

Out-of-The-Box Teaching Activities to Develop Creativity and Critical Thinking in a Second Language

Warm-up Activity with Student-Centered Questions and Answers

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Duration: 10-15 minutes

Target student proficiency level: Varies

Target student age: Varies

Objectives: To develop

- Language skills: speaking and listening to ask and answer questions
- Content knowledge: various topics in the curriculum
- Cognitive abilities: reasoning, critical thinking
- Social abilities: taking an active role to engage with lesson content, responding appropriately to questions on the spot

Materials:

Cards with numbers written on them (the number of cards is the same as the number of students in the class)

Preparation:

Before every lesson, each student chooses a card randomly and keeps it till the end of the lesson.



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Procedure:

Before the lesson of this activity:

1. Introduce the topic of the next lesson to students and ask them to prepare a set of *Wh*-questions (*Who, What, Which, Where, When, How, Why*) about the topic.
2. Instruct students on how to ask good *Wh*-questions. For example, if the topic is “household chores,” some questions can be:
 - *What are some examples of household chores?*
 - *Who often does household chores in your family?*
 - *Why is it important to share household chores among family members?*

On the day of this activity:

1. Write the topic of the reading/speaking/listening/writing activity on the board.
2. Have all students stand up.
3. Call out a random number within the class. The student with the card of that number will ask a question. That student then chooses a number they want and sits down. (A number range may be written on the board to know which numbers they can choose from.)
4. The student with the number chosen by the first student answers the question and asks their own question; then chooses another number for another student to answer and sits down.
5. This activity continues until about seven to ten students have spoken (or as many as time allows).
6. If a question is too tough and the chosen student cannot answer it, they can choose another number. Each time a number is selected, the teacher writes it on the board, so the next student will not repeat it.
7. Summarize students’ ideas related to the lesson content, and then start the new lesson.

Variations & Extensions:

If the students are at a high level of language proficiency, the teacher may add other requirements for their answers. For example, they must include at least one sentence with relative clauses in their responses; or use complex sentences to reply to their peers.

About the Author

Trang Thi Thu Tran holds a Master’s degree from Vietnam National University, Hanoi, and is currently a lecturer of English at Thai Nguyen University, Vietnam. She has been teaching English in Vietnam for 13 years. Her research and teaching interests are learner autonomy, English language teaching techniques, and project-based learning.