

Pedagogical Tools for Teaching and Learning in International Classrooms



Special Interest Group on International Classroom University of Amsterdam

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Introduction

This document offers a collection of pedagogical tools and practices designed to support teaching and learning in international classrooms. Aligned with our university's vision, these tools aim to create inclusive, engaging, and interculturally responsive learning environments. They encourage student participation, foster cross-cultural understanding, and help translate the values of the international classroom—such as belonging, multilingualism, and global citizenship—into everyday teaching practices.

The activities included here emphasize not only academic learning, but also reflection, empathy, and collaboration—skills that are essential in today's diverse classrooms. Each activity is described in a clear and practical format, offering inspiration and guidance while leaving space for adaptation to different courses, teaching styles and classroom dynamics.

Whether you are new to teaching in diverse classrooms or looking to deepen your approach, this collection provides practical tools to help build inclusive classroom communities and to make learning more meaningful and transformative for all students.

Special Interest Group (SIG) on International Classroom

The SIG International Classroom was founded in 2023 in collaboration with TLC Central and multiple faculties. It advances an educational approach that integrates international perspectives and intercultural competences into the curriculum, teaching practices, and classroom dynamics. The aim is to create an inclusive and dynamic learning environment where all students—regardless of cultural or linguistic background—feel welcome and are invited to participate fully.

To achieve this, the SIG develops practical educational tools, is working toward a prospective BKO-plus trajectory for lecturers, and organizes regular seminars for staff and students on relevant themes. In this way, it cultivates knowledge and appreciation for different cultures, perspectives, and worldviews by fostering meaningful interactions among students, peers, and teachers, and by strengthening both local and global senses of belonging. Wherever possible, it also encourages the development of bilingual and multilingual proficiencies, enabling students to build advanced critical and creative thinking skills as well as effective communication across borders. Ultimately, the goal is to help students grow into well-informed, empathetic, and actively engaged global citizens—capable of generating new knowledge, driving innovation, devising solutions to pressing challenges, and bridging societal divides.

For more information on the SIG on International Classroom and its ongoing initiatives, please refer to <https://tlc.uva.nl/en/article/sig-international-classroom/>, and consider becoming a member of the community group to receive invitations for upcoming events.

Social Identity Wheel

Category: Getting to Know Your Students; Classroom Climate Enhancement; Listening Skills; Collaboration; Reflecting on Positionality and Frame of Reference

Materials Needed: Social Identity Wheel Handout

Time Required in Class: 30–45 minutes

General Description: The Social Identity Wheel is an activity designed to help students explore their own social identities and reflect on how these identities may become more salient or impactful at different moments in their lives.

Detailed Description

The Social Identity Wheel is an activity that invites students to explore their social identities and reflect on how various aspects—such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, language, and ability/disability—may become more prominent or impactful at different times. It encourages students to consider how these identities shape both their self-perception and the ways they are perceived or treated by others. The wheel can also serve as a prompt for small- or large-group discussions on identity and positionality. The exercise can be implemented in three phases:

- **Individual Reflection (10 minutes):** Ask students to individually complete the Social Identity Wheel handout. This can be done either in class or as preparation. During this exercise, students are asked to reflect on which aspects of their identity:
 - they are most aware of
 - they are least aware of
 - were most important while growing up
 - have the strongest effect on how they perceive themselves
 - have the strongest effect on how others perceive them
 - they would like to learn more about.
- **Small Group Reflection (15 minutes):** Ask students to reflect in small groups on completing their personal identity wheels by discussing the following three questions. Emphasize that students are not required to share their wheels and should only disclose aspects they feel comfortable sharing:
 - How did you experience filling in this Social Identity Wheel?
 - Which components of the wheel were difficult to fill in?
 - What makes you more or less aware of particular identities?
- **Class Debrief (10–15 minutes):** Conclude the activity by leading a class debrief, discussing how students experienced these conversations and what reflecting on social identities contributes to them individually and to the group as a whole.

Pedagogical Value

- Helps establish a safe and inclusive learning climate by creating opportunities for personal connection.
- Sensitizes students to shared and divergent identities, and to the visible and invisible dimensions of intersectional diversity.
- Highlights how privilege functions to normalize certain identities over others.
- Encourages critical self-reflection on positionality and frame of reference.
- Builds community and fosters empathy.

Facilitation Tips

- Consider sharing aspects of your own social identity at the start or during the debrief to model vulnerability, set a safe environment, and demonstrate the value of engaging with complex intersectional identities.
- Explicitly connect the activity to course content and learning goals to emphasize its relevance.
- Clarify key concepts as needed. For example, students may not be familiar with distinctions such as between “sex” and “gender,” or may be resistant to them. Conclude by linking the exercise explicitly to the concept of intersectionality.

Preparation Time

- If completed as homework: 15 minutes,
- If completed in class: no additional preparation required.

Group Size: 5–30 participants

Learning Goal: Students will develop the ability to relate to themselves and to others with empathy and compassion, and to recognize experiences of related suffering.

Hand-out

Social identity wheel

This exercise is meant to think about and reflect upon what social identities can shape you as a person, when these become explicitly visible and/or sensible, and how these identities take shape in relation to others.

What to do:

Fill out the wheel individually: think about the statements in the middle and place the corresponding numbers of these statements in the identity box that it applies most to for you. If, for example, you are not aware on a daily basis of your gender as an aspect of your identity, you write the number **2** in the box that corresponds to “**gender**.” Boxes can contain multiple numbers and not all boxes need to be filled with a number. There is space to add another category that is relevant for you, yet missing in the wheel.

Please print out the wheel, fill it in and bring it with you to class.



Intake Survey and Strategies for Success

Category: Getting to Know Your Students; Classroom Climate Enhancement

Materials Needed: Anonymous intake survey (e.g., Microsoft Forms) and a format to communicate results back (e.g., PowerPoint, handout)

Time Required in Class: 10 minutes

General Description: This activity introduces students to the course through an anonymous intake survey. The collected information is then shared back in aggregated form, acknowledging the diversity in the classroom and connecting it to clear Strategies for Success.

Detailed Description

When teaching in an international classroom, or when teaching outside your own cultural milieu and you are unfamiliar with students' educational or social context, an intake survey can be extremely valuable for both you and your students. The activity can be implemented in two phases:

- **Administering the Survey (before the first lecture):** Distribute an anonymous intake survey to collect basic information, such as nationality, languages, prior education system, perceived learning preferences, and preferred pronouns. Expand the list of questions according to the themes you wish to emphasize.
- **Sharing Results and Linking to Strategies for Success (first class, 10 minutes):** Present the aggregated information to the group, showing that while students have diverse personal histories, they often share common hopes and concerns. Link this information to Strategies for Success by addressing key points:

Diverse Educational Experiences: In a classroom with students from varied nationalities and socio-economic backgrounds, you can expect a wide range of prior educational experiences—including differences in curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom engagement. Use the survey results as a foundation to collaboratively establish classroom norms with your students.

Communicating Implicit Expectations / the "Hidden Curriculum": First-generation students, as well as those coming from very different educational environments, may be unfamiliar with—or even feel alienated by—the subtle, "unwritten rules" of higher education. Expectations around speaking up in class, publicly asking questions, attending office hours, asking peers to proofread papers, and admitting uncertainty to professors can feel particularly challenging. Clearly communicating your expectations can help ease this transition.

Communicating High Standards with Support: By communicating high standards while also demonstrating a clear commitment to helping students achieve them, you send a powerful message that all students belong and have the potential for growth.

Sharing your own experiences with academic challenges can further encourage students who might be struggling.

Inclusive Language Practices: Discuss the various languages represented in your classroom and consider how many students are learning in a language that is not their native tongue. Reflect on the possibility that you, too, may be teaching in a non-native language. Be attentive to how your language can either include or alienate students—or even forms of knowledge within your field. At the start of class, invite students to let you know if any words or expressions are unclear. This signals that you do not expect them to be familiar with every term and shows your commitment to fostering an inclusive learning environment.

Pedagogical Value

- Establishes a safe and inclusive climate by validating students' diverse backgrounds from the outset.
- Engages students in shaping classroom norms and clarifies unspoken academic expectations.
- Provides instructors with insight into students' prior educational experiences, languages, and learning needs, enabling culturally responsive teaching.
- Encourages reflection in both students and instructors, fostering intentional and equitable learning practices.

Facilitation Tips

- Invite students to share additional information directly with you if needed (e.g., accessibility requests), ensuring their privacy is respected.
- Use survey data to inform group work design. For example, mix students with different experience levels, or pair local and international students to encourage peer learning.
- If you anticipate low survey response rates, consider gathering input live in class using platforms such as Wooclap. Note, however, that live responses may include unexpected or distracting entries.

Preparation Time: Approximately 1 hour (designing and distributing the survey)

Group Size: Suitable for all class sizes

Learning Goal: Students will recognize and value classroom diversity, understand expectations for success, and develop strategies for navigating both explicit and implicit dimensions of the learning environment.

Reference:

Sanger, C. S. (2020). Inclusive pedagogy and universal design approaches for diverse learning environments. In *Diversity and inclusion in global higher education: Lessons from across Asia* (pp. 31–71). Springer.

Tandem Learning

Category: Collaboration; Evaluation and Closing

Materials Needed: Course content

Time Required in Class: Runs parallel to the length of the course

General Description: In tandem learning, two students from different linguistic or cultural backgrounds form a pair to support and reflect on each other's learning trajectories throughout the course.

Detailed Description

This activity invites students from different linguistic or cultural backgrounds to form pairs at the start of a course and become each other's learning buddy. Pairs can be assigned by the teacher or created at the end of an introductory in-class activity (e.g., the Social Identity Wheel, Intake Survey, or Group Social Map). These pairs ("tandems") are asked to set up 3–5 meetings of at least 30 minutes over the duration of the course to discuss and reflect on what they are learning, how they are learning, what is going well, and what challenges they may be facing. During these meetings, students alternate roles as "tutor" and "learner."

The content of these sessions is highly flexible, but the aim is to provide feedback and support each other's learning trajectories. Students may choose to focus on specific areas of study, their overall learning process, or particular language skills they want to strengthen—such as grammar and vocabulary, reading comprehension, presenting and speaking in class, or (inter)cultural competences.

At the end of the course, students reflect on and evaluate their tandem learning process in a small portfolio. In either brief written or oral reflections, they compare and reflect on each other's learning trajectories, discuss the ways they supported one another, and consider how and where they achieved specific course learning outcomes.

This activity asks students to actively reflect on two learning trajectories—their own and their partner's. In doing so, it strengthens self-efficacy and deepens their understanding of reciprocal learning and equal participation. It also builds intercultural competence: students gain insights into different cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds, foster cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, and develop skills that support successful course outcomes.

Pedagogical Value

- Expands intercultural competences by pairing students across linguistic and cultural differences.
- Fosters (international) friendships and strengthens language skills.
- Highlights how diversity in the classroom can be a resource for achieving learning outcomes.
- Encourages reciprocal learning and equal participation.

- Shifts the view of intercultural competence from an individual trait to a relational process, emphasizing interaction, reciprocity, and dynamic balance.

Facilitation Tips

It is recommended that the portfolio assessment be graded on a pass/fail basis or, alternatively, that tandem learning pairs determine and justify their own grade within the portfolio itself—while ensuring this grade accounts for only a small percentage of the final weighted grade. It is also advisable to set clear goals and expectations for the portfolio assignments at the start of the course. For example, you might offer three different assignment formats for tandem reflection and invite students to select two of the three for inclusion in their portfolio. This approach ensures that students are aware from the outset of the parameters for evaluating both their own and their peers' learning trajectories.

Preparation Time: None

Group Size: 4–30 participants

Learning Goal: Students will develop intercultural competences, practice reciprocal learning, and enhance self-efficacy by supporting both their own and their partner's learning trajectory.

References:

Woodin, J. (2018). *Interculturality, interaction and language learning: Insights from tandem partnerships*. Routledge.

Bregant, B., Doz, D., & Hudovernik, S. (2025). Factors influencing tandem learning in mathematics. *International Journal of Instruction*, 18(1), 437–462.

Lost in Translation (Code Switching)

Category: Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills; Discussion

Materials Needed: Course content

Time Required in Class: 10–30 minutes

General Description: Students discuss the translation of specific concepts or course materials to examine what might be “lost” and/or “gained” in translation.

Detailed Description

In this activity, students build on—and learn from—their bilingual or multilingual proficiencies in the classroom by reflecting on what is lost and gained through the translation of a concept or specific course material.

When discussing a concept or material (such as a reading or media object), the teacher invites students to reflect on what happens when it is “translated” into another language. If the material is already a translation (or subtitled, for example), native speakers of the original language are first asked to reflect on what they think may have been lost or gained in translation. Next—or alternatively—students who speak other languages are asked to consider what might be lost or gained if they were to translate the concept or material into their own language. The activity may involve looking up different meanings, definitions, etymological roots, or alternative translations of a term in class. Concepts that often spark rich discussions around linguistic and cultural specificity include: *energy*, *intelligence*, *democracy*, *algorithm*, *gene*, *civilisation*, and *beauty*.

The activity can be conducted collectively or in small breakout groups (e.g., “think–pair–share”) before returning to a larger group discussion.

An alternative version of this activity, particularly relevant in the Humanities, invites students to consider what might be lost or gained “in translation” when a course reading or material is *adapted* for a different audience or into a different format. Students might explore not only what happens when an article, book, artwork, or film is translated into another language, but also how it changes if adapted for a different audience (or market), into a different medium, or in a different style.

Some guiding questions could include:

- What if this work of critical theory were translated into a zine, or adapted into a series of social media posts (and how might the meaning differ between Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok)?
- What if this contemporary German book were adapted into a Russian or Chinese novel, or reimaged as Greek, Indian, or Japanese theatre?
- What if this French television show were adapted into a British drama, a Nigerian production, or a Mexican *telenovela*?

- What if this article on a particular aspect of global history were adapted into a set of American news articles, a graphic novel, a series of paintings, or a piece of performance activism?

Pedagogical Value

This exercise introduces students to the cultural diversity present in the classroom and builds on existing bilingual and multilingual proficiencies. It fosters a sense of inclusion while enhancing intercultural competence. Students are encouraged to reflect on the complexities of language and on communication across linguistic, cultural, or medium-specific boundaries. The activity promotes a deeper understanding of different perspectives on concepts, topics, or materials and highlights that multiple meanings or perspectives can be “true” at the same time.

Facilitation Tips

It may be helpful to take an inventory of the different languages spoken by students and/or their cultural backgrounds before or at the start of the course. You can prepare students for the exercise and set clear expectations by providing a few examples of what is lost and gained when concepts or materials are translated.

Preparation Time: None

Group Size: 5–30 participants

Learning Goal: Students will develop intercultural competences and critical thinking skills by analyzing what is lost and gained in processes of translation or adaptation across languages, cultures, and media.

References:

- Auer, P. (Ed.). (2013). *Code-switching in conversation: Language, interaction and identity*. Routledge.
- Gardner-Chloros, P. (2009). *Code-switching*. Cambridge University Press.

Creating a Group Culture Map

Category: Getting to Know Your Students

Materials Needed: Printouts of Erin Meyer's cultural dimensions; pens

Time Required in Class: 25–30 minutes

General Description: Students collaboratively explore and define their group culture using Erin Meyer's eight cultural dimensions. The activity avoids national generalizations, instead focusing on individual preferences within the international classroom, with the aim of fostering a shared understanding and more inclusive group norms.

Detailed Description

- **Warm-Up (optional but recommended):** Start with a short discussion on the concept of culture, understood as a set of visible and less visible rules, norms, and values shared by a group of people with similar characteristics. For example, explore how people greet one another in different social settings—such as strangers, coworkers, family members, fellow students, friends, or a best friend—to illustrate that culture is context-dependent. Conclude that greeting practices are a highly visible form of culture, as they can be easily observed in a group of people. Then invite students to think of examples of less visible forms of culture.
- **Introduction of Erin Meyer's Cultural Dimensions:** Briefly introduce the eight cultural dimensions using the handout, illustrated with classroom-related example statements (e.g., trust, communication, decision-making, leadership, scheduling, persuasion, evaluation, and disagreement). Emphasize that these are examples of less visible forms of culture. Clarify that culture exists on many levels—national, organizational, personal, and more—but that this group activity focuses specifically on how students prefer to work and interact within the context of the international classroom.
- **Individual Reflection:** Students individually position themselves along the eight dimensions, indicating their personal preferences for classroom interaction and group work. Using the handout, each student answers the eight questions by placing their name on the scale for each dimension, thereby creating a visual map of their cultural tendencies.
- **Small Group Discussion:** Divide the class into small groups of 5–6 students. Within their groups, students compare their results, noting where their preferences align and where they differ. Emphasize that cultural diversity can sometimes lead to misunderstandings, but can also spark creativity and innovation. Invite students to reflect on context as well: would their answers have been different if this exercise had taken place at home or in a workplace setting?
- **Identifying Challenges:** Each group selects three dimensions most likely to create misunderstanding or difficulty in this classroom setting.

- **Rule-Making:** Based on these challenges, each group co-creates one classroom rule that fosters inclusivity and minimizes potential friction.
- **Plenary Discussion:** Groups share their key insights with the rest of the class. What challenges did they identify, and what rules do they propose? Facilitate a discussion on how cultural differences influence teamwork and classroom interactions, and how shared awareness of cultural diversity can improve collaboration by fostering effective strategies for inclusivity.

Pedagogical Value

- Encourages self-reflection on cultural norms and behaviors.
- Increases awareness of diverse expectations and communication styles in the classroom.
- Helps establish inclusive classroom norms that respect cultural diversity.

Facilitation Tips

- Invite students to share personal experiences with classroom norms in different educational settings.
- Use interactive digital tools (e.g., Miro) when teaching online.
- In smaller classrooms, adapt the activity as a plenary exercise by asking students to physically position themselves along a spectrum in the room for each dimension.

Preparation Time: Some preparation (reviewing and adapting the handout)

Group Size: 5–30 students

Learning Goal: Students will recognize and analyze cultural diversity in classroom communication and interaction, and collaboratively develop shared norms that support inclusive group work and learning.

References:

Meyer, E. (2014). *The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business*. PublicAffairs.

Resources:

[Erin Meyer — The Culture Map](#)

How do you navigate culture in teamwork?

Understanding cultural differences can help you work more effectively in diverse teams. Below are **8 cultural dimensions that shape the way we interact**. Read each pair of statements and reflect on where you (and your team members) stand.

Relationship-oriented: Trust is built through personal connections. I work best with people I know well.	1. How do you build trust? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 score your personal preference by writing your name (or initials) on the scale at the point that best represents your approach	Task-oriented: I trust my teammates based on their skills, and track record of success. We don't need to be friends to work well together.
Low context: Say what you mean, mean what you say. Clear, explicit messages help avoid misunderstandings.	2. How do you prefer to communicate? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 score your personal preference by writing your name (or initials) on the scale at the point that best represents your approach	High context: What is not said is just as important as what is. Tone, body language, and shared experiences shape meaning.
Top-Down: We need to appoint a team leader to make the final decision, ensuring efficiency and clear direction.	3. How are decisions made in your team? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 score your personal preference by writing your name (or initials) on the scale at the point that best represents your approach	Consensual: We discuss and vote as a team. Everyone's voice should be heard before a decision is made.
Egalitarian: A good leader treats team members as equals and encourages open dialogue.	4. What type of leadership do you value? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 score your personal preference by writing your name (or initials) on the scale at the point that best represents your approach	Hierarchical: A good leader should take charge, provide direction, and be respected for their authority.

Linear: Schedules are key. I stick to my plan and complete one task at a time.	5. How do you approach time & deadlines? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 score your personal preference by writing your name (or initials) on the scale at the point that best represents your approach	Flexible: Time is fluid. I adapt as needed and work on multiple things at once.
Application First: Give me the facts first! I will connect the dots later.	6. How do you persuade others? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 score your personal preference by writing your name (or initials) on the scale at the point that best represents your approach	Principles First: Start with the big picture and concepts before getting into details.
Indirect: Prefer to receive feedback in a soft, subtle, diplomatic way. Tone and phrasing matter!	7. How do you prefer to receive feedback? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 score your personal preference by writing your name (or initials) on the scale at the point that best represents your approach	Direct: Tell me exactly what I need to improve. I prefer clear, explicit, straightforward feedback.
Avoid: I prefer to keep harmony in the team and express disagreements privately.	8. How comfortable do you feel disagreeing? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 score your personal preference by writing your name (or initials) on the scale at the point that best represents your approach	Confront: Disagreements help us grow! I am comfortable challenging others openly.

Share your results within your group. Identify which cultural dimensions show similarities and which show differences (diversity). Remember, diversity fosters creativity and innovation!

Five Senses Mindfulness

Category: Getting to Know Your Students

Materials Needed: None

Time Required in Class: 10–15 minutes

General Description: A mindfulness exercise that helps students become fully present in the moment by engaging their five senses.

Detailed Description

- **Comfortable Posture:** Ask students to sit comfortably.
- **Guided Exercise:** Lead them through the five senses mindfulness exercise:
 - 5 things you see:** Look around the room and silently notice five details. Pay attention to their colors, textures, and materials.
 - 4 things you feel:** Close your eyes or rest them on a fixed point. Shift your attention to your sense of touch. Notice four distinct physical sensations (e.g., your feet on the ground, the weight of your body in the chair, the texture of your clothing, the warmth or coolness of the air).
 - 3 things you hear:** Listen attentively and identify three different sounds. Are they inside or outside the classroom? Loud or subtle?
 - 2 things you smell:** Take a deep breath in through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Repeat. Identify two distinct scents in the air.
 - 1 thing you taste:** Run your tongue along your teeth and notice any lingering taste in your mouth.
- **Reflection:** After completing the exercise, invite students to briefly share how they feel. Suggested questions: Which sense was easiest to focus on? Which sense was hardest? Did anything surprise them?

Pedagogical Value

- Enhances focus and reduces stress, fostering a positive learning environment.
- Encourages self-awareness and presence, supporting deeper engagement in learning.
- Supports emotional regulation, self-reflection, and a sense of classroom cohesion.

Facilitation Tips

- Use at the start of class to help students arrive mentally and physically, creating a shared moment of stillness and focus.
- Integrate during breaks to recharge energy and reduce mental fatigue, especially in long sessions.
- Close with it at the end of class to support reflection and provide a calm sense of closure.
- Apply before exams or after intense discussions to ground students emotionally and mentally.
- Encourage students to practice mindfulness in their daily life for improved well-being.

Preparation Time: Little preparation

Group Size: 5–30 students

Learning Goal: Students will develop awareness of their present state, reducing distractions and enhancing their ability to focus. They will also learn a practical mindfulness technique to manage stress and improve concentration.

References: Siegel, D. J. (2010). *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*. W.W. Norton & Company.

Resources: [Mindfulness Trainings](#)

Psychological Safety Mapping Exercise

Category: Discussion

Materials Needed: Digital survey tool (e.g., Mentimeter, Google Forms, Padlet) or printable worksheets with structured reflection prompts

Time Required in Class: 15–20 minutes

General Description: This activity allows students to assess their psychological safety in the classroom, reflect on factors that support or hinder it, and suggest improvements. The responses provide the instructor with feedback, enabling real-time adjustments that enhance inclusivity and engagement.

Detailed Description

- **Anonymous Self-Assessment (5 minutes):** Students complete a short survey (digital or paper) with prompts such as:
On a scale of 1 to 5, how psychologically safe have you felt in this classroom so far? (1 = Not at all, 5 = Completely safe)
What helps you feel safe in this classroom?
Can you give an example of a behavior (teacher or student) that has helped you feel more psychologically safe?
What could you do to improve your feelings of safety?
- **Small Group Discussion (Optional, 7–10 minutes):** Students discuss general themes and suggestions for improvement in small groups. Emphasize that personal sharing is not required.
- **Instructor Synthesis & Feedback (7–10 minutes):** The instructor projects and summarizes anonymous digital responses (or collects written responses and synthesizes themes while students are in small group discussions). In large classes, the analysis may be done afterward. Key findings are shared with students in class or via email, along with suggestions for adjustments. Insights can be refined over the semester and inform course design in subsequent years.

Pedagogical Value

- Provides a safe and anonymous space for students to share honest feedback.
- Generates real-time insights that allow instructors to adjust teaching methods and classroom dynamics.
- Promotes inclusivity by capturing diverse student experiences.
- Builds trust as students see their feedback acknowledged and acted upon.

Facilitation Tips

Acknowledge feedback in a neutral way to maintain a non-defensive classroom atmosphere, and implement visible changes based on student input to reinforce trust. If digital tools are unavailable, consider using a physical drop box to collect anonymous written reflections.

Preparation Time: Minimal (5–10 minutes to set up the survey or prepare handouts)

Group Size: Any size (effective in both small seminars and large lectures)

Learning Goal: Students will reflect on their psychological safety in the classroom, identify factors that enhance or hinder it, and provide constructive feedback to help create a more inclusive learning environment.

References:

De Leersnyder, J., Gündemir, S., & Ağirdağ, O. (2022). Diversity approaches matter in international classrooms: How a multicultural approach buffers against cultural misunderstandings and encourages inclusion and psychological safety. *Studies in Higher Education*, 47(9), 1903–1920.

Waldring, I., Hulzebos, G., Van den Hee, M., & Crul, M. (2023). Well-being and happiness among university students: A case study of ethnic diversity in the new multicultural Netherlands. In M. A. White & F. C. Freire Junior (Eds.), *Happiness education: Holistic learning for sustainable well-being* (pp. 176–191). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003037262-10>

Edmondson, A. C., Lei, Z., & Morgeson, F. P. (2014). Psychological safety: The history, renaissance, and future of an interpersonal construct. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 1(1), 23–43.

Inquiry Circles for Deep Reflection

Category: Activating Prior Knowledge; Discussion; Classroom Climate Enhancement

Materials Needed: A list of inquiry prompts related to the topic; a timer (digital or physical); optional journals for reflection

Time Required in Class: 15–20 minutes

General Description: This inquiry-based practice creates a structured space for students to express their thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations related to a sensitive topic discussed in class. By speaking without interruption and practicing deep listening, students develop self-awareness, empathy, and intercultural understanding.

Detailed Description

- **Setting Up Pairs or Triads (2 minutes):** Students form pairs or groups of three, ideally with peers they do not usually work with. The instructor introduces the principles of inquiry: One person speaks uninterrupted for a set time (e.g., 5 minutes). The others listen deeply without responding, offering presence rather than advice or commentary. After the first person finishes, the next person speaks, and so on.
- **Inquiry Reflection (5 minutes per person):** The instructor provides a discussion prompt. Each participant speaks for five minutes without interruption, sharing their thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations. Listeners focus solely on holding space. A 10-second pause follows each turn to allow for integration. Inquiry prompts might include the following: What emotions and sensations arose for you during today's discussion? What personal or cultural experiences shaped how you responded to today's topic? What assumptions did you notice yourself holding? Did you feel fully present during the discussion? If not, what distracted you? What part of today's topic felt most challenging for you, and why?
- **Group Reflection & Pattern Identification (5 minutes):** After all members have spoken, the group reflects on common themes that emerged. They do not analyze individual responses but instead notice shared emotions, insights, or challenges. Notes may be taken individually, on a shared document, or a whiteboard.
- **Instructor Closing (3 minutes):** The instructor briefly synthesizes classroom insights without singling out individuals, validates the range of emotions expressed, and normalizes vulnerability in academic discussions.

Pedagogical Value

- Promotes deep listening and mindful presence.
- Enhances psychological safety by allowing students to speak without fear of judgment.
- Encourages emotional awareness and supports processing of complex feelings.
- Reduces over-intellectualization by fostering embodied self-awareness.
- Fosters cross-cultural understanding through witnessing diverse perspectives.
- Increases sense of belonging by creating space for personal sharing related to student life.

Facilitation Tips

- Emphasize confidentiality—what is shared remains private.
- Normalize silence—students may sit quietly when words run out.
- Use this practice after intense or sensitive topics (e.g., race, gender, migration, trauma, or power dynamics).

Preparation Time: Minimal (5–7 minutes to prepare prompts)

Group Size: Any class size (students work in pairs or triads)

Learning Goal: Students will practice deep listening and reflective expression, enhancing empathy, intercultural understanding, and emotional awareness when engaging with sensitive topics.

References:

Almaas, A. H. (1996). *The Inner Journey Home: Soul's Realization of the Unity of Reality*.

Brach, T. (2012). *True Refuge: Finding Peace and Freedom in Your Own Awakened Heart*.

Resources:

[Tara Brach's Inquiry Meditation](#)

[Diamond Approach Inquiry Practice](#)

Moving Conversation

Category: Activating Prior Knowledge; Discussion

Materials Needed: Space

Time Required in Class: 30 minutes

General Description: This is a group conversation in motion. Students share short statements (one at a time), and others move through the room according to how they relate to these statements. The activity can be used to explore different perspectives on a topic. By moving through the space, students can “speak with their feet”—choosing either to follow the crowd or to take a more distinct, individual position.

Detailed Description

Explain to students that this activity is designed to explore different perspectives on the topic at hand, and that part of this exploration involves holding back judgment. Ask students to come up with statements related to the topic. One student at a time then reads or speaks out their statement. As the teacher, make a point of standing with the student who is speaking. If they struggle to articulate a particular view, you may offer gentle support.

After the statement is shared, other students choose a place in the room—for example, standing behind the statement, opposite it, or somewhere in between, representing a more ambivalent position. Instruct them to position themselves in a way that reflects the extent to which they relate to or recognize the statement. Once everyone has found a spot, the next student shares their statement. You can explicitly encourage students to voice a range of perspectives.

Emphasize that it is perfectly acceptable to contradict oneself across different statements. The purpose of speaking in statements is not to convince others but to surface different perspectives. The moving conversation comes to a close when similar statements begin to repeat and either agreement or polarization recurs within the group.

To conclude, ask students to individually reflect on the conversation—for example, whether they encountered new perspectives, how they experienced the group process, or how they would assess their own ability to empathize with different viewpoints.

Pedagogical Value

Because students can both move around and speak—either by addressing a statement or by shifting their position—their thought process becomes visible. Speaking in short statements also makes it possible to highlight the different perspectives that exist within the group.

Facilitation Tips

If a student stands alone, you might invite them to share their perspective. If they prefer not to, they can also choose to follow the crowd—let them know this option in advance. You can support students in formulating their statements by amplifying or rephrasing what they express.

Preparation Time: None

Group Size: 8–50 students

Learning Goal: Students will empathize with a variety of perspectives and recognize the value of diverse viewpoints on a given topic.

References: [Deep Democracy – Gesprek op Voeten](#)

Throwing Arrows

Category: Problem-Solving Skills

Materials Needed: Space

Time Required in Class: 30 minutes

General Description: Throwing Arrows is an activity that helps integrate different perspectives into a decision, especially when two positions seem to be in conflict. By “throwing arrows” to both sides, students explore and articulate contrasting views before integrating insights into a shared, enriched decision.

Detailed Description

Explain to students that this activity is designed to bring out all aspects of the two sides of a conflict. The conflict may be something group-related that helps resolve an argument (e.g., flexibility versus structure), or it can come from course literature (e.g., free will versus determinism). Ask students to form small groups of 3–4 and, if possible, pair up with someone who holds a differing view—though this is not strictly necessary. Have the pairs stand next to each other.

They are then invited to express everything they can about one side of the argument. While their contributions may be based on facts, encourage them to go beyond this, as the goal is also to explore underlying values. Ask them to try to make their statements sharp and impactful—like an “arrow” that strikes. Once everything has been said on one side, the students literally turn around and state everything they can about the opposite side of the argument. This process can be repeated once more for each side.

Afterward, bring the students together in a circle and ask them to individually reflect on what “hit” them, what they learned from the exercise, or what it revealed about themselves. This could be an arrow they heard, one they received, or one they delivered. You can facilitate this as a group reflection where students share aloud, or make it an anonymous activity.

Finally, ask students to make an **enriched decision**. An enriched decision is a democratic majority decision that is enhanced with the wisdom of the minority. Students choose the side that appeals most to them, but also add what they find important from the other side of the argument. This can be shared collectively, or written down on post-its to allow for anonymity while still making the perspectives visible to others.

Pedagogical Value

It is a method of debating that moves beyond the typical “ping-pong” of defending one’s own points. This approach makes it possible to truly listen to the other side and recognize the value within that perspective.

Facilitation Tips

Instead of throwing arrows and expressing everything negative about a certain perspective, it can be valuable to throw “golden arrows” and articulate everything positive about that perspective. Be sure to model this activity—it benefits greatly from a demonstration or example scenario. Showing students how to engage in the exercise makes it much easier for them to participate. Modeling also emphasizes that there are no morally superior answers on either side.

Preparation Time: None

Group Size: 2–50 students

Learning Goal: Students will learn to switch perspectives on a given topic, reflect on their own assumptions, and integrate multiple viewpoints into a balanced decision.

References: [Deep Democracy – Het Niet Gevoerde Gesprek](#)

Resources: [Deep Democracy – Het Niet Gevoerde Gesprek](#)

Culture Chest

Category: Self-Reflection and Exploration; Classroom Climate Enhancement

Materials Needed: None (students prepare at home)

Time Required in Class: 15–20 minutes

General Description: This assignment is designed to help students explore their own and each other's important social and cultural identities. To this end, students prepare a small box or paper bag at home to serve as their "cultural chest." During class, they then share the contents of their chests in small groups.

Detailed Description

Instructions for Students (to be prepared at home)

- Choose a small box or paper bag to serve as your "chest."
- Select three items that represent your membership in various social or cultural groups—for example, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, social class, and/or age. These items may be deeply meaningful to you or not. They could include a photograph, piece of art, book, music, or any object that reflects aspects of who you are. Place these items inside your chest.
- *Optional:* Decorate the outside of the box or bag with images (pictures, drawings, words, or phrases) that describe how you believe others perceive you as a result of your group memberships.
- Write a short reflection (about one page) that tells the stories associated with the items or images inside/outside your chest and reflects on the process of creating it.

Instructions in Class

These depend on the specific context and aims, but they should always highlight the ground rules of good dialogue: one person shares their chest at a time, others listen attentively, and turns are taken after approximately five minutes.

Pedagogical Value

The Culture Chest activity fosters an inclusive classroom by encouraging students to share personal objects, narratives, or symbols that reflect their cultural identities. Through exploring how their backgrounds shape perceptions and communication, students build self-awareness, cultural sensitivity, and empathy. The activity creates a welcoming environment in which diverse perspectives are valued, while also promoting meaningful connections and critical reflection on the role of culture in learning and interaction.

Facilitation Tips

- Introduce the principles of good dialogue before starting the activity (see related activity: *Dialogue and Discussion*).
- Encourage respectful listening and emphasize that students should only share what they feel comfortable disclosing.

- Allow flexibility—students can choose symbolic rather than personal items if they prefer.

Preparation Time: 1–2 hours at home (none required in class)

Group Size: 3–30 students

Learning Goal: Students will reflect on their own cultural and social identities, share personal narratives in dialogue with peers, and develop greater empathy, cultural sensitivity, and awareness of diversity in the classroom.

References: Kaplowitz, D. R., & Griffin, S. S. S. R. (2019). *Race dialogues: A facilitator's guide to tackling the elephant in the classroom*. Teachers College Press.

Resources: [University of Pittsburgh – Cultural Box Guide](#)

Dialogue and Discussion

Category: Discussion; Classroom Climate Enhancement

Materials Needed: Slides or handouts

Time Required in Class: 45–60 minutes

General Description: Students practice both discussion (debate) and dialogue in small groups to understand how each communication style shapes group dynamics, fosters different types of learning, and requires specific skills. By the end, the class collectively creates “rules of engagement” for both styles, helping to ensure an inclusive and supportive environment.

Detailed Description

- **Introduction (5 minutes):** Explain the difference between discussion (aimed at proving a point) and dialogue (aimed at mutual understanding). Divide students into four groups: two “enactor” groups (one for discussion, one for dialogue) and two “observer” groups (one observing discussion, one observing dialogue).
- **Preparation Phase (15 minutes):** Each group moves to a corner of the room to prepare. Group 1 prepares to enact a discussion. Group 2 prepares to enact a dialogue. Group 3 prepares to observe a discussion and note what they expect (not) to see. And Group 4 prepares to observe a dialogue and note what they expect (not) to see.
- **Enactment: Discussion (15 minutes):** The discussion group enacts a short debate on a neutral topic (e.g., “Does the weather affect people’s mood?”). Observers share insights based on their criteria. The enactors and class reflect on skills essential for discussion (e.g., knowledge, assertiveness, logical structure).
- **Enactment: Dialogue (15 minutes):** Switch to the dialogue group. Students share personal viewpoints on the same or a new prompt (e.g., “What I experienced moving to Amsterdam”). Observers share insights based on their criteria. The enactors and class reflect on skills required for dialogue (e.g., vulnerability, deep listening, openness).
- **Classroom Agreement (10–15 minutes):** The instructor emphasizes the value of both communication styles: Discussion to advance arguments and develop critical thinking, and dialogue to gain insight into diverse lived experiences. Students brainstorm rules for each style (e.g., discussion: separate argument from person; dialogue: share personal stories and maintain confidentiality). Rules are recorded on large paper or a slide, and the class commits to them.

Pedagogical Value

- Promotes inclusivity by distinguishing between two communication styles and empowering students to use each appropriately.
- Enhances cultural sensitivity by fostering empathy and respect for diverse perspectives.

- Builds essential skills, including critical thinking, argumentation, self-awareness, and active listening.

Facilitation Tips

- Choose non-conflictual or accessible topics for initial enactments.
- Remind students that discussion and dialogue serve different purposes and both are valuable in academic settings.
- Encourage observers to focus on behaviors and group dynamics rather than evaluating individuals.

Preparation Time: Some preparation (selecting prompts, preparing slides or handouts)

Group Size: 12–30 students

Learning Goal: Students will analyze and practice two distinct communication styles, developing skills in critical debate and empathetic dialogue while co-creating shared classroom norms for respectful and inclusive interaction.

References: Gurin, P., Nagda, B. A. (Ratnesh), & Zúñiga, X. (2013). *Dialogue across difference: Practice, theory, and research on intergroup dialogue*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Resources: *A Guide for Training Public Dialogue Facilitators* (pp. 43 & 63)

Internationalize the Curriculum

Category: Activating Prior Knowledge; Discussion

Materials Needed: Course content

Time Required in Class: 30–45 minutes

General Description: Students evaluate the current curriculum to enhance its international orientation, considering aspects such as preparation, delivery, content, and outcomes at both the classroom and program level.

Detailed Description

This activity encourages students to critically evaluate their curriculum through an international lens, enhancing their awareness of global and cultural issues. It fosters a focus on the “common good,” which transcends individualism, nationalism, and anthropocentrism.

Students engage with theories of the international curriculum and discuss how their current study program integrates—or fails to integrate—global perspectives. Key discussion points include:

- Developing intercultural awareness, competencies, and collaboration skills.
- Understanding the global workforce and the attitudes needed to contribute positively and ethically at global, national, and local levels.
- Identifying areas where international perspectives could be better integrated into the curriculum.
- Evaluating the relevance of course materials in a globalized world.

The teacher facilitates the discussion by encouraging students to reflect on which aspects of their program promote global engagement and which areas may need improvement. Small breakout groups (e.g., think–pair–share) can be used to analyze different components before sharing insights with the larger group.

This activity also invites students to consider how their curriculum could be adapted to better prepare them for international careers, highlighting the key skills and knowledge areas that may currently be underrepresented.

Pedagogical Value

This exercise helps students develop an international perspective by reflecting on the global relevance of their studies. It encourages critical thinking about the relationship between education and globalization while fostering an appreciation of diverse viewpoints. By analyzing their own curriculum, students gain insight into how education shapes their understanding of global issues and prepares them to navigate an interconnected world.

Facilitation Tips

- Begin with a brief inventory of students' international experiences, cultural backgrounds, or career aspirations.
- Share examples of study programs that successfully integrate international perspectives to inspire discussion.
- Encourage respectful dialogue, validating a wide range of student perspectives and experiences.

Preparation Time: None

Group Size: 5–30 students

Learning Goal: Teach students to engage with peers from different cultural backgrounds, fostering not only awareness of these differences but also empathy and compassion for diverse worldviews.

References: Leask, B. (2015). *Internationalizing the Curriculum*. Routledge.

Build the Inclusive Student Social Life App

Category: Collaboration; Discussion

Materials Needed: Printable worksheets with structured reflection prompts

Time Required in Class: 30–45 minutes

General Description: This activity invites students to imagine and design a social app that supports an inclusive and international student community. It highlights the importance of creating spaces for connection beyond the classroom and encourages students to think about how digital tools can foster belonging and cross-cultural engagement.

Detailed Description

Students are asked to design a simple social app from scratch. This activity encourages them to reflect on and create initiatives that enhance the social networking and integration of international students, ensuring an inclusive and supportive social life. It promotes cross-cultural interaction and active participation in student life beyond academics. Key focus areas include:

- Enhancing social networking for international students by fostering connections with local students.
- Encouraging the active participation of international students beyond the campus to create a stronger sense of belonging and engagement.
- Establishing mentoring schemes in which experienced international students guide newcomers in their academic, cultural, and social adaptation.

The teacher facilitates the discussion by prompting students to share their own experiences or perspectives on integrating into new social environments. Students then design a concrete action plan for their university, outlining how a social app could implement these recommendations to improve international student engagement and inclusion.

Pedagogical Value

This exercise helps students understand the practical challenges international students face in creating a more inclusive social life. It also encourages them to develop proactive solutions, empowering them to take ownership of fostering diversity and inclusion within their social environments.

Facilitation Tips

- Begin by taking an inventory of students' international experiences or aspirations to enrich the discussion.
- Encourage students to draw inspiration from popular app features (e.g., swipe-based matching from dating apps) and adapt them for inclusive student life.
- Prompt groups to consider accessibility, privacy, and inclusivity in their app design.

Preparation Time: None

Group Size: 5–30 students

Learning Goal: Students will analyze challenges faced by international students in building social connections and collaboratively design creative, inclusive solutions to foster intercultural engagement and belonging.

References:

- Li, L., & Peng, W. (2019). Transitioning through social media: International students' SNS use, perceived social support, and acculturative stress. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 98, 69–79.
- Saw, G., Abbott, W., Donaghey, J., & McDonald, C. (2013). Social media for international students – it's not all about Facebook. *Library Management*, 34(3), 156–174.
- Wu, S., & Trottier, D. (2022). Dating apps: A literature review. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 46(2), 91–115.
- Zhao, X. (2017). International students and social exclusion in the age of social media. *Transitions: Journal of Transient Migration*, 1(2), 163–175.