
TEACHING TIPS and STRATEGIES for the LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Note: the following are tips and strategies from Russian language classrooms; however, they are adaptable to any language classroom.

Effective Teaching Strategies



Introduction of the new vocabulary tied to the visual/practical...

- food unit set up as cafeteria style counter
- clothing unit involving the modeling of students themselves



Units to involve the senses and various ways of learning...

- home unit to include describing one's home, designing and labeling a dream home complete with furnishing
- role playing having visits to your new home (outline on the floor with masking tape or on the school field with lime)
- writing up proposed house sale
- touring prospective customers
- construction of a gingerbread house.



Contact with the community...

- Guest speakers
 - job related, i.e. Interpreting, Law, Business
 - travel related
 - study related
 - local history
 - visiting cultural groups/performers

-
- ▶ Community papers, newsletters, journals
 - reading articles
 - writing articles
 - writing letters
 - discussing articles
 - ▶ Community events
 - inform students of events in the local area
 - maintain contact with local language classes
 - organize or participate in the community events ie. Christmas party
 - ▶ Exchange
 - travel
 - letter / fax, modem / video
 - treasure boxes



Including cultural elements...

- ▶ Traditions
 - tea ceremony, using a Samovar or an ordinary teapot, can create an intimate atmosphere suitable for conversation, review, debriefing
- ▶ Literature
 - reading aloud by the teacher or students can become central to a lesson or just a thought for the day
- ▶ History
 - either local lore or Russian history, interspersed in your lessons as anecdotes can serve to “ground” a specific concept through association
- ▶ Music (allow the students as much choice as possible)
 - ideas for the “I can’t sing!” teacher...
 - use it as background music for classroom work
 - use it as a springboard to discuss new vocab, current events, issues, performers, styles
 - use the song to encourage listening skills by inserting blanks for some of the words
 - encourage lip synching projects (students can be made responsible for transcribing the words)
 - use background music for projects
 - use ‘Rap’ to send a message composed by the kids
 - make up your own lyrics to a favourite melody, i.e. “Don’t worry be happy”
 - use drama to bring a song to life.



Technology...

- with multi-level classes, utilise the cassette or video recorder to put part of your lesson onto texts, exercises, and drills. Have the students listen or actively participate by repeating or answering
- for small groups an especially effective tool is the listening lag
- encourage student reading aloud every day by having a cassette set to tape in a quiet corner and during the lesson each student reads his/her passage onto it; listen to it on your drive home or when you can find the time. I've often used two tape decks to record question/answer on the second
- listening labs are great for oral testing, pronunciation drills and encouraging student concentration on the single voice
- using cassettes and videos in project work allows students several opportunities to "get it right"
- the excitement of using the video camera to make their own video production will often challenge the students to try new vocabulary/expressions
- computer programs in Russian, i.e. Russian Tutor, can provide you with drill activities or a chance to write using the Russian language version of Wordperfect
- multimedia production in a play-building format can be used to put together student opinions and ideas in a topic.



Drama...

- theatre sports games such as 'Die,' 'Typewriter,' 'One-word story,' and 'Expert with arms,' can be used to encourage thinking in the target language and responses utilizing whatever skills they have
- group skits or Reader's Theatre are effective tools for interpreting a story or as a culminating activity for a unit
- dialogues of any form are much more meaningful if using elements of drama
- puppets are wonderful tools for those with severe stage-fright, even if you're just reading the dialogue from the text
- half masks are also a great tool as they cover the face but do not hinder speech.



Writing opportunities...

- maintain a journal
- responses to stories/videos/movies/current events
- rewrite an ending/beginning/point of view of an existing piece of work.
- complete a dialogue when only the part of one speaker is provided
- letters to friends, penpals, celebrities...
- completing official forms
- responding to a series of tableaux - Who is in the tableaux? What has happened? What is going to happen?
- guided writing using questions
- puppet scripts
- Reader's Theatre scripts



Split classes...

- behavioural expectations for students who are working independently must be made clear and firmly reinforced to establish a routine
- students want to know the boundaries
- senior students as tutors in class can be a great help to split class work
- encourage ongoing project work, it's available for early finishers and can be taken home for those students who want to put more time into it
- bonus work is made available in the form of: stories and exercises, word searches, crosswords, review worksheets
- whole group projects allow for split classes to work as one ie. scavenger hunt, research projects with oral presentations, timeless (historical and/or literary) productions
- final project work.



Games...

- use for review, drill, reinforcing vocabulary, or language structures...
- Pictionary, Bop, Create a creature, Dialogue relays, Beanbag/nerfball questioning, 20 questions...



Student input into course material...

- where possible give students the choice of a/the topic to be studied, ask them to brainstorm situations where certain language patterns could be used and file these for later use
- encourage student driven review
- encourage for student/group evaluation and self evaluation where possible
- select projects where students choose the topic or the method of presentation, the date or even the method of evaluation, i.e. Final project.

Cooperative Learning



Cooperative Learning in the Heritage Language Classroom

Cooperative learning provides for and encourages interaction in classroom activities. This approach to learning offers each student the opportunity to learn from others as well as from the instructor. It provides instructors with greater flexibility in approaching the language curriculum at all levels and with students of varying abilities.

Cooperative learning methods facilitate not only language learning, but also learning how to work together productively. Peer interaction is encouraged as the students work in pairs or in small groups. The expanded group format enables the group members to use their past experiences

with cooperative learning and to extend their understanding of how groups interact as they work together in increasingly large groups.

The instructors must carefully structure the learning experiences and reflect on what it is they intend to teach, why they intend to teach it, and how they intend to accomplish their objectives. The instructor sets up cooperative learning experiences for specific purposes -- planning activities; generating group responses to questions; working together to create a presentation, report, or product, etc. Cooperative learning can take place with partners in small groups, or in large group situations.

Cooperative skills develop gradually through repeated opportunities to work together, to reflect, to understand, and to practice.

- placing students in **partners** allows them to work together on topics of mutual interest, to clarify ideas, and to develop their oral language skills through discussion.
- **small group work** allows students to clarify ideas through working with speaking and listening skills. Specific learning experiences for small groups work could be: storytelling; discussion; problem solving; research and investigation; experimentation; group reporting; and drama. Small group work develops the student's group skill and encourages tolerance of the opinions of others.
- **large group** learning experiences provide the students with opportunities to share the results of their work. This allows the students to benefit from the work done by others and exposes them to their ideas and interpretations. Specific learning experiences for large group work could include: presentations of projects; drama activities; brainstorming; or general discussions of topics.

There are five types of groups that are used within a cooperative group framework:

a. Informal groups

These are small groups that are formed for a short time and for a direct purpose. Once the purpose has been accomplished, the group is disbanded.

b. Base groups

The primary group for cooperative learning experiences consists of two to four students. Base groups are designed to stay together for long periods of time, are selected by the teacher, and are mixed both according to learning ability and social development.

c. Combined group

In cooperative learning experiences two or more groups come together to share information or ideas.

d. Reconstituted groups - jigsaw

In this cooperative learning technique, the students become informed about a particular aspect of a topic and then send representative members to the other groups to share and exchange information. The representative members then report back to their original or base groups to

share the gathered information, thereby developing a greater understanding of the whole topic. The groups present or share their topics, including the new information. This strategy encourages the students to listen attentively to others and to their group. Evaluation of how much was learned and how effectively the information was shared should follow the presentations.

e. Representative groups

These groups are made up of representative members of each base or working group within the class and may be used to provide a structure for discussion of each group's work -- its plans, current progress, method of presentation, etc.

Principles on which to base cooperative learning strategies:

- students work in heterogeneous groups.
- students work in positive interdependence.
- students are accountable both as individuals and as a group.
- students learn through ample opportunity.
- students learn and practise cooperative skills as they study and explore the subject matter together.



Cooperative Learning in Multi-level Classes

In the Heritage Language program, the students study a language other than English or French. For some students, this language is their mother tongue; for others, it is a language that they wish to study as enrichment. Students who enrol in the program not only have a variety of background experience, but they are also able to enrol in the program at various entry points. For these reasons it is difficult to establish a homogeneous class in a language learning context.

If necessary, the instructor should assess students after Grade 2 (age 8) to determine appropriate placement within the program. Ideally, there should be a class in each grade for students with an average fluency, and for older students still at the beginning stage. Where numbers do not permit, the instructor should address the needs of these various levels within the classroom by using a variety of strategies.

Such strategies might include:

- providing opportunities to work independently, in groups, and with the whole class
- create groups within the classroom to reflect the different levels
- creating groups that contain students of different ability levels, with specific roles for each group member to reflect particular achievement levels
- encouraging peer coaching
- providing enrichment experiences for more capable students
- providing students with prepared materials on occasion, to permit the instructor to move from group to group to offer special or individual assistance
- using parent volunteers.



Role of the Instructor

Properly preparing students for small group learning activities is essential in order to achieve optimal results. Prior to implementing cooperative learning situations, the instructor must ensure that students understand their tasks and the purpose of such tasks.

Language needs of the activity must be foreseen and students must prepare for the activity accordingly. Properly preparing students for the activity and providing appropriate vocabulary, structures, and activities for their level helps avoid frustration and ensures that the students will meet with success.

The success of any activity-based cooperative learning program depends on the instructor having a clear sense of the long-range goals of the program. Once the instructor has established these long-range goals, themes and units should be planned. This planning should include input from the students and draw on their interests and personal knowledge.

Points to consider when planning a unit should include: the approximate duration of the unit; timetable considerations; physical layout of the classroom; types of groupings that will be used (large, small, pairs); activities involving students at various ages; materials and resources required/available; methods for keeping track of student's progress; peer/student/program evaluation.

For the instructor, classroom management may initially seem more complex, but it need not be more difficult. Once the students are working in small groups, the instructor is no longer the central figure in the learning experience and can now be a facilitator or coach providing guidance as required. The atmosphere is friendlier and less stressful and the instructor no longer struggles to meet the needs of many students simultaneously. Well defined routines are essential in cooperative learning experiences.

Essentially three areas require attention:

- **clean-up and maintenance** routines must be clearly established. These routines are usually introduced in primary grades. The students are responsible for the clean-up and maintenance of materials and the work area.
- **time management** is another area for which students in junior grades start taking responsibility as they plan and organize their time through the use of student planning sheets, group plans and objectives, and personal work logs.
- the students should be made **aware of effective and ineffective group processes** and should participate in student evaluation of the processes -- what worked, what didn't work, how the group benefitted.

The instructor must observe the students learning and identify where assistance is needed, evaluate group interaction, and provide supportive intervention. Supportive intervention is intended to help the students work together more effectively. The instructor is encouraged to state problems, address them, and experiment with possible solutions. In cooperative learning, the instructor has the opportunity to observe students working in cooperative learning situations, providing the basis for understanding students' needs and for planning appropriately.

Planning

Planning both long-range and day-to-day is the basis of effective programming. Instructors should establish **what the students are expected to learn** before they can collect and design materials and activities. **Attitudes and values, skills, and knowledge** are the basis for this planning, providing the connections between the learning that is expected and what will be taught.

By focussing on attitudes/values, skills, and knowledge the instructor can consider the purpose for the theme or unit and view the connections between it and other topics with similar concepts. Using concepts such as community, conservation, interrelationship, and change, the instructor can identify the potential links that exist beyond the focus of the theme.

Benefits of this type of planning are:

- the exploration of a theme more than once by changing the perspective from which it is approached
- different possibilities for integration, both cross-grade and cross-curricular
- the ability to facilitate co-operative planning with the students
- the ability to evaluate the students and how effectively the program objectives are met.

When planning a Heritage Language program, instructors should identify:

- **the what:** the broad picture being considered; focus on themes that enable connections to be made between the theme and the unit
- **the why:** the reasons for choosing this particular theme or unit, the interests, needs, abilities, talents of the students, and curriculum expectations
- **the how:** the strategies for implementing the learning objectives

When reviewing the themes and units contained in this document, the instructor should be selective in making choices for activities that reflect what is appropriate to meet the needs of the program and of the students.

Assessment and Evaluation

Evaluation is an integral, ongoing, and systematic part of the learning process, designed to foster the learner's growth and to improve programs. Since most student work in any Heritage Language program is oral and aural, it is often difficult for instructors to evaluate student performance effectively. **Assessment procedures should be directly related to program objectives and should be based on classroom activities developed to improve communication skills.**

Evaluation at this level will be based primarily on direct observation and is classified as "formative evaluation" or the evaluation of process. General observations can be made less subjective by stating the extent of the student's progress toward a selected objective.

Students in the Primary Division participate primarily in listening and speaking. Other language learning processes such as reading and writing should receive more emphasis as the students move into the Junior and Intermediate Divisions. Most forms of student evaluation involve the assessment of a combination of skills rather than of individual skills in isolation. Assessment procedures in heritage language programs should include:

- self-evaluation
- peer evaluation
- group evaluation
- instructor evaluation

Self-evaluation

It is important for the students to learn to evaluate their own work. Eventually, “mature learners must decide what to learn, how to go about that learning process and how to evaluate their own progress.” The instructor organizes procedures for self-evaluation, helping the students to focus on what to look for, and how to improve it.

Peer evaluation

Students must learn to analyze not only their own work but also that of others in an effective and productive way. The comments of classmates are often of great value in helping students to improve.

Group evaluation

Group work should be the most frequently encountered classroom activity in which all language skills could be subject to the individual student’s self-analysis and evaluation of growth and development.

Instructor evaluation

In the Heritage Language program, the instructor is ultimately responsible for the evaluation of all language skills through observation and record keeping. Instructors should also encourage and foster the development of the skills needed for self, peer, and group evaluation.

About Assessment in General

Assessment is the systematic process of gathering information about students’ learning in order to describe what they know, what they are able to do, and what they are working towards. From the evidence and information collected in assessments, teachers describe each student’s learning and performance. They use this information to provide students with ongoing feedback, plan further instructional and learning activities, set subsequent learning goals, and determine areas for further instruction and intervention.

Teachers determine the purpose, aspects, or attributes of learning on which to focus the assessment. They also decide when to collect the evidence and which assessment methods, tools, or techniques are most important.

Assessment focuses on the critical or significant aspects of the learning that students will be asked to demonstrate. Students benefit when they clearly understand the learning goals and learning expectations.

Evaluation involves interpreting assessment information in order to make further decisions (i.e. set student goals, make curricular decisions, plan instruction, etc.) Student performance is evaluated from the information collected through assessment activities. Teachers use their insight, knowledge about learning, and experience with students, along with the specific curricula they establish, to make judgements about student performance in relation to learning outcomes.

Students benefit when evaluation is provided on a regular, ongoing basis. When evaluation is seen as an opportunity to promote learning rather than as a final judgement, it shows learners their strengths and suggest how they can develop further. Students can use this information to redirect methods, make plans, and establish future learning goals.

The assessment of student performance is based on a wide variety of methods and tools, ranging from portfolio assessment to pencil and paper tests.



Criterion-Referenced Evaluation

Criterion-referenced evaluation is one way to evaluate student performance. In this method of evaluation, student performance is compared to the decided upon criteria rather than to the performance of other students. Sometimes teachers collaborate with their students to establish the criteria for projects, oral presentations, compositions, etc.

There are many associated benefits for students through the use of this model, including:

- ▶ students have a fuller understanding of the set expectations
- ▶ criteria provide a format or structure for students to follow
- ▶ criteria serve as a checklist for students as they work through an assignment
- ▶ students are able to more easily appraise their own work and the work of others
- ▶ criteria help students to set future learning goals
- ▶ criteria provide students with ongoing feedback
- ▶ students gain confidence in their learning when outcomes are clearly stated and understood
- ▶ allowing students to participate in the formation of criteria (where student input is appropriate)
- ▶ giving students the opportunity to ask questions about the criteria
- ▶ there are no surprises!

Student performance in criterion-referenced evaluation may be based on a four point scale.

The following words and phrases may be used to describe a student assignment that would be evaluated as either a four, three, two, or one.

Four:

- ✓ powerful
- ✓ highly effective
- ✓ covers all criteria or exceeds criteria
- ✓ creative
- ✓ outstanding
- ✓ imaginative
- ✓ error free

-
- ✓ replete with highly descriptive words
 - ✓ able to capture and maintain audience interest
 - ✓ expressive
 - ✓ information presented in a unique or creative manner
 - ✓ sophisticated work for age and grade of student
 - ✓ impressive finished product

Three:

- ✓ demonstrates that the student is very capable
- ✓ student has put forth a very good effort
- ✓ student is confident
- ✓ all criteria has been followed
- ✓ work is well-organized
- ✓ there are few errors
- ✓ catches audience attention, but not able to sustain it consistently
- ✓ uses many descriptive words
- ✓ contains some detail

Two:

- ✓ developing
- ✓ work is satisfactory, but ideas are insufficiently developed
- ✓ lacks detail
- ✓ many errors
- ✓ student is poorly motivated and has put forth little effort
- ✓ work is somewhat organized
- ✓ meets some of the criteria
- ✓ some parts of the assignment not completed on time

One:

- ✓ work is undeveloped
- ✓ careless work habits basic criteria not met
- ✓ disorganized little to no detail
- ✓ many errors
- ✓ missing key information
- ✓ not completed on time

Effective Teaching Techniques



Meeting Students' Needs

The diversity of backgrounds that characterizes students entering secondary school international language programs means that most classes must accommodate students of widely differing degrees of competence in the language. Significant differences in students' motivation to learn and in their learning styles are also to be expected.

Multi-grade or bi-level classes add to the diversity. Small enrollments may make it necessary to accommodate more than one year or level of the language in the same class period.. While

combined classes require teachers to plan carefully in order to meet the needs of the individual students and the demands of the particular courses, such classes may be the only way to offer students an opportunity to pursue a language they particularly value. To accommodate diversity, teachers can:

- vary the classroom organization, using full-class, small group, and individual work
- organize the course or courses so that students have some joint or simultaneous activities as a full class.

Such activities might include personal question and answer exchange, role playing, songs, games, activities related to cultural topics, videotape or film presentations, or writing sessions:

- assess students' mastery of a language structure or topic before beginning instruction. Students who can demonstrate that they have some particular knowledge or skill can engage in another activity while the rest of the class studies and practises
- use clearly defined small-group tasks to provide a variety of learning activities and to match the pace of learning and the level of difficulty of material to the competence of the different groups of students in the class. Writing and extensive reading assignments, for example, can be varied according to students' competence. The teacher should identify the groups or courses for which the tasks are intended and develop a system for keeping records of student work
- organize activities/projects that enable students to practise and use the language in small groups.

It is particularly important to provide such opportunities in combined courses, in order to preserve a balance of listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities over the three- year sequence of the course:

- develop contracts with senior students to allow them to work on an individualized program. The contract must outline clearly the tasks, the time line, the method of evaluation, and the degree of mastery of the material expected
- provide students with an overall outline of the classroom work and the assignments to be covered in the week or unit and each day list the plan for that day on the blackboard. This will allow students to know what is expected of them and what they can do next if the teacher is teaching or testing other students
- teach students how to use resources, such as dictionaries and grammar guides, to further their own learning
- create a buddy system in which the students can help one another. In addition, senior students or those who speak the language fluently can be asked to teach certain elements in the program
- clearly establish the objectives to be met by each group and make sure that these objectives are appropriate for the students in that group
- set class-wide deadlines for the completion of projects or activities that groups are working on in class so that the timing of presentations, displays of work, or evaluation is the same for all groups.

In multi-grade or bi-level classes, teachers must ensure that the content, learning experiences, and standards of evaluation are appropriate to the individual courses in which the students are enrolled.

To adapt their techniques to the needs of students in basic and general level courses, teachers can:

- outline the day's plan on the blackboard
- plan lessons to allow students ample time for completing most of the assignments *in class*, where consultation and reassurance are available
- inform students of any deadlines well in advance and give frequent reminders
- use a structured activity centred on a blackboard or overhead outline to get students started
- help students with their work at times so that they complete tasks. This will develop their sense of accomplishment and strengthen their commitment
- reinforce and vary regular oral activities with simple reading and writing tasks; overemphasis on oral work causes some students to feel insecure
- use the most simple, concrete method to explain language usage. Students can readily grasp instructions to follow a model; abstract terms like *conjugate* may confuse them
- use the target language as extensively as possible. Students must feel that they are in a real international language class. Some of the students may speak the language as their mother tongue or ancestral language
- use English in class to reduce students' anxiety or frustration and to clarify what is expected of them
- allow students to repeat selected tests and assignments to improve their achievement and raise their marks.

Teaching strategies should take into account the range of students' skills and abilities and should also provide for differences in the ways students learn. Working in groups allows students to function at their own pace and helps them to feel more comfortable about contributing their ideas to the class.

In evaluating students in basic and general level language courses, teachers should use formative evaluation more often than summative evaluation in order to encourage development and increase motivation. Formative evaluation also leaves room for teachers to help students to complete evaluation tasks and reduce fears and hostilities students may have. The aim of the program is to enable students to communicate in the target language; the need for linguistic accuracy should not be overemphasized but should be kept in perspective as only one component of communication.



Group Work

Teachers must include work with partners and small group work in their international language program in order to adapt their instruction to the wide variety of students in their classes and help each student to develop communicative competence.

The use of grouping makes possible a varied program in which the pace of learning and the level of difficulty of the material can be matched to the competence of different groups while other students are proceeding with their assignments. It makes it possible for students to work in depth on one aspect of a cultural topic or one reading selection and to gain, in addition, some breadth of knowledge from exposure to the work of other groups in the class.

To introduce group work successfully, teachers should consider the factors of timing, organization, preparation, classroom management, and evaluation.

A. Timing

Group work can be introduced:

- A. after the teacher has had the opportunity to get to know the students
- B. after the students have become familiar with an activity

-
- C. intermittently, to vary procedures
 - D. after material has been introduced and practised, in order to reinforce it through application
 - E. when the teacher wants to observe the students in order to record their progress towards objectives.

B. Organization

In organizing groups, the teacher is advised to:

- have students work together at first as a full class, then in pairs or groups of three or four doing the same activity, then in groups engaged in different activities
- vary the size, make-up, and purpose of the group for different activities
- increase the size of the group, the complexity of the task, and the time allotted as group skills develop
- group students at different times by ability or interests, by their preferences, or randomly.

C. Preparation

In preparation for group work, teachers should:

- try to obtain additional assistance for group-work sessions from senior students, co-operative education students or community volunteers
- prepare a variety of short activities to be exchanged
- organize and check materials
- ensure that group activities allow for the participation of each group member

- establish the ground rules with students
- teach students the language needed to manage the process of group work
- welcome student input into the process
- explain each activity and the way in which it relates to what students are learning.

D. Classroom Management

The monitoring of noise levels, the timing of tasks correction techniques, the use of the target language, and the use of peer assistance need special consideration in managing group work.

There will inevitably be an increase in noise level when students work in groups. Teachers and principals must be prepared to accept a certain amount of productive noise in the classroom as groups practise listening and speaking skills and prepare projects and presentations.

Some students may not complete assigned work on time. Grouping will at first involve some trial and error in the selection of learning activities and the timing of tasks. The teacher can minimize confusion by planning in detail the work to be covered and by monitoring the students' progress through the various tasks. It is essential, particularly when grouping is used over a long period of time, for the teacher and students to keep up-to-date records of the students' completion of learning tasks, checking regularly to determine whether they are advancing at a reasonable rate.

The most competent students may finish a unit very quickly. When this happens, these students may pursue a topic in greater depth independently, read or write complementary material, or research a cultural topic. They may also assist classmates who are encountering problems, an activity that will help them to consolidate their own understanding.

Some pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary errors may go undetected during group work.

Students working in groups should be encouraged to correct each other or to make a note of difficulties to be discussed later with the teacher. When rotating from group to group, the teacher should note the types of errors being made, and their frequency. If several students are making the same type of error, teachers should use whole-class instruction and practice to correct the problem.

Teachers often fear that students will speak English more than the target language when they work in groups. The clear expectation that groups will work in the target language must be established at the outset. Regular monitoring by the teacher will be necessary, particularly when the students are new to group work. If the teacher selects tasks judiciously, defines them precisely, outlines clearly the steps for progressing through each task, and provides appropriately prepared materials, students should be able to work in the target language without constant teacher supervision.

The use of peer assistance and tutoring is encouraged, but the teacher must find ways of preventing better students from being coerced by peer pressure into sharing with slower students work that they have already completed.



E. Evaluation

Some group work will be evaluated informally as a regular part of class interaction. When groups are working on a project that is to be marked, one component of each student's mark for the project will be based on the quality of the group's work. Each participant will get the same mark for that component. The other component of each student's mark will be based on that person's individual contribution as assessed by the participants and the teacher.

Teaching for Communicative Competence

The principal aim of an international language program is to help students to develop communication skills. They will develop the four language skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - gradually and naturally through the interaction of speaker and listener, writer and reader. If the essential aim of the program - communication - is to be achieved, structures and vocabulary must be taught and practised in context and must be integrated in the students' functional command of the language.

Learning a language in a classroom requires language study, language practice, and language use. Real communication takes place when students go beyond practice exercises, set models, and questions with predictable answers to use language in open ended questions and discussions, and in free writing. Language is learned through interaction. In a communicative classroom, students:

- listen to others and understand what is said
- speak to others for a variety of practical purposes
- read for information and for pleasure
- write to give and obtain information.

In such a communicative classroom, teachers plan their lessons so that:

- the lesson is carried on in the target language
- questions and discussion are often open ended

-
- students ask questions and will answer them
 - students express personal opinions and reactions that go beyond factual recall
 - there is small-group and partner work
 - correction is at times limited, in order not to inhibit language use.

There are two hallmarks that identify the communicative classroom activities: the four language skills are integrated; and students come to know each other through the interaction that takes place, exchanging information, reactions, and opinions in the language as they learn it.

Unit Planning and Lesson Preparation

Unit planning and lesson planning are pivotal elements for successful teaching. Most teachers begin to plan by asking a series of questions. The following is a list of queries that will help you develop and prepare units, themes and individual lessons:

A. What is my purpose in teaching a particular unit, theme, or lesson?

- choose a focal point or central idea that will be used as a thread to tie all lessons in a unit together

B. What teaching strategies and learning strategies will be used so that students can be successful in reaching learning outcomes?

- strategies such as cooperative learning and active participation activities should be included
- provide for a variety of learning rates and learning styles

C. Which type of resources will be needed to attain the learning outcomes of units and individual lessons?

- curriculum
- textbooks
- authentic materials (newspapers, magazines, maps, brochures, video tapes, etc.)
- audio-visual equipment
- records, tapes
- slides, films
- reproducible resource materials
- teacher-made materials

D. What will be the learning outcomes?

The following is an example of learning outcomes taken from the BC Ministry of Education's Languages Template Package (pages A-2 - A-10).

Also included are Language-Learning Strategies (page 5) from the same document.

E. How will I organize?

- break down the unit into individual lessons to determine the length of time needed to conclude the unit
- decide upon the order in which each part of the unit is to be taught
- plan for whole class, small group and individual work and activities that will meet the expected learning outcomes
- include a variety of cooperative learning activities
- locate and/or prepare teaching materials and resources
- develop and prepare assessment materials

F. Evaluation: How will I evaluate students to know if the learning outcomes have been reached?

- written tests
- oral expression
- teacher observation and interaction with students
- individual assignments
- group work
- presentations
- journals
- self-evaluation
- active participation in class
- criterion referenced evaluation (criteria is set by both teachers and students)



The Individual Lesson Plan

The following are necessary elements of lesson planning. This is not, however, an exhaustive list of elements. You may have your own ideas to include in lesson plans:

1. Subject/Topic

2. Learning Outcomes

list what the student is expected to learn during this lesson

3. Objectives

- what do you want the students to learn?
- how will students demonstrate that they have attained the learning outcome(s)?
- are your learning outcomes achievable in one teaching period?
- are learning outcomes: **specific**; **clearly defined**; and, **few** in number?

4. Procedure

A. Set: This means that you will let students know what will be taught during the lesson. You may relate the day's lesson to what has been previously taught and you should actively involve all students. One way to do this is to relate the learning to the real world, thereby making the learning relevant and focusing student attention on that day's lesson.

B. Instruction or direct teaching occurs at this point.

C. Monitor and Adjust: As you teach, monitor student understanding. If students have difficulty during the direct teaching phase, be prepared to revise the lesson, to provide more examples, or to change the teaching strategy.

D. Guided Practice: During this part of the lesson, students practice under the guidance of the teacher. Allow for guided practice in each lesson, especially when the learning content and objectives are new. Students may work alone, with a partner, or in small groups. During guided practice, the teacher should move from student to student or group to group and do the following quickly:

- give positive feedback to those who demonstrate a good understanding of the learning outcomes, and
- prompt those who are experiencing difficulty

5. Closure: This is a final check for understanding. Students are asked to summarize that day's learning. Summaries can be written or oral. Closure allows students time to reflect upon and process the learning that has taken place. Reasons for closure:

- ▶ aids retention
- ▶ allows for summarization
- ▶ refocuses students, at the end of a lesson, on the targeted learning outcomes
- ▶ provides the teacher with assessment information.

Note: Lesson plans should also include teaching strategies, learning strategies, learning activities, and a list of resource materials.

For more information about the preceding, contact:

info@canadianlanguages.ca

www.canadianlanguages.ca