**Class Activity: Discussion Script Worksheet**

This class activity aims to enhance students' understanding of the Core Skills, Positive Norms, and Thought-Provoking Questions that lead to good (and bad) academic discussion, by having them analyze a discussion script that shows examples of each.

These two scripts show a small-group student discussion about the pros and cons of “conventional vs. online learning.” (These scripts are based on the videos of *Good Discussion* and *Bad Discussion,* available on the project website). After watching the videos or reading the scripts, students can use the worksheet to identify where and how the discussants display positive norms, core skills, and thought-provoking questions; or see what happens when they fail to do so (in the *Bad Discussion).* The script provides concrete examples of each skill and norm as emphasized by the project.

Teachers can adapt the worksheet, choosing from the Questions to focus on one or two main skills / norms etc.

Source:

Perspective Taking, Diversity, and Academic Discussion project

Faculty of Education and Human Development

Education University of Hong Kong

<https://eduhk-pt.wixsite.com/ptindiscussion>

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*Class Activity Worksheet 1: Good Discussion*

Read the following discussion script and try to answer the questions on your own. Then turn to your neighbor(s) and discuss your findings.

***Key Content:***Academic Discussion Skills, Perspective Taking,Thought-provoking questions, respectful disagreement, positive norms of discussion

**Academic Discussion Topic:** Is conventional or online learning better?

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| *Line**(5)* *(10)**(15)**(20)**(25)**(30)**(35)**(40)**(45)**(50)**(55)**(60)**(65)**(70)**(75)**(80)**(85)* | **JJ:** We have about 8-10 minutes to discuss whether learning in a traditional way or a non-traditional way is better. So, the traditional way basically means going to classes in person, right? And learning online is considered as a non-traditional method of learning because it doesn’t require students to be physically present in a building that has classrooms.**Dave:** Right. OK! Should we come up with all the pros and cons we can think of for each learning approach first, and then decide which one is better in the last few minutes of our discussion? Or do you already know your opinion and individually want to state which one you prefer and give a few reasons to why? I’m okay with either one.**JJ:** I think we’d better start out listing all the pros and cons, so that we can collect all the ideas before we come to a conclusion. How about we take turns clockwise, so we can hear everyone’s perspective? **Naomi:** I agree that would be interesting and efficient. And, let’s try to remember to also give reasons and support them with evidence and real-life examples, perhaps. Dave, what do you think? **Dave:** Sounds great! Shall I start then, if everyone is okay with that?**All:** Sure, go ahead!**Dave:** OK, so we could say the conventional way is better in some ways because it promotes students-to-student and students-to-teacher direct contact, which in turn makes the learning more stimulating. Moreover, it encourages stu……**Naomi:** But……**Dave:** Please, wait just a moment! *[smiles]* **Naomi:** I’m sorry. Go on.**Dave:**I believe the traditional way of learning also helps students to socialize with other classmates from diverse backgrounds. It will also help their interpersonal and cross-cultural communication skills. It’s less likely for students to get this chance if they learn online because students will not be learning at the same time and in the same place– leading to less interaction with one another, right? **JJ:** *Paying attention and listening attentively.* *(JJ is taking notes.)* OK, so I think you’re saying that direct contact is more stimulating and can help us learn to socialize with diverse classmates. Is that right? **Dave:** Yes, exactly, yes. Naomi, what were you going to say? **Naomi:** Yeah, thanks Dave! I think those are definitely valid points. But honestly, in most of my classes we spend a lot of time listening to the teacher lecturing. Would you agree that class time is often lecture-oriented, and students aren’t expected to really interact or exchange views? How might the way a teacher runs the class affect those outcomes? **Dave:** Hm, that’s very interesting point, and I hadn’t thought of that before. We can combine our points: conventional learning COULD be more stimulating and help build communication skills, but it depends on how class time is spent-- it has to be interactive.**Naomi:** *[nods to show she partially agrees.]* Yes, I agree. So, to synthesize, conventional learning can have the advantage of making us more engaged and practicing social skills, as long as there really is good interaction. But let’s look at the other side too. What are the strengths and weaknesses of online learning? Could it also improve social skills, or does it have other advantages? JJ, I think we haven’t heard from you yet. What do you think?**JJ:** Well, one advantage of online learning is that it provides flexible hours, and a comfortable environment especially for people like working students, new mothers, disabled people, and also people who are shy when they are with a group of people. **Naomi:** Hmm. I’m not sure I completely understand. Could you elaborate on what you mean by a comfortable environment and why it helps? Can you give some examples? **JJ:** Sure. In other words, a comfortable environment would be a classroom-like setting that you can join whenever it’s most convenient if you’re pressed for time, like people who have a part-time job. You can also have online discussion, but it would be more comfortable for some people. For example, shy people might not want to speak up in person because they are afraid of people’s judgmental eyes. However, they’ll feel fine to share behind the screen because they don’t have to interact face-to-face with people, and so they can dare to counterargue the ideas presented. It will help them build confidence.**Dave:** That’s true, but if I can expand on your point—in work life, people who are shy will have to interact with customers and clients. Therefore, it might also be good for them to learn how to interact with other people face-to-face at times. **JJ:** Right, I do agree that that conventional learning can make us practice those skills. But maybe the online environment can help shy people build those skills first, in a more comfortable way.*[Everybody nods]***Dave:** Ok, I think we have discussed really good points. We’re nearing the end of our discussion time, so what key ideas can we take away from this? It seems that both types of learning have advantages and disadvantages on their own. Perhaps, we can suggest combining the two types of learning as appropriate. **JJ:** Hm, good idea.So, I think you are saying that both conventional and online learning methods have pros and cons, so they can be put together to make the best use of both methods. For instance, maybe there can be some online learning and discussion, to cater to people with limited time, and to help shy people build confidence in discussion.**Naomi:** Yes, great. And then also, for more stimulation and practicing conversation skills, there should also be in-class interactive discussion or interactive lectures, which are the strengths of conventional learning. Something like that? Did we miss anything?**JJ:** I agree. So, we can draw the conclusion that the combination of the two is the best for both student convenience and learning and practicing practical interaction skills?**All:** Sounds great! |

**Questions**

1. Can you identify at least three times where the students show the following **positive norms** (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011) in this discussion? *[write the number of the line(s) from the text depicting the specific norm.]*

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| --- | --- |
| 1. I am critical of ideas, not people.
 |  |
| 1. I strive to confirm that I value others, even if I challenge their ideas.
 |  |
| 1. I know that I am valuable even if others criticize my ideas.
 |  |
| 1. I converse, disagree, and challenge in order to learn, not to win.
 |  |
| 1. I listen respectfully to all ideas, even if I disagree.
 |  |
| 1. I work to understand all sides and perspectives of an issue.
 |  |
| 1. I change my mind when evidence and reason convince me.
 |  |

1. Can you identify some **thought-provoking questions,** ones that encourage thinking from different perspectives and are more than just definitions or comprehension review? Find at least **two** and underline them in the script.
2. Can you find at least one example of each of the below **core skills** (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011) in this discussion? *[write the number of the line(s) from the text depicting the specific skill.]*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Elaborate and clarify ideas to explain them to others. |  |
| 2. Support own ideas with examples.  |  |
| 3. Build on and/or challenge a partner’s idea.  |  |
| 4. Paraphrase others’ ideas (summarizing someone else’s main point). |  |
| 5. Synthesize whole conversation points. |  |

1. Finally, can you find at least one example of someone showing each these *Perspective Taking Academic Discussion Skills*?\* *[write the number of the line(s) from the text depicting the specific skill.]*

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| --- | --- |
| 1. I know how to **solicit (徵求) different perspectives from other people** to hear their viewpoints. |  |
| 2. I know how to get **someone else to elaborate on their own perspective** so that I could better understand their point of view. |  |
| 3. I know how to **express my own view** so that others can hear a new perspective. |  |
| 4. I know how to **support my own view with examples and evidence** so that it can be better understood by others.  |  |
| 5. I know how to **challenge** another person’s idea **in a way that makes him or her feel respected**.  |  |
| 6. I know how to **listen when others disagree** with my ideas **without taking offense**.  |  |
| 7. I know how to **synthesize** our different opinions into a new solution that can be accepted by both parties. |  |

1. [If you watched the video,] what non-verbal behaviors do you especially notice from the discussion? Do you think they communicate respect through their non-verbal behaviors while engaging in academic discussion? Why? Why not?

Reference:

\*Buchtel & Lu 2019. Adapted from Zwiers & Crawford, 2011; Davis, 1983; Tjosvold, Wedley, & Field, 1986; Calvard, 2010; Williams, 2012.

*Class Activity Worksheet 2 (Bad discussion)*

Read the following discussion script and try to answer questions on your own. Then turn to your neighbor(s) and discuss your findings.

***Key Content:***Academic Discussion Skills, Perspective Taking,Thought-provoking questions, respectful disagreement, positive norms of discussion

**Academic Discussion Topic:** Is conventional or online learning better?

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| --- | --- |
| *Line**(5)* *(10)**(15)**(20)**(25)* | **Dave:** What’s the topic we need to discuss? I didn’t hear what the teacher said.**Naomi:** I have no idea either. I wasn’t listening. **JJ:** It’s about having to debate which learning method is better, between conventional and online. I think we should say online learning is better because we can do assignments at any time and don’t have to sit through all the class hours for something. We can study on our own.**Naomi**: *[Looking at phone and texting while smiling… and said something in Cantonese to Dave. They both laughed quietly]* **Dave:** *[Quickly turns back to the conversation and* *nods]*I’ll write it down. Anyway, online learning isn’t good for me. I forget things and miss deadlines, then I’d fail. [*Laughs]* I’d rather come to class and be reminded by friends about due assignments.**Naomi**: That reminds me! What’s the due date of PSY course’ written assignment? I totally forgot about it. Jack asked me whether I’ve finished that assignment or not. **Dave:** I’m not sure either. Better check the course information. I’ll text you when I find out. **JJ:** For me, I think online method is better because I want to work daytime and study at night. It’s not convenient for me to attend class if I want to work full-time and earn money. I wa…. **Naomi:** I don’t think online learning is as effective as learning in class directly with professors and classmates. I don’t like online classes *[Goes back to her phone and texts]* **JJ:** Okay, let’s put that. What else should we put there? *[Silence…………….]***Dave:**Now, we have more pros for online learning and cons for conventional learning. We will choose online learning then.**All:** Okay… |

**Questions**

1. Can you identify at least three times where the students show the **OPPOSITE OF** the following **positive norms** (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011) in this discussion? *[write the number of the line(s) from the text depicting the OPPOSITE OF that specific norm.]*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. I am critical of ideas, not people.
 |  |
| 1. I strive to confirm that I value others, even if I challenge their ideas.
 |  |
| 1. I know that I am valuable even if others criticize my ideas.
 |  |
| 1. I converse, disagree, and challenge in order to learn, not to win.
 |  |
| 1. I listen respectfully to all ideas, even if I disagree.
 |  |
| 1. I work to understand all sides and perspectives of an issue.
 |  |
| 1. I change my mind when evidence and reason convince me.
 |  |

1. Can you identify any **thought-provoking questions,** ones that encourage thinking from different perspectives, critical evaluation, and discovery of new ideas? Find at least **two** questions in the script. What “went wrong” with those questions? Could they be improved?
2. Can you find at ANY examples of each of the below **core skills** (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011) in this discussion? Are the attempts inadequate, or what “goes wrong” with the implementation? *[write the number of the line(s) from the text depicting the specific skill.]*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Elaborate and clarify ideas to explain them to others. |  |
| 2. Support own ideas with examples.  |  |
| 3. Build on and/or challenge a partner’s idea.  |  |
| 4. Paraphrase others’ ideas (summarizing someone else’s main point). |  |
| 5. Synthesize whole conversation points. |  |

1. Finally, can you find any examples of each of these *Perspective Taking Academic Discussion Skills,* or their opposite?\* Are the attempts inadequate, or what “goes wrong” with the implementation? *[write the number of the line(s) from the text.]*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. I know how to **solicit (徵求) different perspectives from other people** to hear their viewpoints. |  |
| 2. I know how to get **someone else to elaborate on their own perspective** so that I could better understand their point of view. |  |
| 3. I know how to **express my own view** so that others can hear a new perspective. |  |
| 4. I know how to **support my own view with examples and evidence** so that it can be better understood by others.  |  |
| 5. I know how to **challenge** another person’s idea **in a way that makes him or her feel respected**.  |  |
| 6. I know how to **listen when others disagree** with my ideas **without taking offense**.  |  |
| 7. I know how to **synthesize** our different opinions into a new solution that can be accepted by both parties. |  |

1. [If you watched the video,] what non-verbal behaviors do you especially notice from the discussion? Do you think they communicate respect through their non-verbal behaviors while engaging in academic discussion? Why? Why not?

Reference:

(Buchtel & Lu 2019, Adapted from Zwiers & Crawford, 2011; Davis, 1983; Tjosvold, Wedley, & Field, 1986; Calvard, 2010; Williams, 2012)