

Secondary School Chinese Curricular Guidebook--- Activity Summary

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6. Practical activities for active learning

Many Chinese language teachers are good at collecting materials and identifying content knowledge to present to the class. They usually spend hours creating handouts, worksheets, quizzes, tests, and even finding cultural notes and YouTube video clips. They do many teacher-centered teaching and assume that what they teach is what the students will learn. In a 21st century world language class, students should be the “doers” and “creator”. After all, the students should be the ones who are practicing with the language in the classroom, not the Chinese teachers themselves, right?!

Here are some of the activities to ensure student-centered class. Remember that the majority of class time is for students to practice and acquire the language.

a) Vocabulary level activities:

Title: The Match Game	Small group
<p><u>Directions:</u> Divide the class into groups of three. Each student needs a paper and pencil. In Chinese, prepare a list of categories familiar to your students. Sample categories for a food unit are: types of meat, spicy foods, desserts, things you eat for breakfast, vegetables, your favorite cafeteria food, and green foods.</p> <p>Name one of the categories you have prepared. Each student silently writes an answer on their paper. No information is shared with teammates. At signal, the students compare answers. If all three students match, the team gets three points. If two students match, the team gets one point. At the end of the game, each team totals its score and the team with the highest score wins.</p>	
Title: Popsicle Stick Game	Whole class
<p><u>Directions:</u> Pass out all sticks, one or more per student, keeping one for the teacher. Use a stopwatch to time the game. Read aloud the English word on the teacher’s stick. The student who has equivalent word in Chinese stands, says the word, then flips the stick over and says a new English word. The game continues in this pattern until it ends with my target language word. Record the elapsed time to compare with the times of other classes.</p> <p>Hints: Have students exchange sticks for each new game.</p>	

Title: Describe and Draw	Pair
<p><u>Direction:</u> This is a barrier game in which each student in pair takes turns to describe something he/she see on the board and his/her partner then has to draw what he/she heard.</p>	
Title: Charades	Small group
<p><u>Direction:</u> Charades is a word guessing game. it is an acting game in which one player <i>acts out</i> a word or phrase often by miming similar-sounding words, and the other players guess the word or phrase. The idea is to use physical rather than verbal language to convey the meaning to another party.</p>	
Title: Listen and Put	Pair
<p><u>Direction:</u> Pair students, giving one a filled-out Bingo grid and the other one a blank grid. Student A will describe his grid to Student B, in the target language, until Student B has the same illustration. This is great for practicing prepositions, such as “在” : “Put [phrase] to the right of [phrase].”</p> <p><u>Alternative:</u> You may also have Student A turn to the back of the classroom, then post one Bingo grid that has been filled in With Chinese words on projector, have Student B look at the board and describe what he/she sees to Student A.</p>	
Title: Students vs. teacher	Whole class
<p><u>Direction:</u> Prepare a PPT with at least 20 slides of vocabulary words with one on each slide. Tell the students you are going to say what’s on the slide one by one. If the teacher said it right, then students should “chorally” repeat the word; otherwise, students should remain silent. If any student(s) make a sound, the teacher gets a point; however, if the students stay silent, the students get a point. Continue playing until the last slide is shown. You will have the class leader or a volunteer keeps track of your scores.</p>	
Title: Quizlet	Individual or pair
<p><u>Direction:</u> Quizlet is a free online interactive flashcard program. Go to www.quizlet.com and register. Then create flashcard sets for your students. Student can choose the games provided to learn and study the flashcards.</p>	

b) Sentence level activities:

Title: 2-minute speed dating	Small group
<p><u>Directions:</u> Give each student 12-15 questions (or enough so that they cannot finish asking and answering all questions in 2 minutes in the first round), and randomly pair students. Start the countdown clock (www. stop-watch.com) and have students take turns asking and answering questions. Once the clock rings, tell them to find a different partner and repeat the activity one more time. You may stop after 3 rounds or until one of the pairs is able to finish all questions.</p>	
Title: Running Dictation	Small group
<p><u>Directions:</u> Choose a short passage or dialogue and make several copies. Put the copies up around the walls of the classroom (or even the school building). Put the students in pairs or small groups. The aim is for one of the students in each pair to walk (or run!) to read the passage on the wall. They remember some of the passage and walk (or run!) back to their partner. They quietly dictate what they remembered to their partner, who writes it down. They then swap roles. Over several turns they will build the whole passage. This means they really do have to run back and forth because students will only remember three or four words at a time. The winning pair is the team that finishes first - although you need to check for mistakes. If there are mistakes, they must keep walking to check!</p>	
Title: Yes/No taboo	Small groups
<p><u>Directions:</u> Students work with the teacher or in groups to brainstorm a list of yes/no questions that relate to the current topic. The class is then divided into 3-4 teams. Determine an imaginary borderline behind which each team stands – one player behind the other. The first person in line holds a clipboard or small dry erase board. When the teacher asks a question, the player who is “up” quickly writes an answer to the question and holds it up for the teacher to see. The trick is that students are not allowed to answer with yes or no. Any player who gives a satisfactory answer is allowed to cross over the line, and the first team to get all its members over the line is the winner.</p> <p>Examples: 你有红笔吗? 我有蓝笔。 你最喜欢吃饺子吗? 饺子是我最喜欢的中国食物。</p>	

Title: Give One, Take One	Pair
<p>Direction: Students get a piece of paper with a grid (3x4). They fill in 3 squares with a vocabulary word or sentence using a certain structure. They then take turns reading their words or sentence aloud. Each student then “gets” an idea from the partner and writes it in a blank square on the grid. The activity continues until the students have filled in all the squares by giving and getting ideas from others.</p>	
Information gap	Pair
<p>Direction: An information gap activity is an activity where students are missing the information they need to complete a task and need to talk to each other to find it. For example, Student A has a personal information card of a person with age and nationality missing, while Student B has the same card with school and grade level missing. Together they can complete the information card by asking each other questions.</p>	

c) Paragraph level activities:

Title: Vanishing Cloze	Whole class
<p>Directions: Write an important sentence or group of sentences on the board. Have the students repeat the sentence. Rub off every seventh word. Have the class say the sentence or sentences, using the words on the board and their memory. Rub off the words again. Have the class say the sentence or sentences again. Repeat until all the words have been rubbed off and the class is saying the sentence or sentences from memory.</p> <p>Optional: Students write the vanishing cloze sentences in their books from memory.</p> <p>Alternative: Type the sentences in a word file in advance. During class, project the text on the screen. Next click on the “Text Highlight Colors” and change it to black. Then use the black highlighter to hide every seventh word (or any word of your choice).</p>	
Title: Group Story Writing	Small group
<p>Directions: Divide students in groups of 4-5. Have each group of students sit around a table and number off within their teams. Give each table a piece of paper in a different color so it would be easier to track later. Find a comic strip or a series of story boards. Tell each group to write a sentence as a</p>	

group based on the first board. Then pass the paper to the next group. Have each group write another sentence following the story line. Continue until all the boards are shown. Depending on how much time you have and how long you want the stories to be, you can control how many sentences they have to write for one board.

Title: Jigsaw Puzzle

Small group

Directions:

Assign students to “home” teams of 4 or 5 students. Have students number off within their teams. Divide a short story or text into 4 parts. Have Student 1 in each group gathered in a corner and read Part 1 together, Student 2 read Part 2, ..., and so on. Then have students move back to “home” teams and tell their “home” team what they read. Lastly, have them complete the story. You may want to ask random students to answer some questions you have in the story/text to make sure everyone gets the entire story/text at the end.

Hint: The text can be tailored to your student’s level. Be creative. For example, you can use 4 different restaurant menus and have students pretend that they are food critiques. The representative from each group need to visit one other restaurant, find out information about that restaurant, and share what they know about the food and the restaurant they visited.

Title: Act it out

Small group

Directions:

Give a situation on your current topic to each small group. Have the group members discuss about the situation and act it out in front of the class after a short prep time. The prompt can be a picture, a description, or a comic strip. For example,

1. A restaurant scene



2. A travel scenario: 你和你的同学在北京旅行。有一天，你们想去看一看天安门。天安门离你们的饭店不远。开车大概只须要 10 分钟。你们坐上一辆出租车，可是路上太多车了，司机开了一个小时还没到。

3. A health issue



Title: One-minute speech

Whole class

Directions:

Give students a topic (e.g. My Best Friend, My Typical School Day, etc.) and some time (e.g. 7-9 minutes), to prepare for an individual one-minute speech. Set the timer to one minute. One by one, the students will then be asked to say their speech by memory in front the class.

Title: Fishbowl	Whole class
<p><u>Directions:</u> Arrange classroom chairs in two concentric circles facing inward, with no empty seats. Have students take positions voluntarily if possible. The individuals in the inner circle have the freedom to speak, but those in the outer circle must remain silent. If an individual from the outer circle wishes to make any comment, change the topic, or simply be in the inner circle, she/he must stand up, tap an inner circle member, and change seats (a non-negotiable act). Conversely, an individual in the inner circle cannot leave until selected by someone from the outer circle.</p> <p>Hint: There are no rewards or punitive measures for participation or non-participation. Individuals are free to do as they please as long as they follow the stated rules. Depending upon language level, number of participants, time availability, and teacher goals, the activity can last from thirty minutes to over an hour.</p>	