

Discussion management

One of the most challenging teaching situations is a discussion or a speaking class. That is not only because students need to master special discussion skills, get interested in the problem under discussion etc., but because teachers themselves should possess certain skills and features. The basic skills the teacher needs for such classes are sociability, motivation, communication and, of course, a good command of the language. However, a teacher also needs certain organizational skills and techniques, which can go under the heading 'discussion management'.

The teacher's role in the discussion is to create the conditions in which the discussion can take place, that is:

- *To initiate, to maintain and to summarize the discussion.* The teacher should know what the goal of the discussion is and what questions must be covered in it. Although the discussion is unlikely to follow the exact sequence of the topics, the teacher has to be ready with a list of questions before the discussion. When comments are made and accepted without further discussion, the teacher may ask questions to probe for additional information without filling the silence with her / his own opinions.

- *To give every participant an equal opportunity to speak.* In some classes the most confident students tend to dominate the discussion and the weaker students, those who really need the class, quickly withdraw. The teacher should listen carefully to the discussion and stimulate hesitant or reluctant students to contribute and to control overzealous members of the discussion.

- *To deal with interpersonal problems which develop.* At times a group may attack a person instead of the information that is being discussed.

So, the result and effectiveness of the discussion also depends on the organizational skills and techniques of a teacher.