

Chapter 4

Activities for Learning Strategies Instruction

This chapter presents a variety of suggested activities that teachers can use to integrate learning strategies instruction into their lessons. The activities are organized according to the learning strategy focus, following the order presented in the Learning Strategies List in Chapter 2.

There is one activity for teaching each learning strategy. In addition to identifying the learning strategy focus, each activity indicates the language focus and the culture goal. The activity is briefly summarized and then explained in detail including the materials needed and the procedures to follow. The majority of activities are appropriate for use in any foreign language classroom.

In the Appendices you will find the template that was used to create the activities (Appendix A) and Learning Strategies Lists in Foreign Languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish (Appendix B).

1. SUSHI FOR DINNER

Language: Any language
Example: Japanese

Proficiency Level: Any level

Description of Activity: Students will make a plan for preparing sushi and will then prepare it.

Language Objectives: To improve writing, speaking, and listening skills

Culture Goal: To learn how to make sushi

Materials: Recipes for various kinds of sushi; pictures of sushi; ingredients for making these kinds of sushi (the ingredients can be real or they can be paper or plastic representations)

Preparation:

- 1) Explain that *Organize/Plan* is a learning strategy that helps us complete tasks more easily and efficiently. Tell your students that this learning strategy is particularly useful when you have to complete an assignment that includes numerous steps.
- 2) Model the learning strategy. For example, explain to your students how you plan what you will do when you bake a cake.
- 3) Tell your students that preparing food takes planning. If they think through the entire process ahead of time, they will have an easier time reaching their final goal.

Practice:

- 1) Explain to the students that they will be preparing a variety of types of sushi. Ask them how they would describe sushi. Have they ever eaten sushi before? Do they like sushi?
- 2) Divide students into pairs or small groups and distribute a recipe for sushi for students to read.
- 3) Ask each pair/group to make a plan for preparing their type of sushi and write it out.
- 4) After they have completed their plan, they should prepare the sushi.

Reflection: Ask the students if *Organize/Plan* helped them in preparing the sushi. Then ask them how else they use this strategy when they are studying.

Expansion: Have students write a brief essay on their experience making sushi.

2. ALPINE ADVENTURES

Language: Any language
Example: Italian

Proficiency Level: Second or Third Year

Description of Activity: Students will read and study the informative material on the Web about a well-known Italian ski resort and then they will write their own descriptive texts about other vacation spots.

Language Objectives: To improve reading comprehension and writing skills

Culture Goal: To introduce popular vacation spots in order to teach students about geography and the vacation preferences of people in the target culture

Materials: The official website for the Dolomites (<http://www.dolomiti.it/ita/inverno/sport/skiarea.htm?ski=29>), either as an Internet connection or as a printout; URLs or print materials for other vacation spots in the target culture

Preparation:

- 1) Explain that you are introducing the learning strategy *Manage Your Own Learning*. Tell your students that sometimes a project may seem difficult but, if they determine how they learn best and learn how to focus their attention on the task, it will be easier.
- 2) Show the students online or as a printout the official website of the Dolomites, a very popular Italian vacation spot. Read the passage and explain as you go along how you make it easier for yourself to understand it. (e.g. You might emphasize that you are an auditory learner and that it helps you to read the passage out loud. Or that you are a visual learner and the graphics help you understand.) Make it clear that you are concentrating on the task at hand. Then show the website or the brochure that you have prepared. Explain how you went about preparing either a website or a brochure based on the material. Describe some of your own learning preferences and explain how knowing your preferences helped you research and write and decorate the text.
- 3) Present the learning strategy in the context of the activity that the students will be carrying out. Tell learners that they are going to read about vacation spots in the target culture and then they will create a descriptive piece similar to your model.

Practice:

- 1) Divide your class into small groups of three or four students each.
- 2) Give each small group the URL or a printout of a vacation spot in the target culture. If you have a computer in your classroom or if you can hold the class in a computer lab, the students can view the website online. If students cannot have access to a computer, print out the material from the Web and distribute it to the students.
- 3) Have the students read and discuss the material. Circulate around the class and make sure that they understand the material. Ask the students how they helped themselves understand the material.
- 4) Tell students to create a brochure about their vacation spot to give to potential tourists to Italy (or another target culture). Have them use the article about the Dolomites as a model for their own writing piece.

Reflection: Have students brainstorm ways that Managing Your Own Learning can help them with learning activities in other subjects as well. Have them make a list of circumstances that help and hinder their learning.

Expansion: Organize a Web scavenger hunt to encourage students to learn more about the Dolomites and Alto Adige.

Adaptation: Instead of vacation spots, students could focus on another aspect of target culture geography such as threatening features of the landscape such as volcanoes.

3. WHAT'S NEW?

Language: Any language

Proficiency Level: Any level

Description of Activity: Learners will read an authentic target language article from a very current newspaper and then explain what they have read.

Language Objectives: To develop reading comprehension, writing, and speaking skills

Culture Goal: To gain insight into target culture practices and perspectives through current events.

Materials: A copy of a relatively difficult article from a target culture news source for each student

Preparation:

- 1) Introduce the learning strategy *Monitor Your Progress*. This strategy is useful for completing seemingly tough assignments. It involves breaking big tasks into smaller pieces and monitoring one's progress.
- 2) Model the strategy by explaining that you are going to read a difficult article in small bits. After reading the first paragraph (act out reading to yourself), you will check to make sure you have understood it. Take an article and show the students how you would go through it, checking your understanding of it as you read it.
- 3) Tell the students that they are going to read an authentic target language news article. Explain that, although this article may seem challenging, there are strategies to avoid getting discouraged. Encourage learners to stop and check their comprehension after each section. Explain that we can monitor our writing as well. Instead of waiting to proofread at the end, check your work continuously.

Practice:

- 1) Distribute the article and have the students read it aloud with a partner. At the end of each paragraph, they should stop and discuss what they have read.
- 2) Explain to them that this is a strategy that they will use more often individually rather than with a partner.

Reflection: Have students describe how they monitored their understanding of this article in a journal entry. As a class, have them share their experiences and ideas. Ask them to think about how they could monitor their progress on other assignments. This is a critical strategy worth spending a lot of time acquiring.

Expansion: Have students find a news article online for homework each week. Have them write a short summary and then discuss what they have read in a weekly current events session that you organize.

Adaptation: Have students monitor their comprehension while listening to a lecture in the target language.

4. LET'S GO TO THE MOVIES!

Language: Any language

Proficiency Level: Any level

Description of Activity: Students will view a feature film (or part of one) in the target language and then write a letter to a classmate retelling the story of the movie. Students will read the letters addressed to them and compare their understanding of the film. Students will correct any misconceptions they had of the film.

Language Objectives: To improve listening comprehension; to improve writing skills

Culture Goal: To become familiar with an important artistic product (a quality film) of the target culture; to learn about a specific cultural subject area

Materials: A feature film in the target language (length and level of difficulty will depend on the linguistic proficiency of the students). The film should have content of cultural value so that it teaches something significant about the target culture in addition to providing target language input.

Preparation:

- 1) Tell the students that it is useful for them to evaluate their own work. It is worth talking the time to stop and reflect on their progress in learning a language. Students can also ask someone else to comment on their progress.
- 2) Explain to your students how you yourself use this strategy. For example, you can tell them that when you read an article in a foreign language magazine, you sometimes like to discuss it with a friend to make sure you have understood it.
- 3) When you view a film in a foreign language, it is worthwhile to check your comprehension with someone else. Periodic evaluations of your success with listening activities can definitely assist your progress in this area.

Practice:

- 1) Begin with a warm-up activity. Ask your students questions such as: Have you ever seen a film in the target language? If so, which one(s)? Do you know the names of any famous (French/Spanish/Italian/etc.) actors? Directors?
- 2) Distribute a list of key vocabulary used in the film and go over it with your students.
- 3) Distribute a list of the names and descriptions of the primary characters. Tell them the general subject but no details of the plot.
- 4) Divide the class into pairs. After the film, each student will write to his/her partner.

- 5) Show the film. Tell the students to try to follow the plot and not to worry about words that they don't understand.
- 6) After seeing the film, students will write a letter to their partner in which they retell the film.
- 7) Each student will read his/her partner's letter. The partners will then discuss their letters and determine whether they understood the film in the same way or if they interpreted all or parts of it in different ways.

Reflection: Ask students if they found it useful comparing notes with other students and evaluating their summaries. Ask them when they might use this strategy again in the future.

Expansion: Have students write a review of the film for their class or school newspaper.

Adaptation: Have students carry out the same activity with a reading or a listening comprehension lecture.

Learning Strategy: Use Background Knowledge

5. NEWSCASTS

Language: Any language

Proficiency Level: 3rd year (could be adapted to any level)

Description of Activity: Students will watch a newscast and then report on it. They will do preparatory exercises before watching it.

Language Objectives: To develop students' listening skills

Culture Goal: To get the target-culture perspective on a current news event.

Materials: Video clip of a recent newscast about a world headline event that students ought to be familiar with; today's newspaper

Preparation:

- 1) Explain to students that learning new information is easier and more interesting if we are building on knowledge we already have. Activating background knowledge helps us learn and remember information by adding to what we already know and putting the new information into a familiar context.
- 2) Give an example of how you have used information you had to help you assimilate new knowledge. For example, before watching a documentary in the target language on volcanoes, think about what you know about volcanoes.
- 3) Tell your students that they will listen to a newscast in Russian (or another target language) and they will understand it better if they think about what they already know before listening.

Practice:

- 1) Provide the students with the topic of the news event that they are going to watch. Ask students what they have watched or read about the topic of the newscast in the last 24-48 hours. Have students work in groups to come up with 5-10 things they know about this topic.
- 2) Watch the news clip once. Ask students how much of what you discussed was mentioned in the clip. What was not mentioned? Watch the clip again to check their answers. Have students report on the new information they unearthed.

Reflection: Ask the class if the strategy *Use Background Knowledge* about the news event helped them understand this report.

Expansion: Have students design a similar activity using a newspaper article and the learning strategy.

Adaptation:

For lower proficiency levels:

Allow students to activate their background knowledge in English, and assist them with putting this vocabulary into the target language.

Use a level-specific video, i.e., one that has been adapted for language learners; these often accompany language textbooks.

6. SPORTS HEROES IN THE NEWS

Language: Any language

Proficiency Level: Any level

Description of Activity: Students will look at the photos that accompany magazine articles in the target language and attempt to infer what the subject matter of the articles will be.

Language Objectives: To improve reading skills; to learn sports vocabulary

Culture Goal: To learn about sports in the target culture

Materials: Copies of articles about sports that have photos of recognizable sports heroes, in the target culture or in any other culture

Preparation:

- 1) Tell students that it will be easier for them to read a magazine or newspaper article if they prepare in advance. Photos that accompany articles can often give excellent clues about the articles' content. If you recognize elements in a photo, you can *Infer* what the article will be about.
- 2) Give an example about how you inferred an article's content by a photo. You were looking at a German magazine. You saw an article with a photo of a tennis player holding a trophy. You inferred that the article would be about tennis and an event in which the player won an important match.
- 3) Tell students that they will be looking at photos, and they will try to infer the content of the articles.

Practice:

- 1) Give each student or pair of students a sports article in the target language.
- 2) Tell the students to study the photos without reading the article. See if they can infer the content of the article.
- 3) Have them read the article to confirm their inference.

Reflection: Have the students reflect on how much they use this strategy in their daily lives and in their studies.

Expansion: Focus on a different subject area rather than sports.

7. WHAT COMES NEXT? EDUCATED GUESSING

Language: Any language

Proficiency Level: Any level

Description of Activity: Students will watch a short film. Before watching it they will make some predictions about what they expect to see in the film. After watching it they will verify their predictions.

Language Objectives: To improve listening comprehension

Culture Goal: To learn more about the target culture through cinema

Materials: A film clip

Preparation:

- 1) Tell your students that the learning strategy *Make Predictions* means making some educated guesses about what will happen. Predicting information helps us focus our attention when watching a film, listening to a conversation, or reading a text.
- 2) Give your students an example of how you have made predictions before reading a newspaper article. Say that you were going to read an article about a tennis match. Before reading the article, you made some predictions about what it would tell you. You guessed that it would describe the game, discuss the players, report the score and tell how this would affect the tennis season. Say that you checked your predictions as you read the article. The predictions helped you focus on what you read.
- 3) Tell students that they will watch a few moments of a film clip without sound and that they should try to make predictions about the type of film it will be and who the characters are.

Practice:

- 1) Tell the students in general what the film clip will be about.
- 2) Watch the first 90 seconds of the film without sound. Ask students to predict what type of film it will be (romance, thriller, sci-fi).
- 3) Show a few more minutes of the clip without sound. Ask the students to try to predict what the characters do for a living and what their relationship is to each other.
- 4) Watch the first 90 seconds of the film again, this time with sound. Have the students listen to the way the characters refer to each other. Can they make any predictions about the relationship of the characters based on what they hear?
- 5) Show the rest of the film clip and have the students verify their predictions.

Reflection: Ask students if making a prediction helped focus their attention in the video. Why? Have students identify other situations in which making predictions could help them learn.

Expansion: In a class discussion, have students make further predictions about the plot of the film. Use prediction in a reading or listening activity in a future class. Before the activity, have students remind you how *Make Prediction* will help them.

Adaptation: This activity can be adapted for any language or proficiency level. This procedure works best with films with unexpected or exaggerated plot elements. It is important that the film has good acoustics and straightforward film “grammar” to allow for reasonable comprehension.

Activity based on one submitted by Richard Robin, The George Washington University

8. HEIMAT (HOMELAND)

Language: Any language
Example: German

Proficiency Level: Intermediate or higher

Description of Activity: Students will view a video clip from a German television series that focuses on a specifically German cultural concept. They will then attempt to relate this concept to their own personal situation.

Language Objectives: To develop students' listening skills

Culture Goal: To develop an understanding of the idea of *Heimat* (home or homeland) in the context of German culture. This is particularly interesting for English speakers since *Heimat* has no direct English equivalent; dictionaries list it as home, homeland, home town, etc., but these definitions do not fully capture the emotional connection to a place that the German term suggests. In the German cultural context, *Heimat* is a theme addressed in literature, film, art, etc.

Materials: Video clip from German television (Deutsche Welle TV) from the series *Mein Deutschland. Wie Ausländer Deutschland erleben [My Germany. How foreigners experience Germany]*. One episode runs about four minutes.

Preparation:

- 1) Introduce the learning strategy: Explain that *Personalize* is a learning strategy that helps us to think about how information relates to us.
- 2) Model the strategy. Tell students that you find that you can understand new concepts or ideas better if you can relate them to your own experiences and thoughts. If you can connect what you are learning to your own life or experiences, you cannot only understand it better, but you can also remember it better.
- 3) Tell students that they will learn about a German cultural concept and try to relate it to themselves.

Practice:

- 1) Divide students into pairs. Partners interview each other, asking the following questions:
Where were you born? Where did you grow up? Where do you live now?
Which place feels like home to you? What makes this place feel like home to you? What feelings, people, landmarks, etc., do you associate with the place you call home?

- 2) Show the video clip from *Mein Deutschland* [*My Germany*]. Students can listen for answers to the same questions they just covered in the interview. Discuss the content of the video: Ask them what answers they heard to the same questions they themselves answered earlier. Encourage them to compare these to their own answers: How is this person's experience of *Home* (*Heimat*) different from or similar to yours?

Reflection: Ask students to reflect on the usefulness of the learning strategy *Personalize* in this context. "How did personalizing the idea first help you to understand the video?" Ask the class to brainstorm ways students can use the learning strategy *Personalize*, (i.e. apply another concept or skill to your own thoughts and experiences in order to help understand or remember information) in other subjects or in real life situations.

Expansion: Invite an L2 speaker who has lived in more than one place to speak to your class about his/her concept of home, belonging, or homesickness. Read a text dealing with the topic *Heimat*.

Adaptation: Introduce another cultural concept or practice (e.g. celebrating a special holiday) and encourage your students to personalize what they learn.

Activity submitted by Margaret Gonglewski, The George Washington University

9. UNDERSTANDING POLITICS

Language: Any language that has cognates with English (in particular, Romance and Germanic languages)

Example: Italian

Proficiency Level: Intermediate

Description of Activity: Students will read an article on a political topic from an Italian newspaper. They will look for English cognates.

Language Objectives: To develop students' reading skills and to increase students' vocabulary to increase the students' vocabulary by introducing them to Italian words (or words in another target language) in the area of government and politics that have cognates in English

Culture Goal: To develop students' knowledge and understanding of the Italian political system (or the political system of any other target culture);

Materials: An article from a major national daily newspaper (e.g. *La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *La Nazione*) These Italian newspapers and others are readily available on the World Wide Web.

Preparation:

- 1) Tell your students that the learning strategy is ***Transfer/Use Cognates***. If students recognize that a word in Italian is a cognate of an English word, their vocabulary can increase by leaps and bounds and this will undoubtedly improve their reading skills.
- 2) Students can make better progress in the target language if they can find "hooks" to relate it to their native language. Tell them of your experience. For example, you might be able to tell them that you have studied several languages and found that, when studying Spanish and French, cognates gave you a big boost at the beginning and helped you later as well. Cognates were like free gifts! Japanese was much more difficult for you because there was very little you could transfer to it from English.
- 3) Tell your students that they are going to read an article from an Italian newspaper. They will look for cognates in the article.

Practice:

- 1) Give each student a copy of an article from an Italian newspaper. (Or an article can be shown on the overhead projector for all students to see.)
- 2) Tell the students to skim through the article and pick out any words that look familiar to them and that they think relate to government or politics.
- 3) Make a master list of the appropriate cognates (on the blackboard or on a transparency).

Reflection: Ask the students to reflect on the role of cognates in their acquisition of Italian. How valuable do they believe this strategy of transfer of words from English to Italian is? Ask if they have used this strategy in learning another language, perhaps Latin or another Romance language.

Expansion: The students can continue to read newspapers and magazines and be on the lookout for additional cognates. They could keep a notebook for jotting down the cognates that they find.

You should also warn your students of false cognates. Prepare a handout for them with a list of these 'false friends.' An Italian list would include, for example, 'morbido' (*soft*) and 'morbid' and 'attuale' (*current*) and 'actual.'

Adaptation: This activity can also focus on other semantic groups such as foods, animals, and clothing.

10. THE WHATCHAMACALLIT: DESCRIBING GADGETS

Language: Any language

Proficiency Level: Any level

Description of Activity: The teacher will show students a collection of typical items from the target culture. If they don't know what it is called in the target language, they will describe it so that a native speaker would know what they are referring to.

Language Objectives: To help develop fluency in speaking and to help avoid breakdown in communication; to increase vocabulary

Culture Goal: To learn the vocabulary for common objects so as to facilitate communication when in the target culture

Materials: Common objects whose names students would possibly not know (e.g. eggbeater, timer, stapler, TV remote, billfold, clothespin, pencil sharpener). Try to include several objects that are unique to the target culture or at least not common in the students' home culture.

Preparation:

- 1) Explain that *Substitute/Paraphrase* is a very useful strategy for keeping a conversation going. When you don't know a word in the target language, substituting or paraphrasing helps avoid a breakdown in communication.
- 2) Provide a personal example. For example: "When I was living in Italy, I wanted to buy a stapler. I forgot to look up the word in my dictionary before I left home. At first I hesitated to enter the store. Then I decided to try to explain the concept of the stapler. I told the salesman that I needed to put sheets of paper together in the left corner of the page. He said, "Ah! You want a *cucitrice!*"
- 3) Tell the students that each one will choose an object and will then explain to the class what it is by substituting an explanation for the precise word.

Practice:

- 1) Bring your bag of tricks to class. Spread out a variety of items on a table in front of the class. Make sure that you have at least one for each student.
- 2) Ask each student to choose an item.
- 3) Tell each student to try to explain the item without using the actual name of the item. In some cases the students will not know the name but if someone does, he/she should still try to explain the item by using the strategy *Substitute/Paraphrase*.

Expansion: Invite a native speaker of the target language to class. Have the students describe the objects and see if the NS understands what the students are referring to.

Adaptation: Give the students a list of action verbs. Have them explain the action without using the actual word. For example, if you don't know the target language word for 'run,' how would you describe this action to a native speaker?

11. SPANISH STREET POETRY: SCENES FROM COLUMBIA HEIGHTS

Language: Any language
Example: Spanish

Proficiency Level: Intermediate High and above

Description of Activity: Students will read examples of Spanish “street poetry” (“poesia del barrio”) and then write their own poetry.

Language Objectives: To improve reading and writing skills; to increase vocabulary

Culture Goal: To learn about literature, in particular, a specific form of poetry in the target culture using original works; to identify features of poetry that evoke vivid images; to comprehend and use several colloquial phrases in Spanish that convey desired sentiment

Materials: Copies of excerpts of the poem ‘Scenes from Columbia Heights’ by Jackie Velez (below) or another poem; old newspapers or magazines with pictures for students to cut up

Scenes from “Columbia Heights” (Escenas en Columbia Heights)

Un grupo de muchachas
Con mahones apretados y anchos abajo,
Extra pintalabio y masticaban chicle como las vacas
Piensan que son dueñas del mundo
Ignoran que somos todos iguales
Ellas tienen el estilo pero yo tengo la sabiduría.

English Translation

A group of girls
Wearing bell bottoms,
Extra lipstick, chewing gum like cows,
Think they own the world.
They roll their eyes at me
Ignoring we are all the same
They got the style but I got the brains.

Preparation:

- 1) Introduce the learning strategy *Use Imagery* and explain that it aids students in comprehending complex information through the use of visual representation. Imagery is a multi-sensory approach that supports the incorporation of a variety of learning styles.
- 2) Model the strategy. You could say, for example, "I use imagery to recall factual information and vocabulary. I find that I can understand new ideas better if I create visuals that can be utilized to associate with various concepts or terms."
- 3) Tell your students that imagery is often used in literature, especially in poetry. They will read a poem and try to visualize it.

Practice:

- 1) Introduce the term "street poetry." Give a personal example of a piece of literature that uses more colloquial language. Students' own examples from poetry or music can be elicited. The ensuing discussion can revolve around the use of language to create a setting, mood, and evoke memory.
- 2) Distribute the excerpt from the poem "Scenes from Columbia Heights". Have students read the excerpt through to themselves for comprehension of the language.
- 3) Have students choose particular phrases or scenes and create the images in their minds. Answer the following questions about the scenes: What are the colors you see? What facial expressions do you imagine? How do you feel in the neighborhood?
- 4) Elicit new vocabulary or colloquial phrases introduced in the poem. What do these phrases mean? What images are associated with these terms? How are they used? Are they effective in adding to the mood of the poem?
- 5) In pairs, have students look through magazines and cut out images that fit the images the poem brought to their mind. Encourage students to add to these pictures with their own drawing, and to label the images with lines or vocabulary from the poem.
- 6) Have students write their own poem in Spanish.

Reflection: Ask the students if the use of imagery aided them in understanding the perspective of the author. Ask them also to reflect on whether or not the use of imagery aided in their recall of the various new phrases or terms.

Adapted from an activity submitted by Jane Shore, The George Washington University

12. RESTAURANT ETIQUETTE

Language: Any language

Proficiency Level: First Year (beginners)

Description of Activity: Students will act out a restaurant scenario. They will order food and interact appropriately with the waiter, restaurant manager, and other diners.

Language Objectives: To developing students' listening and reading skills; to learn food vocabulary; to learn how to make polite requests and polite complaints

Culture Goal: To understand how to use basic target-language phrases and apply them to the scenario; to know the social etiquette to use in a target-culture restaurant

Materials: Props for a restaurant setting: tablecloths, music, food, menus in the target language, etc.

Preparation:

- 1) Explain that *Roleplay* is a very useful learning strategy to prepare students for a real-life situation.
- 2) Give students an example of how you have used this strategy. Tell them, for example, that when you were in Germany, you had to go to a bakery to buy some pastries. Before going to the bakery, you acted out your conversation with the salesperson. This gave you confidence before you had to carry out the real conversation.
- 3) Tell your students that they will roleplay a scene in a restaurant.

Practice:

- 1) Set up a restaurant environment.
- 2) Divide students into small groups and assign each student a role as a diner, a waiter/waitress, or manager.
- 3) Go over the menus so that everyone is familiar with the target-language food vocabulary and other necessary restaurant vocabulary. Introduce the phrases usually heard in a restaurant such as "We would like a table for two," "What would you like to order for your first course?" and "Please bring us the check."
- 4) Have each group practice their scene on their own. The manager should seat the diners, the waiter/waitress will take the orders and serve the food, and the diners will talk among themselves. In the end they will settle the bill.
- 5) Ask each group to perform its scene in front of the entire class and have the audience critique it.

Reflection: Students can assess themselves individually on the preparation and evaluation of this activity. Ask students how acting out the skits helped them better understand or remember the vocabulary and phrases.

Expansion: The class can take a field trip to a restaurant that serves target-culture food.

Adaptation: Other real life scenarios can be created such as in the work place, grocery store, etc.

13. NATURAL RESOURCES IN EUROPE

Language: Any language that has gender-specific articles for the names of countries
Example: French

Proficiency Level: Any level

Description of Activity: Students will read a passage about the natural resources in Europe in which at least 10 countries are mentioned. They will then focus on the use of articles with the names of the countries. They will try to determine whether there is a pattern in the distribution of feminine and masculine articles with the names of the countries.

Language Objective(s): To improve students' mastery of definite articles, in particular, with the names of countries

Culture Goal: To learn about the geography and the natural resources of countries in Europe

Materials: A passage in the target language about European geography from a printed source, the Internet, or a passage written by the teacher

Preparation:

- 1) Tell your students that they can save time in the language learning process if they can find and note patterns and then apply them in future situations. This learning strategy can be called *Find/Apply Patterns*.
- 2) Explain to your students that you used to have problems with articles in French until you noticed that certain kinds of words were always feminine. Give an example such as words ending in *logie*: *biologie*, *psychologie*, etc.
- 3) Tell your students that they are going to try to find patterns in the genders of the names of countries in Europe.

Practice:

- 1) Divide your class into pairs.
- 2) Give each pair the reading passage.
- 3) When the students have finished reading the passage, they should make two lists: one for feminine countries and the other for masculine countries. (See the charts below.)

STUDENT LISTS

Feminine Countries
L'Allemagne
L'Angleterre
La Belgique
L'Espagne
La France
L'Italie
La Suède

Masculine Countries
Le Danemark
Le Luxembourg
Les Pays-Bas
Le Portugal

- 4) Have the students discuss their charts. Do they see any patterns that they might be able to apply to future situations? They might remark, for example, that all of the countries in the passage that end with “e” are feminine. They can formulate this hypothesis and pay attention in the future to the names of countries ending with “e” to see if this hypothesis is always correct or usually correct.

Reflection: Ask the students if looking for a pattern was useful. Do they think that this learning strategy might be useful in other situations as they study the target language?

Expansion: You can expand this activity to include countries of other continents or of the world.

Adaptation: You can choose another grammatical feature in the target language to focus on.

Learning Strategy: Group/Classify

14. THE FOOD PYRAMID

Language: Any language
Example: Spanish

Proficiency Level: Beginner/low-intermediate

Description of Activity: Learners will review and learn new food vocabulary by dividing a list of target culture foods into categories and labeling the FDA nutritional pyramid. They will then create three days worth of “healthy” meals based on pyramid portion and quantity recommendations.

Language Objectives: To develop vocabulary that is related to target-culture foods

Culture Goal: To learn about nutrition in the target culture and to learn about the composition of meals

Materials: An extensive list of target culture foods (some new, some review); handouts of the FDA food pyramid; a sample day’s menu that you have created with foods from the list.

Versions of the pyramid are available in various languages and for various cultures on the Web. More advanced learners can read the dietary recommendations that accompany the food pyramid on a website like La Pirámide Alimentaria http://orbita.starmedia.com/~chef_juanin/piramide.htm

Preparation:

- 1) Explain that *group/classify* is a useful learning strategy, especially when students are trying to master vocabulary items. One way to learn a list of new terms is to memorize the list. However, explain that it is usually easier to learn the information when it is organized in a logical way. One can make associations and the information is easier to remember.
- 2) Give a personal example. For example, when you were learning a list of items of clothing in Spanish, you found it useful to divide the items into the categories of male, female, and child.
- 3) Tell the students that they are going to divide a list of target culture foods into categories as they label the FDA nutritional pyramid.

Practice:

- 1) Give students the list of target-culture foods. Tell them to put the words on the pyramid. Model the activity by putting one or two words in the right place on the pyramid.

- 2) Have students label the pyramid in pairs and then check answers with another pair.
- 3) Finally, have the partners create a three-day food plan based on the sample day's menu that you created. Monitor their work to make sure that target culture foods are being assigned to the right meals!

Reflection: Ask students whether categorizing the new terms helped them learn. Ask them to give other examples of how they can use the strategy *Group/Categorize* to learn more efficiently and effectively.

Expansion:

- 1) For homework have students record their own eating habits, using the same model. When they compare their work, more advanced learners can discuss how to change their diets to be healthier.
- 2) In a future lesson give students a list of vocabulary words and have them divide the terms into categories of their choice.

15. NOTE CULTURELLE

Language: Any language
Example: French

Proficiency Level: Advanced

Description of Activity: Students will read and analyze a short text about French culture.

Language Objectives: To develop the students' reading and writing skills

Culture Goal: To help students better understand the French way of life in the target culture and to compare it with their own way of life

Materials: A text that focuses on an aspect of life in the target culture, e.g. "Note Culturelle" which discusses the French way of life and the evolution from rural to urban life.

Preparation:

- 1) Introduce the learning strategy *Take Notes*. Explain that this learning strategy is useful in understanding a rather difficult and long text. It helps in organizing ideas and remembering the most important ideas of the text. This strategy is also useful to develop the analytical skills needed to analyze a text and draw comparisons and conclusions. It also develops writing skills.
- 2) Model the strategy: Tell students, for example, that you use *Take Notes* every time you are confronted with a long text or a long article. It is the best way to remember what the text is about and to organize your thoughts.
- 3) Link the learning strategy to the activity. Tell the students that they are going to read a lengthy text in the target language and they will take notes to organize their thoughts.

Presentation:

- 1) Introduce the content. Talk about your own experience in France, i.e. the way of life in France and the cultural shock one had in the United States because of the differences.
- 2) Draw two columns on the board, one titled "France" and the other "United States." Have students write on the board what they know about the two ways of life, including similarities and differences between the two. The columns can be divided into categories such as food, housing, family, etc. Have the students compare the two columns.

- 3) Have the students read the text, take notes, and then write a sentence or two summarizing the main idea of the paragraphs.
- 4) Discuss as a class the main points of the text and have the students draw comparisons based on what they read.

Reflection: Ask the students how helpful they found the *Take Notes* strategy. In which ways did it help them? In particular, ask the students how using the strategy aided in their comprehension of the text and how it helped them organize the ideas of the text. How did taking notes aid them in analyzing and drawing conclusions about the material?

Expansion: This activity can be expanded in many ways:

- 1) Invite one of the French students in the university to come to class to talk about the French way of life, i.e. what he misses, what is different here, etc. Have the students ask questions of the speaker about the different aspects of life that were discussed in class.
- 2) Ask if any of the students in the class have lived in a foreign country and have them share their experiences with the rest of the class.
- 3) To expand the Take Notes strategy, assign the students a text to read for homework. They should take notes and summarize the main ideas. In class the next day, have students compare their notes and share what they understood to be the most important points of the text.

Adaptation: This activity can be used not only to learn foreign languages but also other subjects. It can be used at any proficiency level with a level-appropriate text. The activity helps students develop their comprehension and analytical skills in all topics.

Learning Strategy: Summarize

16. LE LOUVRE: VISITE VIRTUELLE

Language: Any language
Example: French

Proficiency Level: Intermediate - advanced

Description of Activity: Learners will learn about one of the world's most famous museums by taking a virtual tour of the Louvre (<http://www.louvre.fr/>). They will answer a series of questions on a short worksheet that can only be completed by looking at the Website. Then they will use the worksheet to create a narrative description of the Louvre.

Language Objectives: To improve reading and writing skills

Culture Goal: To develop appreciation of some of the treasures in one of the world's most important art museums.

Materials: Computers for each individual or pair and the worksheet *Le Louvre: Visite Virtuelle* (or adapted version to suit your class). The example below was created for the Louvre website. A similar worksheet can be adapted for the Prado in Spain, the Uffizi in Italy, and other world art museums.

Le Louvre: Visite Virtuelle

How many rooms can you visit?

Name three.

Which of the rooms would you prefer? Explain why using examples for the site.

Describe two rooms in the Salles des Peintures

What was your favorite item in the Salles des Objets d'Art

Where can you find the medieval dungeons?

Where is the Egyptian temple located?

Preparation:

- 1) Explain to the students that the learning strategy *Summarize* is very useful in all areas of one's academic career. By summarizing information one is able to learn and to remember it better. Tell the students that summarizing is a way to check comprehension and help them organize and remember new information.
- 2) Give a personal example of how you use *Summarize*. For example, when you want to remember what a book was about, you write a summary of it when you finish reading it.
- 3) Tell the students that they will visit a website and then summarize the information presented on the website.

Practice:

- 1) Tell students that they are going to learn about the world famous Louvre museum by taking a virtual tour on the Internet.
- 2) As they explore the museum, they should answer the questions on the short worksheet that can only be completed by looking at the Website. Have them work online to complete the worksheets individually or in pairs
- 3) Finally, they are going to use the worksheet to create a narrative description, a summary, of the Louvre. Explain that summarizing means going over the main points. Model summarizing the information from the worksheet to prepare for a narrative description. For example, Question number one tells us that there are x number of rooms, three examples are... In the narrative, this becomes "the museum displays x number of beautiful rooms to visit online."
- 4) Before they write the narrative, have them summarize the information from their sheets out loud with a partner. Then have them write the description.

Reflection: Ask learners if summarizing helped them write the narrative. Explain that summarizing is useful in almost every academic situation. Have them brainstorm some example for language learning and other subjects.

Expansion:

- 1) Have learners create a narrative of their favorite museum. Have them summarize it orally (or in notes) before beginning.
- 2) Practice summarizing information after reading a text or listening to a dialogue. However, summarizing is not only tool for developing receptive skills. With your students, you can also practice summarizing information before writing or speaking in order to create a clearer and more polished product.

17. TOURIST IN FLORENCE

Language: Any language
Example: Italian

Proficiency Level: Intermediate (can be adapted to any level)

Description of Activity: The teacher will give a mini-lecture on the city of Florence, focusing on the major tourist attractions. Students will listen in particular for references to the names of places of interest and jot the names down in list form.

Language Objectives: To develop listening and writing skills

Culture Goal: To familiarize students with an important city in the target culture such as Florence, one of the most important cities in Italy. Florence is popular with tourists and scholars from around the world. The primary attraction of this city is its artistic patrimony.

Materials: Script or notes for a mini-lecture that describe the attractions of the city of Florence

Preparation:

- 1) Introduce the learning strategy: Tell students that *Use Selective Attention* is a useful strategy to help students sharpen their listening skills and to gain confidence in their ability to understand the spoken target language. As they listen to someone speak, they focus on key elements.
- 2) Model the strategy: When I was studying French, I used to listen to a series of audiotapes that had speakers who talked on various contemporary topics. I would note the topic and then listen carefully for words related to that topic. For example, if the topic was cinema, I'd listen for words like *acteur, actrice, film, cineaste*, and *comedie*.
- 3) Link the learning strategy to the activity: Now you will hear a mini-lecture about the city of Florence. Try to listen in particular for the names of tourist attractions (e.g. *Galleria Uffizi, Palazzo Pitti, and Il Duomo*). Make a list of them to discuss after the lecture.

Practice:

- 1) Tell the students that you are going to give a mini-lecture about the city of Florence. Don't read it. Make it sound authentic by using notes. Your notes might look like the following:

Firenze

Galleria Uffizi – molti quadri bellissimi
molto famosi

Per esempio, Primavera di Sandro Botticelli

La Signoria – sede del governo

Palazzo Pitti – quadri, giardini

Ponte Vecchio – un ponte con negozi – tanti prodotti d'oro

Il Duomo – una chiesa molto grande – le tombe di persone famose – una cupola

Il Campanile di Giotto – accanto al Duomo – molto alto – bei colori

Il Battistero – le famose porte di Ghiberti – “le porte del paradiso”

- 2) As you give your mini-lecture, your students will listen carefully and jot down the places that you mention.
- 3) After you have finished, ask the students what they have on their lists and compare them as a class.

Reflection: Ask your students if they found it easier to follow your lecture by listening for key words rather than trying to understand everything.

Expansion: You can present other mini-lectures and prepare the students in advance to listen selectively for key words to improve their understanding.

Students can also use this learning strategy when they are reading. Instead of selectively listening for words, they can use this strategy to read a passage by selectively choosing words in the written text.

18. GEOGRAPHY OF PORTUGAL

Language: Any language
Example: Portuguese

Proficiency Level: Intermediate

Description of Activity: Searching for geographical information on the World Wide Web

Language Objectives: (1) To introduce and practice the learning strategy *Access Information Resources* and (2) to practice reading comprehension and information gathering in the target language, therefore increasing their knowledge of the target culture.

Culture Goal: To learn about the Portuguese geography using authentic materials (i.e. Portuguese Internet web links).

Materials: Computer with Internet connection, browser (e.g. Netscape Communicator or Internet Explorer)

Preparation:

- 1) Introduce the learning strategy: In a class discussion, ask students to brainstorm some resources. Put the list on the board. You do not need to limit them to academic resources. In an ideas-sharing forum, students will come up with all sorts of resources. Elicit anything the students do not identify. Make sure they include human resources. Tell them that “using resources in an important part of learning. We don’t have to rely on our own knowledge to learn new things, complete tasks, and remember information. We can (and should) use resources to help us.”
- 2) Model the strategy: When I was a student of Portuguese before the advent of the World Wide Web, I had a difficult time finding reading materials in Portuguese to supplement the textbook we used in class. I was always thrilled when our professor would bring copies of old magazines to class to share with us. Now eager students who want to go beyond the textbook can go to the Web and find a wealth of materials at their fingertips.
- 3) Link the learning strategy to the task: The Internet, specifically the WWW, offers students access to foreign language materials 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. By

using the Web to look up information about the country of the target language, students are able to improve their reading skills and increase their cultural knowledge.

Practice:

- 1) Introduce the content: The ideal way to carry out this activity is to take your students to a computer lab where each student has his/her own computer. If this is not possible, students can either share or take turns using the available computer(s).
- 2) Begin by demonstrating a search for your students. Tell your students that you are going to look for information about the city of Lisbon on the Web. Proceed to carry out the following steps:
 - a. Connect to the World Wide Web, using a browser such as Netscape Communicator or Internet Explorer.
 - b. Go to a Portuguese search engine to carry out your search
 - c. In the Search window on Yahoo's home page, insert the word "Lisboa."
 - d. Look at the list of hits. Choose one to show your students.
- 3) Now ask your students to conduct searches on their own. You might want to give them a list of URLs to choose from or let them surf by themselves.

Reflection: Have the students think about how using an outside resource helped them in gaining information to learn about a new topic. Ask them what they were able to obtain from the World Wide Web that they wouldn't have been able to otherwise. How did this information increase their understanding of the target language and culture?

Expansion: After the students have found information on Lisbon, they can conduct searches for information on other Portuguese cities. They can, of course, go beyond cities and geography. The list of possible topics is virtually endless.

Adaptation: This activity can be adapted to suit any language that is used on the World Wide Web. The vast majority of material on the Web is in English, but material in many other languages can be easily found as well. This activity can also be adapted to a wide range of language learners, from beginners to very advanced.

19. BIOGRAPHY OF A FAMOUS FIGURE

Language: Any language

Proficiency Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Description of Activity: Students will research, write and present a biography of a target culture figure. The biography will be a narrative history based on a timeline of events.

Language Objectives: To develop online researching skills; to be able to discuss an important target culture figure; to develop written communication skills; to develop oral presentation skills.

Culture Goal: To introduce students to important historical, political, literary, artistic, scientific, entertainment, and sports figures in the target culture

Materials: A model timeline of a famous figure

Preparation:

- 1) Explain to students that asking for and giving ideas and help will make their learning more successful and enjoyable. *Cooperate* is a valuable learning strategy.
- 2) Give students a personal example. You might tell them, for example, how you enjoy writing academic articles with colleagues rather than alone for a variety of reasons - it is less lonely, it is more stimulating, and it is more productive.
- 3) Tell students that they are going to research, write and present a biography of a target culture figure. They will work collaboratively in groups.

Practice:

- 1) Give students a list of influential individuals in the history of the target culture.
- 2) Divide students into small working groups of 3 or 4.
- 3) Each group should discuss the individuals on the list and select the one that the group would like to research.
- 4) Students should do research (in the library, on the Internet, in textbooks, etc.) and share their information with their group.
- 5) Using their research material each group will create a timeline of the figure's life and achievements.
- 6) They will then collaborate on a written narrative history based on a timeline of events.
- 7) Make sure that there is a collaborative effort at each stage of the project. Monitor their information exchanges carefully to make sure they are sharing ideas and helping each other effectively.

Reflection: Have students write a journal entry that defines cooperation in language learning. Have them describe all of the different ways learners can help each other communicate better in the target language and complete language learning tasks.

Expansion:

- 1) Have each group collaborate on an oral presentation. Explain that they will use the timeline as a visual and guide to make the presentation.
- 2) Decorate the classroom with the timelines to create a Hall of Important Figures.
- 3) Encourage learners to use each other as resources regularly. In particular, recommend their studying together for quizzes and exams.

20. AN ARABIC RECIPE: SAMBOOSAK

Language: Any language
Example: Arabic

Proficiency Level: High-beginners and up

Description of Activity: Students will study a recipe in the target language and then prepare the dish.

Language Objectives: To develop students' food vocabulary; to develop reading, listening and speaking skills

Culture Goal: to acquaint students with Arabic culture through preparing and tasting Arabic food.

Materials: Magazine-pictures of people accomplishing different tasks, for example, an athlete climbing a mountain, a racer winning a medal, a student graduating from college, and a baby learning to walk or eat on her own; handouts of an Arabic recipe (Samboosak) and a large copy of the recipe ingredients for display; the recipe ingredients; a pan, stove, and oven

Samboosak: an Arabic recipe

Ingredients:

Pastry:

3 cups plain flour
1 tbsp. baking powder
1 tbsp sugar
1 tsp. salt
2 eggs (beaten)
1cup warm milk
1/3cup corn oil

Filling:

2 medium onions
1 lb minced meat (beef or lamb)
1 tbsp ground cumin
1 tbsp salt
1tsp black pepper
2 tbsp corn oil for frying

1. To make the pastry, put flour, baking powder, sugar, and salt into a bowl, Add oil, warm milk, and beaten eggs. Mix well to form a soft dough. Cut the dough into small balls of 2 in. each. Cover and leave to rest for 15 min.
2. To prepare the filling, chop the onions and add them to oil in the pan. Cook stirring until onions are soft, stir in the minced meat, cumin, salt, and pepper. Fry until well cooked.
3. Roll out the pastry balls into thin circles (4 in. round). Place a tsp of filling in the center of the pastry. Moisten the edges, fold, and press together to seal. You may decorate the edges by rolling them inward. Place them on a greased oven tray and bake on 300F oven for about 15 min or until lightly browned.

Serve it hot. Enjoy!

Preparation:

- 1) *Talk Yourself through It* is a learning strategy that emphasizes task completion and self evaluation. In order to complete a task without getting discouraged, you need to keep telling yourself that you can do it.
- 2) Give a personal example of when you have used this strategy. You might say, for example, that you were very discouraged once when you were trying to create objects from paper using the Japanese origami method. But you kept telling yourself that you could do it and you finally succeeded.
- 3) Tell students that they are going to do something difficult but they should not get discouraged. They should remind themselves that they can do it!

Presentation:

- 1) Bring to class several magazine-pictures of people accomplishing different tasks. For example, an athlete climbing a mountain, a runner participating in a marathon, a student graduating from college, and a baby learning to walk or eat on her own. Display the pictures and ask students to talk about the tasks represented by each picture.
- 2) After students are done with all the pictures, ask them about what they think might have helped people in the pictures to accomplish their tasks. Write their answers on the board.
- 3) Ask the students what mentality the people in the pictures had; what went through their minds during this task completion, i.e., what attitude did they have to focus on the task?
- 4) Explain to students that those people believed in themselves and their abilities; they were ambitious but they tried and tried, had never lost hope and were determined to succeed! Most importantly, they were always saying to themselves: "I CAN DO IT!"

- 5) Tell students that “I can do it” is a magic tool that helps ease tasks. Surprise them by saying: “Today we will accomplish together a task of cooking a dish from the Arabic Culture. Do you think we can make a delicious dish?” Give each student a copy of the recipe and display a large one on the board.
- 6) Divide students into groups of three.
- 7) Read the recipe ingredients and steps as you prepare the recipe. Make encouraging comments as you go along. For example, when you model chopping some onions, say: *Chopping onions is not as difficult as I thought. I can do this.* Have one group finish the task. Each time you give a task to a group, remind students to encourage themselves.
- 8) Read the third step: (Roll out the pastry balls into thin circles (4 in. round). Place a tsp of filling in the center of the pastry. Moisten the edges, fold, and press together to seal. You may decorate the edges by rolling them inward. Place on a greased oven tray and bake on 300f oven for about 15 min or until lightly browned. Model the step and then let every student do at least one Samboosak on his/her own.

Reflection: While waiting for the Samboosak, ask each group to explain orally the task that it was responsible for (students can still look at the board for vocabulary). Ask students why they told themselves “I can do it” during each step of the recipe.

While enjoying the dish, remind students that even though the recipe was new to everybody, everyone was able to accomplish his/her task. Therefore, the dish came out delicious! Remind students that the delicious food they made is strong evidence that they accomplished their tasks and that “I CAN DO IT” is an effective strategy to be used to ease any task in life.

Expansion: Food party

Ask every student to bring food from the target-culture to share with the class. They can either cook themselves or purchase the food at an ethnic grocery store in your area. Ask them to describe the ingredients and how the dish was prepared.

Adaptation: The activity could be adapted to involve more writing and more formal presentations. Instead of giving students a copy of the recipe, have them take notes while you model the recipe and then try to write the recipe in their own words.

Based on an activity submitted by Raghad Kadah