

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 135 745

SP 010 798

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 TITLE Group Interaction Analysis for Improvement of Classroom Discussion.  
 PUB DATE [74]  
 NCTE 7p.  
 EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS \*Discussion (Teaching Technique); \*Discussion Experience; \*Group Discussion; Interaction; \*Interaction Process Analysis; Leader Participation; Participant Characteristics; \*Participant Involvement; \*Role Perception

ABSTRACT

In order to improve the quality of classroom discussion, Group Interaction Analysis (GIA) is suggested as a means of increasing an individual's awareness of the role he assumes in group discussions. GIA is a systemized technique involving the observation of both beneficial and non-beneficial discussion activities. These activities are: (1) fact stating; (2) questioning; (3) offering opinions; (4) accepting; (5) disagreeing; (6) summarizing; (7) leading; (8) holding; (9) jumping in to fill a void; (10) interrupting; (11) all talking at once; and (12) silence. The GIA technique can be used in two ways. For the first, each group member can be assigned a number by the observer and listed on a grid opposite the above twelve categories. At ten-second intervals, a check is made according to which group member is speaking and what category his speech fits into. At the finish, the total interaction during the discussion is recorded. Each group member may thus be made aware of what his role in the discussion was and the group can see the course of the entire discussion. The second use for the GIA is applicable if the leader of the discussion wishes to analyze his interaction in comparison to the rest of the group. The leader is assigned number one and all other members are grouped as number two. This method clearly shows if the discussion is dominated by the leader. The value of GIA lies in making participants aware of what interaction has occurred. It is then up to participants to examine the analysis and, if not satisfied, work toward change. (MM)

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## Introduction

To merely observe a teacher and his or her class without a definite purpose or plan can be boring and rewardless for the observer and the teacher. If some form of systemized observational technique, such as Flanders Interaction Analysis or one of many others, is used then the observer knows what it is he is looking for. The classroom teacher, by using such a systemized observation technique becomes aware of the type of interaction taking place in class and is therefore better able to control the interaction that occurs. Studies by Lohman (1966) and Ober (1966) have found that the interaction in classes of student-teachers who have been instructed in the use of a systemized observational technique is more in agreement with the teacher's own teaching style preference than in classes where no such instruction occurred. It appears reasonable that the use of such a technique designed specifically to analyze classroom discussion could be useful in making teachers and students more aware of their discussion roles and better able to carry on worthwhile discussions.

## Discussion Procedures

Discussion is a teaching technique which can be used at all teaching levels. Yet many teachers, student-teachers and students find they have problems in carrying on a good discussion. Too often the teacher automatically becomes the leader and what was meant to be a discussion turns into a lecture with infrequent student participation. Other problems arise when a few monopolize the conversation or when a battle between two sides develops and very little real listening takes place. Discussions can be improved if participants are informed on the topic for discussion and made aware of what role they tend to play in a discussion. Awareness can lead to a change in behavior and in the case of discussion, awareness through analysis of actual discussions can make discussion a more valuable teaching method.

Preparation for a discussion can be accomplished in many ways but the pre-discussion product should be informed, open-minded group members. This cannot be overstressed. Participants need to be instructed in the purposes and procedures for discussion. In general, a problem or issue must be identified, and each group member must become informed before the discussion can begin. The group then analyzes the problem through inspection of the facts. After reviewing and evaluating related facts and ideas relative to the problem, hypotheses can be introduced and tested according to how well they deal with the problem or issue. The group might need to establish specific criteria to do so or perhaps examining advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives would suffice. A solution may emerge to end the discussion or more likely a formation of generalizations (Hoover, 1973).

It is obvious that many different activities will benefit a discussion while others will not. Fact stating, questioning, accepting statements, and summarizing are some beneficial activities whereas getting off the topic and jumping in with nothing to say contribute to ruination of a discussion.

### Group Interaction Analysis

The Group Interaction Analysis (GIA) is a systemized observation technique which includes both beneficial and non-beneficial discussion activities. Its categories are listed below.

1. Fact Stating: Making informative or clarifying statements.
2. Questioning: Asking a question to the group or an individual.
3. Opinion: Offering a feeling, value or belief -not factual evidence.
4. Accepting: Agreeing with a statement, or merely accepting it as a worthy point.
5. Disagreeing: Taking direct issue with a statement.
6. Summarizing: Bringing together in few words what has thus far transpired in the discussion.

7. Leading: Taking charge, issuing directions such as: "Let's deal with a different point."
8. Holding: Beating around the bush. Talking around the topic rather than to it.
9. Jumping in to fill a void: Some group members cannot tolerate silence. They say anything to break it. This category fits only when what is said after silence does not add to the discussion.
10. Interrupting: Breaking in when another is speaking.
11. All talking at once: Several members trying to talk at same time.
12. Silence: No one talking. They could be thinking or at a loss for what to do next.

The GIA technique can be used in two manners. In a small group each group member can be listed by name or number to the left of the grid as shown below.

#### Categories

Group member	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
0												
1												
2		x										
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
Totals												

At ten second intervals a check is made according to which group member is speaking and what category his speech fits into. For example, if group member two is asking a question, then check category two (which is questioning) for group member two. This is shown above. Continue noting every 10 seconds ideally for the whole discussion but more realistically for a ten to fifteen minute segment during the discussion. When the interaction fits either category 11 or 12, no one group member can be credited. In this instance, check the category for group member zero.

Group member zero stands for the total group. At the finish you may total each category. You now have a record of the total interaction during the time interval and also that of each group member. It is now very easy for each group member to be made aware of what his role in the discussion was and also for the group to look at the discussion interaction in its entirety.

The second manner in which the Group Interaction Analysis (GIA) can be used is applicable if the teacher or leader of a discussion wishes to analyze his interaction in comparison to the rest of the group. The leader is then considered group member one and everyone else together is labeled group member two. Notations are made in the same manner as earlier explained. Group member zero is still used for categories 11 and 12. This method provides the leader with a record of his interaction and also that of the group. It clearly shows how much of the discussion was dominated by one person and how much was spread among the group. If the majority of leader interaction falls into categories 1, 2, 6 and 7 then perhaps the leader was lecturing rather than discussing. If however the other group members as a whole also registered in categories 1, 2, 6 and 7 then it can be assumed the group was working in a discussion. The GIA is no cure for discussion failure. Its value lies in making participants aware of what interaction occurred. It is then up to the participants, especially the leader to examine the analysis and if not satisfied work toward change.

## REFERENCES

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