

Rigorous and Accountable Academic Discussion with the *rBook*



Kate Kinsella, Ed.D.

San Francisco State University (katek@sfsu.edu) (707) 473-9030

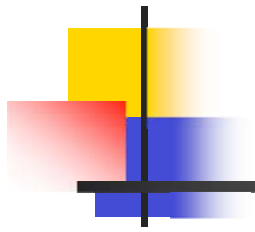
Read 180 National Summer Institute

San Francisco, CA July 26, 2006



Workshop Components

- ❖ Exploration of reasons many learners fail to engage in lesson discussions
- ❖ Potential impacts of unstructured discussions in intervention classrooms
- ❖ Analysis of the essential aspects of academic language
- ❖ Distinctions between oral language vernacular and academic discourse register for school success
- ❖ Demonstration and explanation of steps in structured academic discussion
- ❖ Observation and critique of classroom footage with focused criteria
- ❖ Pragmatics of effective partnering during whole group instruction
- ❖ High priority *rBook* lesson phases for structured academic discussion
- ❖ Cognitive, linguistic and social goals for *rBook* discussions



Learning Journal Writing Prompt

Step to College Class Fall, 2002 Dr. Kate Kinsella

✎ Students tend to be more actively involved in certain learning environments and more passive in others.

Analyze the characteristics of a classroom learning environment that helps you to be a more active and confident student and a classroom in which you tend to remain more passive.

Excerpted from the Learning Journal of a protracted English Learner:

My Active & Passive Classes

(Consuelo, born in Mexico, 8 years in the U.S., 11th grade)

"... The class where I think I'm a passive person is my English class because in English I can't express what I want. I can't say as many things as I want to say. Yes, I do say a little bit, but not how I would like to. I don't feel like participate because I am afraid to say something wrong or pronounce a word badly. I don't like to be wrong and I think is better to be quiet than to be wrong. That's why I think I am a passive learner in English class, because I don't want to be shamed..."



Learner Engagement

(Kinsella, Feldman)

Definition:

to attract and maintain a learner's **interest** and **active involvement** in all lesson content and related tasks, with clearly articulated “**evidence checks**” of a concrete, productive response to instruction (**i.e., some objective, behaviorally observable response to instruction**)

- ✓ *a written response*
- ✓ *an example shared verbally with a partner*
- ✓ *thumbs up when you have decided*

Evidence of the Dire Need to Increase Student Engagement and Academic Language Practice in Mixed-Ability, Linguistically-Diverse Classrooms



*Vanessa Girard,
WestEd San Francisco,
Project ELLA (2005)*

*Arreaga-Mayer,
Perdomo-Rivera (1996)*

*August, D.,
Shanahan, T. (2006)*

- ❖ Only 4% of English Learners' day is spent engaging in L2 informal "student talk"!!!
- ❖ Only 2% of English Learners' day is spent engaging in L2 "academic talk"!!!



Competent Classroom “Academic Talk” is Uncommon Amongst English Learners and Striving Readers

“Academic Talk” = verbal interaction about lesson content using relevant lesson vocabulary, framed in complete sentences with appropriate syntax and grammar (Kate Kinsella)

- ❖ “Academic talk” in classrooms with ELs and striving readers isn’t routinely instructed and structured across the subject areas to ensure “communicative competence” in English.
- ❖ “Academic talk” regularly amounts to unstructured and unmonitored conversational English about lesson content amongst under-prepared learners which fails to support communicative competence and directly contributes to “error fossilization.”



In Terms of Academic English...

ALL Students Are "AESL"
(Academic English as a Second Language)

Academic English is not a natural language.
It must be explicitly taught not merely caught.

✦ Academic English Language =
Vocabulary + Syntax + Grammar + Register



Components of Academic Language

- + **Vocabulary:** all the words that someone knows, learns, or uses
- + **Syntax:** the way words are arranged in order to form sentences or phrases
- + **Grammar:** the rules according to which the words of a language change their form and are combined into sentences
- + **Register:** the style of language use or degree of formality reflected in word choice and grammar



A Written Response Containing Academic English Vocabulary, Syntax & Grammar Uncharacteristic of Conversational English

 **Task:** Discuss common challenges faced by new immigrants to the U.S.

✦ **Students' Default Conversational Register**

Jobs. Mean people. You don't know English. The food's different.

✦ **Formal Academic Discussion Register**

One challenge faced by most new immigrants to our country is learning a different language.

✦ **Formal Written Academic Discourse**

Recent immigrants to the United States face many predicable challenges. One challenge encountered by most newcomers is learning an entirely different language. It is critical for adult immigrants to be able to communicate effectively in English if they want to have a well paid job or attend an American college.



Read 180 classrooms are comprised
of striving readers and English Learners
lacking the linguistic tools for school success.

Merely tossing out provocative questions to the classroom stratosphere and inviting responses will not support these fragile readers and language users in responding competently and confidently.

In literacy intervention contexts, unstructured discussions characteristically elicit learner passivity, default conversational register, selective listening and off-task behavior.



Tandem Goals During ALL *rBook* Class Discussions

Under-prepared readers and English users in Read 180 classrooms must engage daily in rigorous, accountable academic discussion with tandem goals:

- 1) developing critical conceptual foundations to prepare them for demanding reading and lesson tasks;
- 2) improving their ability to articulate perspectives and understandings in academic speaking and writing.



Unified-Class Brainstorming Discussion Tasks Prior to Reading a Text

1. Sixth-grade ELA & Social Studies Core Class (Full Inclusion):
discussion task in preparation for the essay *Restoring the Circle*,
written by a Native American to address inaccuracies in publications
by non-Native American authors:

*Have you ever had anything written about you that was inaccurate,
that wasn't right, not just a note in class but something official like
in a newspaper?*

2. Eighth-grade ELA & Intervention Block Class (ELs & Striving Readers):
discussion Task in preparation for the short story *Raymond's Run*,
addressing the theme of how individuals gain and demonstrate respect
to others, in particular peers, in their daily lives:

How do you or could you gain respect from your peers?



Lesson Observation and Critique: Implementation of Class Discussion

Questions to Guide Lesson Observation and Critique:

- ✓ Was the task appropriate for a unified-class discussion?
- ✓ Were the task purpose, directions and response expectations clearly established?
- ✓ Was any concrete support provided to ensure a competent response by all students?
- ✓ How many students actually responded to the task?
- ✓ How accountable were students for actually responding to the task?
- ✓ Was academic language used by students during the discussion?
- ✓ What, if any, accountability did students have for active listening and note-taking?
- ✓ Was a connection made between the discussion content and the subsequent reading?



Instructional Strategies That Could Have Been Used to Fully Engage Every Student in This Critical Unified-Class Discussion/Unit Opener

- ★ teaching students the meaning of the high-utility academic word **accurate**, since the reading focuses upon information written about Native Americans which is inaccurate and the impact this has on the culture
- 1. presenting a written task on the board that every student could respond to:
How would you feel if someone said or wrote something about you that wasn't accurate?
- 2. clarifying the task demands: purpose, vocabulary, time frame, response type
- 3. modeling an appropriate response for the age/ability level:
embarrassed, disappointed, etc.
- 4. factoring in adequate "wait time" (without blurting or hand raising) to enable all students to process the task and formulate a written response



Instructional Strategies That Could Have Been Used to Fully Engage Every Student in This Critical Unified-Class Discussion/Unit Opener

5. providing and modeling sentence starters to frame written/spoken responses:

*I would feel ___ if a ___ said something unfair and inaccurate about me.
I would be ___ if a ___ reported inaccurate information about me.*

Possible people: teacher, friend, classmate, sibling, coach, parent, etc.

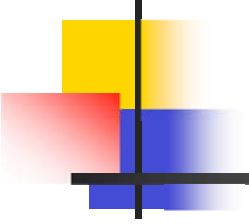
6. allowing students to “rehearse” their responses with a partner
7. requiring active listening by prompting students’ to record 2-3 new ideas during the unified-class debriefing
8. randomly calling on 3-4 students before closing with a few volunteers
9. making clear connections between the content generated during the discussion and the subsequent reading selection.



Structured Academic Discussion Task

✖ **Task:** Identify 3 specific instructional strategies this teacher uses to structure a dynamic and democratic class discussion in order to build background knowledge prior to assigning a non-fiction reading selection.

1. *writing the discussion task and clarifying the task demands*
2. *designing a task that clearly draws upon every student's experience*
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



Structured Writing Task Including Targeted Academic Vocabulary Prior to Accountable Academic Discussion

✓ I observed that she structured active participation
by (verb + ing)

*writing the task and clarifying the task demands
instead of simply asking a question and treating
response as an option.*

My observation:



My colleagues' observations:





Active Speaking and Listening Tasks During Unified-Class Debriefing

- ✓ Be prepared to share your perspective as I will be randomly calling upon individuals to contribute.
- ✓ Use your “public voice” to respond: two times slower and three times louder than casual conversation.
- ✓ Jot down two new ideas offered by other participants that you had not considered.
- ✓ Listen carefully during the unified-group discussion to see if anyone else has contributed an idea similar to the one you intended to share. If you are called upon, be sure to acknowledge your colleague's/classmates contribution before sharing your perspective.



Ground Rules for Class Discussion

- ✓ No blurting or hand raising (until I ask for volunteers).
- ✓ Use your public discussion voice to respond: two times slower and three times louder than casual conversation.
- ✓ Use the assigned sentence starter to share your idea.
- ✓ Jot down two new ideas offered by other participants that you had not considered.
- ✓ If your idea is similar to someone else's idea, acknowledge your classmate's contribution before sharing your perspective.



Communicative Language Functions

to Support Accountable Listening and
Contribution During Academic Discussions

Language Function: Acknowledging Other People's Ideas

Casual Conversational English

My idea is like _____'s idea.

My idea is the same as _____'s.

Formal Spoken & Written English

My idea **is similar to** _____'s idea.

My idea **builds upon** _____'s idea.

I agree with _____'s **perspective**. I also think that . . .



Discussion Vocal Warm Up

- ✓ **Whisper Voice** (very low volume 1x): cheating, borrowing a pen
- ✓ **Conversation Voice** (medium volume 2x): sharing with your partner
- ✓ **Discussion Voice** (high volume 3x): sharing to the entire class

Now I am using my ____ (public/private) voice.



Steps in Structuring Accountable Academic Discussions in Mixed-Ability Classes

- ✓ Pose an open-ended task in writing and clarify the task demands.
- ✓ Model an appropriate response using a sentence starter and point out vocabulary/content/grammar necessary to complete the starter.
- ✓ Monitor students' writing process and offer assistance when needed.
- ✓ Cue partners to share responses using the assigned starter.
- ✓ Assign active listening/note-taking tasks for the unified discussion.
- ✓ Select one/two "nominated volunteers" to jump-start the discussion.
- ✓ Randomly call on students to contribute before inviting volunteers.
- ✓ Require use of "public voices," three times louder/two times slower.
- ✓ Synthesize contributions and establish connections to the curricula.

Structured Academic Discussion Task:

Give One & Get One



✖ **Task:** Name four additional ways your school could help kids lead a healthier lifestyle.

1. *construct a workout room*

2.

3.

4.

.



What Makes These Academic Engagement
Strategies Work? In a word it is...

STRUCTURE



What is conscientiously planned and structured in scaffolded “academic talk”?

EVERYTHING!

- ✓ **Task** - a task that all or most students should reasonably be able to complete, drawing from prior knowledge or lesson content
- ✓ **Who** - an assigned partner or group, “1’s then 2’s”
- ✓ **Time** - relatively brief, highly focused
- ✓ **Preparation** - “Prepared” Participation: model response, think time, writing, pre-teaching of target vocabulary, partner rehearsal
- ✓ **Academic Language Use** - Linguistic Framing: written and verbal application of target vocabulary using appropriate syntax and grammar
- ✓ **Listening** - note-taking task; active listening/acknowledging task



Predictable Consequences of Unstructured Discussions in Classrooms Including Striving Readers and English Learners

✗ Worst Case Scenarios:

- ✓ No students respond. A painfully long silence elapses. The teacher finally adds an idea.
- ✓ A cacophony of unintelligible blurting ensues. No one can understand anything.
- ✓ A fragile student hazards a response, but uses inappropriate vocabulary or mispronounces, etc., which elicits snickering, correction or imitation from classmates.
- ✓ A smart aleck with considerable social status in the classroom seizes the opportunity to make a totally inappropriate comment.



Predictable Consequences of Unstructured Discussions in Classrooms Including Striving Readers and English Learners

✗ Disappointing Scenarios:

- ✓ Volunteers respond but do so using vernacular, avoiding use of any academic language.
- ✓ A student responds using academic language but in an inaudible “private voice” appropriate for personal conversation and no one is able to process the idea.
- ✓ A few students respond but no classmates are listening. Many are actively off task.



Three High Priority *rBook* Lesson Phases to Structure Academic Discussion

- ❖ Anchor DVD Viewing Tasks
- ❖ React Tasks
- ❖ Vocabulary Builder



Structured Academic Discussion Steps Using a "React" Question

- 1) Clarify the discussion task.
- 2) Structure competent student interaction.
- 3) Structure active listening and response.
- 4) Synthesize contributions and make connections to the subsequent reading(s).



Structured Academic Discussion Using a “React” Question

(rBook Stage B - Workshop 8, p. 182)

1) Clarify the task:

What is an example of a major turning point in a young person's life?

✓ *having a really difficult teacher.*

✓ *winning an award*



Structured Academic Discussion Using a “React” Question

(rBook Stage B - Workshop 8, p. 182)

2) Structure competent interaction:

One major turning point that most young people face is ____

having a really difficult teacher.

losing something valuable.



Structured Academic Discussion Using a "React" Question

(rBook Stage B - Workshop 8, p. 182)

3) Structure active listening/response:

- ✓ *No hand-raising or blurting.*
- ✓ *Use your "public voice."*
- ✓ *Listen and write one new example.*



Structured Academic Discussion Using a “React” Question

(*rBook* Stage B - Workshop 8, p. 182)

4) Synthesize contributions and
make connections to the reading(s):



Pragmatics of Structuring Partners

1. **Teacher Assigns** based on:
 - level of literacy
 - proficiency in English
 - performance on assigned tasks to date
 - overall EQ, social skills, lesson engagement track record
 - alternate ranking (#1 w/ #16, #15 w/ #30), no highs w/ lows
2. **Roles** - "A" & "B", "1" & "2", Blue & Green, Raiders & 49ers.
3. **Expectations for Task, Response, Active Listening:**
 - provide models & scaffolding: e.g. "sentence frames" ...
"the most important point about ____ is ____ because ____."
4. **Time - SHORT!!** - 90 seconds, 2 mins.- brief at first!

A Schema for Partnering Students:

Alternate Ranking by Level of Literacy/Language

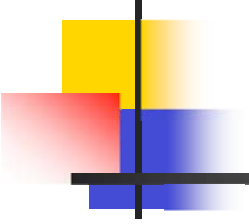
1.	<i>is paired with</i>	16.
2.	" " "	17.
3.	" " "	18.
15.	" " "	30.

- ❖ Adjust as appropriate (social/personal issues)
- ❖ Appoint 2-3 "designated floaters" (flexible/social/reliable students)
- ❖ Sit students w/partners (at tables/across in rows, etc.)
- ❖ Regularly pose questions for partners to address - monitor closely
- ❖ Change partners at the quarter/end of the month
- ❖ Consider having "rainbow partners":
e.g., blue partner for proofreading tasks, red for discussion tasks

Dynamic, competent student participation in discussions
is NOT dependent upon how
hyped up, dramatic or charismatic the teacher happens to be.



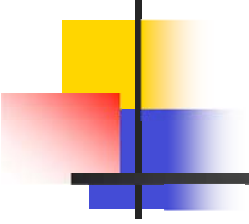
Robin Williams in *The Dead Poet's Society*



Cognitive, Linguistic and Social Goals for *rBook* Whole Group Discussion in Read 180 Classrooms

All students feel academically prepared for the whole group discussion task;

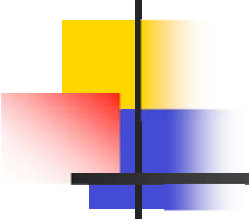
They are provided with task clarification, reflection time, related vocabulary and syntax support, teacher modeling, and partner rehearsal.



Cognitive, Linguistic and Social Goals for *rBook* Whole Group Discussion in Read 180 Classrooms

All students are held accountable for participating and following discussion ground rules.

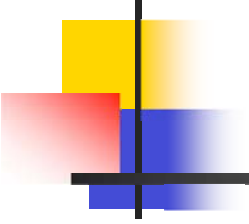
All students feel valued, respected and listened to by the teacher and classmates.



Cognitive, Linguistic and Social Goals for *rBook* Whole Group Discussion in Read 180 Classrooms

All students share initially with a partner if not subsequently with the unified class.

All students use the target academic language to contribute as this may be the only carefully scaffolded and accountable opportunity to flex their academic language muscles during the school day.



Cognitive, Linguistic and Social Goals for *rBook* Whole Group Discussion in Read 180 Classrooms

All students listen actively, learn from classmates and feel validated by classmates' acknowledgement of ideas, teacher writing ideas on board, etc.

All students leave the discussion better conceptually and linguistically prepared for the subsequent *rBook* curricular content.

A Final Goal for this Session:

That the Consuelos in your Read 180 class
can write this learning journal entry...

The class where I think I am an active learner is my Read 180 class because my teacher conscientiously plans for student interaction rather than merely tossing out drafts of questions and hoping for a response. She actually supports us in making dynamic contributions in a number of critical ways. First, she poses clearly worded, engaging questions and gives us adequate quiet time to compose our thoughts. She always provides a sentence starter that enables us to frame our response in an academic register. She also builds our confidence by letting us rehearse with a partner and get peer feedback before facilitating the whole group discussion. Moreover, I greatly appreciate the fact that she structures active listening roles and doesn't allow an intimidating and incoherent "blurtathon." I was initially upset about having to take this reading class, but I can easily see that this supportive class will not only bolster my literacy skills but help me realize my goal of attending college and becoming a nurse.



Academic Vocabulary Instruction "Webinar"

www.scholastic.com/readabout

40 minute seminar with Dr.Kinsella

Lesson footage: 3rd grade mixed-ability classroom
with GATE, striving readers and English Learners

Dr. Kinsella teaching vocabulary to a 4th grade class,
including a full range of GATE, EO and EL students,
for a Social Studies chapter and a story