

Teaching World Languages: A Practical Guide

Chapter 6: Interpersonal Communication Speaking and Writing

The *Standards for Language Learning in the 21st Century*, (2006) provides the guidelines for foreign language instruction in the United States. The first standard, Communication, includes three parts:

- the interpersonal mode of communication (conversational communication),
- the interpretive mode of communication (reading, listening and viewing), and
- the presentational mode of communication (speaking in a presentation and writing).

For more about the standards go Chapter 2: [Standards for Foreign Language Learning](#).

The goal of the Interpersonal Communication standard is to enable students to engage directly with other speakers in real-life situations from the early stages of language learning. Interpersonal communication is the continued negotiation of meaning through language. It can take place in a conversation (speaking and listening) or in written form (writing and reading). Conversations can be held in person, on the phone, via Skype, or even across multiple media, such as telephone messages. Written exchanges can occur through letters, emails, text messages (SMS), or chatting on the Internet. In all cases, each message has an effect upon the next message, and the dialogue evolves throughout the exchange.



Fig. 6-1-1 ©Nruboc

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6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Standard 1.1 Learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions. *

*From *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (2006)

Chapter Contents

Objectives and Assessments	4
Learning Objectives	4
Content Objectives: WHAT Students Should Learn	4
Sample Can-Do Statements and Objectives	5
Assessment	6
Sample Summative Assessment	6
Examples of Terms for Social Negotiation	7
Performance Criteria: HOW WELL Students Should Be Able to Do	
What They Learn	8
Sample Rubric – Interpersonal Communication	9
 Materials	 11
Authentic Materials	11
Semi-authentic Materials	11
 Activities	 12
Integrated Performance Activities and Task-Based Instruction	12
Sample Integrated Performance Activity	12
Preparing Students for Interpersonal Communication	13
Criteria for Interpersonal Communication Activities	14
Sample Communicative Activities	15
Role Play Activity: Family Meal with Guests	16
Discussion Activity: Planning a Presentation	17
Interview Activity: Target Language Speaker – Target Culture Foods	19
Sample Structured Output Activities	20
Information Gap: Make Grocery List; Describe Picture; Jigsaw	20
Written Correspondence Activities: Exchange Notes, Email, Chat	21

**6: Interpersonal Communication:
Speaking and Writing**

Learning Strategies: What the Learner Does	24
Teaching Strategies: What the Teacher Does	25
Resources, References, and Credits	27
Appendices	31

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Objectives and Assessments

Learning Objectives

Learning objectives drive all instruction. *Content objectives*, such as those described in the Standards, describe **what** students should know, and *performance objectives* describe **how well** students should be able to perform. You, the teacher, identify learning objectives for the course, thematic units, and lessons. Developing thematic units is an essential step in your instruction. For more about thematic units, see Chapter 3: [Planning Instruction](#).

Once you have determined the learning objectives for a course, unit, or lesson, you can develop your assessment. Along with your assessment, you can develop a way to grade or evaluate student performance on the assessment. No matter how specific we try to be in objectives, it is what we do to assess student progress that really defines what we expect them to be able to do, and how well. So, it is much better to decide that early on, let the students know your expectations, and then design the instruction to meet the objectives.



Fig. 6-4-1 ©teeranop

We will use an example unit on food for first year language students to demonstrate how you can first plan objectives, then assessment, and then activities.

Content Objectives – WHAT students should learn

Content objectives for interpersonal communication are linked to the *enduring understandings* for the year and the unit. These are “big ideas,” often related to the culture of the language under study. Students explore them mostly in the target language. For more on enduring understandings, see Backward Design in Chapter 3: [Planning Instruction](#).

Standards-based content objectives are different from the traditional language learning objectives. They describe *functions*, what students can do with the language, rather than specific grammar points or vocabulary. The functions are related to a context; the context is provided by the topic or theme of the lesson or unit. After you have read the sample objectives, we will review the objectives and how they determine the grammar and vocabulary that will be taught.

The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (2006) provides sample can-do statements or sample progress indicators for students of many foreign languages, as well as a generic version, for each standard at various levels of proficiency. The can-do statements and progress indicators are functions. They act as guides for developing realistic objectives for your students. These are provided for four levels of study: Grade 4, Grade 8, Grade 12, and Grade 16 (senior in college) on the assumption that since Grade 1 the students have been studying a specific world language. Since this is not usually the case, teachers can approximate which can-do statements or progress indicators are appropriate for their students by adjusting the years of study and then choosing functions that are appropriate (and of interest) to their students.

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

- Can-Do Statements and Progress Indicators for Grade 4 are appropriate for students who have studied the foreign language in grades K-4, 5-8, or 9-10.
- Can-Do Statements and Progress Indicators for Grade 8 are appropriate for students have studied the foreign language in grades K-8, 7-12, or 9-12.
- Can-Do Statements and Progress Indicators for Grade 12 are appropriate primarily for students who have studied the same foreign language in grades K-12.
- Progress Indicators for Grade 16 are appropriate for highly advanced learners.

However, it must be remembered that the Progress Indicators for the Novice Level have been rewritten and replaced by the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements. Intermediate Level and above still retain the Progress Indicators. (See [Resources](#) at the end of this chapter.)

Sample Can-Do Statements and Objectives

For more on Standards and some examples of sample progress indicators, go to Chapter 2: [Standards for Foreign Language Learning](#). For the full sample progress indicators, you will need to obtain the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (2006) from ACTFL. Complete sets of the Can-Do Statements and Benchmarks are available on the ACTFL website. www.actfl.org

Below are some sample Can-Do Statements for interpersonal communication for a first year 9th grade class studying a thematic unit on food:

- I can respond when presented with choices about the foods I eat.
- I can respond when someone asks me what I want to eat.
- I can talk about what I eat.
- I can tell someone that I went to a restaurant and ate xyz food.
- I can ask about what will be served.
- I can tell people which foods I like and which I dislike.
- I can ask how much something costs in a food market.
- I can ask and respond to simple questions about the date, time, and place of a celebratory dinner.
- I can ask for directions to a restaurant.
- I can tell someone how to find the market, a restaurant, or my home.
- I can accept or reject an invitation to dine with someone.
- I can invite and make plans to dine with someone.
- I can exchange information about where to dine and what to eat.
- I can purchase food in a market.
- I can order a meal in a restaurant.

Below are some sample food unit Interpersonal Communication Objectives, based on the Can-Do Statements:

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Students will be able to:

- Participate in a target culture meal using phrases such as, “May I have more rice?” “Please pass the salt.” “Please have some bread.”
- Ask and answer simple questions about U.S. and Target Culture foods. “What is that?” “That is *dulce de leche*.” “Is it good?” “Oh, yes, it is very good!”
- Express likes and dislikes of target culture and U.S. foods, “I like *moules marinière*, but I don’t like escargots.”
- Provide simple descriptions of U.S. and target culture meals.
- Make simple comparisons of every day meals in the U.S. and target culture countries: “In the U.S. many people eat cereal for breakfast; in some target culture countries many people eat fish for breakfast.”
- Write a brief note to a classmate or target language speaker (written or online) asking or telling about food and meals in the U.S. and target culture countries. What do you eat for breakfast?” “I eat toast and fruit.”

Assessment

Teachers give students an assessment at the end of each unit that measures students’ progress on all the goal areas of the Standards and on the three modes of communication together. This is a *summative assessment*. Usually it is an *integrated performance assessment* where the students demonstrate how well they can do what they have learned to do during the unit.

Your objectives determine what you will include in the assessment. The activities you develop for the unit prepare students to meet these objectives. Usually the summative assessment is an activity that is very similar to the task-based activities used in the classroom, and you evaluate it in the same way, often using the same rubric (see [Performance Criteria](#) below).



Fig. 6-6-1 ©SWCockey

You cannot always include all your specific objectives for each goal area of the Standards in your summative assessment, but you can include assessment within the unit activities to help you evaluate how well the students are able to meet objectives. An important function of the summative assessment is that it evaluates how well the students can *transfer* what they have learned to a new, but similar, activity. If you are preparing students to really use the language in authentic situations, then the real test is whether they can take what they have learned in class and use it in new, and slightly different, situations.

Sample Summative Assessment

Below is a sample summative, end of unit, performance assessment for progress for a Grade 9, Year 1 class studying a food unit (We use the same summative assessment in the discussion of each of the standards.)

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Students will work in groups to prepare presentations on the traditional foods of different target language-speaking countries and how they are eaten.

1. Each group will research the traditional foods of one country or region. A teacher handout with a series of key questions (in the target language) will guide their research. Resources may include (all in the target language) recipes, menus, short descriptions of foods, videos, pictures, advertisements, interviews, going to a restaurant with food from the region, going to a target culture grocery store, cooking some dishes.
2. In the target language, students in each group will share their information and design a presentation for the class on the traditional foods of their region and how they are prepared and served. The teacher can encourage the students to be creative in developing presentations that will be of interest to the class. These could include skits, PowerPoint presentations, demonstrations of cooking and/or eating, videos, recipe books, etc.
3. Students give their presentations. Each student in each group participates. Presenters should be prepared to answer questions from other students after the presentation. Each student will listen and view the presentations of the others, take notes, and complete another handout that summarizes the content of all the presentations.

The interpersonal activities in this summative assessment are:

In the target language, students in each group will share their information and design a presentation. Presenters should be prepared to answer questions after the presentation.

To prepare the students to carry out these tasks you need to carefully think about what they need to know to do them successfully. A common problem in the communication-based classroom is that teachers forget to teach the students the language they need to work in groups. This is the *language of social negotiation*. Take a look at the examples of expressions used in interpersonal communication below, and then think how they might apply to this performance assessment.

The following are examples of some functions of interpersonal communication, with corresponding linguistic expressions. With time, your students will develop a large and varied repertoire of these linguistic expressions, so they should begin learning these early in their studies.

Examples of Terms for Social Negotiation

- expressing opinions (I think, I believe, in my opinion)
- greetings and leave-taking
- incidental conversation at a meal, (Please pass the..., have some...thank you)
- agreeing and disagreeing (I agree that..., I don't agree...)
- comparing and contrasting (more, most, worse, worst, better, best)
- explaining, justifying (because, since, therefore)
- suggesting actions (Let's..., why don't we...)



Fig. 6-7-1 ©SWCockey

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

- reacting to other's suggested actions (good idea, bad idea, OK, no I won't)
- concluding, summarizing (So what we are saying is... We agree that...)
- outlining future actions (First we will ..., then I will..., and you will...)
- negotiating social roles in a group (attracting attention, interrupting, responding to interruption, apologizing)
- providing information through description and/or narration
- asking for information (who, what, where, when, why, how much, how many)

Performance Criteria –HOW WELL students should be able to do what they learn

Having clear criteria for what you expect students to be able to do and how well you expect them to do it is a huge asset in the language classroom. The clearer and more concrete you can be in describing your expectations, the better your students will understand what you want them to learn and then be able to do it. It is helpful to develop these performance criteria for a thematic unit before you design the activities. That way you can make sure that your activities will take the students where you want them to go.

ACTFL has developed guidelines for performance objectives, *Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners* (1998, 2002, in press), and rubrics, published in the *ACTFL Integrated Performance Assessment Guide* (2003). (Go to [Resources](#) at the end of this chapter for information on how to obtain both). The guidelines and criteria are based on research and have been validated on large numbers of students studying western languages that are commonly taught in the U.S. They represent reasonable expectations of student progress in these languages based on the amount of time

they have studied the language. The ACTFL Novice Learner range for western languages, such as French and Spanish, includes students who have studied a language in grades K-4, 5-8, or 9-10. The Intermediate Learner range includes students who have studied a language in grades K-8, 7-12, or 9-12. The Pre-Advanced Learner range is primarily students who have studied the same language in grades K-12.

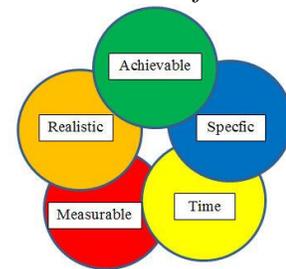


Fig. 6-8-1 ©SWCockey

Using the ACTFL guidelines, you can write a rubric for your students that describes specifically what you are looking for in their spoken and written interpersonal communication about the topic being addressed. Rubrics are written in the students' native language, unless they are advanced or the language of the rubric is highly simplified.

To see the full ACTFL Integrated Performance Assessment rubrics and Performance Guidelines for K-12 you must obtain the *ACTFL Integrated Performance Assessment Guide* (2003). (See [Resources](#) at the end of this chapter.)

Sample Rubric – Interpersonal Communication

An example of a **Rubric for Interpersonal Communication** for Grade 9, Year 1 Food Unit incorporates Criteria from ACTFL Integrated Performance Assessment rubrics and adds Cultural Awareness from *Performance Guidelines for K-12*. Such an example is included in the

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

[Appendices](#) of this chapter.

Criterion	Exceeds Expectations 3 points	Meets Expectations 2 points	Does Not Meet Expectations 1 point
Language Function - types of exchanges	Can use and understand expressions commonly spoken at meals. Can ask and answer simple questions about foods using sentences. Can describe target culture foods using sentences and combining learned language to make own meaning.	Can use and understand expressions commonly spoken at meals. Can ask and answer simple questions about food with a phrase or sentence. Can give short, basic description of target culture foods using memorized language, and combining language sometimes to make new sentences.	Can use and understand only a few of the expressions spoken at meals. Can ask and answer questions usually only with one word. Descriptions of food limited to single words or short memorized phrases.
Text Type - Length of Utterance/Text	Can say/write simple sentences and short paragraphs about foods.	Can say/write simple sentences about food.	Only uses single words and phrases about food.
Communication Strategies = Participation in Conversation	Can carry out a simple conversation about foods, mainly based on questions and answers.	Responds to questions and asks some questions.	Only responds to questions.
Comprehensibility	Usually understood by classmates and teacher.	Can be understood with occasional difficulty by classmates and teacher.	Hard for classmates and teacher to understand.
Language Control Grammar Vocabulary Pronunciation	Uses correct forms, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling with simple sentences and strings of sentences in present tense about foods and meals.	Uses correct forms, vocabulary, and pronunciation with memorized language with single words and single sentences.	Accurate with single words. Accuracy breaks down with phrases.
Cultural Awareness	Behavior and language choices reflect a good awareness of cultural perspectives around food and meals. Student can demonstrate polite behavior at a target language meal.	Behavior and language choices reflect some awareness of cultural attitudes and perspectives around food and meals. Student can demonstrate polite behavior at a target language meal.	Behavior and language choices reflect a lack of awareness of cultural attitudes and perspectives around food. Student does not demonstrate polite behavior at a target culture meal.

You can communicate these expectations to your students by giving them a rubric, such as the one above, before they start activities. The rubric should be part of the activity, not just brought out at the end. For example, if you are planning a role-play activity, adapt the rubric to the activity. Make it a little more specific about what the students will be doing; give the students a copy of the rubric before they begin; then have them think about the meaning of the criteria for their performance on the activity. What is the difference between expressing your own meaning or using only memorized phrases? What is the difference among using only single words to communicate, versus phrases, versus sentences? Then you can use the rubric to assess performance; students can use it to self-evaluate and to do peer evaluation.

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Activities can be selected and designed with these criteria in mind, so that they advance the quality of the students' use of the language. For more on Assessment, go to Chapter 4: [Assessment](#).

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Materials

Students will require models of interpersonal communication, consisting of oral exchanges and written exchanges. There are two possible sources of teaching materials: **authentic** and **semi-authentic**.

- **Authentic** materials are created for and by speakers of the language. They have not been modified for learners.
- **Semi-authentic** materials mirror authentic exchanges but have been modified to be accessible to students. Semi-authentic materials vary in how well they mirror authentic exchanges. They should be used judiciously, and students should be aware when materials are semi-authentic and when they are authentic.

Sources for models of interpersonal communication:

Authentic

Oral exchanges:

- Audio recordings
- Videos
- Radio recordings
- Listening to the teacher interact in an authentic situation (or semi-authentic) with another speaker of the target language

Written exchanges:

- Published or available written correspondence
- Online interchanges, such as blogs
- Email exchanges
- Authentic texting exchanges with cell phones



Fig. 6-11-1 ©Rogerashford

Semi-authentic

Possible sources include:

- Videos developed for learners
- Audio materials developed for learners
- Authentic correspondence that has been modified, or annotated, for learners
- Authentic online correspondence that has been modified for learners

There are many resources for authentic materials for interpersonal communication in all languages on the Internet.

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Activities

Most of the activities we describe in the modules of this guide are on the topic of food, and are designed for a first year, Grade 9 class. We do this to illustrate that all the standards can be used to address a single topic, and to demonstrate that even first year learners can use the target language to do meaningful tasks with the language. The procedures in each activity can be adapted to any topic, and to any age or level of proficiency in the target language. In the activities we refer to materials, such as videos, that would meet the specific needs of the activity. In reality, the materials you can find, adapt, and create will largely determine the details of your activities. We know that finding just the right materials is a very hard task, and will take up a lot of your time. At the end of each chapter is a list of resources, and the final section provides a summary of resources and references.



Fig. 6-12-1 ©Monkeybusinessimages

Activities provide an opportunity for students to practice new material that has been presented by the teacher, often using authentic materials. There are many different activities that can be used to teach interpersonal communication. Included below are a few kinds of activities that teachers have found particularly useful.

Do remember that one of the most important “activities” in interpersonal communication in the foreign language classroom is the everyday conversation that occurs in the target language between the teacher and students and between and among students.

Integrated Performance Activities and Task-Based Instruction

Many teachers present interpersonal communication skills in the context of a task-based activity or project that addresses the three modes of communication as well as the goal areas of the other Standards. A task-based activity is designed to give the students a meaningful problem to solve or project to complete that requires using the language to complete the task. An *integrated performance activity* includes three basic stages; each stage focuses on a mode of communication.

Sample Integrated Performance Activity

Sample integrated performance activity for Grade 9, Year 1 students studying a food unit.

Students will prepare a traditional target culture dish and present it to the class. They will work in groups to (1) watch a cooking video that demonstrates how to prepare the dish and read a recipe for the dish (**interpretive communication**), (2) talk in the target language in small groups to determine the order of the steps in preparation and the ingredients required, using a structured handout from the teacher, and develop a plan for the presentation (**interpersonal communication**), and (3) present the dish to the class along with (a) an oral description of how it was prepared and (b) a written recipe with pictures and annotations to help classmates

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

understand unfamiliar vocabulary and phrases (**presentational communication**), which should also include taking questions from the class).

As you can see, the sample activity resembles the format of the final, summative integrated performance assessment you saw earlier in the chapter. The activities and the assessment should follow the same format and the same kind of assessment. In this sample activity, the interpersonal communication activities in Step #2 are sharing information about food preparation and planning a presentation. The interpersonal activities rely on using the information gathered through interpretive activities in Step #1, and prepare the students to be able to develop their presentations in Step #3.

Preparing Students for Interpersonal Communication

If your classroom is communicative, learner-centered, and conducted in the target language, you will need to focus on preparing students to use their new language in interpersonal communication in two general ways that often overlap: They will need to have a lot of exposure to the language of social negotiation as well as language related to specific topics. By social negotiation we mean the language they will need to function in the classroom in the target language, speaking to you and to each other as they work with you and with each other to complete tasks. The language related to topics may also be social negotiation, such as learning greetings in a unit on “Introducing Myself,” or it may be the vocabulary related to a topic like “Weather” that the students will need to complete a classroom task such as writing and acting out an imaginary TV broadcast on weather in a capital city.



Fig. 6-13-1 ©SWCockey

You can prepare students to engage in exchanges and conversations.

- Present models of interpersonal exchanges in a real life, authentic context. You can present model conversations and/or written exchanges, either by modeling yourself, modeling with another target language speaker, showing videos you have developed yourself using native speakers, showing video clips from movies, TV programs or YouTube selections that model the exchange.
- The students, with your coaching, can identify vocabulary, expressions, structures, and cultural information that are embedded in the models.
- Students can then use the vocabulary, grammar and cultural information in activities that allow them to use what they learned from hearing/viewing/reading the model.
- As students engage in an activity, such as a discussion of a topic, the need for new vocabulary, expressions, and structures will emerge. For instance, if a group of students is planning a presentation on traditional foods of Peru or Senegal, they may need to learn how to say, “I will do the introduction and then you will show the pictures.” When these expressions become important, the teacher can help the students learn the necessary vocabulary and structures and then add this information to the class vocabulary and structures list to be reviewed and recycled in later classes.

6: *Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing*

- If you are asking students to discuss a topic or plan an activity, they will need to have a functional use of the language for social negotiation, and of the topic. If the students have not already researched the topic in the target language, then you will need to follow the guidelines in how to prepare students for interpretive communication in the Activities section of Chapter 7: [Interpretive Communication](#). These preparation activities include activating background knowledge, providing context, and listening to, viewing and reading material on the topic.

For an excellent discussion and demonstration of presenting and using authentic materials to teach interpersonal communication, go to the STARTALK Occidental Teacher Training On-Line Workshop for teachers of Arabic, *Integrating Language, Culture and Content* (See [Resources](#) at the end of this chapter). Although designed specifically for teachers of Arabic, the principles are the same for all languages. This video series includes examples of authentic materials on a number of topics, including food. It demonstrates how to select materials, present them, and develop tasks and activities that include interpretive, interpersonal and presentational modes of communication.

Criteria for Interpersonal Communication Activities

Interpersonal activities should be:

- **Related to the objectives.** All learning activities should be related to the goals of the course and unit. Too often teachers are tempted to choose “fun” activities that engage the students and keep them busy, but do not really further their learning of the language. The challenge is to choose activities that are engaging and that also help students to learn the language.
- **Related to the other activities** in the lesson or unit. Each activity has a function within a lesson: it is part of presentation, or practice, evaluation, or extension (see Lesson Planning in Chapter 3: [Planning Instruction](#)). Within the lesson and the unit, each activity builds on what has come before and prepares students for what comes afterwards.
- **Authentic.** Each turn in the exchange must rely on the previous turn. Meaning is negotiated, and frequently clarified. The exchange should include the unpredictability that is part of real life communication. This is true of both structured output and communicative output activities described above.
- **Meaningful.** Learning activities should include sharing new information or opinions, or the joint construction of a plan or idea. Teachers often embed activities in scenarios (situations that the teacher creates) that provide authentic, or simulated authentic, contexts for the activities.
- **Assessable:** Students need to know what is expected of them, what defines success and what they need to improve. Criteria for many activities are developed and shared with students using rubrics. There are specific rubrics for Interpersonal Communication that you can use or adapt for most activities (see [rubric](#) in Objectives and Assessment above).

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Sample Activities

Two basic kinds of interpersonal activities are **communicative activities** and **structured output activities**. The goal of communicative activities is for students to be able to convey meaning on a variety of topics in a variety of ways. The goal of structured output activities is to use the practice of **focus on form** to give students concentrated practice in grammatical forms or expressions that are difficult for the students and impede their communication.

Focus on form is an approach that teaches grammar as incidental to content, the grammar is taught explicitly when there is a problem with usage in communicative activities. The teacher identifies the problem and then provides the students with some explicit instruction and structured practice that focuses the students' attention on the form. With experience, teachers often can predict what structures are going to cause problems for students and they may choose to include some planned structured output activities as well.

Sample Communicative Activities

Conversations as classroom activities are communicative output activities. The learners' main purpose is to communicate meaning often by completing a task, such as obtaining information, developing a travel plan, or creating a video. In communicative activities, the criterion of success is whether the learner gets the message across. Accuracy is not a consideration unless the lack of it interferes with the message.

The most common types of communicative output activity are role-plays and discussions. Interviews are a special case because the communication is authentic, but the students can plan their questions and can continue with the interview even if they cannot respond to the answers from the interviewee.

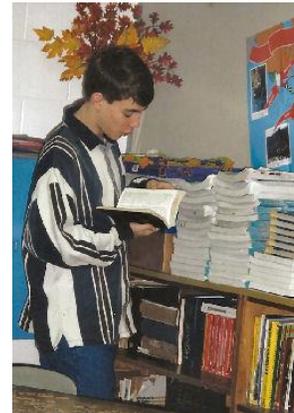


Fig. 6-15-1 ©SWCockey

Role-Plays

In role-plays, students are organized into small groups, put into “pretend” situations that they may eventually encounter outside the classroom, and assigned roles. Role-plays can be more or less structured, depending on the level of proficiency of the students.



Fig. 6-15-2 ©Clarsen55

Some role-plays can be good venues for students to practice using social register in their language (formal vs. informal). For example, a panel discussion on foods of the target culture will elicit the use of a more formal style of language. An informal family setting, however, will elicit a more familiar form of speech. This will give the students the opportunity to compare their language use (and learning) of the two forms in a semi-authentic situation. The following role-play will focus on use of familiar language.

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Sample Role Play Activity: *Family Meal with Guests*

This is a role-play that is part of an integrated performance activity in a unit on food. The students have completed the interpretive phase of the activity. They have learned vocabulary, grammar, and cultural information related to food and meal-taking in the target culture through reading, listening, and watching authentic material. They have viewed various models and videos of family meals and hosting guests, and, with the help of the teacher, have extracted vocabulary, grammar, expressions, and cultural information that they can use in their role plays. The students have shared some of this information in discussions, and now they are ready to use this information to role-play a family having a meal with guests. For more on the interpretive phase, go to Chapter 7: [Interpretive Communication](#).



Fig. 6-16-1 ©Olesiabilkei

1. Share the objectives and the assessment for the role-play with your students. Divide students into groups or pairs.
2. Give the students a “situation card” with a situation described on it that calls for some sort of action that must be acted out by the students. The situation may be more or less structured. For example, you might ask the students to role-play a situation where guests visit a host or hosts and eat a meal, and leave it up to the students to work out the details of the situation. Or you could be more prescriptive and give the students more of an outline of what will happen: The guest arrives, is greeted, everyone sits down to eat, etc.
3. You may provide role cards for each student that describe the person or role to be played, or they may develop the characters themselves. For lower-level students, the cards can include words or expressions that the person might use. Students should not write scripts because the interaction should be spontaneous, although they should be aware of formulaic exchanges, such as greetings.
4. Give the students a time limit for the role-play. During the role-play you should be present as a resource: Answer students' questions, and do not correct their pronunciation or grammar. You may want to record the performance.
5. Use your rubric to evaluate each student's performance, and give feedback privately. Give group feedback on grammar or pronunciation problems you have heard in the whole class, not individuals. You can use structured output activities (discussed [below](#)) to address any common problems that you have identified in the activity.
6. You may want to present a previously recorded role-play on the same topic by speakers of the target language, and ask students what they noticed was the same or different from their own role-play.

This kind of activity can be adapted for any level of proficiency and for any topic. Most students enjoy role-plays. It gets them out of their seats, moving around the room and talking. A role-play can be developed into a skit or play; it can be videotaped and shown to other students; it can be acted out with puppets or stuffed animals. It is important, however, to remember that this can be an embarrassing experience for some students, and

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

they may need to be able to take more minimal roles until they build the confidence to participate fully.

Discussions

Any task-based activity in the foreign language classroom where students work in small groups will require a discussion. Take a look at the integrated performance activity and summative assessment in the [Objectives and Assessments](#) section of this chapter to see how key discussion is to classroom learning. Providing more or less structure for the students will vary the difficulty level of discussions.



Fig. 6-17-1 ©Wavebreakmediamicro

There are many different kinds of discussions. They often follow the same basic patterns as texts; and frequently several of the different patterns are combined in one discussion. Among the different kinds you can have are “*how-to*” discussions, conversations about how to do something or planning how to get something done as a pair or a group. This kind of discussion is important in the task-based language classroom. There can be *informative discussions* where people share information, including points of view, often through direct statements, and/or narrative (telling a story) and/or description. *Problem-solution discussions* start with a problem that two or more people discuss with the goal of finding a solution. In *persuasive discussions*, someone is trying to persuade others about something. In any discussion, social negotiation, behaving in socially appropriate ways, and using socially correct kinds of language, is important to communicating meaning.

Sample Discussion Activity: *Small Group Discussion for Planning a Presentation*

In the communication-based classroom where we encourage students to work in groups speaking in the target language to do projects, an important challenge for the teacher is helping the students learn the language they need to work together. This activity is designed as part of a larger integrated activity where the students have conducted research on target culture food and meal-taking. They have worked in small groups. They shared the information they have researched the traditional foods of a particular country, and they now must plan a group presentation for the class. The objective of this specific activity is that students will be able to discuss and plan – in the target language – a PowerPoint presentation on food.

1. Think about what you are expecting the students to accomplish with the discussion; what will they need to know for (1) social negotiation, (2) to address the topic of food, and (3) to address the task.
 - a) Some social functions they might need for planning together are: expressing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, explaining and justifying, suggesting actions, reacting to each other’s suggestions, outlining future actions (see list of sample functions [above](#)).
 - b) Topical vocabulary, usage, and cultural information about food should already have been covered in the interpretive stage of the activity.

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

- c) Task-based vocabulary will include words such as: PowerPoint, picture, turn (your turn, my turn), to present, handout, projector.
2. Discussion is a complex task. Identify what you think the students already know that can be recycled and what they need to learn for the first time.
 3. Share the objectives, the plan for the activity, and the assessment with the students.
 4. Show the students videos of discussions that include functions similar to those you expect your students to use in the task: expressing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, making suggestions, etc. You may want to focus on just a few of the functions, depending on what they can already do.
 5. Have the students watch and listen for vocabulary, expressions, usage, and cultural behaviors that they can use in their own discussions. You may want to go through a video segment by segment and give the students handouts with questions to guide their viewing. See “Watching a Video” activity in the Activities section of Chapter 7: [Interpretive Communication](#) for more suggestions on how to guide viewing activities.
 6. Help students select vocabulary, expressions, and cultural behaviors that will be useful in their own discussion. Take notes on what they, and you, have selected and share them with the students. Include task-related vocabulary that students might need in planning their own presentations that would not have emerged from the videos such as “PowerPoint” and “change slides.”
 7. Give the students a time limit on their discussion. While students discuss in small groups you should act as coach, but do not make corrections or direct discussions. Also, take note of what expressions, usage and cultural information the students need in order to express themselves more effectively. Encourage students to use everything they know to express their ideas; they should be stretched as far as possible. Let them struggle to express themselves: fumbling, taking time to think what to say, and resorting to acting out and drawing are all good communication strategies. Translation should be the one strategy that is not allowed in the exercise.
 8. As the students are discussing, make sure you have a chance to hear each student long enough to do an evaluation, using the rubric. Note: You may want to videotape or make audiotapes of the discussions in each group for assessment purposes. You can also ask the students to self-evaluate right after the discussion.
 9. After the discussion ask the students what they would now like to know: vocabulary, usage, expressions, that emerged during the discussion. Add anything more that you noted. If there were any consistent errors or areas of weakness in speaking, this is a good time to plan or do a quick structured output activity (discussed [below](#)). You can give personal feedback on an individual basis, either in writing or in person.
 10. The students will then be able to go on to implement the ideas they developed in the discussion.



Fig. 6-18-1 ©SWCockey

6: Interpersonal Communication: *Speaking and Writing*

This kind of activity can be adapted to any age or level of proficiency and for the discussion of any topic. It can also be used for different kinds of discussions, for sharing information, for persuading and arguing, for comparing and contrasting, and for sharing stories, personal experiences, feelings, likes and dislikes. Students enjoy discussions, but they need the basic language to carry them out. They like doing projects and presentations in groups, but they need the language to do the task in the target language, or they will revert to English.

Interviews

Interviews with speakers of the target language provide students with authentic experiences in interpersonal communication; however, they are structured in that the students prepare the questions and do not have to respond immediately to the answer. Interviews can occur in person individually or as a group interview with the whole class. They can also be written interviews carried out online or by letter.



Fig. 6-19-1 ©Gunold

Sample Interview Activity: *Interview with a Target Language Speaker about Target Culture Foods*

This activity is designed as part of an integrated performance activity where the students are collecting information on traditional foods from target language cultures. They have already learned some of the basic vocabulary and cultural information, but are gathering information about specific countries.

1. When you plan interviews with people from outside the classroom, prepare logistics carefully. If the interview is oral, arrange a way to tape it.
2. Identify the reason for the interview for the students, i.e. “To learn about favorite foods in target language countries” for a later student presentation on target culture foods.
3. Prepare students by helping them identify the content and linguistic information they need in order to conduct the interview.
4. Have students prepare questions in writing and allow them to practice orally. For most purposes the questions should be open-ended; they should be difficult to answer with “yes” and “no.”
5. You can ask the students to brainstorm possible responses to their interview questions to get them to anticipate what the possible responses might be. This will help them to understand fluent speaker input that might otherwise come at them so fast that they miss it entirely.
6. Monitor, but do not interfere, during the interviews.
7. After the interview, give students an opportunity to decipher any responses they did not understand.
8. Evaluate student performance using the rubric you developed. Share this with individual students in private. You may also ask students to use the rubric to self-evaluate and/or for peer evaluation.



Fig. 6-19-2 ©Basel101658

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

This activity can be adapted to any theme or topic, and can be adapted to any age level. An enjoyable activity with young children is to use a stuffed animal or puppets that you (or a friend) manipulate and speak for, and you can invite the children to ask it questions. Older students can go into the community, if you have a community of target language speakers, and conduct interviews on specific topics, videotape the interviews, edit them and present them like TV interviews, with commentary. To develop models, you can conduct and videotape a range of interviews yourself with different kinds of people on different topics and then show them to your students. As you build your collection of interviews, you can use them as material for your interpretive activities.

You can find some on-line written interviews with teenagers from several countries and their responses at the NCLRC Culture Club “Hangout.”(See [Resources](#) at the end of this chapter.)

Sample Structured Output Activities

As you conduct a communicative activity, you may notice a persistent issue or problem with grammar or pronunciation that the students have trouble using. Or, there may be a particular form that you know from experience will present problems in interpersonal communication. To deal with these issues you can use the practice called focus on form introduced [above](#). Focus on form means you construct some structured activities that allow students to focus on specific language features. These activities require students to produce structured output. In structured output, students may have options for responses, but all of the options require them to use the specific form or structure that you want them to focus on and master.

A common kind of structured output activity is the *information gap* activity where students complete a task by obtaining missing information. This is a feature the activities have in common with authentic communication. Information gap activities can set up practice on specific items of language.

Sample Information Gap Activities

Filling the gaps in a grocery list. In a unit on target culture food, students work in pairs. They pretend they are in a city where the language is spoken. They are on the telephone planning to go grocery shopping. They both have copies of the same grocery list, but some of the information is missing on each list. Partner A holds a grocery list with some of the amounts missing. Partner B has the same grocery list but with different amounts missing. The two partners are not permitted to see each other's lists (they are on the telephone) and must fill in the blanks by asking each other appropriate questions.

A	B
	
	
	
	

Fig. 6-20-1 ©SWCockey

The function that is practiced is asking and answering questions about numbers and food in a practical situation. The features of language that are practiced would include questions

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

beginning with "how many." Answers would be limited mostly to number expressions like "two potatoes" or "one kilo of beef." Learners can communicate with each other by speaking or by writing. In this activity, students can practice numbers, essential food vocabulary, or numbers and counted noun constructions, depending on how you structure the missing information.

Describing an object, a picture, or a map. Usually the activity is presented as a particular situation where a problem needs to be solved. For example, students are divided into pairs. They pretend that one person is an American student who goes to a market in Berlin. The other person is trying to help the American but does not speak English. The American student has a list in English of the foods s/he wants to buy, but doesn't remember names of the foods in German, so s/he has to describe them. The local person in the market tries to figure out what the American is describing in German.



Fig. 6-21-1 ©Galaiko

The interpersonal functions that are practiced are describing and questioning. The features of grammar and vocabulary that are practiced are determined by the situation.

Jigsaw Activities. In these activities several students share information to complete a task. These activities may proceed in two stages. In a unit on food, students are learning about the diversity of foods in different target language countries. Students first work in input groups (groups A, B, C, and D). Each group learns about favorite foods in a different country. These foods include breakfast, lunch, dinner and sweets. Students then reorganize into groups of four with one student each from groups A, B, C, and D. Each new group is now asked to fill out a form and then prepare a presentation on a particular meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner or sweets) comparing the foods of each country. In order to do this the students must tell each other what they learned in the previous group to pool the information to develop the presentations.



Fig. 6-21-2 ©Lillehoj

This activity could practice writing skills, grammatical structures for comparison and contrast, or country names, depending on how you structure the activity.

The challenge for teachers using structured output activities is to keep them relevant to the theme and objectives of the unit and lesson, and to imbue them with meaning and purpose. The danger is that they can become sets of isolated activities and exercises, that entertaining or not, are isolated from the overall objectives of the course.

Written Correspondence

Correspondence projects can take place between students and a variety of other people: the teacher, other classmates, other target language learners, and native target language speakers. Depending on the type of correspondence, students will use



Fig. 6-21-3 ©Antony Rufus

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

formal or familiar forms of address and language. Whichever variety is most appropriate, students need the ability to use a language-specific keyboard. This is not as difficult as it seems, though you will find it helpful to dedicate a class session to helping students install the necessary diacritical marks, fonts, and keyboard on their computers and showing them the basics.

Note, too, that your students do not need to memorize a language-specific keyboard. Some students prefer to place stickers on the keys; these can be made from ordinary stickers or ordered online (Google “XYZlanguage keyboard stickers”). Or, students can learn and use the ANSI or ASCII codes for diacritical marks.

Sample Written Correspondence Activities

Exchanging Notes can be used to ask questions, send information, and make plans. They can be long or short depending on the purpose and the proficiency of the students. Activities using written notes can be developed to practice the alphabet. For beginners without much vocabulary, a non-Western alphabet can be used to phonetically write the name of a classmate to whom a note is written, even if the note only contains a picture or a simple word.



Fig. 6-22-1
©Dawn Hudson

Email is an enjoyable way for students to correspond with each other while developing their skills in navigating a language-specific keyboard. Students can also set up their accounts in the target language in some programs. Emails can take on many forms and purposes. Some goals of emails can be to discuss different subjects or class assignments, to respond to specific questions, or to role-play formal interactions. You can also set up pen pals between your class and other target language learners or speakers. You will need to prepare students to use email by reviewing some common email conventions in the target language. Email is often very informal and may contain acronyms that are unfamiliar to English speakers (or people who don't use email). Even familiar English acronyms may not be immediately recognizable in another language.



Fig. 6-22-2
©Dawn Hudson

Chatting, texting, tweeting. These ways of sending and receiving messages have become very popular all over the world. Because these messages can range from one word to a couple of sentences, this activity can be easily adapted for different levels of language learners. However, students will need to learn the conventions for this medium in their target language. Students can use chatting, texting and tweeting for a multitude of purposes including exchanging information, asking each other questions, proposing and negotiating decisions together.



Fig. 6-22-3
©SWCockey

With novice learners, exercises that use chatting, texting and tweeting should be carefully designed. These media demand a slightly higher level of language proficiency because messages are short and linguistic redundancy is minimal. For example, a response to

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

something the writer likes might be the one word statement ‘nice’ or a full statement ‘I like this a lot.’

Through well-prepared communicative activities such as role plays, discussions, interviews, and written activities you can encourage students to experiment and innovate with the language, and create a supportive atmosphere that allows them to make mistakes without fear of embarrassment. This will contribute to their self-confidence as speakers and to their motivation to learn more.

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Learning Strategies: What the Learner Does

Language learning strategies are the thoughts and actions that students use to improve their learning of a language. Teachers can help students to use effective learning strategies by instructing them in what learning strategies are, when they are appropriate, and how to use them. For more on teaching learning strategies see Chapter 1: [Essential Concepts](#).

Below are some learning strategies that are particularly useful for students involved in conversations or written exchanges:

Monitor: In conversation or written exchanges students pay attention to whether they understand their conversation partner and whether they are being understood. Students are aware of how well a task is progressing and notice when comprehension breaks down.



Fig. 6-24-1
©SWCockey

Evaluate. Part of monitoring interpersonal communication is evaluating whether comprehension is adequate or whether it is breaking down. If comprehension does break down, students may need to use the strategy of *asking questions for clarification* to get back on track.

Use Background Knowledge. Language learners should use what they know about the language, what they know about communication in general, and what they know about the topic, to decipher what they are hearing or reading in an interpersonal exchange.

Make Inferences. Learners can make inferences from what they understand and know, to make guesses about what they don't understand in a conversation. They can make "educated" guesses based on their background knowledge and then monitor and evaluate to figure out if their guess was right.



Fig. 6-24-2
©SWCockey

Make Predictions. One kind of inference is a prediction. The learner predicts what s/he thinks his/her conversation partner is going to say next, and then can check a partial understanding against the prediction. This helps to navigate the meaning of the conversation.

Use Selective Attention. You can help your students to learn to pay attention to specific aspects of a conversation or written message: to listen for key words, to listen for the level of formality of the language, or to pay attention to gestures. This can give them important information about what is going on if they don't understand every word, or even if they do understand the words.

Substitute/paraphrase. When speaking in a conversation or writing in an informal written exchange, learners do not always know the exact word for the concept they want to express. Instead of coming to a halt, the learner can use other words to describe what s/he wants to say. If s/he doesn't remember the target language word for rain s/he could say 'water from the sky' to express the meaning.

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Teaching Strategies: What the Teacher Does

Set Clear Objectives

Set clear objectives for interpersonal communication, and integrate them with the objectives of the other standards. Make sure the students are aware of the objectives, how they will be evaluated, and the criteria for evaluation. If you use a rubric, give the students the rubric before they begin working on tasks so they know what you expect them to be able to do, and how they should do it.

Use language routines informally as well as formally

Keep in mind that your routine and informal interactions with students, and their interactions with each other in the class, are opportunities for them to learn and practice interpersonal communication in the language. When possible, explicitly model and teach students language needed to negotiate the routines and social aspects of activity in the classroom. Take notes during classroom discussions on what the students need to learn to say to make it easier for them to talk to each other and to you. Ask the students to help you identify what they need to be able to say.



Fig. 6-25-1 ©SWCockey

Provide adequate and appropriate pre-activity support

Prepare students for interpersonal communication activities. Give them some information about the vocabulary and grammar they will need to carry out their activities. However, let the students struggle to use what they know to the maximum to express as much as they can. They will remember and transfer what they figure out better than what you give them. Also, this develops their skills in communicative competence, being able to “use what you know” to communicate.

Provide models of authentic interpersonal exchanges

Provide students with models of authentic interpersonal exchanges. These can be recordings, videos, letters, existing email, and blog exchanges. Multiple recordings of the same kind of exchange can be very useful because they demonstrate that there are a variety of ways to express the same ideas or engage in the same social function (such as greeting someone, or disagreeing with someone). Recordings of native speakers played to students after they have completed a speaking activity, doing exactly the same activity, can provide fascinating information for the students. They can compare their conversation with the fluent speakers, see and hear contrasts in usage and vocabulary and cultural assumptions.

Teach students the standard formulaic exchanges

Teach the students to recognize and use formulaic exchanges. These are highly predictable sets of spoken or written exchanges that occur in many interpersonal communication situations. Greetings, apologies, compliments, invitations all follow certain general patterns. The formulaic exchanges are strongly influenced by social and cultural norms. They can be different for different countries, people of different regions, and for men and women, and may vary according to age. Many formulaic expressions include special words or phrases, markers that indicate important information.

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Provide easily accessible supports

Provide students with readily available supports for grammatical forms, vocabulary, and phrases so that they can use them in the context of meaningful communication without having to frequently interrupt talking or writing to look up words. This can be done using easily visible wall posters, charts and vocabulary lists that can be put in folders and quickly accessed. Students can also develop their own grammar charts and vocabulary lists. Textbooks can be earmarked and kept available for summary information.



Fig. 6-26-1 ©SWCockey

Practice, Practice, Practice

Provide students with lots of practice in interpersonal communication in authentic contexts. This includes all the kinds of interpersonal exchanges that occur in the class, online, and with the extended community in the language.

Provide opportunities for authentic exchanges

Make sure that these exchanges are “authentic” in the sense that every utterance or written turn is determined by the preceding utterance. *Planned dialogs and drills are not authentic interpersonal exchanges.*

Pay attention to meaning

Pay attention and respond to the meaning of what students say and write in interpersonal exchanges and encourage them to pay attention to the meaning of each other’s statements or written messages.

Provide immediate feedback

When providing immediate feedback, respond first to the content and not to the form of what was said or written. Communicative efficiency in the classroom, as in life, is determined by how well you communicate the idea, not by correctness of language use. However, since errors impede communication, later on you may want to provide feedback on patterns of errors, after the meaning in a conversational exchange has been established. This can happen after the exchange.



Fig. 6-26-2 ©SWCockey

Teach strategies

Teach students learning strategies and communication strategies that they can use to help themselves learn the language and engage in meaningful communication.

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

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6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

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6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

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6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

6-26-2 Feedback

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6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Appendices

Appendix A: Example Rubric for Interpersonal Communication for Grade 9, Year-1 Food Unit incorporates Criteria from ACTFL Integrated Performance Assessment rubrics and adding Cultural Awareness from *Performance Guidelines for K-12*.

Criterion	Exceeds Expectations 3 points	Meets Expectations 2 points	Does Not Meet Expectations 1 point
Language Function - types of exchanges	Can use and understand expressions commonly spoken at meals. Can ask and answer simple questions about foods using sentences. Can describe Target Culture foods using sentences and combining learned language to make own meaning.	Can use and understand expressions commonly spoken at meals. Can ask and answer simple questions about food with a phrase or sentence. Can give short, basic description of Target Culture foods using memorized language, and combining language sometimes to make new sentences.	Can use and understand only a few of the expressions spoken at meals. Can ask and answer questions usually only with one word. Descriptions of food limited to single words or short memorized phrases.
Text Type - Length of Utterance/Text	Can say/write simple sentences and short paragraphs about foods.	Can say/write simple sentences about food.	Only uses single words and phrases about food.
Communication Strategies = Participation in Conversation	Can carry out a simple conversation about foods, mainly based on questions and answers.	Responds to questions and asks some questions.	Only responds to questions.
Comprehensibility	Usually understood by classmates and teacher.	Can be understood with occasional difficulty by classmates and teacher.	Hard for classmates and teacher to understand.
Language Control Grammar Vocabulary Pronunciation	Uses correct forms, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling with simple sentences and strings of sentences in present tense about foods and meals.	Uses correct forms, vocabulary, and pronunciation with memorized language with single words and single sentences.	Accurate with single words. Accuracy breaks down with phrases.
Cultural Awareness	Behavior and language choices reflect a good awareness of cultural perspectives around food and meals. Student can demonstrate polite behavior at a target language meal.	Behavior and language choices reflect some awareness of cultural attitudes and perspectives around food and meals. Student can demonstrate polite behavior at a target language meal.	Behavior and language choices reflect a lack of awareness of cultural attitudes and perspectives around food. Student does not demonstrate polite behavior at a Target Culture meal.

6: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking and Writing

Appendix B: Sample Integrated Performance Assessment

Sample summative, end of unit, performance assessment for progress for Grade 9, Year 1 Target Language class studying a Food Unit. (We use the same summative assessment in the discussion of each of the standards.)

Students will work in groups to prepare presentations on the traditional foods of different target language speaking countries and how they are prepared and eaten.

1. Each group will research the traditional foods of one country or region. Their research will be guided by a teacher handout with a series of key questions (in the target language): Resources may include (all in the target language) recipes, menus, short descriptions of foods, videos, pictures, advertisements, interviews, going to a restaurant with food from the region, going to a target language/culture grocery store, cooking some dishes.
2. In the target language, students in each group will share their information and design a presentation for the class on the traditional foods of their region and how they are prepared, served and eaten. The teacher can encourage the students to be creative in developing presentations that will be of interest to the class. These could include skits, PowerPoint presentations, demonstrations of cooking and/or eating, videos, menus, recipe books, etc.
3. Students give their presentations in the target language. Each student in each group participates. Presenters should be prepared to answer questions from other students after the presentation (in the target language). Each student will listen to and view the presentations of the others, take notes, and complete another handout that summarizes the content of all the presentations.