A Functional Language Structure for Group Discussion Flow

**Assumption:** Four students sit in a circle around a table, each with their respective articles and/or notes. The group spend 30 seconds on deciding who will present first, who will present 2nd and so on, remembering that each article will be discussed by the group after each presentation. It is helpful if the students do not simply present in the same consecutive order in which they are sitting.

1. The 1st presenter then begins, with something like this:

   “Good afternoon everyone, my name is xxxxxx
   I'd like to present an article I've found in the International Journal of Organic Chemistry - by Safad and Hasouri, dated May, 2014. The article is about/reports/is on a study of ....”

   The 1st presenter continues using notes and inclusive eye contact in the group to explain what he/she has noted from the article until concluding after around five minutes. Then the presenter invites group discussion:

   “So everyone, I wonder what your comments/thoughts are?”

   The 1st presenter is not leading the ensuing discussion, but is part of it and can help it develop when it falters with some pre-planned questions for the group:

---

1 This name-giving is necessary in the final/end of module (filmed) discussions for the external examiner to know who is who in each group.

2 A suggested reading strategy for version 1: Suggest to students they are like eagles. That is, after they’ve selected their article (e.g. by its abstract), they open their wings, get some height/altitude and ‘fly’ over the mountaintops of the article, taking in its headings, structure and references list – scanning. Then they go back to the section(s)/pages they spotted that are most important/interesting/relevant to the questions they have brought to the article, and read those sections closely. This strategy helps PhD students and 1st year undergrads alike to find their own ‘front doors’ into texts. Cognitive overload (therefore, little retention of information) tends to be avoided; the article is not going anywhere and the student is more likely to revisit it.

3 Beware of the student who turns the hoped-for discussion into an interview panel by accidently finishing a presentation with: “Okay everyone, any questions?”
“What do you think about that method...? ... the implications/possible applications of....? Why/how ....? Are there weaknesses in the author’s argument, do you think?”

.... and so on.

When the discussion has run its course or at the end of 8-10 minutes, the presenter thanks the group for their contributions to discussion of the paper (or other item) and hands over to the student who volunteered (when the group first sat) to be the 2nd presenter.

So, Keisha, could I invite you to present next?

...Keisha thanks the first presenter, and the cycle begins again.