

# Standards-Based Strategy 5

## Information Gap Activities

# Recurring Question

What makes an activity  
student-centered?

# Student-Centered Activities

- Independent student-to-student interaction
- Teacher as a monitor, in a supportive role

# Recurring Question

What tasks give students a reason to communicate in the target language?

# Student-Centered Activities

Tasks in which students

- are motivated to find out more.
- have a need to find something out to complete the task.
- don't have all the information themselves.

# Information Gap Activities

Each student has information that the other does not have.

By asking and answering questions of each other, the partners close the information gap.

# Rationale

Information Gap Activities provide students opportunities

- for practice in a sheltered, small-group interpersonal setting.
- for one-on-one interaction in the target language.
- to understand and to be understood.
- for meaningful interaction with peers.

(Lee and VanPatten 1995)

# Information Gap Student Tasks

- Finding differences and/or similarities
- Predicting partner's response(s)
- Following and giving directions
- Finding and giving information
- Completing a picture

# Sample: Similarities and Differences

1. The teacher gives each student a picture of the same scene with some differences (Picture A and Picture B).
2. Students exchange information to determine how their pictures differ.

# Sample: Extra-Sensory Perception (ESP)

1. The teacher assigns a topic such as shopping for clothes at a target culture department store.
2. Each student receives the same questions about the clothes and jots down answers for him or herself without showing them to their partner.

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# Sample: Extra-Sensory Perception (ESP)

3. Then students write down their prediction for their partner.
4. Partners orally exchange information to see whose predictions are more accurate.

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# Sample: Following and Giving Directions

1. The teacher gives both students in each team a laminated metro map from the target culture.
2. Each student's map indicates a different destination.

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# Sample: Following and Giving Directions

3. Student A gives directions to his or her destination to Student B and Student B highlights the route.
4. Student B then give directions to Student A for the second destination and Student A highlights the route.

# Sample: Finding and Giving Information

1. The teacher gives Student A half of an article from an authentic source on x and Student B the other half.
2. Each student reads the provided text before sharing the content with the other.
3. The pair writes an outline of the entire article.

# Sample: Completing the Picture

1. The teacher gives Student A an incomplete picture. Student B has the complete picture.
2. Student B gives Student A enough details about the complete picture so that Student A can draw the missing elements.
3. Student A asks clarifying questions to complete the picture as accurately as possible.

# Before the Activity

## Teacher Role

- Teach the content necessary to complete the task.
- Model the task in the target language.
- Summarize the task.
- Assign student pairs.
- Determine who begins.

# Managing the Activity

Establish and practice procedures for

- beginning the task.
- quieting the class with a signal.
- moving to groups.
- handling materials.
- asking for help or clarification.
- sticking to a time limit.

# Managing the Activity

Review procedures for what students do when they need to

- pause to collect thoughts.
- ask their partner to slow down.
- let their partner know that they did not understand.
- can't think of a word.

# During the Activity

## The teacher

- monitors the timeframe.
- circulates around the class.
- monitors students' language production and participation.
- ensures that students don't let their partners see each other's notes or information.

# After the Activity

Follow-up activities that involve

- the culture triangle
- the presentational mode
- comparisons of responses or information

# Conclusion

Information gap activities are a step towards sustained student-to-student interaction in an open-ended and meaningful context.

# Last Word

If at first you don't succeed...

And you may not...

**Keep trying!**

# Final Reflections

- When should I use Information Gap Activities?
- How do I organize Information Gap Activities for success in my class?
- Why is the use of Information Gap Activities necessary in a performance-based classroom?

# Resources

- Textbook series
- NCLRC.org (DC)
- Web?