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**Classroom interaction**

**Task 4**

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**BEFEKTETÉS A JÖVŐBE**



#### Task 4

Here is a list of typical classroom activity types or stages in a lesson. For each of them, think it over which arrangement(s) 1-5 above would be

- a) optimal
- b) rather inappropriate
  
- a) the teacher is explaining a grammar point
- b) the students are writing a test
- c) the students are working on a longer project in groups
- d) the students are engaged in a short pairwork activity
- e) the teacher organises feedback on individual work (e.g. checking and correcting homework, or discussing a grammar or reading comprehension exercise that the students did on their own)
- f) with the teacher's orchestration, the group are doing a listening exercise
- g) the students are discussing a topic in groups and have a task to perform together
- h) the students are watching a video and filling in an accompanying handout
- i) the group are engaged in a full-class discussion with the teacher as moderator



#### Key

- a) the teacher is explaining a grammar point

*optimal:* all, except 5. The focus of attention needs to be on the teacher and the board for explanations. With 2-4 however, the students' attention might be diverted by other students who are in their range of vision.

*inappropriate:* 5. No matter where the teacher stands, there will always be some students who have their backs to him or her or have to twist themselves to see the teacher and the board (if any). In addition, the students' attention is easily diverted by the other students sitting at their table.

- b) the students are writing a test

*optimal:* 1c. The students can focus on their own work and are less likely to be tempted to cheat by copying from their neighbours

*inappropriate:* 5 – cheating is a great temptation and is difficult to monitor.

- c) the students are working on a longer project in groups

*optimal*: 5 – speaks for itself. However, if the desks are movable, 1-3 can be easily rearranged into a similar arrangement. 2a can easily be modified by asking one or two students of each group to move over with their chairs and sit inside the horseshoe, facing their groupmates in this way.

*inappropriate*: 4. If the big desk is not a composite of smaller desks, you don't even have much chance to rearrange the room – the students can move to a group format only with their chairs provided the room is big enough for that) – but they might be missing some sort of working surface then.

d) the students are engaged in a short pairwork activity

*optimal*: 1a lends itself to easy pair-formation – with the danger, of course, that the pairs are same throughout the course, which has obvious disadvantages.

*inappropriate*: All the other arrangements can be easily modified for pairwork – with 1b the third student at the desk can turn backwards and work with the student behind him. However, as the activity is short, a solution has to be found which then suits the rest of the lesson as well, or is easily rearrangeable.

e) the teacher organises feedback on individual work (eg checking and correcting homework, or discussing a grammar or reading comprehension exercise that the students did on their own)

*optimal*: same as a)

*inappropriate*: same as a)

f) with the teacher's orchestration, the group are doing a listening exercise

This depends mainly on the sound equipment (especially where the speakers are) and the room acoustics. It might take a bit of experimenting to find out where it is ideal to place the speakers in a given seating arrangement (if we take that as given), or what seating arrangement suits the sound equipment the best (if the equipment is not portable).

g) the students are discussing a topic in groups and have a task to perform together

Same as c, except that should you decide to rearrange the seating to better suit the groupwork activity, have the rest of the lesson in mind as well – will the new arrangement suit the activities coming after the group work task? Or is the new arrangement easy to arrange back?

h) the students are watching a video and filling in an accompanying handout

*optimal*: 2, 3 or 4. All the students can see the screen.

*inappropriate*: none of them are totally inappropriate – but with 1a-c there is a high chance that some students have visibility problems, and with 5 at least half the students need to turn with their chairs so that everyone faces the screen

i) the group are engaged in a full-class discussion, with the teacher as moderator

*optimal*: 2, 3 or 4. All the students can see each other and the teacher.

*inappropriate*: 1 and 5 are equally awkward – the students can't all see each other, which makes real interaction with approximately even participation fairly difficult to achieve