LEARNING AND WORK INSTITUTE

Citizens' Curriculum Activity Pack for Participatory Learning

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Acknowledgements
This activity pack has been developed on behalf of Learning and Work Institute by English for Action (EFA London). English for Action run free English for Speakers for Other Languages (ESOL) courses in London, using a unique participatory ESOL approach. They support participants to take action to improve their lives and their communities. English for Action have participated in L&W's Citizens' Curriculum pilots.

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Who is this guide for?

This activity pack is for learning providers and practitioners delivering Citizens' Curriculum programmes.

1. Participatory Learning and the Citizens' Curriculum approach

This resource offers practical guidance on how to use participatory techniques to support and add value to the Citizens' Curriculum approach. It focuses on language (English for Speakers of Other Languages - ESOL) and literacy learning, but also provides inspiration for teaching and learning activities focused on other Citizens' Curriculum capabilities.

The Citizens' Curriculum

Learning and Work Institute's **Citizens' Curriculum** promotes flexible, locally-led programmes of study, co-designed with learners, to help adults gain the skills they really need in life and at work, including English, maths, digital, civic, health and financial capabilities.

A citizens' curriculum is learning which

- is locally-led, responding to local community and/or economic priorities, or meeting the needs of identified local cohorts
- is developed with the active participation of learners
- interlinks the life skills of language, literacy and numeracy with health, financial, digital and civic capabilities

Our pilots show that this innovative, holistic approach benefits learners in many different ways. Alongside enhanced confidence and employability come gains in physical health and life satisfaction, as well as improved attitudes towards learning.

Find out more about the Citizens Curriculum, and download the L&W's capabilities frameworks for further information about each aspect of the Citizens' Curriculum **www.learningandwork.org.uk/citizens-curriculum2**

Learner involvement

To ensure relevance and to help adults develop more confidence in themselves as learners, the Citizens' Curriculum approach prioritises learner involvement at every stage of the learning process, from programme design to evaluation. This is consistent with what we know from research about learning in general and adult learning in particular.

During the pilot phases, Learning and Work Institute identified that providers and practitioners enjoyed the flexibility offered by the Citizens' Curriculum to work responsively to learners' needs, but some would like further support to adopt these approaches.

Learning and Work therefore decided to commission two resources to inspire and help practitioners and providers co-design the curriculum with learners. The resources include:

- This activity pack, which focuses on participatory approaches in ESOL and literacy learning, but can also be used to inspire teaching and learning relating to other capabilities.

- A guide to non-directive coaching, which can be used to complement classroom approaches, but will be particularly useful on other settings such as the workplace. It can be used in relation to all Citizens' Curriculum capabilities, and includes specific guidance for working with ESOL learners.

What we know about adult learning

Research[1] tells us that

- Learning arises out of the learner's own experience and is unique to the learner.
- As learners, we build on our existing knowledge and experience.
- Adults have their own reasons and motivations to learn.
- Adults tend towards self-direction and autonomy as learners. They are able to think about how they learn and so can become more effective as learners.
- Most adult learning occurs in response to real-life problems and issues. Learning arises through a combination of action and reflection.
- Reflection can enable people to arrive at new understandings of their experience and their potential.
- There are things that can be done to encourage reflective learning (e.g. types of discussion).

Participatory learning approaches can help adult learning practitioners work in ways which reflect what we know about how adults learn.

Here we present nine participatory activities that can help to adopt a Citizens' Curriculum in ESOL and literacy learning. The first set of activities is designed to engage learners with a topic or theme. They can be used in the first or second session of several sessions that relate to the same theme. The second set of activities are for exploring a sub-topic in greater depth; analysing and problem-posing. The third set relates to evaluation and they can be used at the end of a course of learning, or at the end of a session or activity.

1 For more see Tusting, K., and Barton, D. (2003), Models of adult learning: a literature review. London: NRDC (National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy).

2. What are participatory approaches?

Participatory education is a collaborative form of learning that values students' existing knowledge and experience. It is based on the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who developed literacy programmes for the rural poor in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. Freire rejected the 'deficit model' of education which treats students as empty vessels who need to be filled with the teachers' expert knowledge.

In ESOL and literacy contexts, adult learners are not 'empty vessels' – they bring significant existing language resources to the classroom, and these resources can be validated and put to use in the participatory process to aid learning. The students may be beginner English language learners, but they are not beginner thinkers. As well as bringing linguistic resources, they also bring their life experiences. Learners are of course experts on their own lives and know best what English language and literacy they need. As such, in participatory learning, there is no set curriculum. Instead, course content is decided between students and teacher in an emergent process, based on students sharing their experiences, interests and needs. This makes learning more relevant to students' lives, increasing their engagement and motivation. Moreover, by giving students more ownership of their learning process, it challenges the established hierarchies between teacher and student.

Participatory education seeks to bring about social, political, cultural and economic change. By treating everyone with respect and challenging established power dynamics inside the classroom, students become better equipped to change the world outside the classroom. The practices of self-reflection and sharing necessitated by a participatory approach also build community and encourage relationships to develop between members of the group.

In an ESOL context, this means that the classroom becomes a site of integration, mutual support and collective problem solving in its own right. Participatory activities involve students in discussion of their experiences and the real-life problems they face, and encourage critical thinking about these problems and how they can be overcome. Participatory learning goes further than critiquing injustice and modelling change; it also challenges and supports participants to take action to improve their lives and communities outside the classroom. Planning, taking and evaluating action is also language-rich and feeds back into the learning process. These features of participatory learning link particularly well with the Citizens' Curriculum approach, for example by linking language and literacy with civic capability.

3. Engaging Learners and Finding Topics

This first set of activities is designed to explore new themes and generate sub-topics that are engaging and relevant for your students. For example, the teacher may pick the theme "The local community" and then use one of these activities to find out what element of the theme will be most fruitful for future learning. It could be absolutely anything, from using the local library to complaining to the council about a dangerous road crossing.

Choose a generative theme

A theme acts as a starting point for students' discussion. Choose something broad and non-specific. Examples: work, health, family, home, education, learning, language, integration, migration, London (or the local community where your class is taking place), UK.

To find sub-topics, we use 'catalyst activities' which encourage students to share their real-life opinions, experiences and reflections. The catalyst activities are deliberately open and relatively free. This allows students' interests to determine which direction discussions take. At the same time, even the most open discussions can involve more formal language learning and follow up activities. This provides the more structured learning that students may expect and need.

During activities, the teacher needs to be 'consciously listening'[2]. This means listening to conversations to pick up on which issues and sub-topics seem most important, engaging or live, for the group.

With a new group, don't worry if discussion needs some time to take off. New groups may need time to build rapport. If whole group discussion proves difficult, try breaking students into smaller groups first, then ask them to feed back.

Activity 1: Picture Pack

The picture pack is a large collection of photos of different things which are spread out on a surface for students to rifle through. We recommend that every teacher has their own picture pack. To prepare one you can cut out interesting images from newspapers and magazines, use old postcards and images. It is a good idea to laminate and then the pack can be used again and again for years.

Pictures can be completely random - they do not need to obviously link to any theme. The images trigger associations for students which provide the basis for comments. The picture pack allows students to describe their own experiences. This can be personal or detached, literal or metaphorical, as they wish.

2 See Auerbach, E R *Making Meaning, Making Change. Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL Literacy.* Delta Systems Inc., 1992.

When to use this activity:

This works well as an activity to introduce a broad, generative theme (see above). It could be the first activity you do in a lesson where the new theme is introduced.

Instructions:

1. Spread the images out across a surface so that all the students in the group can rifle through them.
2. Tell the students to choose a photo that says something to them about the theme.
3. Once everyone has an image, ask students to tell the class why they have chosen it. If students are a bit reluctant to speak to the whole class, they could do this in pairs first before showing their picture to the whole group.

Examples of language likely to be generated by this activity

- Discourse markers/phrases to structure an anecdote e.g. *openings ('Once,…'; 'one time…'; 'I remember…'; 'This makes me think about the time…'),*
- Connectives: e.g. *'Then'; 'so'; 'after that', 'finally'*
- Narrative tenses, especially simple past: e.g. *went, was, saw etc.*
- Expressing opinions: e.g. *'to me, …' 'for me,…', 'I think…'*
- making analogies/comparing: e.g. *'it's like', 'it reminds me of', 'it makes me think of'*
- showing you're listening: e.g. *nodding, repeating back phrases, follow up questions, noises and words to show you're listening like 'yeh,' 'right' 'mmm' 'uh-huh'*
- linking ideas with conjunctions e.g. *'and', 'but', 'so', 'because', 'if'* etc.

More experienced teachers may wish to listen to the language that students are producing and then subsequently chose an activity that focuses on a language point that would most improve students' output. This needs to be level appropriate and of course correspond to the aims of the course and fit in with recent learning. Alternatively for teachers less confident about designing follow-on activities during the lesson, you could choose one or two of the language areas listed above and prepare an activity or two before the lesson.

Example of a follow up activity

Showing you're listening

After the picture pack activity, ask the group 'when you are listening to a story, what can you do and say to show you are listening?'

Get students to discuss this question in pairs and write down answers on sticky notes

Students feed-back and stick their notes on the board or wall.

Some of these notes will be descriptions of movements or gestures (e.g. make eye contact), descriptions of language use (e.g. 'ask a relevant question') or words and phrases (e.g. 'right'; 'ok').

You might want to add some ideas of your own to feed in 'new' language.

Give sticky notes out to students. Do this in a differentiated way – students working at higher levels can have a number of sticky notes with descriptions of language, students working at lower levels can be given fewer sticky notes with gestures, words or phrases for them to use.

Ask students to get into pairs and take turns telling each other what they did last weekend. While person A is talking, person B must use the language items on the sticky notes they've been given.

Activity 2: Card Cluster

The card cluster is a way for a class to pool knowledge and create a group narrative about a topic. Each student is given three pieces of card and told to write three different things about the topic in question, one thing on each card. It can be information, opinion or personal experience and there are no rights or wrongs. Students then share their cards and cluster similar cards together to create a map of students' knowledge, experience and interests around a topic.

When to use this activity:

This can be used whenever you begin to explore a new theme or sub-topic within a theme. It's particularly useful for creating a shared overview of a subject and assessing participants' knowledge and interests. It could be in the first or second lesson about a new theme.

Instructions:

1. Choose a generative subject for the activity. This can be a theme word (e.g. health), a specific topic within that theme (e.g. the NHS) or a question (e.g. what is important for good health?).
2. Give each student three cards (or sticky notes). Ask them to write 3 things they know about the generative subject. Tell students to write only one item on each card (this is important otherwise it will be impossible to cluster ideas subsequently!).
3. Once students have their cards ready, bring the group together around a surface such as a table or wall. Ask one student to place, stick or pin one of their cards on this surface.
4. Other students can then add cards which are connected or similar to the first card. Students should read out their card and place it next to the card that has gone before to create a cluster of cards on the surface. Invite students to explain the card if the meaning isn't completely clear.
5. When no one in the group has any cards which are obviously connected to the last card laid down, students can place down a new card on the surface, starting off a new cluster.
6. Once all the cards are laid down, ask students to check the clusters and re-arrange them if there are better ways to cluster the cards. Ask students to collaboratively decide on titles for each cluster and write those titles down on new pieces of card in a distinctive colour.
7. Finally, when the cards have been clustered and named, students take turns to create a single narrative, or summary of the statements. This produces a wealth of language and opportunities for further language development work, as well as 'sub topics' for further exploration.

Tip:

Depending on the generative theme, you could give students more cards at the beginning of the activity. You can also keep some cards or sticky notes spare, and tell students they can write more cards at the feeding back stage if they have new ideas.

Examples of language likely to be generated by this activity

There is a range of language you can expect students to use, or want to use, when doing this exercise. Accompanying or follow-up activities can focus on these language areas, for example:

- vocabulary relating to the theme: e.g. if the generative theme is *integration*, vocabulary could be *'immigration', 'migrants', 'culture', 'multicultural'* etc.
- expressing opinions e.g. *'Yeh', 'I agree', 'I think so', 'I'm not so sure…' 'I don't know if…'*
- making analogies/comparing: e.g. *'it's like', 'it reminds me of', 'it makes me think of'*
- showing you're listening: e.g. making eye contact, *repeating back phrases, follow up questions, "right", "yep" etc.*
- connectives e.g. *'also', 'another thing', 'because of that', 'as a result', 'in the same way'*
- Connecting paragraphs (you could work on first sentences): e.g. *'In terms of education…….', 'On the other hand, there are many bad things about……'*
- making suggestions e.g. *'why don't we…', 'could we…', 'maybe it would be better to…', 'how about…'*
- making space to speak in a group discussion e.g. *'um,…' 'yeh,…' 'one thing,…' 'can I just say,…'*

Example of a follow up activity

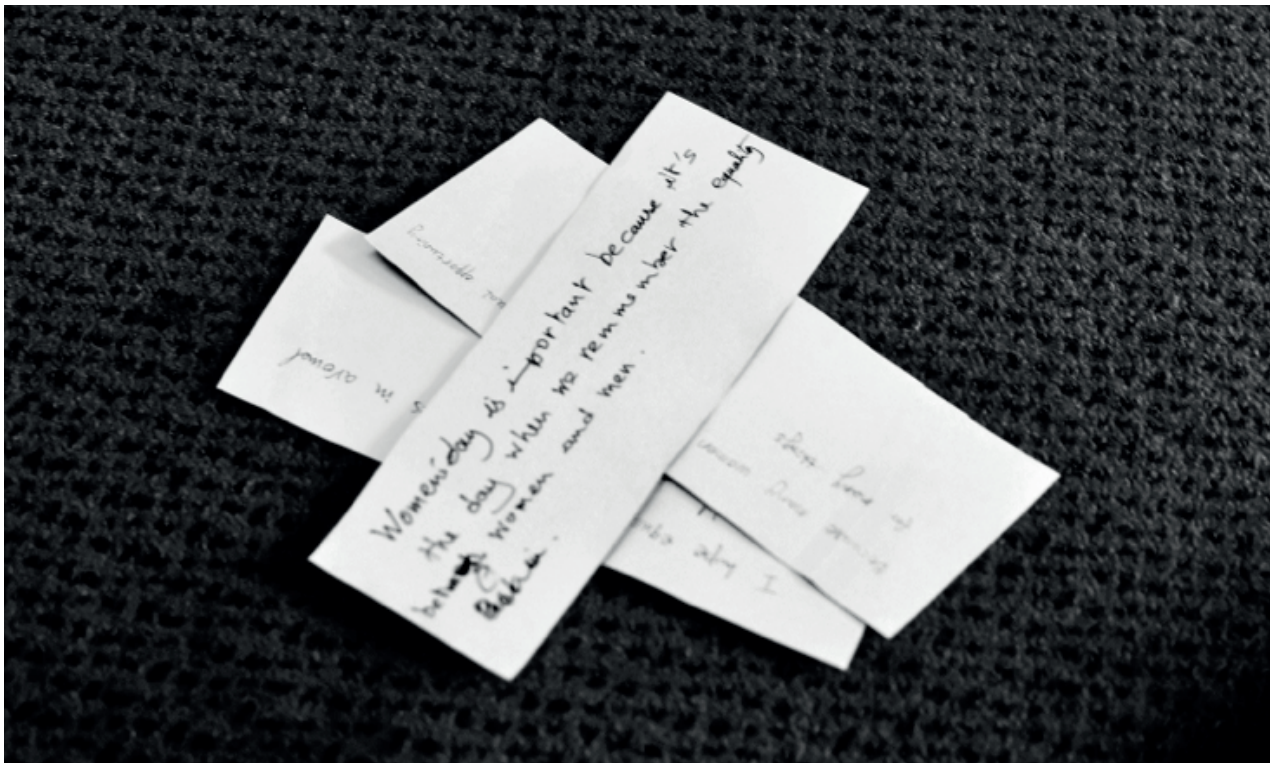
Writing paragraphs

Divide the class into small groups, and give each group one cluster from the card cluster. They are each going to write a paragraph of writing based on that cluster. Each sticky note will form a sentence or two within their paragraph. Ask the students to decide together, as a group, to arrange the sticky notes in order that they will appear in their paragraph.

Students will then need to write up their paragraph, creating full sentences from each sticky note and finding phrases and sentence structures to connect the sentences together into a coherent piece.

The teacher can support this in a number of ways. If students are writing in class, the teacher can circulate to give support to each group in turn. The teacher can share useful phrases from students' work for other students to borrow. The teacher might want to group students with the more confident writers helping the less confident writers.

Once drafts are complete, students could peer review each other's work. To do this, ask students to place their writing around the classroom and circulate to read. Students could leave sticky notes on each other's work with positive feedback on what they like. Alternatively, the teacher could take away the drafts to read them privately and provide written or verbal feedback to each student.



Activity 3: Word Flower

The word flower works a bit like a card cluster, in that it is a way to explore ideas and associations with a generative theme (e.g. home).

Instructions:

1. Divide students into groups and give each group a sheet of flip chart paper.
2. Each group writes the generative theme word or phrase (e.g. 'Home') in the centre of a flip chart paper, circles the word and then draws petals around the circle. In each petal students write a word that they associate with the main word.
3. Walk around probing and listening to the conversation in groups in order to be.g.in to identify 'sub topics' - aspects of the theme that are emerging across students' conversations and seem areas of particular interest. From a theme like 'home' this could be anything from interior design, to house prices or tenants' rights.

Examples of language likely to be generated by this activity

- Vocabulary relating to the theme: e.g. if the theme is 'home', words generated might be *'housing', 'cottage', 'homeland',' suburbs'* etc.
- language for making suggestions: e.g. *'how about we….', 'let's…', 'could we….?'*
- language for agreeing and disagreeing e.g.. 'yeah, that's right', 'it's true', 'yes, but', 'really?',
- Making analogies/comparing: e.g. *'it's like…', 'it's similar to…', 'it's the same as…', 'it reminds me of…'*
- language for checking and clarifying meaning e.g. *'so is it…?', 'so do you think…?' 'do you mean…?', 'let me say that again….','no, I mean….'*

Example of a follow up activity

Report Back

An activity that involves students reporting back on their group's word flower to the rest of the class:

Ask one group to report back to the rest of the class. Listen while they do so.

Once the first group has reported back, draw attention to two useful phrases or pieces of language they used. You could write them on the board and get students to repeat the phrases.

Then add in two further useful phrases or words for reporting back that the group did not use but would have improved their report-back.

Continue asking groups to report back and draw attention to any further useful language students produce or language that would further improve the report-back.

Examples of language types and phrases that are useful for reporting back to the group:

- tonic sentences e.g. *"home means different things to different people"*
- sequencing: *'first of all', 'firstly', 'secondly', 'finally', 'then'*
- *"some of us thought that"*
- *"we agreed that"*
- *"we thought"*
- *"we said"*
- *"the most important thing was…"*
- finishing the report: *"thank you", "that's it", "any questions"*

4. Exploring subtopics in greater depth

By consciously listening during the activities above, subtopics should emerge from your generative theme.

Subtopics are topics related to the generative theme which are of particular interest to the students. For example, from the generative theme of 'health', GP waiting times may emerge as a subtopic. From the theme of 'home', the cost of renting a home might emerge as a subtopic. Subtopics are the subjects that are mentioned most by different students and that generates the most discussion and engagement when they're brought up.

You can use the following tools to explore these subtopics in more depth. These tools provide a structure for conversations which encourages critical thinking. The teacher's role varies depending on the tool; sometimes he/she can be completely out of the discussion and sometimes lead the discussion by asking a series of critical questions.

Activity 1: Problem Tree

The problem tree structures a discussion of the causes, consequences and possible solutions to a particular problem. It provides a shared visual record of discussion which can be referred back to in later lessons.

When to use this activity:

The problem tree is for when the sub-topic that has emerged is a problem, or something that the group would like to change, for example 'it takes too long to get an appointment with the GP'. Everyone in the group must agree that this is a problem for the exercise to work. The tool helps the students discuss causes and consequences of a problem, so if there is no consensus that there is a problem in the first place it is difficult to proceed.

Instructions:

1. Split students into small groups (4-6 people).
2. Give each group a sheet of flip chart paper. Ask students to draw a tree trunk in the middle of the sheet.
3. On the board write a statement that encapsulates the subtopic problem that students have been discussing, e.g. "It is difficult for young people to find work". Ask students to write this statement into the centre of their tree trunk. Alternatively, you could do the last stage for students in advance, and distribute the paper with the trunk and statement already drawn.
4. Tell students that in groups, they have 20-45 minutes (depending on level) to talk about this problem and its causes, consequences and solutions. Check that everyone understands the meaning of these three terms.
5. Tell students to write down causes of the problem on the flipchart paper as roots below the tree trunk; consequences as branches (above the trunk) and solutions as fruit (amongst the branches). Students can draw in these roots, leaves or fruit onto the sheets themselves. Alternatively, you could distribute card or paper shapes (roots, branches, fruit) in which students can write causes, consequences and solutions.

6. While students are discussing the problem and creating the tree, the teacher can circulate. The teacher may want to probe the causes students identify through further questioning, in order to drill down into the deepest 'root causes' of the problem. For example, if the problem at the centre of the tree is 'rent is too expensive' and a cause identified by students is 'house prices are expensive', the teacher can ask students to identify causes of high house prices by pointing to the cause and asking 'why?'.

When students have finished their trees, you can organise feedback in a number of ways:

- by asking one student from each group to explain their tree to the rest of the class.
- by asking each group to nominate one person to stay with their tree; everyone else can rotate to look at other people's trees and ask questions to the nominated person.
- Place the trees next to each other on tables or the floor in the centre of the room. Give everyone five minutes to mingle and look at the trees on display.

Types of language generated

- expressing opinions: e.g. *'in my opinion…', 'I reckon…', 'I guess…'*
- making space to speak: e.g. *'can I just say something?', 'hang on a minute', 'yes, but…', 'yes and…'*
- agreeing with others: 'yeah, totally', 'that's right', 'so true!' disagreeing with others: *'no, really?', 'do you see it like that?', 'not for me', 'yeah?'*
- Language of causality e.g. *'the main cause is….', 'because of the…', 'X is caused by Y' etc*
- Language of consequences e.g. *'so', 'therefore', 'as a result', 'due to', 'X happened because of Y'*
- Making suggestions: e.g. *'shall we…?', 'we could…', 'maybe we should…'.*
- Offering: *'I'll do X','if I do X, can you do Y?', 'I don't mind doing that'*
- Summarising: *'basically,…', 'so you can see that….', 'at the end of the day…'*

Example of a follow up activity

Making Suggestions

Listen out during the exercise for the language that students use to make suggestions e.g. 'Perhaps we should…' 'Maybe…' 'Can we put…' 'How about…' 'let's…..'

Write these phrases on the board.

Ask students for other ways to make suggestions.

Draw attention to the words and phrases like 'perhaps' and 'maybe' which students can use, and to the verb forms which make statements sound more tentative like 'we could' and to the technique of asking a question as a suggestion e.g. 'Could we stop paying the rent?'

Encourage the students to repeat the phrases, individually and as a whole group.

After the students have practised the language in a controlled way, they could repeat the action/solutions part of the discussion. This will give them the opportunity to use the target language in an authentic and familiar context. The teacher can listen to assess the students' use of language.

Activity 2: Problem-Posing

This tool works by focusing the group on an image (also referred to as a 'code') which relates to a problem or situation of interest for the group. The facilitator then uses a structured questioning technique to draw out understanding and reactions from students. The questions lead students towards a deepening analysis of the problem/situation. It is not a free-for-all discussion.

When to use this activity:

When the class are clearly engaged around a particular shared problem, e.g. the cost of renting a home.

Instructions:

1. Preparing your code: The code should be an image that represents a problem, conflict or tension central to the sub-topic. This could be a picture that has been drawn by the teacher in advance, a photograph, or an image found online. Alternatively, the teacher could ask students to create a theatre scene or a tableau (a freeze frame image made using their bodies) to represent a problem that is key to the sub-topic.
2. The teacher then asks the rest of the group a series of questions about the code.

Elsa Auerbach[3] suggests five stages:

1. Describe the content - What do you see?
2. Define the problem - What's happening? What's wrong exactly?
3. Personalize the problem - Has this happened to you or anyone you know?
4. Discuss the problem - Causes and consequences: Why is it happening? What are the effects?
5. Discuss the alternatives to the problem - What could happen instead? How can we change this?

Types of language generated

- Descriptive language (present simple): e.g. *'it's', 'he's…', 'she's…' they're…' 'the problem is…' 'the trouble is…' 'this is…'*
- Summarising language: e.g. *'so we can say that…' 'so basically,' 'what's happening is',*
- Narrative tenses, especially past simple: e.g. *' it happened to me', 'it was…', 'I didn't know what to do',*
- Interjecting/making space to speak: e.g. *'ummm', 'can I say something?', 'hang on a minute', 'yes, but'*
- Language of causes and consequences: *'it's because of…', 'X happens because of Y, 'then you get…','as a result'*
- Action planning: *'why don't we…?', 'let's…', 'how about we…'*

3 Auerbach (1992), *Making Meaning, Making Change.*

Example of a follow up activity

Planning action

In order to plan action that the students suggest during the problem posing, you can use an "action-matrix". In groups of 3 or 4, students draw a table like this:

Action
Put up posters asking drivers to switch off their engines outside the school
Why?
This would improve the air quality for children, teachers and parents around Chisenhale Primary School
Who?
Saleha and Asma (they need to check with school first)
When?
By Friday 15th May

The example relates to the problem of air pollution in London.

You can help the students negotiate and delegate by teaching phrases like 'if you do x, I'll do y' and 'when do you think you can do that by?'.

The action matrix can then be a record to refer to in future and students can hold each other to account.

Activity 3: Iceberg

This is a good tool for initiating analytical discussion. It can also be used as a record of group discussions that have taken place. This can then become a resource you can photograph, bring back to subsequent lessons to help students remember what they said previously and also use to help students structure writing on the topic.

When to use this:

To explore contentious ideas key to your sub-topic that have emerged from what students have said during discussion, for example, 'immigrants to the UK need to integrate'.

Instructions:

1. Draw an iceberg on the board or on a large flipchart sheet.
2. On the tip of the iceberg write some kind of assumption or general statement associated with the sub-topic. Ideally, this would be something that students have said themselves e.g. *'British people don't look after their parents when they're old.'*
3. The rest of the iceberg is a blank slate to explore the statement through group discussion - to qualify or problematise words or aspects of the statement, to add nuance.
4. The teacher can ask probing questions:
   'What else could explain this?'
   'Does anyone have an alternative view?'
   'Is this true in all cases?'
   'Why is this happening?'

5. One student scribes for the group, adding ideas onto sticky notes or directly onto the iceberg. Alternatively students can take turns to write their ideas but the group should discuss together and not just write ideas individually.
6. The group can go deeper and deeper into the iceberg as they interrogate their ideas.
7. Visual symbols can also be added to the iceberg, like life rafts or rescue boats on which students write possible solutions or responses to the problem.

Examples of language likely to be generated by this activity

- expressing an opinion: e.g. *'it could be because…', 'perhaps it's about…', 'for me, it's all about'*
- language for causes and consequences: *'it's because of…', 'X happens because of Y, 'then you get…','as a result'*
- agreeing or disagreeing: e.g. *'I suppose so', 'that's right' 'do you really think so?', 'I don't really see it like that'*
- connectives and conjunctions: e.g. *'so…', 'as a result…', 'therefore…', 'because of…'*
- conditional phases: e.g. *'if people didn't work, they would have more time', 'it would be different if people lived close to one another'*
- making connections: e.g. *'it's like you said before…', 'it's the same as…', 'it relates to…'*
- persuading: e.g. *'don't you think that….', 'but what if…', 'if you think about it though…'*

Example of follow up activity

Planning a piece of writing

Divide students into small groups.

Ask each group to copy out the ideas recorded on the iceberg onto cards.

Each group should then arrange the cards into 3-4 clusters according to which ideas go together. Each cluster will become a paragraph in a piece of writing about the iceberg topic.

The paragraphs are ordered from first to last.

Finally, students can arrange the cards within each paragraph into a coherent order.

Tip:

You can frame this activity by discussing what the aims of the writing are and who will read it. This could lead on to a discussion of the best form for the purpose of the writing. For example, if students are producing persuasive piece of writing, you can discuss with them the best way to arrange ideas to make an argument.

After students have arranged their paragraph clusters, or even after they have written up this plan into a text, a follow up activity could be to give each paragraph a tonic sentence, e.g. 'When we consider the pros of immigration,…'

Participatory Evaluation

Meaningful student evaluation is a crucial part of the participatory learning process. Students can evaluate action they have taken and then even if the action has not produced the desired reaction or result, it will still have been a useful learning experience. Students can also evaluate their learning in order to improve it.

Evaluation and genuinely asking students' feedback (especially if feedback then goes on to visibly inform the teacher's practice) also sends a message that students are respected and have ownership over the class. Over time, this helps create a sense of shared responsibility between teacher and students for the class atmosphere and learning process. It can also help to identify themes or subtopics for future learning, or it can help the teacher to tweak the emphasis and make the topic more relevant or enjoyable. For example, one EFA class was working on the theme of 'poverty'. In the evaluation at the end of the first session on the theme, the students suggested that it was too 'heavy' as a topic. The teacher listened to students' feedback and switched the emphasis in the following lesson to action against poverty and the class was far more successful in terms of student engagement.

Evaluation can also be used to draw students' attention to the language learning that has taken place during the learning cycle. This can be especially useful when language learning has happened through activities (such as extended discussion and action planning) that students might not associate with 'proper learning'.

Activity 1: Evaluation Wheel

This is an individual participation evaluation tool. It gives students a chance to reflect on their participation in group work or discussion. It also allows students to share their feelings with the group and perhaps make amends for things they wish they had or hadn't said.

When to use this:

After an involved group discussion, after a class or at the end of a course.

Instructions:

1. A large circle is drawn on a piece of flipchart paper and then it is cut into slices like a pizza (e.g. one segment for one each member of the group).
2. The participants are each given a segment and asked to colour in the proportion of the segment that reflects how happy they are with their contribution to the activity i.e. if they are very happy with how they participated, they colour in all, or nearly all, of the segment.
3. Participants should colour in from the narrow end of the wedge upwards. This is important for when the students reassemble the circle.
4. They can also add some comments (either on the blank part, or on a sticky notes).

5. Once students have finished filling in their segment, get everyone to reassemble the wheel by placing the segments back together to create a full circle. This provides a visual representation of the overall satisfaction level of the groups.
6. Students can then spend a few minutes reading everyone's comments and talking.

Examples of language likely to be generated by this activity

- language to talk to about feelings: e.g. *'I thought…', 'I felt that…', 'I found…', 'I worried that…'*
- Word-level writing skills: e.g. *spelling*
- vocabulary relating to evaluation: e.g. *'contribution', 'talking', 'shy', 'dominant', 'loud', 'quiet', 'confident'*
- Past simple, positive and negative: e.g. ' *I talked a lot', 'I didn't say much', 'I was happy'*
- Intensifiers: e.g.. *'really', 'quite' 'totally' 'completely' etc.*
- Abbreviations: e.g. *'Sts' (students), 'lang.' (language), 'ppl' (people), 'pron.' (pronunciation) etc.*

Follow up?

Teachers can use this activity to ask students to reflect on their participation in the future. It can be used to generate a discussion about the factors which may influence their participation and/or discussion of how to keep the balance of participation more equal, including the language that students need to do this e.g. language to invite people to speak ('what do you think?') and language to make space for themselves to speak.

If unequal participation is an issue, the teacher may choose to make group discussion and feedback more structured to better control participation. If some students are dominating because their language level is much higher than their classmates, this may mean the teacher needs to design activity with more differentiation.

Activity 2: Spectrum Line

This is a versatile activity that can be used at many different stages of the learning process, but it works well as an evaluation tool. It allows for reflective discussion amongst participants, with a clear visual representation of the spread of group opinion.

When to use this:

At the end of a lesson or course to reflect on the experience and whether aims have been met. Also, at the beginning of a new theme to assess students' existing knowledge or opinions.

Instructions:

1. The teacher makes statements and asks participants how far they agree or disagree. To show how far they agree, students go and stand somewhere along a 'spectrum' between two walls or two points in the classroom. One wall or point represents complete agreement and the other wall or point represents complete disagreement.
2. After each statement has been read out, and students have positioned themselves, the teacher can invite participants to explain why they are standing where they are. The teacher can ask for comment from those participants who are furthest along the spectrum line in either direction.
3. Students can change their position if they are persuaded by something someone else says. By giving people a chance to speak once they've positioned themselves, they can justify their stance, add nuance and clarify their understanding of the statement.

Examples of statements to explore with students:

- "I enjoyed this lesson/course/topic"
- "I feel more confident about X"
- "I know how to X"

Examples of language likely to be generated by this activity

- language to express opinion: e.g. *'I thought that…', 'I guess…', 'I can see it both ways'*
- language to show you're listening: e.g. *' yep', 'absolutely', engaged body language*
- language for agreeing and disagreeing: e.g. *'I completely agree', 'I'm with you', 'no way', 'that's not true, is it?'*
- Checking understanding: e.g. *'do you mean that…','so, you mean…', reformulating what the teacher said*
- Asking for repetition: e.g. *'say that again', 'sorry, I don't understand', 'sorry?'*

Follow up?

If a spectrum line gives students a chance to express satisfaction and enjoyment, it can be a feel good closing activity. When some students express dissatisfaction with elements of the learning, the teacher may want to follow up with making or eliciting some suggestions for how to address this e.g. 'Maybe next time we could…'. In areas where students express less confidence or feel they have made least progress, the teacher can ask whether this is a topic or area that students would like to do more work on in the future. This can help inform course planning.

Activity 3: Free Writing

This activity allows everyone in the class to contribute anonymous written thoughts about different aspects of the course.

When to use this:

When you want specific feedback about different aspects of the course and a written record is useful. This is a calm, reflective activity which is done in silence.

Instructions:

1. Seat students in a circle, preferably around a table. Tell students that you're going to evaluate the course together. Clarify the meaning of evaluation if needed.
2. Ask students what is important for a good ESOL class (e.g. good teaching, good space, good topics, nice classmates). Write their suggestions on the board. Amalgamate similar suggestions to create 3-10 categories against which the students will evaluate the class (e.g. teaching, space, topics, classmates).
3. Alternatively, you could create evaluation categories yourself: 'I loved…' 'I didn't like…' 'Next time, it would be better if…', 'Next I would like to learn about…'
4. Write each category as a heading on sheets of paper, with one category per piece of paper. Distribute the sheets evenly around the group.
5. Ask students to write their evaluation comments for each category, writing at the bottom of the sheet.
6. Once their comment is complete, they fold the paper up so their comment is hidden and pass the sheet to their right.
7. Students continue to add their comments at the bottom of the sheet, fold the sheet and pass it along until everyone has written on each sheet.
8. Sheets can either then be collected by the teacher or unfolded and displayed in the classroom so that everyone can view the group's comments together.

Examples of language likely to be generated by this activity

- expressing opinions in the past: e.g. *'I liked,' 'I didn't like,' 'I thought', 'I enjoyed', 'I loved'*
- conditional phrases: *'I would prefer', 'I would have preferred'*
- adjectives: e.g. *'fun' 'boring' 'loud' 'interactive' 'friendly' 'hard' 'easy'*
- diplomatic criticism and euphemism: *' Perhaps next time', 'one area for improvement is…' 'maybe we could…', 'I enjoyed x less'*

Follow up

It's important for the teacher to feed back to students after this activity in order to show them that their feedback is valuable and has been taken on board. The teacher could either read the sheets and then summarise them for students in some way, including practical action points that the teacher will implement to improve their practice. Alternatively, the teacher could ask the students to review the feedback as a group and condense it into a number of 'points for celebration' and 'areas for improvement'. These could even be made into learning objectives for both teachers and students e.g. 'Teacher to give us three – five pieces of homework next term'; 'everyone in the class to pay more attention to making participation equal, measured by evaluation wheels at half term and the end of term'. Again, this contributes to a sense of shared responsibility and ownership for the learning community.

5. Further Reading and Resources

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https://esol.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/Language_issues_migration_integration_perspectives_teachers_learners.pdf

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Cooke, M. and C. Roberts (2007) *ESOL. Developing Teaching and Learning: Practitioner Guide Leicester, NIACE.*

Reflect ESOL Resource Pack (2007)

http://www.reflect-action.org/sites/default/files/u5/Reflect%20for%20ESOL%20Resource%20Pack.pdf

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