

The Language Centre



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Encouraging Active Listening Through Teaching and Assessment

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What is active listening?



Research: Interaction at degree level

- Questionnaire to former International Foundation Year students
- Interviews with departments
- Katherine Thornton's analysis of the MICASE corpus

Findings

- Importance of group work
- Skills needed: presenting information and ideas clearly, ensuring understanding is taking place, managing and developing interaction
- Concern about international students:
 - Do international students recognise discussions and the input from other students as a resource for learning?

Test of discussion skills: Aim

- To ensure that students have the necessary interactive skills for their future degree programmes
- To make students more aware of the importance of interactive communication skills
- To lead to more teaching of these skills

Discussion Skills Test

- Part 1

- a) Individual presentations & request for clarification from other students

- b) Commenting on each presentation to demonstrate understanding

- Part 2 - open discussion

Trial of discussion skills test part 1

- Feedback from a colleague and students
- **Successes:**
 - Awareness raising
 - Learning
- **Problems:**
 - Assigning grades
 - Inauthentic

- “I tried to listen and understand what other students said”
- “It is really a good experience. From the test, I could find both mine and my partner’s shortages on conversation and improve these in other conversations after this”

Conclusion

- Active listening and ensuring that understanding is taking place is very important at degree level
- Testing students makes them more aware of the skills needed and the importance of these skills
- More trials and discussion needed