

The Amity Teacher's Toolkit 2003

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Introduction

While this latest version of the Toolkit is not a radical departure from the previous version, it is cleaned up and smoothed out to some extent, particularly the material in Part I - Teaching Oral Skills, and other sections have been updated as much as possible. There is also a new section, Part II - Sample Course Outlines, which consists of descriptions of oral skills and writing courses. My hope is that this new section will be of use especially to those who are new to teaching and would appreciate seeing how other teachers might go about the process of planning a course. I also hope that this section will be expanded by the addition of other sample course outlines in the future.

Over the years, a growing number of Amity teachers and friends have contributed material to the Toolkit: Cindy and Bob Ball, Christine Boucique, Hilde Brungot, Maxine Burnett, Candi & Tom Cann-Jenkins, Jean Crouch-Smith, Thom Downing, Milford & Evelyn Eglund, Norma and Stan Foskett, Bryan Fulford, Kate Goodspeed, Ian Groves, Karin Helmreich, Jerry & Jennifer Henry, Matt Johnson (editor, version 2), Yvonne Kalshoven, Peter Kim, David McKoski, Elaine Moy (editor, version 2), Ingrid Nordwall, Barbara Penny, Stephanie & Scott Peterson, Jeff Rasch, Anastasia Sofranac, Sylvia Skeffington, Jerry & Joanne Stinson, Kim Strong, Judy Sutterlin, Sue Todd, Suzanne Weber, Joni Wiggins, Anastasia Wilch, Elizabeth Wilson, Mary Wong, Pam Whitfield, Melinda & Michael Whong-Barr, Gary Wittig, Gus & Eileen Wttewaall. Thanks to each and all of them for their time and assistance, and my apologies to anyone whose name I have inadvertently omitted from the list.

As always, the Toolkit remains a work in progress, and there is always room for new contributions.

Don
June 2003

How To Teach Oral Skills: The Five Golden Rules

#1: Give students as much opportunity as possible to practice speaking! Speaking a foreign language is a rather complex process - you not only need to put your ideas into the sounds, words, and structures of some other language, but need to craft them so they will make sense and communicate effectively in the mental world of a foreign culture. The only way students will ever learn to do this comfortably and fluently is through lots of practice. While this might seem obvious, there are several reasons it is still worth pointing out:

- **Assumptions about "English class":** In the minds of many teachers and students, the phrase "English class" conjures up images of a teacher explaining grammar to students, and anything that wanders too far from this ideal isn't a "real" English class. Unfortunately, listening to grammar explanations doesn't teach students to speak English any more than listening to explanations of guitar playing makes one a guitarist.
- **Teacher talk:** It is easy for teachers to become intoxicated by the rapt attention of students, the compulsion to explain things, or simply the joy of having a captive audience. Granted, it is good for teachers to talk a fair amount in class, but excessive "teacher talk" often deprives students of the chance to practice speaking English.
- **Assumptions about "discussion" activities:** Both teachers and students tend to like large-group discussion activities in which the whole class participates. These allow the teacher to keep track of what is going on, and students are reassured by the fact that the teacher can hear what they say. The problem with these activities is that only one student gets to speak at a time, so such activities generate relatively little actual speaking practice -- in fact, often none for many of the more quiet students.

For these reasons, the best way to help students build their oral skills is through lots of pair and small group activities during which many students are speaking at any given time. Such activities should not make up the entire course diet - there also need to be large group discussions (especially to provide closure to pair and small group discussions), and times when the teacher speaks in order to give students listening practice (see below). However, the average lesson should contain a hefty dose of pair and small group activities.

#2: Provide ample listening practice! It does students little good to be able to speak English if they can't understand it - in fact, students who understand fairly well but speak poorly are arguably more functional in real communication situations than those whose speaking skills exceed their listening comprehension. Thus, in any oral skills course, listening practice should play a major part. The most valuable kind of listening practice is that pitched at a level where it:

- stretches students' skills, making them guess and even struggle a bit, but:
- is not so far over their heads that they become totally lost and give up.

Teaching listening comprehension is thus in part a process of gradually upping the ante - providing students with practice opportunities that gradually increase in difficulty. This can be done by speaking a little more quickly and naturally, using a wider range of vocabulary, and so forth as students' listening skills improve.

#3: Create opportunity for real communication! Both students and teachers will find oral skills classes more meaningful and interesting if conversation practice involves "real" communication. In other words, as often as possible:

- Conversation should involve an "information gap." In other words, student A should tell student B something student B doesn't already know. Interest in conversation dwindles quickly when student B has to listen to student A struggle to say something student B already knows. (The cultural difference between foreign Western teachers and Chinese students provides a wonderful natural information gap, and this should be drawn on as much as possible in oral skills classes.)
- Students should be given opportunity to express their own ideas, especially to talk about topics they are interested in, care about, and are relevant to their lives.

#4: Expand the range of topics students practice talking about! The development of speaking skills can be viewed as an expanding of a circle with the student at the center. In the beginning, the easiest kinds of topics for students to talk about are those which are relatively concrete, conceptually simple, and close and familiar to the student. Often these are the topics of daily life. Then, as students' skills advance, they should be encouraged to practice talking about topics a little further out in their circle -- topics concerning other people, times, and places. At the outer ranges of the circle are topics that are relatively abstract, conceptually complex, and unfamiliar to the student.

The teacher's task is thus to push students gradually to move further out into the circle of topics, learning not only to discuss new topics but also how to cope with discussion of topics with which they are not yet entirely familiar. Students who are afraid of the unknown tend to stay within a small circle of familiar topics. This, in turn, tends to slow or halt their speaking skills development. In contrast, students who become comfortable discussing new topics, even if they do not yet have all the requisite vocabulary, are more likely to keep pushing their skills forward.

#5: Build discussion skills! Speaking and listening is not something one usually does solo; rather they usually involve interacting with other people. So one important aspect of building oral skills is learning how to interact with other people effectively in English. Some specific sub-skills involved in this are:

- explaining what you mean (when others might not understand you);
- persuading (when others might not agree with you);
- assessing what others know or believe (so you know how much you need to explain or persuade);
- clarifying what you mean (to avoid potential misunderstanding);
- clarifying what others mean (when you don't understand them, or aren't sure you understand them);
- politely disagreeing (while giving as little offense as possible);
- requesting (eliciting) information;
- repairing misunderstandings;
- finding ways to bridge gaps in your own language skills (when you don't know exactly how to say something);
- drawing other people into a conversation;
- moving a conversation along;
- bringing discussion of a topic to conclusion;
- building consensus;
- changing topics;

There are many more, but even the list above could serve as the framework for many hours of in-class work.

Setting Goals for Oral Skills Courses

The most important aspect of planning a course is setting goals. Unfortunately, however, it is not unusual for Chinese schools to leave you entirely to your own devices in deciding what the goals of the course should be. While such freedom of choice has its advantages, at times it may also leave you feeling like a rudderless boat adrift in a very broad ocean.

Obviously every setting and group of students is to some extent unique, and you will need to tailor your goals to your students' needs. However, Chinese students often fall more or less into one of the three broad categories listed below, and one way to start setting goals for your oral skills courses is to 1) determine which of these levels most closely matches the skill levels of your students, and then 2) look at the suggested goals, methods, and Toolkit materials appropriate to those levels. (Of course you may have material other than the Toolkit available, but to make things more fun we'll assume there is no assigned textbook for the course, and that the only material you have readily at hand is the Toolkit.)

Level 1: Students who can/will hardly speak at all.

Description: Students in the category are typically first-year college students in their first semester, especially students from poorer and more rural areas. They:

- are almost completely unable to communicate orally in the target language;
- are extremely uncomfortable when trying to speak the target language
- understand very little of what you say to them, including classroom explanations and directions.

Students at this level may already have considerable textbook knowledge of the target language: i.e. they know quite a lot of vocabulary and grammar rules, and can read slowly. However, they have never had much opportunity to practice speaking and listening, either because their middle school teachers were weak in these skills or because teachers neglected these in order to focus on other skills that count for more in the college entrance examination. (With the increasing emphasis on oral skill training in middle schools, fewer and fewer students fall into this category, but there are still some.)

It is likely that students in this category will initially be quite disoriented in your class, nervous in the presence of a foreigner, and confused by your classroom expectations - which will probably differ considerably from theirs.

Suggested Goals:

Build students' listening skills, especially their ability to understand classroom instructions so they can function in class. In particular:

- Help students get over the shock of listening to spoken English, and begin to recognize previously studied words when they hear them.
- Help students learn to understand classroom instructions (so the class functions more smoothly).

Build students' speaking skills. Students need to begin using the English vocabulary and grammar they have already studied to begin expressing their own ideas. In particular:

- Build students' fluency; i.e. their ability to put ideas into English quickly and smoothly enough that they can begin to sustain conversation.
- Improve their pronunciation and intonation as needed.
- Teach basic "classroom tools" (like "What does ___ mean?" or "Please repeat.")

Build students' comfort speaking the target language. Sometimes the first hurdle you need to help students overcome is just getting up the courage to open their mouths and speak. This is achieved through:

- lots of activities that are not too difficult for students;

- a degree of continuity, familiarity and predictability, rather than a totally new and unfamiliar set of activities each lesson;
- gradually orienting students to your classroom style and expectations rather than changing all of the rules they are used to overnight.

Build interest in language learning. For many students, language study in middle school was mechanical, boring, and directed almost exclusively at passing examinations, so it is important to build their interest in language study.

Other goals: Additional goals of a course could include:

- teaching new vocabulary, especially how words are used;
- pronunciation and intonation;
- new phrases and sentence structures.

Suggested Methods: (See also "Activities for Teaching Oral Skills.")

For listening:

- Total Physical Response (TPR): Good for improving basic listening skills and teaching vocabulary, especially words directly related to things and activities in the classroom. Also makes a fun warm-up.
- True/False Listening: Good for building basic listening skills and vocabulary. Can be used to teach vocabulary less immediately related to the classroom.
- Dictation: Good for building basic listening and writing (spelling, capitalization, etc.) skills. In situations where students lack textbooks, you can also provide students with short dialogues by dictating them, then using the dialogues as material for lessons.
- Show and Tell: Good for building ability to understand slightly longer stretches of language. Being able to see an object makes what you say more interesting and easier to understand. This is often also a good activity for sharing about yourself and building relations.
- Focused Listening: For practice listening to longer stretches of language.
- Story Telling: You can give students practice listening to longer stretches of language by telling them short simple stories, especially about your own life and experiences. This can also be an enjoyable way to build your relationship with students.

For basic speaking skills:

- Surveys: These are good speaking/listening activities for beginners because the questions are predictable (if everyone in the class is asking about the same topic), and because the same questions and answers can be repeated several times. However, they also give students opportunity to express their own ideas and to improvise.
- Interviews: Good for low level students if students interview each other on very familiar topics (such as family, hometown, and so forth).
- Making Up Dialogues: Having students write and then perform dialogues, perhaps working from a model in a textbook, is a good way to have them start putting their own ideas into English in a way that is still relatively controlled and safe.
- Pair/Small Group Tasks: Conversations in pairs are a good way for students to start building their ability to converse and express their own ideas. (Pairs are often better for lower level students who are trying to build their confidence.)
- Classroom Chat: Informal question and answer between the teacher and students can be a good way for establishing the idea of language as communication; it can also be a fun warm-up. However, for low level students, it is best if any questions addressed to them are very easy (to avoid long awkward silences), and also if students not be put on the spot too much by being forced to respond to questions they may not understand. (It may be best to rely mostly on volunteers to answer questions.)

Building students' comfort level:

- Choral Drill: While this kind of activity isn't communicative, it is familiar to students and is of some use in reviewing material, practicing pronunciation and intonation, and just getting

students used to speaking.

- Jazz Chants: This is a fun way to practice intonation and the rhythm of sentences; it is also enough like Choral Drill that even low-level students should find it comfortable.
- Dialog Memorization: This may help very low classes build confidence. Best if students write their own dialogs.

Building interest in language learning:

- Simply getting students to use language for genuine communication will improve things dramatically.
- Games make class more lively and fun, but should also have value for language learning (not all games involving language do). A good example is "20 Questions," which is good for teaching proper question form, as well as for practicing listening and speaking skills.
- Songs provide a nice break while still allowing a bit of language practice. Good for making class more comfortable and appealing.

Relevant Toolkit Materials

The Dialogue Course: This is a set of dialogues and follow-up exercises designed to help students improve their listening, pronunciation and intonation, and speaking. The level of difficulty can be adjusted by whether dialogues are presented to students through dictation or dictogloss.

Explaining Culture/Daily Life Module: Most of the topics and activities in this module are relatively easy because they deal with familiar aspects of daily life, so this would be a good starting point for helping low level students build speaking and listening skills.

Level 2: Students who can sustain basic conversation.

Description: Students in this category are typically in their second or third semester of college English study, though first-semester students who had good middle school English training may also be at this level. Generally students at this level:

- Can talk about themselves and their immediate environment, but can still only comfortably discuss a very limited range of topics and handle a limited range of conversation situations. (Once they get beyond this limited range, they tend to break down quickly because of inadequate vocabulary or because they lack strategies for coping when they can't think of the word they want.)
- May be hard to understand because of pronunciation problems.
- Can understand slow, clear "teacher English" on familiar or predictable topics, but run into trouble beyond that range. (One problem is that they may not be accustomed to guessing, so give up too quickly when they hear too many unknown words. Another problem is that there are many vocabulary items they have studied in textbooks yet cannot retrieve quickly enough from their memories when they hear them -- especially when heard in an on-going flow of speech that won't allow them to pause and think.)

Suggested Goals:

Further building students' listening skills. At this level, specific goals include:

- Increasing the range of topics students can understand someone talking about. This is achieved mainly by exposing students to lots of vocabulary on a range of topics.
- Building the speed with which students can comprehend what they hear. This is achieved mainly through practice.
- Building students' skills and comfort guessing the meaning of what others say, even when they don't understand every word spoken.

Further building students' speaking ability. Specific goals include:

- Expanding the range of topics students are able to talk about.
- Building their ability to express their own ideas.
- Enhancing their discussion skills; i.e. their ability to cooperate and function effectively in conversation with others.
- Build students' comfort/skill communicating ideas when they don't know exactly the right word or structure they need.

Building students' ownership of their own language learning. Students need to develop learning strategies and habits for the day when they won't have a teachers to tell them what to do. If their study efforts are to be sustainable, students must begin to take responsibility for their own learning.

Other goals. Additional goals at this level would include:

- teaching new vocabulary, especially how words are used;
- pronunciation and intonation;
- new phrases and sentence structures;
- cultural information.

Suggested Methods: (See also "Activities for Teaching Oral Skills.")

For building listening skills:

- Classroom Chat: One of the best ways to build your students' listening skills is simply to talk to them a lot in class. At this level, it is important to begin gradually upping the ante by speaking more quickly and naturally as students are able to handle it, especially when it is not absolutely essential that students understand every word.
- Talks: Short talks and even lectures are good for building students' general listening skills, especially their ability to listen for longer periods and cope with larger stretches of discourse. (While the focus at this level is more on building listening comprehension than on teaching content, talks on culture-related topics are a good way to kill two birds with one stone.)
- Teacher Interviews: These are good for building listening and note-taking skills, as well as providing practice asking questions. This can also be adapted as a creative way for teaching culture.
- Dictogloss: This activity builds students' ability both understand and retain information they hear.

For building speaking skills:

- Pair/Small Group Tasks: For students at this level, a heavy diet of small group activities is recommended. These build both speaking and discussion skills.
- Surveys and Interviews: These activities generate a lot of speaking practice because so many students get to speak.
- Cocktail Parties allow lots of free, informal speaking practice.
- Role Plays are a good way for students to practice "functions" of English conversation such as offering an invitation, politely refusing a request, and so forth.
- Large Group Discussions become feasible at this level.

For building students' ownership of their own language learning:

- English Corner: English corners (English clubs, and so forth) are not only a good way for students to practice speaking, they are also a good way to get students used to practicing on their own, especially if students take responsibility for managing the English corner.

Relevant Toolkit Materials

The Dialogue Course: This material may also be appropriate for Level 2 students if they are taught as dictogloss activities.

Explaining Culture: All of the Explaining Culture modules would be appropriate for students at this level, though the Daily Life Module might be a touch on the easy side. The Cycle of Life Module and Relationships Module deal with topics that are somewhat closer to students' personal lives, so may be slightly easier than those that deal with broader society - the Nation, Society, and Popular Culture and Arts modules. All of these will expand the range of topics students can discuss, and all have material for both speaking and listening practice.

Activity Grab Bag: This section in the Toolkit has a number of activities appropriate to students at this level.

English Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions: The material in this section of the Toolkit can be used in a variety of ways to supplement other material.

Level 3: Students who can easily handle daily conversation.

Description: Students in this category are typically second year students, in their third or fourth semester of Oral English, or higher. Students at this level:

- Can talk about issues of daily life and society fairly easily (though generally not without errors in grammar and usage).
- Rarely "break down" when they don't know a vocabulary word they need -- they have developed strategies for explaining their way around the problem. However, they would still have difficulty discussing more advanced topics -- such as issues related to their profession -- in English.
- Can understand clear, moderately-paced "teacher English" quite readily, especially when the teacher is talking about a familiar daily topic.
- Still have difficulty with faster, more natural speech, and with more advanced topics.

Suggested Goals:

Building students' ability to listen for content. The goal here is to build students' ability to listen to talks, lectures and so forth on more advanced topics, such as culture or their professional field. Specific goals include building students' ability to:

- Comprehend more advanced discourse.
- Understand naturally paced speech.
- Take notes, or remember and retain the content of talks they hear (instead of just recognizing English words they hear).

Further expanding the range of topics students can discuss. Here the goal is build students' ability to discuss topics in the educated adult range. Specific goals include building students ability to:

- Express ideas with greater clarity, precision, and nuance.
- Discuss topics related to their professional work

Building students' ownership of their on-going language study. Students at this level may be near the end of their formal (in-class) language training, yet not have reached a skill level where further study is no longer needed. Thus it is good to encourage students in the habit of making their own decisions about language study, and independently designing and carrying out their own language study plans.

Suggested Methods:

For building listening skills:

- Talks, especially talks related to aspects of culture or students' professional field.

For building speaking skills:

- Pair/Small Group Tasks: For students at this level, a heavy diet of small group activities is recommended. These build both speaking and discussion skills.
- Surveys and Interviews: These activities generate a lot of speaking practice because so many students get to speak.
- Debates: These provide good practice in explanation and persuasion, as well as analytical thinking and argumentation.
- Also, Cocktail Parties, Role Plays, Large Group Discussions.

For building students' ownership of their future language study:

- Encourage English language newspaper reading: The 21st Century is a weekly newspaper published by China Daily in English for students of English. It is far less expensive for subscribers than the China Daily. It also covers an interesting range of topics and would make good material for a discussion (or reading/writing) class.
- Encourage radio news listening: In most parts of China, some kind of English radio news program can be heard; now there is even English news on many television stations. Japanese broadcasts are also available in some areas; possibly also German. Radio news provides a good opportunity for continued use of English because it is inherently interesting - and free if you have a radio. The main problem is that listening to the news requires a fairly wide vocabulary range and good listening skills. Radio news also switches from story to story quickly, so students need to have ways to quickly establish a context for guessing.
- Encourage book reading: Novels in particular offer an inherently interesting way to continue using English, and while students may have few English books in their town, they could probably find a way to get a friend in a larger city to send an English book occasionally. One can read Jane Eyre or Scarlett for a long time.
- Promote English corners and conversation groups: If students get in the habit of organizing and running their own conversation groups (English corners, etc.), they may be able to get something similar going in their new hometown after graduation. This, however, requires that they develop the habit of not only participating in such groups but also starting and maintaining them. You can work toward this goal by encouraging conversation corners and helping students learn how to run them. While you might also choose to participate at times, you should also ensure that you are not always there, lest the group depend on you to keep the corner going.

Relevant Toolkit Materials

Talking About Culture: Most of the "Talking About Culture" modules (Toolkit - Part III) would be appropriate for this level. For serving or future language teachers, the Teaching and Education Module and Language Learning Module would be especially good sources of topics and activities.

Encounters: These exercises aim to develop both speaking skills, especially explanation, and good intercultural communication habits.

Talking About Language Learning and Teaching: This is a textbook to give serving and future language teachers opportunity to practice discussing issues related to language teaching. Available from Yilin Press.

Activities for Teaching Oral Skills: An Introduction to Basic Activity Types

This section provides an introduction to some of the most common and useful kinds of activities used in teaching speaking and listening skills - the activities suggested in many portions of the Toolkit. As you become familiar with these different types of activities, you will find that many of the topics in the Toolkit can be used with activity types other than the one with which they are matched, and you are encouraged to mix and match activities and topics. (The activity types are listed alphabetically for easier reference.)

Choral Drill: This is essentially the all-class "Repeat after me" exercise in which the teacher first says something and then students repeat it. While it is of limited value in building communicative language skills, it can be useful for practicing pronunciation, intonation, and also for getting lower level students more accustomed to opening their mouths and speaking.

Procedure:

1. Choose a dialog from a textbook, read it aloud line by line, and have students repeat after each line. Students will pay more attention to pronunciation and intonation if they repeat after listening to you rather than reading aloud from a dialog in their textbook, so if the dialog is from one of their textbooks, have them close the book. (Each line students repeat in this way needs to be fairly short so as not to overload their short-term memory, so you may have to break long sentences into shorter parts.)

2. Have students try to replicate your pronunciation and intonation.

Tips:

1. If the goal is to build students' mastery of normal speech intonation, it is best to use dialogs and other texts that approximate spoken (rather than written) language. (Learning to read literary texts aloud is also of some value, but probably more for students at higher levels.)

2. When repeating longer sentences, have students build it up from the end (to preserve normal intonation). Ex:

had ever eaten?
the best she had ever eaten?
my cooking is the best she had ever eaten?
Did she really say my cooking is the best she had ever eaten?

3. In the Toolkit, the "Dialogue Course" material could be used for Choral Drill.

4. See also "Jazz Chants."

Classroom Chat = informal classroom conversation between you and students, usually consisting mainly of you informally asking students questions about some aspect of Chinese life or culture. Classroom Chat is often a good way to begin or end a lesson, or provide a break in the middle. In addition to giving you a chance to learn more about Chinese culture from your students, Classroom Chat is often a good way to introduce a topic and warm up before moving into a more organized activity related to the topic.

Tips:

1. It is generally easiest to speak first to volunteers or students who enjoy talking. (Eye contact is often a better -- and more natural -- indicator of who is willing to speak than whether or not students raise their hands.) After everyone has an idea of what is going on, you might try to engage students who are more reluctant to speak.

2. When you ask a question, it is often good to first address it to the class as a whole, and to give them a moment to think before calling on someone. This brief pause gives everyone a chance to mentally compose a response in English. (If you call on someone immediately, other students are less likely to try to think of a response.)

3. Avoid following a predictable pattern when deciding who to ask questions to. A random pattern works better because once students can predict who you will talk to, they tend to tune out until it is their turn.

4. As useful new words or structures emerge in the course of conversation, write them on the board.

5. Try to avoid asking questions that you aren't really interested in. If you ask questions you are really interested in, your enthusiasm will spread to the students.

Cocktail Party is a free form of speaking practice in which students get out of their seats and converse with different partners in a style similar to that of a cocktail party.

Procedure:

1. Explain the basic "rules" of a cocktail party to students:

- Rule #1: You should talk to more than one person rather than talking to the same person the whole time.
- Rule #2: After talking with someone for awhile, you must close your conversation and move on to someone else.

Also teach students a few lines for striking up conversations (Ex: "It sure is hot today"), and for closing them (Ex: "Well, it's been nice talking to you, but it's getting late and I need to get going.").

2. Let students know whether or not you want them to practice specific material (from a model dialogue, for example), how long they have to talk, and how many people you expect them to talk to.

3. Turn students loose, and join in.

4. When time is up or enthusiasm runs thin, call everyone back to their seats. Close by asking a few students about their conversations. This is generally more fun -- and other students will pay more attention -- if you ask a specific question appropriate to the activity (Ex: "Tell me a little about the most interesting conversation you had." "What new things did you learn?") rather than having students summarize all their conversations.

Tips:

1. This format is relatively noisy, so consider the impact this chaos will have on nearby classes.

Debate: Debates are good for generating excitement and interest in a topic, but have a serious drawback in that during the debate phase of the activity only one person can speak at a time. The debate format suggested below therefore includes substantial small-group activity.

Procedure:

1. Introduce the issue to be debated. This may be presented either as a statement (Ex: Adolescents should be encouraged to take jobs) or a question (Ex: Should adolescents be encouraged to take jobs?) You may wish to supply some background to the issue, and also relevant vocabulary

2. Put students into small groups (teams), and either assign or allow them to choose an affirmative or negative position on the topic.

3. Have each team prepare a case. This should consist of one or more reasons why they hold the opinion they do, and also include an explanation and examples or other evidence that support their view. (This is the phase of the activity that provides most of the speaking practice, so allow ample time.)

4. For the debate phase, I recommend a "ping-pong" format that follows lines of argument one at a time. The procedure for each line of argument is as follows:

- First one affirmative team states one of its arguments (with explanation and support).
- One negative team then responds to the affirmative team's argument with either questions or a counter-argument. They must respond directly to the argument raised by the affirmative team -- they cannot begin a new line of argument.
- Either the original affirmative team or another affirmative team is allowed to respond to the negative team. And so on, following the line of argument until development ceases and repetition sets in.
- Then one negative team begins a new line of argument, and so on.

5. As the teams develop a line of argument, the teacher should keep a flow chart on the board, roughly keeping track of the flow of the arguments.

6. At the end, the teacher can close the debate by praising especially good points made by various teams.

Tips:

1. A good topic for debate and discussion has the following characteristics:

- Students have some knowledge about the topic and interest in it. It is hard to start discussion when students have little idea what they are talking about.
- Opinion is divided. No matter how "good" a topic is, if students all agree there won't be much debate.
- The topic is not too politically or culturally sensitive.

2. One way to locate good topics is to look at China's English language press (China Daily, 21st Century, TV news, etc.). You might also ask your class monitor or the class at large to help you choose topics.

Dictation is useful for practicing basic listening skills and also basic writing (capitalization, spelling, punctuation, etc.). Dictation is recommended mainly for lower level students.

Procedure:

1. Choose a short passage or dialogue. Sentences should either be short -- no more than seven or eight words -- or broken into shorter phrases. (Longer lines overload students' short-term memory.)
2. Before dictating the dialogue, briefly set the scene by explaining who is talking to who, where, etc. (A picture sets the scene very effectively.)
3. First tell students to just listen, and then read the entire passage aloud. Then read the passage line by line, repeating each line two or three times, and have students write it down word for word. (You may want to read the dialogue one final time so that students can quickly check their work.)
4. To check, have volunteers or the class as a whole read the dialogue back to you as you write it on the board. Students can then check their work by looking at the board. Alternatively, have volunteers write different lines on the board, or collect the dictations and check them individually.

Tips:

1. If the dictation includes words unfamiliar to many of the students, introduce them before the dictation. At some point, also give students an opportunity to ask about unfamiliar words.
2. While dictating, you might wander the aisles to see how much difficulty students are having. If they are having difficulty, you can slow down and speak more clearly. If the dictation is too easy, speak more quickly and naturally.

Dictogloss is a listening exercise in which you read a short passage to students and have them write down what you say. Unlike Dictation, however, in Dictogloss you read the whole passage to students several times at a fairly natural pace rather than stopping after each sentence. This forces students to listen to and remember ideas, not just words. Students then work together in groups to reconstruct the passage. Dictogloss is more challenging than Dictation, involves more listening for ideas and speaking practice, and also requires students to draw more on their knowledge of grammar.

Procedure:

1. Choose a short passage or dialogue. The passage might only be 5-10 sentences long.
2. Before reading the passage to students, set the scene. If the passage is a dialogue, it is very important that you help students know who is speaking when -- otherwise, it is easy for them to be confused as to who is saying which sentence. One way to do this is changing voices and body position for the different characters, acting each one out. Another is putting a minimal outline on the board (Ex: "Jim: _____. Judy: _____. _____ . Jim _____.")
3. Before the first two readings, instruct students to listen and try to remember. Then read the passage twice at fairly normal speed, not pausing between sentences.
4. Before the third reading, tell students they may jot down key words and phrases (not every word). Then read the dialogue a third time, slightly more slowly.
5. Have students try to reconstruct and write down the passage as best they remember it. Tell students they need not use exactly the same words as the original, but the meaning should not be different and the English should be grammatically correct. (This can be done either individually or in groups. Individually takes less time; groups provide opportunity for speaking practice and mutual assistance.)
6. To check students' work, one option is to write the original on the board and have students check their own work. As they check you can circulate and answer questions, particularly on the grammatical accuracy of what they wrote. A general question-and-answer time may also be helpful. Another option for checking is to have groups write their passages on the board, but this can be slow.

7. You can make a Dictogloss more or less difficult by altering the length and difficulty of the passage or dialogue, by reading the passage fewer or more times, by reading more quickly or slowly, and by adding or eliminating pauses between sentences. Note: The right level of difficulty is that most students are able to write down the gist of the passage after the third hearing. If they get most of it after the first reading, it is too easy.

Focused Listening activities are listening tasks in which you help students anticipate what they will hear by first giving them clues in the form of questions to answer or outlines, forms, or graphs to fill in. These questions or outlines help students focus their listening, and make listening practice easier (especially for lower level students).

Procedure:

1. Prepare a little talk of some kind. This can be a story, a lecture, etc.
2. Decide what kind of clues you will provide. These might consist of:
 - a set of questions to answer;
 - a form to fill out;
 - a graph to fill in;
 - a partial outline to fill in, etc.

In other words, anything which gives some clue as to what you will say and which gives direction to students' listening.

3. Write the set of questions (graph, form, etc.) on the board, or give students a handout. Ask students to look this over so that they know what they should listen for. You might ask them to predict what your talk will be about -- this enhances motivation and encourages active listening.
4. Tell students to listen to your talk and quickly note down information that will help them complete the task. (If you want them to write out full answers to your questions, tell them you will give them time to write after the talk.) Then give your talk.
5. Check student comprehension (see "Talks and Lectures" below).

Games: The obvious advantage of games is that they are fun, and many activities can be improved by adding an element of challenge or fun to it. (Spelling bees are a good example of making a rather boring activity a little more appealing.)

Tips:

1. Be sure you can explain to students what the educational value of the game is, i.e. what skill or knowledge they are practicing. Otherwise they may view the game as fun but pointless.

Interviews are especially good for intermediate or advanced oral skills classes because they allow in-depth exploration of a topic and provide students with practice in explaining opinions.

Procedure:

1. Decide what topic(s) you want students to interview each other on.
2. Give directions for the interviews. Students need to know the suggested topic and approximately how much time they will have. If you want students to write up their own list of questions they will also need a few minutes to do this.
3. Pair students. Often it is good to find a way to pair students with someone other than the person sitting next to them (who they probably already know fairly well).
4. Have students carry out interviews. Once student A finishes interviewing student B, you can ask them to switch roles, or even switch partners. You may want to set a time limit, and call out when partners should switch roles.
5. To close, ask a few students to report some of the more interesting things they learned from their partner during the interview.

Tips:

1. Topics which involve opinions or information not shared by everyone in the class are best because they make interviews more genuinely communicative.
2. Role-playing and interviews mix nicely; for example, one person might be a reporter and the other a famous person.

Jazz Chants are short dialogues which are chanted rather than spoken, with the natural rhythm of the sentence emphasized -- even exaggerated -- so that it comes out sounding like a chant from a basketball game or protest rally. These are not for everyone, but classes often find them more fun than traditional choral drill, and they help students get used to the natural rhythm of the language.

Procedure:

1. Chant out one line at a time, emphasizing the natural rhythm of the sentence, and have students chant after you.
2. Close by chanting through the entire dialogue.

Large Group Discussions: Like Debates, these can work well for getting a class excited and interested, but have the serious disadvantage of allowing only one person to speak at a time, hence providing little conversation practice. It is therefore generally good to have students first prepare in small groups for large group discussions.

Procedure:

1. Introduce the topic and any necessary vocabulary.
2. Have students prepare in small groups. (It is actually in the small groups that they get most of their speaking practice, so allow ample time.) Each group should be required to come to consensus on a position which they can present to the rest of the class.

Tips:

1. See "Debates" for suggestions on the characteristics of good discussion topics, and how to locate such.

Pair/Small Group Tasks are good for speaking practice because many students have a chance to speak. Shy or nervous students are under less pressure in small groups because they can choose not to speak, but still find it relatively easy to speak up when they choose to.

Procedure:

1. Place students in pairs or groups of three or four. (Larger groups give fewer people chances to speak.)
2. Give groups a task (not just a topic -- see below) and tell them how long they have to complete it. Also tell each group to appoint a recorder to write down what the group decides.
3. While groups discuss, wander from group to group, listening in and looking at what they have written. As you look at their lists, help with language difficulties or just comment on their ideas.
4. To close, have each group briefly report their conclusions as you take notes on the board. Tips:
 1. A group of 3 or 4 is small enough that each student feels a sense of ownership in the group, so even students who say little tend to remain engaged by listening and mentally formulating language. Small groups often work best if there is a discussion leader.
 2. It is important that instructions include a clear task so that groups know exactly what they are supposed to do. Vague instructions such as "Talk about _____" make it harder for groups to get started. Good examples of tasks include:

- **"Make a list"**: (Ex: List the most beautiful places in your country.)
- **"List reasons why _____"**: (Ex: List ten reasons why middle school children should -- or shouldn't -- study a foreign language.)
- **"List advantages and disadvantages of _____"**: (Ex: List the advantages and disadvantages of using standardized examinations to determine who should have the opportunity to enter university.)
- **"Prepare directions"**: (Ex: Prepare a list of directions for how your foreign teacher should bargain at the market. Or: Make a list of suggestions on how to choose a good bicycle.)
- **"Decide whether or not ____"**: (Ex: Decide whether or not middle school students should be allowed to date.)
- **"Decide whether you agree or disagree with (a statement)"** (Such as "It should be against the law to not wear a seatbelt when riding in a car.")
- **"Rank/prioritize"**: (Ex: In order of importance, rank China's ten greatest heroes.)
- **"Make a plan"**: (Ex: Plan the ideal three-day local vacation trip for your English teacher.)

- **"Solve a problem"**: (Ex: Your foreign teacher is interested in world news but can't understand TV news programs in China. What suggestions do you have as to how she/he can find out about world news while in China?)

3. For several reasons, it is generally very helpful if one person in each group is entrusted with the task of taking notes for the group. This tends to bring the group together -- they all tend to look at the same piece of paper. It also makes it easier for you to see how groups are doing -- whether they are on task, and so forth -- and makes it easier for you to join in by commenting on a good point they have made, making a suggestion, or offering a correction. (In a noisy room, looking at the notes is often the only way you can know what is going on in each small group.)

4. When it comes time for groups to report, it is better to ask each group to report just one comment/idea at a time rather than having one group give a long report while others sit and wait. (If one group reports everything first, the others are often left with not much to say.) Make several rounds of the class if necessary.

Role plays are a form of pair practice which allow students freedom to play, improvise and create. These are useful as a way to practice not only language, but also culturally appropriate behavior.

Procedure:

1. Create situations and roles for students. You may want to base these on a dialogue or something else you have studied in class.
2. Pair students, give them the situation and their roles, and have them carry out the role play. While students should practice material they have studied, also encourage them to be creative and improvise.
3. One way to close is by having one or two pairs do their role play for the whole class. This serves primarily to give a sense of closure and need not go on long. (If each pair performs, too much time is taken and other students spend too long sitting and waiting. Listening to classmates stumble through dialogues is not very good listening practice.)
4. Another way to close is by asking a few students what the outcome of their role play was (was the invitation accepted? etc.). This is much quicker than having students perform, but still provides a sense of closure.

Tips:

1. Encourage creativity. If students make an effort to entertain, role plays are more fun to do and much more fun to watch. Be realistic, however, about the fact that not all students are hams, and not all will be great public performers.

Show and Tell: This informal but engaging activity involves bringing pictures or other objects to class, showing them, and talking about them. Show And Tell is good for providing listening practice and arousing interest in a topic; also serves as a good informal warm-up or as a break from "real" class.

Songs are great for making class a warmer, nicer place. For maximum value in language classes, you might first sing or play the song to get everyone interested, and then teach all or part of the words to the song by saying the words and having students repeat (and perhaps memorize) after you. You may not be able to teach all of the words this way, especially if the song is long, but try to have students learn as much as possible of the song by listening and speaking rather than just reading.

Surveys involve asking the same few questions several times to different people, so they are a good way for students to repeatedly practice questions and answers in a format which encourages genuine communication. For lower level students, this is one of the easiest formats for relatively free communicative interaction.

Procedure:

1. Decide on a topic or list of questions. This activity works better when you are genuinely curious about the results of the survey, and when students are too.
2. Tell students what the purpose/topic of the survey is. Either list the questions you want them to ask or give them a general topic and have them write down their own questions. If you want them to generate their own questions (either individually or in groups) give them time to do this. Variation:

Have students work in groups to prepare questions, and then each member of the group asks the same questions. Later they can then get back together to compare notes and report results.

3. Tell students how many classmates they are expected to survey, and approximately how long they have to do it in. Alternatively, assign a time limit for each short interview.
4. Have them conduct the survey. You may need to occasionally encourage them to move on to a new partner. You can either join in or wander and eavesdrop.
5. Close the activity by having a few students (or groups) report their findings.

Tips:

1. Having students move around the class as they conduct their interviews makes things more lively and keeps everyone awake.

Talks and Lectures are useful for helping students improve their listening and note-taking skills, especially for improving their ability to guess when listening to longer stretches of discourse in which it is not possible to catch every word. Also useful for teaching culture. (Students are often especially interested in stories you tell about yourself, especially when supported with pictures or other visuals.)

Procedure:

1. Locate information and prepare the talk.
2. Tell students what you are going to talk about, and ask them to take notes. (Taking notes forces them to listen more carefully.) Participants may need some instruction on how to take notes.
3. Give the talk. If students' listening skills are not strong, it is very easy to lose your audience, so keep an eye out for the glazed-over look that says your audience has been left behind.
4. After the talk there are a number of ways to check comprehension:
 - ask questions;
 - have students write a summary of your talk;
 - give a short quiz;
 - have students write (and ask) follow-up questions based on what you talked about;
 - have students talk or write about corresponding aspects of their own culture;
 - based on your talk, have students work in groups to list similarities and differences between Chinese culture and yours.

Tips:

1. Your country and culture are especially good topics, but other topics such as your experiences in China, language learning, etc. can also be useful.
2. You can make your talk easier to follow by first giving students a list of questions to listen for the answers to, or by writing a simple outline of the talk on the blackboard. Also write down key new vocabulary words that you use.
3. Visual aids of any kind are very helpful.
4. For maximum benefit, try to pitch the talk so that students can follow much of what you are saying, but still have to guess some of the time.
5. You can make talks easier for students with lower listening levels to follow by first giving them clues in the form of questions to answer or outlines, forms, or graphs to fill in. The questions (outlines, whatever) help focus students' listening, make it easier for students to anticipate and guess, and also enhance motivation and encourage active listening. These can either be written on the board or put in handouts, and gone over with students before the talk.

Teacher Interview: A good speaking activity is having your students interview you "press conference" style about a topic, often after they have prepared questions in groups. This is good for speaking and listening practice, and for encouraging student initiative; it also helps students to get to know you and your culture better.

Procedure:

1. Be sure you are prepared for any questions students might ask on the topic.
2. Tell students that they are reporters interviewing you so that they can write a story for the local paper. Then give them the topic and some time to prepare questions related to the topic. This can be done individually, but it is often better for speaking practice to have them work in groups.
3. Have students conduct the interview like a press conference.

4. If you plan to require a written report, have students take notes. You may also want to put new vocabulary on the board.
5. To close, ask comprehension questions, or ask a few volunteers to tell you what they found most interesting or surprising about what they learned from the interview. Alternatively, you can ask each student to write a short report based on the interview. (For more suggestions on checking comprehension, see Talks and Lectures.)

Tip:

1. To ensure that the process isn't dominated by a few zealous students, one approach is allowing each group in turn to ask one question. This allows shyer students to get their questions asked by the group representative. If there is less need to protect shy students, another alternative is to simply require that everyone ask at least one question.

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a "Simon Says" type of activity in which the teacher gives students instructions, and they respond by doing what the teacher asks (rather than by speaking). Because students respond with action rather than speech, they can focus their attention more fully on listening to what the teacher says (rather than having at the same time to worry about constructing an oral response). This method is good for building listening skills, especially for students at lower levels, and can also be used to introduce or review vocabulary and even grammar structures.

Procedure:

1. Before the activity, make a list of the instructions you wish to use. (Ex: "Open your books." "Turn to page six." "Touch your nose with your friend's pen." Etc.)
2. Conduct the activity in a game-like manner, repeating instructions and building for faster student responses.
3. If you want to make it more like a game, add the "Simon Says" element; i.e. tell students they should only carry out the instruction if you preface it by saying "Simon Says."

Tip:

1. This activity can be especially useful for teaching basic classroom instructions to students with very low listening skills.

True/False Listening: For this activity, prepare a number of short statements, some true and some false, and then present them to students as an informal "true/false" quiz. Good for reviewing vocabulary and culture content from previous lessons while also providing listening practice.

Procedure:

1. Write up a set of statements for a short true/false quiz, drawing material (vocabulary, cultural information) from previous lessons. This is most fun if the statements are a little tricky without being mean. The more this seems like a game instead of a test, the better.
2. Ask students to listen to each statement, decide if it is true or false, and write down T or F on a numbered sheet. After the exercise these can be checked as a group. Alternatively, just ask everyone to shout out the answer.

How To Turn Activities Into A Lesson

Introduction

Activities in and of themselves do not constitute a lesson; rather, they are the materials from which you need to construct a lesson. You need to decide which of these activities to use, how many to use, and what order to put them in. In effect, the activities are the ingredients, and one of your tasks as teacher is turning these ingredients into a satisfying meal.

A Typical Lesson Menu

Most teachers, even very experienced ones, generally find it best to actually write out a lesson plan before going into class. Of course, frequently things do not go as planned, so you should be ready to improvise, but having an initial written plan is still best.

One typical menu for a one or two-hour lesson consists of the following:

- Review.
- Warm-up.
- "Main Course" Activities.
- "Spare Tire" Activity.

Obviously, the parts of a lesson do not always need to be in this order, but this is a fairly standard menu that serves as a good outline for discussing the elements of a lesson. Let's consider each part more closely.

1) Review

Somewhere in the lesson, often at the beginning, it is good to quickly review some of what was covered in the previous lesson. One obvious reason for this is that it helps students learn -- that which is not reviewed is often quickly forgotten. However, equally important, review signals to students that you are serious about their learning, and lets them know what you hoped they would learn.

Generally review should be brief and as lively as possible. It doesn't need to be thorough as much as it needs to touch on the highlights.

What you review and how depends on what you goals for the lesson were. However, some of the points you are most likely to review include:

- language points (vocabulary, phrases, sentence structures, etc.).
- content points (factual information about culture). ;
- ability to express ideas (whether students can explain something in English);
- comprehension of ideas (whether students understand when you explain something in English).

Some examples of simple, quick, informal review techniques include:

- For language points: Call out new vocabulary words (phrases, etc.) introduced in a previous lesson, and ask students to either tell you what they mean or to make a sentence with them.
- For content points: Ask the class to tell you three things they learned about _____ (food in your country, etc.) in a previous lesson.
- For ability to express ideas: Based on a previous discussion activity, ask the class to tell you again _____ (who Sun Yat Sen was, why the Great Wall is so important, etc.).
- For ability to understand what you say: Give students a short listening quiz, repeating an explanation of something from a previous lesson.

2) Warm-up

It is generally good to have a relatively light and interesting activity near the beginning of a lesson. Likewise, longer and more challenging activities generally go better if you precede them with a warm-

up to get them interested and engaged. Good warm-up activities include: 1) Surveys; 2) Classroom Chat; 3) Brief Games; 4) Show and Tell. (See "Oral Skills Activities" for more about these activities and others mentioned below.)

3) "Main Course" Activities

These are the medium-to-long activities that provide students with most of their speaking practice and serve as the core of your lesson. Good main course activities include: 1) Talks; 2) Pair and Small Group Tasks; 3) Interviews; 4) Debates; 5) Teacher Interviews; 6) Role Plays; and 7) Cocktail Parties.

A few general tips on conducting such activities:

- Remind students of the purpose(s) of the activity, either at the beginning, the end, or both. Stress both the more general purposes (practicing speaking, etc.), and any more specific purposes the activity might have (practice asking questions correctly, explaining some aspect of Chinese culture, etc.).
- For most of these activities the bulk of the practice occurs between students, beyond the teacher's range of attention. While the benefit of the activity derives mainly from the practice itself, students will generally not feel satisfied if things are left at that, so it is generally necessary to bring things together and provide closure through some kind of all-class discussion, however brief, at the end of the activity.

4) Spare Tire Activities

Even veteran teachers often have trouble estimating how long a particular activity will run in class, so it is generally wise in your lesson plan to include a "spare tire" activity that you can use if other activities do not run as long as you thought. One of the worst experiences in teaching is being caught with twenty minutes left in the class period and no idea what to do, and having a spare tire activity ready to go helps prevent this particular calamity.

The best spare tire activities are those that are very flexible time-wise; i.e. activities that are simple enough you can get them going in a few minutes, but that can also run for fifteen minutes or more if necessary. Many kinds of activities can serve as spare tires, but activities like Surveys, Interviews, and Cocktail Parties are especially good because they are simple, yet can run for a fairly long time (especially if students change partners one or more times).

How To Turn Lessons Into A Course

A well-taught lesson is a beautiful thing, but in order for a series of lessons to become a course, they need to be connected by an over-all plan that gives them coherence and purpose. We might compare this to individual athletes working together as a team toward a shared purpose, individual musicians playing the same piece of music together as an orchestra, or even a series of meals combining into a nutritious and satisfying diet. Whatever the analogy, the point is that you need to turn individual lessons into a unified course.

Organizing a course is obviously much easier if students are working their way through a textbook. The textbook not only presents an organized body of material, but the very process of making progress through the book creates a sense of both direction and accomplishment. Course planning is more problematic if students don't have a textbook and especially if you have to build a course out of unrelated materials and activities from a variety of sources. In such cases, it is not only very important that you build structure and purpose into your course, but also that you frequently remind students of this structure and purpose.

I. Goals

The most important way to turn a series of lessons into a unified course is through goals which are:

- Clear in the teacher's mind.
- Evident in the choice of materials and activities.
- Clearly and repeatedly stated to students .

For oral skills courses, the most basic underlying goals are to build students' speaking and listening skills, best achieved through giving students many practice opportunities. However, in and of itself, just providing practice opportunities is generally not sufficient to satisfy students' need for a sense of overall purpose and direction because:

- "Improving speaking and listening " is too broad and vague a goal.
- Improvement in speaking and listening skills is generally a gradual slow process, especially at intermediate and advanced levels. Students who have hardly even spoken before may experience a very clear and satisfying breakthrough during their first oral skills class, but progress after that time is generally slower and less dramatic, so students need other "benchmarks" by which to measure and see their progress.
- If a course has no goals other than providing speaking and listening practice, it is easy for students to wind up repeatedly using the skills and language they already know, rather than moving into new and more challenging territory.

For these reasons, it is very helpful if an oral skills course has more specific goals, and is organized so that students can see their progress toward these goals. Some possibilities:

Organizing the course around "functions": Many oral skills courses are organized around common social situations and the English language tools (functions) students need in order to deal with these situations. Some examples of functions would include:

- (For common social situations) asking for information; offering invitations; declining invitations; asking/giving directions; introducing people; asking for assistance; and so forth.
- (For group discussion) explaining what you mean; persuading; assessing what others know or believe: clarifying what you mean; clarifying what others mean; politely disagreeing; repairing misunderstandings; finding ways to bridge gaps in your own language skills; drawing other people into a conversation; moving a conversation along; bringing discussion of a topic to conclusion; building consensus; changing topics.

Organizing a course around a set of functions like those above means that students can chart their progress toward mastery of a limited and identifiable body of language words, phrases, and structures, and this gives them a much greater sense of direction and progress. (The Dialogue Course is organized mainly around social situation functions.)

Organizing the course around topics: To a large extent, fluency is topic-based; in other words, students are generally much more fluent when discussing topics they have talked about before. To

some extent this has to do with vocabulary; when students have practiced talking about a certain topic, they are more likely to know key words they will need. However, it is just as important that students have had the experience of finding ways to express whatever ideas, opinions, and feelings they have about a given topic area in English.

One way to organize topics is by general area of life or culture; this is the approach taken in the Talking About Culture materials in the Toolkit (Part III). For example, the Daily Life module in the Talking About Culture materials contains discussion activities related to the following topic areas:

- Getting To Know Each Other
- Daily Schedules
- Food
- Clothing
- Homes, Buildings, And Space
- Health And Hygiene
- Work
- Recreation and Entertainment
- Sports and Games
- Shopping
- Traffic and Transport
- Social Life
- Personal Finances And Banking

Working through such a set of topics allows students to systematically become familiar with talking about an identifiable segment of life, and helps focus and give direction to their speaking practice.

II. Other Ways to Create Coherence

Consistent use of activities and methods. Each type of activity tends to build and develop a certain set of skills, and just as exercise needs to be repeated if muscles are to build strength, kinds of activities need to be repeated if skills are to develop. There is, of course, the danger that overly frequent use of similar activities will result in boredom, so it is important to vary the menu from time to time just to avoid monotony. However, on the whole, especially for beginning language teachers, the greater danger is too much variety rather than too little. This is especially true for beginning language teachers, for whom the novelty of a fresh kind of activity is often a big part of making a lesson go over well with students. In the short run, a series of novel (but relatively unrelated) activities will probably sell well, but over time students may begin to feel that they are having a good time but not learning much.

In striking a balance between continuity and variety, keep several things in mind:

- Just like a balanced diet has foods of different kinds, it is important to have a set of activity types that you use often, not just one or two.
- Remember that change in topic provides a considerable degree of variety, even if the same general activity types are repeated.
- Of course, you need to be judicious in discerning when students need a break from routine, but it is not necessary to abandon an activity type the first time a student complains "we have done this before," any more than a coach would let runners quit after they have run a track three times. "Don't like" doesn't equal "not useful." As necessary, encourage students, give pep talks, and above all remind them why you are asking them to do whatever the activity is.

The goal is clearly a balance between continuity and variety. However, continuity is the meal, and variety is the spice.

Having students keep notebooks: One very effective way to help give a course coherence and a sense of progress is by having students keep a notebook in which they note new vocabulary items, vocabulary usage, points of culture, and so forth. This notebook then becomes their textbook for the course, facilitating review and provide participants with visible proof of their accomplishment.

If you do have students keep a notebook, you should collect them occasionally and include them in the grading process so that students know you take the notebooks seriously. You need to

collect the notebooks at least once very early in your course to signal their importance and also to make sure students are doing more or less what you want.

Review: Regular review of previously covered material (language points, content, skills, etc.) helps give a course a stronger sense of coherence and direction.

Evaluation: Well planned evaluation gives courses more sense of purpose and coherence, especially if the evaluation methods effectively re-emphasize and support the main goals of the course.

How To Evaluate and Grade Oral Skills Courses

I. Why is evaluation important?

Many of us would no doubt like to completely dispense with evaluation. After all nobody particularly likes tests, quizzes, graded homework assignments, and so forth. However, there are several reasons why it is generally good for language courses to have an evaluation component:

- You may be required by your school to turn in some kind of grade at the end of the term, so avoiding evaluation entirely is often not an option.
- Well designed evaluation methods can encourage students to study, practice, and review in ways that will benefit their learning.
- Evaluating your students' performance and progress gives students the sense that you take them and their work seriously, and makes them feel the course is more important.
- Your evaluation methods remind students of the goals of the course.

II. Some basic principles of evaluation

1) Make sure the backwash effect of your evaluation methods encourages students to prepare in productive ways. "Backwash" is the effect that a test or other evaluative measure has on the way students study and practice. Put bluntly, the idea is that students will tend to do what they are rewarded for doing. Grades are important to them -- rightfully so. So, for example, if your mid-term test scores their performance largely on the basis of how many grammar errors they make, you can only expect that when preparing for the final examination they will focus on grammatical accuracy rather than communication.

The backwash effect can be strong or weak, depending on how important students perceive scores and grades to be. Backwash can also have either a positive or negative effect. If your evaluation methods encourage students to prepare in productive ways that fit the course goals, the effect is positive. If, on the other hand, your evaluation method rewards them for doing things that will help them pass the test but not really improve their English skills, the effect is negative.

2) Make evaluation an integral part of your course plan. Because tests and such usually come later in a course, there is a temptation to not worry about them until around the middle of the course, particularly if you are a new teacher. If you don't plan your evaluation methods until late in the course, there is much more danger that your evaluation will wind up having a negative backwash effect because it isn't well integrated with your course plan.

3) The methods you use for evaluation should closely resemble your regular teaching methods and activities. In other words, if you do a lot of small group problem solving, students' performance in small group work should be included in evaluation. Or, if dictation is an important part of your class, dictation should be part of the evaluation process. Coordinating in-class methods and evaluation methods has several advantages:

- Students will be more familiar with the forms of your tests, quizzes, etc. when evaluation time comes around.
- Students will know from early on how they will be evaluated and how they should study and practice. This maximizes positive backwash.
- The evaluation process will seem fairer -- everyone knows the rules all along -- and students will have a greater sense that you know what you are doing.

4) Don't pack a whole semester grade into the results of one examination. The backwash effect of grading a course based on one big interview or exam is that it encourages students to cram for a few days at the end of the course rather than studying or practicing regularly. Big exams (interviews, whatever) also tend to generate incredible tension. It is generally better to have a lot of small scores based on several different kinds of evaluation methods. A nice "package" of evaluation measures for an oral skills course might consist of:

- a few listening (dictation, etc.) quizzes;
- some in-class grades for pair and small group work;
- some quiz or test scores for content (vocabulary, phrases, functions, sentence patterns, cultural patterns, etc.);
- a final interview score.

III. Interviews

Interviewing is the best way to evaluate spoken skills because this form of test is closest to actual conversation and has the best backwash effect. Interviews also allow a rare opportunity for you to focus on the speaking skills of individual students in a situation where you can really pay attention.

The main problem with interviews is that they are very time consuming, often prohibitively so for large classes. Interviews are thus often used only at the beginning of a course as a pre-test and at the end as a final examination, and other forms of evaluation are used to supplement.

A. Preparing for the interview

Setting goals: The first step in preparing for a final examination interview is to decide what you are looking for. Grammatical accuracy? Use of vocabulary taught during the course? Overall communication skill? Etc. Your choices flow naturally from the goals you set at the beginning of the course. Needless to say, the backwash effect will be stronger and more positive if you also let students know well in advance of the final examination exactly how they will be evaluated and how they should prepare.

Listing questions: Secondly, draw up a list of topics or questions. A few tips:

- Have enough extra questions so that you don't need to use exactly the same questions with each student.
- Questions should range in difficulty so that you have easy questions for students at lower levels and more challenging questions for advanced students.
- Open-ended questions are best (Ex: What do you think about....? Tell me about....) because they not only avoid yes/no answers but also give you a sense of the degree to which the student can elaborate on a point, which is one good indication of the level of speaking ability.

Preparing a scoring system: Before the interview you should plan some kind of scoring system by which you will assess students' performance during the interview. Imagine that you are teaching an oral skills course with the following goals:

- To improve students' ability to express ideas.
- To expand range of topics students can discuss, and increase their comfort discussing topics they have not often discussed before.
- To improve students' ability to understand interviewer.
- To improve students' intelligibility (pronunciation, usage, grammar).

One way to score interviews for such a course is by using an **impressionistic point system and a scoring chart**. A chart consists of a list of the points you are looking for with a point scale for each, such as the simple example below:

Sample marking chart

Ability to express ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Range of topics	1	2	3	4	5
Listening comprehension	1	2	3	4	5
Intelligibility	1	2	3	4	5

Using such a chart, right after the interview you mark each student's performance in each of the areas indicated. The main advantage of this approach is that such a system is easy to design and use. The main disadvantage is that such an approach is not very objective or reliable, especially if you need to interview many students. (As you get tired, your impressions may change.)

Another way to grade is to place students performance on a **proficiency scale**. This kind of grading relies on a more detailed scale than the one above, and the scale should be written to reflect the points that have been emphasized during the course.

Consider the following sample scale, designed for a course with the same goals as above:

Sample Proficiency Rating Scale

Beginning (1-2)

- Student able to express self only haltingly and with difficulty; frequently unable to express ideas at all.
- Often fails to understand slow, clear, simple sentences, even after repetition or clarification.
- Communication breakdowns also caused by mistakes (inaccurate pronunciation, intonation or grammar), or by limited vocabulary.

Functional (3-4)

- Can discuss a limited range of topics (self, immediate environment) with a patient interviewer.
- On other topics communication is difficult and often breaks down; the interviewer's patience is tried on almost all topics.
- Often misunderstands/fails to understand interviewer unless ideas clarified or repeated.
- Mistakes sometimes interfere with communication.
- Lack of vocabulary seriously hinders communication.

Intermediate (5-6)

- Can discuss familiar topics easily, deeper or professional topics with difficulty. Can discuss own field much better than other topics of similar complexity.
- On unfamiliar topics, circumlocutions and breakdowns occur; the patience of the interviewer may be tried.
- Still has trouble understanding rapid or informal speech, but has little trouble with clear, moderately slow speech.
- Range of vocabulary adequate for familiar topics, but still limits communication in some areas.
- Mistakes still common, but don't often interfere with communication.

Advanced (7-8)

- Can discuss wide range of topics; discusses own field with ease.
- Occasionally forced to resort to circumlocutions or explanations by lack of vocabulary, but problem generally resolved quickly; patience of interviewer almost never tried. Communication virtually never breaks down on any but the most obscure topics.
- Can understand normal speech without difficulty, and can also follow some informal or rapid speech; interviewer doesn't need to pay special attention to speech.
- Mistakes occur, but rarely interfere with communication.

Native-like (9-10)

- Easily discusses a broad range of topics.
- Can understand even informal and rapid speech.
- Still has foreign accent, but this causes interviewer no difficulty.
- Mistakes rare, and almost never affect communication.

The advantage of such a scale is that it is more objective and easier to use than the simpler point scale above; it also helps keep the interviewer more consistent even after many interviews. However, it also requires more effort to design.

B. Conducting the interview

Normally, you should allow an average of at least 5 minutes for an interview, plus a little bit of time between interviews so that you can take notes and grade. For advanced students, longer interviews are necessary to give you an idea of their range of competence. Normally interviews have three phases:

Phase I: Open with a few easy pleasantries to relax the student, allow a chance for a warm up. During this phase, you should try to guess approximately what the student's level is so that you can choose appropriate questions for Phase II.

Phase II: Try to determine the student's level using more challenging questions. For example, using the proficiency scale described above, your main goal would be to assess the student's range of topics and the depth at which he/she can still maintain fluency.

Phase III: End with a few easy questions so that the student doesn't leave the interview feeling miserable.

Taping interviews allows you to focus attention on the conversation during the interview, but it also means that the process of grading will take quite a long time. Taking notes during the interview and then assigning a grade immediately after the interview is much more efficient, but can also distract both you and the student during the interview. When possible, it is best to have two interviewers so that one can focus on evaluation while the other conducts the interview. Having a second opinion also increases reliability.

IV. Other Evaluation Methods

Many teaching methods can be adapted for use as evaluation tools. Some specific suggestions:

Listening: Listening skills are a vitally important part of the ability to interact orally in a foreign language, so there is no reason that evaluation of listening should not be used in an oral skills course. A practical consideration is also that listening is much easier to test in large classes than speaking, so in order to avoid packing the whole evaluation process into one interview and a very impressionistic "class participation" grade you may want to have a few scores from listening activities.

- True/false exercises are easily turned into quizzes -- just have students write down their answers. You may also need to be a little less entertaining than usual lest outbursts of class laughter tell everyone which statements were relatively absurd.
- Focused listening can also easily be made into a quiz or a test component by having students write down answers to questions or fill in a graph/form/whatever.
- Talks and lectures can be followed up by having students answer comprehension questions, turn in written notes, or write a summary.
- Dictation and dictogloss exercises easily become quizzes. The main question here is the degree to which you score on the basis of writing issues (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.) as opposed to comprehension. There is no "right" answer to this question -- it depends on the goals you set for the course and what you ask students to learn as they do the exercises.

Memorized dialogues: You probably won't ask students to memorize many dialogues, but you may find this method of some use in very low level classes or with groups who panic at the thought of creative or communicative language use. The memorized dialogues can be checked by having students perform them in class or by having them write down the dialogues from memory. The former is obviously closer to actual spoken communication, but also takes more class time. Note: In evaluation of memorized dialogues, be sure students know what exactly you are scoring for.

Dialogue writing: In classes which emphasize study of dialogues and learning the patterns (language and cultural) of common social conversations, you can check whether or not students are learning the content of the lessons through a listening + writing quiz. Listening skills are closely tied to speaking skills, and the written component tells you whether or not students are learning the material (vocabulary, grammar, etc.) as well as improving their skills. Use the following procedure:

- Orally describe to students a conversation situation like the following: "A and B meet on the bus and greet each other. A then asks why B didn't come to dinner last night. B apologizes and offers an excuse. A then invites B to dinner another time." Have students take notes.
- Have students to write a conversation consisting of six turns: A--B--A--B--A--B. Encourage students to write the shortest dialog that fulfils the instructions.
- Grade the dialogues for linguistic and cultural accuracy and appropriateness.

Note: This kind of quiz takes a little getting used to, so you should practice with students a few times before doing it for a grade.

Pair-work (model-based dialogues, role plays, direction giving): Types of pair work which are conducive to performance can of course be checked by having students practice and then perform a conversation, but this takes a long time and can be boring if the role plays are not sufficiently animated. A good alternative is to call a few pairs or groups out to perform while the rest of the class is doing a small group discussion exercise; over time, this allows you to hear each student several times. This approach can serve as the equivalent of a speaking class quiz. Again, be sure that students know exactly what they are being graded on.

Small Group Tasks and Problem Situations don't lend themselves very well to performance, but can be checked either as part of an examination or on an in-class basis.

Exams: If there is not enough time to interview all of the students in a class individually, one option is to have them come to you in groups and do small group activities similar to those you use in class. You listen and evaluate based on previously agreed-on criteria. For example, you might award points for participation, following up on others' opinions, asking clarification questions, questions drawing out the opinions of others, etc. (For more on group exams, see "Testing Conversational English of a Large Group.")

In-class: Scores can also be given by listening in on pairs or small groups as they discuss in class. For this kind of evaluation, a simple scoring system which judges whether or not the students participated and roughly indicates the quality of their contribution would be sufficient. A major advantage of this approach is that it gives students a strong incentive to participate in pair or group practice. The major disadvantage is that if you do this during all class practice, students may come to dread the moment when you hover near them, clipboard and pen in hand.

V. Thoughts on Grading

Grades as a language: Grades are a code used to convey meaning, and what a given grade means in one culture may well be different from what it means in another. One of your first tasks in grading, therefore, is to understand how the language of grading works in China, so that the grades you give are appropriate within your community and so that they communicate what you wish them to communicate.

In China, grades are usually (but not always) given as percentages. A typical Chinese grade curve look something like this:

- Grades from 100-90 are considered very high marks and are rare.
- Most students get grades between 70 and 90. Good students have lots of marks in the high 80s and low 90s.
- Grades from 60-70 are less common, but there are usually some in each class.
- Below 60 is failing. Students almost never get failing grades in China unless they virtually commit a crime.

There is also a second grading system that corresponds roughly to an A/B/C/D/F system. The grades in this system are:

- *you* (excellent)
- *liang* (good)
- *zhong* (average)

- *ji ge* (passing)
- *bu ji ge* (not passing)

This system is sometimes used in oral skills courses, so be sure to find out from your school which grading system they expect you to use.

Approaches to grading: Grades should reflect both achievement and effort; in other words, you should reward participants both for good English and for trying hard. In general you should give good grades to participants who work hard and who make an effort to communicate in English, so any student who tries should get at least a passing grade. Poor grades should be reserved for those who make little effort, or those who disrupt the efforts of others.

It is, of course, up to you whether you tend to grade on the strict side or tend to be a bit generous. However, until you become more familiar with the Chinese context it is probably better to err a bit on the side of generosity, so a suggested approach would be for you to use a grade curve slightly higher than the one described above, more or less as follows:

- Give a few marks in the mid or high 90s to students who are outstanding both in their English and participation.
- Give a number of grades in the high 80s and low 90s to students who work hard and make good progress.
- Give lots of grades between 70 and 85 to average students.
- Give grades in the 60s to students whose English is poor and who also don't work too hard or miss quite a few classes
- Try to avoid giving grades below 60 unless there is a very serious problem and you have consulted repeatedly with school authorities. If a student is headed toward a failing grade, start talking to school authorities as soon as possible, well before the end of the semester.

Ideas For The First Day of Class

Our natural tendency is to assume that the main goal on the first day of class is to introduce your course to students, and maybe even dive into teaching. However, if you are in an unfamiliar setting teaching unfamiliar students, there is another goal in the first day or so of class that is at least equally important - finding out as much as you can about your students. Before you can really plan a course, you need at least rough answers to questions like:

- How good is students' listening comprehension? How much can they understand of what you say?
- How well can they speak already?
- How much grammar and vocabulary have they studied?
- How well can they read and write?
- How motivated and interested do they seem to be?
- Can or will they practice in small groups?
- And so forth.

Below are a few activities for the first days of class that will help you get a better understanding of your students.

Filling out information cards: Many teachers find it helpful to have each student fill out a little card with some basic personal background information (name, age, where they are from, how long they have studied English/German/Japanese, and so forth). The process of having students fill out such cards can tell you quite a bit about their English level, especially their listening skills and ability to follow instructions. (Knowing how well students understand instructions is critically important for your class planning.) Suggested procedure:

- Decide what information you want or what questions you want students to answer.
- Orally list the questions you want answered or the information you want. Have students take notes and then fill out the card according to your oral instructions. (This is really a covert dictation exercise.)
- As students fill out their cards, wander the aisles to check how well they understood your directions and questions.
- (If it is clear that many didn't understand, you may need to write the questions on the board so that they can complete the task.)

Dictation: For lower level classes, a short dictation exercise is one way to get a quick idea of both their listening and basic writing skills. Suggested procedure:

- Choose a text that is relevant to the first day of class. This might consist of:
 - Basic rules you want everyone to follow in class. (Ex: "Always turn in your homework on time.")
 - Maxims for good language learning. (Ex: "Try to speak at least a little English every day.")
 - Encouraging slogans. ("Grammar is not so hard!") And so forth.
- Dictate the text to students, repeating each line a few times while they write down what you say.
- Collect the dictations and see what happened.
- (For further tips on Dictations see "Oral Skills Activities.")

Talk or Lecture: For intermediate or higher level students, giving a brief talk or lecture is a good way to find out how well they can understand and follow sustained discourse (as opposed to just brief sentences). Suggested procedure:

- Prepare a brief talk relevant to the first day of class. For example, you might prepare an introduction to yourself, the aims of the course, or so forth.
- Give the talk and have students take notes.

- After the talk, either collect their notes or use some other means to assess their comprehension. (See Talks and Lectures in "Oral Skills Activities" for ideas.)
- For students whose listening skills may be relatively weak, you can make this activity a little easier by first writing on the board several questions you will answer in your talk. (See Focused Listening in "Oral Skills Activities.")
- One way you can learn more about students' grammar, vocabulary, and writing skills through this activity is by having them to write a summary of your talk.

Pair/Small Group Task: In planning oral skills classes, you not only need to know how well students can already speak English (German, Japanese, etc.), you also need to know how well they can discuss in groups - and how willing they are to do so. Therefore, it is often a good idea to do at least one pair or small group activity on the first day. Suggested procedure:

- Choose a topic relevant to the first day of class, preferably one that will help you learn more about their ideas on language study. (Ex: "What are the best ways to study English?" "Why is it useful to study a foreign language?") Be sure to frame the topic as a task (see Pair/Small Group Activities in "Oral Skills Activities.")
- Put students in pairs or groups for discussion, and have them complete the task.
- As students discuss, wander and listen in. Pay attention to difficulties they have understanding and getting started on the task, and also how able and willing they are to discuss with each other.

Survey or Cocktail Party: A Survey or Cocktail Party activity allows you to talk to a number of students individually, so that you quickly get a much clearer idea of how well they can listen and speak. You will also quickly get a sense of how much students are willing to speak with each other in a foreign language when you aren't hovering over them. Suggested procedure:

- Pick a topic or question that seems relevant to the first day of class. (Ex: What do you find hardest about studying English?" "What do you like most about studying English?")
- Give students the topic/question and ask them to talk to several other students and note down what they learn. (See Surveys and Cocktail Parties in "Oral Skills Activities" for more specific ideas.)
- Join in and speak to as many students as possible, but also keeping an eye on how well the rest of the class responds to the activity.

Writing Exercise: If you are teaching a writing course or a course in which writing is one component, it is difficult to make plans until you have some idea of how advanced students' writing skills already are, so one good use of the first day in class is to get a short sample of students' writing. Suggested procedure:

- Choose a topic, especially one that will help you learn more about ideas and experiences in language study, such as:
 - Why are you taking this course?
 - What methods do you usually use to study English (Japanese, German)?
 - Why is it beneficial to study English/Japanese/German?
 - Describe your best middle school teacher.
 - What is the best way to learn a foreign language?
 - What experiences have you ever had with foreigners?
- Give students a limited amount of time, perhaps half an hour or so, and ask them to write a short composition or letter.
- Collect and go over the compositions.

"Simon Says" Game (TPR): This activity makes a fun warm-up or a break, especially for lower level classes. It also helps quickly establish a relaxed fun atmosphere in class - and incidentally gives you a quick idea of students' listening skills. Suggested procedure:

- Prepare a list of commands to give, starting with very simple ones and getting more difficult. Try to make them appropriate to students' skill levels, and also make some of them fun. Examples:
 - Please stand up.
 - Greet the person next to you.
 - Shake the hand of the person behind you.
 - Ask someone what time it is.
 - Compliment someone.
- Do the activity either as TPR or a Simon Says game.
 - For TPR, see "Oral Skills Activities."
 - Students may be familiar with "Simon Says" because the game "Polly Says" is in the Junior English for China books used in most Chinese middle schools.)
- Vary the difficulty of the activity by the speed with which you deliver the commands.
- **Caution:** Simplify the commands quickly if you appear to be above the limit of students' comprehension skills.

Interviews: Ultimately, the best way to get to know your students, and also to gain a sense of their speaking skills, is through individual interviews. While it is very time consuming to interview students individually, the advantages of doing so are also great. If you have too many students for individual interviews, you can speed the process up by having them come in pairs or even small groups.

Common Problems In Oral Skills Classes - And How To Cope

Below are some of the problems most often encountered in oral skills classes, and a few suggestions for dealing with them.

Unclear instructions: One of the most common reasons discussion activities don't go well is that instructions are not sufficiently clear, either because they are too complicated or not presented clearly. Some tips:

- Write down your instructions in advance, even verbatim.
- Keep instructions short, clear, and simple. Students normally only understand part of what you say, so instructions need to be especially clear if you want students to understand well.
- When you deliver instructions, speak more slowly and clearly than normal.
- Repeat instructions, using the same (or almost the same) wording.

Unclear tasks: Another reason discussion activities often fail to get off the ground is that the task assigned is too vague and students aren't quite sure what to do. Instructing students to "talk about" or "discuss" something doesn't give them a very clear direction. Discussion starts faster and moves with more purpose if you assign students a more specific task such as:

- make a list
- make a decision
- find out what everyone thinks about....
- design a plan. Etc.

(See "Activities for Teaching Oral Skills - Pair/Small Group Tasks" for more ideas on tasks.)

Lack of genuine communication: Students generally talk more enthusiastically if they are really communicating with each other and with you. "Real" communication involves:

- Talking to somebody about something that is of interest to both parties.
- Putting one's own ideas into words.
- Having an "information gap," i.e. A telling B something B doesn't already know.

Students not sure why they are doing something: Students generally plunge into any task with more enthusiasm if they know why they are doing what they are doing. So:

- Before an activity, tell students why they are doing the activity, and what skills and/or language knowledge they are developing through the activity.

Boring student monologs: Students tend to lose interest rapidly when the whole class has to sit and listen while one student talks at length. Tips:

- When you ask for reports after a pair or small group discussion activity, don't let the first student reporter "download" everything her/his group talked about. Ask for just one point and then move on to the next group.
- Think twice before assigning student presentations - they often result in long periods of boredom for the audience.
- If you do assign student presentations:
 - stress that students should attempt to be interesting or entertaining;
 - put a time limit on the presentation;
 - schedule only one or two presentations a day, rather than filling entire lessons with them (unless they are well done).

Time wasted getting group discussions started: Group activities generally go better if groups don't spend a lot of time deciding how to organize themselves. You can speed up the process and make activities seem more focused and directional by giving clear instructions as to group organization. Other tips:

- Either group students yourself or give clear instructions as to how students should group themselves.
- Tell each group to pick someone to take notes.
- Try not to have more than 3-4 students in a group. As the group gets larger than 4, chances to speak decrease. Students are also forced to sit further from each other, it becomes harder for them to hear each other (this a real issue in many classrooms), and interest in the activity plummets.

Difficulty getting students to talk: Sometimes when you ask questions or assign activities, students are slow to respond. Suggestions:

- Make sure instructions are clear (see above). One reason students don't respond is often that they aren't quite sure what you mean or what you want them to do.
- See that the question or task is not too difficult conceptually, and that it doesn't place unreasonable demands on students' English skills.
- Make sure your questions and tasks are intellectually appropriate for adults. Sometimes a question or task is too simple and students don't respond because they don't find it challenging (or because they assume that such a simple question must be a trick). "Real" communication helps a lot.
- Sometimes students don't respond in general class discussions because they haven't had time to decide what they think about something. It may help to give students a minute or so to think and jot down a few notes, either individually or in small groups.

Poor student listening comprehension: In some cases you will have groups of students who understand very little of what you say. Suggestions:

- Write a lot on the board. Often students will be able to read words which they don't understand by hearing alone.
- If you give a talk, it is especially important to write key words on the board. This not only makes it easier for students to learn those words - and write them into a notebook - but also gives them clues which makes it easier to figure out what you are talking about.
- Be prepared to mime a lot. As you plan lessons, you might think of ways in which you can show students what you want them to do if they don't understand you instructions. This will help make the mime a fun addition to the lesson rather than a frustrated last resort.
- Use lots of visual aids (pictures, stick drawings, objects, and so forth).
- Keep instructions as simple as possible.
- Keep activities as simple as possible. If you try a complicated activity -- no matter how good -- you may well bog down completely just trying to explain it.
- Less explanation - more examples. Don't expect students to understand explanations. Rather, give examples.
- In your lesson plan, include some "traditional" activities like choral drill, dictation, or dialogue memorization. These are usually familiar to students, so they don't require much explaining and they give students a break from the constant strain of trying to comprehend what you want them to do.

Tricks For Teaching Classes With Low Listening Skills

One of the most difficult adjustments that many foreign teachers need to make during their first weeks in China is getting used to communicating with students whose listening skills are very low, in many cases so low that they do not understand simple questions like "What is your name?" This, of course, will not be true of all students, but may be true of:

- First year students in most colleges, even foreign language majors. (Foreign language majors in key universities will probably be much better.)
- "College English" students; i.e. students who are not language majors.
- German or Japanese as a second foreign language students.
- Middle school language teachers from non-key middle schools.

There is no easy solution to this problem, but here are a few tips that might help:

Write a lot on the board. Often students will be able to read words which they don't understand by hearing alone.

Be prepared to mime a lot. As you plan lessons, you might think of ways in which you can show students what you want them to do if they don't understand your instructions. This will help make the mime a fun addition to the lesson rather than a frustrated last resort.

Use lots of visual aids. Pictures, stick drawings on the board, objects, whatever.

Keep things simple. Make any instructions you give as simple as possible, and keep activities as simple as possible. If you try a complicated activity -- no matter how good -- you may well bog down completely just trying to explain it. In preparation for class, actually practice giving your instructions - it is often only when you start saying them out loud that you realize they are more complicated than you thought.

Little explanation -- lots of examples. Don't expect students to understand explanations. Rather, give examples.

Use familiar activities. In your lesson plan, include some "traditional" activities like choral drill, dictation, or dialogue memorization. These are usually familiar to students, so don't require much explaining, and give students a break from the constant strain of trying to comprehend what you want them to do.

Teaching Pronunciation¹

The Problem

No matter how good the English of your Chinese English teaching colleagues is, their pronunciation will often have a marked Chinese accent. So one of the most valuable gifts you have to offer in China is your pronunciation. However, contributing this particular gift can occasionally be a bit tricky, for several reasons. First, your students have already studied English for years and their pronunciation habits are not easy to change. A second problem for those of you who are native speakers of English is that you produce sounds so naturally that you may not be aware of how you do it, so even when you know that your students' pronunciation is wrong, you may not know what the problem is or how to correct it. Finally, the overwhelming majority of Amity teachers are not native speakers of the British "RP" accent ("Received Pronunciation", also known as "BBC English" or "the Queen's English") which is the accepted English standard in China in most textbooks, including Junior and Senior English for China. (Even in the UK, this accent is spoken by only a fairly small minority.) The upshot of all this is that teaching pronunciation may be a more complicated issue than it seems.

The good news, however, is that through dint of hard effort it is possible for students to make some improvement in their pronunciation, particularly when they are attending to their pronunciation. (In other words, even future teachers with fairly heavy accents can learn to pronounce words accurately enough when paying attention that they provide an acceptable model for their own students.) If you pay attention to your own pronunciation, and spend a little time browsing through typical Chinese English textbooks, you should also be able to learn enough about the mechanics of pronunciation to be able to help students. Finally, as long as you are aware of the differences between your own accent and RP, you can provide a useful pronunciation model for your students.

Tips on how to approach the pronunciation issue

- Do teach pronunciation!
- In class, speak naturally using your own accent, although if there are marked regional features to your speech you might lean as far in the direction of a more broadly accepted standard as is comfortable for you.
- Learn the differences between your accent and RP. If you are not familiar with the International Phonetic Alphabet and the accepted RP pronunciation of words, you might look over the pronunciation tables found in Junior English for China (especially Book 1) or in volume 1 of almost any College English textbook series in China.
- When teaching pronunciation, in places where your accent differs from RP, don't insist that students follow you rather than the standard. (Future teachers will need to teach the standard in textbooks.) Rather, point out the difference between your accent and the standard so that students are aware of it.
- Many of the pronunciation problems you encounter in Chinese students will have less to do with the fine tuning of a particular English accent than with simply getting them to pronounce words in a way that is more or less acceptable in any variety of English, so focus your efforts on the many areas where you can help students in their pronunciation.

Aspects of pronunciation

Many students tend to think of pronunciation primarily as accurate production of the sounds of English words, but this is neither the only aspect of the problem nor the only important one. Consequently, one way in which you can help students improve is by ensuring that they are aware of all of the important issues.

1) **Accurate pronunciation of sounds:** This is really two problems, one of ability and one of knowledge. Students first need to learn to pronounce as many of the sounds of English as possible accurately. The particular sounds with which students will have difficulty depend to a large extent on

¹ This piece is adapted from More Than A Native Speaker (Don Snow, TESOL, 1996).

students' first language, but there are some sounds in English such as the "th" sounds in "think" and "this", or the short vowels in "head," "hit," and "put" which are difficult for students from many language backgrounds.

The second problem is making sure that students know what sounds they should pronounce in a given word. Common pronunciation problems include omitting sounds, adding extra ones, or simply pronouncing the wrong sound.

2) **Syllable stress:** Unlike many other languages, English requires that one syllable in each word be stressed more than others. The importance of putting the stress on the right syllable in English cannot be underestimated; putting the stress on the wrong syllable is more likely to make a word unintelligible than is mispronouncing one of its sounds. For many students who are especially hard to understand, misplaced syllable stress is the main problem.

3) **Sentence word stress:** In English sentences, not all words are given equal emphasis. Key words (usually the words that contain new or important information) are stressed and pronounced more slowly and clearly than other words. Take, for example, the question "Are you going to go to Boston?" If the focus of the question is on where the listener will go, the sentence will sound something like "Ya gonna go ta Boston"; the word "Boston" would be pronounced clearly and with more emphasis. If, in contrast, the emphasis is on who is going, the sentence would sound like "Are you gonna go ta Boston?" While students don't necessarily need to learn to reduce the unimportant words in sentence, they should learn to stress key ones. (Students should also be made aware of English word reductions for listening comprehension.)

4) **Sentence intonation:** Intonation patterns in English sentences primarily indicate the degree of certainty of an utterance, i.e. whether it is a statement, question, or suggestion. Statements rise to a plateau, and then end with falling intonation. Most questions end in rising intonation; however, Wh-questions (who, what, where, when, why and how) end with falling intonation. It is important for students to learn these patterns not only in order to communicate meaning, but also in order to avoid unwittingly sounding rude or indecisive.

5) **Enunciation:** A final important aspect of pronunciation is clear enunciation. Some students lack confidence in speaking or are unsure of their pronunciation, and therefore speak either very quietly or unclearly. Obviously this makes them more difficult to understand, and students should therefore be reminded that speaking audibly and clearly is an important aspect of pronunciation.

Teaching pronunciation

The ideal approach to student pronunciation problems is for you to work individually with each student, listening for problems, explaining the proper pronunciation (intonation, etc.), modelling correct pronunciation, and listening to the student practice. However, this is usually not possible because of time limitations and class size, so the discussion below will focus on approaches which can be used with a class.

1) Listening and pronunciation.

Unless you are fortunate enough to have very small classes, it will be difficult to give much individual attention to students' pronunciation. Students must therefore learn to rely on their ears to tell them whether their pronunciation approximates that of native speaker models. However, many students are not in the habit of listening carefully before attempting to repeat. In fact, they have often been trained for years to immediately repeat whatever the teacher says, no matter how vague their impression is of the jumble of sounds they are trying to reproduce. Another problem is that while students are listening to the teacher's spoken model, their attention is often focused more on preparing to repeat than on listening. The teacher's sentence consequently serves less as a model for pronunciation than as a starting shot announcing that students should try to speak.

The first approach to pronunciation is thus helping students develop the habit of listening carefully before they speak. To do this, the first time you say a word or sentence, ask students to listen -- just listen. They should not murmur the utterance quietly after you; instead they should concentrate on fixing the sound in their memories. It is helpful if you repeat the model utterance several times

before asking students to repeat; this not only allows them more chances to listen but also helps students break the habit of blurting out a response as soon as you finish.

Exercises which require listening but no oral response may also help sharpen student listening skills. Minimal pair drills are particularly good for helping students learn to hear the difference between similar sounds. Minimal pairs are words that are pronounced exactly the same with the exception of one sound (Ex: pin--pen, bid--bit). Sample exercise: To help students learn to hear the difference between the short "i" and "e" sounds, ask students to raise their pen when you say the word "pen" and a pin when you say "pin."

Training students' ability to hear sound distinctions will not necessarily result in good pronunciation. However, students who have not clearly heard a sound obviously have less chance to produce it correctly than those who listen carefully.

2. Modelling pronunciation.

Most native speakers of English have not formally studied the mechanics of English pronunciation, so this is an area in which it would be helpful to do some homework so that you are prepared to explain how sounds are made if called on to do so. However, you will almost certainly be expected to serve as a model for pronunciation, and for this purpose a limited amount of choral drill can be useful. Steps for such a drill would be as follows:

1) Choose a text that represents normal spoken English (as opposed to more bookish language). A dialog from your textbook would be a good choice.

2) Read sentences aloud, clearly but at a fairly normal speed. Have students listen to each sentence once or twice before attempting to repeat it. Remind them that they should be listening to and trying to mimic the rhythm, stress, and intonation patterns of your speech as well as your pronunciation.

3) Build up longer sentences from the end, starting with the last few words, and then adding the previous ones. Ex: "...give you money?" "...expect me to give you money?" "Do you really expect me to give you money?" (This approach tends to preserve sentence intonation better than working from the beginning.)

One fun way to practice the rhythm of English sentences is by taking a dialog from a book, preferably one with short sentences, and turning it into a "jazz chant." In essence, this means finding the natural rhythm of each sentence and then chanting it with emphasis on the key words, something like a group cheer at a football game or a chant at a protest rally ("Hell no, we won't go" and so forth). Clapping or pounding desks adds to the festive nature of the activity. This exercise is particularly good for driving home the point that not all words in English sentences get equal stress.

Suggestions:

- If you want students to prepare choral drill of a dialog before class, it is best if they have a taped model to work with. Without having heard a dialog before they repeat it, they may wind up polishing an incorrect performance.
- Choral drill is best in small doses. It generally only takes a short period of drill for students to get the point you wish to make, and drill beyond that point rapidly turns into mindless parroting.

3. Performance of a text.

Once students are able to repeat accurately after a spoken model, the next step is to have them practice speaking from a written text. Keeping pronunciation accurate while reading a text aloud is more difficult than repeating after a teacher, but it is still easier for students than maintaining correct pronunciation in free conversation because they can focus their attention on pronunciation rather than grammar or word choice.

One way to do this is to choose a text and copy it for students. If the goal is to teach daily conversational English, it is best if the text represents normal spoken English, though an argument can be made for sometimes including texts of literary and cultural merit (famous orations, poems, etc.) that were also intended to be read aloud or recited. Having chosen a text, go over it with students in class and have them take whatever notes they need on pronunciation, syllable stress, sentence

intonation and stressed words. Next have students practice reading the text aloud (either in class or at home). Students should become very familiar with the text. Finally, either have students perform the text in class or -- if the equipment is available -- have them tape a reading of the text. The advantages of the latter approach are that students don't all have to listen to each other read the same text, and that you can listen at your leisure.

English (Japanese, German) Corners

One of the main virtues of English (Japanese, German, etc.) corners is that they are a rare opportunity in China for learners to actively take charge of their own learning. Of course English corners also give participants a good opportunity to practice their speaking skills, but their main value may lie in the way they force learners to take responsibility by practicing on their own. Unlike regular language classes where students can rely on the teacher's initiative, passively doing what they are told to do, English corners push students to decide for themselves that they will do and what it takes to make the activity work.

It is a virtual certainty that someone in your school or town will invite you to participate in some kind of language corner, possibly even hoping that you will manage the activity, and foreign teachers respond differently to these requests. Some are enthusiastic about language corners, especially at first; for others, enthusiasm dwindles over time as students ask the same questions time and again. However, whatever your level of personal interest, you should try to encourage the activity without allowing students to become dependent on you to run it. Some suggestions:

- When schools want to start a new language corner they sometimes assume that the presence of a foreigner is vital. Your participation certainly will help spark interest, but you should help organizers see that language corners are most valuable if participants take most of the initiative. You might offer to play an advisor role and perhaps offer to attend at least occasionally. However, if it seems necessary that the activity be organized, get students to take the lead. Also, it might be best if you only appeared some of the time, lest the group become too dependent on you.
- Unless the school assigns a language corner to you as part of your regular workload, your attendance is strictly voluntary. (If the school does assign it to you, it should be counted as part of your workload, not a freebie.) However, it would be nice if you generally at least offered advice and encouragement.
- Many successful language corners have no agenda at all -- people just gather and talk at an appointed time and place. However, if a group is having difficulty getting off the ground it might help if you gave them topic or activity suggestions.

Course Plan: First-Year Oral English (Winter Term)

Karin Helmreich

Setting:

This is the plan for the Oral English course taught to the first-year students at Hangzhou Teachers' College during the winter term 2002 / 03.

- In all four classes, students' Oral English level and willingness to communicate with the teacher and one another was quite high. Students also got Oral English practice in other courses, such as in the 'Comprehensive English Course' with its new textbook aiming at skills integration.
- The course took place once a week for two 40-minute periods.
- Class Size: 27 students per class

Goals of the Course:

- To help students become confident and proficient users of Oral English so that they will be able to meet the challenges as English language teachers in a fast-changing educational environment.
- To help students become independent, motivated and self-directed users of Oral English based on their own commitment and initiative to serve their overall learning goals.

More specifically, students are expected to....

- improve their fluency, accuracy, pronunciation and intonation
- develop public presentation skills, discussion skills and social interaction skills
- learn to make appropriate use of conversation strategies and language functions
- organise and express their ideas on topics of general interest
- initiate and sustain conversation in social contacts
- plan and implement practice and improvement strategies for their own oral skills development, especially for pronunciation problems
- develop enthusiasm and discipline for seeking and creating an English language environment for oral communication.

Materials:

- Course book: Tian Jing Xian (ed.) 2001 Speaking Strategies for the IELTS Test. Kouyu. Beijing: Beijing Yuyan Wenhua Daxue Chubanshe. ISBN 7 - 5619 0990 - X/H 01092. This book was ordered on my request since the previous course book (Oral Workshop 1) was not interesting and challenging enough for last year's freshmen.
- A variety of activities and ideas from different resource books and the Internet as well as self-generated and student-generated resources.

A Typical Lesson (for two 40-minute class periods)

This Oral English course is based on parallel strands of different speaking activities running throughout the term and providing continuity, coherence and a sense of progression. Each of the strands focuses on the continuous development of specific sub-skills of speaking proficiency and gives students exposure to different modes of oral communication. Here are the main strands for this course:

1. Oral Presentations:

Each student presents a 3-minute talk at the teacher's desk on a given topic. Evaluation by the classmates and written feedback by the teacher is provided in order to allow students to assess their ability and make further progress.

2. Talking Warm-Up:

Usually an enjoyable pair work communication activity to get all the students involved in talking and establish a good class atmosphere.

NB: The Oral Presentations and the Talking Warm-up take up the first 40-minute slot. Since timing is not completely predictable with freshmen giving their first talk, I found it easier to start off with the Oral Presentations rather than with the Talking Warm-up so that I can shorten or stretch the warm-up according to the situation.

3. Focus on Speaking Strategies:

This part of the lesson follows the units in the IELTS Oral English course book. Students prepare the model dialogues and useful phrases in advance so that there is enough time to carry out the communication tasks in class.

4. A Song To Make You Talk:

The song serves as the basis for small group discussions in which students share their response to the song and discuss its theme following the questions on the handout. This is the preparation for more free-style group discussions in the summer term. There are always more questions than students can discuss in class as a stimulus for out-of-class practice. The open end makes it easy to control the timing.

5. Out-of-class Talking Opportunities:

At the end of each Oral English lesson, four practice topics are provided which serve a double purpose: All students discuss them in their Dormitory English Corners during the week. At the same time, four designated students prepare a talk to be delivered in class the following week. Most of the practice topics are based on the 'Topic Cards' at the end of the IELTS book.

This course design divides each lesson into four 'slots'. In order to break the routine of this repetitive lesson pattern, special events are scheduled during the term, such as the sketch performance in the middle of the term, the Christmas lesson and a Class Speech Competition. Since students tend to perceive repetition as boring and often expect their foreign teacher to spark off fireworks of surprises every single lesson, I found it important to make the course design transparent to students and point out the benefits of continuous skills development over the term.

A Semester Outline of Lessons

1st Lesson Week 7

1. Introductions: Getting to know the teacher, Q&A time
2. Introductions: Getting to know the students, filling in the identity cards
3. Talking-warm-up: Getting-to-know-each-other communication game
4. Introductions: Getting to know our Oral English course: Aims, content, organisation, assessment, the importance of practice for skills development.
5. Practice Topics for out-of-class talking opportunities:
 - Which teacher has greatly influenced you in your life?
 - Which has been one of the best trips in your life?
 - Dogs and cats are popular pets in many countries, and they are becoming more and more popular in China as well. Do you approve or disapprove of this trend?
 - According to your own experience, what are the main differences between your life as a middle school student and as a College student?

2nd Lesson Week 8

1. Oral Presentations Students 1-4
2. Talking Warm-up and follow-up advice: How can we develop our speaking skills this term? Which practice opportunities do you plan to create for yourself?
3. Speaking Strategies: Book Unit 1: Introductions and Greetings

4. A Song to Make You Talk: 'I Hope You Dance'
5. Practice Topics for out-of-class talking opportunities:
 - What kind of friends would you like to make?
 - Which experience has left an unforgettable impression on you?
 - How can young adults get on well with their parents?
 - Should students have a part-time during College life?

3rd Lesson Week 9

1. Oral Presentations Students 5-8
2. Talking Warm-up: Values Topics Communication Game
3. Speaking Strategies: Book Unit 2: How to Start a Conversation
4. A Song to Make You Talk: 'Take Me Home, Country Roads'
5. Practice Topics for out-of-class talking opportunities:
 - What do you think of marriage arranged by parents?
 - "First impressions count" - Do you agree with this saying?
 - Which successful person - famous or not - do you admire? Why?
 - What is your most treasured possession?

4th Lesson Week 10

1. Oral Presentations Students 9 - 12
2. Talking Warm-up: News Reports 'The Week in Focus'
3. Speaking Strategies: Book Unit 3: Leaving-signals and Saying Good-bye
4. A Song to Make You Talk: 'Loch Lomond'
5. Practice Topics for out-of-class talking opportunities:
 - What makes people change in life?
 - How can you have a successful job interview?
 - What problems do you find in the Chinese education system and in which way can they be solved?
 - If you had to live on a desert island for the rest of your life, which three things would you take with you?

5th Lesson Week 11

1. Oral Presentations Students 13 - 16
2. Talking Warm-up: Book Unit 4 Task 3
3. Speaking Strategies: Book Unit 4: Games
4. A Song to Make You Talk: 'You Needed Me'
5. Practice Topics for out-of-class talking opportunities:
 - How are birthdays celebrated in China?
 - What are the advantages and disadvantages of the growing tourism industry in China?
 - In your opinion, which characteristics should a good person have? Give an example of a good person who has had a positive influence on your life.
 - What are the main differences between your and your grandmother's (grandfather's) life?

6th Lesson Week 12 English Sketch Performances

Students perform selected sketches from the following resource books:

- Doug Case and Ken Wilson: English Sketches 1. Sketches from the English Teaching Theatre. Elementary. Oxford: Heinemann 1995. ISBN 0 435 26394 3.
- Doug Case and Ken Wilson: English Sketches 2. Sketches from the English Teaching Theatre. Intermediate. Oxford: Heinemann 1995. ISBN 0 435 26397 8.

7th Lesson Week 13

1. Oral Presentations Students 17 -20
2. Talking Warm-up: Interview Practice Book Unit 5 Task 1
3. Speaking Strategies: Book Unit 5: Question and Answering Techniques

4. A Song to Make You Talk: 'Never Surrender'
5. Practice Topics for out-of-class talking opportunities:
 - Nowadays more and more people own their flats or houses. In the long run, would you prefer to live in a flat in the city or in your own house in the countryside?
 - If you were awarded a scholarship for postgraduate studies abroad, which country would you choose and why?
 - Should children be punished?
 - If you could create the perfect classroom for you to teach in the future, what would it look like?

8th Lesson Week 14

1. Oral Presentations Students 21 - 24
2. Talking Warm-up: Card game fluency activity
3. Speaking Strategies: Book Unit 6: Conversation Techniques
4. A Song to Make You Talk: 'The Gambler'
5. Practice Topics for out-of-class talking opportunities:
 - Now more and more people want to buy their own car in China. How can traffic safety be increased?
 - What is a local tradition in your hometown?
 - In our modern competitive society, should teachers be paid according to performance?

9th Lesson Week 15

1. Oral Presentations Students 25 - 27
2. Talking Warm-up: Model Role Play Book Unit 7
3. Speaking Strategies: Book Unit 7: Pair Work Role Plays
4. A Song to Make You Talk: 'Memory'
5. Preparation for the Class Speech Competition

10th Lesson Week 16 Class Speech Competition

1. Class Speech Competition: "A Special Childhood Memory"
2. Instructions for the Final Exam.

11th Lesson Week 17 Christmas Lesson

12th Lesson Week 18 Final Exams

13th Lesson Week 19 Final Exams (continued)

Evaluation Mode Used in the Course

1. Course work (40%): Active participation and performance in class, use of English in class, completion of out-of-class speaking assignments, complete class notes, one 3' oral presentation for every student about a given topic, one major role in an English sketch performance.

2. Final Exam (60%): 10-minute exam per student in groups of 6 with the teacher. NB: No mid-term evaluation for the freshmen in the winter term.

Exam Requirements:

1. Present a prepared talk about a special childhood memory to the others in your group. Total time: 4-5 minutes

2. Draw an unknown topic question and talk about it in a clearly organised way, then answer follow-up questions by the teacher. Total time: 5'. You have several minutes preparation time while the student before you is being examined.
3. Read aloud for 1 minute from a unit in the course book in the way you would read to your class as a teacher.

Course Plan: First Year Oral Skills

Don Snow

Setting: This is a plan for the first semester of freshman oral skills course at a teacher training college.

- In this class, students' oral skills levels are generally quite low. Many students have great difficulty with any oral communication in English and are afraid to speak in class.
- There is no textbook assigned for the course.
- The course meets once a week for two 50 minute class periods.

Goals of the course:

- Help students become more confident and comfortable speaking in English.
- Build students' general spoken fluency; i.e. their ability to express ideas at a reasonably normal pace.
- Help students learn the phrases they need for functioning in class. ("How do you spell ____?" etc.)
- Improve students' listening comprehension, including ability to understand classroom instructions and talk about daily life.
- Build students' group discussion skills, and their willingness to practice speaking to each other in groups.
- Increase the range of topics students can talk about in English, especially topics related to their daily lives and their immediate environment.

Materials: The main material for this course is the "Talking About Daily Life" module in the Amity Teacher's Toolkit; occasionally supplemented by other materials for a break.

Most Frequently Used Kinds of Activities and Tasks:

- Pair and small group discussion activities.
- Surveys.
- Talks given by the teacher.

A Semester Outline of Lessons/Topics (based on units from the "Talking About Daily Life" module in the Toolkit.

Week 1: Getting to know each other.

Week 2: Getting to know each other.

Week 3: Daily schedules.

Week 4: Food

Week 5: Clothing.

Week 6: (Something different for a break)

Week 7: Homes.

Week 8: Sports.

Week 9: Mid-term.

Week 10: Health.

Week 11: Health/Work.

Week 12: Work.

Week 13: (Something different for a break)

Week 14: Recreation and entertainment.

Week 15: Shopping.

Week 16: Traffic and transport.

Week 17: Social life.

Week 18: Final exam.

(Note: This course plan assumes freshman students won't miss four weeks of class for military training, but often they do.)

A Typical Lesson (for two 50-minute class periods). (This lesson is based on the "Shopping" unit in the Toolkit "Talking About Daily Life" module.)

- 1) Review: Quickly review new words and expressions from the previous unit, "Recreation and Entertainment. Goal: Review and reinforce. (Note: Students are expected to keep a vocabulary notebook.)
- 2) Warm-up: The "Did it cost ___?" activity (p. 54). Goal: Warm-up class atmosphere.
- 3) Survey. "Which is the best bike in China?" (p. 55). First have students survey each other. Then call on a few to ask either what they think or what they heard from others. Goal: Speaking practice, build confidence to speak out in public.

- 4) Small group task: "Teaching the teacher to bargain" (p. 55). Goal: Practice speaking, practice talking about bargaining.
- 5) (Break)
- 6) Talk: Short talk on refunds in your country. When, where, how, for what given. Have students take notes. Check comprehension. Goal: Listening practice; lead-in to next activity.
- 7) Activity: "I want my money back!" (p. 56). Goal: Practice explaining, persuading.
- 8) Review: Close by quickly asking students what skills they practiced today, what topics they covered, and what new words/phrases they learned.

Evaluation Methods Used in the Course

- For the mid-term and final, small group conversation tests (see Toolkit p. 92, "Testing Conversational English of a Large Group").
- For the mid-term and final, also a listening test. Give a short talk and ask students to either turn in notes or write answers to comprehension questions.
- Participation grade. This could include simple grades or notes kept in class on how students do when they are asked to speak out after Survey and other activities.
- Option: If possible, at the beginning of the term, interview students informally outside class time - perhaps in groups of three - to get to know them better. Also keep notes on their speaking and listening skills to establish a baseline. At the end of the semester, this would help you single out ways in which they have improved. (Note: This takes a lot of time, but is very helpful in allowing you to get to know students and their skill levels quickly.)

Course Plan: Second/Third-Year Writing

Barbara Penny

Setting: This is a plan for the first semester of a writing course at a teacher training college. The plan is based on the following assumptions:

1. The students are second- or third-year English majors.
2. The students' writing skills, as well as speaking, listening, and reading skills, are generally poor.
3. There is no textbook for the course.
4. The course meets once each week for two 45 or 50 minute class periods.
5. The class size is 30 or less and the teacher has no more than two writing classes.

Basic philosophy: Students learn to write by writing.

Goals of the course:

1. Increase students' confidence in their ability to use written English as a means of communication.
2. Improve students' ability to write clearly, correctly, and effectively.
3. Familiarize students with different types of writing (descriptive, narrative, expository, argumentative, etc).
4. Help students realize that grammar rules and vocabulary lists are merely tools to aid in communication, not ends in themselves.
5. Develop students' ability to proofread and correct their own writing.

Strategies: The course uses various kinds of writing assignments and activities to accomplish the stated goals.

1. Journal assignments: Journal assignments are a means to improve fluency. The emphasis is on communication. Mistakes are not necessarily corrected and the teacher responds positively to the intent and content of the writing. Students have two journal books and write two entries of approximately 100 words each week. The journal books are collected every two weeks. While the teacher is reading one set of books, students are writing in their other book. It is a good idea to specify some of the journal topics because students have a tendency to recycle their own writing and to copy from other sources. I stress that the entries should be based on current happenings in their lives. I usually allow the students free choice for one of the weekly entries and specify the subject of the other entry. For example, tell me about your hometown, explain your Chinese name, tell me about your experiences during military training (I was curious how they regarded the experience.), explain what you like (dislike) about living in the dormitory.
2. Homework essays: The purpose of the homework essays is to improve the clarity, correctness, and effectiveness of the students' writing. The teacher reads the first and second drafts closely, making comments and suggestions to help students as they re-write their essays. I do not usually assign a numerical grade to the first and second drafts, but the third (final) draft receives a grade. For beginning writers, the essay usually takes the form of an extended paragraph of about 125 words.
3. The choice of topics for the journal assignments and the essays is the prerogative of the teacher. It is wise to listen to what the students are interested in, but it is also your chance to assign subjects that you want to know more about and that you feel would produce interesting essays.
4. Peer editing: Peer editing gives students practice in evaluating their classmates' writing and actually finding mistakes and correcting them. After they have learned to edit the writing of others, always easier than editing one's own work, students are better able to edit their own writing. It takes many weeks of practice for students to become effective peer editors. Start by asking them to read their partner's essay and answer one or two very specific questions about content or organization. Be patient.

5. Discussion of student writing: As I read the homework essays, I note the mistakes that show up repeatedly and write down sentences that contain the errors. In class, I put the sentences on the board and ask students to find the mistakes. This leads to a discussion of the particular grammar point or semantic issue that needs to be addressed. I usually read aloud (anonymously) one or two of the better papers to help students understand what I expect.
6. Return of student papers: I return the papers with my comments and then circulate around the class, encouraging the students to ask for clarification and help. Questions are few at the beginning of the semester but will increase as students realize the importance of the re-writing process.

Semester Outline:

Week 1

1. Getting to know each other.
2. Journal assignment.
3. Homework: Write a one-paragraph (100-125 words) essay describing a favorite place.

Week 2

1. Peer editing of first draft of favorite place essay (previous week's homework).
2. Journal assignment.
3. Student homework: Write one paragraph describing a famous Chinese person who lived before 1900.
4. Teacher homework: Read and comment on first draft of favorite place essay.

Week 3

1. Peer editing of first draft of famous person essay.
2. Discuss and return first draft of favorite place essays.
3. Collect journals. Next four entries are written in the second journal book.
4. Journal assignment.
5. Student homework: Second draft of favorite place essay.
6. Teacher homework: Read and comment on first draft of famous person essay. (And so it goes with the teacher reading what the students wrote the week before.)

Week 4

1. Peer editing of second draft of favorite place essay.
2. Discuss and return first draft of famous person essay.
3. Journal assignment.
4. Homework: Second draft of famous person essay.

Week 5

1. Peer editing of second draft of famous person essay.
2. Discuss and return second draft of favorite place essay.
3. Collect journals. Return first set of journals. Allow time for students to read teacher's comments and ask questions.
4. Journal assignment.
5. Homework: Final draft of favorite place essay.

Week 6

1. Collect final draft of favorite place essay. Sometime I have the students pass their papers around so that they can read each other's work before I mark the papers.
2. Discuss and return second draft of famous person essay.
3. Journal assignment.
4. Homework: Final draft of famous person essay.

Week 7

1. Collect final draft of famous person essay.
2. Journal assignment.
3. No homework. The students will need a break and so will you!

And so the semester proceeds with two essays in process concurrently and the journal assignments continuing in the background.

Evaluation of student performance: The course grade is based on the homework essays and the journal assignments. You may also choose to give in-class writing assignments and grammar exercises or tests. If you feel the need for a midterm or a final examination, it is easy to have the students write an essay in class or you can have them revise a draft of an essay that is in process.

In conclusion: Obviously you will need to vary the routine and include some light-hearted activities in class. The Toolkit has some excellent writing activities and topic ideas. Remember that many oral class topics can also be used as subjects for an essay.

Teaching writing means grading papers, and grading papers is exhausting. Depending on your other responsibilities, you may need to give fewer assignments than I have indicated here.

Course Plan: Second-Year Writing

Don Snow

Setting: This plan is for the first semester of a sophomore writing course at a teacher training college.

- This plan is for students who have not previously had a writing course, so many still have trouble with basic writing conventions (capitalization, punctuation) and grammar (connecting independent clauses with commas, problems with verb tenses, determiners, plural and singular, and so forth).
- The course meets once a week for two 50 minute class periods.
- In this particular course, students face severe time constraints, so much writing will be done during class time. (Homework will consist mainly of journal writing.)

Goals of the course: Help students learn to:

- Write letters and simple papers in reasonably accurate English.
- Become comfortable writing about themselves and their country/culture.
- Express and explain opinions in English.
- Proofread and edit their writing; in particular, build their ability to spot and correct errors in their writing (a useful skill for future teachers).

Materials: No textbook per se, but topic ideas drawn from material in the Amity Teacher's Toolkit, especially the Daily Life, Cycle of Life, Relationships, and Our Nation modules.

Most Frequently Used Kinds of Activities and Tasks:

- Free writing (in class).
- Pre-writing activities, such as in-class discussion and outlining.
- Writing letters and short papers.
- Revising letters and short papers.
- Practice proofreading and editing.
- Journal writing.

Semester Course Plan Topic Outline

Weeks 1-2: "Something interesting about me" (Writing about self.)

Weeks 3-4: "What is special about my hometown" (Writing about self, expressing opinions.)

Weeks 5-6: "My best teacher" (Writing about self, expressing opinions.)

Weeks 7-8: "Qualities of the ideal mate" (Expressing opinions.)

Week 9: In-class mid-term. "What are the best places for a foreign visitor to travel to in China and why?" (Expressing opinions.)

Weeks 10-11: "What is the best way to learn English?" (Expressing opinions.)

Weeks 12-13: "China's greatest hero" (Expressing opinions.)

Weeks 14-15: "What is the biggest challenge facing Chinese English teachers?" (Expressing opinions.)

Weeks 16-17: "My ideal career" (Writing about self.)

Week 18: In-class final.

Notes:

- The topics above are only general ideas - they should generally be refined and made more specific before given as writing assignment tasks.
- This plan assumes that roughly two weeks will be spent on each topic. The core of the first week's class would consist of pre-writing activities such as discussion and outlining, and also on writing a first draft. The core of the second week's class would consist of proofreading, editing and revising activities.

A Typical Two-Week Cycle (for four 50-minute class periods). (Based on the "China's greatest hero" topic.)

Week 1

- 9) Warm-up: Free writing: Give students the topic "My favorite food" and have them writing as much as possible in five minutes. (The goal here is to loosen up and write quickly, not to worry about accuracy or style.)
- 10) Pre-writing activity: In groups, have students list China's ten greatest heroes (or ten greatest pre-modern heroes), and be ready to explain why each is considered a hero. (They should also check the *pinyin* spelling of the hero's name.) Then have groups report and discuss.
- 11) Preparing to write: Have each student choose the person they think is China's greatest hero (greatest female hero, greatest ancient hero, etc.) and plan a short composition that 1) introduces this person to a foreign reader, and 2) explains in a convincing way why this person is great.
- 12) Writing: After drafting a plan (outline), each student should write a short composition and be ready to turn it in at the end of class. They are encouraged to finish early and exchange papers for peer editing. (At the end of this particular class, the teacher will collect the papers, and make some grammar and content suggestions for each. However, the teacher could also simply collect the papers and save them for student self-editing the following week.)
- 13) Homework: For homework, students should make several entries in their journal.

Week 2

- 1) Warm-up: Free writing.
- 2) Editing exercise: Have students do some kind of proofreading or editing exercise, either using their own papers, papers generated during the free writing, or specially prepared exercises. Have students focus on a "point of the day" but have them look for other problems as well.
- 3) Self and peer editing: Have students edit and revise the compositions you turn back in class, either working alone or in pairs. They should correct mistakes (and in a notebook make notes of points they need to be careful of in the future) and plan to revise the composition.
- 4) Re-writing: Have students re-write their compositions in class.
- 5) Homework: For homework, students should make several entries in their journal.

Evaluation Methods Used in the Course

- Composition grades.
- In-class mid-term and final writing exercises.
- A portfolio of revised compositions. (When commenting on papers after the first round of revision, the teacher will no doubt still have suggestions to make. The portfolio could consist of a few compositions students select and revise a third time.)
- Journals. (While the teacher would not grade these, some record could be kept of whether or not students actually make journal entries.)

Introduction: Why Talk About Culture?

The "Talking About Culture" activities in Part III this book all have one thing in common - all are based on culture-related topics. More specifically, they either require students to talk about their own culture, with each other or with a (foreign) teacher, or they require students to listen and try to understand as a (foreign) teacher talks about her/his culture.

There are several reasons for this strong focus on culture:

- There is a genuine "information gap" between Chinese students and foreign teachers, so conversation about culture issues results in genuine communication. This is generally more interesting and motivating for both teachers and students than making things up for the sake of language practice.
- Learning about Western culture enhances students' ability to understand English. Students' listening and reading comprehension skills are based heavily on the amount of background knowledge they bring to a communication task. Put simply, the more students know about the cultural background of the people they communicate with, the more likely they are to be able to guess correctly if they encounter unfamiliar words, phrases, grammar structures, and so forth. (This is called "top-down" processing.)
- Knowing something about what Westerners already know and believe helps students know how to more effectively express their ideas to Westerners. For example, it enhances their ability to decide what needs to be explained (so a Westerner won't get lost or confused), and what doesn't need to be explained (so a Westerner won't be bored). It also helps them know when Westerners need to be persuaded of something, and when they will accept it without further argument and evidence.
- If students ever actually encounter Westerners and have a chance to talk with them, one of the things they are most likely to talk about is their culture. The more comfortable students are talking about their culture in English, the more likely they are to be able to express their ideas effectively. Also, students who can express their ideas well will be more able to sustain conversation and have more chances to continue practicing their English.
- Knowing more about Western culture will help students better understand the behavior and intentions of Westerners, why they do and say the things they do. This reduces the chances of misunderstandings, which can often lead to bad feelings.
- Learning about Western culture in more detail helps break students of the habit of thinking about Western culture in terms of over-generalized, two-dimensional stereotypes. Students who have limited experience of the West and Westerners are likely to think about it in terms of very broad generalizations such as "(All) Americans are rich" or "(All) British are polite." The more students come to see the complexity of Western culture and people, the less likely they are to fall back on such stereotypes as they try to make sense of Westerners, and the more keenly they will feel the need to learn more rather than being satisfied with such broad and superficial generalizations.

Given the many advantages of talking and learning more about culture, it seems only natural to kill two birds with one stone by combining English study and practice with opportunity for both students and teachers to learn more about each other's cultures.

(Module 1) Daily Life

Getting To Know Each Other

Activity: "Initial data gathering"

Goal: Get to know students, see how well they understand directions

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Easy

Preparation:

1. You might want cards or uniform sized sheets of reasonably nice paper.
2. Decide what information you want about students. Ex: Name, where they live, etc.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students the questions you want them to answer. Students should first note down your questions, and then write answers after you finish dictating the list. Repeat directions as necessary. (It's easier if you write questions on the board, but then students don't need to listen.)
2. As students write answers, wander the aisles to see how well they understood the directions. If students are having trouble, you can either help them individually or write the questions on the board so that they can complete the task with a minimum of fuss.
3. Have students turn in their papers so you have data about the students in your class. You might even take small group or individual photographs to put with the data sheets so that you can more easily place faces with names.

Talk: "Introducing yourself"

Goal: Get sense of students' speaking and listening skills; build relationships

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you would like to introduce yourself to them, but would like to respond to questions rather than just talking.
2. Divide students into groups of 3 or 4. Ask each group to make a list of questions they want to ask you - questions they are really interested in. They should discuss in English. One person in each group should write down the questions suggested by others.
3. While groups prepare, walk around, look at the questions, and suggest grammar corrections, or comment on interesting questions. Also note how well students function in groups and how willing and able they are to use English.
4. Have students interview you. Have a group ask one question, and then move on to the next group -- don't have one group ask a series of questions while others sit and wait. Ask students to take notes on your answers, and to ask clarifying questions if they don't understand.
5. After the interview runs out of steam, check students' comprehension by asking them what your answers to their questions were. Ex: What did I say my job was? Tip: Rather than singling out students (and possibly embarrassing them if they didn't understand) you might direct your questions at the whole class and let volunteers answer. Alternatively, pick a group and have one volunteer from the group answer.
6. Option: To check comprehension more carefully and see writing samples, ask each student to write a paragraph summarizing what they have learned about you. (This is a good exercise, but not very communicative.)

Game: "Polly Says" (Note: This variation on "Simon Says" is in the JEC curriculum)

Goal: Practice listening practice; take a fun break. (Might also be a good warm-up.)

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Preparation:

1. Make list of directions. Ex: "Please stand up." "Say 'good morning'." "Greet the person next to you." "Shake the hand of the person behind you." "Ask someone what time it is." "Compliment someone." Start with simple directions and move to more challenging ones.

Activity Notes:

1. You give directions, students respond by doing what you ask. Examples.
2. A festive game-like atmosphere should make this fun, but...simplify the commands quickly if you exceed the limit of students' comprehension skills.

Letter Writing: "Getting to know students"

Goal: See how well students can write (grammar, vocabulary, etc.)

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long (if writing done in class)/Relatively Challenging.

Preparation:

1. Choose a topic that will help you get to know your students better. Ex: 1) What do you hope to gain by taking this course? 2) How have you learned English? 3) Describe your best middle school teacher.
- 4) What is the best way to learn a foreign language? 5) Tell me the story of your life.

Activity Notes:

1. Quickly show students a simple format for a personal letter.
2. Ask students to write a short letter (a page or less) to you on your topic.
3. Collect the letters. Read them later to get an idea of students' writing skills.
4. Suggestion: Rather than correcting errors and handing the letters back, keep them but comment in class the next day about some of the interesting things you learned. This quickly conveys the idea that letters you ask them to write are for communication, not just writing practice. (Because the focus of these materials is on speaking and listening activities, this is the only writing activity that will be listed in these materials. However, there is much to be said for including writing with oral skills practice, and many of the speaking activities and topics would also lend themselves to good writing assignments.)

Pair Practice: "Getting to know each other"

Goal: Practice speaking; see how willingly students speak English with each other

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you want them to get to know each other, and also to practice English.
2. Ask students to get up, find a person they don't know well, and sit down together. If necessary, compel students to their feet, and shepherd more passive ones to a partner.
3. Tell students to interview their partners in English about where they are from and so forth. Tell them they should discover something interesting about their partner. Have students take notes (not full sentences) as they interview each other.
4. Close by asking a few volunteers what the most interesting thing was that they learned about their partner.
5. Variation: Have students move around the room and talk to several partners (see "Cocktail Party" in "Glossary of Activities and Methods"). Suggestion: Teach students one or two lines that they can use to end a conversation so they can move to a new partner. (Ex: It was nice talking to you; I hope we can talk more later.) You may also occasionally need to call out "Change partners!" lest people talk to the same partner forever.

Teacher Interview: "My life"

Goal: Practice listening, asking questions; build relationships.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students they are newspaper reporters who need to interview you about your life in order to write a story for the local newspaper.
2. To prepare for the interview, divide students into groups to decide on and write down questions they want to ask. While they talk, circulate and help them with the questions. Tip: If some questions are too personal, tell students before the interview OR show students strategies for avoiding answering personal questions e.g. "I'd rather not answer that, if you don't mind" etc.
3. Have students interview you, taking notes. Encourage students to ask clarification questions as necessary, especially "tool questions" such as "How do you spell _____?" in order to get their notes right.
4. Close with comprehension check. Option: Have students write up the article as homework.

Option: Ask students if there was anything particularly surprising about what you said, anything you said that violated their previous ideas about Westerners.

Show and Tell: "Pictures"

Purpose: Take a break, have fun.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Flexible/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Bring some pictures of your life to class and talk a little about them.

Cocktail Party: "Special memories"

Goal: Practice speaking; build relationships.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to think of most exciting (dangerous, wonderful) thing that ever happened to them was. Then have everyone get up, find a partner, and ask about his/her story.
2. Close by asking a few volunteers to report on a good story they heard.

Interview: "Life story"

Goal: Practice talking about one's life; allow students to get to know each other.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students they are going to interview a partner about his/her life story.
2. Have them spend a few minutes thinking of questions and writing them down.
3. Have everyone find and sit with a partner they don't know well. Have partners take turns interviewing each other and jotting down notes as necessary. Join in as an interviewer.
4. Close by asking a few students what the most interesting thing they discovered about their partner was.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Advice for learning Chinese (or English)"

Goal: See how well students work in groups, find out what they think about language learning

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Place students in groups of three or four.
2. Tell students you would like to learn some Chinese while in China, and you want their advice. Ask each group to make a list of five important bits of advice they would give you on how to learn Chinese. (Variation: If you already speak some Chinese, you might ask them to tell you advice they would give to students on how to learn English.) Advice should be as specific as possible. Ex: "Practice listening" is not as helpful as saying "Listen to Chinese tapes every night before you go to bed." Tip: If a group finishes early, have them prioritize their list, deciding which advice is most important and so on.
3. One person in each group should write out the advice suggested by others.
4. While the groups discuss, walk around, look at what they are writing, and comment on their English and ideas. Insist that they use only English.
5. Have each group report one bit of advice and explain why it is important; you can also ask other groups if they agree. Keep going until board is filled or the class runs out of steam.
6. Ask the class to teach you one word or phrase in Chinese. (Ex: Thank you. Good morning.) Your efforts to repeat after them should result in good entertainment. Close by thanking the group for their help.

Pair/Small Group Task: "English Corner Topics"

Goal: Prepare for English corner

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Explain that one difficulty in practising English outside the classroom is finding topics to discuss with others.

2. Have students list topics they usually talk about in Chinese every day with their friends, colleagues and family, also other topics they want to discuss.
3. Have groups report their best topics. Perhaps even vote on which seem most interesting.
4. Talk with students about the importance of practicing English outside class, and encourage them to organize an English corner if they don't already have one. Collect the topic lists for future reference (can be used for other homework speaking assignments as well).

Other Activity Ideas:

Interview: Divide students into pairs, and have each person ask questions to get to know their partner. To close, have people introduce their partner.

Conversation Partners: Pair students, have them arrange a time to meet outside class (take a walk, whatever), and see that they have a topic. Perhaps give participants a list to choose from, have the class as a whole list topics, or have each pair decide what they want to talk about. Tell them that tomorrow you will ask what they talked about, or have them summarize the conversation briefly in their notebooks.

Other Topic Ideas:

- Your fondest childhood memories.
- What is the earliest thing you can remember in your life? Is there any part of your life you'd rather forget?

Daily Schedules

Classroom Chat: "Our typical schedule"

Goal: Practice talking about schedules; learn more about your students.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you what a normal day's schedule is for people in China. Start with getting up in the morning and go through a typical work day. Write the reported schedule on the board as students talk.

Teacher Interview: "A Western daily schedule"

Goal: Practice talking about schedules; asking questions; listening. Learn more about West.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students they have been assigned to interview a Westerner about her/his schedule.
2. In pairs or groups, have them prepare interview questions about your daily life, especially questions related to schedule. ("What time...? How long do you?")
3. Closure suggestions: (Especially if the interview was a little disorganized.) In groups, have students organize the information they got from you and write it up as typical daily schedule. When they are done, they turn it in to you. (You may want to look them over, and later announce which group was most accurate.) Alternative: Ask students if there was anything about your schedule that surprised them.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Late" vs. "Early"

Goal: Practice talking about time; compare Chinese and Western culture.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Explain that one of the main differences between cultures lies in the "rules" for what is considered too late and too early. (In virtually all cultures, it is acceptable to arrive at an appointment either before or after the exact time specified -- the question is how much flexibility is allowed in each direction.)
2. In small groups ask students to tell you the rules for being on time in China. For each of the following engagements, have them tell you how early is "too early" and how late is "too late": a business appointment, a dinner, a date, other.

3. Closure suggestion: Based on what students tell you, comment on any differences between China and your own country in the rules for being early and late. (The differences may not be too great, but there will probably be some.)

Pair/Small Group Task: "Early to bed and early to rise"

Goal: Practice talking about time, explaining opinions.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Introduce the saying "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."
2. In small groups, quickly have students decide whether they think this is true or not, and be ready to explain why they think so.
3. For large group discussion, first have groups report and explain their views on the saying. Then open the general question of how early one should go to bed and get up, and why.
4. Alternative: Similar activity with the saying "Time is money."

Other Activity Ideas:

Survey: Have students ask each other what their ideal schedule would be like. (Before starting the survey, give students a few minutes to consider what their own ideal schedule would be; for example, when they would get up, go to bed, etc.)

Pair/Small Group Activity: Using what they have learned, have students list three good things about the average schedule in China and in your culture, and three things that are not so ideal.

Other Topic Ideas:

- Should middle school students have classes on Saturday? (In China, they sometimes do.)
- What is a normal daily schedule for a worker? (Farmer? Student? Official? Teacher? Etc.)
- What is a normal schedule for eating meals in China? (When, what, and how much?)
- What is the normal pattern for sleeping in China?
- Are there any situations where it is polite to be late? If so, list.
- What is the best time of day for studying?

Food

Classroom Chat: "What do you eat?"

Goal: Practice talking about food. Learn a little more about your students.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students what they normally eat for: breakfast, lunch, supper.

Game: "Food Contest"

Goal: Practice talking about food, generate food-related vocabulary.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. In groups have students list as many fruits (meats, vegetables, etc.) as possible within 3-5 minutes. No dictionaries.
2. As they compile their lists, wander and help with vocabulary.
3. Call time and have each group count up their list.
4. Ask which group has the most, and then have that group read their list so that everyone can check. You write the words on the board. They only win if all (or most) of their entries are right. Close with a round of applause for the winning group.

Pair/ Small Group Task: "Typical Western Meal Contest"

Goal: Practice talking about food; learn about food in your culture.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. In groups ask students to write down what they guess a typical breakfast, lunch, and dinner would consist of in your country.
2. Have groups report their guesses. Tip: You may want to handle this one meal at a time; otherwise each group report may be too long and tedious.
3. After groups present their guesses, present your own summary. Praise the group(s) whose guesses are closest. If time permits, repeat for other meals.
4. Note new vocabulary on board and have students write it into their notebooks.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Banquet Etiquette"

Goal: Practice talking about meal behavior, explaining rules of etiquette. For you to learn more about how to behave in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Somewhat Challenging

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you expect to be invited to a Chinese banquet. You want to behave properly so as to impress your hosts, but don't know much about banquets in China.
2. Ask each group to make a list of tips as to a) problems you may encounter as a foreigner, and b) what you should and shouldn't do.
3. Wander, help, and ask questions about anything that isn't clear to you.
4. Have each group give their most important piece of advice first. Make them explain as necessary. Go for second and third rounds of advice if groups still have more to share.
5. Thank everyone for their advice. Comment on especially unexpected (hence valuable) tips.

Other Activity Ideas:

Show and Tell: Bring in pictures of a few of your favorite foods, describe how to make them.

Talk: Tell a story about a memorable meal you had in China or at home.

Survey: Have students survey each other for their most (least) favorite foods.

Survey: Students find out what, if any, foreign foods they have had and what they think of them.

Pair/Small Group Task: If you were going to prepare a banquet for a foreign guest, what dishes would you include? Be prepared to explain to the teacher what these dishes are.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students describe to you how to make some wonderful Chinese dish.

Activity: "Running a Restaurant." Divide students into groups A (restaurant owners) and B (customers) -- with more customers than restaurants. Students in group A then use a supplied menu (or create one of their own), make a sign, and open for business. Meanwhile, while group A prepares, students in group B briefly discuss what kind of food they fancy eating that day. Each customer in group B is also given a certain amount of fake money (have students draw their own foreign money from samples you provide?) and then sent off to eat. They can visit more than one restaurant until they run out of money. At that point have some customers persuade an owner to retire and then take over a restaurant. For closure you might ask everyone's opinion as to the restaurant with the best (or worst) service.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What foods should people eat in the winter? Summer? (Example: Dog is a winter food. Cold things should only be eaten in the summer.)
- What do you think of the increase of Western fast food in China?
- In order of priority, have students list the most important foods in the local diet.
- In a family, who should buy/prepare food?
- What are five especially nutritious foods and what are they good for?
- What are the most famous dishes of this region? What makes them special?
- If you had to prepare a banquet for a guest from another country, what would you prepare?
- At a banquet/dinner, how can you politely avoid eating something you don't want to eat?
- For a foreigner going to a banquet, list the five most important rules for eating politely.
- What are the five rudest things a person can do at a meal?
- Explain the rules of toasting to a foreigner.
- List/describe the circumstances under which it is hard to refuse to drink. (Who? What situation? Etc.)
- Should there be a set "drinking age" below which it is illegal to buy or drink alcoholic beverages?

Clothing

Classroom Chat: “What’s New In Chinese Fashion?”

Goal: Practice talking about clothing, explaining changes in fashion.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students about latest trends in Chinese fashion -- what’s in and out now.
2. Alternative: Ask how fashion in China has changed over the last ten years.

Survey: “What Do You Like?”

Goal: Practice talking about clothing, explaining preferences.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

- 1) Have students interview several classmates, asking them what they like most in current Chinese fashion and why (Ex: I love leather jackets because _____.), and what they hate most and why (Ex: I hate pink shoes because _____.).
- 2) Closure suggestion: Share some of your own feelings about apparel.

Talk: "Changes in fashion"

Goal: Practice talking about clothing, listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

- 1) Prepare and give a short talk for students about changes in Western fashion during the last few decades, especially changes you have seen within your lifetime.
- 2) Closure suggestion: Have students tell you about changes in Chinese fashions over the past several decades.

Pair/Small Group Task: “What Should I Wear (Or Not Wear)?”

Goal: Practice talking about clothing, giving advice, explaining why something is/isn’t appropriate.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you are newly arrived in China. This coming week you have a busy schedule of events to attend, and want their advice on how to dress properly for each event. The events include: a formal banquet, a job interview, a class you have to teach, a walk in the park with a Chinese friend, and a visit to the house of an official for dinner. For each event, you want to dress as appropriately according to Chinese custom as possible, and you want to blend into the crowd as much as possible.
2. In pairs or groups, have students list tips on how you should dress for each of the occasions listed above (or others you choose). Each tip should be stated as a bit of advice. (Ex: "For a job interview, you shouldn’t wear tennis shoes.") Students should also be prepared to explain why dressing in a certain way is more/less appropriate.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Dressing For Winter”

Goal: Practice talking about clothing, giving advice, assessing what other people (foreigners) do and don’t already know and tailoring communication accordingly.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that you have heard it is very cold in China in the winter and you are worried about how to dress so that you will survive the winter as comfortably as possible. Tell them, of course you have some idea about how to dress to stay warm, but that they probably know some things you don’t know, so you would appreciate their advice.
2. In pairs/groups, have students list suggestions for you. Each suggestion should be stated as a bit of advice. (Example: "Be sure to wear a hat when you sleep at night.") Tip: If necessary, first introduce vocabulary and sentence patterns for giving advice.

3. Ask each group to give the one bit of advice they think you need the most (one that hasn't been given already).
4. Closure suggestion: Tell students which bits of advice you found most useful. (If you have other ideas from your own experience, share these with students as well.)
5. Variation: Same activity, but ask for tips on how to stay as cool as possible in summer, as dry as possible during rainy season, or whatever.

Other Activity Ideas:

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students describe the proper dress for different kinds of people: teachers, business people, officials, etc.

Classroom Chat: Tell students that in your own country, you can sometimes guess a lot about people from the way they dress. Ask students to give you some tips on how to make guesses about the backgrounds (profession, social class, region, income level, etc.) of people in China.

Homes, Buildings, and Space

Pair/Small Group Task: “A Chinese apartment”

Goal: Practice talking about apartments and space, giving and clarifying instructions. For you to learn more about how people live in China..

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups have students prepare to describe to you the layout of a typical apartment in your city in China. Tell them that you will attempt to draw the apartment layout on the board based on the instructions they give you.
2. When students are ready, draw a layout on the board as students tell you what to draw. (Rather than having one group do the whole thing, let each group tell you how to draw one part of the apartment, starting with general outline, then rooms, etc.)
3. This task will almost certainly generate confusion -- no two groups will have drawn exactly the same layout, and they will probably find that giving you instructions as to what to draw and how is harder than they thought. That's fine -- it forces them to practice clarifying instructions and repairing miscommunications.
4. The task will probably also generate new vocabulary -- keep a running list of new words at one side of the board and have students take note of them.
5. Closure suggestion: Give a prize to the group that gave you the clearest instructions.

Talk: “Buying a house”

Goal: Practice listening. Learn about home buying in the West.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare a talk in which you describe, step by step, the process of finding and buying a new home in your country. Include things that are important in choosing which house to buy, and be sure to discuss how a home purchase is usually financed.
2. Closure suggestion: Ask students what in your talk was new to them.
3. Alternative: A short talk describing the different kinds of housing options in your country (apartments, condos, homes, etc.) and the relative advantages and disadvantages of each.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Moving house in China”

Goal: Practice talking about finding housing; describing steps in a process. For you to learn more about how people live in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups, have students prepare to describe to you, step by step, how they would go about finding and getting a new place to live in China.
2. Tip: Rather than having each group describe the whole process, ask each group what their first step would be, establish a consensus, and write it on the board. Then move to the second step, and so on.

Survey: "My office"

Goal: Practice talking about spatial arrangements in an office.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have each student ask several others the following: If you had your own office and could arrange it any way you wanted to, how would you arrange the furniture and why?
2. Variation: Have students ask others how they would arrange a living room, bedroom, kitchen, etc.

Other Activity Ideas:

Talk: Describe a typical apartment in your country. (Caution: If housing in your country is much nicer than in China, try to be sensitive. For this reason, it may be better to describe a modest apartment rather than an individual house.)

Other Topic Ideas:

- Are there ways in which local housing reflects local culture (history, topography, etc.)?
- For receiving guests in a living room (meeting room, etc.), what is the best way to arrange chairs?
- If you could build your dream house (apartment), what would it be like?

Health and Hygiene

Pair/Small Group Task: "Diet for Good Health in China"

Goal: Practice talking about healthy eating habits, giving advice.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In groups have students make a list of five bits of advice for a foreigner on what to eat and drink (or not eat and drink) in order to develop and maintain good health in China.
2. Wander, comment, and help.
3. Have each group report their first piece of advice, move to more if time permits.
4. Have students note new material in notebooks.
5. Closure suggestion: Move into "Healthy Diet."

Talk: "Healthy Diet"

Goal: Practice listening. Learn more about the West.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare a short talk about what Westerners think makes up a healthy diet, in other words, what people should and should not eat.
2. Ask students to listen and take notes. If you think this topic might be challenging for students, first give them questions or an outline which will help them know what to expect and listen for.
3. Allow time for questions.
4. Closure suggestion: Have students tell you which points in your talk most Chinese would agree with, and which many might disagree with.

Small Group Task: "Cold Remedies"

Goal: Practice explaining ailments and remedies. For you to learn more about China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In groups have students list what you should eat and drink if you have a cold in China.
2. Wander, comment, and help. (Students might have quite a bit of difficulty explaining some of their remedies in English.)
3. Have each group report.
4. Closure suggestion: Tell students about some of the folk remedies used in your country.

Talk: "Health in my country"

Goals: Practice talking about health.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Preparation:

1. Prepare a talk about one or more of the health topics (fads) that are prominent in your country. Ex: weight and dieting; aerobic exercise, cholesterol, vegetarianism; health food, vitamins and other diet supplements.

Activity Notes:

1. Say that you are going to give a talk on health in your country, and ask students to take notes. You might want to focus students' listening with questions or an outline on the board.
2. Give the talk. Encourage questions either during or after the talk.
3. Check comprehension.

Small Group Task: "Living a long life"

Goals: Practice talking about health.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In groups have students list the five most important ways things you can do to ensure that you remain healthy and live a long life. Wander, comment, and help as they discuss.
2. Have each group report their most important tip and explain. Continue to other tips.
3. Write new vocabulary and structures on board, have students write into notebooks.

Small Group Task: "Health Proverbs"

Goals: Practice talking about health.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Write a couple of proverbs and sayings about health on the board. (Ex: *Good health is above wealth. An apple a day keeps the doctor away. An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Diseases are the price of ill pleasures. Early to bed, early to rise, makes one healthy, wealthy and wise.*)
2. In small groups, have students discuss a) what they think the proverb's meaning is; b) whether they agree with the wisdom contained in the proverb or not. Allow students to use dictionaries.
3. To close, elicit a few answers to the above questions from different groups. If time, have groups come up with similar health sayings in Chinese and a translation of them for you plus explanation of their meaning in English.

Other Activity Ideas:

Classroom Chat: How do you clean your teeth and when? (If you are a dental floss user, you might bring some into class -- this is relatively rare in China.)

Talk: Dieting in the West.

Pair/Small Group Task: Divide students into groups and ask them to design a healthy week-long meal plan for you, using food available in the town you are living in.

Other Topic Ideas:

- Design an exercise plan.
- What are the five most important things parents should teach children about hygiene?
- Is it better to bathe (shower) in the morning or evening?
- Habits that lead to a long life -- and habits to avoid if you want to have a long life.
- Dieting.

Work

Game: "Occupations"

Goal: Practice naming/describing occupations; generate occupation-related vocabulary.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. In small groups, give students exactly three minutes to list the names of all the occupations they can in English (Ex: driver, farmer, teacher.)
2. Call time, and then ask each group to count their list.
3. Ask which group has the most. Then, have that group read out their list as you write it on the board. Check for accuracy. (If there are errors you might need to see if another group actually got more right.)
Note: You may want to write the list at one side of the board where it can be left up for other activities (see below).
4. Closure suggestion: Declare a winner.

Survey: "What is most important in a job?"

Goal: Practice talking about occupations, explaining why some are better than others. For you to learn more about China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have the class as a whole list the rewards a job can potentially have. (Ex: status, salary, satisfaction, challenge, opportunity to learn, etc.)
2. Have students survey several other classmates asking: What is most important in a job?
3. Have volunteers report their results.
4. Option: In small groups, have students try to reach consensus on which rewards are most important. Have them try to agree on a prioritized list.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The best/worst occupations in China"

Goal: Practice talking about occupations, explaining why some are better than others. For you to learn more about China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In groups have students list the three best occupations in China and the three worst. Have them be ready to explain their choices. (The definition of "best" and "worst" is intentionally left vague here -- students will need to decide what criteria they use to decide what makes a job good or bad.)
2. Have groups report their lists, and also how they arrived at their decisions. Let class debate choices.
3. Closure suggestion: Tell students what you think the best and worst occupations are in your country and why.

Talk: "My Working Life"

Goal: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a talk about several different jobs you have had in your life, including part-time jobs you had during adolescence.
2. Give talk; encourage questions.
3. Closure suggestion: Comprehension check.

Debate: "Should students in China have part-time jobs?"

Goal: Practice talking about jobs, explaining and persuading.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Divide class into 2 teams (you will probably need to sub-divide each team into smaller groups). The Affirmative team should list advantages of having young people take part-time jobs; the Negative team should list disadvantages. Teams should be ready to explain each point, illustrate with an example.
2. Follow Debate procedure.
3. Closure Suggestion: Close by praising the better points made by each side.

Other Activity Ideas:

Interview: Have students interview each other about the jobs of their family members.

Cocktail Party: Using fictional identities and professions, have students meet, greet, and interview each other about their work.

Survey: If you were going to start a business, what kind would it be?

Other Topic Ideas:

- Have students interview each other about feelings about present/future jobs.
- How do graduating students go about finding jobs in China?
- Describe the steps in resigning from a job.
- Describe the steps in finding and getting hired in a new job.
- What are the three best ways to get a job?
- Describe a typical job application/interview process.
- What are the top three jobs you would want your child to have?
- Describe the steps involved in becoming a _____ (driver, teacher, policeman, etc.)
- How will changes in China's economy affect students' future job prospects?
- List the advantages (disadvantages) of business as a career?
- How does one go about starting a business?
- What are the relative advantages of working in a big versus small firm.
- What are the rules for success in business?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of life as a farmer?

Recreation and Entertainment

Survey: "What do you do for fun?"

Goal: Practice talking about recreational activities; explaining why one likes activities.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to survey several other students about what they normally do if/when they have free time.
2. Start the survey. Join in and survey a few students yourself.
3. Close by asking a few volunteers to report their findings. Alternative: Ask who has the most interesting free time activity that you heard about?

Talk: "Entertainment"

Goal: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a short talk on one form of entertainment you are especially interested in: music, TV shows, movies, etc. Explain what you like (or dislike) about it.
2. Have students take notes. You may want to first give comprehension questions or a simple outline if the talk will be difficult for them.
3. Allow time for questions.
4. Check comprehension. Suggestion: Have students write a summary.

Small Group Task: "A Hobby for the Teacher"

Goal: Practice talking about hobbies.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you would like to learn a typical Chinese hobby or pastime while in China, but don't know what to choose.
2. In groups, have students decide which hobby or pastime to recommend to you, and why it would be good for you. Wander, comment, and help as they discuss.
3. Have each group quickly report. Ask for more information as necessary.
4. Thank everyone for their suggestions; especially particularly interesting suggestions.

Show and Tell: "My Hobby"

Goal: Practice listening; take a break.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Take something to class that is related to a hobby of yours. Show the object and chat a little about your hobby. Encourage questions.
2. Variation: Tell your students they need to write an article about you and your hobby for the local newspaper, and then have them interview you.

Other Activity Ideas:

Talk: Tell students about a hobby you tried that didn't work out.

Talk: Teach students some aspect of one of your hobbies.

Pair/Small Group Task: Decide which are the three best (most fun, most useful, strangest, most dangerous) hobbies.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have each pair list as many hobbies as they can think of.

Survey: Have students survey their classmates to find out which is the most popular hobby (travel location, etc.) and why.

Other Topic Ideas:

- Is it better for a country to have many holidays (i.e. days off from work) or few? How many should there be? Does China need more or less?
- List the most popular leisure time activities in China.
- What are the most common kinds of parties (social gatherings, activities, etc.)?
- Is it better to work lots and have more income or work less and have more vacation?
- Prepare instructions to teach your foreign teacher how to play a uniquely Chinese sport.
- List the five most popular hobbies in China? (Why are they so popular? How do you pursue them?)
- Should people have hobbies? If so, what are the best ones to have?
- What are China's top tourist attractions?
- What is the best way to spend a weekend?
- Is it a good thing to keep pets?
- What do you think of gardening as a hobby?
- Give five rules for raising healthy plants.

Sports and Games

Classroom Chat: "What is your favorite sport?"

Goal: Practice talking about sports.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students what their favorite sports are and why. As names of sports crop up, keep a list on the board for use later in the lesson.
2. Variation: In pairs or groups, have students list as many sports as they can think of.

Talk: "A Foreign Sport"

Goal: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare a talk introducing one of the main sports in your country, especially a sport not well known in China. Ex: baseball, (American) football, rugby, cricket, skiing. Talk about both how the sport is played and how it fits into the national life of your country.
2. Give talk, have students take notes. Suggestion: Focus listening with questions or an outline.
3. Allow time for questions.
4. Closure suggestion: Comprehension check.

Activity: "Learning to Play a Sport"

Goal: Practice listening; have some fun.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Figure out a way you can walk students through some of the basic aspects of a sport you want to teach, either in the classroom or outside. Bring to class the items needed for the sport, or some creative substitutes. (For example, a wad of scrunched-up paper generally serves well as a ball for indoor use.)
2. Tell students you want to teach them to play a sport. Have them arrange the room as necessary or go outside (Note: Rearranging the classroom or going outside for class is not common in Chinese schools, so you may find some reluctance or suspicion on the part of some students initially. Encourage them to see this as a valid and fun way to learn new knowledge and skills. You should probably also clear this with school authorities.)
3. Put a few basic vocabulary items on the board, especially those which have moved from the sport into daily speech. Ex: "He threw me a curve" (from baseball).
4. Demonstrate the basic moves of the sport. Then place students in the proper positions and have them go through the motions as you give directions. (This is a teaching technique called "Total Physical Response.") Try to involve every student somehow.
5. Tip: This may work better as an out-of-class activity. If you do it during regular classroom time, be careful not to disturb other classes too much!

Pair/Small Group Task: "Teaching a Chinese Game / Sport"

Goal: Practice talking about sports/games, giving directions.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you want to learn a Chinese game / sport.
2. In groups, have students pick an interesting Chinese game / sport to teach you. Then have them draw up simple directions for how to play it. While they discuss, you wander, comment, and help.
3. Go around and have each group say what game / sport they want to teach you. Then, either pick the one that sounds most interesting, or have the class decide which one you should learn. Then have the group explain it to you. This is more fun if you try to walk through the motions as the group explains.
4. Close by thanking everyone for their help.

Other Activity Ideas:

Show and Tell: Bring in Monopoly or some other typical game from your country.

Survey: Have students survey their classmates to find out which is their favorite sport/game and why.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What are the three most popular sports in China?
- What sport best symbolizes China?
- List five popular children's games.
- List five popular games played by adults.
- Step by step, describe how to play a popular game that is unique to China/your region.

Shopping

Game: "Did it cost ___?"

Goal: Practice talking about prices, asking questions. Have fun.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Bring a few inexpensive items to class that you have purchased in China or at home. Try to find items for which students may not easily guess the price.
2. Show students an item and tell them that in a minute you will ask them to guess how much you paid for it, but first they are allowed to ask a few yes/no questions (Ex: "Did it cost more than 5 yuan?") to get clues.

3. Once you have answered several questions, make everyone announce their guess. A round of applause for the winner. (Give them the item as a prize?)
4. Variation: What Do I Need To Know? Show students some item they will not recognize (dental floss?) and explain that you met a man on the street who wants you to buy the object. He will sell it to you for 500 yuan. Ask the students to list questions you should ask the seller about the object before deciding whether or not to buy it. Have them role play what you should do when you see the seller again and either return the object or buy it.

Small Group Task: "Teaching the Teacher to Bargain"

Goal: Practice talking about bargaining; giving advice; explaining. For you to learn about China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Fairly Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you want them to teach you how to bargain effectively in a Chinese market..
2. In groups have students list the steps you should follow in bargaining in a market. (Ex: "First you should _____. Then....")
3. Have groups report their strategies. Suggestion: To make this more fun, as the groups suggest strategies, do a market role play with a willing student, following their advice. If your role play partner has any gumption at all, the advice won't work as smoothly as promised -- to everyone's amusement -- which gives you an excuse to ask advice from the next group.

Talk: "How we buy and sell in my country"

Goal: Practice listening, note-taking, writing.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare a short talk about shopping in your country: what kinds of stores allow self-service, where bargaining is allowed, how you pay for goods, what goods are in what kinds of stores, opening hours, service, differences you notice between your country and China. (Focus on how your culture deals with shopping, rather than on how many goods are available in your country -- be sensitive that your comparison doesn't sound unfairly weighted in favor of your culture.)
2. Tell students you are going to talk shopping in your country; have them take notes.
3. Give talk; allow time for questions.
4. Check comprehension. Suggestion: Have them write a summary.
5. Have students note new material in their notebooks.

Classroom Chat: "Which is the best bike in China?"

Goal: Practice talking about bicycles.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students which Chinese brand of bicycle is best and why. Encourage debate.
2. Variation: (To keep up with the times) Ask students about which brand of motorcycle (car, computer, stereo, etc.) is best.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Selling bikes"

Goal: Practice talking about products, persuading.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that you want each group to come up with a short advertisement in English (about 1 minute) for one brand of Chinese bicycle. They will perform this ad for the class.
2. As groups prepare, wander, comment, and help. Note useful vocabulary and structures on the board as they arise. Keep an eye on the time -- this activity may run long if you allow it to.
3. Have each group perform. Have the class monitor keep time, and threaten to charge for extra air-time if a group's ad goes over one minute.
4. Ask the class to vote for which ad was best (cannot vote for their own group).

Pair/Small Group Task: "Language in advertising"

Goal: Practice speaking, explaining.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Start out with "Classroom Chat." Tell students that you have noticed that even in China the packaging of many goods has English on it. Ask students about why this is so.
2. Tell students that they work in a packaging company in the sales department, and they must decide which language to use on the packaging of many goods.
3. In groups ask students to list products under three categories, those which: 1) should only have Chinese on them; 2) should have mostly or all English; 3) should have about half and half. As students discuss, you wander, comment, and help.
4. Reports: As you take notes on the board, first have students say what goods should have packaging that is mostly in English. Once each group has suggested one or two products in this category, ask them to explain why these goods should have English. Repeat as time allows.

Other Activity Ideas:

Activity: "Buying and Selling I." Half of students as sellers, half as buyers. Set buyers up as a certain type of store (shoe store, fast food restaurant, etc.) and show them normal procedure in that kind of store. Then turn customers loose. Variation: Set up a shopping mall (many kinds of stores).

Activity: "Buying and Selling II." Set up a market to practice bargaining. Half of class as sellers, half buyers. Give each seller an object (picture of something?) to sell, and each buyer a limited amount of fake money. See which sellers can earn the most for their products, and which buyers can get the most for their money.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Get Rich" Have each group make a plan for getting rich in business. What would they sell, to who, where, etc.

Activity: "I want my money back!" Divide students into two groups: merchants and customers. Each customer needs an item which he/she will try to return to the merchant for a refund, and should prepare to explain why he/she should be allowed to return the item; the merchant explains why not to give a refund. If time permits, switch roles or partners. Close by asking volunteers to share the best explanations (excuses) they heard. (Either have students bring in items, or you prepare some items.)

Classroom Chat: Ask participants about customs vis-a-vis returning items to stores in China.

Game: Call out math problems, have students do the problems and write or read out answers. Increase speed as appropriate. Good for building fluency in listening to numbers.

Classroom Chat: List a few things you would like to buy in China and then ask students "Where can I go to buy _____?" or "Where is the best place to buy _____?"

Show and Tell: Show pictures of different kinds of stores in your country.

Pair/Small Group Task: Make a list of tips for the teacher on how to buy a good bicycle.

Pair/Small Group Task: Imagine you and your partner have 1,000 *yuan* to spend together. Walk around town and discuss in English the merits and drawbacks of the goods you see. Make notes of possibilities and prices. Then, at the end of the walk, negotiate how you will spend the money.

Other Topic Ideas:

-- For a foreign visitor, list the most common kinds of stores in China and what you would buy there.

Transport and Traffic

Pair/Small Group Task: "Improving transport"

Goal: Practice talking about transportation; persuading.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Challenging.

Activity:

1. Tell students the local government has recently been given a significant loan for the purpose of improving local transport.
2. In pairs or groups, students should first identify the main local transportation problem, and then write a proposal for how to use the money to solve the problem. Each pair/group should be prepared to explain why their proposal is the best one.

3. Give each group a limited amount of time (probably only a few minutes) to present their proposal to the class.
4. Closure suggestion: Have everyone vote as to the best proposal.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Road safety"

Goal: Practice talking about road safety; explaining.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that you are new in China and need advice on how to stay safe when biking on crowded streets.
2. Ask each pair/group to list the five most important safety tips for you.
3. Ask each group to give you their most important tip (that has not yet been give).
4. Closure suggestion: Ask the class which of the tips they thought was best.

Survey: "Should more people in China get cars?"

Goal: Practice talking about transportation.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have each student survey several other classmates, asking whether it would be a good thing if most Chinese could have their own car. Those being surveyed should be asked to justify their opinions.

Other Topic Ideas:

- For a foreign teacher, prepare a list of the most important traffic rules.
- Which traffic rules should police be strict about enforcing? Which traffic rules are less important? Which should be revoked?
- What are the steps for getting a driver's (car, motorcycle, bicycle, etc.) license?

Social Life

Classroom Chat: "Parties"

Goal: Practice talking about parties.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students what kinds of parties are most common in China.
2. Have them describe the usual sequence of events for the main kinds of parties.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Refusing an invitation"

Goal: Practice talking about excuses; explaining.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups, ask students to list the 5 best excuses that you can use if you want to refuse an invitation to a banquet (or some other social occasion). They should be prepared to explain why these excuses are the best.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Gifts"

Goal: Practice talking about gift giving; explaining. For you to learn more about China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that as a newcomer to China, you don't know what kinds of occasions call for gifts, and what kinds of gifts are best for each occasion.
2. Ask them to list for you the occasions on which Chinese would normally give gifts, and what kinds of gifts they would give.
3. Closure suggestion: Ask students how much they think a foreigner in China would be bound by the same rules for gift-giving that Chinese are?

Talk: "Gift giving in the West"

Goal: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a short talk on gift giving in the West. Explain what occasions call for giving gifts, and what kinds of gifts are appropriate for each occasion.

Other Activity Ideas:

Pair/Small Group Task: List the five most common topics people in China chat (or gossip) about.

Pair/Small Group Task: List the different kinds of parties people have in China.

Other Topic Ideas:

- In Chinese culture, is there a difference between chatting and gossiping? If so, what is it?
- How do you introduce people?
- How do you make an invitation? How can you politely refuse an invitation?
- How do you strike up a conversation with a stranger? When is it appropriate/not appropriate to strike up a conversation with a stranger?
- How and when do you apologize?
- How and when do you compliment? How does one respond politely to a compliment?
- When is it necessary to say something like "Excuse me"?
- How does one disagree politely?
- How do you give advice? In what kinds of situation do people often give advice?
- How do you interrupt someone? When is it acceptable/not acceptable to interrupt?
- When should you say no to a gift?
- When is a gift a bribe?

Personal Finances and Banking

Other Activity Ideas:

Talk: How to invest. The best way to invest.

Pair/Small Group Task: Is it good to borrow money (to buy a house)?

Talk or Teacher Interview: Financing a home.

Talk: How one goes about borrowing money in your country.

Other Topic Ideas:

- How to borrow money. (Classroom Chat, Talk)
- Savings.
- Credit cards -- good or bad?

(Module 2) The Cycle of Life

My Life

Show and Tell: "Pictures"

Goals: Practice listening; build relationships with students.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Bring some pictures of your life to class and talk a little about them.
2. You might want to combine this with the activity "Teacher Interview: My life" below.

Teacher Interview: "My life"

Goals: Practice listening, asking questions.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students they are newspaper reporters who need to interview you about your life in order to write a story for the local newspaper.
2. To prepare for the interview, divide students into groups to decide on and write down questions they want to ask. While they talk, circulate and help them with the questions. Tip: If some questions are too personal, tell students before the interview OR show students strategies for avoiding answering personal questions e.g. "I'd rather not answer that, if you don't mind" etc.
3. Have students interview you, taking notes. Encourage students to ask clarification questions as necessary, especially "tool questions" such as "How do you spell _____?" in order to get their notes right.
4. Closure suggestions: Comprehension check. Options: 1) Ask students if there was anything particularly surprising about what you said, anything you said that violated their previous ideas about Westerners. 2) Have students write up the article for homework.

Cocktail Party: "Special memories"

Goals: Practice talking about our lives; build relationships between students.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to think of most exciting (dangerous, wonderful) thing that ever happened to them was. Then have everyone get up, find a partner, and ask about his/her story.
2. Closure suggestion: Asking a few volunteers to report on a good story they heard.

Interviews: "Life story"

Goals: Practice talking about our lives.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students they are going to interview a partner about his/her life story.
2. Have them spend a few minutes thinking of questions and writing them down.
3. Have everyone find and sit with a partner, someone they don't know well. Then the partners take turns interviewing and jotting down notes as necessary. Join in as an interviewer.
4. Closure suggestion: Ask a few students what the most interesting thing they discovered about their partner was.

Talk: "An interesting story"

Goals: Practice listening; build your relationship with your students.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell an interesting story about yourself or a family member.

Birth and Babies

Classroom Chat: “The big day”

Goals: Practice talking about pregnancy. For you to learn more about Chinese culture.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you step by step what happens from the time a pregnant woman in China starts going into labor.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Advice for pregnant women”

Goals: Practice talking about pregnancy. For you to learn more about Chinese culture.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you are curious about what Chinese people think about what women should and should not do while they are pregnant.
2. In pairs or small groups, ask students to make a list of Chinese “rules” for pregnant women. Each can be written as a sentence completion. “Pregnant women should _____.” “Pregnant women should not _____.”
3. Closure suggestion: Respond with a corresponding Western list of rules for pregnant women.

Talk: “My first baby”

Goals: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. (Assuming you are a parent) Tell the story of the day your first (second, whatever) child was born. Walk students through the events of the day.

Teacher Interview: “Having babies Western-style”

Goals: To practice talking about pregnancy, asking questions.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students their local newspaper has assigned them to interview a Westerner and then write a story on how Westerners typically handle childbirth.
2. In groups have them prepare interview questions. Then have them interview you and take notes.
3. Closure suggestion: Ask them what their most surprising discovery was.

Other Activity Ideas:

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students list and be ready to explain Chinese customs surrounding birth.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What is the best form of childbirth? (Note that in the West, some women prefer natural childbirth at home, some prefer a hospital; some prefer anesthetics, some don't want them, etc.)
- Describe how birthdays are celebrated.
- Compare how babies in China and the West are fed and taken care of.
- Compare the process of potty training in China and the West..

Childhood and Child Raising

Interview: “Childhood memories”

Goals: Practice talking about childhood.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students they are going to interview a classmate about his/her childhood memories. Ask them to prepare several questions. (Some suggested questions: What are your earliest childhood memories? What are you fondest childhood memories? Can you remember doing anything that got you in trouble?)
2. Pair students with other students they don't know well and have them interview each other.
3. Have a few volunteers report on interesting memories they were told about (but first have them ask the permission of the person whose memories are being publicly shared).
4. Closure suggestion: Share a few memories of your own.

Pair/Small Group Task: “What is a mother (or father) to do?”

Goals: Practice talking disciplining children.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or small groups, ask students to make a list of the best ways to deal with a child who is misbehaving.
2. Closure suggestion: Comment on how, from a Western perspective, you would view their suggestions.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Should children be given chores?”

Goals: Practice talking about chores.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or small groups, have students decide whether or not children in China should be given household chores, and then be prepared to explain their decision.
2. Closure suggestion: Talk a little about what chores are typically given to children in the West and why.

Debate: “Should children be paid for doing household chores?”

Goals: Practice talking about pregnancy; asking questions.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that in the West it is not unusual for children to be paid by their parents for doing certain household chores. (Often an “allowance” is tied to the performance of set chores.)
2. Ask students whether they think this is a good idea or not. Then divide them into affirmative and negative groups, and have them prepare to argue their position.
3. Follow “Debate” procedures.
4. Closure suggestion: Share your own views and experiences on the topic.

Other Activity Ideas:

Talk: Tell students about some of the lessons your own parents taught you during childhood and how.

Other Topic Ideas:

- Is it better to err on the side of strictness or leniency with children?
- Who should be primarily responsible for taking care of children? Wife? Husband? Grandparents? Relatives? Day-care center?
- What are the most important lessons to teach young children at home? Older children?
- Is childhood the best time of life?

Adolescence

Classroom Chat: “The difficult years”

Goals: Practice talking about adolescence.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that in the West, the early years of adolescence, especially junior high school age, are often considered “difficult years.” (You may need to explain this.)

2. Ask students whether the same age is difficult for young people in China, or whether there is another age period that might be considered the “difficult” stage.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Independence?”

Goals: Practice talking about adolescence.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that one of the main issues in adolescence in the West is the question of how much independence adolescents should be allowed?
2. In pairs or small groups, ask students to discuss how much independence they think adolescents in China should be allowed. More specifically, ask them to be ready to give answers to the following questions:
 - How much should adolescents have to tell their parents about what they do and where they go?
 - How late should they be allowed to stay out at night?
 - How much say should parents have in who they are friends with?
3. Closure suggestion: Lead-in to the activity “Teacher Interview: Western adolescents” below.

Teacher Interview: “Western adolescents”

Goals: Practice listening comprehension; learn more about the West.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students their school newspaper has assigned them to interview a Westerner and write an article on the question of how much freedom parents allow young people in the West. (They may use questions from the activity “Pair/Small Group Task: Independence?” above, and should add other related questions -- on the same topic -- of their own.)
2. In pairs or groups, have students prepare interview questions.
3. As you answer students’ interview questions, draw on both your personal experience and what you know to be typical of your country.
4. Closure suggestion: Ask students which of your answers they found most different from Chinese culture.

Pair/Small Group Activity: “To date or not to date”

Goals: Practice talking about adolescence.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or small groups, have students decide at what age they think it is appropriate for young people in China to start dating or having a boyfriend or girlfriend, and be ready to explain their position.
2. Closure suggestion: Comment on the various views held on this topic in your country.

Classroom Chat: “The difficult years”

Goals: Practice talking about adolescence.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students when someone becomes an adult in China? In other words, what marks the passage from being an adolescent (child) to an adult?

Other Activity Ideas:

Classroom Chat: Ask students what “youth culture” in China is like.

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you whether China has a “generation gap.” If so, what are some of the differences?

Other Topic Ideas:

-- Does China have a “teenage” stage?

-- List three reasons why high school and/or college students in China should not be allowed to date and three reasons why they should. Explain which viewpoint you favor and why.

Dating and Choosing a Mate

Pair/Small Group Task: "Meeting your mate"

Goals: To practice talking about dating. (For you to learn more about China.)

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you have heard that the dating process is different in China from in your country, and you are curious.
2. In groups ask students to list, in order of frequency, how it is that couples in China first meet.
3. Have each group report, and then discuss any disagreements between groups.
4. Closure suggestion: Based on what the students tell you, comment on differences you see between China and your country.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The steps of the dating process"

Goals: Practice talking about dating. (For you to learn more about China.)

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Following up on the "Meeting your mate" activity above, ask students to write down one-by-one the steps through which a typical Chinese couple go from first meeting to marriage. They should make a special point of noting what signals/events indicate that the relationship is getting more serious. Tip: This may be easier if the class first creates an imaginary typical couple of a certain age, job, education, area, etc.
2. On the board write: "Step 1" "Step 2" and so forth. Then go around and ask each group what they think Step 1 is. Discuss disagreements. Continue through process.
3. Closure suggestion: Comment on differences between the process they describe and what is typical in your country.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The advantages and disadvantages of matchmaking"

Goals: Practice talking about dating.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that in virtually every culture some people seem to like matchmaking. Quickly ask how common this is in China.
2. In groups have students list the advantages and disadvantages of matchmaking as a way to help single people find mates.
3. Group reports and discussion

Pair/Small Group Task: "What is "love"?"

Goals: Practice talking about love; explaining.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to explain what "love" really means (in the Chinese context). Give them a few minutes to think, jot notes.
2. In groups have students share their ideas and try to come to agreement. Each group should be ready to present an explanation they all (more or less) agree on.
3. Have each group share their explanation while you jot notes on the board.
4. Closure suggestion: Comment on differing views of "love" in your culture.
5. Alternative: Do this as a Talk or Teacher Interview.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The ideal boyfriend / girlfriend"

Goals: Practice talking about boyfriends and girlfriends.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Divide the class into small groups that are either all women or all men.
2. In groups, have the women list the characteristics of the ideal boyfriend; have the men do the same for the ideal girlfriend.
3. Have the women report their top five, the men report their top five, and then ask how each group feels about the expectations of the other.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Advice columns"

Goals: Practice talking about romance; writing.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Find or write a short letter from a personal advice column in a magazine or newspaper ("Dear Abby", "Dear Clare Rayner", etc.). Make sure it isn't too hard.
2. Read the letter to students, making sure students grasp the problem involved.
3. In small groups, have students play the role of advice columnist and write a group response.
4. Have each group read their response to the class.
5. Closure suggestion: Present the "expert" advice given by the magazine and see how it matches any of the students suggestions (or runs contrary to them!)

Other Activity Ideas:

Teacher Interview: Have students interview you about the typical steps by which couples meet and move toward marriage in your culture.

Pair/Small Group Task: List clever ways to introduce two people who would make a good couple.

Pair/Small Group Task: Decide at what age students should be allowed to date in China.

Talk: If you are married and wouldn't mind talking about how you met your mate, the students would probably love it.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What is the ideal age for getting married?
- How much influence should parents have in deciding who their children marry?
- Should it be acceptable for women (in China) to invite men out?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of blind dates?
- What are the most common problems faced in finding (choosing, winning) a partner?
- How do you know which person is "Mr. Right" or "Miss Right"?

Marriage

Show and Tell: "Wedding pictures"

Goals: Practice talking about weddings.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Bring wedding pictures to class -- your own or those of someone you know.
2. Show the pictures and chat with students about them.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Weddings in China"

Goals: Practice talking about weddings.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups have students list the usual steps in the process of getting married in China.
2. Put "Step 1," "Step 2" and so forth on the board. Then have one group tell you what they think the first step is, write it on the board, and so forth. Discuss disagreements.
3. Closure suggestion: Use this activity as a lead-in to the "Mock wedding" activity below.

Activity: "Mock wedding"

Goals: Practice listening; learn more about Western culture.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare to teach basic steps of a wedding ceremony in your country. As desired, prepare costumes and props.
2. Tell students you want to teach them about weddings in your culture by walking them through one. Assign roles to everyone in the class. Drawing from a hat adds to the excitement.
3. Arrange furniture in the room as best you can.
4. Explain to each group their duties. Put key phrases and vocabulary on the board.
5. Walk everyone through a rehearsal.
6. Have the wedding.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Who should do what?"

Goals: Practice talking about marriage.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Make a list of the tasks of daily home life (washing dishes, etc.) Have students call out items while you write them on the board.
2. Divide students into small all-male or all-female groups. Ask each group to divide the tasks into three categories: 1) those women should do; 2) those men should do; 3) those that should be shared.
3. Go over the list item by item and see what the groups say about them. If there is disagreement, ask students to explain their position.
4. Comment on different views of this division of labor in your culture.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Tips on a happy marriage"

Goals: Practice talking about marriage.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In same-sex groupings, have students list tips on things to do or not do in order to have a happy marriage. Men list tips for women; women list tips for men. You might want to use sentence completion. (Ex: "You should always.....") Alternative: Used mixed groups and have them list general tips for anybody. Wander, comment, and help as groups discuss.
2. Go around and have each group present one tip, perhaps alternating between men's and women's groups. Encourage discussion and response to suggestions made.

Pair/Small Group Task: "To marry or not?"

Goals: Practice talking about marriage.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Divide class into A and B teams. (If the class is large, divide A and B into smaller teams.)
2. Working in groups, A teams must think of as many advantages of being single and disadvantages of being married; B teams must generate advantages of marriage, disadvantages of staying single.
3. Tell the class they are going to play "Ping Pong" with their ideas. In Ping Pong one player serves the ball and the other has to hit it back; when one player cannot return the ball, the other player scores a point. In this game, one side "serves" an idea to the other side; the other side must then "hit" the idea back with a reply. When one side cannot directly reply to the other side's ideas, then the other side scores a point. Then a new idea is "served". You keep the score on the blackboard.
Ex: A: "If you are single then you can keep all the money you earn for yourself."
B: "But if you are married you will have two salaries, therefore twice the money."
A: "But what if your wife doesn't work?"
B: "... (Here B team cannot reply, so A team scores one point.)
4. Play the game: students should raise their hands to "serve" an idea or reply to an idea. Try to involve as many students as possible. Continue until the game runs out of steam.

Other Activity Ideas:

Talk: Give students a talk about weddings in your country.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What procedures does one normally go through to get married?
- What are ten basic rules for a happy marriage?
- What are the characteristics of the ideal wife? Husband?
- Should it be easy to get a divorce?
- What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of staying single versus getting married?
- List circumstances under which divorce should be acceptable.
- Describe the procedures for getting a divorce. (They may not know.)

Adulthood and Careers

Pair/Small Group Task: “The best age for having children”

Goals: Practice talking about having children.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students decide what the best age is for couples to have a child. They should be ready to explain the advantages of that age.
2. Closure suggestion: Share your own thoughts.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Success”

Goals: Practice talking about success.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to discuss what is most important in deciding whether one is “successful” or not. First have them list possible factors (wealth, health, etc.), and then decide which three are most important.
2. Closure suggestion: Tell students what factors you think are most important in defining whether someone is a success.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Saving for the future”

Goals: Practice talking about savings.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students to imagine that married friends, about 35 years old with one child, come to them and ask for advice on how much of their income they should be saving.
2. Have students decide what percentage of their income couples should try to save, and what they should do with that money. (Invest it? Put it in a bank? Etc.) They should come up with a plan, stated as advice to the couple. (Ex: “They should try to save ____ each month.”)
3. Closure suggestion: Talk to students a little about the savings and investing habits of people in your country.

Other Activity Ideas:

Classroom Chat: Do people in China have “mid-life crises”?

Talk: How I am planning (or saving) for retirement.

Other Topic Ideas:

- How does a person in China go about getting a raise?
- How does someone in China go about getting a promotion?
- How old is “young”? “Middle aged”? “Old”?
- How important is it for couples to have children? What are the relative advantages of having children versus not having children?
- Which is more important: career or home life?
- Should married couples buy life insurance?
- Define “maturity.”
- The joys and headaches of middle age.

Retirement

Classroom Chat: "What do you want to do when you retire?"

Goals: Practice discussing future wishes.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students what they would like to do when they retire.

Teacher Interview: "Retirement"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about your culture.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students to imagine they are reporters writing a story on retirement life in your country, and they have been sent to interview you.
2. Working in groups, have them prepare a list of questions to ask you.
3. Have students conduct the interview.
4. If necessary, close with comprehension check.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Should China adopt social security for all?"

Goals: Practice talking about social security.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you about pensions in China -- who gets them, who does not, and roughly how much of a retired person's living expenses they cover.
2. In pairs or groups have students list advantages and disadvantages of China's adopting a social security system that would provide retirement money for all retired Chinese.
3. On board write "Advantages" and "Disadvantages." Have groups report, one at a time.
4. To close, ask if this would be a good idea or not. (Maybe share your country's experience.)
5. Variation: Have each group generate a social security plan for China, including both how it would be funded and how funds would be distributed.

Show and Tell: "Retirement benefits"

Purpose: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Take documents related to retirement (social security cards, etc.) to class, show students the documents(s), talk a little about how the system works, its pros and cons.

Survey: "When you retire..."

Goals: Practice talking about retirement.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students survey several other classmates asking: After you retire, what do you expect from your children? (What should they give you or do for you?) Give everyone a minute to think about the question before the survey starts.
2. Have a few students report results.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Should retired parents live with their grown children?"

Goals: Practice talking about retirement.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups have students list the advantages and disadvantages of having retired parents live in the same home with grown children, and decide whether or not the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Wander, comment, and help as they discuss.

2. Divide the board into "Advantages" and "Disadvantages." Then go around and have each group report one advantage or disadvantage. Open to general discussion.
3. Comment on the question from your perspective.

Other Activity Ideas:

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students discuss advantages and disadvantages of having retired parents take care of and teach their grandchildren.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students discuss advantages and disadvantages of having a set age at which people (in a given profession) are required to retire. If there is a set retirement age, what should it be?

Other Topic Ideas:

- If you were rich, what would you do for retirement?
- Does growing older mean growing wiser? Have students discuss some examples to prove and disprove this proposition.
- Should young people always respect old people?
- Are retirement homes for old people a good idea?
- Describe the typical day of a retired teacher (official, farmer, etc.).
- Describe the budget of a typical retired person (teacher, worker, etc.).
- In order of priority, list the people/agencies which have responsibility for taking care of someone when he/she becomes old.
- Should old parents live with their (grown) children? (Advantages? Disadvantages?)
- What obligations do children have to their parents later in life?
- Saving for retirement.

Passing the Torch²

Classroom Chat: "Euphemisms"

Goals: Practice talking about euphemisms; gently introduce the touchy topic of death.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Explain that people in the West, like people in most cultures, are somewhat uncomfortable talking about the end of life. For this reason, instead of talking about "death," people often use indirect euphemistic terms. Some of these are more genteel and sensitive ("pass away" "gone"). Others ("kick the bucket," "croak," "six feet under pushing up daisies") are more colloquial, informal, and even a bit humorous, and make it easier to talk about an awkward topic.
2. Ask students to first list in Chinese and then translate for you a few of the euphemistic phrases used in Chinese.

Talk: "Funerals"

Goals: Practice talking about funerals.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a short talk on the procedures and customs for funerals in your country.
2. If students seem comfortable with the topic, then perhaps ask them to tell you about similar customs in China. (Some students may be very adverse to discussing this, so don't use it without getting advice from Chinese friends.)

Talk: "Remembering those who have gone before"

Goals: Practice talking about commemorating ancestors.

² Note: Students in China may find talking about death uncomfortable or even offensive, so check with your class monitor or colleagues if you are considering use of this lesson.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a talk on how the departed are remembered in your culture, especially any holidays or special occasions devoted to that purpose.
2. Have students tell you about corresponding commemorations in Chinese culture.

Talk: “And the cycle goes on”

Goals: Practice talking about your family tree.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a talk about some of your ancestors, focusing especially on some of the more interesting facets of your ancestry. (Chinese students may be especially interested if your ancestry includes people of a variety of different countries.)
2. If possible, bring pictures of some of your ancestors.

Other Topic Ideas:

- Wills and inheritance.
- Life expectancy and leading causes of death.
- How to live a long life.

(Module 3) Relationships

Family

Teacher Interview: "My Family Tree"

Goals: Practice talking about family, asking questions.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. On the board draw the start of a family tree -- your parents and you (but not the entire tree). Note names and occupations.
2. As necessary, also write a few of the question patterns students might use in asking about your family. Ex: "Do you have any ____? (brothers, sisters, cousins, etc.)" "What does _____ do?" "Is/are your _____ still alive? (grandmother, grandfather, parents, etc.)"
3. Make sure everyone knows what a "family tree" is.
4. Ask students to interview you about your family (tree). As you answer questions, fill out the family tree on the board.
5. As students become more comfortable asking questions, you might ask them to correct and repeat questions that are asked incorrectly.
6. Close by erasing the family tree and asking students what they can tell you about your family.

Talk: "My Aunt Minnie"

Goals: Practice listening, taking notes.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare a talk introducing one of the more interesting members of your family and her/his career -- the more entertaining, the better.
2. Tell students you will introduce a very interesting member of your family and that they should take notes in their notebooks.
3. Give your talk. You might pause at times and encourage questions -- early on you want students to feel comfortable asking questions. Explain new words as necessary.
4. Check comprehension.
5. Have students list new vocabulary in their notebooks.

Interview: "Family members"

Goals: Practice talking about family members; get to know each other.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask everyone to find a partner they don't know well and sit down together.
2. Partner A should interview partner B about his/her family, especially about more interesting members of the family. Perhaps partner A can choose one of partner B's family members to ask more in-depth questions about, such as job, favorite food, hobbies, etc. Then switch roles. You circulate to help groups having trouble thinking of questions.
3. Closure suggestion: Have one or two students introduce an interesting member of their partner's family.

Show and Tell: "My family"

Goals: Practice listening; take a break.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Bring pictures of family members to class. Show the pictures and talk about the people. Tip: If students come up and circle around your desk they can see small pictures more easily; this also creates a more informal atmosphere.

Small Group Task: "Names of Chinese family members"

Goal: Practice explaining.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Long

Procedure:

1. Tell students you have heard that the Chinese family system is much more complicated than the Western system; for example that Chinese has more words for "brother" "sister" "uncle" "aunt" and "cousin" than English does.
2. Put students in small groups (3-4), and ask them to prepare to explain the Chinese system to you -- as clearly as possible. You want them to give you the Chinese words for brothers, sisters, aunts, and uncles, and explain in English what each one means. Tip: If time is short, just have each group prepare to explain one kind of family member.
3. As groups discuss, wander, look at their notes, and ask questions. Remind them to use English.
4. Have each group report on one kind of family member.
5. Note: This activity can easily degenerate into confusion, but that's okay.

Small Group Task: "The ideal family"

Goal: Practice talking about families.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Procedure:

1. In groups, ask students to decide what the ideal family household would be. (Two parents and one child? Two parents, one child, and grandparents? Etc.)
2. Have each group report and explain their decision.
3. Share your own thoughts on the topic.

Other Topic Ideas:

- Is it better to live in nuclear families (just parents and children) or extended families?
- What tasks are various family members (father, mother, grandparents, children) usually responsible for in a countryside/urban family in China?

Friends

Classroom Chat: "Where did you meet your friends?"

Goals: Practice talking about meeting friends.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask everyone to quickly think of a few of their best friends; maybe even write their names down. After people have had a minute to think, ask a few students where and how they met these friends. Try to learn how people usually meet and make friends (best friends) in China.

Pair/Small Group Task: "How can I make friends in China?"

Goals: Practice talking about friends.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. In groups have students make a list of tips on how you as a foreigner should go about making friends with Chinese people. Wander, comment, and help as they discuss.
2. Have groups report.
3. Write new vocabulary and structures on the board, and have students write into notebooks.

Talk (or Teacher Interview): "Making friends in the West"

Goals: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare a talk about how and where people in your country make friends. (In some Western cultures, especially North America, people move many times during a lifetime so tend to establish --

and leave -- friendships more quickly and easily than people in cultures where people don't move so much.)

- 2.. Give talk and encourage questions.
3. Check comprehension.
4. Alternative: To handle this issue more informally, set it up as a Teacher Interview.

Talk (or Show and Tell): "My best friends"

Goals: Practice listening

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Be ready to talk a little about a few of your best friends, where and how you met, etc. If you have pictures, so much the better.
2. Show pictures and chat.

Survey: "How many friends do you have?"

Goals: Practice talking about friendships.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students survey several classmates asking: How many friends (good friends) do you have? You join in.
2. Have a few students report.
3. Confusion may well arise over who counts as a "friend." This leads into the next activity.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Guanxi"

Goals: Practice talking about inter-personal relationships.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that you have heard that in China there is something called "guanxi" (pron: "gwan-shee"), and that having "guanxi" with a person is something like being "friends" with that person, but not exactly the same.
2. Ask students to prepare to explain to you the differences between "guanxi" and friendship. Encourage them to also prepare one or more examples.
3. Have each group explain what they think the main difference is, illustrated with an example.
4. Closure suggestion: Talk about the difference between "friend" and "acquaintance" in your culture.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The perfect friend"

Goals: Practice talking about friendships.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students list the characteristics of "the perfect friend."
2. Have each group report the most important characteristic.

Other Activity Ideas:

Pair/Small Group Task: Point out that friendship often begins when two people find they share something in common, then have students sit in pairs with somebody in the class they don't know well. (You may need to gently encourage movement.) Pairs try to find out how many things they share in common and thus how many ways they can complete the sentence "We both..." Suggest areas that pairs may choose to explore e.g. their lives, family backgrounds, interests, hobbies, likes/dislikes, opinions, past experiences, etc. To close, have a few pairs share the most surprising / interesting thing that they found they share in common.

Cocktail Party: Have students list five qualities their friends must possess and five qualities they cannot stand in others. Then have students circulate and compare lists with others. They should try to find someone who shares their opinions on people they like and dislike. They should be ready to discuss why they hold these opinions.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students describe your best (hometown, childhood) friend and explain what makes that person special.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students write a definition of the word “friend.”

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students make a list of advice for a foreigner in China on how to make friends with Chinese people.

Other Topic Ideas:

- Where and how do people meet their best friends?
- What is a "real friend"?
- What kinds of help should you always be able to expect of a friend? What kinds of help can you not necessarily expect of friends?
- When is it impossible to say "no" to a friend who wants something?

Men and Women

Pair/Small Group Task: "Housework according to gender"

Goals: Practice talking about gender roles.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or small groups, have students first list the various kinds of housework tasks that need to be done in a typical Chinese home. Then they should divide the tasks into three categories, those more appropriate for women, those more appropriate for men, and those equally appropriate for both.
2. Divide board into three sections: women, men, both. Then go around the room asking each group to give you one occupation, the category they think it belongs in, and why. After each group has made one or more contributions, open to general discussion.
3. Closure suggestion: Comment on the list from the perspective of your own culture.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Jobs according to gender"

Goals: Practice talking about gender roles.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. It may help to have a list of occupations on the board (see activity above or maybe write one up yourself before this activity takes place).
2. Tell groups you want them to list occupations, dividing them into three categories, those more appropriate for women, those more appropriate for men, and those equally appropriate for both.
3. As groups discuss, wander, comment, and help.
4. Divide board into three sections: women, men, both. Then go around the room asking each group to give you one occupation, the category they think it belongs in, and why. After each group has made one or more contributions, open to general discussion.
5. Closure suggestion: Comment on the list from the perspective of your own culture.

Other Activity Ideas:

Survey: Have students ask whether they think it is better to be born a man or a woman.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of having both members of a couple work outside the home? Is it better to have one stay at home?
- Is it more difficult for women to communicate with men (and vice versa) than with other women?
- Do men and women really think differently?

Hosts and Guests

Pair/Small Group Task: "The perfect guest"

Goals: Practice talking about guests, using adjectives.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups, have students list, in order of priority, the characteristics of the ideal guest. These could be stated as sentence completions (Ex: The ideal guest is _____.)
2. For reports, have each group say which characteristic they think is most important (write these on board). Then give each group a chance to explain why they think the characteristic they selected is most important. Try to work toward a consensus on the top five characteristics, in order of importance.
3. Closure suggestion: Comment on how closely the resulting list would resemble the views of people in your country.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The perfect host"

Goals: Practice talking about hosting.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups, have students list the duties of the ideal Chinese host. These could be stated as sentence completions (Ex: In China, the ideal host should _____.) Each student will need to take notes on what the group decides.
2. After each pair/group has a list, re-divide the class so that each student is now with different partners. Then have students compare notes.
3. For reports, have each new pair/group report the things they all agreed on most.
4. Closure suggestion: Lead into next activity.

Teacher Interview: "Hosting a house guest"

Goals: Practice talking about hosting.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Hard.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that a friend of theirs is planning to go to the West for several weeks, and will be living with a Western host family. He doesn't know what this will be like so has come to them for advice. They, in turn, come to you.
2. In pairs or groups, have students prepare questions on what a Western host generally expects -- and doesn't expect -- to do for a house guest, and what a Western host will generally expect of a house guest. After interviewing you they will need to list points of advice for their friend.
3. Closure suggestion: After the interview, ask students what advice they would give their friend.

Classroom Chat: "The unexpected guest"

Goals: Practice talking about hosting.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Hard.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students the following: If a friend stops by to visit in China, is it ever okay to turn them away? If so, under what circumstances is it okay?

Other Topic Ideas:

Pair/Small Group Task: Should hosts arrange everything for guests? How much is too much?

Strangers

Interview: "Stranger in a strange land"

Goals: Practice talking about being a stranger; using nouns and adjectives to describe feelings.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to think of an experience they had where they were a stranger in an unfamiliar place.
2. Have students interview one or more classmates, asking about their experience of being a stranger, especially how they felt.
3. Ask volunteers to report some of the feelings they heard others mention. (As these are put on the board, pay attention to making sure that they are all either adjectives or nouns.)

4. Closure suggestion: Go over the feelings mentioned, and make sure students can use them properly in sentences. (They may tend to confuse the nouns and adjectives.)

Pair/Small Group Activity: "To help or not?"

Goals: Practice talking about helping strangers.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students: We have all had the experience of passing strangers on the street who seem to need help. Sometimes we decide to offer help; other times we pass on by.
2. Ask students to consider the following question: If you passed a stranger on the street who seemed to need help, how would you decide whether or not to stop and offer help?
3. Have students list the criteria that would influence their decision about whether or not to help. You might have them do this as a sentence completion, such as "I would stop if _____ (the stranger seemed to be in serious difficulty, I wasn't in a big hurry, etc.)."
4. Have students report the criteria they came up with.
5. Closure suggestion: Share your own views.

Debate: "You should never trust a stranger"

Goals: Practice talking about trust and strangers.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In groups have students prepare to either support or refute the proposition that "You should never trust a stranger."
2. Follow Debate procedure.
3. Closure suggestion: Ask students how they would decide whether or not to give a stranger the benefit of the doubt.

Classroom Chat: "The stranger on the train"

Goals: Practice talking about strangers.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that in the West it is not unusual for people on planes (trains, long-distance buses, etc.) to get into conversations with strangers in which they wind up talking about personal problems or issues, perhaps telling the stranger things they wouldn't tell their friends or family. Ask students if the same phenomena occurs in China as well.

Other Activity Ideas:

Cocktail Party: Have students share stories of an interesting encounters they have had with strangers.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students list criteria they would use in deciding whether on not to trust a stranger.

Other Topic Ideas:

- Should we teach children not to talk to strangers?
- How do you decide whether or not to talk to a stranger on an train?
- Do you ever enjoy being a stranger in a place where no one knows you?
- Do we have as much obligation to help strangers as we do to help people we know?

Bosses and Employees

Interview: "If I could be the boss..."

Goals: Practice talking about bosses; warm-up.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students find one other student they don't know very well and ask: If you could be the boss of any kind of organization (company, institution, agency, etc.) in the world, what would you want to be boss of and why?
2. Have volunteers report some of their findings.
3. Closure suggestion: Have students list some of the headaches they might wind up with if their wishes were granted.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The ideal boss"

Goals: Practice talking about boss-employee relations.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students list the characteristics of the ideal boss. This could be set up as a sentence completion such as "The ideal boss _____ (treats employees nicely, is easy to talk to, etc.)"
2. Variation: Have students list the characteristics of the ideal employee.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Motivating the staff"

Goals: Practice talking roles in the family.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that a friend of theirs has just been made manager of a shoe company. The friend has never been a manager before, so comes to them for advice on how to motivate the company's employees.
2. Have students make a list of suggestions for how the new manager can motivate employees to work hard and enthusiastically.
3. Have groups report.
4. Closure suggestion: Ask students if they would use similar strategies for motivating their English students.

Other Activity Ideas:

Talk: Prepare and give a talk on what management/employee relations are normally like in companies in your culture.

Talk: Prepare and give a talk on the best (or worst) boss you ever had.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What is the best way for bosses to make decisions? Consult? Put issues to a vote? Decide by themselves?
- How far should employees go in agreeing with the boss's ideas, especially if they privately question them?
- Should leaders/bosses always be bound by the same rules as employees?.
- Is hierarchy a good thing? Necessary?
- What is the hardest things about being a boss? An employee?
- If you were the leader of your organization (school, company, agency, etc.), what changes would you make?
- What is the best way for bosses to discipline employees?

Husbands and Wives

Survey: "Keeping the flame burning"

Goals: Practice talking about the relationship between husbands and wives.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students survey several classmates asking: What should husbands and wives do to keep romance alive in their marriage?
2. Have volunteers report while you list strategies on the board.

3. Closure suggestion: Have students vote on the most efficacious strategy and/or the cleverest strategy.

Pair/Small Group Activity: "The ideal spouse"

Goals: Practice talking about the relationship between husbands and wives, describing characteristics.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Divide students into all-men and all-women groups. Then ask each group to make two lists, one of the characteristics of the ideal husband and one of the ideal wife. Tip: Set these up as sentence completions; for example: The ideal husband _____ (always comes home on time, is handsome, etc.).
2. To report, first allow either the men to present their list of characteristics of the ideal husband, and then have the women compare what the men said with their list. Then reverse the process. Encourage good natured disagreement.
3. Variation: Have groups make lists of what they think the other group will list as the characteristics of the ideal wife/husband.
4. Closure suggestion: Comment on some of the characteristics people in your culture would agree with Chinese people on, and some where the general view in your culture would be quite different from Chinese views.

Debate: "Who should wear the pants?"

Goals: Practice talking roles in the family.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Start by explaining the expression "wear the pants in the family."
2. Divide students into groups, some to argue that women should wear the pants, some to argue that men should. have groups prepare their arguments.
3. Follow Debate procedures.
4. Closure suggestion: Comment on which of the arguments presented you found most compelling.

Other Activity Ideas:

Debate: Who should manage family finances?

Pair/Small Group Task: Tell students that some Westerners feel it is better for husbands and wives to take separate vacations, so that they get a little break from each other. Have them list the advantages and disadvantages of such a custom. (Be sure to point out that while some Westerners do this, this is not typical.)

Pair/Small Group Task: Tell students that some Westerners feel it is best if wives and husbands "over-communicate" with each other, in other words, make an effort to communicate in words as much as possible of what they think and feel. Have them list the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What role should husbands and wives each play in raising the children?
- In some societies people are allowed to have more than one husband or wife. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of living in such a household?
- In China, what is the most common complaint wives have about husbands, and the most common complaint husbands have about wives?
- Approximately how much time should husbands and wives spend talking to each other (one on one) each day?

Parents and Children

Classroom Chat: "Were your parents strict or lenient?"

Goals: Practice talking about child-raising.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students if when they were children their parents were strict or lenient. You may need to explain "strict" and "lenient." Ask for examples of behavior that illustrate their opinions.
2. Closure suggestion: Use this as lead-in to the activity "Strict or Lenient?" below.

Survey: "Strict or Lenient?"

Goals: Practice talking about child-raising.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to survey several classmates asking whether it is worse to be too strict or too indulgent toward children as parents. Join in.
2. Have a few students report which of the two options most people felt was worse.
3. If you want the activity to run longer, ask a few students to explain why they feel the way they do, and perhaps open it into general discussion.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Golden Rules for Raising Children"

Goals: Practice talking about child-raising.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups have students make a list of tips on what parents should and should not do to raise children well. Tip: Put pattern sentences on the board (Ex: "Parents should always Parents should never") While students discuss, wander, comment, and help.
2. Have each group report one rule. As rules are reported, ask the class whether or not they agree.
3. As new vocabulary arises, write it on the board, and have students note in notebooks.
4. Closure Suggestion: Do Teacher Interview, allowing students to ask you about views on child-raising in your country. Alternative: Prepare a talk on the subject (see below).

Talk: "Child Raising in My Country"

Goals: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a talk on what people believe about child raising in your country.
2. Allow time for questions.
3. Check comprehension.

Show and Tell: "My Childhood"

Goals: Practice listening; take a break.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Bring some pictures of your own childhood (or your own children, nieces and nephews, etc.) to class, show pictures and chat.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Should children have chores?"

Goals: Practice talking about chores

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups, ask students to decide 1) whether or not school-age children should be given household chores and why, 2) if so, what chores should they be given. Wander, comment, and help while students discuss.
2. Have groups report whether or not they think children should have chores and why.
3. Write new vocabulary and structures on the board as they arise, and have students write into notebooks.

Talk: "Chores when I was young."

Goals: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare a talk about chores you were given as a child and whether or not you were paid in some way for them. You might also comment on the idea of chores as a part of a child's education.
2. Give talk, and encourage questions.

Other Activity Ideas:

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students list ways parents should deal with behavior problems in children.

Pair/Small Group Task: Tell students that in Western countries, children are often paid for doing chores like mowing the lawn, babysitting, even cleaning their rooms. Have them list what they think the advantages and disadvantages of this custom might be.

Survey: Have students survey each other asking whether they think adoption a good thing.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students decide whether there is nay difference between an adopted child and a birth child.

Talk: Attitudes toward adoption in the West.

Talk: About how you were raised, what was best about it, and what you wish might have been different. (Clearly this is can be a somewhat personal topic, but you don't need to make it any more personal than you and your class are comfortable with.)

Other Topic Ideas:

- Is childhood the best time of life?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of only having one child?
- What are things a child is allowed to do (behavior) which an adult cannot?
- Are there aspects of childhood you miss as an adult and wish you could capture again?
- What are the pros and cons of "acting like a kid again" as an adult?
- Would you rather have a boy or girl baby?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a big family?
- Is there "generation gap" between you and your parents? (Children?) (Check that students understand the term "generation gap".)

Siblings

Classroom Chat: "Sibling rivalry"

Goals: Practice talking about siblings.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Explain the term "sibling rivalry," and explain that it is fairly common in the West. provide any examples you can think of.
2. Ask students whether or not sibling rivalry also occurs in Chinese culture, and ask for examples.

Survey: "To be an only child?"

Goals: Practice talking about siblings.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students survey several classmates asking: Do you think it is better to have siblings or be an only child?
2. Have volunteers report their findings.
3. Closure suggestion: use this activity as a lead-in to "The joys of siblings" below.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The joys of siblings"

Goals: Practice talking about siblings.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students list the advantages and disadvantages of having siblings, as opposed to being an only child. This could be done as a sentence completion, such as "One advantage of having siblings is _____ (you have someone to borrow money from, etc.)"
2. Have students report.
3. Closure suggestion: Share your own thoughts.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Duty to the siblings"

Goals: Practice talking about siblings.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students list the duties that Chinese people expect siblings to have toward each other. This could be done as a sentence completion, such as: "Chinese siblings should always _____ (financially support brothers and sisters who are in school, etc.)."
2. Have students report.
3. Closure suggestion: Comment on which duties people in your culture would also expect from siblings, and also on any differences you note in expectations.

Other Activity Ideas:

Show and Tell: Bring pictures to class and tell students about your siblings.

Other Topic Ideas:

- In the West, often assumed that oldest children, second children, etc. have certain characteristics. What about in China?
- What are the duties of the eldest child in China? Toward parents? Toward younger siblings?
- How should siblings determine who had what responsibility for older parents?
- Is it best for siblings to live in the same town?
- In China, how do grown-up siblings usually maintain ties?
- What limits are there on obligations siblings in China have toward each other? Is there anything you couldn't ask for?

Relatives and Ancestors

Classroom Chat: "Terms for relatives"

Goals: Generate relative-related vocabulary; warm-up.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students call out for you all the English terms they know for relatives, as you list these on the board. Make sure they know what each means.
2. Ask them to try to explain to you the corresponding Chinese terms. (These are considerably more complicated than their English semi-equivalents, so this may quickly descend into good-natured confusion.)

Talk: "My relatives"

Goals: Practice talking about relatives.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a short talk on how you interact with your relatives (outside the immediate family), especially the degree to which you interact with them, and how you go about maintaining ties. (Chinese often assume that Westerners have less contact with relatives than many actually do.)
2. Comprehension check.
3. Closure suggestion: Ask students to tell you how go about maintaining ties with their relatives.

Pair/Small Group Task: "World without relatives"

Goals: Practice talking about relatives, social changes.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Over the years, as China's one-child policy has an impact, (urban) Chinese will have no siblings and fewer relatives. Have students make a list of the ways in which they think this will change life for (urban) Chinese people. Ex: One way life will change is _____ (family reunions will be smaller, etc.).
2. Reports.
3. Closure suggestion: Ask students to quickly list the advantages and disadvantages of the changes they have foreseen.

Interview: "Your grandfather was a pirate?"

Goals: Practice talking about ancestors, describing characteristics.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students interview a classmate they don't know well, asking the classmate to tell them about an ancestor they are especially proud of, or one who is interesting (notorious, unusual). They should be sure to find out why he/she was notable. As they listen, they should take notes, and be ready to introduce that ancestor to the class.
2. Ask a few eager students to tell about an interesting ancestor they heard about.
3. Closure suggestion: Tell the class about an interesting ancestor of yours.

Other Activity Ideas:

Talk: Explain what "god-parents" are. Ask students to tell you about any corresponding role in Chinese culture.

Talk: Introduce your family tree.

Talk: Give a short talk introducing your ancestors back one or more generations.

Other Topic Ideas:

- How much are relatives obligated to help each other?
- How and when do Chinese have family reunions?
- What duties do aunts and uncles have toward nieces and nephews?
- Is it best for relatives to live near each other? Even if that means limiting their work or career opportunities?
- How are memories of ancestors passed on in your family?
- Why do people create family trees?

(Module 4) Our Nation

Visiting My Country

Survey: "If you could go anywhere in China....."

Goals: Practice talking about travel in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students survey their classmates asking: If you could visit anywhere in China for one day, where would you go and why?

Talk: "You absolutely must visit"

Goals: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Easy-Medium

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a short talk introducing one or more of the main tourist attractions in your country. Introduce the places, why people like to go there, and what significance they have for your history or culture.
2. Closure suggestion: Use as lead-in to next activity.

Small Group Task: "China's Top 10 Attractions"

Goals: Practice talking about tourist sites in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Easy-Medium

Activity Notes:

1. Have each group decide which are the ten best places in China for a foreign visitor to China to travel to and why. They will then need to make a recommendation to you.
Variation: Have groups decide which city/place in China would be best for a foreign teacher to work in and why.
2. Have each group report.
3. Close by expressing interest in visiting some of the places students recommend.

Other Activity Ideas

Pair Task: Tell students they have an unlimited supply of money for 3 weeks of travel. With a partner, have them plan where they will go and what they will do.

Survey: Have students ask each other what kinds of places they like to visit. (Temples? Rivers? Etc.)

Other Topic Ideas

- What makes China unique, special?
- If you could go on a ten-day trip in China, what places would you visit?
- If you had to arrange a ten-day trip for a visitor to China, where would you have him/her go?

Geography

Classroom Chat: "China's Geography"

Goals: Practice talking about China's geography, generate relevant vocabulary.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy-Medium

Activity Notes:

1. Draw a rough outline map of China on the board, or have a student do it for you. No details -- just an outline of the outer boundary. (Note: Don't offend students by omitting Taiwan!)
2. Ask students to tell you where major geographic features (rivers, mountains, cities, etc.) of China are so that you can draw them onto the map.

3. As they give you directions for where to draw, have them use either geographic terms (in northern..., west of..., etc.) or spatial terms (a little to the left, further down, etc.). Write these terms on the board as necessary.
4. In their notebooks, have students make notes of location phrases.

Small Group Task: "The best part of China"

Goals: Practice explaining.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask each group to decide which region of China is best to live in and why.
2. While the groups prepare, wander, ask questions, and help with English.
3. Have each group report and explain their conclusion. Encourage debate after each group has had a chance to report.

Talk: "My country"

Goals: Practice listening; generate vocabulary.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Preparation:

1. Bring a big map of your country (and something to hang it with) to class.

Activity Notes:

1. Point out major features, important cities, etc. Write new words on the board as they arise.

Talk: "Regions of my country"

Goals: Listening/writing practice

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Long

Preparation:

1. Prepare a talk introducing the various regions of your country. Plan to point out each on a map and discuss the following: topography, climate, history, economy, special features, special problems.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you are going to give a short talk about the different regions of your country and ask them to take notes. Tell them they will need to write a summary after your talk.
2. Give talk. Encourage questions.
3. Ask each student to write a short paper summarizing your talk. Variation: Before writing, allow students to check notes with each other in small groups -- as long as they speak English.
4. Collect/check summaries.

Teacher Interview: "My Home Region"

Goals: Practice listening, asking questions.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Medium.

Preparation: Bring photos or artifacts from your region to show your class to prompt questions.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students which part of your country you come from and that you want them to interview you about your region of the country.
2. Have them quickly prepare questions in groups.
3. Have them interview you.
4. Comprehension check.

Other Activity Ideas

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you about the geography and topography of their province.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students list ways in which the geography of their province (region, etc.) affects life there.

Other Topic Ideas

- What are the economic regions of your country?
- Which parts of China are least hospitable to people?

- Which mountains, rivers, etc. are important symbols in your country?
- What are the most famous land features (mountains, rivers, deserts) in your country?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of living in the mountains (seacoast, etc.)?
- What kinds of animals (plants) are most common in your country?

The Climate

Survey: "Your worst nightmare..."

Goals: Practice talking about China's geography, generate relevant vocabulary.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy-Medium

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs, have students list as many kinds of storms and natural disasters as they can think of.
2. Reports.
3. Have students survey each other, asking which of these natural disasters they think is most frightening and why.
4. Closure suggestion: Tell students which of these you would least like to experience -- or most like to experience.

Talk: "Weather in my country"

Goals: Listening practice

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium

Activity Notes:

1. Give a talk on the climate in different parts of your country. Make special note of unusual or extreme climates.

Talk: "Storms in my country"

Goals: Listening practice

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium

Activity Notes:

1. On the board, list the names of different types of storms in your country. on the board. Then have students take notes as you explain what each one is.
2. Closure suggestion: Asking students tell you the difference between the different kinds of storms, using the pattern: "The difference between _____ and _____ is that"

Other Activity Ideas

Classroom Chat: Ask students what the climate is like in different regions of China. Which part of China has the best/worst weather?

Classroom Chat: Have students tell you how the climate varies from season to season locally.

Talk: Tell about an adventure you had in a storm once.

Other Topic Ideas

- How does the climate of your country influence life there?
- What is the best way to stay warm in winter,? (Cool in summer? Dry in rainy season?)
- What is the most perfect possible kind of weather? (The worst?)
- What are five tricks for staying cool in the summer? Warm in winter?
- What are five tricks for coping with high humidity? Very dry climates?
- What are five pieces of advice for staying safe in a typhoon (blizzard, etc.)?
- Many people like to watch documentaries/movies about natural disasters. Why would this be so?

The People

Talk: "The people in my country"

Goals: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium

Activity Notes:

1. Give a short talk about the different ethnic (social, etc.) groups in your country.

Small Group Task: "Who is Chinese?"

Goals: Practice talking about identity.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students decide on a definition of what makes a person Chinese. Have them do this as a set of sentence completions: "A Chinese person is someone (who likes Chinese food, etc.)."

Classroom Chat: "What makes Chinese different?"

Goals: Practice talking about Chinese identity.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Medium

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you about what makes Chinese people unique, different from other people.

Other Activity Ideas

Talk: Give a talk about different social (ethnic, etc.) groups in your country.

Talk: Give a talk about class structure in your country.

Talk: Give a talk about minority groups in your country.

Classroom Chat: Ask students about minority nationalities in China.

Other Topic Ideas

-- What are Chinese like?

-- Describe the typical person from different regions in China.

-- What are the main differences between Chinese and _____?

-- If you were going to describe people from (country) to a group of Chinese students, what would you say? Main characteristics?

Holidays

Pair/Small Group Task: "What do you know about Christmas?"

Goals: Practice talking about holidays.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In small groups have students quickly list what they already know about Christmas and how it is celebrated in your country. Wander, comment and help with language as they discuss.
2. Go around and have each group report one item of information while you take notes on the board. If there are points on which the students are not clear, mark those with question marks (to serve as material for the Teacher Interview below).

Teacher Interview: "Christmas in my country"

Goals: Practice listening, asking questions

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you want to give them a chance to ask questions about the JEC lesson on Christmas.
2. Have students prepare questions (possibly in groups). Suggest they draw on unclear points from the previous exercise. Wander and help with language; write new material on the board as it arises.
3. Conduct the interview.
4. Comprehension check.
5. Have students write new material into notebooks.

Show and Tell: "Pictures of Christmas"

Goals: "Spare tire" activity; take a break.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Preparation:

1. Bring to class pictures of Christmas celebrations.

Activity Notes:

1. Show pictures and chat.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Christmas and Spring Festival"

Goals: Practice talking about holidays.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Long.

Activity Notes:

1. In groups (pairs), ask students to compare Spring Festival and Christmas. Students should list as many similarities they can find between the two festivals.
2. Find out which pair has the longest list and elicit some of the similarities found from that pair and from others. Clear up any of the students' misunderstandings about Christmas (and any of your own misunderstandings about Spring Festival!) that are revealed during this session.
3. Maybe award a suitable "Christmas" gift to the pair with the longest list.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Listing holidays"

Goals: Practice talking about holidays

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In groups quickly have students list as many of the holidays of your country as they can think of. Wander and help with vocabulary and spelling as they discuss.
2. Have each group count up their list and announce how many they have. Have the winning group read out their list while you write it on the board.
3. Follow up by talking a little about the fairly unfamiliar holidays, or encouraging questions.
4. Have students write new material into notebooks.

Small Group Task: "Chinese holidays"

Goals: Practice talking about holidays.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In groups have students list Chinese holidays in order of importance. Wander, comment, and help with language. If they don't know the English name of a particular Chinese holiday, have them explain it and make up a name.
2. Have groups report. Discuss as necessary in order to get priority clear.
3. Ask the class to tell you more about the holidays which are unfamiliar to you or seem particularly interesting.

Survey: "My favorite holiday"

Goals: Practice talking about holidays.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students survey each other asking "Which is your favorite holiday and why?" "Which is your least favorite holiday and why?" You join in.
2. Have several students report their findings.

Other Activity Ideas

Talk: List several holidays of your country on the board and then have students take notes as you explain when the holiday is and what it celebrates.

Pair/Small Group Task: Introduce some custom of a holiday in your country which students probably don't know the origin of (Christmas trees, May poles, etc.). Each group needs to discuss the issue, make one guess as to the origin, then present the guess. One prize for the closest guess, one for the most original, etc. (a piece of candy per group member would be suitable). You briefly explain the origin.

Pair/Small Group Task: What should China's next new holiday be? Have each group "invent" a new holiday for China, and plan how to celebrate it. To close, each group presents their proposal and then the class chooses the best (the most creative, the most fun, etc.).

Interview: Have students interview each other about favorite holidays. Variation: Have students interview each other about their plans for an upcoming holiday.

Talk: Tell about a particularly memorable holiday.

Activity/Christmas Party: Students exchange home-made cards (perhaps draw recipient's name from a hat), you bring candy or cookies and tell/read a Christmas story.

Other Topic Ideas

--What are your most important national/regional holidays, why are they celebrated, and how?

History

Small group Task: "History timeline"

Goals: Practice talking about history; generate vocabulary.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Preparation:

1. You might bring a history book -- or a time-line -- of your country's history for reference.

Activity Notes:

1. In groups have students list as many major events in the history of your country as they can think of in approximate chronological order. They don't have to know the dates! Wander, comment, and help with language. Put new material on the board as it arises.

2. Draw a long horizontal line on the board, possibly marked with year dates (Ex: 1500, 1600, 1700, 1800, 1850, 1900, 1950).

3. Go around and have each group contribute one event.

4. Follow up with Talk (see below).

Talk: "What people in my country know about their history"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about culture

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Preparation:

1. Be ready to talk about the major events in your history, especially those things that are stressed in school and which most people in your country know about.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you are going to give them a brief talk on your history as the average person in your country sees it. This will probably be an elaboration on the material students generated in the previous exercise. Have them take notes of new information.

2. Give talk. Encourage questions.

3. Check comprehension, perhaps by asking them to tell you what was new to them.

Pair/Small Group Task: "What events shaped Chinese history most?"

Goals: Practice talking about Chinese history.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In groups have students list the five events that shaped Chinese history most, in order of importance. (If you want to avoid contemporary politics, restrict the period to pre-1900.) Wander, comment, and help with language. Put new vocabulary on the board as it arises.

2. Ask each group to report what they chose in #1 and why. Discuss.

3. Have students write new vocabulary in notebooks.

Other Topic Ideas

-- Write a short outline of the most important events in China's history.

-- List China's greatest successes and defeats, greatest trials and triumphs.

-- How important is history in determining who we are now?

- Why is it important to study your own country's history? The history of other countries?
- What achievements in history are your people proudest of? Achievements of last ten years?
- What do you think your country will be like ten years in the future? How will it be better? What new problems might emerge?

Contact with Other Countries

Talk: "Who shaped us"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about contact between cultures.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Give a talk on which nations have influenced your country most and how.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Borrowing from the neighbors"

Goals: Practice talking contact between cultures.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students make a list of a) things Chinese culture have borrowed from other countries; and b) things other cultures have borrowed from Chinese culture.
2. Closure suggestion: Discuss: Is cultural borrowing good or bad? What kinds of things should/should not be borrowed from other cultures?

Other Activity Ideas

Pair/Small Group Task: Is it ever okay for Chinese to directly borrow (transliterated) English words (Ex: "motor" = "*ma da*"), or should new vocabulary always be translated (Ex: "engine" = "*fadongji*")?

Classroom Chat: Ask students about China's most famous inventions, which were then borrowed by other cultures.

Other Topic Ideas

- List the ways in which people in China learn about foreigners.
- Describe the typical (Western) foreigner. (Only use this if you are thick skinned.)

Famous People

Pair/Small Group Task: "How many famous people can you think of?"

Goals: Practice talking about famous people; learn English names of famous people.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students quickly list -- in English -- the names of as many famous people from your country as they can think of. Tell them this is a race, and they will only have a few minutes.
2. When time is up, have groups count the number of names on their list and announce how many they have.
3. Pick one group -- probably the one who claims to have the most -- and have them call out the names on the list one by one as you write them on the board. As each name is called out, you ask the rest of the class to say whether they got the name right or not (pronounced properly, actually from the right country, etc.)
4. Decide if this group should be festively declared the winner, or if another group should be given a chance.
5. Closure suggestion: Go over the list on the board and see if everyone knows who these people are and why they are famous. Explain as necessary.

Talk: "Our most famous"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about your history.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Give a talk on your nation's most famous person (leader, thinker, etc.). Tell the story of this person's life, why s/he is famous, and what impact s/he had on your country.
2. Closure suggestion: Comprehension check.

Teacher Interview: "A famous person"

Goals: Practice listening, asking questions, learn about your history.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Preparation Notes:

1. Read up on a famous person from your country so that you would be able to play that person for an interview. If possible, also come up with a bit of a costume.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students they have been asked to interview Abraham Lincoln (Winston Churchill, Audrey Hepburn, Michael Jordan, one of the Spice Girls, whatever) for their local newspaper. In pairs or groups have them prepare questions.
2. With you playing the role of the famous person, conduct the interviews.
3. Closure suggestion: Ask students what they discovered during the interviews that surprised them most. (If you were forced to improvise answers to some of the questions, you might also let students know which answers were "real" and which ones you just made up.)

Pair/Small Group Task: "China's most famous"

Goals: Practice talking about famous Chinese people in English.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to make a list -- in order of importance -- of the ten Chinese people that they think foreigners should know about. They should be ready to explain to a foreigner (you) why each of these people is important in Chinese history. (To avoid political issues and make the task more interesting, restrict the list to people born before 1900, or even 1850.)
2. Go around, having each group add one person to the list and introduce that person. Keep going around until groups run out of candidates. (This should result in a list of more than ten on the board.)
3. Closure suggestion: Have the group discuss until they come to consensus as to which should be on the top ten (or top five) list.

Other Activity Ideas

Talk: Give a talk about a lesser-known but interesting person from your country you think students should know about.

Survey: Would you want to be famous? If so, for what?

Other Topic Ideas

- Who are the most important famous people of the past? Of the present?
- What is the best/easiest way to become famous?
- Who are China's most famous women (leaders, scientists, soldiers, etc.)?
- How many of my country's presidents (kings, etc.) can you name?

Heroes and Villains

Pair/Small Group Task: "Chinese heroes"

Goals: Practice talking about heroes, values. For you to learn about China

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have groups list China's top 10 heroes (not just famous people), and be ready to explain why each is considered a hero. Suggest that a "hero" is not just someone who is physically brave, but someone who is brave morally as well as physically, someone who bravely persists in triumphing over any kind of obstacle. (Also, if you want to avoid a long list of current leaders, restrict the range to those who

are no longer alive who lived before a certain time.) Wander, comment, and help with language as students discuss. Insist that they discuss in English.

2. Number ten slots on the board #1, #2, etc. Then have each group say who they think should be #1 and explain why. Discuss as necessary to reach a consensus.

3. After there are ten names on the board, you might ask the class to comment on what this list says about what characteristics Chinese people value.

Talk: "Heroes in my country"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about your culture.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Preparation:

1. Prepare a talk on one or more of your favorite heroes and why they are considered heroes. Be sure to explain what qualities this person had that people in your country find particularly admirable.

(Famous Westerners who appear in JEC include Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, and Charlie Chaplin.)

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to take notes.

2. Give talk. Encourage questions. Write new words on the board as they arise.

3. Check comprehension.

Small Group Task: "Makers of History"

Goals: Practice talking about famous people.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask each student to write down, according to their own personal opinion, a) The name of the greatest person who ever lived, b) The most important event in the last century, c) The most important invention.

2. In groups, have students compare their lists. Have students explain and justify their answers to other members of the group; ask groups to try to reach consensus.

3. Elicit the consensus answers from a few groups. If time permits, discuss what criteria may be used to make a choice within each of the above categories. Do their choices fit these criteria?

Other Activity Ideas

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students try to list the main heroes and villains of your country.

Activity: Have small groups prepare and perform a brief skit involving a Chinese hero in a famous scene from history or folklore. They may prepare props as well.

Other Topic Ideas

-- Who is the woman in history you admire the most, and why?

-- What cultural values are represented by your country's heroes?

National Symbols

Talk: "Our national anthem"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about your culture.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Preparation:

1. Give a talk telling the story of your national anthem was written, why it was chosen for its national role. Also introduce and go over its lyrics.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Makers of History"

Goals: Practice translating.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students translate their national anthem into English for you, and be ready to tell you what they know about its story and significance.

Other Activity Ideas

Talk: The story of our flag.

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you about the Chinese flag.

Other Topic Ideas

- What animals symbolize your country and why?
- If you had to pick a plant as a symbol of your country, what plant would you pick and why?
- What other things are important symbols of your nation/culture? Why do they have this symbolic value?

(Module 5) Society

City and Countryside

Survey: "Where is the best place to live?"

Goals: Practice talking about life in the city, countryside.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium

Activity Notes:

1. Ask each student to survey three or four other students, asking what kind of location they think is best to live in and why: village, township, county seat, prefectural city, or provincial capital.
2. Have students quickly report their findings.

Small Group Task: "Town vs. City"

Goals: Practice talking about life in the city, countryside; making comparisons; stating advantages.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you want them to explain more about China to you. In groups, ask students to list advantages and disadvantages of living in a town (township or county seat), and of living in a city (prefectural or provincial seat). They should be prepared to explain these to you.
2. As groups prepare, wander, ask questions, and help with English.
3. Have groups report. Tip: First state a category (Ex: Advantages of small towns) and then go around quickly having every group suggest one advantage. Then move on.
4. Closure suggestion: Have students review the aspects of city versus country life, stating each as an advantage or a comparison.

Talk: "Town and City"

Goals: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Preparation: Bring photos of cities, towns, and countryside from your own country.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a talk in which you compare countryside and city life in your country, noting the relative virtues of each. Show photos if you have any.

Other Activity Ideas:

Survey: Have students ask: What is the best city in China to live in?

Pair/Small Group Task: You are the mayor of a big city. Set policy.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students list the most important cities in China and their characteristics.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students list (in order of size?) the cities they know in your country and what they know about them.

Talk: Life in the countryside in my country.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What are the major social problems facing cities?
- What are the most important advantages/disadvantages of living in a big city?
- Should there be controls on who can move to cities?
- What are the major problems of city, town, countryside life.
- What are the challenges of life in the countryside?
- What are the differences in outlook (aspirations, goals) between urban and rural people?

Government and Political Life

Classroom Chat: "Chinese Administration"

Goals: Practice explaining government systems.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that unless you understand a little about China's administrative organization you can't really understand about "hometowns" -- or the school system.
2. Ask students: What is a prefecture? What is a county? What is a township? Maybe use the local surrounding area as a starting point. Chart out the system on the board as they explain, in part so they can check to see if you have things right.
3. Ask where your students are from. Prefectural cities? County seats? Townships? Villages?

Pair/Small Group Task: "How does my government work?"

Goals: Practice talking about government systems.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to quickly write down as much as they know about the structure of your government - what its main parts are, what each does, etc. (If students know very little, or don't have the language skills to talk about this, be prepared to move quickly into the following activity.)
2. Use as a lead-in to the following activity, "How my government works."

Talk: "How my government works"

Goals: Practice listening; learn more about a different system of government.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Difficult.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a short talk on the government system in your country. Introduce the main government bodies, what each does, and how the system works.
2. One potential danger with this topic is that it may be too difficult and confusing, so be sure to write key words on the board, and not to make the talk too complex and confusing.
3. Another potential danger is that it may seem like you are comparing China's government system unfavorably to yours, so be sure to mention some of the disadvantages of your government system and how it works.

Pair/Small Group Task: "How my government works"

Goals: Practice explaining government systems. For you to learn more about governance in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Difficult.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students prepare to give a brief introduction to China's governance system in English. They should introduce: the main government bodies and what each does.
2. For reports, have each group introduce one body. If you are not sure how one relates to others, ask.
3. Closure suggestion: Review for students what you have learned, and ask them to check and see whether you got it right.

Other Activity Ideas

Survey: Would you want to be a mayor (president, general secretary, etc.)?

Talk: Explain the administrative structure (states, counties, provinces, etc.) in your home country.

Talk: Explain the structure of your country's government and how it works.

Talk: Introduce the main political parties in your country, and what the differences between them are.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students list in order the three most effective ways to prevent corruption. (Be ready to respond by saying a little about how corruption is prevented in your country.)

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students prepare to describe China's tax system to you. (What kinds? Who needs to pay? How is the amount determined? How are they collected?)

Talk: Describe the tax system in your country to students. (What kinds? Who needs to pay? How is the amount determined? How are they collected?)

Talk: Describe the election process in your country and how it works.

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you about village elections in China.

Classroom Chat: Describe the tax system in your country.

Classroom Chat: Ask students about ID's/documents that people in China are required to have.

Show and Tell: Show students some of the kinds of IDs people in your country customarily need.

Other Topic Ideas

- How does one join political parties in your country?
- What are the joys and headaches of being a mayor (president, prime minister, etc.)?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of democracy? (Use with caution, if at all.)
- Should taxes be used to redistribute wealth in society? If so, how?
- What would the ideal tax system be like?
- What is the best way to tax?
- How much is it fair to tax?

Economic Life and Development

Survey: "Bringing in new industry"

Goals: Practice talking about local economy; generate industry-related vocabulary.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students survey each other asking: If you could establish a new industry in your area, what kind would it be, and why?
2. As students report, write names of industries on the board.
3. Closure suggestion: Erase the industry names and see how many of the new terms students can remember.

Talk: "What keeps our local economy afloat"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about the economy of your country.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Difficult.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a talk on the economic life of your region (country, etc.), or one important (or especially interesting) aspect of your local economy. In other words, what provides employment and income for your community? Introduce the main products, services, industries, etc. Mention both advantages and disadvantages of your region's economy.
2. Closure suggestion: Comprehension check.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Reeling in the clients"

Goals: Practice talking about attracting investment; making recommendations.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Difficult.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that they have been asked to advise their local government on how to attract foreign companies to set up joint venture enterprises locally, creating more jobs and helping the local economy. Have them come up with several recommendations for how the local government can go about attracting these foreign companies. (Each recommendation could be stated as a sentence completion. Ex: "Our first recommendation is that")
2. Closure suggestion: Have students vote on which is the best recommendation.

Other Activity Ideas

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you what the most important national/local industries are.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students create an economic development strategy for their province (county, etc.).

Classroom Chat: Have students describe 1) the main agricultural products produced in their area; 2) the normal schedule of the farming year; 3) the steps for planting and harvesting the main local crop.

Classroom Chat: Ask students: If someone from another country asked you what investment opportunities there were in your home area, what would you say?

Other Topic Ideas

- What is the best way to create jobs?

- What is the best way to control inflation?
- List the products exported by your home area.
- What impact do you think China's entry to the World Trade Organization will have on China's economy? (Good and bad.)
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of industrialization?
- In your area, should polluting industries that will bring in jobs be encouraged?
- What are the most important crops produced in your country?

Medical Care

Classroom Chat: "Health problems in China"

Goals: Practice talking about health problems, generate relevant vocabulary.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students what some of the most common health problems are in their part of China.
2. Respond by talking about a few major health problems in your country. (This could also be set up as a Talk or Teacher Interview).

Classroom Chat: "Seeing a doctor in China"

Goals: Practice talking about health problems, generate relevant vocabulary.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to explain the steps involved in seeing a doctor at a clinic or hospital in China.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The changing medical system in China"

Goals: Practice talking about medical care, using comparatives.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you have heard that there have been many changes in medical services over the past 15 years in China, especially in paying for medical services.
2. In groups, ask students to list differences between now and the early 1980s. Wander, comment, and help as students discuss.
3. Have groups report.
- 4 Write new vocabulary and structures on board, have students write into notebooks.
5. Variation: Cover this more quickly as a Classroom Chat.

Teacher Interview: "Health care in my country"

Goals: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Preparation:

1. Be ready to answer questions about the health system in your country, how health care is paid for, advantages and disadvantages of the current system.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students they are reporters who have been told to interview you so that they can write a story about health care in your country. Give them a few minutes to prepare questions (individually or in groups). As they prepare questions, wander, comment, and offer language help. Write new vocabulary and structures on board as they arise.
2. Hold the interview. Encourage language as well as content questions.
3. Check comprehension.

Other Activity Ideas:

Talk: On how health care is paid for in your country.

Show and Tell: Bring medical insurance forms, records to class.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students list the main areas in which the medical system in China needs improvement, and then decide on proposals for improving the medical system in China.

Classroom Chat: Ask students about home remedies their parents, grandparents use to cure various ailments. (China has a lot of interesting home remedies!)

Pair/Small Group Task: List advantages and disadvantages of telling patients who have incurable diseases the truth.

Talk: Western views on telling dying patients the truth.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What are the steps for getting medical care in China?
- What five tips would you give a foreigner in China on how to stay healthy?
- What are the best steps to take if you have a cold? A fever? A stomach ache?
- What should be done about smoking in China? Should it be restricted? If so, how?
- Do the effects of alcohol harm society? Should it be restricted? If so, how?
- What are the relative advantages of private versus communal health care?

Law and Order

Classroom Chat: "Crime and punishment"

Goals: Practice talking about crimes and punishments.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you what some of the most common crimes are in their region, and what the punishments are. As new vocabulary (names of crimes, punishments) emerges, list words on the board.
2. Closure suggestion: Erase the new words on the board. Then, to review, have students call out the crimes in order of frequency. Then erase and have them call out the crimes in order of seriousness.

Talk: "Keeping the peace"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about law enforcement.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a short talk introducing the various law enforcement agencies in your country and what they do.
2. Closure suggestion: Ask students to tell you about the law enforcement agencies in China and what their duties are.

Talk: "Order in the court!"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about trial procedure in your country.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a talk explaining the main steps of a typical trial in your country. (Charging the suspect, opening statements, cross-examining witnesses, closing statements, etc.) Also teach some of the key terms and phrases used in trial procedure ("I object!" "innocent until proven guilty" "defendant" "prosecutor" etc.)
2. Closure suggestion: Have students role play a trial, following the steps you outlined. (This will obviously increase the length of the activity considerably.)

Pair/Small Group Task: "Improving public order"

Goals: Practice talking about crime; making recommendations.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that they are law enforcement experts who have been asked by local government to come up with a plan for decreasing crime in the area. Each plan should include: a) an assessment of what the most serious local crime problem is, and b) several recommendations for what should be done about it.

2. For reports, first ask each group what they think the most serious problem is. Try to reach consensus as to the order of importance. Then, starting with the most important, elicit recommendations, and have the class discuss the merits of each.
3. Closure suggestion: Share thoughts on the most serious crime problem in your country, and what you think should be done about them.

Other Activity Ideas

Pair/Small Group Activity: Have students list advantages and disadvantages for a society of having capital punishment.

Role Play: Explain to students the steps involved in a trial in your country. Then have them role play a trial.

Talk: Tell students about prisons in your country.

Other Topic Ideas

- What are the advantages (disadvantages) of a career as a lawyer? Policeman? Judge?
- What is the best way to prevent crimes?
- What is the best way to deal with criminals -- punishment, prison, etc?

Science and Technology

Talk: "A famous scientist"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about science in your country.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a talk about a famous scientist (inventor, etc.) from your country.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Cultivating scientists"

Goals: Practice talking about innovation; making recommendations.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that their local government wants to promote technological innovation as a way to boost the local economy, and wants advice on how to train young people so that more of them will become good scientists, inventors, and technicians.
2. Have students come up with a set of recommendations for their local government.
3. Closure suggestion: Have the class decide on which are the three best recommendations.

Other Activity Ideas

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students list the advantages and disadvantages of society becoming more technologically oriented.

Talk: On the process of how patents are applied for in your country.

Talk: On technological training in your country.

Survey: If you could invent one new thing, what would it be?

Other Topic Ideas

- For a foreign visitor, describe how and in what kinds of institutions scientific research is carried on in China.
- What are the most famous centers of scientific research and learning in China?
- What are the advantages (disadvantages) of a career as a scientist?
- Scientists as heroes, role models.
- How can schools train students to develop new inventions?
- Is science more beneficial or harmful?
- Is the increasing use of mobile phones good for society?
- Can technology solve most of society's problems?
- Are space programs worth the expense?

News and Information

Classroom Chat: "A typical TV news broadcast"

Goals: Practice talking about news programs.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you what the elements of a typical Chinese TV news broadcast are, in order.
2. Closure suggestion: Respond by telling students the elements of a typical TV news program in your country.

Talk: "The daily news"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about news in your country.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a talk about the news industry in your country. What are the main outlets for news? What kind of news does each tend to focus on?

Other Activity Ideas

Survey: How do you get your news?

Other Topic Ideas

- Are there certain kinds of news it isn't appropriate to publish?
- What kinds of things should news programs focus on?

Religion and Philosophy

Classroom Chat: "Chinese thought"

Goals: Practice talking about religion.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you about China's major philosophers/religious figures, and the main ideas of each.
2. Closure suggestion: Repeat back to students what they have told you to see if you got it right.

Talk: "Religion in my country"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about religion in your country.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a short talk on the religious life of your country. What religions are represented? What are the basic beliefs and practices of each? What role do they play in society?
2. As students listen, have them generate and be ready to ask one or more follow-up questions.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Confucius today"

Goals: Practice talking about philosophy and society.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students discuss how much impact Confucianism has on Chinese culture today. they should be ready to report ways in which they think Confucianism still influences people in China.

Other Activity Ideas

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you about traditional religion in China -- its impact on culture, daily life.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students prepare to introduce Confucianism or another important traditional school of thought to a foreigner (you).

Other Topic Ideas

- How has China's traditional religions influenced its values?
- List China's greatest thinkers, in order, and their most important ideas.
- List the main religions in China and describe the beliefs of each. (Be a little cautious with this one. If you focus on traditional Chinese religions it will be less sensitive.)
- How does ancient Chinese philosophy affect the culture now? Does it?
- What does everyone in China know about Confucius?

Languages and Dialects

Survey: "Your next language"

Goals: Practice talking about languages.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students survey each other asking: If you were to learn another language (or Chinese dialect) what would it be and why?

Talk: "The way we speak"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about the language situation.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a short talk on the language situation in your country. What languages are spoken, where, and by who? How much difference is there between one part of your country and another in terms of accent, vocabulary, etc? How much can you tell about people from their speech?
2. Closure suggestion: Comprehension check. Then move into following activity, "The way we speak in China."

Pair/Small Group Task: "The way we speak in China"

Goals: Practice talking about languages; explaining locations.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Preparation: On the board have a student draw an outline map of China, with one or two major features (probably the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers) included.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students prepare to explain to you what different languages (dialects) are spoken in China and where. They need to be ready to tell you -- in English -- where on the map these dialect areas are..
2. As students report, you draw a map on the board according to what they tell you.
3. Closure suggestion: To review, you call out the name of a dialect and students have to tell you where it is spoken.

Other Activity Ideas

Classroom Chat: Have students explain what "dialect" (*fangyan*) means in the Chinese context. How different are the dialects from Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese)?

Talk: The English-only debate in the US.

Talk: The bilingual education debate.

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you how China has gone about promoting a common language, Putonghua.

Talk: Tell students about which foreign languages students in your country most often learn and why.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students list the languages spoken in China in order according to prestige. (Use this carefully or not at all in areas where there are strong prejudices. You might ask for advice before using this activity.)

Other Topic Ideas

- Should dialects ever be allowed in television or radio broadcasting in China? If so, when is their use appropriate?

- Can you tell where someone is from their accent?
- What dialect or accent do you feel most comfortable with?

Social Problems

Survey: "A litany of social ills"

Goals: Practice talking about social problems; generate relevant vocabulary.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students survey each other asking which are China's most serious social problems.
2. As students report, write the names of the social problems on the board, all in noun form. (Ex: Poverty, unemployment, etc.)
3. Closure suggestion: List some of the main social problems facing your country.

Talk: "A social problem"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about social issues in your country.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a talk on one of the main social problems facing your country. (Ex: drugs, poverty, crime, unemployment, etc.) Explain the causes of the problem and what efforts are being made to deal with it.
2. As students listen, require them to generate at least one follow-up question to ask about your talk.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Whatever shall we do?"

Goals: Practice talking about social problems, explaining advantages and disadvantages.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Drawing on the list of social problems students have already come up with, assign each pair/group one problem and have them produce a plan for dealing with it. They should also be ready to state the main advantage of their plan, and its main drawback or problem.

Other Topic Ideas

- Why do people turn to drugs?
- What is the best way to combat drug use and addiction?
- What is the best way to deal with juvenile crime?
- What is the best way to combat illiteracy?
- What is the best way to alleviate poverty?
- Does migration of people within China create more problems or solve more problems?
- What is the best way to prevent children from dropping out of school?
- What is the best way to deal with unemployment?

Environment and Ecology

Talk: "Pollution"

Goals: Practice listening; learn about pollution problems in your country.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a short talk on the issue of pollution in your country. Talk about what kinds of pollution there are, what measures have already been taken, and what challenges and problems still await solution.
2. As students listen, require them to generate at least one follow-up question to ask about your talk.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Who should pay?"

Goals: Practice talking about how to deal with pollution, explaining advantages and disadvantages.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Point out to students that everyone would like to eliminate pollution. The problem is that stopping pollution and cleaning it up is usually expensive, at least in the short run.
2. Have students decide who should bear the main costs of cleaning up pollution -- national government, local government, or the producers of the pollution. They should be ready to explain a) who should pay; b) why; and c) what the main disadvantages of that strategy are.
3. Closure suggestion: See if the class can come to a consensus.

Other Activity Ideas

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you about some of China's plans for solving the problem of water shortage in northern China.

Pair/Small Group Task: List the advantages and disadvantages of building dams on major rivers.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students come up with a plan for an anti-litter campaign.

Pair/Small Group Task: In China, one environmental problem is a decreasing supply of arable land, both because of erosion and population pressure. Have students come up with a plan for preserving the supply of arable land.

Other Topic Ideas

- Is global warming really a serious problem?
- Is it really important to protect endangered species? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Which is more important -- economic development or environmental protection?

(Module 6)

Popular Culture and Arts

Movies

Survey: "Your favorite movie"

Goal: Practice talking about films.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have each student ask several others -- in English -- what their favorite movies are. If they only know the film title in Chinese, they should do their best to translate it into English.
2. Closure suggestion: Have a few volunteers report, and as the name of each film is mentioned, have the rest of the class rate it with a quick voice vote.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Chinese movies -- in English"

Goal: Practice translating.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students quickly make a list of the names of Chinese films, and then translate these into English. They should try to do as many as possible in the allotted time.
2. Have each group call out the (translated) English name of a film, as you write it on the board. Then see if the other groups can guess from the translated English name what the original Chinese title was.
3. Do enough of these to generate a list of films on the board.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Kinds of movies"

Goal: Practice talking about kinds of films.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. This activity naturally follows after "Chinese movies -- in English" above.
2. Have students make a list of the different kinds of movies common in China. (Ex: Love stories, war films, mysteries, etc.) Tip: It may help students think if they look at the films on the board and try to figure out what categories they naturally fall into.) They should then give each kind (genre) the best English label they can come up with.
3. Reports: Have each group report -- and if necessary explain -- the categories they came up with.
4. Closure suggestion: Point out which of the genres are the same in your culture -- and say a little about genres in your culture that aren't found in China..

Other Activity Ideas

Teacher Interview: Favorite films.

Survey: What are your favorite kinds of films? (Talking about film genres.)

Pair/Small Group Task: List China's top movie stars and why they are popular.

Other Topic Ideas

- What are China's most popular types of movies?
- Describe the formula of a popular type of movie.

Music

Classroom Chat: "Music in Chinese schools"

Goal: Practice talking about music. For you to learn more about China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students about music education in Chinese schools.

Survey: "Your favorite kind of music"

Goal: Practice talking about kinds of music.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have each student ask several others -- in English -- what their favorite kinds of music are. If they don't know how to say a certain kind of music in English, they should do their best to explain it.
2. Closure suggestion: Have a few volunteers report, and as the name of each kind of music is mentioned, have the rest of the class rate it with a quick voice vote.

Survey: "How important is music in education?"

Goal: Practice talking about music education.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have each student ask several others how important a role they think training in music should play in primary schools (or middle schools).
2. Have a few volunteers report.
3. Closure suggestion: This activity could be used as a lead-in to "Music education."

Pair/Small Group Task: "Music education"

Goal: Practice talking about the role of music in schools.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students design a curriculum for music in elementary (or middle) schools. They should decide:
 - What kind of musical training students should be given. (Singing? Instruments? Music appreciation? Etc.)
 - Whether musical training should be required or optional.
 - Where and how music would be taught in the curriculum. (Outside class? A special music class?)
 - How much time a week should be devoted to music.
2. Have groups report and justify their plans.
3. Closure suggestion: Tell students a little about the role of music in primary and/or secondary school education in your country.

Other Activity Ideas

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students list as many names of musical instruments as they can think of in English.

Pair/Small Group Task: List Chinese folk instruments, and be prepared to describe them in English.

Debate: Should classical (or traditional) music be financially supported by the government?

Other Topic Ideas

- List, in order, China's most popular kinds of music. Among young people? Older people?
- Does your region have any special kinds of music? What makes it special?
- What instruments do people in your area most often learn to play? How?
- What are China's most popular and well-known songs?.
- If you could learn to play (another) musical instrument, which one would it be and why?
- What are China's most famous pieces of classical (traditional) music?
- How popular is traditional (classical) music now?
- Is the growth of an international modern pop style of music a good thing?

Television

Classroom Chat: "TV in China"

Goal: Practice talking about television. For you to learn more about China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you about China's most popular types of TV shows.

Survey: "Your favorite television programs"

Goal: Practice talking about television programs.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have each student ask several others what their favorite television programs are. If they don't know how to say the name of a program in English, they should try to explain it.
2. Closure suggestion: Have a few volunteers report, and as the name of each program is mentioned, have the rest of the class rate it with a quick voice vote.

Debate: "Is TV good or bad?"

Goal: Practice talking about the impact of television on society.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In small groups, have students prepare to argue either 1) that television's impact on society is primarily good, or 2) that television's impact is mainly bad.
2. Follow Debate procedures.

Other Activity Ideas

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students prepare to describe the formula of a popular type of TV show.

Other Topic Ideas

- How much television do most people in China watch? Who watches most?
- How much TV should children be allowed to watch? Should parents limit the amount of time per day children watch television?
- Should parents put limits on the shows children are allowed to watch?

Sports

Survey: "Your favorite sport"

Goal: Practice talking about sports.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students survey their classmates to find out which sports they enjoy playing the most.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The winning team"

Goal: Practice talking about sports.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that they are famous sports coaches who have been approached by the Chinese government for advice on how to train China's national football (soccer) team for the next Olympics.
2. Have students come up with a plan for how to create a winning team for China. The more creative, the better.
3. Reports.
4. Closure suggestion: Have everyone vote on which is the best plan. Alternative: Tell students a little about how sports teams are trained in your country.

Talk: "Superbowl"

Goal: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a short talk about some famous sporting event in your country. Explain the event's role in society, as well as the nuts and bolts of the competition itself.

Other Activity Ideas

Survey: Have students interview each other to see which sports they like watching the most.
Pair/Small Group Activity: Have students list the names of as many sports in English as they can.

Other Topic Ideas

- What are the key elements of a good spectator sports?
- Explain how to play a sport.
- How much should schools stress sports?
- How much should government support sport teams financially?

Theater

Survey: "Plays or films?"

Goal: Practice talking about plays and films.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students survey classmates asking whether they prefer watching movies or plays, and why.
2. Reports from volunteers.
3. Closure suggestion: Tell the class your preference and why.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Chinese opera"

Goal: Practice talking about Chinese opera.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that Westerners often find Chinese opera hard to appreciate.
2. Ask students to prepare for a foreigner (you) an explanation of why Chinese opera was traditionally popular. They should mention as many reasons as they can think of.
3. Reports.
4. Closure suggestion: Ask students how they feel about Chinese opera..

Talk: "Theatre and language"

Goal: Practice listening, learn new expressions.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a short talk about expressions in English that derive from theatre. Examples could include: "The show must go on." "Break a leg." "The final curtain." "In the limelight." "Stage fright." Explain the expressions and how they are used.
2. Closure suggestion: Ask students to tell you about any common expressions in Chinese they can think of that derive from the theatre.

Other Activity Ideas

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students introduce China's most famous plays to a foreigner (you).

Talk: Prepare and give a short talk on the history of theater in your country.

Other Topic Ideas

- Is theater doomed by TV?
- Would you want your child to become an actor?
- Should schools put on plays involving students as part of students' education? If so, why?
- If you were an actor, would you rather do plays or films?

Dance

Survey: "Do you like to dance?"

Goal: Practice talking about dancing.

Estimated Time/Difficulty:

Activity Notes:

1. Survey: Do you like to dance? What kind?

Talk: "Dancing in my country"

Goal: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a short talk about the different kinds of dancing popular in your country.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Shall they dance?"

Goal: Practice talking about dancing.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students discuss the following question and try to reach a consensus: Should children be taught to dance in school? They should be ready to explain the reasons for their position to the class.
2. Reports.
3. Closure suggestion: Tell students about what, if any, efforts to teach dance are a part of public education in your country.

Other Activity Ideas

Activity: Have students try to teach each other -- or you -- an unfamiliar dance using only English. No demonstration allowed!.

Other Topic Ideas

- Which is better -- social dancing or disco?
- Why do people like to dance?

Reading and Literature

Survey: "What do you like to read?"

Goal: Practice talking about reading matter.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students survey others asking about what they like to read and why.
2. Have a few volunteers report their findings.

Classroom Chat: "Where can I get a magazine?"

Goal: Practice talking about where to get reading matter.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. First ask students to tell you about the different kinds of places where people in China buy books, magazines, newspapers, and so forth, and what kind of reading matter each kind of place has available. (This will probably be somewhat different than in your country.)
2. Ask where you could find reading matter in English.

Interview: "That special book"

Goal: Practice talking about books.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Pair each student with another he/she doesn't know well. Have them interview each other about the book they read that has had the most influence on their life and why.
2. Have a few volunteers report what their partner said. After each volunteer speaks, invite the partner to add anything else he/she wishes to.
3. Closure suggestion: Tell students about a book that has influenced you.

Pair/Small Group Task: "China's greatest literary hits"

Goal: Practice talking about literary greatness.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students list -- in order of greatness -- China's greatest works of literature, and be ready to introduce these to a foreigner (you). They should be ready to explain what it is that makes these works great.
2. For reporting, first have the class try to agree on a prioritized list. Then move on to the question of what makes these works great.
3. Closure suggestion: Ask students to tell you titles of famous literary works in English they are familiar with (perhaps as you list these on the board). Then comment on which of these -- plus any others -- you consider to be the greatest.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Books for the countryside"

Goal: Practice talking about library-type services.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In most countries, people in cities have much better access to reading material than people in rural areas do, especially because libraries are usually found in cities. So a problem governments face is how to make reading material and information available to people in remote areas.
2. Have students design the most practical and cost-effective plan possible for making books and other reading material more available in rural areas of China, especially small remote villages. They should be ready to explain and justify their plan.
3. Reports.
4. Closure suggestion: Tell students about solutions to this problem used in your country (bookmobiles, etc.)

Other Activity Ideas

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students list, in order of priority, the criteria which determine whether or not a work of literature is "great."

Other Topic Ideas

- List China's most popular traditional stories and their characters.
- What are China's funniest works of literature? (Most boring, etc.)
- If you could recommend one book to a foreigner who wants to learn about China, what would it be and why?
- What kinds of books should not be in libraries open to children?
- What poems have you memorized? Translate one.
- What works of literature (etc.) do all Chinese know?
- Tell a famous story.
- Tell about famous characters from novels.
- What are China's most popular types of books?
- Describe the formula of a popular type of book.

Advertising

Other Activity Ideas

Survey: What are your favorite advertisements? What ads do you like least?

Other Topic Ideas

- List the key qualities of an effective advertisement.
- Should TV be supported by advertising, or by the state?
- List the most common types (genres) of advertisements in China. How does each work?
- Design an ad campaign to sell soap.

Art

Pair/Small Group Task: "Types of art"

Goal: Practice talking about art, generate art-related vocabulary.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students quickly make a list in English of as many kinds of (visual) art forms as they can think of. (Ex: painting, sculpture, etc.) Have them pay attention to the proper part of speech -- the forms on their lists should be stated as nouns.
2. Ask which group has the most. Then have the group which claims the longest list report the items on the list while the rest of the class checks the items to ensure 1) they got the part of speech right; 2) the item is actually an art form. (There is obviously much room for discussion on this latter point.)
3. Closure suggestion: Use this as a lead-in to the "Favorite form of art" activity.

Survey: "Favorite form of art"

Goal: Practice talking about forms of art.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have each student survey several classmates asking what their favorite form of (visual) art is and why.
2. Have volunteers report their findings.
3. Closure suggestion: Tell students about your own preferences.
4. Variation: Survey on form of art students find least interesting.

Pair/Small Group Task: "China's most famous artists"

Goal: Practice talking about art.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students decide who China's three most important (famous) artists are, and prepare to introduce these people to you. They should tell you a little about the artist, and why he/she is considered great.
2. For reports, have each group introduce one artist who hasn't been mentioned yet by another group.
3. Closure suggestion: Thank students for their introduction. Try to review for them what they have told you, partly so they can see if you got it right, partly to demonstrate that you were really listening and trying to understand.
4. Variation: China's most famous art works.

Pair/Small Group Task: "What is 'art'?"

Goal: Practice talking about standards for art.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students decide on the criteria for what determines whether something is a "good" work or art or not. (Are there objective standards? Is it just a question of personal feeling? Is the main thing community approval and popularity?) Each pair/group should try to reach consensus.
2. Reports and discussion.
3. Closure suggestion: Share your own opinion, and also the prevailing views in your country.

Debate: "Art for art's sake?"

Goal: Practice talking about the role of art in society.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. The question is: Should the value of art be determined primarily on the basis of 1) its social impact (art for the sake of serving society) or; 2) its artistic merits (art for art's sake)?
2. In groups, students should prepare to argue one or the other of these two positions.

3. Follow Debate procedures.
4. Closure suggestion: Share your own opinion, and/or the prevailing views in your country.

Other Topic Ideas

- Describe the process by which artists are trained in your country.
- What is the best way to train artists?

Computers and the Web

Classroom Chat: "Computers in China"

Goal: Practice talking about computers; warm-up.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you about the role of computers in China now. (How easy is it to buy one? How much do they cost? Are there places you can use one? How many people have computers? How prevalent is computer knowledge? How fast is computer use growing?)

Pair/Small Group Task: "Giving computer directions"

Goal: Practice talking about computers; generate computer-related vocabulary.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students prepare to explain to you in English -- from turning the computer on -- how to write and send an e-mail message (visit a web site, etc.). As they prepare, you may need to help them with lots of computer-related vocabulary.
2. As the first volunteer group reports step-by-step, you stand in front of the class and do exactly what they tell you to do. If you have a computer that can serve as a visual aid, fine. If not, pretend.
3. As new computer-related words come up, write them on the board and explain how they are used.
4. Closure suggestion: Review the new words and have students use them in a sentence.
5. Note: Before you try this activity, check to see whether a fair number of students in your class know enough about the relevant computer operation to do this activity.

Classroom Chat: "Chinese word processing"

Goal: Practice giving computer instructions. For you to learn more about China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Relatively Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask the class to explain to you how word processing in Chinese works.

Talk: "My worst computer day"

Goal: Listening practice; review computer-related vocabulary.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Somewhat Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell a story about an amusing or disastrous experience you had with computers.
2. Closure suggestion: Review the computer-related vocabulary in the story.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Computers and wealth"

Goal: Practice talking about the role of computers in society.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Relatively Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students discuss and decide whether they think increasing use and availability of computers will tend to increase the gap between the rich and the poor, or lessen it. Pairs/ groups should try to reach consensus. Have them be ready to explain their position.
2. Reports.
3. Closure suggestion: Share your own opinion.

Other Activity Ideas

Pair/Small Group Task: List the advantages and disadvantages for society of increasing computer availability and use.

Classroom Chat: Have students tell you about Chinese internet websites.

Other Topic Ideas

- How could computers be used to facilitate economic development of China's poorer western provinces?
- Should schools teach children to use computers? Starting at what age?
- If you wanted to get rich by designing computer software, what kind of software would you design?
- Will the internet make the world a better place?
- Should computer software be freely available to the public (shareware), or should people be required to pay for it?

(Module 7) Teaching and Education

Getting to Know Us as Teachers

Interviews: "Who are you, and why are you here?"

Goals: Practice talking about ourselves; get to know each other.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to introduce themselves to two (or more) other students in the class who they don't know. In addition to finding out each other's names, they should find out:

- where others are from;
- where they work and how long they have been there;
- why they have come to this course.

They should take notes and be ready to introduce the people they have met to the class.

2. Have each student introduced to the class as follows:

- First pick a student and ask him/her to say his/her name.
- Then ask the students who interviewed him/her to say at least one thing they found out about him/her.

-- At the end of the "introduction," ask the student if there is anything else he/she would like to add to the introduction.

(This procedure gives you a little more control of time, so that the process does not drag out too long and become boring.)

Talk: "I am _____"

Goals: Practice listening comprehension; allow students to get to know you.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Briefly introduce yourself and a little about what you do as a teacher.
2. Give students a chance to ask you questions about yourself.
3. Closure suggestion: Check comprehension by asking student volunteers to repeat back some of the key facts about you.

Classroom Chat: "China's school system"

Goals: Practice talking about schools. For you to learn about the education system in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students about China's school system, starting with kindergarten (or the equivalent) and then moving on up. You might chart the system on the board, also put up new vocabulary. Also ask about the role of standardized tests, and the role of English on those tests.

Teacher Interview: "The school system in my country"

Goals: Practice listening, asking questions.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Be ready to answer questions about schools in your country.
2. Tell students they are reporters assigned to interview you and write an article on education and schools in your country.
3. Have them prepare questions, either individually or in groups. Circulate and help ensure that students' questions are constructed properly. Write new words and structures on the board as they arise.
4. Conduct interview. Encourage clarification questions.
5. Closure suggestion: Ask students to tell you what differences they see between the system in China and in your country, based on what they learned by interviewing you.

Show and Tell: "My school"

Goal: Practice listening; have a break

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Preparation:

1. Bring pictures of your school. Might bring others for comparison -- nice and not so nice.

Procedure:

1. Show pictures and chat.

Before Middle School

Classroom Chat: "Pre-school"

Goals: Practice talking about pre-school education. For you learn more about pre-school education in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you about pre-school education options in China (day care, nursery schools, kindergartens, etc.)

2. Closure suggestion: Tell students a little about similar options in your country.

Pair/Small Group Task: "How much homework?"

Goals: Practice talking about homework.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you have heard there is now much discussion in China about reducing the homework load of children (*jian fu*).

2. In pairs or small groups, have students decide how much time they think primary school children should spend doing homework each school evening. They should be ready to explain their position.

3. Closure suggestion: Tell students a little about the issue of homework for primary school students in your country.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Parents' choice?"

Goals: Practice talking about pre-school education, explaining; develop basic debating skills.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Start by asking students the following: In China, how is it decided what primary school a student will go to?

2. In pairs or small groups, have students discuss the following question: Should all children in China just go to the closest school? Or should parents have some choice as to what school their child goes to?

The group should try to arrive at a "consensus" (you may need to explain this word and concept), and be ready to explain their view to the class.

3. Use the following procedure for having groups report:

-- Ask which groups felt the closest school option is best, and which felt parents should have a voice.

-- Pick one group who favors the closest school option, and ask them to explain their view.

-- Then pick a group that favors the other view and have them explain their view. And so on.

Encourage groups to comment on and respond to the ideas mentioned by previous groups.

4. Closure suggestion: Give special praise to groups that listened and responded to the ideas of others.

Other Activity Ideas:

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you about the process of teaching children in China how to read. (Learning to read Chinese is a more demanding task than learning to read a Western language is.)

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you about what, if any, strategies some parents in China use in order to get their children into good primary schools.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students decide whether or not they think children in China should start learning English in primary school.

Other Topic Ideas:

-- What should the main goals of pre-school education be?

Middle School

Talk: "A student's day"

Goal: Practice listening comprehension; learn more about the West.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Give a short talk describing the typical day of a high school student in your country. Organize your talk chronologically.
2. As you give the talk, suggest that students take notes in the form of a rough schedule.
3. Closure suggestion: Move into "A typical Chinese student's day" below.

Pair/Small Group Task: "A typical Chinese student's day"

Goal: Practice explaining a schedule. For you to learn more about student life in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you want to learn more about the lives of students in China. Ask groups to write out a typical daily schedule for a junior middle school (3rd yr) student in China.
2. For reports, have the first group suggest the first item of the day and approximate time for it. Quickly check this with the rest of the class. Then have the next group report the next item of the day, and so on. You should write this composite schedule on the board as students report.
3. Closure suggestion: Ask students to comment on the biggest differences they see between student life in China and in your country.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Getting into university"

Goal: Practice talking about getting into university. For you to learn more about student life in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that you have heard that getting into university in China is quite difficult, and that senior middle school teachers who teach the graduating class have a lot of responsibility for preparing students for the university entrance examination.
2. In pair or small groups, have students list, in order of importance, the things that senior 3 teachers do in order to prepare students for the university entrance examination. They should be ready to explain things to you as necessary.
3. For reports, ask one group to suggest what they think is most important. Then ask if other groups agree with them and discuss as necessary. Once there seems to be adequate agreement on something, write it on the board as #1 and move on to the next group and suggestion.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Should schools all use the same books?"

Goal: Practice talking about textbooks. For you to learn more about student life in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups, have students decide whether or not they think all (or most) schools in a country should use the same textbooks. They should try to reach consensus, and be ready to explain their viewpoint to the class.
2. Closure suggestion: Comment on how books and other teaching materials are selected and distributed in your country.

Other Activity Ideas:

Talk: Tell students what courses are typically offered in middle schools in your country. Points to comment on might include: degree of choice students have as to what courses they take, whether they can choose majors, what the requirements of a typical course are..

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you what a typical grade curve looks like in a Chinese middle school.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What are the best parts of student life? The worst?
- What are the courses in a Chinese middle school curriculum? Which are considered most important?
- What extra-curricular activities do schools in China have? Contrast with your country.
- What role do sports play in Chinese schools? Why such an emphasis on extra-curricular activities in West?
- How much homework do Chinese middle school students have, and what kind?
- What standardized examinations and other kinds of tests do students in China face? Compare with your country.
- How do teachers in China typically go about evaluating students?
- How does a teacher normally handle the situation if a student is headed toward failing a course?
- What costs are involved in middle school education?

After Middle School

Pair/Small Group Task: "After junior middle school?"

Goal: Practice talking about different kinds of education; talking about percentages. For you to learn more about student life in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you have heard that after junior middle school in China, some students go on to senior middle school and some don't.
2. In pairs or groups, have students list the options for students at the end of middle school, and be ready to explain each to you in English. They should also be ready to tell you roughly what percentage of students take each option, and how each option is generally viewed (i.e. how desirable it is).
3. Closure suggestion: Try to summarize what the students have told you back to them, so they can tell you if you got it right or not.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Finding a job"

Goal: Practice talking about finding jobs. For you to learn more about life in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students to imagine that a senior middle school student who is about to graduate comes to them and asks for advice about finding a job. (She isn't planning to take the university entrance examination because she thinks she has no chance.) In pairs or small groups, ask students to list pieces of advice that they would give her, including strategies for finding a job. They should be ready to explain their advice to you.
2. During the reporting phase, ask the first group to offer one piece of advice, and if necessary explain it. Then ask the class if they agree with the point made, wish to comment on it, or modify it. If it is generally accepted, write it on the board and move on to the next group.
3. Closure suggestion: Be ready to tell the class some advice you would give a similar student in your country.

Other Activity Ideas:

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you what continuing education opportunities exist in China.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students present a proposal as to what middle schools should do -- if anything -- to help students find jobs.

Other Topic Ideas:

- Should schools have graduation tests?

University

Pair/Small Group Task: "How much choice should students have?"

Goal: Practice talking about university courses.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that one decision university departments need to make is how much, if any, choice to allow students as to what courses they take. Should the department decide all the courses? Or should students be free to take whatever courses they want? Somewhere in between?
2. In pairs or small groups, ask students to list the advantages and disadvantages of 1) deciding all of students' courses for them; and 2) allowing students to choose their own courses.
3. Have students report. while you list their ideas on the board.
4. Again, in pairs or groups, ask students to make a proposal for an English department as to which courses should be required, and which should be elective. They should be ready to justify their ideas.
5. For reports, have one group suggest a course that they think should be required, and then see if the class agrees. Discuss as appropriate. Once agreement is reached, put the course on the board under "required" or "elective" and move on.
6. Closure suggestion: Talk with students about what courses might be required and elective in a university department in your country.

Talk: "A typical university course"

Goal: Practice listening comprehension.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare and give a talk on what a typical university course in your country is like. Topics to mention would include:
 - what people do in class; (lecture? discussion? etc.)
 - kinds of homework assignments are given; (papers? projects? reading for tests? etc.)
 - what materials are used; (how many textbooks? what kind? library readings? etc.)
 - how the course is evaluated (tests? papers? presentations? etc.).
2. Encourage students to ask questions.
3. Closure suggestion: based on what students learned, have them tell you what similarities and differences they see between courses in your country and in China.

Teacher Interview: "Advance warning"

Goal: Practice listening comprehension.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that they have been asked to go teach Chinese at a university in your country for two years. Before they go, they have been asked to interview you in order to get more information on how they should teach courses in a Western university.
2. In pairs or groups, first have students list issues they would need to consider. (For example, what grade curve to use, how much homework to give, how to evaluate students' performance, what to do if students cheat or don't do their homework, etc.)
3. Conduct the interview.
4. Closure suggestion: Share with students a little about what worried you most about coming to teach in a foreign country, and what you have enjoyed most.

Other Activity Ideas:

Classroom Chat: Ask students to describe the typical day of a Chinese college or university student to you.

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you what a typical college or university grade curve looks like in China, and what happens if students get failing grades.

Classroom Chat: Ask students to tell you how courses in China are normally evaluated.

Talk: Explain the process in your country for choosing and getting into a college or university. Ask students to tell you about the same process in China.

Pair/Small Group Task: Have students decide whether university students should be allowed to choose their own majors and minors. Alternatively: Have them discuss, from the perspective of society, the relative advantages of allowing students to choose their own majors versus assigning students to majors.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What is the process for choosing and getting into a college or university?
- How many and what courses are students generally expected to take outside their major?
- What extra-curricular activities (sports, clubs, etc.) are a part of university life?
- What methods should university teachers use to evaluate students? Are tests the best way?
- How do university students get into graduate school?
- What are the costs involved in college/university education, and how do students generally pay these?

A Teacher's Life

Survey: "How do you like being a teacher?"

Goals: Practice talking about teaching.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have each student survey several others, asking what they do and don't like about being a teacher. Students should be ready to report the results of their surveys.
2. Closure suggestion: Use as lead in to "The teaching profession" Activity Notes below.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The teaching profession"

Goals: Practice talking about the teaching profession.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or small groups, have students list the advantages and disadvantages of teaching as a profession (in China).
2. Wander, comment, and help. If one group finishes early, have them prioritize their list. Which is the main advantage? Second? Etc.
3. Have groups report and explain their ideas. To keep one group from dominating, at first ask each group to just tell you the most important advantage (disadvantage). Then, as there is time, ask for items lower on their lists.
4. Closure suggestion: Compare what students said with teaching in your country.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Getting ahead"

Goal: Practice talking about promotions.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or small groups, ask students to make a list for you of the things that a middle school teacher in China needs to do in order to get promoted. They should be listed in order of importance.
2. For reports, have one group suggest what they consider to be the most important factor. Then see if other groups agree, and discuss if necessary. Once the class agrees, list #1 on the board and move on to a candidate for #2 position. And so on.
3. Closure suggestion: Move on to "Teacher Interview: Getting ahead in teaching in the West" below.

Teacher Interview: "Getting ahead in teaching in the West"

Goal: Practice listening comprehension, asking questions; learn more about the West..

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students they have been assigned to interview you and then write an article on how teachers in the West get promoted.
2. In groups, have them prepare questions.
3. Conduct the interview.
4. Closure suggestion: Based on what they heard you say, ask each group to comment on one similarity or difference between teacher promotion in the West and China. They cannot repeat a point made previously by another group.

Other Activity Ideas:

Classroom Chat: Ask students why they became teachers.

Debate: Should teachers have higher pay? (Divide into "government finance official" and "teacher" groups.)

Other Topic Ideas:

-- What is the process for becoming a teacher? (Training, requirements, etc.)

The Challenges of Teaching

Pair/Small Group Task: "The big class"

Goals: Practice talking about teaching large classes; share ideas on how to deal with big classes. For you to learn more about teaching in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes Notes:

1. Ask students to imagine they are giving advice to a Western English teacher who has never taught a large class (50-80 students) before. In groups they should prepare a list of advice, each piece of advice can be given as a sentence completion: "You should _____." "You should not _____." Have them be ready to present their advice and explain why it is important.
2. Closure suggestion: Share tips you would give to a Chinese teacher who was coming to teach Chinese in school in your country.

Pairs/Small Group Task: "To be strict or lenient?"

Goals: Practice talking about teaching.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes Notes:

1. Issue: "Is it better if teachers are strict or easy-going?"
2. In pairs or groups have students list the advantages and disadvantages of being both strict and lenient. Then have each group decide whether it is better to err on the side of being too strict or too lenient. They should be ready to announce their decision and explain it.
3. Closure suggestion: State and justify your own position.

Other Activity Ideas:

Pair/Small Group Task: Have groups list ways to deal with students who misbehave.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What are the advantages of student-centered approaches to teaching? Of teacher-centered approaches?
- How can teachers motivate students?
- How should teachers deal with students who do poorly?

Ideas About Education

Pair/Small Group Task: "What is *suzhi jiaoyu*?"

Goal: Practice talking about education, explaining. For you to learn more about education in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that you have heard that now in China there is much discussion about “quality education” (*suzhi jiaoyu*), but you don’t really understand what *suzhi jiaoyu* is.
2. In pairs or groups, have students prepare a clear definition of this concept in English, and also be ready to explain why it is being discussed so much.
3. For reports, have one volunteer group start by presenting their definition of *suzhi jiaoyu*. Then allow other groups to suggest modifications to the proposed definition, and discuss until a consensus is reached.
4. If this doesn’t arise earlier naturally, then ask students to explain why this concept is being discussed so much in China.
5. Closure suggestion: Repeat back to students your understanding of what they told you, and see if you got it right. Thank them for helping you better understand a difficult idea.

Classroom Chat: "A Good Teacher"

Goals: Practice talking about education.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy.

Procedure:

1. Ask everyone to quickly write down a few important characteristics of a good teacher.
2. Have a few volunteers share their ideas.

Personal story: "My favorite teacher"

Goals: Practice listening.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Prepare a short talk about one of the best teachers you ever had and what you think was so good about him/her. (Or about one of the worst teachers you ever had -- if you can make it amusing.)
2. Give your talk informally.
3. Closure suggestion: Check for questions. If there is time and interest, you might also ask if one or two students would share briefly about an especially good teacher they had.

Other Activity Ideas:

Survey: Have students ask each other about the best teachers they ever had. What made those teachers good? What did they learn from them?

Other Topic Ideas:

- Which is more important: creativity or knowledge?
- What should teachers look for when they evaluate students?
- Is there a “best” way to teach?
- How should science (math, etc.) be taught?

Issues in Education

Classroom Chat: "Key schools"

Goals: Practice talking about different kinds of schools.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to explain to you what "key" middle schools are, and what changes are currently taking place in the system of key schools.
2. Closure suggestion: Use this as a lead-in to the Activity Notes "Should China have key schools?" below.

Debate: "Should China have key schools?"

Goals: Practice talking about different kinds of schools.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell participants that you are going to ask them to debate the issue: Should Chinese middle schools be divided into key and non-key schools? You will act as judge, and participants will be asked to prepare a case and be ready to explain it to you (someone who doesn't know China well).
2. Divide participants into Affirmative and Negative teams, and then into small groups within each team. Affirmative groups must then list all of the advantages of having a system in which schools are divided into key and non-key types, and be ready to explain each advantage to you, the judge. Negative teams do the same for disadvantages.
3. Follow Debate procedures.
4. Closure suggestion: Have the class vote as to who did the better job of presenting their case.

Other Activity Ideas:

Classroom Chat: Ask students what the main educational issues currently being debated in China are, and have them explain these issues to you. Or: Ask students what reforms in education are currently being discussed in China are, and have them explain these reforms to you.

Classroom Chat: Ask students whether teachers in China have unions, and what those unions do.

Talk: Tell your students about how parent-teacher associations work in your country.

Other Topic Ideas:

- Should parents play any role in schools? If so, what and how?
- What are the main problems faced by schools in China? In your country?
- What school subjects are most important?

(Module 8)

Language Learning

Why Learn A Foreign Language

Survey: “What do you like/dislike most about learning English?”

Goal: Practice talking about English study. For you to learn more about how your students feel about studying English.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students each survey several classmates, asking them what they like most about English study and what they dislike most about English study.
2. After volunteers report their results, share what you liked and disliked most about your own study of some foreign language.
3. You might also ask the question what implications the survey results have for how English should be taught.

Pair/Small Group Activity: “Why learn English?”

Goal: Practice talking about English study; analyzing reasons to learn English.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups, ask students to list as many advantages of learning English as they can think of, and as many disadvantages.
2. Closure suggestion: Write ideas on the board as students report. Then leave the lists up as material for the activity below, “Should all Chinese students be required to study English?”

Debate: “Should all Chinese students be required to study English?”

Goal: Practice talking about English study.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. To start, point out that an enormous amount of time and energy is spent in China teaching all middle school and university students English, but many (most) students never actually develop functional skills in the language.
2. Assign or allow students to choose either the affirmative or negative position on the issue: “Should all Chinese students be required to study English?” In groups they should then prepare to defend their position.
3. Conduct the debate following “Debate “ procedures.

Other Activity Ideas:

Survey: Why are you studying English?

Survey: If you could learn one language you don’t already know (not English), what would it be?

Other Topic Ideas:

-- What opportunities do you have to use English where you live?

Learners

Pair/ Small Group Task: “What are the characteristics of a good language learner?”

Goal: Practice talking about language learners; underscore importance of learners role in language learning. For you to find out more about what your students think about language learning.

Estimated Time/Difficulty:

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups, have students list characteristics of good language learners. These can be stated as sentence completions such as “Good language learners _____ .”

2. After each group has a list, ask them to discuss and decide which three characteristics are most important.
3. Have each group share the characteristic they think is most important.
4. Closure suggestion: Ask what teachers can do to encourage these characteristics.

Pair/Small Group Task: “How are students different?”

Goal: Practice speaking; emphasize that students are different; lead in to “What are you good at?” (below).

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to think of other students they know. In pairs or small groups, have students list as many kinds of differences as they can think of between students.
2. Have them write ideas as contrasting pairs, using a sentence completion pattern like: “Some students _____; others _____.” Sentences can be completed with adjectives (Some students are lazy; others are diligent) or verb phrases (Some students work hard; others never study).
3. Have pairs discuss the question in English while one person writes down the group’s ideas. While the pairs talk, circulate and help with vocabulary and grammar.
4. Have pairs report. Ask each pair to report one difference; then move on to the next pair. If time allows, allow volunteers to suggest more after every pair has suggested one difference.
5. Closure suggestion: Use this as a lead-in to the following activity, “Survey: What are you good at?”

Survey: “What are you good at?”

Goal: Practice talking about language learning; encourage students to think of themselves as distinctive and unique learners.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to think for a minute about what they are good at in language learning, and what is hard for them.
2. Have students survey each other asking two questions: 1) What are you good at in language learning? 2) What is hard for you in language learning? Every student should survey at least five other students, and write down the answers.
3. You might put one or more sample answers on the board to use as models. Ex: “I am good at using verb tenses.” “Translating is hard for me.”
4. Ask volunteers to report what they found to be the most common answers. Also ask if everyone had the same answers.
5. Closure suggestion: If this isn’t already obvious, point out that language learners are not always the same, and that a study program that is good for one might not sit another.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What habits do good language learners have?
- How important are learning styles in language learning?

Grammar

Classroom Chat: “How do Chinese students study grammar?”

Goal: Practice talking about grammar study. For you to learn more about how students in China study languages.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you how Chinese students usually study grammar.

Survey: “What is the hardest thing in English grammar?”

Goal: Practice talking about grammar. For you to learn more about the grammar problems students face.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask each student to decide what they think is hardest about English grammar, and have them be ready to tell somebody else.
2. Have each student ask at least five other students “What do you think the hardest thing about English grammar is?” and note down the responses.
3. Ask volunteers to report what seems to be the thing most people find most difficult.
4. Note: Before this activity you might want to review your English grammar terminology. One way to do this is to borrow an “intensive reading” textbook from one of your Chinese students or colleagues -- this allows you to learn the terms used in China.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Explaining grammar”

Goal: Practice explaining grammar points in English.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Pick one or more of the English grammar students suggested in the activity “Survey: What is the hardest thing in English grammar?” above. Assign each group one grammar point, and as a group have them prepare an explanation -- in English -- of that grammar point.
2. Have each group offer its explanation.
3. Closure suggestion: Give special praise to the explanations that you found clearest and most helpful.

Talk: “Learning grammar”

Goal: Practice listening comprehension; learn more about language learning in the West.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Give a short talk on your own experiences studying English grammar in junior high school or another topic of your choice (such as your experiences learning the grammar of a foreign language).

Pair/Small Group Task: “Making grammar interesting.”

Goal: Practice talking about grammar teaching.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. First informally ask students how they feel about English grammar. Do they enjoy studying it? Do they enjoy teaching it?
2. Ask students to imagine that a colleague of theirs comes to them to complain that students find grammar too boring, and she doesn’t know what to do.
3. In groups, have students list tips (tricks?) to make the teaching of grammar points more interesting for the teacher and students. Each tip should be written as a piece of advice. Students should be ready to present their advice, and explain why each tip is important.
4. Closure suggestion: Give any tips you can think of.

Other Activity Ideas:

Survey: How important do you think it is to study grammar?

Other Topic Ideas:

- How can you learn from grammar mistakes you make?
- What is the best way to learn grammar?

Vocabulary

Classroom Chat: “How do Chinese students learn vocabulary?”

Goal: Practice talking about vocabulary learning. For you to learn more about how students in China learn languages.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you about how students in China usually go about studying vocabulary.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Memorizing vocabulary”

Goal: Practice speaking, brainstorming; share ideas on vocabulary memorization.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In the activity above, “Classroom Chat: How do Chinese students learn vocabulary?”, students will have introduced some methods students in China use to memorize vocabulary.
2. In groups, ask students to brainstorm and list as many additional methods they can think of that students can use to memorize vocabulary. (Sentence completion: “Students can memorize vocabulary by _____.”) Explain that in brainstorming, the goal is to list as many ideas as possible -- it doesn’t matter if the ideas are good or not. (The issue of deciding which ideas are good comes later -- the first thing is to generate as many ideas as possible.)
3. Have each group count up how many ideas they have written down and report the number. Then ask the group with the most to share their list (as you note them on the board). After they finish, ask other groups if they have other ideas to add.
4. After there is a list on the board, ask students which ideas they think are the best.
5. Closure suggestion: Suggest any tricks you have for vocabulary memorizing.

Talk: “Using words”

Goal: Build listening comprehension; call attention to vocabulary issues other than meaning.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Give a short talk on learning how to use new words. Point out that memorizing the meaning of vocabulary words is not enough; students also need to learn how the words are used. (At least those words that they want to add to their active vocabulary for speaking or writing.) Issues you might mention would include: connotation, collocation (which words go together), part of speech, level of formality, and level of frequency.
2. Have students take notes as you talk, and check after the talk to see how much they understood. The talk can also be followed by a question and answer session.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Teaching vocabulary”

Goals: Practice explaining; share ideas on vocabulary teaching.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Imagine that a new (inexperienced) English teacher is asking you about how to teach vocabulary. In groups, list several pieces of advice that you would give to him/her. State each as a sentence completion: “You should (not) _____.” Have students be ready to explain why each piece of advice is important.
2. Closure suggestion: Respond with suggestions of your own.

Other Activity Ideas:

Survey: What methods do you use to memorize vocabulary?

Other Topic Ideas:

- What is the best way to study vocabulary?
- What is the best way to memorize vocabulary?
- What is the best way to learn the proper usage of new vocabulary?
- What is the best way to find out meanings of unfamiliar words?

Listening

Classroom Chat: “What opportunities are there in China for practicing listening?”

Goal: Practice talking about listening comprehension. For you to learn more about what English listening opportunities your students have.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to list all the English listening opportunities they can think of in China - opportunities that exist in the areas they live in, (not just in big cities like Beijing or Shanghai).

Pair/Small Group Task: “What makes listening to English hard?”

Goal: Practice explaining obstacles to listening comprehension; gain better understanding of obstacles to listening comprehension.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups, have students analyze the obstacles that sometimes impede their listening comprehension in English. They should list answers as sentence completions like: “Sometimes I can’t understand because _____ (there are words I don’t know, etc.).”
2. Have each group report one problem while you list them on the board. After each group has reported one, allow volunteers to suggest any that haven’t been mentioned.
3. Some problems that should be included are: 1) distinguishing between sounds (like the difference between *pill* and *peel*); 2) reduced forms of words (like *wanna*); 3) hearing intonation clues (like the difference between *Yes?* and *Yes!*); 4) accents; 5) unfamiliar vocabulary; 6) speed; 7) grammar; 8) cultural background knowledge.
4. Closure suggestion: Use this activity as a lead-in to the next question: How can we practice effectively so as to overcome these difficulties?

Pair/Small Group task: “What is the best way to practice my listening?”

Goal: Practice explaining language learning methods; to emphasize the importance of study plans.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have each student write out a study plan for improving his/her listening comprehension, including (specific) goals and methods.
2. In groups, have one student share his/her plan. Then students should list the advantages and disadvantages of the plan, completing the sentence “One dis/advantage of this plan is _____.”
3. Have each group report one plan, and its main advantage and disadvantage.

Talk: “Building your listening comprehension”

Goal: Practice listening comprehension.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Give a short talk on improving listening comprehension or a related topic (such as note taking, etc.)
2. Have students take notes, and check comprehension later.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Teaching listening”

Goals: Practice talking about listening tests. For you to learn more about listening tests in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. First informally ask students to tell you about the listening component of the examinations (such as the university entrance examination) students are required to take in China.
2. In groups, have students list suggestions for how to best prepare students for listening tests.
3. Closure suggestion: Respond with any suggestions you have.

Other Topic Ideas:

-- What is the best way to improve your listening?

Speaking

Classroom Chat: “How important is speaking?”

Goal: Practice talking about speaking skills. For you to learn more about the situation in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students how important it is in China to develop one's ability to speak English. Do they really need to improve their speaking? If so, why? How important is it for middle school students to learn to speak?

Pair/Small Group Task: "Finding opportunities to speak"

Goal: To practice talking about speaking opportunities; brainstorming; sharing ideas on ways to find speaking practice opportunities.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Explain that in China it is sometimes difficult for people to find opportunities to practice speaking English, so it is important that people who want to improve their speaking be creative and actively seek to find or create opportunities.
2. In pairs or groups, have students list (brainstorm) ways to practice speaking English, as many as possible. Sentence completion: I can practice speaking English by _____ (starting an English corner). At the end, have students count up the number of ideas on their list.
3. Ask each group to share their most creative idea (or two). Then have a class vote as to which idea is most creative.

Pair/Small Group Task: "To speak or not to speak"

Goal: Practice explaining advantages and disadvantages; share ideas on how to encourage students to practice speaking English to each other.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups, have students list advantages and disadvantages of practicing English by talking with other Chinese people (classmates, colleagues). Sentence completion: "One advantage of practicing with other Chinese people is _____." Each group should list some of both.
2. Have each group report one advantage or disadvantage. Follow this by class discussion of whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages or vice versa.
3. Closure suggestion: If this isn't too obvious, note that unless Chinese practice speaking English to each other, most are not likely to get much practice.

Pair/Small Group Task: "How to run an English corner"

Goal: Practice talking about English corners; share ideas on how to run English corners.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups, have students list the rules for how a good English corner should run. Sentence completion: "You should _____ (always have a topic)." Students should be prepared to discuss why they think each rule they suggest is good.
2. Have each group suggest one rule. After all are on the board, have students discuss which are good rules and why.

Activity: "Pronunciation clinic"

Goals: Help students improve their pronunciation of difficult sounds.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups have students list the sounds of English that they find most difficult. For each sound they should have one or more example words.
2. Have each group report the sounds (and example words) they want help with. Then go over each word with students, pronouncing and helping them.
3. WARNING! Some of the sounds of standard British English (the standard used in Chinese middle schools) are quite different from those used in American English, especially some vowels and final "r" sounds. You might forego demonstrating sounds that are not familiar to you.

Talk: “How to start a conversation”

Goal: Practice listening skills.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Give a short talk on how Westerners start conversations with strangers or acquaintances.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Giving students speaking practice”

Goal: Share ideas on how to give students speaking practice.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Remind students that one of the most important part of building speaking skills is practice, so students need a lot of it, more than can be provided in class.
2. Have students list kinds of speaking assignments they could give to their students as homework. For each assignment, they should write down: 1) what exactly they would ask the students to do, 2) how they would check to see if students did it, and 3) how they would reward students for doing it. Students should be ready to share their ideas with the class.
3. Closure suggestion: Present one or two homework speaking assignments of your own design.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What should the goals of English corners be?
- What is the best way to run an English corner?
- What is the best way to improve your pronunciation?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of practicing your spoken English with other Chinese?
- What is the best way to improve your speaking?
- Is it useful to practice by talking to yourself?

Reading

Classroom Chat: “What kind of English books are available in China?”

Goal: Practice talking about reading. For you to learn more about English reading resources in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students what kinds of English reading material are available in China in the areas where they live.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Too hard or too easy?”

Goal: Practice talking about issue of levels of reading difficulty.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Obviously it is best for students to read things that are neither too hard nor too easy for them, but it is not always possible to find things that are just right. If you can't find something that is just right, is it better to practice reading things that are a little too hard or a little too easy?
2. In groups, have students discuss the question. They should first list the advantages and disadvantages of each, then decide which is better.
3. Have each group present its decision and the main reason for it.

Pair/Small group Task: “The best way to read”

Goal: Practice talking about reading; listing steps in a process.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students imagine that they are going to read a magazine article in order to improve their English reading skills. What should they do in what order? Each group should list the steps they would recommend in the proper order. These should be presented as steps in a process. “First you should _____. Next _____. Then _____. Finally _____.”
2. Have each group present their suggested procedure, listing the steps.

3. Closure suggestion: Offer a few suggestions of your own.

Talk: “What I like to read”

Goal: Practice listening comprehension.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Give a short talk in which you introduce some of your favorite books (or kinds of books) and explain why you like each.
2. After you check students’ comprehension, have them survey each other about what kinds of things they like to read in Chinese and/or English.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Intensive reading.”

Goals: Practice explaining. For you to learn more about Chinese language teaching.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you have heard of “intensive reading” but aren’t quite sure what it is.
2. In pairs or groups, have students prepare a short explanation of “intensive reading” for you, and be ready to read it aloud to you. (Alternative: have each group tell you the steps in a typical intensive reading lesson.)
3. Have each group present their explanation as you note down important points on the board..
4. Then ask students in groups to list the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of teaching, and decide what is best about it and what is worst.

Pair/Small Group Task: “When to use the dictionary”

Goal: Practice talking about dictionaries; discuss dictionary use.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Explain the following: When you read in English, you will sometimes encounter words you don’t know. Which words should you look up in the dictionary, and which words should you not look up?
2. In pairs or groups, have students decide which words should be looked up. (Write down as sentence completions: “You should look words up in the dictionary if _____.”)
3. Have each group share. If there are disagreements or questions, discuss.
4. Closure suggestion: If this isn’t obvious, point out that it is important for students to learn that they don’t always have to look up every unfamiliar word they encounter -- for one thing, it kills any hope of joy in reading.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What is the best way to improve your reading speed in English?
- What are the best kinds of things to read to improve your English reading skills?
- What is the best way to improve your reading comprehension in English?

Writing

Classroom Chat: “Writing in Chinese tests”

Goal: Practice talking about tests. For you to learn more about writing tests in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Easy.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you about the writing tests (English) students face in China; for example, the writing components of the senior middle school and university entrance examinations.

Pair/Small Group Activity: “Learning from corrections”

Goal: Practice talking about error correction; share ideas on error correction.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Introduction: One thing writing teachers all know is that even when they correct errors on students' compositions, the students often make the same mistakes again next time.
2. In pairs or groups, have students write up a list of requests they would make to a writing teacher who was going to correct something they wrote. Have students state their answers as a list of requests. "Please _____."
3. Have groups present their requests.
4. Closure suggestion: Ask the class to discuss what students should do to ensure that they learn from corrections.

Talk: "Rules for good writing"

Goal: Practice listening comprehension.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Give a short talk giving suggestions for how to be a good writer.

Activity: "Teaching writing"

Goal: Practice talking about writing; share ideas on how to teach writing.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Warm-up by asking what kind of and how much writing students have to teach.
2. In pairs or groups have students list the main difficulties they face as they teach (English) writing. Each difficulty could be listed as a sentence completion: "One problem I face when I teach writing is _____."
3. Have each group introduce one of the problems they listed, explaining as necessary.
4. Then, back in small groups, have students try to think of ways they could deal with the problems listed, and be ready to share their solutions.
5. Closure suggestion: Suggest any solutions you can think of.

Other Topic Ideas:

- How important is it for students in China to learn to write in English?
- What is the best way for students to improve their English writing?

Culture

Survey/Pair/Small Group Task: "My culture"

Goals: Practice talking about Chinese culture.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Survey several classmates asking the following question: Imagine that you have been invited to give a talk on "Chinese culture" to a group of foreigners who have never been to China before. What things would you talk to them about?
2. After volunteers report, in pairs or small groups write the outline of the talk mentioned above. List the points you would talk about and a little about what you would say. Also be ready to explain to the class why you chose the points you did.
3. Have each group report one of the points they would talk about and why.
4. Closure suggestion: Use this activity to lead into the next one, "What is 'culture'?"

Pair/Small Group Task: "What is 'culture'?"

Goals: Practice explaining what 'culture' is.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or small groups, ask students to discuss the question: "What is 'culture'?" First have them list the things that are included under the word "culture." Then have them write a definition of the word.

Other Activity Ideas:

Survey/Teacher Interview: What do you find most interesting (strange) about Western culture?

Other Topic Ideas:

- What are the most important things you should learn about a foreign culture?
- What is the best way to learn about a foreign culture?

Tests

Classroom Chat: "Preparing for examinations"

Goal: Practice talking about tests. For you to learn more about testing in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you how teachers in Junior 3 and Senior 3 prepare students for China's standardized examinations. (Note: The need to prepare students for these examinations is a dominant reality in the life of Chinese middle school teachers, and has a huge impact on teaching.)

Pair/Small Group Task: "English tests in China"

Goal: Practice talking about tests. For you to learn more about the role of tests in English learning in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In small groups, ask students to prepare to explain three things to you: 1) What are the most important English tests Chinese students face? 2) Why is each of these important? 3) What kinds of things are on each of these tests?
2. Ask the first group to name a test and tell you one or two things about it; then ask another group to tell you more about this test, and so on until you have exhausted this first type of test. Then move to the next kind of test.
3. Closure suggestion: Comment on any differences you see between foreign language testing in China and your home country.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Preparing students for the big test."

Goal: Practice talking about testing; share ideas on how to prepare students for tests.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to imagine that they are giving advice to a new inexperienced English teacher in China about how to prepare students for an important English test (such as the university entrance examination). In groups, they should list pieces of advice as sentence completions: "To prepare students well for the test you should _____." They should be ready to share their advice with the class, and explain why each is important.
2. Closure suggestion: Share advice you might give students for preparing for tests.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What is the best way to study for a test?

Studying Foreign Languages

Classroom Chat: "My English study goals"

Goals: Practice talking about language study goals.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short-Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. First, ask students to write down several goals they want to set for their future (or present) English study. Each could be stated as a sentence completion: "I want to _____ (improve my listening, etc.)."

2. Then ask students to make each goal more specific. Ex: "I want to improve my ability to listen to TV news broadcasts in English." (This assumes that the first goals students write will be very general. If their initial goals are specific, this step can be omitted.) Circulate and help students with vocabulary and grammar.
3. Finally, ask students to pick the two goals that are most important for them personally, the two goals they want to work toward.
4. Closure suggestion: Use this as a lead-in to the activity "Pair/Small Group Task: Choosing methods" below.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Choosing methods"

Goal: Practice talking about methods for language study; share study method ideas.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students you want them to help each other make study plans.
2. In pairs or small groups (3-4), have one student tell the others one goal he/she chose (in Setting Goals above). Then have the group discuss (and write down) several methods the student could use to work toward the goal. Then proceed to the next student, and so forth. As students discuss and write, circulate to help with grammar and vocabulary. Try to allow enough time for each group to complete the process for at least one of the goals of each student in the group.
3. Have each group report one goal and two or three of the methods they suggested.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Language learning: Time and opportunity"

Goal: Practice talking about language study; help students prepare for further language study.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium-Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Tell students that today everyone will discuss ways to continue to study English after the course ends, but that first everyone needs to consider limits on time and opportunity, because these affect English study plans.
2. In pairs or groups, ask students to discuss three questions:
 - Realistically, how much time do you have on the average day to study English, especially time when you are not exhausted?
 - Realistically, which opportunities can you create to use English outside teaching?
 - Realistically, which forms of English study do you like enough that you will do them even when you are tired and busy?

Each group should prepare to summarize group members' answers to these questions.

3. Have groups report, first on time, then on opportunity. (For opportunity, you might ask if they can ever get foreign language books, radio broadcasts, or newspapers like 21st Century which are published in China.)
4. Closure suggestion: Use this to move into the activity "Pair/Small Group Task: English learning plans" below.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Motivation for English study"

Goal: Practice talking about motivation in language study; call attention to impact of feelings on study.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. First, have each person write down two or three things that discourage them in their English study. This could be done as a sentence completion: "One reason I become discouraged when I study English is _____." Encourage students to be specific.
2. In pairs or groups, have students share with each other some of the things they listed.
3. Then ask them to pick two or three of the problems, and list things they could do to help deal with the problem. Have one person take notes, listing both the problem and the ideas for dealing with it. Note: The focus here is on how to prevent or deal with discouragement.
4. Have each group share one problem and one or two ideas for dealing with it.

Pair/Small Group Task: "English learning plans"

Goal: Practice talking about English study plans; for further study

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. This activity is a combination of those above, and is intended to be used only if you do not choose to use the others above.
2. Have students individually think about how they might continue studying English after the program ends, and make a few notes about a study plan. These plans should be realistic, i.e. things that are possible to do within limits of time, energy, interest, and opportunity.
3. In groups, have students share their plans with each other and discuss whether they are realistic. Note: Students tend to make plans that are too big and broad, trying to cover too many things for the time available--the "Your eyes are bigger than your stomach" phenomenon. The disadvantage of such plans is that students often see little progress, become discouraged, and give up. When people have limited time and energy, it is often more realistic to focus efforts in one area (e.g.: vocabulary and newspaper reading), at least for a period of time.
4. Closure suggestion: Have a few students present their plans.

Other Activity Ideas:

Classroom Chat: Ask students how they normally study language. When, where, how.

Pair/Small Group Task: What is the best way to schedule language class periods during a week? (Either for an intensive summer program or normal classes during the year.) Have each group come up with a proposed schedule and explain its merits.

Teacher Interview: Have each group prepare a list of specific questions on language study. Then have the groups interview you as to your opinion.

Talk: Different strategies for effective language learning.

Other Topic Ideas:

-- What is the best kinds of homework for language study?

-- What is the best way to learn a language?

Language Teaching

Pair/Small Group Task: "New ideas about teaching"

Goal: Practice talking about language teaching.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Challenging.

Procedure:

1. Tell students that you know many of the methods foreign teachers use are somewhat different from the methods Chinese teachers normally use. (Note that the circumstances in other countries may also be quite different -- smaller classes, higher level skills, no standardized final exam, etc.).
2. Give students a few minutes to individually consider the following question: What new ideas about language teaching have I gained as a result of being in this course? Note that new ideas need not necessarily be based on teaching methods you have used.
3. In groups have students discuss and list. Wander, comment, and help with language.
4. Have groups share some ideas. Discuss.

Pair/Small Group Task: "What makes a good language teacher?"

Goal: Practice talking about language teaching. For you to learn more about Chinese beliefs about language teaching.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students individually write a list of characteristics of a good language teacher. This could be done as a sentence completion: "A good teacher _____."
2. Have students share their lists with each other in pairs or small groups. Then have each group generate a composite list of the five characteristics they think are most important. They should be prepared to share this list with the class, and explain why they feel these characteristics are the most important.

3. Have groups share their ideas with the class. Discuss.
4. Closure suggestion: From your (Western) perspective, present your own list.

Pair/Small Group Task: “Principles of good language teaching.”

Goals: Practice talking about language teaching. For you to learn more about what Chinese believe about good language teaching.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Have students imagine they are giving advice to a young (inexperienced) English teacher. Ask each student to list advice, perhaps as sentence completions: “To be a good English teacher, you should (or should not) _____.”
2. As above, have students share their lists in small groups and then make a consensus list of the five most important pieces of advice. They should be ready to explain why each is important.
3. Closure suggestion: Present your own (Western) list.

Classroom Chat: “The headaches we face.”

Goal: Practice talking about classroom management problems. For you to learn more about classroom management problems in China.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Medium/Easy-Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Ask students to tell you about some of the problems they face in managing their English classrooms.
2. Closure suggestion: Share about some of the classroom management problems often experienced in your country.

Other Activity Ideas:

Talk: How foreign languages are taught in your country (focus on your own experience?).

Survey/Debate: Should only English be used in class?

Classroom Chat: How are language teachers trained in China?

Survey: How do you go about preparing lesson plans?

Other Topic Ideas:

- Assuming that it is best for an English program to have both native and non-native teachers, what are the special advantages of each?
- What are the strong points and weak points of language teaching approaches in China?
- What should be done to improve English teaching in China (especially in middle schools)? -- What is best about language teaching in China?.
- How should language teachers be trained?
- How should teaching practice for future language teachers be conducted?
- How should discipline problems in class be handled?
- What can teachers do to continually improve their teaching?
- What do you think of the new JEC/SEC English teaching materials?
- What is the best way to motivate students?
- Should songs be used in English teaching? If so, how?
- Should games be used in English teaching? If so, how?
- In English teaching, which is more important - good English or teaching experience?

English

Pair/Small Group Task: “Advantages of having a world language”

Goals: Practice talking about the social role of languages.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Short/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. In pairs or groups, list the advantages of having a world language, a language that everybody in the world could speak and understand.
2. Closure suggestion: Use this as a lead-in to the next activity.

Debate: “A world language?”

Goals: Practice talking about the social role of languages.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Medium-Challenging.

Activity Notes:

1. Issue: Should the UN promote a world language? If so, what language should it be?
2. In groups, first decide on your position (answers to the questions above). Then prepare to explain and defend your position.
3. Start the debate by giving Group 1 three minutes to present its opinion. Then other groups are allowed to challenge Group 1's position by asking questions (but not by making statements).
4. After the question-challenges to Group 1 are finished, move on to Group 2, and so forth.
5. Closure suggestion: Have students vote as to which group did the best job of answering the question-challenges.

Debate: “What kind of English should we learn?”

Goals: To practice talking about different types of English.

Estimated Time/Difficulty: Long/Medium.

Activity Notes:

1. Issue: Should students in China learn British English or American English?
2. In groups, students should prepare to argue for one of the two positions above.
3. Follow “Debate” procedure.

Other Topic Ideas:

- What is the proper role of slang in English teaching? How important is it to teach it?
- Is Indian English really English?.
- Should English become the world language?

The Dialogue Course: 20 Lessons for Basic Oral Skills

Don Snow and Kim Strong

Introduction

General notes:

1) The focus of this course is on being accurate in practice; i.e. learning to apply knowledge in actual communication situations so as to be accurate. The course is based on short dialogues which present models of correct language use, and your goal is to teach students to "milk" each dialogue for all it can teach them about grammar, pronunciation, usage, culture, vocabulary. While you will no doubt point out things in each dialogue that students should pay attention to, it is equally important that they learn to pay attention on their own to what they can learn from dialogues, especially little things like preposition use that are easily overlooked.

2) This course is based in part on the assumption that while students may have studied much of the material in the lessons before, they don't necessarily get it right when they actually speak English. In other words, when they speak they often make mistakes in verb tenses, preposition use, pronunciation, and so forth. So the early lessons give students a chance to practice some basic grammar points. Later lessons shift more to an emphasis on how to do things with language ("functions"), and may have somewhat more material that is new to students. However, even here, the goal is less on introducing new material than on giving students a chance to practice accuracy in using what they have studied.

3) Because English lessons in Chinese textbooks are often based on dialogues, the methods you use in teaching this course may be especially relevant to the kinds of English teaching your students will engage in, so this course presents a good opportunity for you to model teaching methods that may be of use to your students as future teachers.

4) In each of these lessons there is probably too much material for a 50 minute lesson. This is by intent -- we would rather give you too much material to choose from than not enough. However, as soon as possible you will need to get a sense of how much material you can cover in a period, and also of what kinds of practice are most valuable to your students. You will then need to choose which aspects of each lesson to invest most time in, and which can be covered quickly or omitted entirely.

5) In these materials, each lesson is set up according to a standard and rather unremitting formula. You will probably want to vary the routine from time to time, altering the sequence of steps, adding another activity for fun, or whatever. There are distinct virtues in repetition, but you don't want to drive your students mad with monotony.

The steps of a typical lesson

Review: It is often a good idea to warm-up by quickly reviewing elements of the previous lesson. This can generally be handled quickly through question and answer, or by briefly re-running a practice activity from the previous lesson. (Some of the lessons include a suggested review activity in the "Other Ideas" section.)

Presenting the dialogue: Because your students will presumably not have a written copy of the dialogues, you will need to first read it aloud to them and have them copy it. (You could also write it on the board, but this deprives students of useful listening practice.) Normally we recommend that you present the dialogues to students as a "dictogloss" exercise. It can also be done as a simple dictation, but this is only appropriate for lower level students who couldn't cope with dictogloss. Dictogloss is not only more challenging and interesting than dictation, but is also a much better form of language practice. (See "Glossary of Activities and Methods for Teaching Oral Skills" for instructions on how to do dictogloss and dictation.)

Teaching material from the dialogue: You will generally want to teach some of the grammar or vocabulary points contained in the dialogue, but you should also try to avoid long lectures. Remember that students may well have studied this material before -- their problem is that they may not have had adequate practice applying what they know to actual communication. Some suggestions:

- 1) Look over lesson plans beforehand and try to predict and be prepared for what you will need to explain. Improvised grammar explanations can easily get muddled.
- 2) Start by asking students what things they think they should pay attention to in the dialogue, and list a few of these on the board as students volunteer them. If there are points students miss, you can add them.
- 3) Check to see if students understand these points, and explain only as necessary. If they understand, move on quickly. Caution: Students are often reluctant to say that they don't understand, and even when they say "We understand" this really means that they know what a word or structure means, not that they can necessarily use it properly. Both as a means of checking and of practice, when students seem unsure have them try things out by using a word or structure in a sentence.
- 4) Keep explanations brief, and use lots of examples. Also write new material on the board -- participants often read better than they comprehend aurally.
- 5) Give special attention to the "Focus Point" in each lesson. For this point, you might have students practice a little in pairs, or in conversation with you. (Often the first "Practice Activity" in each lesson is appropriate for this.)

Pronunciation practice: For most students, at least some work on pronunciation and intonation will be of value. How much time you invest in pronunciation and how you approach it needs to be decided on the basis of what problems you students have, but a general approach is suggested below:

1. Start by reading over the dialogue sentence by sentence and having students repeat after you. Encourage them to listen to you, mimic and repeat, rather than ignoring you and reading the dialogue from their notes.
2. If the sentence is long, have students build it up from the end (to preserve normal intonation). Ex:

had ever eaten?
the best she had ever eaten?
my cooking is the best she had ever eaten?
Did she really say my cooking is the best she had ever eaten?

3. As students repeat, listen for problems. If there are words or sounds that many students mispronounce, practice these in isolation by having students repeat after you. If you can tell what the problem is, explain to students what is wrong, but in general keep explanation to a minimum. Teach students to listen and trust their ears.
4. In each lesson we have suggested some points that may be worthy of special attention, and sometimes also activities for working on these points. Use these as appropriate to the needs of your class.
5. If time permits, have students practice by saying the dialogue aloud to themselves while you walk around, listening to individuals and helping. To close you might have the whole class say the dialogue aloud one more time. Alternatively, have two volunteers read the dialogue aloud.
6. For further suggestions on teaching pronunciation, see "On English Pronunciation and Amity Teachers."

Practice activities:

1. Each lesson generally has two suggested Practice Activities, a relatively constrained one directed toward practice of the Focus Point, and a freer one that involves more communication.
2. A danger in the structure of each lesson is that practice activities are placed at the end of the lesson, and you may often have little time left by the time you get to them, so try to ensure that you cover the earlier material quickly enough that enough time remains for whatever practice students need.
3. Suggestions on how to conduct various kinds of small group and pair activities can be found in "Glossary of Activities and Methods for Teaching Oral Skills."

Lesson 1

Focus Point: Yes/no questions

Introduction: The main purpose of the Dialogue course is to help students improve the accuracy of their English through study of dialogues which serve as models of proper English usage. Students' goal is not so much to learn new grammar and vocabulary as to learn how to correctly use grammar knowledge and vocabulary. There will also be attention to pronunciation and intonation.

Dialogue. Two foreigners, mother and young child, are walking past a Chinese department store. (Listen carefully to the form of the child's questions.)

Kid: Mom, is this a department store?

Mom: Yes, it looks like one.

Kid: Do you think they have cookies here?

Mom: Yes, they probably do, but you can't have any.

Kid: Why not?

Mom: It will ruin your teeth and spoil your dinner.

Kid: Can I have some ice cream instead?

Focus point: Yes/no questions ("to be" + subject; auxiliary + subject).

-- "Is this ____?"

-- "Do you think that ____?"

-- "Can I ____?" (Have students generate more.)

Other points to note:

-- "looks like (something)"

-- "you can't have any"

-- "Can I have _____ instead"

Pronunciation practice. Special points:

-- Number of syllables: Have students repeat the following words and tell how many syllables are in each: *department, cookies, probably, ruin, diner, instead.*

-- Stressed syllables: Where does the accent fall in each of the words above?

-- Intonation: Practice rising intonation at the end of yes/no questions.

Practice activity: "Twenty questions"

1. Bring a bag into class containing one or more "mystery objects."

2. Tell students you want them to guess what is in the bag, and that they can ask questions to help them guess. However... Rule #1: You will only answer yes/no questions. Rule #2: You will only answer a question if it is grammatically correct. (If a question is incorrect, give the student a chance to correct it before coming in with hints.)

3. Once somebody guesses correctly, reward them with applause or some kind of prize.

Other ideas:

Pair Practice: Have students interview someone else in class they don't know well using only yes/no questions. (As with 20 Questions, the partner only needs to answer if the question is correct.)

Lesson 2

Focus Point: Useful "question tools" for learning English

Dialogue. Bob is an impatient foreign tourist, and Lee is a Chinese student who is very interested in learning new English words. (Listen especially for Lee's clarification questions.)

Bob: Excuse me, can you tell me where I could get some dental floss?

Lee: Pardon, would you say that again?

Bob: Where could I buy some dental floss?

Lee: What is "dental floss"?

Bob: It's a kind of string you use for cleaning your teeth.

Lee: How do you spell it?

Bob: D-E-N-T-A-L F-L-O-S-S.

Lee: Would you please write it down for me?

Bob: Forget it. I'll ask someone else.

Focus point: "Question tools" that are useful in English class:

- "Pardon" Also "Excuse me" or "Sorry".
- "Would you say that again?" Also "Could you repeat that?"
- "How do you spell _____?"
- "Would you please write it down for me?"
- "What does _____ mean?"

Other points to note:

- Notice use of past tense ("where could I buy") to make questions more polite.
- Verb + preposition combination: "to use for"

Pronunciation practice. Special points:

- Consonant clusters: /fl/ in *floss*; /ksk/ in *excuse*. (Chinese doesn't have consonant clusters.)
- Final /l/: In *dental*, *spell*, *I'll*. Also /ls/ in *else*. (While native speakers don't not always make this by raising the tongue to the roof of the mouth, this may be the easiest thing to have learners do.)
- Hard sound: Different forms of /th/ in *that* and *teeth*. (/th/ is very difficult for most learners of English, and many will never get it exactly right, so don't waste excessive energy on this problem.)
- Review pronunciation of the names of the letters of the English alphabet.

Practice activity: "A beastly dictation"

1. Dictate the following passage sentence by sentence for students to copy. Tell them to stop you for questions as necessary. A difficult passage has been chosen so that students will be forced to frequently stop you and ask lots of questions -- and become more comfortable asking clarification questions in class. (If the first sentence shocks them into silence, stop and gently prod until they ask questions.) Don't complete the whole passage -- just do as much as is productive. Try to have fun with this.

"Traditionally, schools and universities in many other parts of the world have taught what is often referred to as 'British English'. As far as grammar and vocabulary are concerned, this generally means Standard English as it is normally written and spoken by educated speakers in England and, with minor differences, in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. As far as pronunciation is concerned, it means something much more restrictive, for the RP ('Received Pronunciation') accent which is taught to foreigners is actually used by perhaps only 3% to 5% of the population of England. The RP accent has its origins in the south-east of England but is currently a social accent associated with the BBC, the Public Schools in England, and with members of the upper-middle and upper classes. It is considered a prestigious accent in the whole of the British Isles and British Commonwealth, but it is for the most part an accent associated only with England." (Adapted from "International English" by Peter Trudgill & Jean Hannah)

Lesson 3

Focus Point: Past verb tense practice

Dialogue. Han is a teacher who is applying for a new job as a translator and is being interviewed by Bob. (Listen especially for verb tenses.)

Bob: Please tell me about your education, Mr. Han.

Han: I graduated from Zhongsan Teachers College in 1965. I was an English major.

Bob: How about your work experience?

Han: I have been teaching in Hua Dong middle school for the past 30 years.

Bob: Have you ever been a translator?

Han: No. I have always been a teacher.

Bob: Why are you applying for this job?

Han: Because I don't like children very much.

Focus point: Verb tenses:

-- Simple past tense. "graduated" "was". Used for *a completed action or condition*.

-- Present perfect tense. "have been". Action that *started in past, still continues*.

-- Present perfect progressive tense. "have been teaching" Action that *started in past, still continues*. Often interchangeable with present perfect, but *emphasizes continuous nature of action* a bit more.

Other points to note:

-- Personal information questions for interviews. "Tell me about...." "How about...." "Have you ever...."

-- Verb + preposition: "graduate from (school)" and "graduated in (year)".

-- "How about...." Used after a previous question has made context clear.

-- "don't like ___ very much" (In Chinese the word order is different.)

Pronunciation practice. Special points:

-- Syllable stress: *education, graduated, English major, experience, translator*.

-- Practice syllable stress for numbers, example: difference between "14" and "40". Stress on second syllable for "teen" numbers (thirteen, fifteen, etc.), on first syllable of multiples of ten (twenty, sixty, etc.). First, you say numbers while students listen and try to tell the difference. Then, have students practice saying numbers.

-- Sentence stress. In English, some words are stressed more in a sentence than others. Read the dialogue again and have students listen to see which words are stressed most in each sentence. (Underlined above.)

-- Hard sounds: /th/ in *thirty*; final /l/ in *tell*.

-- Final stop: Final /b/ in *job*. Final /b/, /d/, and /g/ sounds in words like *job, had, bag* are often not voiced by students, so sound like **jop, *hat, and *bak*. Make sure the final consonant is voiced, and also make sure the vowel is somewhat longer. (Ex: The main difference between *had* and *hat* is that the vowel sound in *had* is longer.)

Practice activity: Ask students to tell you about what they did yesterday (over the weekend, etc.), or about their previous study or work experience. As they answer, have them pay special attention to verb tenses.

Practice activity: Job interview

1. Assign half the class to be employers, half to be job applicants. Ask employers to 1) write the name of their company on a sign and place it on their desks; 2) decide what job they are interviewing for; and 3) prepare a list of questions. Ask applicants to 1) make up a (fake) resume including their education, previous work experience, and other information about themselves.

2. When ready, have applicants interview at several different companies. After one interview, they should move to another. During interviews, everyone should pay special attention to verb tenses.

3. Close by asking a few employers who they want to hire and why.

Lesson 4

Focus Point: Talking about future plans

Dialogue: Xiao Lin and Xiao Ling are about to finish an English course and they are talking about their future English study plans. (Listen especially to expressions of future tense.)

Lin: Are you going to keep studying English?

Ling: I hope so. / I plan to listen to the radio every night.
What about you?

Lin: I hope to read for an hour every night,
but I suppose it will be hard to find enough time.
Anyway, at least I'll try to read *21st Century* each week.

Focus point: Talking about future plans:

-- "Are you going to _____". Also "Will you _____?"

-- "I plan to (+ verb)..."

-- "I hope to (+ verb)..." Note differences between "hope" and "wish". Ex: "I hope that it rains." (Seems like a real possibility.) "I wish it would rain." (Seems less like a real possibility.)

Other points to note:

-- "What about you?"

-- "I suppose _____" Admitting a difficult reality.

-- "it will be hard to"

-- "Anyway"

Pronunciation practice. Suggested points:

-- Blending: Elision of "Are you going to..." to [Are ya gonna...].

-- Unvoiced final stops: /p/ in *hope, keep*; /t/ in *night, what*. (In normal speech, a final /p/, /t/, or /k/ is not aspirated; i.e. you don't actually "explode" the air out at the end of the sound. Usually, the airway is just closed by the lips, tongue, or throat, respectively.)

-- Voiced final stops: /d/ in *read, hard*.

Practice activity. Have participants survey each other about what they plan to do this coming week, practicing the material above. Close by asking a few volunteers what others told them.

Practice activity.

1. Ask students to spend a few minutes thinking about how they plan to continue studying English after your course ends, and jot down a few notes.
2. In groups, have students share ideas -- paying special attention to their use of expressions of future tense. Each student should choose at least one good idea another student suggests.
3. Close by asking volunteers to share a little about their long-range English study plans.

Other ideas:

Vocabulary practice: Have students practice making sentences with "hope" and "wish" (if this seems to be a trouble point for them.)

Lesson 5

Focus Point: Giving directions; prepositions of location

Present Dialogue. Foreign tourist Sue is lost and asks Chinese student Min for directions. (Listen especially for how location words like "next to" are used.)

Sue: Excuse me, could you tell me where the post office is?

Min: It's next to the bank on Main Street.

Sue: How do I get there?

Min: Walk two blocks down this street, then turn left. / Across from the post office there is a bookstore / and in front of the post office there is a big sign. / So it's easy to find.

Focus point: Prepositions of location: (You may want to add others.)

-- "next to"

-- "on _____ street"

-- "across from"

-- "in front of"

Focus point: Giving directions:

-- Note that the imperative form of verbs is used. "Walk _____." "Turn _____."

Other points to note:

-- "Could you tell me where _____ is?" Note that for "Could you tell me ____" questions, the verb moves to the end of the sentence, unlike other yes/no questions.

-- "How do I get there?"

Pronunciation practice. Special points:

-- Consonant clusters: /ksk/ in *excuse*; /st/ in *post*; /nt/ in *front*; /kst/ in *next*.

-- Final voiced stop: /g/ in *big*.

-- Vowel sound: /ay/ in *main*. (Some Chinese learners have difficulty with this.)

-- Short vowel: /i/ in *it*, *big*.

-- Blending: the /d/ and /y/ in "Could you" elides into a "j" sound -- "coujoo"

Practice activity: "Giving directions"

1. Draw an outline map of a town on the board, including streets and some major buildings. Also list several "routes". Ex: "From bank to corner of Main and Pine."

2. In pairs, have A and B take turns asking where given buildings are, using the pattern "Can you tell me where ____ is?" When answering, students should pay special attention to correct usage of prepositions. To close, ask the class to tell you where some buildings are.

3. In pairs, have A ask B for directions, using "routes" on board. B then gives directions. Close by asking the class as a whole to give you directions from and to a few points you specify.

Other Ideas:

Pair Practice: Student A has to draw a map of a town / country according to instructions given by B.

Small Group Task: Each group sets up a walking tour of the town for you, complete with directions. Close by deciding which group designed the best tour. (And maybe go on the tour with the class one afternoon!)

Lesson 6

Focus Point: Geographic location

Dialogue: Xiao Wang can't find Vancouver on a map, and asks Gary for help. (Listen especially for phrases that indicate location.)

Wang: Where on earth is Vancouver?

Gary: In western Canada, in British Columbia.

Wang: Where in British Columbia?

Gary: In the west, on the coast.

Wang: Is Vancouver north, east, or west of Seattle?

Gary: It's a few hours north of Seattle by car.

Focus point: Prepositional phrases for geographic location:

- "in + (province, state, country, region)"
- "in western _____" Also "in the western part of _____"
- "on + (coast, river, lake)"
- "north of"

Other points to note:

- "Where on earth..." "on earth" just adds emphasis. Also "How on earth...."
- "Where in _____?" Follow-up location question.
- "A few hours by car." Culture note: Distance is often measured in travel time.

Pronunciation practice. Special points:

- Sentence stress on *Where* in A *Where in British Columbia?*@
- Presenting choices: rising tones on stressed syllable of all choices preceding the final choice; falling tone on the final choice. "Is it north (rising), east (rising) or west (falling) of _____?"
- Sentence focus: If the answer is A north@, then that word will receive full sentence stress in the reply. AA few hours north (falling) of Seattle.@
- Short vowel /i/ in *in, is, it's*.
- Consonant clusters: /st/ in *coast, east, west*; /rth/ in *earth, north*. Note: In standard British English, the standard used in China, the /r/ is dropped.

Practice activity: Game: "I'm thinking of..." (a version of "20 Questions")

1. Purpose: Practice prepositions of location.
2. Look at a map of China and choose a few locations to have participants guess.
3. Tell participants: "I'm thinking of a place in China, and I want you to figure out what it is by asking me questions. I will only answer yes or no, and won't answer a question until it is correct." Then have them ask you short yes/no questions like: Is it in north China? Is it west of Beijing? Is it in Shandong? (You may want to have a map for reference.)
4. Once everyone gets the hang of this, have participants play the game themselves in pairs, A choosing a location and B using questions to figure it out. Wander and listen in, and encourage participants to check with you if they aren't sure whether a question is correct or not.

Other ideas:

Pronunciation practice: Practice intonation patterns for presenting choices: Ask students to think of several places their partner might like to go, then ask "Would you rather go to A, B, or C? Variation for fun: Ask students to think of places their partners probably would NOT like to visit.

Lesson 7

Focus Point: Prepositions and time

Dialogue: Lee is complaining to Hal about how busy her intensive English course is. (Listen especially for the prepositions Lee uses with time words.)

Lee: Every day we have to get up at 6:00 for breakfast.

Then we have classes from 8:00 to 12:00.

At 12:00 we have lunch, and then a break.

In the afternoon, class starts at 2:30 and goes until 4:00.

At 4:00 on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday there is English Corner, and on Tuesday and Thursday we have talks.

In the evening we need to study / so we only have free time on weekends.

Focus point: Prepositions and time:

-- at + (time) "at 6:00".

-- from (time) to (time) "from 8:00 to 12:00"

-- starts at (time) and goes until/to (time)

-- on (day of week) "on Monday(s)" Note: "on Monday" can either mean "this Monday" or "Mondays (in general)"

-- in the morning, afternoon, evening

Other points to note:

-- to have lunch = to eat lunch

Pronunciation practice. Special points:

-- Sentence intonation. Re-read dialogue and have students note where your intonation rises in each sentence and where it falls. (Be sure to practice this first so that you are aware of your intonation.)

-- Intonation pattern Afrom 8:00 (rising) to 12:00 (falling)@

-- Patterns for presenting choices or listing. Ex: "...Monday (rising), Wednesday (rising) and Friday (falling)..." "...on Tuesday (rising) and Thursday (falling)..." Note: The tone rises or falls on the *stressed syllable* of whichever word is being emphasized.

-- Vowel: /ay/ in *Monday, Tuesday*, etc.

-- Consonant clusters: /ndz/ in *weekends*; /lks/ in *talks*; /rts/ in *starts* (no /r/ in British Standard).

-- Final unvoiced stops: /t/ in *get*; /p/ in *up*.

-- Final /l/ in *until*.

Practice activity: Ask several students to tell you about their weekly schedules, paying special attention to prepositions and time. (You might give them a few minutes to make notes first.)

Practice activity: "The week before the college entrance exam"

1. In small groups or pairs, have students prepare to tell you about the weekly schedule of a typical graduating senior middle school student who is about to take the college entrance examination. As they prepare, have them pay attention to prepositions and time expressions.

2. Ask each group to report. (Have each group report just a bit before moving on to the next -- don't let one group go on too long. Guide with questions if necessary.)

3. Alternative: Ask what the schedule of a student preparing for the examination should be like.

Other ideas:

Review: Name a few locations in China (or your country) and have volunteers call out where it is. (Ex: Q: Where is Nanjing? A: Nanjing is in Jiangsu province. Q: Where in Jiangsu? A: In western Jiangsu.)

Activity: Have students make a 2-3 day schedule, leaving only 3 hours free. Students then try to make appointments with each other, discussing schedules until they find a time that is suitable for both.

Lesson 8

Focus Point: Politely expressing disagreement

Dialogue: Anne and Mick are arguing -- politely -- over whether cats or dogs make better pets. (Listen especially for how they indicate disagreement.)

Anne: I think that cats usually make better pets than dogs. / For one thing, they are quieter.

Mick: That may be true, but sometimes they make a lot of noise crying at night.

Anne: For another, cats are more affectionate.

Mick: Really? I don't think so.

Anne: Of course they are. They always love to sit on your lap.

Mick: That's just because they want something from you.

Anne: Yes, but they are so sweet about it.

Focus point: Step #3: Disagreeing: (When disagreeing politely, Westerners will often first agree with part of someone else's opinion before disagreeing. "Yes, but...." patterns are very common.)

-- For introducing counter-arguments "Yes, but" "That's true, but...." "I agree, but...."

-- For expressing reservation "That may be true, but...." Also "I suppose that's true, but ..."

-- For complete disagreement: "I don't think so." "I disagree." "I'm not sure I agree." Often prefaced by "Really?"

Other points to note:

-- "I think that...." For expressing opinions.

-- "For one thing...." "For another...." Common expressions for introducing a reason.

-- Note that the plural form is used when speaking about nouns in general. Ex: "Cats usually make better pets than dogs do."

-- "That's just because..." Just = only. Often used to minimize something.

-- Verb + preposition: "to want something from somebody"

-- Adjective + preposition: "sweet about (something)"

Pronunciation practice. Special points:

-- Stressing key words. Read the dialogue again to students and have them listen to see which words are stressed most in each sentence. Have them repeat it back, sentence by sentence, stressing key words.

-- Final /r/ in *quieter* and *are*. This is silent in standard British English, but is pronounced in most North American accents as well as in many other English accents (such as Scotland, Australia, etc.)

-- Consonant cluster: /ts/ in *cats*, *pets*; /gz/ in *dogs*.

-- Final stops: /p/ in *lap*; /t/ in *sweet*.

-- Short vowel: /e/ in *pets*; /i/ in *think*, *thing*, *it*.

-- Final /ing/ in *crying*, *something*. (Some areas of China make no distinction between /ing/ and /in/.)

Practice activity: Ask one student whether he/she thinks cats or dogs would make better pets and why. The next student then responds to the first before stating his/her own opinion, and so on. Ex: A: "I think dogs would make better pets because they are useful." B: "Yes, but they also eat too much."

Practice activity:

1. In groups have students decide what kind of animal would make the best pet. As they discuss, they must pay attention to agreeing or disagreeing with what others say before expressing their own opinions. (They should also pay attention to using the plural forms of countable nouns: "cats, etc.)

2. Have each group report, giving their decision and one reason.

3. Alternative: Ask what makes the best souvenir or the best gift.

Other ideas:

Review: Ask students to describe the worst possible weekly class schedule they can imagine.

Lesson 9

Focus Point: Mass nouns and countable nouns

Dialogue: Lee is in a Western-style fast-food restaurant ordering her meal. Tom is the server. (Listen especially to how the count and non-count nouns are used.)

Tom: What would you like to have?

Lee: How about a salad and some soup./ I also want a hamburger and an order of French fries.

Tom: Small, large, or medium?

Lee: Large. I would also like apple pie.

Tom: Anything to drink?

Lee: A large Coke.

Tom: Wow, you must be hungry.

Lee: Not very, but I want to try everything.

Focus point: Mass nouns and count nouns. (Some nouns like "sandwich" are always countable, hence need either an article or a plural ending. Other nouns like "water" "rice" "bread" are virtually always mass nouns. Yet other nouns can be either, depending on how they are used. Ex: "a salad" or just "salad". Students need to memorize which is which.)

-- Count nouns: "a hamburger" "French fries"

-- Mass nouns: "soup"

-- Nouns that can be both: "salad" "pie" "Coke" ("a Coke" is really short for "a cup of Coke")

Other points to note:

-- "an order of (something)"

Pronunciation practice. Suggested points:

-- Eliding AWould you@ d + y = j.

-- Point out how English speakers reduce the vowels in certain words to achieve the rhythms of rapid speech. Longer, clearer vowels are reduced to schwa ("uh") in words like "you", "to", "the", "and", "for" when these words are not stressed. Ex: "What would you like to have?" [What wud ja like ta have?] Note that in "You must be hungry" "you" is stressed, so not reduced to "ya". You might have students try practicing the dialogue using these reduced vowels to increase their speed. Note that these reductions are NOT sloppy or lazy English, but simply a way to speak more quickly, especially in casual conversation.

-- Jazz chant: What would you like?

I'd like salad and soup / salad and soup

What about bread with your salad and soup?

I'd like garlic bread, garlic bread.

Something to drink? Any dessert?

Coffee and pie -- That sounds good! / Mm -- mm -- That sounds good!

Practice activity: In pairs or groups have students list different kinds of foods according to whether they are count, non-count, or both. For count words, they should use plural form; for words that can be both, they should give examples of each. Then have each group report one item at a time as the teacher writes the word in the appropriate column on the board. Note: As students report, they should also be practicing proper form. In other words, for a count noun like "potato", insist that they say "potatoes".

Practice activity: Eating out

1. If possible, get Western menus for participants. Otherwise, write one on the board.

2. Participants in two groups, customers and proprietors. Proprietors set up restaurants (complete with sign), then customers choose a restaurant and place order. If time permits, switch roles. Everyone should pay attention to count and non-count nouns.

3. To close, ask customers to comment on the quality of service in the restaurant they visited.

Lesson 10

Focus Point: Clarifying

Dialogue: The phone rang and Phil has picked it up, but the connection is very bad and he can't hear what the caller is saying. Sorry, but we can only hear one side of this conversation. (Listen especially for how Phil tries to clarify what the caller is saying.)

Phil: Hello, Phil Collins speaking.
Sorry, what did you say? / This connection isn't very good.
Would you mind repeating that?
I didn't catch what you just said.
Could you say the last part again?
Did you say something about a fish? / .Sorry, I didn't catch the last word.
Did you say you want to marry a fish?
Oh, you want Mary Fisher! Sorry, but she's not here.

Focus point: Clarifying:

- "What did you say?"
- "Would you mind repeating that?" Or "Would you repeat that?" To ask for repetition.
- "I didn't catch what you said." = "I didn't hear what you said." To indicate you didn't hear something.
- "Could you say the last part again?" "I didn't catch the last word." For indicating what you didn't hear.
- "Did you say something about....?" "Did you say that...?" For checking whether you understood.

Other points to note:

- "Phil Collins speaking." A common way to answer the phone.

Pronunciation practice. Suggested points:

- Show students how stress and intonation can change the meaning of a sentence by saying the following sentence three different ways -- ask them to tell you the difference in meaning. (Add other examples.) Ex: "Could you say the last part again?"
"Could you say the last part again?"
"Could you say the last part again?"
- Consonant clusters: /ksh/ in *connection*; /tsh/ in *catch*.
- Final stop: /d/ in *word*, *said*, *good*.
- Short vowel /i/ + final /l/ in *Phil*.

Practice activity: Dictate a few fairly difficult sentences to students (as in the exercise in Lesson Two), intentionally making it harder by going fast and mumbling a bit. Have them use the clarification questions in this lesson (as well as from Lesson Two) to get you to repeat as necessary.

Practice activity: "The lousy connection"

1. Have each student write a short message (several sentences) to a friend (C).
2. Seat students in pairs, but far enough from each other that they can't see each other's written messages (and may even have a little trouble hearing each other).
3. A calls B to see if friend C is there, B says C isn't there, so A asks B to take a message and then dictates the message. B uses the clarification questions as necessary as he/she takes down the message. (Switch if times permits.)
4. To close, ask a few students to read the message dictated by their partner, and then ask the partner if they got the message right. Reward with praise as appropriate.

Other ideas:

Review: Ask participants: "If you could order anything in a Western restaurant, what would you want?" Then have them give you their dream order.

Lesson 11

Focus Point: Making suggestions

Dialogue: It is a holiday. Fred and Lynn are trying to decide what to do with their day. (Listen especially to how they make suggestions.)

Fred: What do you want to do today?

Lynn: I don't know. What would you like to do?

Fred: Why don't we go to a movie?

Lynn: We could, but there will be lots of people there today.

Fred: Then how about going to a park?

Lynn: There will be lots of people there too.

Fred: Well then, what do you think we should do?

Lynn: I guess I'd like to stay home.

Focus point: Making suggestions:

-- "Why don't we (+ verb)..." Also "Lets (+ verb)

-- "How about (verb + ing)..." Also "What about (verb + ing)..."

Other points to note:

-- "Well then..." = "In that case..."

-- "I guess" for hesitant opinion.

Pronunciation practice. Suggested points:

-- Blending and reduction of syllables - AWhat do you@ to [Whadaya]. "Would you" to [Wouja].

-- Read dialog again and have participants listen to see which word carries the sentence focus (stress). (See underlined words above.)

-- Note how English speakers use stress to show contrast. Ex: "What do you think we should do?"

-- Hard sound: /v/ in *movie*. (A few students may have problems with this).

-- Consonant cluster: /pl/ in *people*.

-- Short vowel /i/ + final /l/ in *will*.

Practice activity: Ask students to make suggestions for an English corner activity (class party, etc.), using the phrases above for making suggestions. After one student makes a suggestion, the next student should agree or disagree with the previous speaker before making his/her own suggestion.

Practice activity: Planning holiday schedule.

1. In small groups, ask students to plan a schedule of activities an ideal day-long class outing. They should try to reach consensus, i.e. arrive at a plan everyone likes. The schedule should be fairly detailed, including times. As they discuss, they should practice the phrases for making suggestions.

2. Close by having each group report their plan. (Good review of schedule words.)

Lesson 12

Focus Point: Giving advice

Dialogue: Ann is a parent having trouble with her children; Sara is a friend gently offering advice. (Listen especially for the phrases Sara uses to offer advice.)

Ann: My children never want to do their homework! / I just don't know what to do with them.

Sara: Why not try punishing them?

Ann: I have, but they still don't listen to me.

Sara: You could always reason with them.

Ann: I've done that, but they just ignore me and watch TV.

Sara: If I were you, I would get rid of the TV set.

Focus point: Giving advice:

-- "Why not try + (gerund)"

-- "You could always + (verb)"

-- "If I were you, I would + (verb)"

Other points to note:

-- Verb + preposition: "to listen to"

-- Verb + preposition: "to reason with"

-- Adjective + preposition: "to get rid of"

Pronunciation practice. Special points:

-- Ask participants to look at the dialogue and decide which words they think should be stressed in each sentence. Then have volunteers say a sentence as they think it should be stressed. (Note: There may be more than one possibility.) Close by saying the dialogue as a group, stressing the appropriate words.

-- Final stop: /d/ in *rid*.

-- Short vowel /i/ + final /l/ in *still*.

-- Stop /g/ in *ignore*.

Pair practice: Tell students you feel like you have a cold coming on and then ask for advice from volunteers (using correct form, of course).

Practice activity: The teacher's problem child

1. Tell participants that you have a 12-year old son, a stubborn wretch who absolutely and totally refuses to do any kind of homework. You are at your wits end and need help.

2. In small groups, have participants make a list of suggestions you could try. (They should practice making suggestions in the group.)

3. Have groups present their suggestions to you, one suggestion per group at a time. (To make this more fun, express thanks for each suggestion but sadly explain why you don't think it will work, hence necessitating further suggestions.) Close by having everyone vote on the best suggestion, and perhaps the worst.

Other ideas:

Topic: Advice for a friend who snores, has the hiccups, has bad breath, can't find a girlfriend/boyfriend, has a test tomorrow and hasn't studied yet, etc.

Lesson 13

Focus Point: Refusing politely

Dialogue: Bob likes Ann and wants to invite her out on a date. Ann doesn't like Bob very much, but doesn't want to be rude. (Listen especially to how Ann puts Bob off.)

Bob: Are you busy this Friday night?

Ann: Why do you ask?

Bob: Are you interested in going to see a movie?

Ann: That would be nice, but I should really stay home and work.

Bob: How about next weekend?

Ann: I'm not sure right now. / Let's wait and see.

Focus point: Polite refusals:

-- Strategy: "Why do you ask?" Instead of answering Bob's first question directly, Ann asks more about his intentions.

-- "That would be nice, but (+ reason)." Polite refusals usually follow the pattern "I would like to, but..." followed by a reason. The more vague the reason is, the more it seems like an excuse. Also "I wish I could, but (excuse)." "I would love to but (excuse)."

-- Strategy: Sometimes instead of directly refusing a request, people will give a "maybe" answer such as "I'm not sure right now" or "Let's see later." (Westerners are often more willing to give a direct "no" answer than Chinese are, but still sometimes try to avoid it, especially if a direct "no" would hurt someone's feelings.)

Other points to note:

-- "Are you busy?" This question frequently serves to introduce a request or invitation..

-- "Are you interested in + (gerund)" Invitation.

-- "How about + (gerund)" Invitation.

Pronunciation practice. Suggested points:

-- Intonation patterns for questions: final rising for Yes/No, final falling for WH-questions.

-- Pay attention to Would you / d+y = j.

-- That would be nice, but....@ Prior to a polite refusal, the intonation pattern falls slightly, but not completely, to show hesitation. If the intonation rises on "nice", the speaker conveys interest. If the intonation drops fully, it conveys agreement or acceptance. Demonstrate these differences for the class.

-- Consonant cluster: /nd/ in *weekend*.

Practice activity: Invite a few students over to your apartment to help you stuff envelopes (or do something else unappealing), and have them refuse you using some variation of the "I would love to, but (reason)" pattern. (They need to refuse you politely -- after all, you are the teacher.) For each reason given, ask other students whether it sounds like a real reason or a (made up) excuse.

Practice activity: Cocktail party "Would you do me a favor?"

1. Make sure everyone knows the expression "Would you do me a favor?"

2. Using this expression as an opening, have students go around and try to borrow money from each other (or make some other awkward request). The catch is that they must all refuse each other politely without saying "no" directly. Everyone should approach several other people.

3. Close by asking students to report on some of the excuses they were given. (Perhaps even have a contest for best excuse, most creative excuse, worst excuse, etc.)

Other ideas:

Review: Tell the class you couldn't get to sleep last night, and ask them to give you suggestions.

Lesson 14

Focus Point: Refusing more directly

Dialogue. Tom wants Ed to go with him to a movie, but Ed has no interest in going to the film. (Listen especially to how Ed refuses Tom.)

Tom: Ed, do you want to go to the James Bond movie tonight?

Ed: Not really. I don't really care for James Bond films.

Tom: Are you sure? I hear it's really good.

Ed: Thanks but no thanks. I'd rather study English.

Tom: Oh, come on. You need a break.

Ed: Tom, I don't want to go. Frankly, I can't stand James Bond.

Focus point: Direct refusals:

-- "Not really" Less blunt than "No!" The word "really" softens the refusal.

-- Saying you don't like something very much: "I don't care for" "I'm not very interested in...." "I'm not very keen on...." (British)

-- Thanks but no thanks." Cute direct refusal.

-- "Tom, I don't want to go." A clear direct refusal, indicated in part by use of Tom's name.

-- "I can't stand..." = "I hate"

Other points to note:

-- "the James Bond movie" Use of "the" here indicates that Ed already knows which specific film Tom is talking about.

-- "Oh come on." Used to urge someone to do something, or to indicate displeasure or disbelief.

-- "Frankly..." Indicates a blunt statement. Also, "Honestly,...." "To be honest,...." "To be frank,...."

Pronunciation practice. Suggested points:

-- "Do you want to" In casual speech, this might be reduced to [dya wanna] or to [ya wanna].

-- "Tom, I don't want to go." Ed could reduce this to [I don' wanna go], but if he is really trying to make a point he would pronounce each word clearly. Demonstrate.

-- Consonant cluster: /lmz/ in *films*; /nd/ in *Bond*.

-- Short /e/ + final stop in *Ed*.

Practice activity: Ask a few students if they would like to go see a (bad) movie with you, and have them turn you down, practicing the material above. After each student refuses, ask other students how direct and/or polite (or rude) their responses were.

Practice activity. Cocktail Party "Door to door salesman"

1. Ask students if they know what a door-to-door salesman is; if not, explain.

2. Divide the class into two groups, sales people and customers. Tell sales people that their goal is to sell as much as possible, and that they should never give up; then give them a few minutes to prepare a product and a "sales pitch." Meanwhile you explain to the customers that they should try to refuse to buy anything, starting with polite refusals but getting more direct if the sales people persist.

3. Turn the sales people loose. Have them approach at least two or three customers (depending on time).

4. Close by asking the customers which sales person was most persistent (effective, etc.).

Other ideas:

Review: Say you are curious about Chinese newspapers, and ask a few participants if they would kindly translate the whole of today's newspaper into English for you. (Encourage polite refusals + excuses like "I would love to, but")

Topic: In China, when is it appropriate to give a direct refusal, and when is it better to put someone off or give an indirect answer?

Lesson 16

Focus Point: Responding to compliments

Dialogue: Lucy is out walking and sees her old friend Lily, who is wearing nice new clothes. (Listen especially to how Lily and Lucy respond to each other's compliments.)

Lucy: Oh Lily, you look so nice today. / That's a very nice blouse you are wearing.

Lily: Thank you, Lucy. / It was a gift from one of my grandchildren.

Lucy: Your skirt is very attractive too.

Lily: I got this on sale downtown. / Your outfit is very nice, too.

Lucy: That's very kind of you. / This dress is nothing special, but it's comfortable.

Focus Point: Strategies for responding to a compliment: (Like Chinese, Westerners are often modest about accepting compliments, but unlike Chinese this is not usually expressed through direct rejection of the compliment. In fact, direct refusal may even seem rude.)

-- Accept it (when you feel really deserve it): "Thank you."

-- Accept it but pass the credit to someone else: "Thank you, it was a gift from my grandchild."

-- Moderate the compliment by turning into a conversation topic: "I got it on sale downtown."

-- Accept the good will, but not the compliment itself (when you feel you really don't deserve it). "That's very kind of you." Also "It's very nice of you to say so."

Other points to note:

-- "on sale"

-- "is nothing special"

Pronunciation practice. Suggested points:

-- Hard sounds: /th/ in *that's*.

-- Consonant clusters: /ldr/ in *children*; /bl/ in *comfortable*.

-- Syllable stress: *grandchildren*, *attractive*, *downtown*, *outfit*, *comfortable*.

-- Review intonation for direct address to get someone's attention (falling intonation on the stressed syllable of the name.)

-- Intonation for direct address at the end of a response is a rising tone on the stressed syllable of the name. Ex: Thank you, Lucy (rising).

-- Stress and intonation shift the focus from Lily's dress to Lucy's when Lily says "Your outfit is very nice, too." Make sure students give the word your the full weight of sentence focus. Practice shifting focus: Teacher: "I like your hair." Student: "Thank you, I like your hair too."

Practice activity: Compliment several students on their clothes (how well they speak English, etc.), and have them practice different responses to compliments. See that they try a variety of strategies.

Practice activity. Cocktail party: "Compliment party"

1. Ask participants to think up a number of nice compliments they can give to other members of the class.

2. Once everyone is ready, have students circulate, compliment each other, and practice responding using the strategies above.

3. Close by asking about the nicest (most interesting, funniest) compliments heard.

Other ideas:

Review: Tell participants you plan to take a weekend trip but that you don't plan to take any money. (They should strongly suggest this is not a good idea.)

Topic: Ask students how Chinese people respond to compliments. Is it always just by saying "No, no!"?

Lesson 17

Focus Point: Asking about and expressing opinions

Dialogue: Al, Chen, and Wang are English teachers chatting in the office at a school in China. (listen especially for how people ask for and express opinions.)

Al: Mr. Chen, how do you feel about teaching English in primary schools?.

Chen: I think children should start studying English as early as possible.
Young children are more excited about learning a new language.

Al: What do you think about it, Mr. Wang?

Wang: Personally, I don't think it is such a good idea.

I suppose it is good to start learning a language early; / but only if there are enough good teachers.

Focus point. Asking about opinions:

-- "How do you feel about + (gerund or noun)"

-- "What do you think about +(gerund or noun)"

Focus point. Expression opinions:

-- "I think that..." Also "I feel that..." "I believe that ..."

-- "should" For opinions.

-- "Personally" Emphasizes that this is a personal opinion, thus making his disagreement with Mr. Chen seem less sharp and direct.

-- "I suppose that..." Indicating reservation.

Other points to note:

-- "as early as possible" The "as ___ as ___" pattern often causes problems in China.

-- Adjective + preposition: "excited about"

Pronunciation practice. Suggested points:

-- Ask students which words should be stressed in each sentence. Note especially stress for "What do you think about it, Mr. Wang?"

-- Syllable stress: *personally, primary, suppose.*

-- Consonant cluster /bl/ in *possible.*

-- Notice the falling intonation used when Al says "Mr. Chen" to get his attention.

-- Build the longer sentences in this dialogue from the end.

Practice activity. Have students interview you briefly, asking your opinions about various aspects of life in China and practicing the material above.

Practice activity. Small group task: "English in primary schools."

1. In small groups, ask students to discuss: Should English be required in primary schools in China? Each group should have a moderator whose job is to ask everyone's opinions (using the phrases above). As others speak, they should try to relate their opinions to those of the person who spoke previously. ("I agree with ..." "That's true but...." etc.)

2. Conclude by having groups report their opinions.

Other ideas:

Review: Compliment a few participants on their clothing, have them use different strategies to respond.

Lesson 18

Focus Point: Expressing sympathy

Dialogue: Pam is a foreign teacher at a Chinese college, and gets a surprise visit from the dean of her department, Mr. Lin. (Listen especially for how Mr. Lin expresses sympathy.)

- Lin: We just got a phone call from overseas, / and I have some bad news for you.
I'm afraid that your uncle Obadiah passed away yesterday.
I'm very sorry. / You have my deepest sympathy.
- Pam: Thank you for being so kind, but are you sure you have the right person?
I don't have an uncle named Obadiah.
In fact, I don't have any uncles at all!
- Lin: That's odd. There must be some mistake.

Focus point: Expressing sympathy:

- "I have some bad news for you." To prepare people for bad news.
- "I'm afraid that..." Often used when giving bad news.
- "I'm very sorry." For expressing sympathy. This is more serious than "That's too bad."
- "You have my deepest sympathy." Formal expression indicating deep sympathy.
- Other commonly used phrases:
"I'm sorry to hear about (+ noun phrase)" Ex: "I'm sorry to hear about your uncle."
"I'm sorry to hear that (+ subject + predicate)" Ex: "I'm sorry to hear that your mother is sick."

Other points to note:

- "passed away" = died

Pronunciation practice. Special points:

- Read sentences again and have students listen to see which words are stressed. Then have them repeat after you.
- Practice saying those sentences expressing sympathy with an appropriate tone.
- Word stress: "I don't have any uncles at all!"
- "That's odd." (Rising tone on "odd".)
- Final /d/ in *bad, afraid, kind, odd*. (The final sound in *passed* is actually /t/.)

Practice activity: You break bad news to student A, and then call on student B to express sympathy with A using the "I'm sorry to hear that..." or "I'm sorry to hear about..." patterns. (Prepare some funny bad news in advance. Ex: "I'm afraid that the school has assigned you to work in the cafeteria." "I'm afraid the class has volunteered you to repaint the dormitory.")

Practice activity: Cocktail party: "I have some bad news."

1. Have students prepare one or two pieces of bad news they can break to somebody (you failed your examination, your pet cat died, etc.) Encourage students to keep the bad news more humorous than grim.
2. Have each student share their bad news with another student. The recipient of the bad news should then thank the other for being so kind, but insist that the news is inaccurate. Each should then move on to other partners.
3. Close by asking a few volunteers to report the strangest bad news they heard.

Other ideas:

Review: Have students participants interview you about your opinion of Chinese weather (or some other topic), using opinion questions from previous lesson.

Lesson 19

Focus Point: Generalizations and exceptions

Dialogue: Xiao Li has met a Liz, an American teacher, and is surprised to see her drinking tea. (Listen especially for how Liz makes generalizations.)

Li: Do you like tea?

Liz: By and large I prefer coffee, but sometimes I like tea, too.

Li: But I thought all foreigners drink coffee.

Liz: Not necessarily. In fact, its dangerous to assume that all foreigners do anything.

As a rule, most Westerners do drink more coffee than tea.

But I think British people drink more tea than coffee / and lots of Americans also drink tea.

Anyway, there are exceptions to most generalizations.

Focus Point: Generalizations.

-- "By and large, ____, but ____"

-- "As a rule, ____, but ____"

-- Also "In general, ____" "Usually, ____", "Generally speaking, ____"

Other points to note:

-- "I thought that ____" Past tense used to indicate a mistaken idea the speaker no longer holds.

-- "Not necessarily." Nice way to correct a statement that is too general.

-- "In fact" Used to correct a misconception. Also "Actually, ____", "In reality, ____"

-- "Anyway" Used for ending one line of discussion and coming to a conclusion or getting back to the main topic.

-- "lots of ____" = many

-- Vocabulary: *assume, exceptions, generalizations*

Pronunciation practice. Suggested points:

-- Note stress on "all" in "dangerous to assume that all foreigners do anything."

-- Read each sentence again and have students listen for the intonation, especially of phrases like "By and large" "Not necessarily" "As a rule" "Anyway"

Practice activity: Ask students to make generalizations about Chinese people, practicing the phrases above.

Practice activity:

1. In groups, have students list several generalizations which they feel are more or less true about Westerners (Canadians, foreign English teachers, etc.), making sure to practice phrases that indicate generalization.

2. Have each group report one generalization, and ask other students to agree with or challenge the generalization. You then comment, agreeing with or correcting misimpressions.

Other ideas:

Topic: Same activity as above, but ask students to list generalizations they think Westerners have about Chinese people.

Lesson 20

Focus Point: Opinions -- different degrees of certainty

Dialogue: A group of students is talking about what is likely to be on the final examination for their English course. (Listen especially for ways they indicate how sure they are about their opinions.)

Al: What do you think is going to be on the examination next week?

Bud: I guess there will be a listening section, / and maybe there will also be a vocabulary quiz.

Carol: I'm pretty sure there will also be a reading component.

And I'm positive that there will be a writing test.

Al: How can you be so sure?

Carol: The teacher told me.

Focus Point: Degrees of certainty in expressing opinions

-- May be true: "I guess" (+ sentence) "Maybe" (+ sentence). Also "Perhaps ____" "I suppose that ____" "It looks like ____"

-- Probably true: "I'm pretty sure" (that) (+ sentence). Also "probably"

-- Certainly true: "I'm positive ____" Also "I'm sure (that)" (+ sentence). "I'm certain (that)" (+ sentence).

Other points to note:

-- Preposition: "on the test". Also note "the" is used -- everyone knows what test he is talking about.

Pronunciation practice.

-- Syllable stress: *examination, section, component, positive.*

-- Word stress: Ask students to decide which words in these sentences would be stressed.

-- Consonant clusters: /gz/ in *examination*; /ld/ in *told*; /nt/ in *component*.

-- Final /l/ in *Al, Carol, will*.

-- Final stop: /d/ in *Bud*.

Practice activity: Ask students to tell you what they think will be on your next test, paying attention to degrees of certainty.

Practice activity:

1. In groups, have students discuss what they think China will be like in ten years. Have each group make a list of predictions of varying degrees of certainty. Ex: "We think that maybe more people will live in cities." "We are certain that there will be more cars."

2. Have each group present one prediction and explain their reasons.

Other ideas:

Topic: Ask students what job they think they will have after they graduate

Topic: Ask students to predict the following day's weather.

Encounters:

Activities for Oral and Intercultural Communication Skills

Don Snow

The goal of language teaching is not just to teach students grammar and vocabulary, or even just language skills. Rather it is to help students learn to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds, using the medium of a foreign language. Thus, improving students' intercultural communication skills should be a part of all language teaching. (This is in line with Amity's desire to "contribute to China's social development and openness to the outside world.")

The exercises in this section have two purposes. One is to help students improve their conversation skills, especially their ability to explain. The second is to improve students' intercultural communication skills by teaching them to take a broader and more careful approach toward the ways in which they judge what foreigners do and say. One of the key problems in any encounter between people of different cultures is that they tend to interpret each other's behavior in ways that are often both inaccurate and unnecessarily negative, and if students become more consciously aware of this interpretation process and develop the habit of reminding themselves that the behavior of the "other" may have an explanation that is different from whatever (often ethnocentric) interpretation first occurs to them, they are less likely to jump to negative conclusions that will lead to misunderstanding and bad feelings.

This material is adapted from Encounters with Westerners (Don Snow, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, forthcoming). The published version will include both a student textbook and a teacher book.

I. General Notes

Purpose: These exercises give students a chance to improve their ability to communicate with people from other cultures, and also to build their speaking and listening skills. The core of the exercises involves asking students to think more broadly and carefully about how they interpret what foreigners say and do, so that they are less likely to jump to conclusions which result in misunderstandings and bad feelings.

Classroom time: A relatively hurried treatment of one exercises would probably take 15-20 minutes; a more leisurely treatment can easily take an entire 45-50 minute class period, allowing time for small and large group discussion, and also further discussion of responses to the situations and of the cultural points raised.

Student level: Intermediate and advanced.

II. Steps in Teaching the Exercises

Step #1:

1) Before class, read the situation and modify it to suit your context and purposes.

Step #2: Presenting the situation (2-5 minutes)

1) Read the situation to your class orally, or tell the situation more freely and informally as a story. If necessary, have them take notes

2) Give students a chance to ask questions. Then, as necessary, check students' comprehension. (I normally do this by quickly asking the whole class a few questions about the key points of the situation, or having the class repeat the situation back to me.)

Step #3: Small group discussion of interpretations (5-15 minutes)

1) In small groups (3-4 students), have students list possible interpretations of the situation. First they should brainstorm -- i.e. put any idea on the list. Then they can look back over their list and pick a few

interpretations which they think are especially probable (or clever). Both nice and nasty interpretations should be considered.

2) Have one student in each group take written notes!

3) As groups discuss, circulate and look at the notes being written. This gives you a chance to offer help with both language and ideas.

Step #4: Reports and large group discussion

1) Have groups volunteer suggestions while you make a brief note of them on the board.

2) Discuss the suggested interpretations. Perhaps start by asking the class which suggestions seem highly improbable, and then which seem relatively probable. (I often find that my role is to point out that some suggestions which are not likely are in fact within the realm of possibility.)

3) After students present their ideas, add your own ideas as to which interpretations are relatively likely and why. However, try to avoid coming in as final judge to tell students which group got the one and only right answer -- for all of these, there are a variety of possible explanations.

4) Close this step of the exercise by settling on a "working hypothesis, i.e. one or more interpretations that seem relatively plausible. (Normally I encourage students to give the benefit of the doubt, but also to recognize the possibility of explanations that are not so generous. While a relatively generous interpretation may not necessarily be the "right" answer, my assumption is that students will be better able to maintain a positive attitude toward the target culture and its people if they err toward generosity rather than stinginess in their interpretations.)

Step #5: Follow up ideas

1) Discuss possible responses to the situation. "What would you do if this happened to you?" If time is short, ask the class at large to suggest a few responses. You may then point out the merits of each, and give special praise to one or two of the best. When more time remains, have students go back into small groups to come up with a short list of options. Ask them to be ready to justify the options they will volunteer, pointing out both its virtues and disadvantages. (Again, try to avoid the "single right answer" syndrome. Instead, note that most responses have both advantages and disadvantages. Especially encourage responses which allow students to withhold judgement until they understand the situation better, and those which will result in them learning as much as possible.)

2) Discuss follow-up questions. Most of the situations involve one or more aspects of culture which might be explored more thoroughly, and some of these are suggested at the end of each exercise. You might pursue these by briefly talking about the topic or having students tell you (orally or in writing) about a corresponding aspect of their own culture. **Note:** Most of the questions suggested in the lessons below are geared mainly for you to ask students so that they have an opportunity to tell you more about China - and practice explaining Chinese culture and life in English. If modified, some would also work as questions for students to discuss among themselves.

3) Advice letters. Have students write letters of advice to Xiao Lee or Xiao Wang.

4) Role plays. Have students role-play the situation, perhaps after first discussing how the different participants in the encounter would probably view it from their perspective.

5) Culture talks. Give a short talk about an aspect of your culture related to the topic.

The Exercises

The Taxi

Situation: Xiao Lee was given a scholarship to study English for a year abroad [in England, Canada, the US, Sweden, etc.], so she is taking a plane to the city where she will study. After a long flight she finally arrives and, after waiting in line for some time, finally gets a taxi. She puts her luggage in the back, gets in, and shows the driver the address of her university, which is in the northern suburbs of the city. After riding in the taxi for some time they finally arrive at the school. Lee looks at the meter and it reads \$32.50, but then the taxi driver turns around and says Lee should give him \$50.

Why do you think the driver is asking Xiao Lee for \$32.50 instead of \$50? List several possible reasons and choose several which seem most likely.

Some possible interpretations:

- The taxi driver is trying to cheat Xiao Lee.
- There are extra charges that Xiao Lee doesn't know about for luggage or tolls (bridge, tunnel, or road).
- There is an honest misunderstanding. Maybe there is something wrong with the meter, or fares have recently gone up and the meter hasn't been adjusted yet. Or perhaps Lee misunderstood what the driver said, or didn't hear what he said clearly.
- The driver has included a generous tip for himself, but not an entirely unreasonable one, perhaps because he knows Xiao Lee is a foreigner and thinks she doesn't know about tipping, or because in the past other foreigners have given him very stingy tips.

Follow-up discussion questions:

- 1) Is tipping a good custom or a bad custom?
- 2) Are there situations in China where it is appropriate to tip? If so, how much? How and when do you present the tip?
- 3) What kinds of extra charges might surprise a Western tourist in China?

The Compliment

Situation: Xiao Wang is visiting a local museum, and there she meets an older Western man. Unfortunately the explanations of the exhibits are not translated into English and the man can't read them, so Xiao Wang offers to explain all the exhibits. However, as he begins he soon finds that it is very difficult to explain about all of the ancient artifacts in English because there are many words he doesn't know how to say in English. He makes a lot of mistakes, and often has to admit that he doesn't know how to say what he wants to in English. By the time they reach the end of the museum, Xiao Wang feels very tired and discouraged because there are so many things he can't say in English. However, the man smiles and thanks Xiao Wang for his help, and then says "Your English is very good." Xiao Wang says: "I'm sorry. My English is very poor."

What do you think the American really thought about Xiao Wang's English, and why did he compliment him? List several possible reasons and then decide which seem most likely.

Some possible interpretations:

- The man is just being polite; he really didn't think XW's English was very good.
- The man was genuinely impressed by XW's ability to handle such a difficult topic, even though he made some errors.
- The man could tell XW was having difficulty with his English, and he wanted to encourage him.
- The man feels a little awkward because he put XW through so much trouble, and his compliment is really another way of saying thank you.

Follow-up discussion questions:

- 1) When and how are compliments usually given in China, and how does one respond?
- 2) In some Western countries there is a saying: "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all." In China is it better to say nice things, even if they aren't true, or to always be honest?

Culture Note -- Compliments: Chinese people sometimes respond to compliments by directly rejecting them ("My English is really poor"). Westerners more often respond to compliments with the following strategies:

1) Accept it. When Westerners feel a compliment is reasonable, often they respond just by saying "Thank you." In some situations, it is also appropriate to return the compliment. (Ann: "Helen, your dress is lovely." Helen: "Thank you. Yours is also quite beautiful.")

2) Deflect it. Often Westerners will accept a compliment by saying thank you, but then quickly pass the credit on to someone else. (Ann: "Helen, your dress is lovely." Helen: "Thank you.

My mother made it for me.") Another common strategy is for the person receiving the compliment to quickly shift attention away from him/herself by adding information that opens up a new conversation topic. (Helen: "Thank you. I got it in Mexico last year.")

3) Thank but decline. If a Westerner really feels a compliment is unjustified or cannot be accepted, often he/she will thank the person offering the compliment, but without actually accepting it, using a sentence like "It's nice of you to say so" or "That's very kind of you."

The Gift

Situation: Xiao Lee has been granted a special scholarship at an American university, and his English teacher, Ms. Kelsen, wrote a recommendation letter that was instrumental in his getting the scholarship. Xiao Wang feels very grateful to Ms. Kelsen, so decides to buy her an expensive gift, a landscape painting, as a way of thanking her. One day after class has ended and the other students have left, Xiao Wang presents the gift to Ms. Kelsen. Looking surprised, Ms. Kelsen says thank you, but says that she can't accept it. Xiao Wang offers the gift several more times but Ms. Kelsen insists on refusing.

Why do you think Ms. Kelsen won't accept the gift? List several possible reasons and then decide which seem most likely.

Some possible interpretations:

- Ms. Kelsen feels that teachers should not accept gifts, especially valuable ones, from students.
- Ms. Kelsen thinks if she accepted the gift it would look to others as though she had been bribed.
- Ms. Kelsen wrote the letter because it was the right thing to do. Accepting a gift now would make the nice thing she did for Xiao Wang seem cheap.
- Ms. Kelsen feels that she has done nothing to deserve such a special gift.
- Ms. Kelsen feels uncomfortable because she assumes XW cannot afford to give expensive gifts.
- Ms. Kelsen feels that accepting the gift would put her under obligation to XW.

Follow-up discussion questions:

- 1) What are the customs for gift giving and receiving in China?
- 2) In China, what are some appropriate ways to express thanks to someone who has helped you?
- 3) Is there a clear difference between a gift and a bribe?

The Shopper

Situation: Xiao Wang is out shopping, and in a store downtown he sees a middle-aged Western woman who is trying to ask the storekeeper how much an item costs. The woman looks frustrated, and is using lots of sign language, but the storekeeper still doesn't understand what she wants. XW decides this would be a good chance to practice his English, so he goes over, explains to the clerk what the tourist wants, and then tells the tourist how much the item costs. The tourist says thank you, and then begins looking at other items in the store. Encouraged by his success, XW asks the tourist if she would like him to act as her interpreter as she shops. The tourist, however, says "No, thank you" and then walks off to another part of the store.

How do you think XW might have felt when the shopper refused his offer of help? What do you think XW expected?

Why do you think the shopper refused XW's offer? List several possible reasons and then decide which seem most likely.

Some possible interpretations:

- The woman is tired of Chinese people who want to practice English.
- The woman wants to do it herself.

- The woman doesn't want to be obliged to XW, especially when she doesn't understand the Chinese rules for reciprocating.
- The woman is trying to learn a little bit of Chinese, so doesn't want an interpreter.
- The woman doesn't fully trust XW, perhaps because of previous unpleasant experiences in the China or simply because XW is a stranger.

Follow-up discussion questions:

- 1) In China, when is it alright to accept help from others, or to ask for help from others?
- 2) In many Western cultures, doing things for oneself rather than relying on help from others is a major point of pride and self-respect. In China, to what degree is self-reliance considered a good thing?
- 3) If you wanted to practice English with a Westerner, how do you think you could keep him/her interested in the conversation?

Getting To Know You

Situation: Xiao Lee has recently arrived in a Western country to study English, moves into a dormitory with Western graduate students. XL is the only international student on her hall. The first day there is a party for all the people living on XL's hall. First they have a meeting where they sit in a circle and introduce themselves, and when XL says where she is from, one of the other women says: "You will have to tell us all about your country", and the other people all agree. XL is pleased because she wants to talk to people, and she wants to tell them about China. Then, when the party starts, XL waits for people to come and talk to her about China, but instead all of the Western students talk to each other, and nobody comes over to talk to Lee.

How do you think XL might have felt? What do you think she expected?

Why do you think nobody went over to talk to XL about China? List several possible explanations and then choose several which seem most likely.

Some possible interpretations:

- If XL's English isn't very good, students may have preferred to talk with other Westerners simply because it is easier.
- The Westerners all actively sought out others to talk to; XL was left out because she was passive.
- Some of the Westerners were interested in XL and China, but didn't go to talk to her because they didn't know much about China so they didn't know what to ask her about.
- Some of the Westerners weren't very interested in XL or China, and preferred to talk to other Westerners, with whom they had more in common.

Follow-up discussion questions:

- 1) In China, how and where do people go about striking up conversations with strangers?
- 2) What kinds of things do you think might most interest foreigners about China?

Culture note -- Striking up conversations: At Western parties it is generally acceptable to start a conversation with a stranger. Normally Westerners start conversations with one or more of these strategies:

- Saying something about the situation that you share (the party, the class, even the weather).
Ex: "Nice party, isn't it?" "It's pretty cold today."
- Simply introducing yourself and then asking the stranger to introduce him/herself.
- Asking the stranger a general question. Westerners often ask each other about what they do or where they are from.

Not Eating

Situation: Xiao Wang has invited an American friend named Nancy home for dinner, and XW's family has prepared a large meal in honor of the guest, with lots of local specialties. However, soon

after the meal begins, it is obvious that Nancy is not eating very much. Several times XW and his family encourage Nancy to eat more, and each time she is urged to do so Nancy eats a little bit more, but still not very much. However, each time the family urges Nancy to eat more, she comments on how wonderful all the food is.

Why do you think Nancy is eating so little? List several possible explanations and then choose several which seem most likely.

Some possible interpretations:

- Nancy really doesn't like the food, but says it is good to be polite.
- The foods are strange to Nancy and she is afraid to try them.
- Nancy doesn't feel well.
- Nancy is on a diet and is trying not to eat too much so she will lose weight.
- Nancy has some kind of health problem (allergies, high cholesterol, etc.) which would be aggravated by many of the foods being served.
- A number of the foods served are things Nancy can't or won't eat because of a religious or moral conviction.

Follow-up discussion questions:

- 1) Sometimes at banquets in China it seems to foreign guests that the dishes were chosen to test how brave the guest is about putting strange things in his/her mouth. If a foreigner doesn't want to try some food at a banquet, how much should you try to persuade him/her?
- 2) In China, does anyone ever diet in order to lose weight?
- 3) Some Westerners who are vegetarian. Other Westerners have religious restrictions on what they can eat or drink. Are there certain foods that certain kinds of people in China won't eat?

Reading Alone

Situation: At Xiao Wang's school there is a Western teacher named Nancy who XW often sees and chats with in the cafeteria. Several times Nancy has told XW that she would be welcome to come over and visit sometime, so one evening after dinner XW decides to go visit. XW arrives at Nancy's apartment, knocks, and Nancy opens the door. When Nancy sees XW she smiles and says: "It was nice of you to come over, but I just want to spend an evening by myself reading. Could I ask you to come back another time?"

Why do you think Nancy says she wants to read rather than inviting Lee in? List several possible explanations and then choose several which seem most likely.

Some possible interpretations:

- Nancy values her time alone, and feels that sometimes it is more important than hosting guests.
- Nancy plans her time carefully and does not like to change plans at the last minute.
- Nancy doesn't want to talk with XW very much, and doesn't feel obligated to invite XW in because XW didn't call first.
- Nancy likes talking with XW, but doesn't feel obligated to invite her in tonight. Nancy thinks it is perfectly normal and polite to ask her to come over some other time.
- Nancy is reading something important.
- Nancy's invitations to XW were only meant to be polite; she didn't really expect XW to visit.

Follow-up discussion questions:

- 1) Many Westerners feel that it is a good thing to have some "personal time", i.e. to spend some time alone doing whatever they want to. ("Alone" does not necessarily mean being "lonely".) In China, do people feel that they need "personal time", or time when they are alone?
- 2) In China, when a guest visits, what are your obligations? Are there occasions when you can turn them away?

3) Among Westerners, some invitations are "polite", others are 'real". In China do you have both "polite invitations" and "solid invitations"? If so, how can you tell the difference between them?

The English Teacher

Situation: Xiao Wang is taking an English class which is taught by a Western teacher. XW's teacher never lectures on grammar; instead the class usually consists of conversations in pairs or large group discussions of cultural issues. Today, XW was confused about how to use "the" and "a" in English, so in class she asked the teacher to explain. However, instead of explaining, she said: "I generally prefer not to explain grammar rules. Tell me what you want to say and I will tell you how to say it correctly."

Why do you think the teacher refused to explain? List several possible explanations and then choose several which seem most likely.

Some possible interpretations:

- The teacher avoids explaining grammar because she doesn't know how to explain grammar very well (and doesn't like it very much).
- The teacher doesn't think grammar is important.
- The teacher's main goal is to build students' communication skills, so she focuses more on communication and fluency than on grammar.
- The teacher refuses to give long explanations because she thinks they will slow down the lesson. She feels her method is more efficient.
- The teacher thinks the students rely too much on memorizing grammar rules, so tries to encourage them to figure out rules for themselves.

Follow-up discussion questions:

- 1) How important do you think grammar is in language learning?
- 2) What is the best way to learn a foreign language?

Grades

Situation: Xiao Lee's first semester at a university abroad is coming to a close, and next week she needs to turn in her final paper for an economics course. Today in class the professor of the course says that next week when everyone turns in their papers he also wants everyone to give him a note saying what grade they think they deserve for this course.

Why do you think the professor asked students to give themselves a grade? List several possible explanations and then choose several which seem most likely.

Some possible interpretations:

- The professor feels that he is being fair or democratic; he feels that students have a right to have their opinion considered in the grading process. (He may not give students exactly the grade they think they deserve.)
- The professor wants to know students' opinion of their own work because it will be helpful information as he decides their grades. (He may not agree with their assessment.)
- The professor asks students to give themselves grades because he wants them to reflect on their own performance. He feels students will learn better if they evaluate themselves.
- The professor doesn't feel grades are very important, and he wants to minimize the pressure of grades. (He will give students more or less what they ask for.)
- The professor doesn't feel grading is right, but has to give some kind of grade. Having students decide their grades cuts down on the professor's work.

Follow-up discussion questions:

- 1) Most Western teachers don't ask students to give themselves a grade, but some do. Do you think this is a good idea?

- 2) How are grades normally decided in China?
- 3) Who should determine what and how students learn: the teacher or the students?

The Interview

Situation: Xiao Wang is interviewing for a job with an American company. The interviewer, a middle-aged American woman, first asks several questions about his educational background, work experience, and why he wants this job. Then she asks XW what salary he would expect.

Why do you think the interviewer asked XW what salary he expected? List several possible expectations and then choose several which seem most likely.

Some possible interpretations:

- The interviewer is testing XW to see how he deals with an awkward question.
- The interviewer wants to see if XW knows the profession and normal pay scales in it.
- The interviewer wants to see how confident XW is of his worth.

Follow-up discussion questions:

- 1) For Westerners, one part of the purpose of a job interview is to get a sense of what candidates are like and how they handle themselves. It is therefore not uncommon for interviewers to ask at least one or two questions that are awkward or difficult to handle, in order to see how candidates perform under pressure. The question about salary in the situation above is one example. Another might be: Why do you think you are qualified for this job? (Issue of balancing modesty with confidence.) In China, do interviewers ever intentionally ask difficult questions?
- 2) Americans tend to avoid asking or talking about what their salary is, possibly because it is such a potent marker of status and because Americans try to be relatively egalitarian. How do Chinese people feel about this topic? In China, when is it acceptable to ask about someone else's salary, and in what situations? Is it ever rude?
- 3) Describe a strategy for coping with job interviews in China (how to prepare, dress, etc.).
- 4) How much are interviews used in China as a means of recruiting? If interviews aren't used for selecting candidates for jobs, how is it done?

Out of the Nest

Situation: In the US/other Western countries?. When Xiao Lee is getting on a bus, she drops one of her packages. A young man picks it up for her, and as the bus starts XL begins to chat with him. He says he is 18 years old and has always lived in this town. Although his family also lives in town, he lives alone in a small apartment. He just graduated from high school this year and is now a student at the local university. XL asks where he is going, and he says that he is going to work -- he has an evening job at a restaurant to make money to pay for university. He says that although his family is not poor, he doesn't want to live with them or ask them for money.

Why do you think the young man doesn't live with his family or get any money from them? List several possible explanations and then choose several which seem most likely.

Some possible interpretations:

- The young man's relationship with his family is not very good.
- The young man's family is willing to help but he wants to assert his independence by being self-reliant.
- The young man has more freedom living on his own.
- The young man's family does not think higher education is important -- they think he should just get a job -- so they do not emotionally or financially support his university aspirations.

Follow-up discussion questions:

- 1) Most Western cultures place great stress on self-reliance and independence, and young people normally leave home at around age 18. What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of this

cultural value would be?

2) How is university education paid for in China?

3) In China, how do people view the idea of students taking part-time jobs?

4) What financial obligation do parents in China have to their children, particularly as young people approach adulthood?

Grandma

Situation: Xiao Wang is visiting a Western teacher he knows and looking at pictures of her family. He sees a picture of her grandmother and asks the teacher about her. The teacher says her grandmother is 83 years old and lives in a small town. Lee asks if the grandmother lives with any of the other family members, but the teacher says that she lives alone -- all the other family members have moved away.

Why do you think the grandmother lives alone, instead of with other family members? List several possible explanations and then choose several which seem most likely.

Some possible interpretations:

- Grandma has lived in her home and her town for many years. All of her friends and memories are there, so she has no desire to go anywhere else.
- Grandma feels that if she moves in with one of her children, she will lose her independence and self-reliance.
- Grandma thinks her children really don't want her to live with them, and she doesn't want to be a burden to them. (In fact, they would be willing to have her.)
- Grandma knows that her children really don't want her to live with them -- and she is right.

Activity Grab Bag

These activities and ideas have been suggested by previous teachers. Add your own to the list!

Listening

Name: TALKING ABOUT YOURSELF

Purpose: Listening practice, creating a warmer class atmosphere

1. Bring in a family picture and talk about the members of your family.
2. Bring in something that is special and tell why it is special to you.

Name: MOCK WEDDING (TPR)

Purpose: Listening practice, cultural knowledge Organization: Whole class

Preparation: Need role cards with "bride," "groom," "mother of bride," "minister," "best man," etc. Bring the words of the service, newspapers, tape, glue, scissors, scraps of paper, Bible, other readings.

Procedure:

1. Elicit on the board what they know and add key words and phrases (tuxedo, etc.).
2. Have class members pick roles at random (add enough "friend of bride," "friend of groom" cards to make up total class number. Don't let them change cards.)
3. Rehearsal: (TPR) Call for bride, groom, etc. and place them as they'll be at the end of the service. Give the words of the service to the "minister." Then have them go out as they'd go out, come in as they'd come in, and go through the service.
4. Preparation: Have them make decorations and costumes with the paper, etc. Over "bride" was a male student and had a veil/ headdress with a wreath of flowers. The 6 male "flower girls" made flower petals and a basket to scatter them from. The men wore crêpe paper bow ties, flowers in their lapels, and the groom had a pleated cummerbund.
5. The Wedding - beautiful, really.
6. The Reception Line: Candy.

Remarks: This went amazingly well. Take lots of photos, like a real wedding. They need to trust each other a little to do this well.

Conversation activities (pairs)

Name: TALK! TALK! TALK!

Purpose: Warm-up

Organization: Pairs

Procedure:

1. Teacher calls out an opinion question which is discussed by partners for 60 seconds. Topics can include: weather, favourite food, sports, entertainment, seasons, pets, personality type, holidays, vehicle, flower, music, historical figure, free time, dislikes, likes, etc.
2. Teacher asks A about B's opinion of the given topic and B reports A's opinion (a few pairs).

Name: I HAVE A PROBLEM

Purpose: Practice giving advice.

Organization: Cocktail party format

Preparation: Slips of paper with personal problems for every student

Procedure:

1. Each student picks out a slip of paper from a hat.
2. Then, each student must describe his or her personal problem to three other students and ask for advice on solving the problem.
3. Closure: Ask a few students to report their problem and the best advice received.

Name: WHAT'S MY LINE

Purpose: Practice yes/no questions.

Organization: Cocktail party format

Procedure:

1. Write an occupation on a slip of paper and tape it to the back of each student.

2. Students must ask yes and no questions to his or her classmates to discover his or her line.
Occupations: photographer, gardener, singer, lawyer, window-cleaner, interpreter, taxi-driver, musician, politician, electrician, librarian, mathematician, sailor, soldier, barber, decorator, professor, burglar, beggar, salesperson, business person, police person, scientist, cartoonist, baby sitter, cook, etc.

Name: MAKING A DATE

Purpose: Practice invitations.

Organization: Pairs/cocktail party format

Preparation: Slips of paper with and activity pertaining to making a date with each student.

Procedure:

1. First teach how to make a date in your country (how to invite, say 'yes' and 'no' politely, etc.)
2. Let the students choose one slip from a hat. On each slip there is an activity pertaining to "making a date." Example: "You need to buy a birthday present for your mother. You'd like help shopping. Find friends to go with you Friday night. Write their names down."
3. The students must find people to join them and write their names down.
4. Closure: Ask the students what they wanted to do and how many people agreed to go with them.

Name: DIRECTIONS

Purpose: Practice discussing spatial relations/directions.

Organization: Pairs

Preparation: Diagram (or two) of a room (which you draw) for all the students

Procedure:

1. Pass out the diagram to all the students.
2. Begin by talking about the shape of the paper, which way is up, the top, the bottom, and the sides. Then talk about the shape of the room: east, west, north, south, etc.
3. Then together with the students label the furniture, the doors, the windows, and where they are, i.e. against, next, to, in the upper NE corner, etc.
4. Partners take turns asking each other where things are.
5. End the task by having students make their own room diagram which they then describe to their partner. They both do this and then compare the original drawings with the copies.

Name: HOW TO LIGHT A MATCH

Purpose: Practice giving directions, have a little fun.

Organization: Pairs

Procedure:

1. Give each pair a small box of matches.
2. Have A explain to B how to light a match: B does exactly what A says.
3. Then have some of them give you the instructions and you follow them exactly, demonstrating the process. It's hilarious. They really learn how to give instructions after this. None of the students told me how to hold the box, so when I opened the box the matches all fell out.

Name: ORIGAMI

Purpose: Practice giving directions.

Organization: Pairs

Procedure:

1. Student A explains to student B how to fold a piece of paper a certain way to make something (no hand motions allowed). Also make sure student B doesn't know already.
2. Student B listens to student A's directions and can ask questions to clarify directions.
3. After it is completed, student B gives student A origami directions.

Name: USING MAPS

Purpose: Practice giving/following directions Organization: Pairs

Preparation: Simple sketch map of city you teach in with street names, buildings, etc. for all the students and slips of papers with different tasks. Enough maps for each pair.

Procedure:

1. Prepare words connected with traffic: zebra (pedestrian) crossing, traffic lights, turn right (left), on your right hand side, avenue, intersection, etc.

2. Hand out the map sketches to the students and then give directions how to go somewhere on the map. The students follow your directions and tell where they are.
3. Each pair then gets a paper with a different task e.g. Tell a foreigner how to go from the railway station to the Bank of China on Yunnan Road. The groups work with their tasks. Then each group tells the rest of the class how to go and all follow on the maps.

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR GIVING DIRECTIONS:

1. How can I get a driver's license in China?
2. How do I ask someone out?
3. How do I play Chinese chess?
4. How do we change jobs?
5. How do you become a movie star in China?
6. How do you cook rice?
7. How do you prepare a live chicken?
8. How do you tie a shoe?
9. How do you make a paper airplane?

SUGGESTED STORY TOPICS (for pairs):

1. Surprising, dangerous, amusing, embarrassing (funny) experiences
2. Coincidences
3. Story of my life
4. Life stories of other family members, friends
5. Childhood
6. Tell bedtime story to a 4-year old using simple language and expressive use of voice
7. Chinese fairy tales

UNFINISHED SENTENCE TOPICS:

- The funniest thing I ever saw was ...
- If only I had 24 hours to live, I would
- On Sundays, I usually
- I feel best when ...
- I have never ...
- Roommates should always ...
- My child will ...
- The world would be better if ...
- I never worry about ...
- The thing that worried me most is ...
- Some day I am going to ...
- I like people who ...
- I find it easy to ...
- I like to be more ... and less ...
- I am not interested in ...

Small Group Tasks

Name: BEGINNER GROUPS

Purpose: Discussion practice; sell students on the idea of working in groups.

Organization: Pairs and Groups

Procedure:

1. Pair students and give them a simple problem solving activity such as: What three dishes would you order for dinner?
2. Group the students and give them another problem solving activity like: If you had a choice to see a movie, which one would all of you agree to see.
3. Pair students with different partners and give them an advice seeking problem: A friend asks you whether they should go to Shanghai or Nanjing for a trip. Where would you tell your friend to go?

4. Put students in a different group and give them a problem solving activity: Your parents decided to give your group a trip in the summer. Decide where you all would go together between X and Y.
 5. Now write on the board "pair" and "group." Have the students tell you what they like and dislike about working in pairs and groups (In groups, they tend to say..."so and so doesn't talk," "so and so talks too much," "it's hard to come to an agreement.")
 6. Discuss how groups are very important for the work place, how team work is the latest trend in business, how it is helpful to work with others well.
 7. On the board, write some pointers about working in groups: giving respect to everyone, looking at everyone when you speak, encouraging others to express their opinions, asking questions when you don't understand, remembering that the point of a group is to make a decision together, etc.
 8. Put them in groups again and ask them to make a list of ways that groups can work better together, then write it on the board.
- Remarks: This helps students to be aware of roles in the group and what they need to do in groups.

Name: PROVERBS and SAYINGS

Purpose: Stretch discussion skills, learn about culture.

Organization: Groups

Procedure:

1. Write a proverb on the board and have groups decide whether they agree or disagree and why.
2. Quickly ask groups to guess what the proverb reflects about the culture. You might also briefly give your views.
3. Follow-up: Have groups compare Chinese culture with your culture, perhaps looking for a corresponding Chinese proverb.

Remarks: Using proverbs is a good way to introduce a topic on your culture, i.e. friendship, love, etc.

Name: WHO SHOULD DO THE WORK?

Purpose: Stretching discussion skills.

Organization: Pairs or Groups

Procedure:

1. For the following family units, have groups decide who should shop, cook, clean the flat, wash the clothes, and pay the bills.

Family A: Mother, father, 20 year-old university student, 14 year-old daughter, 9 year-old son.

Family B: Single parent with a 12 year-old son.

Family C: Three friends sharing a flat.

Name: BARGAINING AT THE MARKET (Giving Directions)

Purpose: Practice in giving directions; improvement in your bargaining skills, class has some fun.

Organization: Groups

Procedure:

1. Have groups write down directions for the best approach to bargaining in a Chinese market.
2. Have students role play their EXACT directions or have the teacher appoint one member of the class to be the vendor and the teacher follows the EXACT directions the pairs or groups give him or her. (If the vendor has any spunk and the teacher applies the suggestions in a way that is just a little too literal, the results can be very entertaining.)

Variation: Groups write their directions on the blackboard, class debates which is the best method.

Name: TV PROGRAM PLANNING

Purpose: Organizing thoughts, discussion.

Organization: Small groups.

Procedure:

1. Each group plans a TV program, listing personnel needed and assigning roles to each student.
2. The program may include: News and weather, special interest reports (cooking, research, travel), talk shows, game shows (spelling bees, grammar rules, historical facts, culture), business reports, movies, interviews, sports, cartoons, advice shows, whatever.

Name: VALUES

Purpose: Learn culture, stretch conversation skills.

Organization: Groups

Procedure:

1. Present an important value in your culture and an example of behavior which exemplifies this value. (You might also exemplify the value with a proverb or saying.)

2. Task: In small groups have students list the advantages and disadvantages of this value in a culture.

3. Task: In small groups, have students compare your culture with Chinese culture and decide to what extent China shares this value and to what extent China differs in this area.

Remarks: A series of such exercises would make a nice unit on culture.

SMALL GROUP LISTING ACTIVITIES:

--List China's 10 greatest (no longer living) heroes. Be ready to explain why they belong on this list.

--List China's 5 most prestigious kinds of job.

--Ways to deal with a child who refuses to study diligently for the university entrance exam.

--3 pieces of advice for staying comfortable in hot/cold weather.

--10 characteristics of a good teacher (10 differences between a good and bad teacher, 10 things you disliked about past teachers, 10 things you liked about your past teachers, 5 things that would be important for the next class to know before going to their teaching practise, etc.)

Small Group Problem Situations

Name: INTRODUCTION OF YOUR HOME AREA OR PROVINCE

Purpose: Improve ability to discuss home area.

Organization: Groups (4-5 according to hometown/county/province)

Procedure:

1. Have each group plan a 1-3 day tour for a foreigner visiting their hometown.

2. Situation: A foreigner (foreign teacher?) is coming to live in your home town for a year, and your job is to plan her/his orientation. List the 5 most important things this person needs to know.

3. Make a one-day orientation plan for this teacher. What will you tell/teach/show this person and how will you do it?

4. Closure: Each group presents one aspect of their plan. You can respond by discussing what people in your country think they know about China.

Name: REFORM

Purpose: Stretching students' explanation skills; consensus-building practice.

Organization: Groups

Procedure:

1. Each group is given responsibility for one area of government. Areas include agriculture, industry, energy, transportation, finance, cultural arts, defense, education, sports, foreign affairs, welfare, commerce, space, postal services, and public health.

2. Each group required to come up with plans for one improvement in their area of government.

3. Closure: Groups report plans and rationale, class discusses.

Name: ESSENTIALS OF A HEALTHY LIFE

Purpose: Stretch expression skills.

Organization: Pairs or Groups

Procedure:

1. Question: What is most important for a healthy life? Have groups prioritize the following: water, recreation, food, love, work, sleep, success, friends, light, family, exercise, oxygen, money, education, communication, and transportation.

Name: EMERGENCY BOYCOTT MEETING (fictionalized incident that actually happened)

Purpose: Stretching students' explanation and negotiation skills.

Organization: Group (6)

Preparation: Copy of roles for each student.

Procedure:

1. Hand out a copy of the six roles to each student. Read to them and explain any new vocabulary.

2. Put them in groups of 6 before or after handing out the paper. Decide who should have which role in each group (or they can decide themselves).
3. Ask them to take this problem and their role seriously and to work together as a group to solve it. Everyone in the group should agree on the solution.
4. At the end, write each solution on the board and have a class discussion.

Roles:

1. You are a high administrator at the school. Your teachers are poorly paid and are short of housing. You have just approved a new capital expenditure for new buildings. You have been told by the president of this school to solve this problem by making everyone as happy as possible and spending as little as possible. You do not want the students to hold another boycott of the dining-room, but have been told not to be too high-handed. One student organizer has an important father.
2. You represent the students who are very upset about the quality of the food. You recently staged a successful one-day boycott of the student dining-room but were criticized for your action. However, it is clear that you got their attention and you are prepared to boycott again if you have to. Your fellow students are counting on you. Some have been getting sick and want strong representation. Your father is an important party cadre and you are not particularly afraid of punishment.
3. You represent the students who are very upset about the increasing prices. You were one of the leaders of a recent successful boycott of the dining room, along with another student at this meeting. Your parents live in the countryside and send you very little money. You have little to spend on food. While you do not want to get into trouble, you feel strongly that you are right. You also are an avid student of Karl Marx and a student of your country's history. You know that mass actions and boycotts have played an important role in China's history and are a powerful tool.
4. You are the Student Union President elected by the students. The SU is responsible for order in the dining room, an increasingly difficult task. You have been elected by ALL the students, some of whom don't want to "rock the boat" by another boycott. They are afraid of angering the authorities. However, ALL the students agree that the food is bad and one of your best friends was recently hospitalized because of the poor food he was eating. You feel a responsibility to solve this problem quickly for the benefit of the students AND the school.
5. You are the head of food management for the school and are responsible for the preparation and serving of all the food. With the new changes in the economy some of your food prices are rising and you have to raise prices. The administration has so far been unwilling to give you more money or better help. You were embarrassed and angry by the recent student boycott. You feel somewhat helpless, however, in putting more pressure on the administration for a bigger budget for food.
6. You are the head of the food service workers. You are tired of the irritation of the students over the poor quality and the high prices of the food. Your own son is a student at another university where the food is only slightly better. Your sympathies are really with the students, but on the other hand you and the other workers feel powerless as you report to the head of food management. You have been invited to this meeting and you and your fellow workers hope a solution can be reached at this meeting.

Name: EMERGENCY!

Purpose: Stretch persuasion skills.

Organization: Groups

Procedure:

1. Put a list on the blackboard of people who need a heart transplant. Ex: business person, farmer, worker, nurse, teacher, scientist, police person, doctor, husband, singer, and wife. All will eventually receive one, but groups need to list the order of priority.

Name: DEAR ABBY (ADVICE COLUMN)

Purpose: Stretch explanation skills.

Organization: Groups

Preparation: Cut out an advice column from newspaper

Procedure:

1. Read advice column to class and go over new words.
2. Put the students into groups and have them discuss how to solve the situation.
3. After a short discussion time, ask each group to tell the class what their solution would be.
4. Write the solutions on the board and discuss as a class.

Name: TRAVEL THE WORLD

Purpose: Practice discussion; talking about travel.

Organization: Groups (3-4)

Procedure:

1. Instruct the class: You are given enough money to travel anywhere in the world with your group. Make a plan including: a) where you would like to go, b) what you want or expect to see, c) what you will take with you for the trip, d) how you will get there, e) what you plan to do there.

2. Have groups list all the things they know about Canada, Britain, Japan, Australia, etc. As groups report, you might fill in with additional information.

Remarks: Can restrict visit to a smaller area, like particular city or well known scenic spot in China.

Name: ADVERTISING

Purpose: Stretch persuasion skills; insight into culture.

Organization: Group

Preparation: Examples of advertisements

Activities:

1. Have groups list pros and cons of different mediums of advertising (billboards, flyers, magazines, newspapers, radio, TV).

2. Show various examples of ads from your culture or China; have students analyze who the ad is trying to convince (target group), and the method the ad is using to sell the product. Students might also say why they like or dislike it. "Good" advertising is culturally defined.

3. Task: Teacher is the president of a company which is introducing a product in your city and is looking for an advertising group for his or her product. Divide students into groups which compete with one another to get the teacher's account. The product should be simple (things like an alarm clock, soap, toothbrush, shampoo, tea, chopsticks have worked quite well). It helps if the students can see the actual product.

4. The group creates an advertising campaign (perhaps as homework).

5. Groups present their campaign. (Setting a time limit will help keep this within bounds.)

Name: IMPROVING A PRODUCT

Purpose: Improve persuasion skills.

Organization: Group

Preparation: Examples of product improvements (walkmans, etc.)

Procedure:

1. Briefly discuss why companies improve products (to make money, beat the competition, etc.) and how companies improve products (from customer's survey, complaints, problems, new technology). Give examples of products that have been improved (Ex: walkmans, TVs, telephones) and how they were improved (more functions, lighter, smaller, more compact, clearer, user friendly, etc.).

2. Situation: Teacher is the owner of a company who wants to improve a product (you can use anything but don't be too sophisticated). The groups compete with one another to get the "job."

3. Students work in groups (in class or for homework) creating their improvements.

4. Each group presents the "new product" to the class and explains why their product is the best improvement. Meanwhile the other groups are sitting, listening, and formulating questions to ask the presenting group about the product after the presentation. Teacher can grade presentation, questions, and answers for each group.

Large Group Discussion

Name: FORBIDDEN ILLEGAL SALES

Purpose: Raise class interest.

Organization: Groups

Procedure:

Put students in group and give them their role to play in the "court room". The characters are merchants, customers, police, jailer, lawyer, judge, and jury. The case is that the sidewalk shop is selling tiger skins, frogs, bear paws, cranes, and other illegal things that you can think of.

Name: DEBATE

Purpose: Liven class up for a day.

Organization: Groups (even number)

Procedure:

1. Explain rules and procedure for your debate.
2. Divide class into pro and con teams (probably several small groups for each position). Have each group plan arguments for their position.
3. Closure: Full class debate.

Remarks: Good topics for debates are: abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, dating in college, working part time in college, men and women are equal, money makes you happy, gun control, funding education in China, whether some TV broadcasting should be allowed in local dialects, etc.

Toward Breakthrough

Name: GOALS

Purpose: Get students thinking about taking control of their own learning.

Procedure:

1. Briefly suggest to students the importance of setting goals for their own language learning.
2. Ask each to set one specific goal for the semester and consider ways to achieve it.
3. You might have students share their goals with each other in small groups to get feedback and suggestions.
4. If you want this to be taken seriously, have students contract with you as to what they will do and how you will hold them accountable. You might even make this part of the course grade.

Name: NEWS NEWS NEWS

Purpose: Get students using their language to listen to or read news.

Procedure:

1. At the beginning of the term, give each student or team a "beat"--a topic or type of news for which they are responsible.
2. On some class days, ask teams to report what is happening on their beat. Having these reports be random will force students to keep up with the news.

Remarks: This project will take a fair amount of student effort, so should be used in the context of a course which includes work with news.

Games/Misc.

Name: STRING STORY

Purpose: Fun and some speaking practice.

Organization: Groups

Procedure:

1. Give an introductory or starter statement to the class - "A strange thing happened yesterday." Create a story as an example to the class. Give a list of connecting or sequence words - first, next, then, so, meanwhile, finally, etc.
2. Then ask the group to create a story with each student contributing a sentence that builds on the previous sentence.
3. Groups can continue the story or present it to the class.

Remarks: Can be modified to practice a particular tense, to include specific vocabulary, or even to ingrain a pronunciation point.

Name: WHO'S THE VIP?

Purpose: Practice with questions; fun.

Organization: Group or Whole Class

Procedure:

1. In a group or with the whole class, chose one person to be a famous living (or dead) person.
2. Have the person whisper who they choose in your ear.
3. Class asks who, what, when, where questions to the famous person to guess who he or she is.
4. First person to guess the identity becomes the next VIP.

Remarks: May be helpful to do this first as a whole class, then put them into groups for each group to do it by themselves.

Name: MIME

Purpose: Question practice; fun.

Organization: Pair

Procedure:

1. Give the pairs the situation (one is a guest and the other is a receptionist).
2. The guest can't speak and has a task to perform (tell the receptionist you have no sheets on your bed). The receptionist has to ask questions to the guest to find out what the guest wants. The guest mimes out the answers and clues to the task.

Remarks: This can be used for various situations - student/teacher; parent/child; salesperson/clerk; police/citizen; doctor/patient, etc.

Name: QUIZ SHOW - "HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR FRIENDS?"

Purpose: Fun.

Organization: Groups or Whole class

Preparation: Some multiple choice questions such as examples below.

Procedure:

1. Two students are chosen, A and B. C acts as quiz master. Student B goes outside. Student C asks A three questions such as the following: "Which of the following Chinese cities would your friend like to visit the most? A) Beijing; B) Guangzhou; C) Hangzhou; D) Lhasa." "Which of the following animals does your friend dislike the most? A) Spiders; B) Dogs; C) Snakes; D) Rats." "What is your friend's favorite color?" (The questions come from the teacher initially, but then are made up by the students once they get the idea. They must have 4 options, A, B, C, D, or else lead to a definite answer, which can then be definitely right or wrong.)
2. Once three questions have been asked and the class has clearly heard the answers, Student B is brought back in and presented with the same questions. If his or her friend A knows him or her well, the answers will tally. Every time they agree, they score one point.
3. The same procedure is repeated, with Student B answering this time, and Student A going outside. The aim is to get agreement on all six questions. Prizes can be awarded for the pairs of friends who really "know each other well." (Beware of pairs of students signalling answers to each other!)

Name: ACROSTIC POEM

1. Divide participants into pairs.

2. Have each participant write an acrostic poem about him/herself. An acrostic poem is where you write a word (in their case, the participant's name) vertically down the left side of the page. Then write a word or phrase that describes themselves, and begins with the letter in the name. Example: Jim.

J Jolly
I Inventive
M Motivating

3. Have participants share as time allows.

Dividing Students Into Groups -- Creatively!

Pam Whitfield

Tired of just dividing students into pairs or groups by counting off? Try this:

1. Use postcards cut up into however many pieces you need to match class size. This works for pairs, trios, foursomes, according to your scissor-work.
2. Use slips of paper, half of them with names of countries, half with the capitals, to match. This is good because they have to talk more to do this, and they also learn some proper nouns.
3. Give half the students small pictures, and the other half written descriptions of the pictures (for example, "a yellow tree in a field"). This forces the students with the words to go around asking, "Who has a picture of a yellow tree in a field?" The phrases can be adjusted to any level, and if you want to work in some vocabulary or special terms, you can kill two birds with one stone. (For example, if you are working on directions or prepositions, one written description could say "A girl sitting above her mother but below a tree.")
4. For lower levels, you can pass out colored papers to half, and the names of those colors to the other half. It's surprising how many students don't know the word "purple."
5. For groups, you can pass out duplicated pictures of animals, then say "All zebras over here, all gorillas go to the back row," using the names of animals that they don't often say but should know.
6. And, of course, you can pass out pictures to one half of the class and corresponding vocabulary items to the other half, in order to illustrate whatever vocabulary you are teaching them at the moment.

Testing Conversational English Of A Large Group

Merrilyn McNary

English teachers from overseas are often asked to teach oral skills courses, which involve many activities encouraging students to practice English conversation. However, methods of testing often don't accurately test what happens in the classroom during the term. There are many methods of testing, but the method described below is appropriate for many reasons. Students are tested on what they have done in class. They use conversation, which is the purpose of the class. They know in advance what is expected. The teacher specifically chooses aspects on which to base the assessment. Finally, perhaps most important, management of the test is relatively simple.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into small groups of 3-4. Less than three does not create enough conversational energy. More than four does not give each person adequate opportunity to speak. When groups choose their own members, they are more comfortable and willing to speak out. Teacher-planned groups are also satisfactory, depending on the situation.

2. Select topics to be used. These should be from the topics that have been discussed throughout the term. Write each topic, one word or phrase, on a slip of paper. These slips are the "pot" from which students will select their group's topic.

3. Locate a testing room with chairs that can be arranged. This can be the regular classroom or an office.

4. Schedule groups so that each gets the same amount of time for conversation. Give 3-4 minutes for the changeover of groups. Beginning students will do well with 6-7 minutes. Second year students will do well with 10-12 minutes. Adjust the time to suit the students. Use names, as well as group numbers, so there is no question as to who is in what group. Give a copy of the schedule to the class the week before the test. Place a copy outside the classroom door on the day of the test. Require students to be on time. No one should be allowed to enter the group late as it interrupts the flow of conversation.

5. Prepare the list of items the teacher will be evaluating. Tell the students in advance what will be evaluated during the test. For convenience sake, make a chart of the groups: Students' names on the left and the items to be evaluated across the top. This will be used on the day of the test.

6. Seat the students comfortably in a conversational configuration. Only the students in the group should be allowed in the room. Students should not feel as if they are putting on a show. Let the students choose three slips of paper on which the topics have been written. The group then decides (in English) which of the topics they wish to discuss. That topic can be set aside or returned to the "pot", since no one hears the conversation.

Encourage the group to choose the topic and start the conversation quickly since the time spent is part of the allotted conversation time. To encourage students to keep the conversation moving, 1) score students separately; 2) give extra points for the student who opens the conversation; 3) give extra points for the students who use questions to advance the conversation; 4) to encourage the development of the conversation, not just questions and answers, give extra points for introducing a new idea in line with the on-going conversation.

7. Sit as an observer outside the group of students. Using the chart (prepared ahead of time), the teacher starts the timer (or checks his/her watch), observes, listens for the specific aspects of conversation or speech chosen, and makes notes or checks as a reminder of the students' participation. It is difficult to remember how students participated after hearing so many conversations. The teacher may choose to enter the conversation in the last two minutes, especially for clarification and positive

reinforcement; if the teacher can enter the conversation and the conversation continues smoothly, the students have moved to another skill level.

8. Stop the conversation on time. In order that the next group not be held up or time taken from their allotted time, stay within the schedule. When conversation stops, the teacher may make a general comment, but no mark or specific student comments need be made at this time. As the teacher becomes skilled at this type of evaluation, she/he may be able to give immediate feedback. prepared individual evaluation slips can be quickly filled in and given to students immediately. if time is allotted, a short discussion about the conversation with student self-evaluation would be appropriate.

9. Continue to test each group in the same manner.

Evaluation

The evaluation should take into consideration the expectations the teacher has had of students during the term. This means that it can be as basic as just speaking or as complex as taking an opposing view. The topics can be completely free of expectation or can include required vocabulary or idioms.

Sample evaluation scoring system:

Responding (or commenting)

1 point

(Students may earn as many points as comments they make.)

Opposing comment or question

2 points

(This encourages students to develop conversation through questions. Though some students do act as devil's advocates, opposing views are usually not verbalized in beginning and intermediate conversations.)

Opening of conversation

3 points

Introducing new idea

3 points

No comment at all

0 points

Hogging the conversation

minus 3 points

(This will discourage students from taking all the time for their own advancement. Students need to know that this will happen if they choose to dominate the conversation.)

No student is allowed to fail; therefore the base score of 80 is used. The points are added to this base. Usually the scores then range from 80 to 96.³ Any base score can be used depending on the expectations of the teacher and the level of the students.

This method was satisfactorily used with second-year English majors and second-year non-English majors. Other teachers have used this technique at a beginning level and at the graduate level. This technique is useful as long as students can listen and respond in complete sentences.

To decrease the level of difficulty, give a topic to each group ahead of time so they can prepare. This takes away the spontaneity, but some students are not ready for that.

To increase the difficulty, make the topics complex with more specific requirements, such as debate.

To change the focus, instead of using the evaluation items mentioned above, use such items as pronunciation, enunciation, fluency, stress, or clarity. Any combination of items can be used as long as the students know ahead of time what the criteria will be.

³ This will produce a relatively high grade curve. If you do not want a grade curve that is this high, adjust accordingly. (Editor.)

Teaching Writing: A Rudimentary Introduction

Don Snow

The introduction below describes several sample approaches to writing at different levels. For students who are at the beginning stages -- not yet ready for composition -- there are activities which can be incorporated in other kinds of classes. For beginning and intermediate composition students there are two sample courses. Finally, we will conclude with some ideas for writing at more advanced levels.

I. Pre-Writing

This is the stage at which students have minimal English/Japanese/German skills and still have difficulty writing simple sentences. At this level, writing tasks should be conceptually simple and involve little organizational difficulty, and are probably best combined with other skills. The major goal at this level is to get students used to the basic conventions of writing (capitalization, punctuation, spelling) and to putting what they can say into writing.

Suggested activities:

- 1) Dictation: This conceptually simple activity provides practice in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling in combination with listening practice.
- 2) Writing dialogues: Students can practice both the conventions of writing and basic grammar by writing dialogues, possibly in conjunction with work for a speaking skills class.
- 3) Talk summaries: Listening and writing can be combined by having students listen to a simple talk and take notes. Then ask them to write a summary of the talk based on their notes.
- 4) Dictogloss: (For slightly more advanced students.) Choose a short passage, then read it aloud to students three or so times. The first two times they just listen; the last time they may take notes. Then they need to write down as much of the passage as they possibly can. (See "Activities for Teaching Oral Skills" for more on Dictogloss.)

Correction of students' work at this level will focus mainly on pointing out errors. Generally it is better for you to indicate where errors are (by underlining, using a symbol systems, etc.) than by actually correcting the mistakes yourself. You will probably also want to focus on certain kinds of errors and ignore those which are too far over students' heads. However, you should also try to give credit where it is due, even if that just means writing an occasional "Good" in the margin where appropriate.

II. Beginning

This is the stage at which students have a grasp of simple sentences and basic conventions of English writing, but are not accustomed to organizing their ideas into longer written discourse.

Goals at this level could include:

- 1) Improving command of grammar.
- 2) Becoming accustomed to writing longer compositions.
- 3) Developing enjoyment of writing.
- 4) Developing basic proofreading skills.
- 5) Becoming accustomed to making notes before beginning to write.
- 6) Learning letter form.

Tasks: Good writing tasks for this level (in addition to those above) would include:

- 1) Letter writing. Letter writing is a kind of writing students have a relatively high chance of actually being engaged in at some point, and it is often required by tests in China. The organization of personal letters also does not follow strict rules, so this is a fairly easy kind of writing to start with. Finally, it is not impossible to create situations where students can actually write real letters to real people--

perhaps pen pals in another city in China (work with an Amity colleague in another city) or even in your home country.

2) Personal stories. Some of the best student compositions are those based on personal experiences; they are fairly easy to write because students are familiar with the topic, and students often become genuinely interested in telling stories about themselves. (These compositions are also often quite interesting to read.) Such stories can be written either as straightforward stories or as letters to a friend--real or imaginary. In fact, one of the best ways to introduce a topic for these stories is to write a letter in which you describe such a story of your own (a dangerous experience, an unbelievable coincidence, an exciting day, etc.). You can then put your letter on the board or read it aloud to students as a stimulus to their imaginations and memories. Once the stories are written, you might have students share them with each other--even in class--as well as turning them in to you.

3) Preparing to write--notes: Before students write something, try to get them in the habit of thinking for a minute or two and jotting down a few notes. These need not be nicely formed English/German/Japanese sentences; in fact, they should probably be hastily scribbled words or phrases in Chinese. The purpose of this is to get students in the habit of beginning to think before they write.

4) Proofreading: Learning to proofread is valuable not only because proofreading is an important part of editing but also because practising proofreading is one way to learn grammar. Proofreading is also a task required on foreign language tests in China. Students can practice looking for errors on either materials you hand out or put on the board, on a classmate's paper, or on their own work.

To proofread effectively, students generally need to be looking for specific problems. (Unlike skilled users of a language, students are not generally able to rely on an instinctive knowledge to pick up errors.) Therefore, it may be useful to focus on certain grammar points, perhaps introducing them briefly in class and then having students look specifically for these points as they proofread. When possible, it also helps if you tell students where to look for certain kinds of problems (Ex: before and after nouns for article and plural problems, at verbs for verb tense problems, at commas for problems with independent clauses connected only by commas). Students generally also cannot find mistakes in their own work right after they finish writing a composition--they will have much better luck the morning after or a few days later--so you might try to get them out of the habit of writing their homework right before class.

Evaluation: Paper correction at this level should involve responding to both content and form. Comments on content need not be judgements; they can include any kind of comment which indicates that you understood what the student was trying to express, and may take the form of agreeing, disagreeing, sympathizing, or noting that you have had a similar experience. The main thing is that the students realize you received their message as well as its form. Often the most efficient way to respond to specific points in student writing is through brief comments or questions in the margin; comments at the end tend to be longer, take more time to write, and be harder for students to understand because they are further removed from whatever in the student paper they are comments about.

As students begin to write compositions instead of sentences, papers will contain more errors and take longer to read. It is therefore especially important at the beginning and intermediate levels that you not become bogged down in correcting all student errors. Before students write something, ask them to pay special attention to whatever points of structure have been brought up in class, perhaps even providing a cumulative checklist. Then, as you go over papers focus on these structure points and ignore most others. As noted above, students need to learn to correct their own mistakes, so your goal is to draw their attention to errors rather than to correct them. (I find it much faster--when possible--to indicate problems by just drawing a line under them rather than by working with a complicated symbol system, and it seems to work just as well.)

III. Intermediate

Students at this level can produce sustained written discourse and express basic ideas in writing, though often with many errors. However, they do not have much experience in organizing or editing

work to ensure maximum clarity and effect, and still probably tend to do little planning or editing of their writing.

Goals at this level could include:

- 1) Continuing to improve command of grammar.
- 2) Learning to prepare for a composition more carefully by taking notes and organizing them, possibly even writing some kind of outline.
- 3) Learning to express and support an opinion (following an opinion--reason--evidence pattern) or develop an idea (using an idea--explanation--concrete detail pattern).
- 4) Learning to edit a composition for content as well as grammar.
- 5) Continuing to sharpen proofreading skills.

Tasks: Good writing tasks at this level would include:

- 1) Guided writing essays: A guided essay is one in which students are given information and then asked to use this to write a composition (paragraph, letter, etc.). This kind of writing is required on many Chinese tests.
- 2) Opinion papers. A useful and interesting kind of writing task involves learning to state, present reasons for, and support an opinion. The skills are basic to expository writing tasks (such as academic papers, reports, business letters), and are also skills required for many types of writing tests, including Chinese tests as well as the TOEFL. They also provide a good context in which to train students in planning compositions and editing them. Opinion papers can start as simple paragraphs which answer a question (Ex: What is the best way to memorize vocabulary?) and develop into longer papers as students' skills improve.

The form of composition required by TOEFL examinations is actually a good one for practicing expository writing skills. Students are given a topic on which they must express an opinion. They must then first analyze the issue, pointing out advantages/disadvantages or good/bad points of whatever is being discussed, and finally state and explain their own opinion.

When working on opinion papers, class time can be used in having students discuss a topic in order to generate ideas for a paper, or even to debate a topic as closure after writing about it. Class time is also well spent in having students plan (outline) their compositions, and edit their work, especially as these are the two steps of the writing process students are most likely to skip when working on their own.

- 3) Business letters. Learning to write business letters is useful not only because this is a skill which students may have need for, but also because it is a good context within which to practice expository writing skills. In addition to learning a proper form for business letters, students need to learn to state their point(s) clearly and adequately, and then finish without leaving a sea of wasted ink. (Incidentally, the value of brevity in business letters makes them a good kind of writing to focus on in classes that are very large.

- 4) Journals: Despite the conceptual simplicity of journal writing, I have placed it here at the intermediate level on the assumption that students will find journal writing more interesting once their language skills are sufficient to permit them to explore thoughts and emotions in some depth rather than being restricted to very superficial ideas. However, journal writing can be used at almost any level.

Students may find keeping a journal easier if they you give suggestions as to what kinds of things to write about. While a journal can be used like a diary, as a record of the day's activities and thoughts, it can also be focused on topics such as the language learning process itself.

One main virtue of journal writing is that students can do a lot of it without overburdening you. Most teachers tend to read over journals more for content than form, so reading journals tends to be more interesting and less time-consuming per page than reading other kinds of work.

Evaluation: The main difference between correction at this level and the beginning level is that here more attention should be directed to issues of organization, effectiveness of argument, clarity, etc. Often this is best done through short margin comments -- often questions such as "Why?" -- rather than longer comments at the end.

The greater complexity of compositions at this level can make grading more difficult. The process can be made quicker and more reliable by writing out some kind of rough criteria system before going over a batch of papers, based on the points that you have emphasized in class in general and the assigning of this paper in particular. Having a written description of what kind of paper deserves what kind of grade is especially helpful as you begin to get tired. When grading at this level, some teachers prefer to give two grades--one for form and one for content.

IV. Advanced

Above the level of basic writing, choice of focus should be based as closely as possible on students' future needs. However, because of its motivating effect, there is also much to be said for doing some writing which is more fun than practical. Types of writing on which an advanced course might focus would include:

- 1) Reviews of books or films: This is a good way to practice expository writing skills and also to integrate writing into reading or listening courses.
- 2) Summaries of articles, books, films. This is a skill required in academic and report writing, and involves considerable analysis in the process of deciding not only what is or is not important enough to be included in the summary, but also how to group material for maximum efficiency. Again, this is a good way to integrate writing with other skills.
- 3) Academic writing or research papers: These are most appropriate to students who are likely to have need for such skills. Disciplines tend to have distinct and differing demands for professional writing, so for many groups of students the focus will need to be more on basic skills than specifics.
- 4) Business writing - letters, reports: For students in advanced general writing courses this can be a good focus because learning to write things like resumes, application letters, and reports is beneficial for a wide range of students.
- 5) Creative writing - poems, stories: This kind of writing tends to be more fun to do and read than report writing, so can be a good motivator.

V. Some Thoughts on Writing Topic Ideas

Often the best topics for writing assignments are those which allow students to tell you something you really want to know about themselves and their culture. The topics below may make the compositions you receive a little more interesting to read, and students may be more enthusiastic about writing if you seem to be genuinely looking forward to finding out what they have to tell you.

These topics will probably work better if you customize them to your audience and make them more specific--having a very clear assignment generally makes it easier for students to get started writing.

- Introduce important people in your life.
- Tell about your most memorable (dangerous, exciting, strange, happy, etc.) experience.
- Introduce your hometown for a foreign visitor.
- Introduce your best middle school teacher.
- Describe your typical day as a student.
- Describe the best way to learn a foreign language.
- Tell about preparing for and taking the college entrance examination.
- Tell about China's greatest hero.
- Describe a strategy for successful bargaining in a market.
- What are China's best/worst bicycles? Compare and analyze.
- Introduce the best places for a foreigner to visit in your province (city, county, etc).

Writing Activities and Topic Ideas

Kate Goodspeed

I. Factors Impacting the Teaching of Writing

There are many factors that can impact how you teach writing. Here, three of them are discussed briefly: the needs of your students, the setting, and the approach you decide to take towards teaching writing.

Student Needs: Obviously, every teacher must tailor his or her writing classes to the needs of the students, but these may be difficult to assess. You might want to ask the following questions: How will the students use English writing? Are they preparing for a standardized test? What is their current level? Where do they hope to be at the end of the class? What are the students' goals? What are the English Department's goals for them? Often, the answers to these questions will be ephemeral and in the nature of, "All we know is that they are supposed to have English Writing for one year. You are the foreign teacher. You know best. Just teach them English writing." Individual interviews with a few of your most perceptive students may or may not uncover specific goals.

As you stay longer at your school you may see how graduated students and the other Chinese English teachers actually use English writing (often smoothing out translations of Chinese into English or writing short letters or faxes for business people). As you work with your students you will certainly uncover all the problems that they have with English writing. Both of these factors can impact the content of your course.

The Setting: Some teachers teach writing in the more academic setting of a three-or-four-year program; others teach writing in the more pragmatic setting of a two-year teacher-preparation program. Some teachers teach writing to the same students to whom they teach speaking and, thusly, can integrate the two classes if they choose. Others teach only writing to their students and must coordinate assignments and topics with other teachers if their lessons are to be integrated in any way.

Approaches to Teaching Writing: There are many approaches to teaching writing. These approaches can range anywhere from a strict, linear "let's start at the very beginning" approach where the class works up from phrases to clauses to sentences to paragraphs and on up to compositions, letters, and full-fledged research papers to a fluency-based "process writing" approach where the student's inherent communication skills are assumed and the *process* of writing is stressed rather than the *product* of writing. Some approaches work towards increasing student creativity and fluency and others work mainly toward correct form. Some writing classes focus on becoming familiar with various genres: the business letter, the three, four, or five-paragraph essay with requisite introduction, three body paragraphs on each of three points, and concluding paragraph, and possibly a research paper. Other classes, and books, provide a wide variety of writing models which the students then follow.

It should probably follow that your approach is dictated by the students' goals and the setting in which you are teaching writing. Often, however, the approach is based on many factors and highly dependent on your own style and personality. As teachers of writing, we must find an approach with which both we and our students are comfortable and which ultimately results meeting the goals of our students.

II. Writing Activities

Quick writes and free writes in class: A quick write or free write is a very short assignment where the writing is done quickly in class. Quick writes have many uses and advantages for the teacher and students. First, they can be used in a very discreet way to practice some writing element just introduced (for example, a topic sentence, the use of vivid and specific adjectives or adverbs, or building a parallel list). They can also be used to help students develop fluency and write in the time-

controlled setting of the classroom. They can be used to allow students to freely reflect on some topic that is being discussed in class.

When you collect free writes you can tell, immediately, which students have real problems with writing by the amount and fluency displayed. If poor students tend to have others write their assigned papers for them, this can easily be detected by collecting free writes and walking around to see who is having difficulty, or simply not able to put even one word down on paper. Finally, you can respond quickly to free writes, skimming them in a short time and spotting general problems so that you can restructure your future lesson plans.

Mind Maps: The mind map is a pre-writing technique that is excellent in freeing students to consider many different facets of a topic. It is a way of getting brainstorming ideas into a more or less organized form. The best way of teaching this technique is by doing it yourself with or without S input on the blackboard. A mind map starts with a circled topic in the middle of the black board (or a piece of paper, when the student does one individually).

Let's use an example where you are asking for S input on the topic of "Women's Equality." Perhaps you have assigned this topic, with focus questions, for discussion in class. In the center of the black board, you write "women's equality" and circle it. You would ask So what kinds of things they were talking about in their small groups. If you gave them focus questions you can predict the types of things they've been discussing and help them along. You might, eventually, get items like "education," "housework," "husbands," "Women hold up half the world," "government policy," and "single-child policy" up on the board around the central topic in a circle. Circle each topic as you write it and draw a line from the center out to the sub-topic. As students mention "women are devalued if they only have girl babies" add this somewhere and draw a line to connect it to some topic. This will look like a mess and will not be perfectly organized. Don't edit what you put on the board. Try to write every idea up on the board.

Follow-up Activities: You might then, if you have any more board space, try to organize the topics and sub topics into an outline form, or ask the So to do this, individually or in pairs. You might ask them to write their own mind maps about another topic, individually or in small groups. You might require a mind map as a first assignment in preparation for a larger paper on some subject.

Outlines: Many writing text books available for Chinese classrooms have a section on outlines. After you have taught brainstorming and mind maps, you might want to teach outlining one way of getting your thoughts organized. After some initial teaching, perhaps using a mind map that you've done in class, you can do a variety of in-class and out-of-class activities. You can have students write outlines based on a topic which you provide. You can ask students to provide both a mind map and an outline as pre-writing products for an assigned paper. (It is best to collect these earlier than the paper or students will write the paper and then go back and do the outline --- you remember this technique from high school, right?)

You can have students produce an outline of a written piece from one of their textbooks. You can have students write an outline of a mini-lecture you give them on a topic. This last activity helps the students see how outlining can be one way of taking notes and will help them improve their listening (always a goal of Chinese English students).

Descriptions Using Pictures: This activity is best used as part of a speaking unit on describing places or people, but could also be used to practice some specific writing element (a parallel list (series) of vivid adjectives comes to mind).

You need to bring pictures from magazines and calendars to class. Fan the pictures out on your desk and ask the students to come up and sort through the pictures to find one that especially intrigues them. Ask them to write a descriptive piece as a quick write in the classroom. If you have been working with descriptive adjectives or figures of speech, you can request that they use vivid adjectives and a metaphor or a simile or two in their descriptions. Collect these, along with the pictures (putting away all pictures that were not chosen -- very essential!).

After class look through the descriptions, making sure that each S did one and checking for general things that So did well or poorly to point out in a mini-lecture in the next class. In the next class, pass out the descriptions willy nilly (not letting students get what they wrote themselves) and

have the students find the picture that corresponds to the description they have been given. Then, put them into groups of three and ask them to make up a story using the three pictures. This latter is best done as an oral activity. To process these stories, you can have two groups get together and share their stories while you listen in on a few. If it is later in the year and you want to take the time this requires, each group could present their story to the class (this is very time-consuming, as you can imagine).

Personification Stories: One figure of speech that brings out students' creativity and gives them permission to use their imagination is personification. You can do this using ordinary objects found in the classroom. Bring several objects up to the front of the classroom. A mop, dustpan, and a broom are good objects to use. You have to do a little playing around with these objects to give the students the idea of making up a story where these objects are alive, talk, think, and feel. You can comment on the broom's stiff haircut and proud bearing and even have "him" say a few words in an imaginary voice. You can imagine that the mop's hair was once very soft and beautiful and that perhaps she was very vain. You can pretend that the mop is looking in the mirror and, using your best May West voice, remembering when she was beautiful and the talk of the town. If the dustpan is dirty and broken, perhaps it is looked down on because of its disability or appearance, even though its role is essential. Ask the students to write a two-page story about these three objects in class. This is a good activity for the beginning of the year as it really frees the students to be creative. You can also introduce Writer's Workshop with this in-class writing, enabling So to appreciate their classmates' creativity. If you link these two activities together, you will need a full two-hour class period.

Mouse, Mask, and Miniskirt: Tell your students to begin to write a story that contains all three of these elements. (You can choose other elements if you want to do this more than once, but these trigger interesting stories.) Ask the students to stop writing before they have resolved the story. In other words, they should not finish the story but leave it at an exciting moment. They should write about one or one and a half pages. You can write along with your students. Since this requires some creativity and imagination, some students will need time to do this and others will rush to the task. For some students, this is their best writing. Their imaginations go wild! Collect these papers.

In a subsequent class, pass these papers out to different students (you'll have to assure them that they *shouldn't* have their own paper) and ask each student to complete the other student's story. Then, you can read through the stories and give them grades for both parts of the stories or process them in some other way. The students like this because they get to work out an ending for another story and they are always curious to see how someone else has ended their own story. It is interesting for the teacher to see which students resonate with this activity -- often the students who do poorly on other assignments.

Research Project and Report: Research papers are difficult to assign in China because there are few books in the library to consult. Using interview data from questionnaires is a good way to do projects and write papers on a variety of topics. This can be done in a variety of ways.

In small groups, students can choose a topic about which they'd like to know other students' experience, ideas, and opinions. They would develop questionnaires to be used with the other students in their class, grade, department, dorm, or whatever. After interviewing a certain number of students, they would use the data they had gathered to write up a report.

A research project can also be done as a whole class project that might survey middle school students or certain people in their village. You can integrate this with a topic that has come up in conversation class or in students' text books. For example, if you have been discussing *women's equality* in class and perhaps using this as a topic for a mind map, you could do research with village women.

After the mind map, ask students in small groups to come up with questions they'd be interested in asking women in their village to see what their lives really are like and how they feel about some of the issues being discussed in class. You can then copy down this list of questions from the blackboard and, possibly, synthesize them with questions from other classes into a questionnaire that can be used by all the writing students that you teach. Ask all students to take this questionnaire and interview three women in their village. Make sure that they know that they should maintain

confidentiality. Use the words "secret" and "fake name" to get this idea across. As much as possible, what the women tell them should not be objects of village gossip.

The information from the questionnaires can then be written up in a case study research paper in which the three women are discussed. If possible, other research methods can be used to see the relationships between some of the elements. For example, all the data from all the women interviewed could be collated and the question asked: Are educated women more or less satisfied with their lives.

Writer's Workshop: Writer's Workshop is an essential part of the "process" method of teaching writing. It emphasizes that all writing is "work in process" and the importance of sharing one's work with one's peers and getting their input. In the Chinese classroom it has many benefits. It can greatly improve student's listening and speaking skills and uses real, authentic material as a focus of discussion -- the students' writing.

Writer's workshop is a small group process in which individual students read or present their work-in-process while others listen and provide constructive feedback. Each element of writer's workshop needs to be taught and reinforced. Here is the basic process. When some writing -- a poem, a paragraph, an in-class assignment, or a homework assignment -- is ready to be handed in, you break the students into small groups of two or three (two is best in the beginning, three later on). Each student reads his or her own piece. The other student(s) listen and offer feedback, which is recorded. Other tasks, such as editing can also be done in these groups, when the papers are ready for error correction.

The first element that needs to be reinforced is the need to have the writer *read* his or her work and for the others in the group to *listen*. Students in China want to turn this into an intensive reading task. They don't want to do the work of listening and trying to understand their classmate's pronunciation, grammar, and writing. You must reinforce how important it is for the writer to hear his or her work being read aloud. You must reinforce how much this activity can improve each student's listening comprehension. You must go around and make sure that they are really reading their papers aloud and not just passing them around and reading them.

The second element that needs to be taught is how to give constructive feedback. Students will find this task difficult. However, if they are going to be teachers themselves, it is essential for them to be able to respond to student writing. To assist them in this process, you might give them a list of questions to answer about each paper. For example: Does the writer set the scene well? Does the writer use direct speech rather than indirect speech? Does the writer describe his or her characters clearly and vividly? Is the plot clear? Is there a good ending? These questions should, of course, reflect the assignment. With a poem, I will ask the questions: What image sticks in your mind after hearing the poem? What words did you particularly like? Was there a figure of speech -- a metaphor or simile -- used? Was it effective?

Third, the feedback from their peers must be recorded. Some teachers ask someone besides the writer to take notes of feedback. Others ask the writer to write down on his or her paper what others said. Still others ask the students to write down their own comments on the bottom of each paper. How this is handled may depend on whether you are using Writer's Workshop as part of an integrated class, where spoken comments and note-taking by the writer might want to be stressed, or of a stand-alone writing class, where written comments might be more appropriate.

Lastly, you can use Writer's Workshop as a venue for editing papers, though that is not its primary purpose. If you use Writer's Workshop in this way, you must be clear when this is required or all workshops will be used solely for error correction and the creative use of it for larger and more general feedback will be lost. Make sure that students are focused in their editing, looking for one type of mistake at a time, such as verb tense.

Portfolios: The use of portfolio is common in western countries. In China, the use of portfolios can serve as a collection point for student work so that they can present their writing in an organized way at the end of the school year. Portfolios also tend to reverse the trend of Chinese students losing their writing: from first drafts of work that they might want to work on later to finished pieces that you have laboriously commented on and edited.

At the beginning of the year, pass out 1/4 sheets of heavy poster paper. Show the students how to fold the portfolio into a folder with pockets. Ask each student to decorate the front of his or

her portfolio with a picture that represents some element of themselves. If you are teaching writing as part of an integrated class, you can have them draw these mini-posters about themselves as part of a unit on introductions. These mini-posters can then be the focus of a class on introducing yourselves to your teacher and classmates. Later they can be glued onto the portfolios. It is best if you have a finished portfolio, with your name and "English Writing Portfolio" on it, to show your students.

III. Teaching Around Student Errors

It is inevitable that you will discover many common errors in the writing of your students in all your writing classes. You can approach this from a number of ways: provide handouts with editorial checklists and common problems to avoid, present short mini-lessons on one or two errors each class, ask the students to present short mini-lessons on one or two errors each class, and/or create various error correction games.

Editorial Checklists: Here is a standard editorial checklist. See below for a discussion on how to use this in class.

Verb Problems:

- X Subject-verb disagreement
- X Sudden verb tense shift without signalling
- X Incorrect verb tense
- X Lack of -d or -ed ending
- X Incorrect use of -ing ending or infinitive form
- X Lack of some needed form of "to be," "do," or "has"

Sentence Structure Problems:

- X Comma splicing
- X Sentence fragment
- X Run-on sentence
- X Double negative
- X Use of "although" with "but" or "because" with "so"

Other Odds and Ends

- X Faulty pronoun reference
- X Lack of possessive ending
- X Incorrect adverb/adjective form
- X Incorrect use of articles
- X Lack of parallelism, especially in series and lists
- X Wrong word order or wrong word

The students can use this editorial checklist when checking their own papers for errors. Have them concentrate on only one or two error types at the beginning. Later on they can check for all of these errors at the same time.

Mini-lessons: You, as the teacher, can provide a mini-lesson on each of these grammar points, using examples of errors from student compositions and providing many examples so that they become experienced at finding the errors in what you write on the board.

Alternatively, you can divide the class into small groups and have them decide how they will teach one or two of these error types to their classmates. You will want to provide them with a definition of the error and several sample correct and incorrect sentences. To ensure that they do not teach their classmates incorrectly, you may want to review their lesson plans before they do this in class. This latter activity is a good one to use when your students will be teachers and they want time in front of the classroom.

Error Correction Games: Divide your class into groups of two or three. Review and teach around a short list of standard errors, such as:

- X The use of *although* and *but* in the same sentence.
- X The use of *because* and *so* in the same sentence.
- X The incorrect use of *ever* as in, "I have ever been to Mt. Tai."
- X The incorrect placement of *very* as in "I very like to play basketball" or, conversely, "I am interested in playing basketball very much."

Write on the board some sentences which contain these mistakes. Ask each group to correct the error and pass in their paper. Give a prize to the groups with the most corrections. This may seem so simple, however it is not at all. If you do this with 10 or 15 common errors, many groups don't even get a passing grade. This is an excellent way to determine if they really have absorbed the correct way of phrasing something in English. As a final activity, a quiz where people are working as individuals would be a good idea also.

IV. Poetry

I Remember Poems: "I Remember" poems are a good way to get your students interested in writing poetry and in breaking through the ideas of strict rhyme and verse of English poetry and the rhythms and word patterns of Chinese poetry that may constrict them. "I remember poems are fun and can be vivid, down to earth, and personal. They also help the students learn that their own language and experience make poetry.

Write "DETAIL" on the board, and discuss what it means. Tell the class you're going to ask them to write "I remember..." followed by what they remember. It can be anything, from the day they were born to this morning, and it doesn't have to be important. Shorthand things like, "I remember my first bike" -- period, end of memory, are tedious. Students should flesh out their memories with the detail that was part of the original experience -- colors, exact names, unusual focuses. They should tell just what it was that made it stick in their mind. Pretend it's a one minute movie and tell everything in it. Make it real.

Read "I Remember" poems of others and of your own, pointing out good uses of sound, how poetic language often arises out of common speech. Here are some examples. When you read these, tell why you think they are good. Savor the words. Allow silence, so that the students can appreciate the words.

- I remember the only time I ever saw my mother cry. I was eating apricot pie.
- I remember a very poor boy who had to wear his sister's blouses to school.
- I remember very old people when I was very young. Their houses smelled funny.
- I remember how embarrassed I was when other children cried.
- I remember one very hot summer day I put ice cubes in my aquarium and all the fish died. [Brainard]
- I remember playing with the skin that hung from my great-grandma's arm and being told not to do it again. [a seventh grader]
- I remember my sister sealing a banana from home and running away on her blue bike, up the dirt road. [a twelfth grader]
- I remember the day my favorite rabbit died. I picked him up, and he was light and cold and hard. [a tenth grader]
- I remember catching a black and yellow caterpillar. I tried to keep him by sticking two flowers together. But he ate his way through! [a fourth grader]

This is a good in-class writing activity. Given too much time to think and compose, Chinese students get the dictionary out and the poems become artificial. Collect them and then, the next class, read (with permission from the writers) the best ones aloud. If possible, savor the really good, vivid details that make the poems special so that students will begin to have an idea of what makes good poetry. As always, it is interesting to see that some of the students who do least well in other more linear activities, do very well in this type of work. [Some of these ideas from *Poetry Everywhere*.]

Five-Sense Poems: As preparation, make a list of emotions or other evocative words on a piece of paper and cut them into small slips, one for each student. Here is a list that works well: Happiness, strength, old age, jealousy, boredom, generosity, pain, surprise, hope, envy, worry, shock, shame, warm hands, amazement, work, holidays, loneliness, Sunday mornings, peace, sympathy, money, greed, fear, friendship, celebration, selfishness, problems, cold weather, affection, birth, guilt.

1) First, do a sample poem with the entire class. Give the following directions to your students, pausing for them to follow the directions and making notes on the board for the more visual in your class:

"Write the word "despair" in the middle of a sheet of paper. To the right of the word, write the color it makes you think of. To the left, write down a sound you associate with it. If you could taste it, what would it taste like? Write that word at the top of the paper. If you could smell it, what would it smell like? Write this at the bottom. Think of a feeling or an action you associate with this word and write it right below the word."

(When you say, "Write the color..." your students will inevitably give you a blank or questioning stare. Just stare right back and say, "Yes, the color of despair. For example, despair might be gray.")

2) Second, ask the students to throw out the words they've thought of. Under color, you might have a list such as "gray, black, white, colorless, murky gray, etc." Collect as many of the words as the students are ready to give you. Some may not contribute but many will. Savor the really good ones. Put even the weirdest ones up on the board. Then construct a poem with this form.

Despair is gray
It sounds like crying
It tastes bitter
It smells of damp rooms
It feels like walking in the rain.

3) Third, ask the students to write their own despair poem, using their own words.

4) Fourth, have students pick one of the slips of paper (with the emotions written on them, as listed above) from a hat and ask the students to do this exercise with their own word (each student having a different one).

Collect the poems and read them at home, marking the excellent lines. Almost every student will have at least one line with some potential and some students will have succeeded with each line to make the whole poem excellent. In the next class, read the poems that are the best (with permission of the poet, of course).

V. Writing Topics

Gertrude Moskowitz, in her book *Caring and Sharing in the Second Language Classroom*, has a good list of topics that can be used in a variety of settings. The *Conversation Cookbook* also has topics for conversation that can be used as writing topics.

Cautions about Topics

1) Do assign topics. If you don't, you'll really encourage plagiarism. Some students are even smart enough to throw in a few mistakes or lines they write themselves to throw you off. Pick a topic you are interested in reading about. You will have many students writing papers and you may have to read several drafts of many papers on this topic. Giving students a choice of three or four topics gives you some relief when you are reading 60 student papers. You may want to give one choice that offers a chance for the more daring and imaginative students, such as "Individuality: Can you be your own person in China?"

2) Don't choose topics that are subjects of government pamphlets or found in their own English books, unless you put a twist on the topic. Students will be tempted to copy material if they can or they will recycle the government's ideas almost verbatim. If you do assign topics like smoking and birth control, give some focus questions that help students see that you expect them to think about the topic in a new way or discuss it out of their own experience. This also discourages plagiarism.

3) Seriously consider assignments that encourage students to speak about their own immediate experience and memories. In class, you can work on descriptive skills (people and places) and the use of dialogue with these topics, helping them to make these important stories come alive with vivid language. Moskowitz's topics lend themselves to this type of writing. Some of them are: "A time when I was treated fairly," "my grandmother/father," "the most important person from my childhood," "an incident from childhood", "the most beautiful place I've ever been."

Topics for Argumentation/Debates/Opinion Papers

These topics can be used for argumentation/opinion papers and fit well into an integrated writing and speaking unit that includes discussion and debate. These topics can be presented as open-ended questions or as statements of opinion to be supported or argued with.

- X Should the traditional Chinese teaching method be abandoned?
- X A woman's place is in the home.
- X Should getting married be less expensive/extravagant in China?
- X Should the Confucian ideal of filial piety be reconsidered in today's China?
- X Is the back door good or bad for China?
- X Should corruption be dealt with more resolutely?
- X Should the Chinese ideal of beauty be based on long hair, big eyes, a high nose, and... alone?
- X Is love more important than money in marriage?
- X Do a color T.V. and a fridge mean happiness?
- X Should we follow fashion?
- X Should men and women be treated equally?
- X Boys and girls should be allowed to be friends freely without others gossiping about them.
- X Boys and girls in college should be allowed to date and fall in love without restriction.
- X Should religion be abolished?
- X Should teachers be paid more?
- X Should the Japanese still be treated as enemies?
- X "Honesty is the best policy" Is it always right to be honest?
- X Alcohol is a good thing.
- X A true man must drink and smoke.
- X Looks really count.
- X Should we be required to learn a second foreign language?
- X Should college education be reformed?
- X Education should be given priority by the Chinese government.
- X Economic development should be given priority over education in China
- X Should corporal punishment be used in bringing up children?
- X Should your parents have the right to determine whom you will marry, even if it is against your will?
- X Bababa - fafafa: Is it all hocus-pocus?

Exposition Topics

- Xis the ideal age.
- X Chinese-Japanese relations
- X The best teacher
- X The values I look for in a spouse
- X The dark side of China's modernization
- X The importance of education in present day China
- X Why I am studying English
- X What it means to lose face in China
- X What is a true man/woman?

Topics For Composition

The following topics come from *A Thousand Topics for Composition: Revised, Illinois English Bulletin*, February, 1971. Although these topics are used in teaching elementary school-aged children, they can be used or adapted and used in class. These topics could also be used in conversation, as quick-write topics, as journal topics (if you assign topics, which is an option occasionally) or as topics for papers or poems.

Description

Me

- . Why I am thankful
- . When I was little
- . Describe your personality
- . How my family celebrates
- . What makes me happy when I'm sick
- . I'm sad because
- . I'm happy because
- . The thing I treasure most.

My world

- . A bumblebee
- . A cloud
- . The fan
- . The flag
- . A hot day in summer
- . I saw it.
- . A mosquito
- . The raisin
- . Sleet is...
- . Snow is....
- . A snowy winter day.
- . Some signs of fall are...
- . The stars...
- . The sun...
- . A train whistle.
- . People I can do without.
- . A place I would like to visit.
- . A cool swim on a hot day.
- . A crisp day in the fall.
- . A sunny day in the spring.
- . A windy day.
- . A cold day.
- . A clock.
- . A rugged mountain range.
- . The sound of...
- . The taste of...
- . The perfect place to live.
- . The exact color of a lake.
- . The new leaves.
- . The song of the wind that howls around the corner at night.
- . My neighborhood.
- . A walk in the forest
- . Walking in the rain.
- . It's morning again.

- . It's winter and the earth is bare.
- . A dog's long ears.
- . A kitten's soft purr.
- . A calf's pink tongue.
- . In the rain I can...
- . It was shiny and bright.
- . The house I live in.
- . A person in action.
- . When I plant a seed, here is what happens.
- . The first snow fell last night. Outside, it...

Characterization

Personal

- . When I was 10 years old...
- . When I am 50 years old...
- . If I were a teacher, I would
- . If I were president of my country, I would...
- . If I could make one phone call anywhere, I would call... because.... and say....
- . I get angry when...
- . I often worry about....
- . I would like to give a poor child...because....
- . When I was younger....
- . What I am really like.
- . How I see myself.
- . The real me.

Others (Human)

- . I admire....
- . The one I love most.
- . My favorite aunt (uncle).
- . My favorite kind of person.
- . What I admire most in a friend who is a boy/girl
- . My best friend.
- . A beautiful person.
- . He made me laugh.
- . The famous person I would most like to be.
- . The unknown person I would most like to be.
- . The most unusual person I know.
- . My first friend.
- . My kind of family.

Others (Plant and Animal)

- . I think trees in the winter feel....
- . Consider the mighty ant.
- . My favorite animal.
- . How a tree feels on a cold night.
- . I'm a lazy kitten.
- . A tale about a big fish.

Dramatization

"Proverbial" Plays

- . Speech is silver, silence is golden.
- . A penny saved is a penny earned.

- . The early bird gets the worm.

Playwriting

- . Write a play about some incident in history.
- . Write a highly adventurous story using members of the class as the characters.

Character Portrayal (these are all inappropriate, but some could be chosen from Chinese stories)

- . Gulliver the great, an episode.
- . Pall Bunyan at the city park.
- . Sailing the seas with Christopher Columbus.
- . The night Lincoln died.

Narration

Stories

- . Each minute seemed like an hour.
- . Playing the game.
- . The trial.
- . Caught in the act.
- . At last the day was over. (One sentence of story; build theme from there.)
- . The discovery of bubble gum.
- . The accidental wonder.
- . Fractured fairy tales.
- . And then it happened.
- . There were strange footprints in the sand.
- . A funny story.
- . Late for school.
- . Lost in a wilderness.
- . There is only one way to do something -- that is...
- . What would happen if...
- . She returned to the empty room but something had moved.
- . Let's go fly a kite and...

Personal

- . I wonder why...
- . A million in one and I had to...
- . I was so afraid when...
- . I found a...
- . I wish that...
- . I slowly lifted the lid and....
- . Why I enjoy....
- . I remember how scared I was when....
- . I was almost frightened to death once when....
- . I floated on a cloud and....
- . So I said to my mother....
- . I didn't mean to do it.
- . We did it together.
- . How can I explain what I've done?
- . Why did it have to be me?
- . Someone made fun of me.
- . My dog is lost.
- . If I could be part of my favorite T.V. show.
- . If I had a day off from school, I would...
- . One day I went downtown. On the way, I found a ten kuai note.
- . What I think about before I fall asleep.

- . My most exciting time.
- . My first haircut.
- . My autobiography.
- . Something I remember from the time when I was little.
- . When I broke a rule.
- . When I cried.
- . How I was frightened.
- . My most disappointing moment.
- . It couldn't happen to me, but it did.
- . I was so embarrassed.
- . Once I dreamed...
- . Was I sick!
- . The funniest thing I ever saw.
- . I learned my lesson.
- . I'll never forget this.
- . The best thing that ever happened to me.

Special days

- . The happiest day in my life.
- . My most exciting day.
- . My favorite day.
- . My most memorable day.
- . My best birthday party.
- . My birthday wish.
- . A holiday story.
- . On Saturday, I...
- . On Spring Festival eve, I...
- . On Spring Festival morning, I...

Imaginative Writing

Other places

- . One hundred years from now, I would invent...
- . Put yourself back in the times of (some Chinese historical period)
- . When I was two.
- . The day I grew six feet.
- . Write a description of your landing on Mars.
- . If I could change the world.
- . What do you think it would be like to live on Mars?
- . Would you like to go to the moon?
- . What I can see from a cloud.
- . My home is the moon.
- . What happens when I put on my magic vest?
- . If I had a magic pencil at school.
- . If I could be anyone.
- . If I had a million kuai.
- . An imaginary trip anywhere.
- . If I were only one inch tall, I would...
- . If I could only relive yesterday.
- . If I were living long ago.
- . If I could live in a different time period, which period would I pick and how would life be different for me?
- . If I could drive a car, I would...
- . If I could reach the sky, I would...
- . If I could fly, I would.

- . If I became invisible.
- . If I could do what I wanted for one day, I would...
- . If I could have one wish.
- . If I had three wishes.
- . If I had my very own town, I would...

My thoughts

- . What is quiet?
- . What is peace?
- . What is happiness?
- . What makes me cry.
- . The happiest day of my life.
- . A dream I've had.
- . The funniest thing I ever saw.
- . Things I can't see or touch.
- . Babies can't talk because...
- . My favorite fairy tale is.... because....
- . To me, spring means....
- . The things I fear
- . When I am alone, I like to....
- . The place I would most like to explore.
- . When it is dark, I like to think of...
- . In spring, I feel like....

My dreams

- . I would be a.... because....
- . Clouds remind me of....
- . Where I would like to be right now.
- . A strange dream.
- . What will you be doing in the year 2006?
- . If things could talk, I think they would say....
- . Describe a child's day one hundred days from today.

My ideas

- . Excitement is...
- . War means...
- . Love is....
- . A good teacher is...
- . Summer is....
- . What a mother is.
- . How does it feel to be disappointed?
- . Leaves fall off trees because...
- . Leaves turn colors because...
- . To hibernate means....
- . Loneliness is....
- . To succeed is.... (be careful of this and the next one, or they're all be a series of platitudes.)
- . A friend is... (If anyone assigns this topic and does NOT have at least one student write, "A friend in need is a friend indeed," you win a prize trip to Zaozhuang, all expenses paid!)
- . The traffic light that never changed.
- . If I could invent something to make work easier, I would invent....
- . If I could invent something to make life more fun, I would invent....
- . If I could change my village (or neighborhood for city dwellers), I would...
- . The experience I most want to remember (or forget) is....
- . Write a story describing a new toy you have invented to amuse children under ten years of age.

My Actions

- . What I like to do best in my free time.
- . The method of travel that I enjoy the most.
- . If I were snowed in, I would....
- . The presents I am going to buy for my family are...
- . When I am sick in bed, I...
- . If I could go to any country to live, I would go..
- . If I found a hurt animal, I would...
- . If I were to receive an award and was later told I would not get it, I would feel... and would...

Before Teaching Practice: A Grab-Bag Of Ideas And Activities

Kim Strong

For any of you with students on the verge of their teaching practicum, Melissa and I thought we would pass along a few activities that we've used in the last few weeks to provide some much-needed encouragement and also to stimulate some interesting discussions about teaching issues. Consider it a "grab-bag" and even if teaching practice has already come and gone at your school this year, perhaps it will provide a few new ideas for next time!

Writing Before Teaching Practice

Begin by asking students to do a 5-minute "quick-write" expressing their feelings about their up-coming teaching practice. (This gives them an opportunity to get some of their ideas on paper before they are asked to discuss it orally.)

Next, tell students to pretend they are TV reporters who have come to interview a student about teaching practice. Emphasize that all good reporters prepare questions ahead of time, and give them the chance to write a list of questions first. Then pair students with someone other than their desk-mate, and let them interview each other for about 10-15 minutes. (This turned out to be a very lively discussion and I didn't hear a single student lapse into Chinese!) Afterwards, ask the students to return to their seats and write a brief summary of the most interesting and important things their partners told them. (This was handed in to the teacher so we could see specifically where some of the concerns were among students.)

Based on what they have heard and written, give students about 10-15 minutes to write a personal letter of encouragement to their partner offering any advice or suggestions that may be helpful to them. Encourage students to use standard letter style and to write neatly as this is a real letter to a real person who may read it several times in the days and weeks to come. When all students are finished, let them deliver the letters and allow time for reading.

Following this, we found it useful to talk a little about the importance of using time wisely in the two weeks prior to teaching practice and about setting "specific" goals. Students tend to set broad unrealistic goals for themselves and failure to meet those goals reinforces their feelings of inadequacy.

We talked about how a goal such as "I want to have beautiful handwriting" is unrealistic for a two-week period if your hand-writing presently looks like "chicken scratch." However, specific goals such as "I will work on the letters "a, d, u, and n" or "I will practice writing on the blackboard at least 4 times a week" are reasonably realistic and can be accomplished. Ask students to set 3 goals for themselves that can be accomplished over the two weeks prior to their teaching practice.

Have students write these goals and emphasize that the more specific they can be about the "how and when" of what they want to do, the better. It could be useful to have the students review each others' goals and point out weak or unrealistic ones to each other. (We didn't do this, but I think I would next time!) Afterwards, have students hand in their goals and give some quick feedback if necessary, returning the goals to the students as soon as possible.

Melissa capped off this lesson by letting the students practice a short self-introduction. "Hi, my name is _____ and I AM A GOOD TEACHER!" She practiced this with them encouraging them to say they last part with real gusto, and then she let them practice it cocktail-style introducing themselves to as many people as possible and repeating enthusiastically "I AM A GOOD TEACHER!" A student actually stopped her after class and told her how useful he felt this was, and on his way down the stairs stopped another classmate and said "I AM A GOOD TEACHER!" A little encouragement really goes a long way!

Talking About Teaching Practice

Your Favorite Place: Tell students about "your favorite place" (real or imaginary) -- the place that makes you feel warmest, safest, happiest, most peaceful, etc. Describe it in as much detail as possible and try to show why it makes you feel so good to think of that place. Ask students to think

about their own favorite place and describe it in as much detail as possible in a 5-minute quick-write exercise. After students have finished writing, ask them to tell their deskmates about this special place, then call on a few to share their ideas with the entire class.

Talk to the students about the powerful effect a place can have on our emotional well-being. As they prepare to enter a new and strange classroom for the first time, it may help lessen their feelings of anxiety to spend a few moments imagining themselves in the place they have just described. On their first day, as they stand on the platform, it may also help to try and picture this place inside their classrooms. For example, one student talked about a bridge over a peaceful river in her hometown and it was easy to imagine the teaching platform as the bridge with the river flowing along peacefully beneath it. Another talked about how he could imagine the safe, peaceful hills that surround his hometown on the walls around the classroom. This is a short, easy activity and just one more way to help students deal with the inevitable "first-day jitters."

Tips for Being a Good "Host (Teacher)" in China: As students approach their teaching practicum, many tend to get upset and anxious because they focus a great deal of attention on what they still DON'T know. This is a discussion activity that increases confidence and calls attention to good teaching practices by focusing on what they DO know!

Tell the students that the Chinese people are famous throughout the world for being "*feichang hao ke!*" -- very hospitable! Build up their feeling of pride in knowing how to take care of a "guest" in their homes. In groups, tell students you will give them 5 minutes to make a list for you of "Tips for Being a Good Host in China" -- everything they can think of. Write this topic at the top of the blackboard and let them go at it. Because they know it so well, they have a lot to say to each other and can easily finish the task. Elicit responses from each group and write these on the board in roughly the order they would happen if someone were really having guests over for a meal. This is a sample list I got from one of my classes:

1. Make thorough preparations before your guests arrive.
2. Greet your guests warmly.
3. Serve them hot tea, fruit, sweets, etc.
4. Show them your picture albums or other interesting things in your home.
5. Encourage them to talk freely!
6. Serve them a delicious meal.
7. Encourage them to "Eat more!" and "Drink more!"
8. After dinner, you may prepare a game (mahjong, cards) or sing a song (Kara-ok)
9. When your guests leave, ask them to come again soon!
10. See your guests off -- all the way out of sight.

When the students are satisfied that they have listed all the essential elements of being a good host, erase the word "Host" from the original title and write the word "Teacher." This, of course, will bring a few gasps of surprise from the class, but in fact, it's pretty easy to see how these same elements are essential to a good lesson.

1. Make thorough preparation for your classes; that's the key for any good class. I told the students how long it takes me to cook some kinds of Chinese food because I have to keep looking at the cookbook as I go along, while for them it is quite natural and simple. It may be important for them to realize that in the beginning they will have to spend a lot of time in the preparation stage, but that will improve with experience.

2. Greeting a class with sincerity and warmth -- rather than just a lifeless rote phrase -- makes a huge difference in the classroom atmosphere. It is important for teachers to let students know that they are "welcome" in the classroom.

3. This is essentially equivalent to a warm-up activity -- something you do to warm-up the relational atmosphere and increase students motivation to learn. Pouring hot tea in the classroom could be telling a short, funny story, singing a song, asking a few informal questions about the students themselves. Anything to make the class more comfortable.

4. Talk about how seeing and touching enhances a student's ability to learn. When teachers can supplement their lessons with drawings on the blackboard, photos of their own, pictures drawn or cut from magazines, or real objects the students can touch and hold, they are much more likely to keep the students interest and attention.

5. This, of course, must be balanced with the demands of the lesson, but it is always good to remind students to encourage real speaking practice in the classroom whenever possible.

6. The meal is the lesson itself -- the heart of whatever they've prepared for the day. No Chinese host or hostess would be caught dead serving less than their best to honored guests, and no self-respecting teacher would serve their students less than their best in the classroom either. Variety is also a hallmark of a classic Chinese meal, and variety is just as important in the language classroom.

7. "Eat more!" "Drink more!" is the equivalent to urging students by every means possible to LEARN more and fill themselves with as much new knowledge as they can hold.

8. A game now and then or a song is always welcome in the language classroom.

9/10. These are meant to show that a satisfying ending to the lesson is just as important as any other element. Let students know that you are looking forward to seeing them the next day and let them feel that you have seen them all the way through to the lesson's natural conclusion.

Students are delighted to realize that things which are almost second nature to them are equally applicable to the language classroom, and China's "host/guest" culture as a rich model for good educational practice!

Discussion Topic: In your opinion, is it a good idea to use ONLY ENGLISH in the classroom? I asked students to discuss this in groups and come to some consensus. Apart from the simple "yes" or "no" answer, I asked them to list as many advantages and disadvantages as they could think of. Each group reported their general opinion and then one advantage and one disadvantage. Needless to say, the vast majority said they did NOT think it was a good idea, but a deeper discussion of advantages and disadvantages proved to be very stimulating and enlightening.

Advantages tended to include things like:

- improves students' speaking & listening ability
- creates a good language learning environment
- helps students to "think" in English
- forces students to pay attention more closely
- may increase student interest and motivation
- leads students to respect the knowledge and ability of their teacher

In most classes, there were two advantages students tended to overlook. One was that using only English in the classroom reinforced the idea that English is a language and languages are for "communication"; English is not (or at least it doesn't have to be) merely a subject they have to pass for the college entrance exam! Furthermore, students tended to overlook the obvious advantage daily classroom practice has with regard to maintaining or improving their OWN English level. I told some rather grim stories of students who were once quite conversational, but after they graduated, went off to teach (only in Chinese) and then came back to visit, they could no longer speak with me in English. Using English in the classroom has just as many benefits for the teacher as for the students.

Disadvantages included:

- variations on the general theme "The students won't be able to understand us"
- it slows down the lesson
- if students continually don't understand, they will lose interest/confidence
- it will make the students tired

All of the groups again focused on disadvantages to the students, but I pointed out that probably the real disadvantage that caused them to want to avoid using "only English" had to do with the difficulty or fear that might cause them as teachers. There were sheepish grins and general murmurs of assent throughout the classroom.

In fact, given the time constraints and other parameters of what must be taught in a middle school English lesson, I doubt if it is reasonable to expect that many of them could use only English in teaching. Still, I believe the discussion may have encouraged them to consider using it more frequently and intentionally than they might have otherwise, and that in itself is useful.

Discussion Topic: Bad Behavior in the Classroom -- What to Do?

Many students asked what to do when students misbehave in the classroom, but this is a topic where I felt somewhat reluctant to give advice. I have not observed enough middle school classrooms in China to know what kind of discipline is culturally appropriate, so I decided to turn the question back to them.

First, I asked them in groups to list as many "examples" of bad behavior in a middle school classroom as they could possibly think of. They took up this topic with relish (and, no doubt, a few fond memories of their own!) We listed these on the board, and I divided the class into two halves. In one half, the groups were to think about the BEST teachers in their middle school experience and list good ways those teachers dealt with behavior problems. The second half focused on their WORST teachers and listed poor examples of classroom discipline. Then the various groups reported about their discussions. This proved to be an enlightening topic of discussion for me, as well as for the students, and it encouraged them to look within themselves and their own experiences for culturally appropriate models of classroom management.

English Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions

Elaine Moy and Matt Johnson

You can do a lot with these - have students guess the meaning as a warm-up, decide if they agree with the point of a proverb, discuss whether there is a similar saying in Chinese, etc.

Proverbs

Variety is the spice of life.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be.
Love thy neighbor as thyself.
99% perspiration and 1% inspiration.
A stitch of time saves nine.
Penny wise and pound foolish.
Too many cooks spoil the broth.
He who hesitates is lost.
Many hands make light work.
Slow and steady wins the race.
It's always darkest before the dawn.
Actions speak louder than words.
Oil and water don't mix.
Birds of a feather flock together.
Let sleeping dogs lie.
An apple a day keeps the doctor away.
Beauty is only skin deep.
If it isn't broken, don't fix it.
When the cat's away the mice will play.
An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink
The grass is always greener on the other side of the hill.
Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

Idiomatic Expressions

A slow boat to China.
Wipe the slate clean.
Half baked.
Hard-boiled.
Go to pot.
Watered down.
On the house.
A wet blanket.
Keeping up with the Joneses.
Spick and span.
Put that in your pipe and smoke it.
My better half.
Behind the times.
Call it a day.
In a jiffy.
A bolt from the blue.
Make hay while the sun shines.
A stone's throw away.
Down to earth.
Make a mountain out of a molehill.
Once in a blue moon.
Back the wrong horse.

Up a creek without a paddle.
Back fire.
Have a crush on.
Twist one's arm.
The pot calling the kettle black.
Hit home.
Raise the roof.
The handwriting on the wall.
Hit the sack.
Make a clean sweep of ...
Can't make heads or tails of it..
A chip off the old block.
Run around in circles.
Fly by night.
In the nick of time.
Break the ice.
It's still up in the air.
Dirt cheap.
High and dry.
Leave no stone unturned.
Win by a landslide.
Black sheep.

Let the cat out of the bag.
 Fish out of water.
 Go to the dogs.
 Monkey around with.
 Smell a rat.
 Take the bull by the horns.
 Birds of a feather flock together.
 Early bird.
 Kill two birds with one stone.
 Ugly duckling.
 Against the grain.
 Grapevine.
 In a nutshell.
 Out on a limb.
 Turn over a new leaf.
 Call to order.
 Far cry.
 Sign on the dotted line.
 Talk of the town.
 Make head or tail.
 Face value.
 Put 2 and 2 together.
 Seeing double.
 In the red.
 Paint the town red.
 Red tape.
 Round peg in a square hole.
 Odds and ends.
 Run circles around someone.
 Lay it on thick.
 In the bag.
 A drop in the bucket.
 Left holding the bag.
 Take a back seat.
 Meet halfway.
 Off the beaten track.
 Climb on the bandwagon.
 Make or break.
 Make a scene.
 Wipe the slate clean.
 A watched pot never boils.
 Peas in a pod.
 It's a dog's life.
 Hopping mad.
 Running around like a chicken with its head chopped off.

Cry wolf.
 Get one's goat.
 In the dog house.
 Pig headed.
 A snake in the grass.
 A bird in the hand.
 Chicken.
 Eat crow.
 Swan song.
 A wild goose chase.
 Beat around the bush.
 Hit the hay.
 The last straw.
 Reap what you sow.
 Call a spade a spade.
 A close call.
 Read between the lines.
 Neither rhyme nor reason.
 Level headed.
 Pipe dream.
 Lump sum.
 Second rate.
 Black and blue.
 In black and white.
 Red carpet treatment.
 Silver lining.
 Vicious circle.
 Straight as an arrow.
 Go up in smoke.
 Knock on wood.
 Boxed in.
 Lock stock and barrel.
 Pull no punches.
 Water under the bridge.
 Know the ropes.
 In the same boat.
 On the wagon.
 Go to pieces.
 Blow your top.
 Pull no punches.
 Get with the program.
 Slow as molasses.
 It's raining cats and dogs.
 Feeling on top of the world.

Books Recommended By Amity Teachers

Below are books that past Amity teachers have found useful, plus some of their comments. As you come across other books you find helpful, please let us know so they can be added to the list. (For some of these books teacher editions, tapes, and so forth are also available. The ISBN information below is only for the student book.)

Teaching Materials

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words (Books 1 -2). Anthony Mollica, Julie Ashcroft, Anne-Marie Finger. Editions SOLEIL Publishing Inc., (ISBN 14092-0890) (Pictures around which all kinds of lessons can be designed.)

The Book Of Questions. Gregory Stock. Workman Publishing Company, 1987. ISBN# 0894803204. ("Great book to use to get students talking.")

Discussions That Work. Penny Ur. Cambridge University Press. ISBN# 0-521-218169-5. ("The first part gives general guidelines on how to organize discussions. The second part gives about 50 practical examples for different levels.")

Drama Techniques In Language Learning. Alan Duff and Allen Maley. Cambridge University Press. ISBN # 0-521-28868-1.

English Sketches 1: Sketches from the English Teaching Theatre (Elementary). Doug Case and Ken Wilson. Heinemann, 1995. (ISBN 0 435 26394 3) (Skits for performance. Cassette also available.)

English Sketches 2: Sketches from the English Teaching Theatre (Intermediate). Doug Case and Ken Wilson. Heinemann, 1995. (ISBN 0 435 26397 8) (Skits for performance. Cassette also available.)

The ESL Miscellany: A Treasury Of Cultural And Linguistic Information, Revised Second Edition. Raymond Clark, Patricia Moran and Arthur Burrows. Pro Lingua Associates, 1991. ISBN # 0-086647-043-3.

Face The Issues. Carol Numrich. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1997. ISBN# 0-201-84672-1. ("A listening comprehension book with lots of possibilities for discussion and role play.")

Five Minute Activities: A Resource Book Of Short Activities. Penny Ur and Wright, Andrew. Cambridge University Press, 1992. ISBN # 0-521-39781-2.

Functions Of American English. Leo Jones. ISBN # 0-521-28528-3. ("It's available in quantities in the foreign language bookstore (Nanjing)... review basics in class, go over it and expand on the material in the book.")

Grammar Practice Activities: A Practical Guide For Teachers. Penny Ur. Cambridge University Press. ISBN # 0-521-33847-6. ("While this book centers on writing skills, many of the activities can be very effectively modified for beginning oral conversation.")

Great Ideas. Leo Jones and Victoria Kimbrough. Cambridge University Press. ISBN# 0-521-31243-6.

Keep Talking. Frederike Klippel. Cambridge University Press. ISBN# 0-521-27871-6. ("Great book!" "Communication activity book with about 100 different ideas, exercises - has worksheets.")

Listening In And Speaking Out. Sharon Bode, Charles Whitney, and Gray James. Longman. ISBN # 0-937354-25-2. (For lower levels.)

More Recipes For Tired Teachers. Christopher Sion. Addison-Wesley, 1991. ISBN # 0-201-52318-3.

The Non-Stop Discussion Workbook, 2nd Edition. George Rooks. Newbury House Publishers.

React-Interact: Situations For Communication, Second Edition. Donald Byrd and Isis Clemente. Prentice Hall Regents. ISBN # 0-13-753716-6. ("One of my favorites! Copied by numerous teachers.")

Reader's Choice, Third Edition. Margaret Baudoin, Ellen Bober, Mark Clarke, Barbara Dobson, and Sandra Silberstein. University of Michigan Press. ISBN # 0-472-08265-5. (This excellent reader is available in an edition published in China. A book of notes for Chinese students is also available in China.)

Recipes For Tired Teachers. Christopher Sion. Addison-Wesley, 1984. ISBN # 0-201-06509-6.

Speaking Naturally: Communication Skills In American English. Bruce Tillitt. Cambridge University Press, 1985. ("Excellent for the basics - different ways of greetings, invitations, introductions, agreeing, disagreeing, etc.")

Talk-A-Tivities: Problem Solving And Puzzles For Pairs. Richard Yorkey. Addison-Wesley, 1984. ISBN # 0-201-09911-X. ("Great for pair work for beginners. Need Xerox machine.")

Techniques In Teaching Writing. Ann Raimes. Oxford American English. ISBN # 0-19-434131-3. ("Can be adapted to oral class.")

Warm-Up Exercises: Calisthenics for the Brain (Book 2). Rita Kisner and Brooke Knowles. Thinking Publications. ISBN 0-9610370-9-1. (Good warm-ups or fillers.)

Books on Language Learning and Teaching

A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning. Peter Skehan.

Aspects of Language Teaching. H. G. Widdowson.

Classroom Decision-Making. Michael Breen and Andrew Littlejohn.

Context and Culture in Language Teaching. Claire Kramsch.

Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing. Lyle Bachmann.

Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching. J. R. Nattinger and S. Decarrico.

Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation. Elisabeth Badger.

Second Language Learning and Language Teaching. Vivian Cook.

Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language. Andrew Cohen.

The Study of Foreign Language Acquisition. Rod Ellis.

Success in English Teaching. Paul Davies and Eric Pearse.

Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom. Tricia Hedge.

Teaching Language as Communication. H.G. Widdowson.

Useful Web Sites

I. Resources for English/language teaching.

- **Amity Foundation.** www.amityfoundation.org (Lots of teaching resources available under "Teachers Program.")
- **Boggles World.** www.bogglesworld.com (Loads of activities; also a job search site.)
- **Dave's ESL Cafe.** www.eslcafe.com (Lots of ideas and materials for both teachers and students - the links are especially useful.)
- **E. L. Easton.** eleaston.com (Teaching aids for English and other languages.)
- **ESL Lounge.** www.esl-lounge.com (Lesson plans, teaching aids, flash cards, role play cards, book reviews, etc.)
- **Everything ESL.** www.everythingESL.net (Lots of lesson plans, activities, and so forth. More ESL than EFL focused.)
- **The Gateway to Education Materials.** www.thegateway.org (Search engine for lesson plans in many areas - including EFL.)
- **Guide to Grammar and Writing.** cctc2.comnet.edu/grammar (Grammar for writing.)
- **Karin's ESL Partyland.** www.eslpartyland.com (Resources for both teachers and students.)
- **Learning/Teaching English.** www.tolearnenglish.com (Resources for both students and teachers.)
- **Lingua Center (U of Illinois, Intensive English Institute).** www.iei.uiuc.edu/free.html (Broad range of resources and links.)
- **Longman.** www.longman.com (Some resources for teachers and students, but also lots of ads for Longman publications.)
- **Purdue University.** owl.english.purdue.edu (Has quite an abundance of resources, especially handouts for different aspects of writing, and also links to other web sites.)
- **Sites for Teachers.** www.sitesforteachers.com (Has links to a huge number of web sites for teachers.)
- **Sounds of English.** www.soundsofenglish.org (A website dedicated to pronunciation - American English. Information, activities, exercises, links, etc.)
- **Teaching Fish.** www.teachingfish.com (Lots of games, activities, EFL/ESL resources; also job search links.)
- **TEFL China Teahouse.** teflchina.com/teach/ (A website to support English teachers in China. Articles, lesson plans, and informal tips and discussion by Chinese and foreign teachers.)
- **Wordskills.** <http://wordskills.com/index.shtml> (Has a variety of resources, including book recommendations, level tests, mini grammar lessons and so forth.)

II. Web journals and magazines.

- **Asia Journal of English Language Teaching.** www.cuhk.edu.hk/eltu/DP/ (Research-oriented journal on topics relevant to teaching in Asia. Published at Chinese University of Hong Kong.)
- **English Teaching Forum.** exchanges.state.gov/forum/ (A quarterly journal on teaching of English as a foreign language. Articles contributed by teachers around the world. Published by the United States Information Agency.)
- **English Teaching Professional.** www.etprofessional.com (Selected articles from this ELT magazine are available at this website.)
- **ELT Spectrum.** www1.oup.co.uk/elt/magazine (An online magazine from Oxford University Press, with teaching tips, articles, interviews with authors, discussion forums, and more.)

- **ESL Magazine.** www.eslmag.com (A bi-monthly magazine serving ESL/EFL professional worldwide.)
- **Humanizing Language Teaching.** www.hltmag.co.uk (Interesting variety of articles and features for language teaching.)
- **IATEFL Newsletter.** www.iatefl.org (Under "Newsletter" is the newsletter of IATEFL - the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language - an organization based in the UK.)
- **The Internet TESL Journal.** iteslj.org (A monthly web journal started in 1995; includes articles, research papers, lesson plans, teaching techniques, book reviews, and links. Also more than 500 quizzes students can take to test their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and idioms.)
- **Journal of the Imagination in Language Teaching and Learning.** www.njcu.edu/cill/journal-index.html (Pretty much what title says.)
- **The Language Teacher.** jalt-publications.org (This is a monthly publication of the Japan Association for Language Teaching; has lots of very readable and practical articles. JALT Journal also available at same site.)
- **The Reading Matrix.** www.readingmatrix.com (A journal focusing on reading issues. Lots of other reading-related resources available at this site.)
- **SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.** www.relc.org.sg (Articles on language teaching in *RELC Journal*.)
- **TEFL Web Journal.** www.teflweb-j.org (New quarterly teacher magazine.)
- **TESL-EJ: Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language.** www-writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/ (A quarterly web-based journal offering articles on a wide range of teaching topics.)
- **TESOL Matters Online.** www.tesol.edu/pubs/articles/index.html (A newsletter published by TESOL - Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages - an international organization based in the US. The "Wandering the Web" column (<http://www.tesol.edu/pubs/magz/wanweb.html>) provides information on useful websites for teaching.)

III. Web sites for students.

- **Aardvark's English Forum.** englishforum.com (Lots of resources for students.)
- **Activities for ESL Students.** a4esl.org (Lots of quizzes and activities for students.)
- **Ask Oxford.** www.askoxford.com (What you would expect from a dictionary-related web site.)
- **Dave's ESL Cafe.** www.eslcafe.com (Lots of ideas and materials for both teachers and students - the links are especially useful.)
- **The English Listening Lounge.** www.Englishlistening.com (Site for listening practice. Has Chinese language version.)
- **ESL Resource Center.** www.eslus.com/eslcenter.htm (Lessons for students.)
- **Karin's ESL Partyland.** www.eslpartyland.com (Resources for both teachers and students.)
- **Learning English Online.** www.aec.ukans.edu/leo (Online classes, activities, resources for students.)
- **Learning/Teaching English.** www.tolearnenglish.com (Resources for both students and teachers.)
- **TEFL Games.** teflgames.com (Lots of word games and so forth.)
- **Topics.** www.rice.edu/projects/topics/Electronic/Magazine.html (Magazine for students of English - lots of interesting features.)

IV. Other potentially useful or interesting web sites. (From recommendations by Amity teachers, Nantong class of 2000.)

- **www.scmp.com** (The South China Morning Post, a Hong Kong daily newspaper.)
- **www.newsunlimited.co.uk** (This is for the Guardian, a UK newspaper. You can subscribe to the Wrap, a daily news summary sent to you by e-mail.)
- **www.grammarlady.com** (Answers any questions about grammar you may have.)
- **www.half.com** (Books, music, etc. for half the price.)
- **www.powells.com** (A new and used bookstore. If you buy US \$50+ worth of books they will ship them anywhere in the world free.)
- **www.sinohotels.com** (Book Chinese hotels online.)
- **www.google.com** (For the fastest searches on the net!)
- **www.bartleby.com** ("www.bartleby.com is massive and amazing. It has tons of literary material -- complete works of Shakespeare and anthologies such as the Harvard Classics & Shelf of Fiction and Cambridge History of English and American Literature, which have pretty much any novel, play, poem, essay or story written before 1900 that you ever wanted to read. There is also critical material for all of that. But the biggie is the reference collection, which includes a complete Columbia encyclopedia, dictionaries, most usage and style manuals, thesauri, quotation collections, Gray's anatomy, the Columbia Gazetteer of North America, King James Bible, Farmer's Cookbook, Emily Post's Etiquette and other stuff, all in their complete forms. It's pretty much a whole public library online - but easy to use and without overdue fines.")