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.
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.

(continued on next slide)
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.

C. Knop
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.

(continued on next slide)
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 gives 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.
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?