

Socratic Circles

Tim Strode and Bridget O'Leary October 2018



Expected:

- *read academic texts*
- *make an attempt to understand them*
- *attend tutorials ready to ask questions*
- *discuss opinions, interpretations of these texts with peers*

What **challenges** do learners face with these expectations?

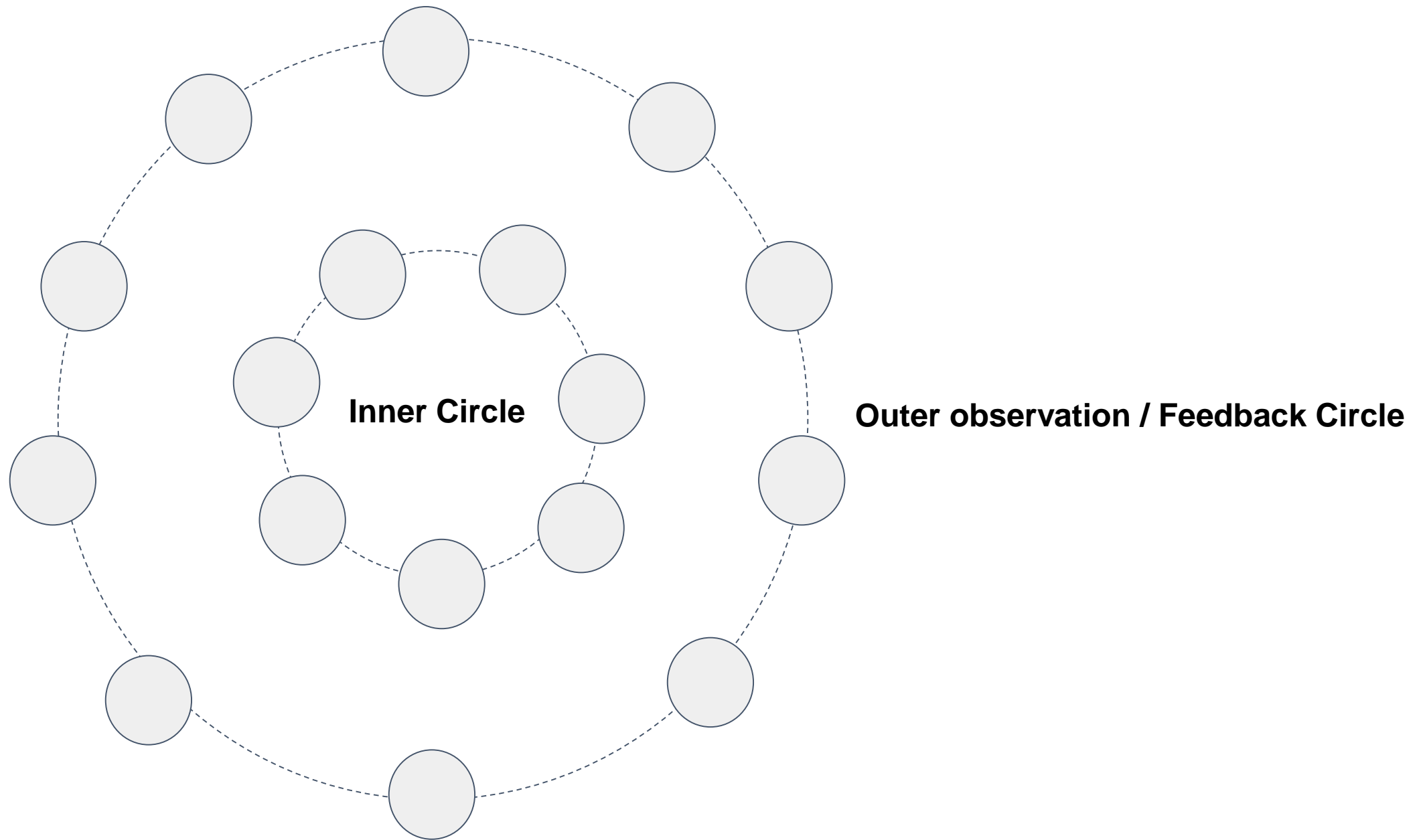
Challenges observed

Students have problems with:

- articulating a **true understanding** of texts
- making use of texts in discussions
- writing coherent notes, annotating
- actively listening to each other in discussions

What is a **Socratic Circle**?

- the teacher chooses texts for discussion
- students annotate the text and prepare to discuss the topic
- students form two circles of between 6-10
- one circle of students sits inside the other circle



What is a **Socratic Circle** (continued)?

- inner circle discusses the text for 8-10 min
- outer circle observes and takes notes
- outer circle provides feedback on inner circle
- two circles swap and the process is repeated

How to set it up:

explain task

Step 1:

Text: **Previous PDs**

Q: **What are the features that make a **successful PD**?**

Step 2:

Pre-task



Pre-Task Socratic Circles # 1 topic:..... date:.....

Texts read on the topic:

- 1.
- 2.

Write three main ideas from the texts.

Swap this paper with a partner. Write three follow-up questions on your partner's paper.

	Main ideas	Follow-up question:
1.		
2.		
3.		

What makes a good discussion? Rank most important to least important: 1-8

a)	Body language that shows you are listening (e.g. <i>eye contact, open posture</i>)	
b)	Interrupting (e.g. <i>hand gestures, or but, no, yes</i>)	
c)	Adding a new idea	
d)	Giving an example for your opinion	↑
e)	Follow-up questions	
f)	Speaking clearly and audibly	
g).	Giving a new opinion	
h)	Checking you understood what another person said	

Deeper Thinking:

Topics focussed on in the media will often be discussed in the wider community. It is through this discourse that ideas are furthered. This exchange of ideas leads to a deeper understanding of the topic furthering the development of the discourse within the community. Throughout these conversations we understand more perspectives and connect ideas better.

Think about what really interests you in this topic.

Make a question that you would like to know the answer to, which can not be found in the text:

Your question will contribute to furthering this conversation.

Step 3:

Circle set up



Step 4: roles

role cards

I want to speak

role cards set 1

it is strong to speak

What suggestions do you
have for the group?

Listen to others more carefully

Name:.....

Who helped the
conversation flow to
others?

.....

Was there a leader?

.....

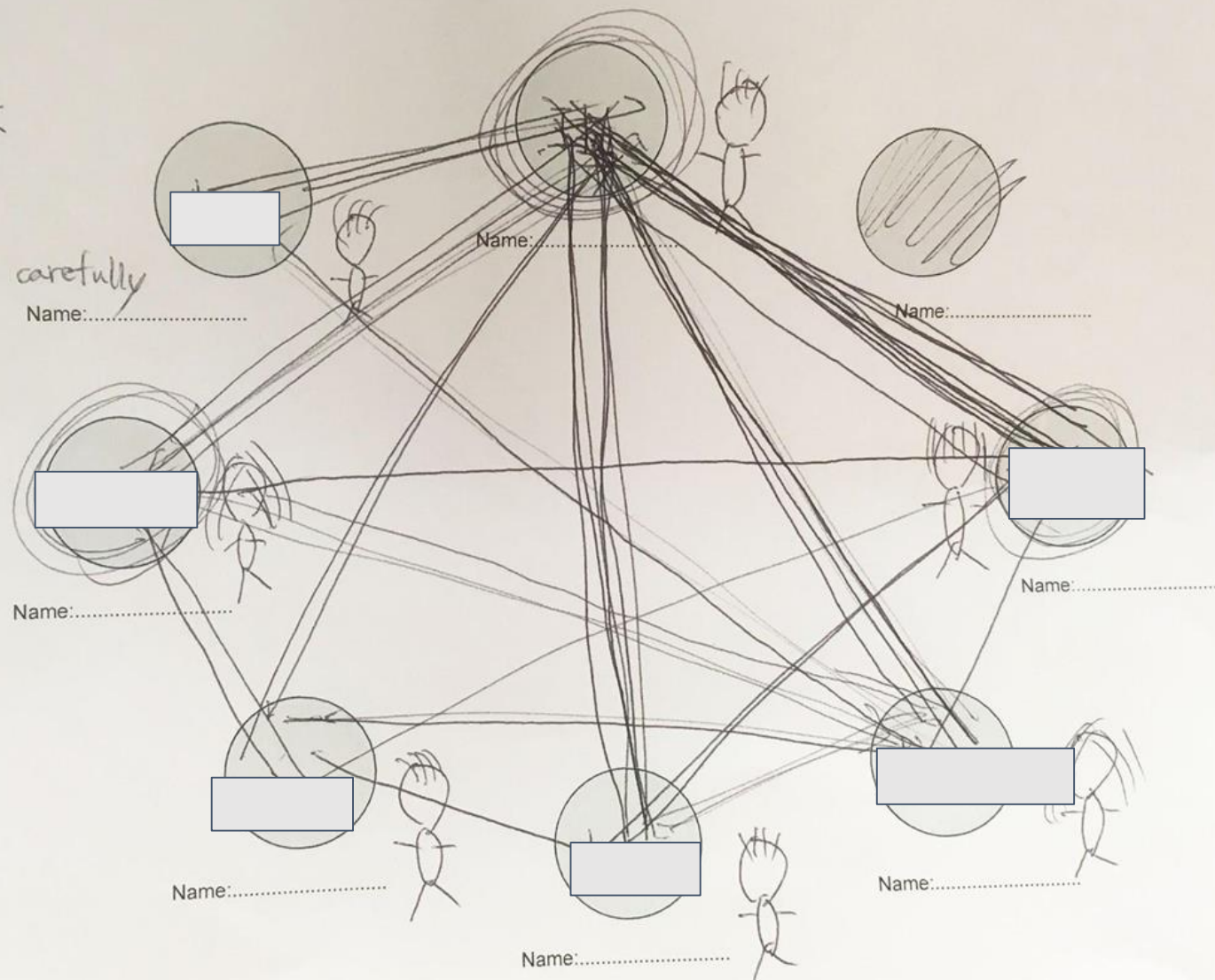
What conclusions do you
have?

.....

Any other observations?

.....

background



Role card: #1



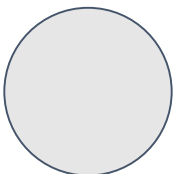
After Observation:

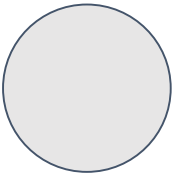
Observations:

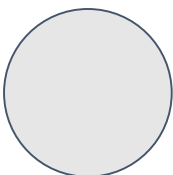
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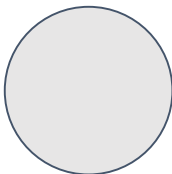
What suggestions do you have for the group?

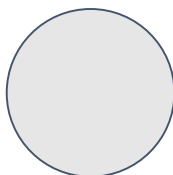
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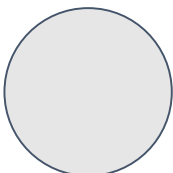

Name:.....

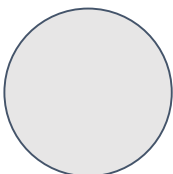

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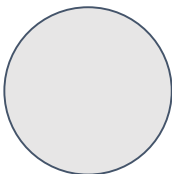

Name:.....


Name:.....


Name:.....


Name:.....


Name:.....


Name:.....



Body Language			
	Who:	Body language observed:	Positive / Negative
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

After Observation

Who had the most effective body language and why?.....
What are some suggestions for the group?.....



IDEAS				
	Who?	Idea	Example or evidence given, referred to the text <i>(E.G. according to the article..)</i>	Reactions: <i>(nod/ smile/ agreement 'yes'...)</i>
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

After Observation: Evaluate the ideas? Which worked well and why? Which linked with other ideas?

Questions	Linking	
Clarification: <i>(E.G. What do you mean by...?)</i>	Summarising/ Paraphrasing ideas: <i>(E.G. What <student name> means is.....or When you say.....do you mean... So you think that...)</i>	Holding the Floor: <i>(E.G. As I was saying... Excuse me, I'd like to finish my idea fist...)</i>
Evidence: <i>(E.G. What evidence is there to support..?)</i>	Acknowledging ideas: <i>(E.G. I agree with <student name>... , My idea follows on from....)</i>	Questions about Assumptions: <i>(E.G. What are you assuming when you say that? Do you have any evidence to support that assumption?)</i>
Viewpoints: <i>(E.G. <student name> you seem to be looking at the issue from... point of view, why do you see the issue this way?)</i>	Disagreeing: <i>(E.G. I don't agree with you because... , I agree with you on some points, but...)</i>	Questions that Encourage Reasons: <i>(E.G. How can we find out? How could someone solve this problem? Why is this important?)</i>

Role cards: #4



After Observation:

Do you think the group used questions well?

Which box could be used more?

What could you suggest for further improvement?

Step 5:

conversation

text: **Previous PDs**

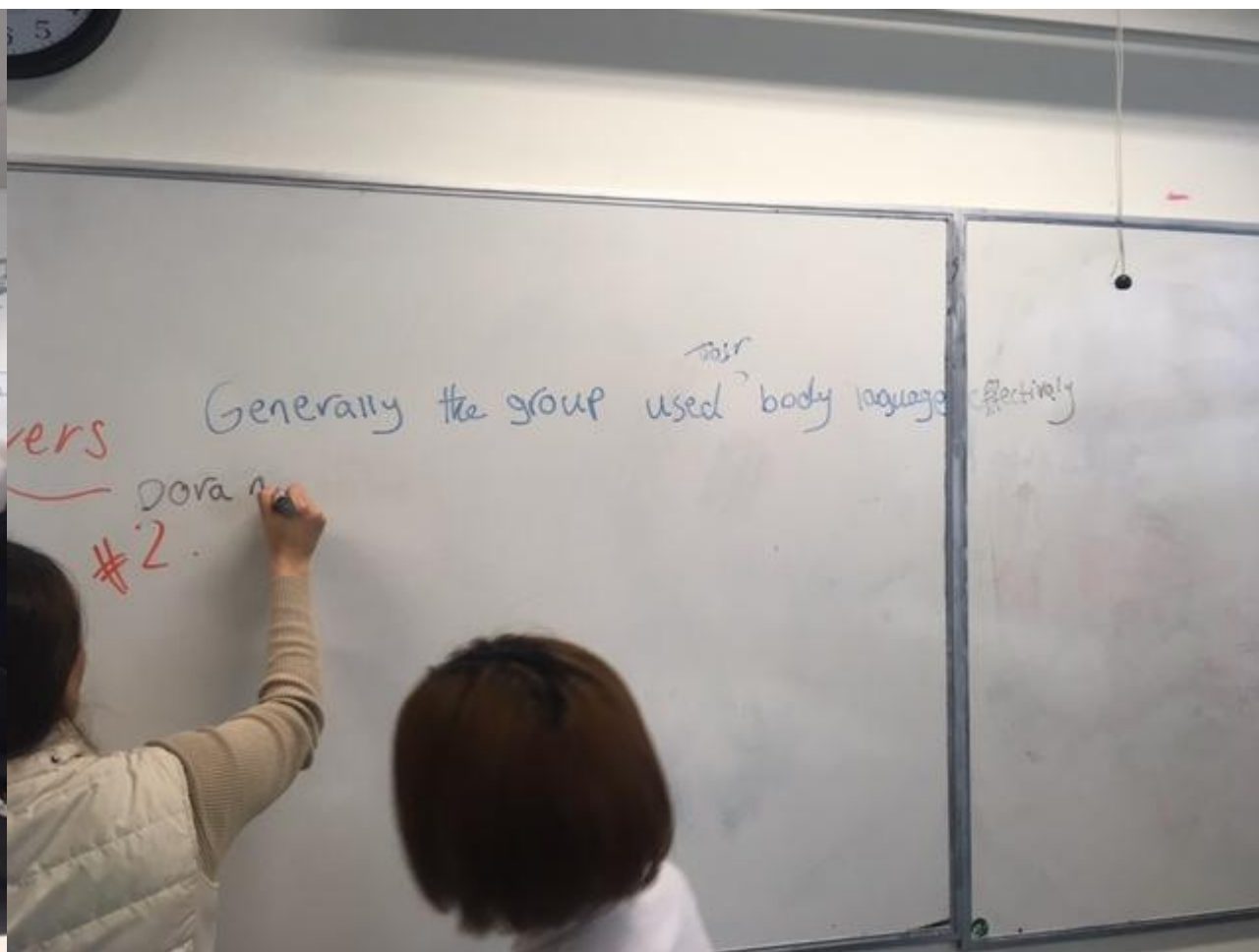
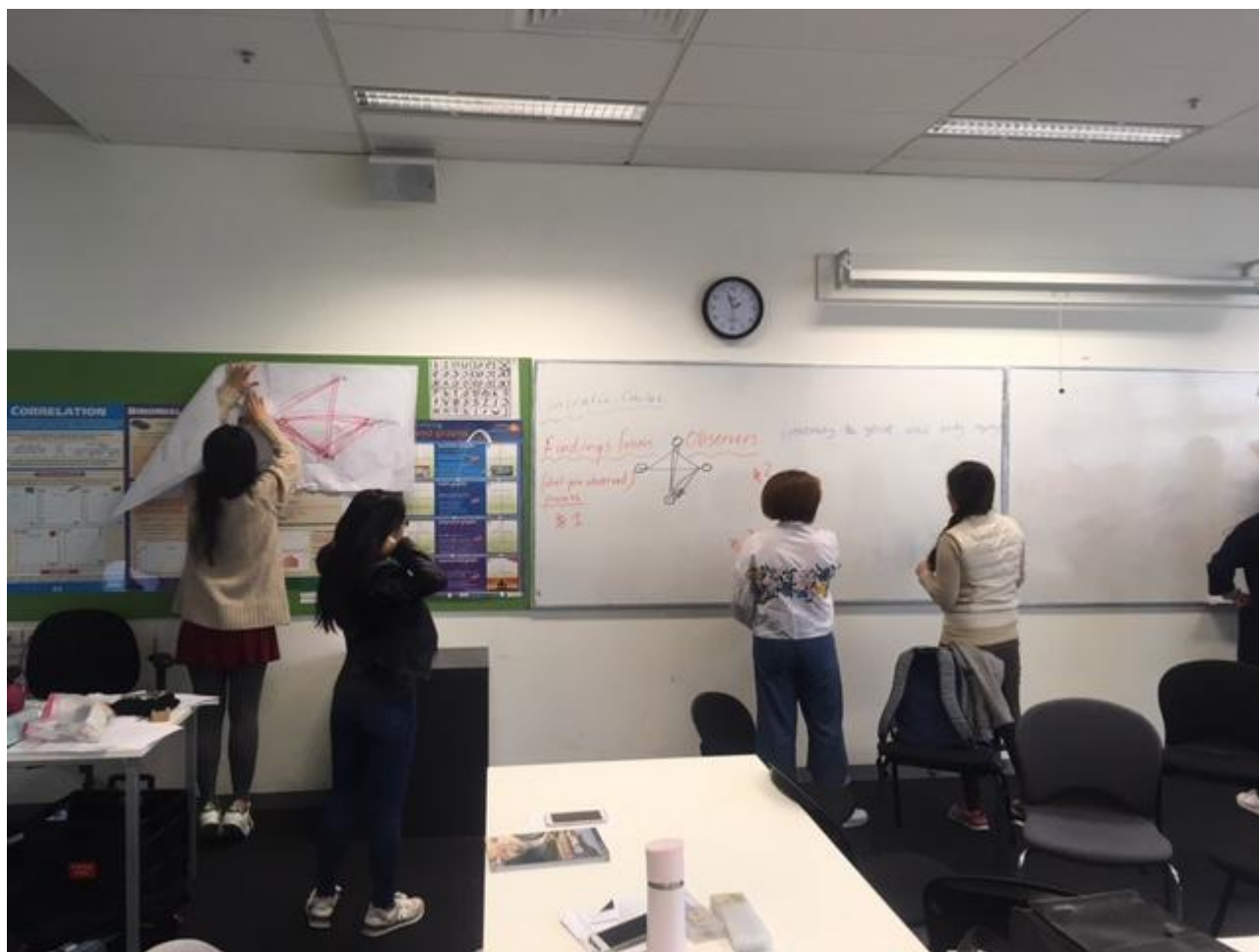
Q: **What are the features that make a successful PD?**

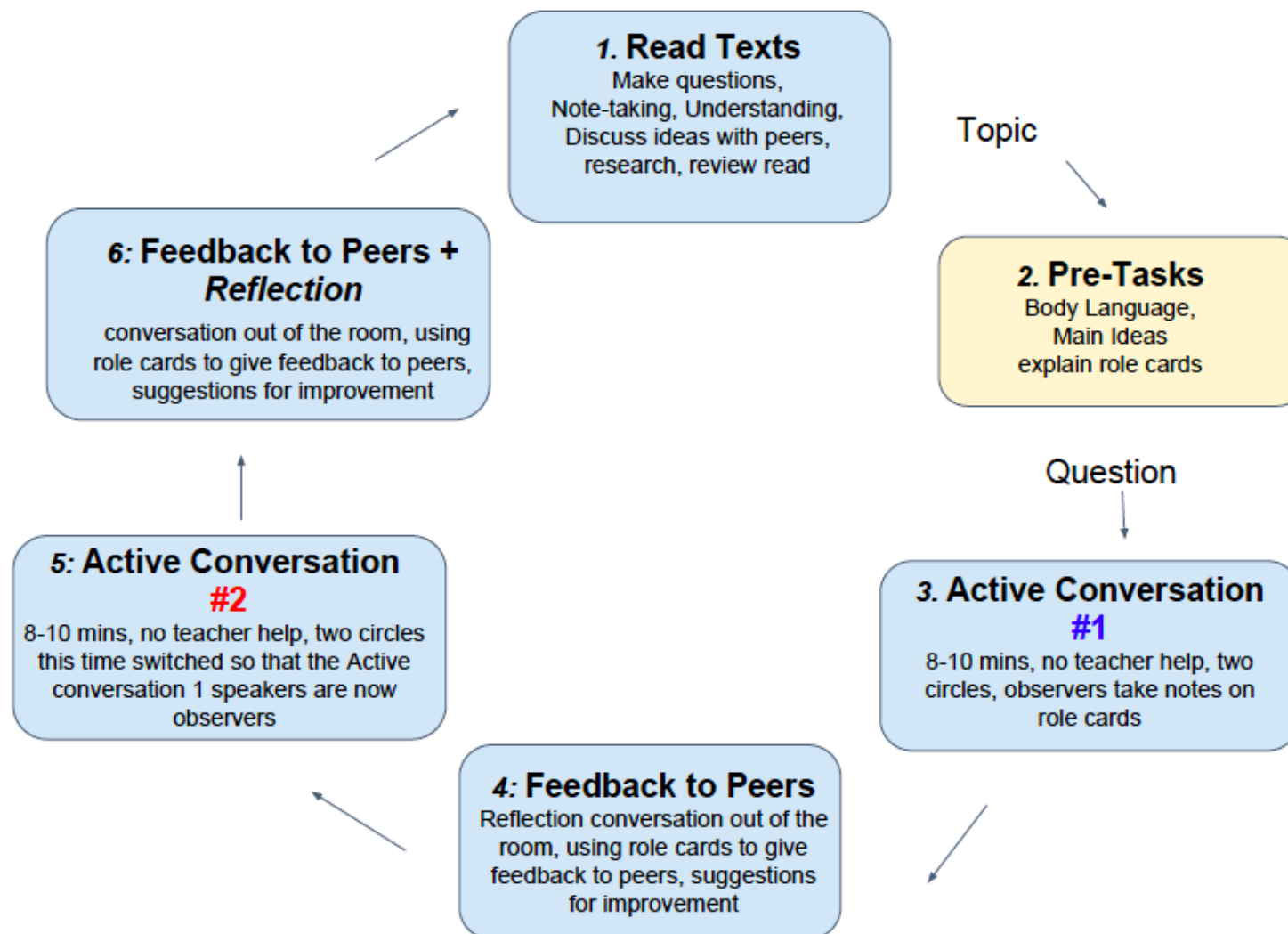
Step 6:

inner circle leaves classroom to discuss

Step 7: feedback

present feedback: each group





Info sheet



Socratic Seminars

Definition:

Readings of Texts, scaffolding,
preparing for a conversation
watched by peers, feedback

Aim: To help in preparation for
pathway

Timeline suggested:

Day 1: Set texts to be read for homework

Day 2: Pre Task 1

Day 3: Pre Task 2 + Active Conv #1

Feedback + Action Conv #2 + Feedback

	Vocabulary that is specific to the topic found in the texts: (make a list)	✓	Who said the word:
1			who:
2			who:
3			who:
4			who:
5			who:
6			who:
7			who:
8			who:
9			who:
10			who:

	Vocabulary that is specific to the topic found in the texts: (make a list)	✓	Who said the word:
1			who:
2			who:
3			who:
4			who:
5			who:
6			who:
7			who:
8			who:
9			who:
10			who:

Role cards: #5



	Phrases	✓	Who said the word:
1			who:
2			who:
3			who:
4			who:
5			who:

After Observation:

	Key Ideas from the text (to be listed with a few students helping)	✓	Who said the idea
1			who:
2			who:
3			who:
4			who:
5			who:
6			who:
7			who:
8			who:
9			who:
10			who:

Role cards: #6



Vocabulary
 Brainstorm:

After Observation:

Feedback

Questions

Please add:

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on materials if you plan to use them in the classroom

Thanks

Date:

Term:

Topic



Graph Feedback Reflection from Socratic Circles:

Level

10.....
9.....
8.....
7.....
6.....
5.....
4.....
3.....
2.....
1.....
0.....

Tasks:	Reading	Pre-tasks	Conv #1	Feedback Reflection	Feedback Observers	Feedback Teacher	Conv #2	Feedback reflection	Feedback Observers	Feedback teacher
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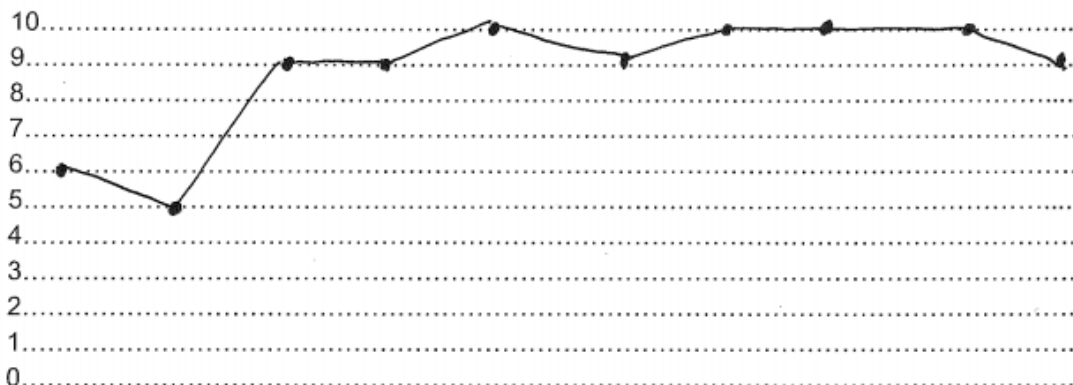
Reflection: Please describe what parts were interesting for you and why, which parts were challenging and why, what suggestions you have about materials or steps or anything else.



Graph Feedback Reflection from Socratic Circles:

Date: 18/04/2018 Term: Topic

Level



Reading	Pre-tasks	Conv #1	Feedback Reflection	Feedback Observers	Feedback Teacher	Conv #2	Feedback reflection	Feedback Observers	Feedback teacher
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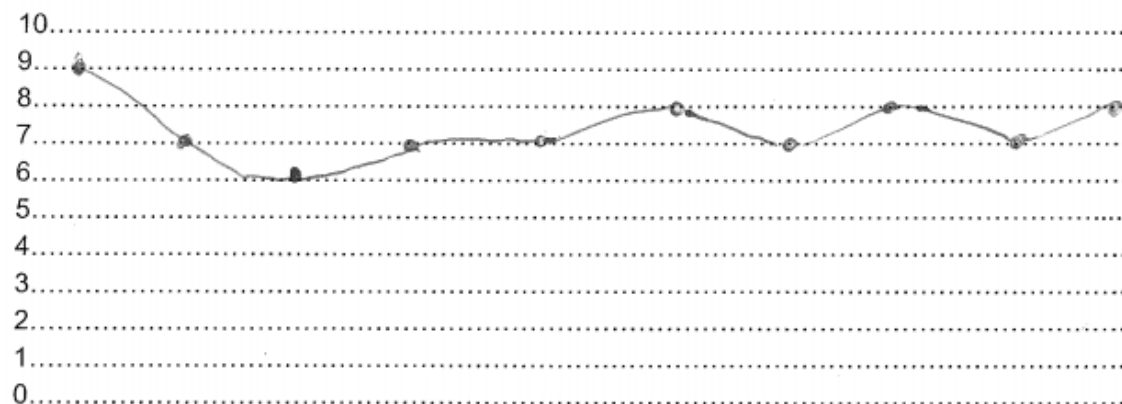
Reflection: Please describe what parts were interesting for you and why, which parts were challenging and why, what suggestions you have about materials or steps or anything else.

Conversation is the most interesting part to me, and also the most challenging part. Because during the conversation, I can listen to all of the interesting ideas from others. It is also the most challenge part, the reason is when I do the conversation, I need to contribute my idea, but sometimes I find it is not easy to fully express my opinion due to my language limit. it makes me feel nervous.



Graph Feedback Reflection from Socratic Circles:

Level

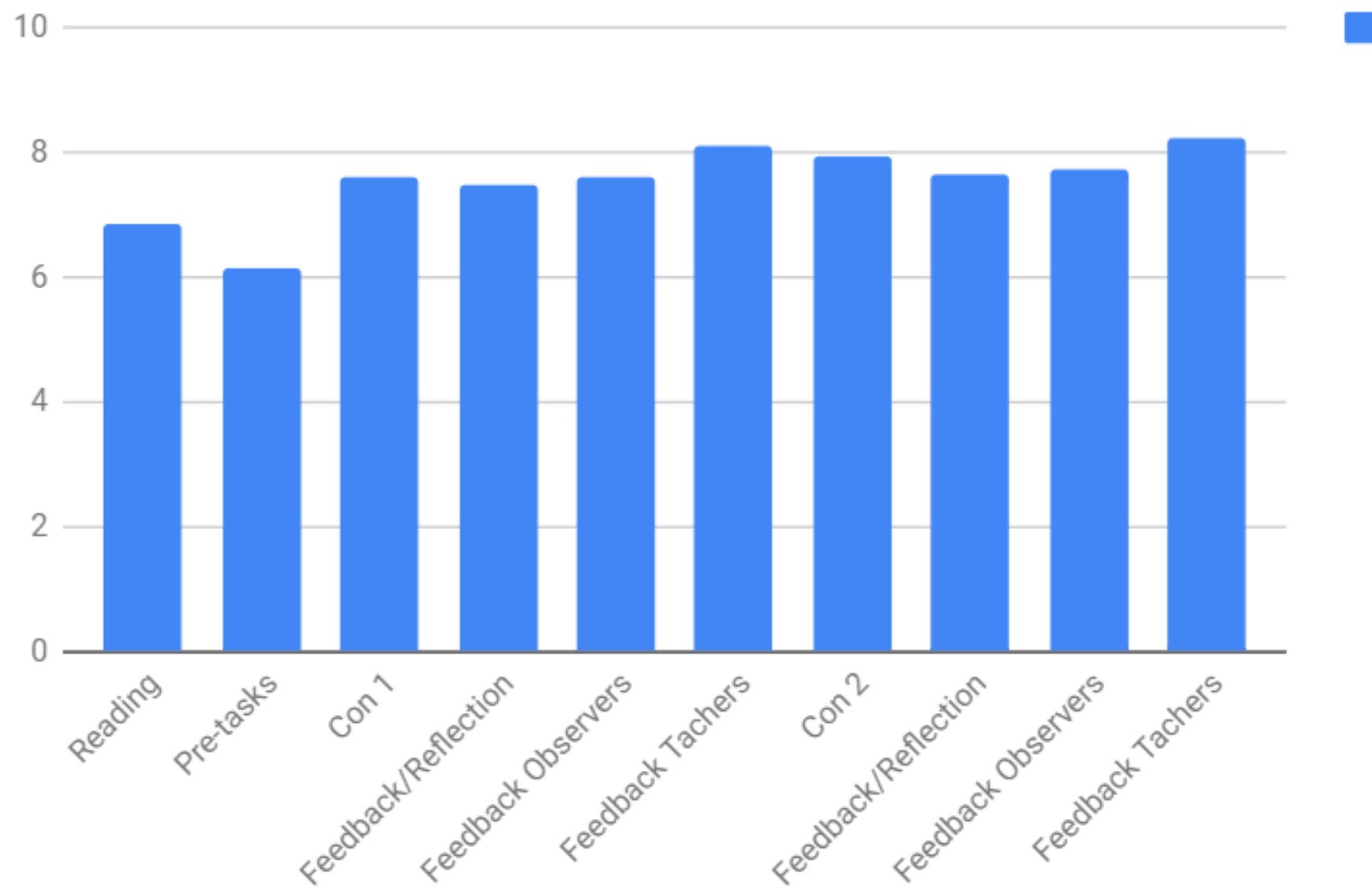


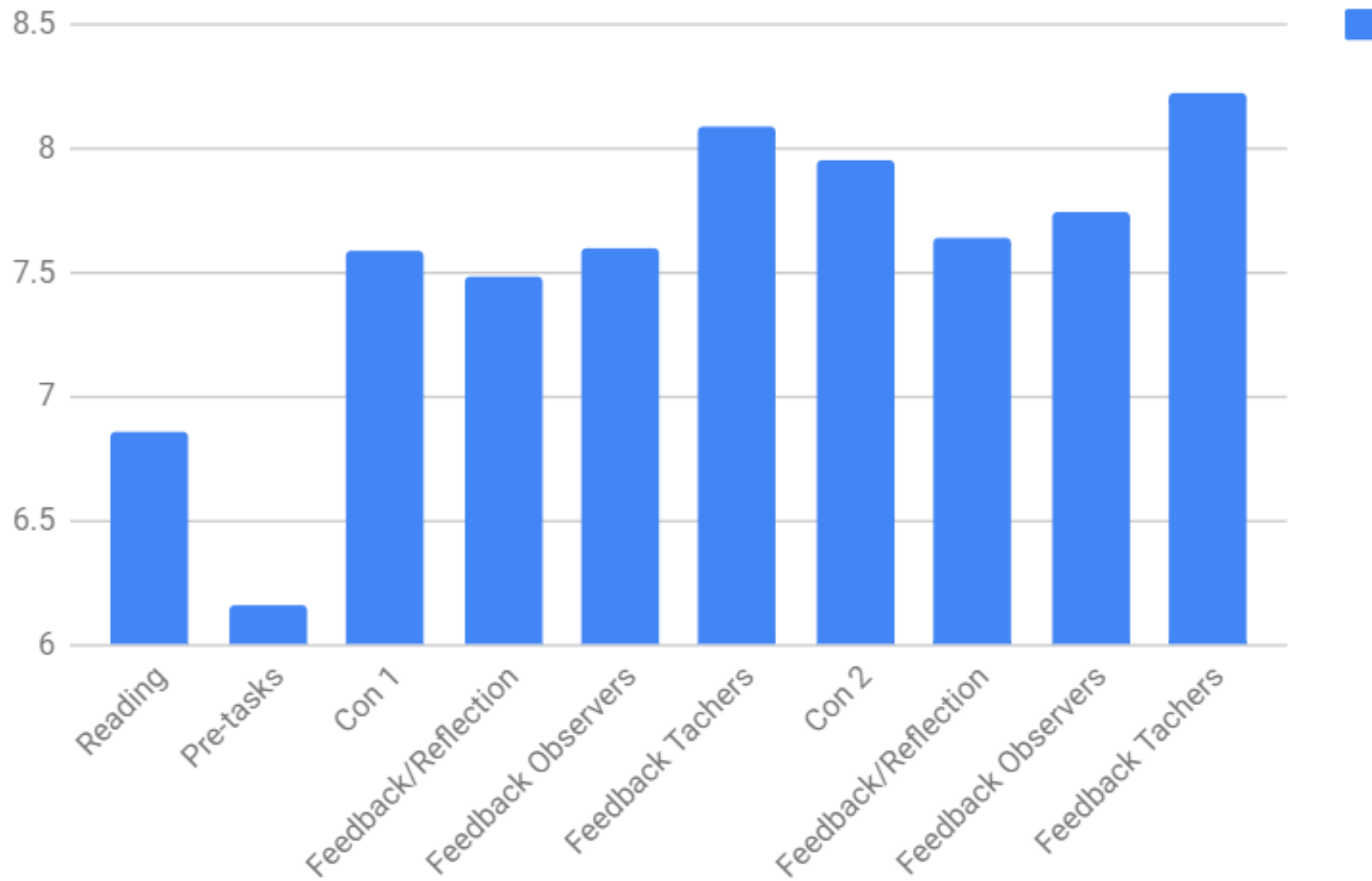
Tasks	Reading	Pre-tasks	Conv #1	Feedback Reflection	Feedback Observers	Feedback Teacher	Conv #2	Feedback reflection	Feedback Observers	Feedback teacher
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Reflection: Please describe what parts were interesting for you and why, which parts were challenging and why, what suggestions you have about materials or steps or anything else.

I think one of the most important ~~these~~ aspects was the choose of the topic. It was a pressing topic related with what is happening currently like the Facebook scandal. I bottom lines I consider the topic was a good choice and reading about it was keeping myself updated with the latest news.

The pre-task activity I consider useful was making





Facilitating Reflection

Key Takeaway

Specific feedback: learners - teacher

Value: peer - peer

‘When students give feedback that were not familiar so it must be relevant.’

self-consciousness supportive environment

Practical considerations

- 6-10 students in each circle
- 8 - 10 mins for discussion time
- outer circle is crucial
- may take several attempts to really work with a class

Successful texts:

- Challenging
- Relatable
- Interesting
- Involves values
- Linked

Why are Socratic Circles **effective**?

Reading is given a purpose.

Discussion is informed and student directed.

Students are motivated to contribute.

Feedback offers opportunity for reflection.

The process is repeatable and students improve with practice.

Socratic circles work best when students:

- refer explicitly to the text
- use examples from their own experience
- actively listen and ask further questions
- form and articulate clear opinions
- provide constructive feedback

The second discussion of the text shows an awareness of the previous discussion and builds upon points previously raised.