

Belinda's Matrix: 60+ activities to help you achieve ACTFL Performance Guidelines

Belinda A. Sauret, Ph.D. NCLRC 2011

Using the target language in the classroom can too often seem forced and stilted, so I've put together a list of verbs and some activities that have worked for me to make the use of the language more engaging, fluid and authentic. Many of us have already used verbs lists derived from Bloom's Taxonomy, and these, of course, serve as the inspiration here. However, instead of building from knowledge to evaluation à la Bloom, I have arranged these activities from repetition to recognition to selection and finally to formation. It's relatively easy, after all, to get students who can speak to do so, but finding the way to allow them to safely say something in class when they are at the beginning levels is a much greater challenge. Students sometimes enroll in Heritage Language classes although they can only manage some comprehension on a narrow range of topics, so this list of activities can be used for HL instruction as well. Differentiating in this way allows all students to participate and avoids the stony silence of the student who thinks she is being asked to do something unreasonable. Please note that the two categories, formation and recognition, complement each other nicely, as when a student develops texts (formation) that allow other students to participate in a guessing game (recognition). Additionally, some activities can be joined together to form a series of exercises around a text; recently I gave groups of students a number of L2 articles on the topic of memory. Each student read the article, told the other students about it, took notes and discussed other students' articles and wrote a paragraph of synthesis on what each student had learned. I suppose we could call that combination something like "read-share-write" if we felt the need for a handle.

Naturally, I have not had all the awesome ideas that teachers have used for making classrooms brim over with L2 chatter, nor have I been able to keep the categories from overlapping a bit. But I hope this chart will help us all achieve our goal: to encourage students to speak freely, to enjoy communication and to risk making an occasional error, and also to structure the activities so that errors are minimized even as meaningful messages allow for a genuine exchange.

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	Repetition (both oral and written)	Recognition	Selection	Formation
c o m p r e h e n s i b l i t y	<p>Play (eg. Serpientes y túneles, Twister) that require repetition of the same expressions. http://www.edochan.com/teaching/aims.htm(Played with native speakers)</p> <p>Demonstrate step-by-step a recipe or other process.</p> <p>Gossip: Have students pass along a list of information, attempting to maintain careful pronunciation.</p> <p>Find someone in the class who... (students repeat a question several times in order to identify who was born in another country, has three brothers, etc.)</p>	<p>Inquire about basic information in order to fill out a form. Partner checks over form for the accuracy of the information.</p>	<p>Match a diagram to an action or a text.</p> <p>Reverse the process of question and answer. Supply a question for a statement.</p> <p>Contradict a command or a statement made by someone else. (use of negatives, subjunctive)</p>	<p>Summarize or paraphrase a brief L2 newspaper article.</p> <p>Describe a well-known person or fictitious character.</p> <p>Role-play.</p> <p>Make an analogy.</p>

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c o m p r e h e n s i o n	<p>Survey classmates for preferences. (I like coffee, I like tea, I like chocolate.)</p> <p>Label things in a picture, a room, a backpack, etc.</p> <p>Ask and answer (or information gap) activities. Both students have same chart of statistics, map or other data, but the blanks are different. Students must ask for information and give it orally.</p>	<p>Illustrate a brief text.</p> <p>Identify a word after hearing a description.</p> <p>Order: smallest/biggest, nearest/farthest, lightest/heaviest</p> <p>Obey commands/TPR</p> <p>Act-out new vocabulary/narrative/TPRS</p> <p>Sketch the item described by teacher or other student.</p> <p>Graph simple information in a text, an audio news item or the results of an in-class survey.</p>	<p>Outline a brief text.</p> <p>Subdivide a list into smaller categories.</p> <p>Join simple sentences to make more complex ideas using a short list of L2 conjunctions.</p>	<p>Lead class in a series of commands which other students act out.</p> <p>Guide someone blindfolded through a maze or other process.</p>

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l a n g u a g e c o n t r o l	<p>Place vocabulary words into various categories on the basis of some characteristic: color, time of day, male/female, seasons, easy/difficult, individual/group.</p> <p>Define or describe (in target language using expressions such as "similar to," "the opposite of," "used for," "comes from," etc.</p>	<p>Arrange a jumbled dialogue (or the words of a sentence) in logical order.</p> <p>Match the new expressions with similar ones in a second column or within an authentic text.</p>	<p>Prioritize expressions or activities in a list and explain their order.</p> <p>Devise a semantic map of related L2 words and ideas before beginning to write or speak about a topic.</p> <p>Contrast one student's experience with another, focusing on changes like time, age, place, etc.</p>	<p>Distinguish between similar things.</p> <p>Disagree with a statement of opinion in a polite manner.</p>
v o c a b u s a g e	<p>Recite (songs, poems, scenes)</p> <p>Spot and name the differences between two pictures.</p>	<p>Point to appropriate picture.</p> <p>Raise the appropriate syllable, word, pronoun, verb form, etc. on a card after hearing it pronounced or alluded to.</p>	<p>Check the words or phrases that you hear in the video (lecture, sound recording).</p> <p>Compare what you heard with what your partner heard during the video (lecture, sound recording).</p> <p>Choose the better of two translations and defend the decision.</p>	<p>Write an appropriate title for a text.</p>

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	Repetition (both oral and written)	Recognition	Selection	Formation
s t r a t e g i e s	Use ordinals to clarify meaning.	Build something following written instructions.	Supply best proverb for a situation described by another.	Invent a dialogue in which a proverb could be used.
c u l t u r a l a w a r e n e s s	Greet, bless, express best wishes to other students in L2 in the classroom. Repeat aloud the steps of a dance in the process of practicing the moves.	Dramatize a famous painting. Analyze popular songs to discover their characteristics such as rhyme, rhythm and metaphor.	Extrapolate a reasonable next utterance in a dialogue (or pick one from a list) Define a cultural artifact or experience that is unique to a culture.	Narrate a video presented without sound before the audio is turned on. http://www.values.com/ Has video clips in 10 languages. Interview native speakers to make a map of regional expressions or foods. Defend a cultural difference such as attitudes about time, leisure, or approaches to naming children.