut them off. The teacher can say, "That's okay. I think you have the idea, and we need to move on because I know you want to finish and get out of here."

- **Call off intervals:** For shorter timed activities (like scanning and skimming), call off 30 second intervals to keep students focused. For longer activities, call off increasingly shorter intervals as you approach the end. "10 minutes, 5 minutes, 2 minutes, 1 minute, 30 seconds, done!" This will energize students and keep them on task.

- **Don't give students more time to finish than you have planned:** If students need to learn to read faster, they will never read faster if you don't push them.

- **Don't always report out:** Not every group needs to report out after small group work. You can say before group work, "We have to stay on schedule, so I may not call on every group. Is that okay? I promise if I don't call on you this time I will next time!" And then be sure to do it!

Handout 3: Transitions in the Classroom (Before Moving into Groups)

Give clear instructions

Plan your instructions when you plan your lesson. If you improvise in front of the class, you will likely use less English, make mistakes in the host country language, have to repeat numerous times and risk losing your students' attention. Always reflect to yourself: "Could I follow these instructions if I were hearing them for the first time in a second language?" Scaffold instructions with board work, gestures, and intonation.

Focus on being clear about:
- how groups or pairs are to be formed.
- what physical steps students will take to form groups.
- what their goal is once they are in their groups.
- the steps they will carry out that will ensure they achieve their goal.

Give instructions BEFORE moving into groups

That way you do not have to call their attention after they have been moving desks or getting acquainted with their group members.

Always do a comprehension check after all instructions

What's a comprehension check? Have a student repeat back YOUR instructions in her/his own words to see if s/he's understood. If the student struggles, elicit help from others. If they struggle, review the instructions again, and seek another comprehension check again.

Configuring groups: Use variety

Avoid structuring groups in the same way all the time. For example, sometimes you can let students self-select and other times the teacher can assign them to groups. Pair a stronger learner with a weaker learner to support the weaker learner. However, if you do this all the time, how will the stronger learner begin to feel? How about the weaker learner? So mix up proficiency pairings. Sometimes group students of similar proficiency together as well.

Clarify interaction expectations

Be clear on your expectations for interactions between group members. Practice in polite, respectful communication is essential to interactional success. Expectations are particularly important if you have ethnic groups in your class that tend to clash, or if gender roles make it uncomfortable for learners to participate in ways you expect. One strategy would be to develop a list of rules regarding group work behavior. Post them somewhere in the classroom and refer to them each time you move students into groups.

Handout 4: Transitions in the Classroom (Launching Groups)

Transitioning- Moving Into the Group Space

- **Announce a clear, explicit start to the transition.** Explicitly initiate the group move and tell them when the move should be finished (how much time they have to move into groups). Use the same transition language and signals regularly to build a routine.

- **Set a routine to make sure all learners are prepared to go to work.** What do learners need to take out of their bags and bring to their desks?

- **Make sure that everyone is ready to begin at the same time.**

- **Permit student-guided physical transitions for pair/group activities** (let students decide how to move into groups). The teacher can decide who is in which group, but the students manage the move themselves.

- **Student-guided Transitions**
    (1) Set a definite time limit for the transition.
    (2) Have penalties for students who do not complete the transition within the time allotted.
    (3) Make sure the students know where they're moving to.
    (4) Model how they get there: Can they slide desks across the floor? Do they walk to new desks?
    (5) Build responsibility. Stress to students that you trust them to move while acting appropriately and finishing on time.

Transitioning During Group Work

- **Once in groups, do a follow-up comprehension check.** For most learners, the first words they usually utter when they start group work with others is, "Now what are we supposed to be doing?" If you call for a comprehension check before they think to ask, you'll help keep learners on task.

- **State clearly how much time you'll give.** Make sure that time is reasonable.

- **Give time checks.** "You have 3 minutes left. How are you coming?"

- **Circulate as much as possible** during group work, to answer questions and keep students on task.

- **Avoid appropriating group work;** that is, taking over the discussion, giving the right answers, taking control of the discussion, or spending too much time with any group. Allow groups to solve their task without your intervention. That's how they can learn.

- **Keep pacing crisp.** The focus of your facilitation should be primarily to maintain crisp pacing.

- **Allow enough time.** Don't short-circuit group work by stopping it early because it's boring for you to stand around and wait.

Handout 5: Transitions in the Classroom (After Group Work)

Coming Out of Group Work
- Never give more time that was allotted.
- Get students ready for the transition by making eye contact with several, by telling them the time remaining, and by inquiring about their progress on their task.
- Try to be as respectful as possible. For example, announce that you are giving them 30 seconds to wrap up (or to finish their discussion) before you call them back into whole group.

Some Common Transition Cues
- Flick lights.
- Raise your open palm in the air and say, "Give me five!… four… three...two…one."
- A nice bell is a wonderful transition signal. It attracts attention but is not annoying.
- Say in a clear voice, "Are we ready? Let's see!"
- Say in a clear voice, "Okay, take 30 seconds to finish your thought and then we'll come together." Then after 30 seconds use one of the other transition cues mentioned here.
- Say, "It's time. I know you have a lot more to say, but WE have a lot more to cover, so if YOU can help me help you, we'll get through this."

Transitioning – Reporting Out
- **First, review with students their "task"** --what were they supposed to do?

- **Second, don't call on all groups**—it eats large amounts of time and while one group is reporting other groups are snoozing. Instead, sample one or two groups then move to debriefing. To prepare them for this say something like, "We need to keep moving, so I may not ask every group to share out. But if I don't call on you this time, I will call on you next time."

- **During reporting out, value all comments.** When someone from one group comments, look for opportunities to get reactions from other groups.

- **Look for opportunities to apply reporting out** — so students feel that there is a reason for sharing other than that it's required.