Hope at the interface

The young people I teach are living manifestations of hope.

They opt to travel from their home countries, to engage in tertiary study using their developing English language skills and limited academic experience.

Foundation Studies and English for Academic Purposes are taught face to face, integrating language skills and the demands of higher education in the westernised university context.

Using a thematic approach to study, my students are challenged to research and prepare academic essays and presentations on issues that range from climate change, to the impact of social media, and the use of artificial intelligence in higher education. “Think-Pair-Share” is a well-known communicative teaching approach that has been modified here, as groups were asked to reflect on their experience of working on a group presentation just as they embarked on research for writing an argument essay.

While brainstorming ideas may not seem all that intellectually challenging, writing the thoughts down helps vocalise and crystalise student’s ideas. Working with others is stimulating, providing engagement, encouragement and reinforcement. Critical thinking skills were developed through consideration of similarities and differences, all the while being mindful of the course’s learning outcomes and scheduled assessments.

The activity helped students navigate academic expectations they all struggle with, through the construction of a shared understanding guided and augmented with limited teacher input.