Language Instruction for the 21st Century

An Introduction to Communication Based Instruction

Bay Area Foreign Language Program
Lesson Components
The 5 Steps of a Communicative Lesson Plan

Setting the Stage

Definition: A short exploratory activity or prompt that focuses the students’ attention before the actual lesson begins.

Criteria:
• Used when students enter the room or in a transition.
• Sparks interest; motivates learning
• Involves as many students as possible
• Ties concepts to material that students have previously learned
• Relates to present concerns
• States objective/goal: what students are going to learn
• Establishes purpose: why the student is learning this material

Teacher’s role: Director, coach, producer, monitor

Students’ role: Learner, active listener

Examples:
• Display posters or pictures related to theme
• Play video
• Have appropriate music on when students enter
• Wear or display costumes
• Have samples of food
• Display authentic realia
• Do a role-play, dramatization, or readers theater
• Tell a story (personal, real, or invented)
• Ask a few quick interest-generating questions
• Post vocabulary for the lesson
• Use computer graphics
• Use multi-media presentations.
• Use overhead transparencies with pictures or questions
• Show an object
• Play a guessing game
• Read a quote
• Refer to students’ personal lives, attitudes, or ideas
• Demonstrate something that is mysterious or interesting
• Present sample (teacher-generated or from previous year) of culminating activity
• A handout given to students at the door
• Line-ups
• Signature game

Comprehensible Input

Definition: The vocabulary, skills, and concepts the teacher will impart to the students—what the student needs to know in order to be successful.

Criteria:
• Presented in target language
• Easy enough that the students can understand it, but just beyond their level of competence (input +1)
• Makes frequent use of cognates
• Uses gestures
• Contextualized
• Listening and reading emphasized.
• Creates and reinforces meaning by using all three learning modalities: auditory, visual, physical
• Provides low affective filter, low stress level for students
• Motivates and catches students’ interest
• Incorporates checking for understanding using questioning in the following sequence: Yes/No questions
  Either/Or questions
  Short responses

Teacher’s role: Director, coach, producer, monitor

Students’ role: Learner, active listener, active participant with limited production

Examples:
• Visuals: pictures, photographs, drawings, transparencies
• Videos, films
• Props, puppets, realia
• Multimedia presentations
• TPR
• Mime, gestures
• Story lines
• Mini dramas and role play
• Bingo games
• Jigsaw
• Paired Readings
• Matching activities
Guided Practice

Definition: Activities that help students analyze and discover grammar and vocabulary and internalize new material

Criteria: • Progresses from manipulative ("one book, two books, three books.") to meaningful ("How many books are on the table?") to communicative ("How many books are in your backpack?")
• Directs students' learning activities
• Assists students who are having difficulty
• Students monitored closely
• Uses manipulatives
• Drills and practice contextualized and/or meaningful (not discrete or unrelated items) and provided for the functions, vocabulary, grammar and culture being taught
• Provides frequent feedback and checking for understanding

Teacher’s role: Director, coach, producer, monitor, facilitator, motivator

Students’ role: Learner, active listener, active participant with guided production

Examples: • Paragraph slot fill-ins (Cloze exercises)
• Games of a "drill" nature (interview, verbs)
• Categorical lists
• Personalized/informational questions
• Reading/listening comprehension exercises
• Patterned writing/oral exercises
• "Pancho Camancho"
• Crosswords
• Word association
• Dictation
• Information gap (A/B) activities (limited answers—right or wrong)
• Games: Go Fish, Concentration, Slap Jack
• Matching (words-pictures or definitions, subjects-verbs, sentence halves)
• Following commands (TPR)
• Directed conversations
• Retelling
• Naming
• Copying
• Choral Response
• Fact-or-Fiction / Find-the-Fib
• Teach Your Partner

**Application & Extension (Independent Practice)**

**Definition:** Activities in which students integrate what they have learned to generate their own language, i.e. communicate

**Criteria:**
• Activities should:
  • Have personal significance
  • Be culturally authentic
  • Include an element of spontaneity
  • Resolve uncertainties or information gaps
  • Have a meaningful purpose
• Assigns students to groups or individual work
• Gives students creative tasks for applying new skills
• Allows students to select or design activities according to their interests
• Provides students with ample opportunities to practice the language
• Builds in an interesting or relevant information gap for students to close by using the language
• Integrates cultural phenomena

**Teacher’s role:** Monitor, facilitator, motivator

**Students’ role:** Interactive learner, active listener, active participant with independent production

**Examples:**
• Contextualized role playing (situations)
• Discussions
• Reports
• Panels
• Debates
• Indirect discourse
• Introductions
• Open-ended conversations
• Summaries (group or individual/oral or written)
• Skits: role playing
• Original written works (e.g. letters, descriptions, stories)
• Interviews
• A/B activities (pictures, stories) with open-ended answers
• Many co-operative activities ("telephone", "partners", "jigsaw")
• Games requiring an exchange of information in a spontaneous format (Who wants to be a millionaire? Jeopardy, Survivor, Wheel of Fortune)
• Completion of application forms
• Re-telling stories
• Show and tell

Evaluation

Definition: Combines all components and learning in a contextualized format so as to demonstrate learning. Determines whether the objective of a lesson has been adequately achieved. Is both ongoing and cumulative.

Criteria:
• Focuses on whole/global lesson
• Is used as final evaluation of ability to communicate
• Involves every student
• Assesses whether students can actually do, or not do, that which was expected
• Is used to improve instruction
• Is multidimensional

Teacher’s role: Monitor, facilitator, evaluator

Students’ role: Interactive learner, active listener, active participant with independent production

Examples:
• Magazines, newspapers and articles
• Story presentations and minidramas
• Mock TV programs
• Videos
• Re-create real-life scenes related to context
• Compositions, essays, letters
• Projects (oral and written)
• Portfolios
• Speeches and oral presentations
Functions

What is a function?
A linguistic function is something that you do with language. The central function of language is to communicate. This can be broken down into more specific functions, such as “express likes and dislikes,” “identify things,” or “ask questions.” Often, there are several ways of performing the same function. For example, one could perform the function “express ability” in any of the following ways:

I'm good at soccer.
I can play soccer.
Soccer? Well, I'm not that good, but I can play a little.

The important thing to remember is that vocabulary and structure are tools to perform functions. Just as one can boil water on a gas stove, an electric stove, or in a microwave, we can perform a single linguistic function using a variety of structures and words.

Frequently asked questions

♦ Why teach functions?
Before somebody says something, they think (perhaps subconsciously) about what they want to do, e.g. “I’d better apologize” or “I need to ask him something.” Nobody thinks “I think I’ll use the subjunctive form for this statement.” “Passive voice is what this person really wants to hear.” Since our brains focus on functions, it makes sense to organize a curriculum around functions. Furthermore, if we just teach structures, students have less flexibility and will have difficulty being creative with language.

♦ Don’t some of these overlap?
Yes. Functions such as “obtain information” and “ask follow-up questions” are clearly very similar. This redundancy offers us an opportunity to recycle forms and vocabulary in the curriculum.

♦ Don’t we care about structures?
Of course. Curriculum should be organized around topics and functions so that structures and vocabulary can be taught in communicative contexts where they appear naturally.

Terms and Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>What one can talk about, similar to topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functions</td>
<td>What one can do with the language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text type</td>
<td>The kind of language a student can produce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>How well a student can communicate with another person</td>
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Content/Topics + Functions = Content Standards
(What students must know and be able to do)

Text type + Accuracy = Performance Standards
(How well students must perform)

Assessment
(How we know if a student meets a standard or not)
Communicative Language Functions:
Learning Objectives for Communication in the Foreign Language Classroom

People communicate for specific purposes. They want to provide or obtain information, express feelings, apologize, exchange opinions, influence or direct others, etc. Specific purposes for employing language are commonly called functions. In most languages, each of the many functions can be effected in several ways. We often have a choice of words or expressions by which we carry out a specific communicative purpose. For instance, in English in order to get someone to stop talking one might say: Shut up! Stop talking! Be quiet, please! Please quit talking! Cut out the chatter! That’s enough of that now! This noise is really getting to me! etc. As we become proficient in communicating in a language we learn to carry out more and more of the common functions, and we also learn more ways or expressions by which each function can be realized.

Following are many of the common specific categories of language functions (not the actual expressions, which are too numerous, and which vary from language to language) which one must be able to carry out in order to communicate in the basic situations encountered in a society which speaks any of the commonly taught foreign languages. Some of the functions are learned and practiced at the earliest stages of instruction; others are introduced at later stages. Some functions are appropriate for K-3 learners; others are appropriate only for older learners. As instruction proceeds, the number of functions used increases, and the number and complexity of the enabling expressions usually increases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exchanging Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>identify or name</td>
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<tr>
<td>describe</td>
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<tr>
<td>remind</td>
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<tr>
<td>announce</td>
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<tr>
<td>ask for information</td>
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<tr>
<td>answer negatively, deny</td>
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<tr>
<td>ask about knowledge of</td>
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<tr>
<td>affirm or negate</td>
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<tr>
<td>explain</td>
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<td>report</td>
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<td>speak hypothetically</td>
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<tr>
<td>confirm</td>
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<tr>
<td>answer by giving information</td>
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<td>ask about belief or conjecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>generalize</td>
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<tr>
<td>draw attention to</td>
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<tr>
<td>repeat</td>
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<tr>
<td>assure</td>
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<tr>
<td>answer affirmatively</td>
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<td>express lack of knowledge of</td>
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<tr>
<th>Evaluation or Commenting on</th>
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<tr>
<td>express opinion/viewpoint</td>
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<td>approve of</td>
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<td>criticize</td>
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<td>regret</td>
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<tr>
<td>excuse oneself or apologize</td>
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<td>seek concurrence</td>
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<tr>
<td>refute</td>
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<tr>
<td>take exception or object</td>
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<tr>
<td>express esteem or regard</td>
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<tr>
<td>express lack of preference</td>
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<tr>
<td>ask about interest in</td>
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<tr>
<td>ask for one's preference</td>
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<tr>
<td>take sides with</td>
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<tr>
<td>acknowledge with thanks</td>
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<tr>
<td>disapprove</td>
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<tr>
<td>justify</td>
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<tr>
<td>ask one's opinion of</td>
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<tr>
<td>ask for justification</td>
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<tr>
<td>correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recant or retract</td>
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<tr>
<td>express wishes or desires</td>
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<tr>
<td>express disdain or contempt</td>
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<tr>
<td>ask for evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>praise or judge positively</td>
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<td>play down or excuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>reproach</td>
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<tr>
<td>ask for one's wish or desire</td>
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<tr>
<td>request opinion, judgement</td>
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<tr>
<td>agree with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concede</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>express interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>express preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>express lack of interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>admit</td>
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</table>
**Expressing feelings**
- fondness
- gratitude
- satisfaction
- disappointment
- indifference
- hope
- sadness
- impatience
- sympathy or pity
- enthusiasm
- surprise
- dismay or alarm
- resignation
- fear or anxiety
- dissatisfaction
- irritation or anger
- antipathy
- joy
- relief
- calmness or composure
- helplessness
- sorrow or grief
- boredom
- disgust

**Regulating activities**
- making request or demand
- ask for help
- ask for or purchase
- allow or permit
- urge or press
- cheer up or encourage
- exempt
- deny exemption
- request proposals
- ask one’s wishes
- offer help
- consent
- refuse (to do something)
- express intention
- express renunciation
- express purpose of action
- express readiness
- express obstacles
- point out obligation
- ask about intention
- ask about preference
- ask about competence
- ask about obligation
- calling for common action
- call for help
- order (for purchase)
- instruct
- warn
- propose
- ask about permissibility
- request permission
- ask for advice
- offer things
- invite
- agree
- reject offers
- express determination
- express a desire action
- express capability
- express feasibility
- express incompetence
- point out permissibility
- ask about determination
- ask about intended action
- ask about preparedness
- order someone to do something
- request
- express wishes
- give instructions
- claim
- threaten
- advise
- refuse permission
- request exemption
- request instructions
- offer to do something
- promise
- accept offers
- hesitate
- express indecision
- express preference
- express competence
- express unfeasibility
- express incapability
- point out prohibition
- ask about desired action
- ask about capability
- ask about feasibility

**Social conventions**
- greet someone
- react to question about how one is
- react to introduction
- request permission to enter
- answer phone call
- respond to leave taking
- end phone conversation
- reacting to apology
- promise to relay greetings
- return greeting
- introduce oneself
- address someone
- ask someone to enter
- salutation in letters
- send greetings to someone
- responding to phone farewell
- excusing/pardoning oneself
- reacting to thanks/gratitude
- ask how someone is
- introduce another
- react when addressed
- introduce self on phone
- take leave, say farewell
- sending letter
- congratulation
- thanking someone
- paying compliments
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reacting to congratulations</th>
<th>Expressing condolence</th>
<th>Reacting to condolences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expressing good wishes</td>
<td>Reacting to good will</td>
<td>Toasting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Organizing speech and assuring understanding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interrupting someone</th>
<th>Requesting permission to speak</th>
<th>Letting someone else speak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Requesting silence</td>
<td>Changing topic or theme</td>
<td>Asking someone to speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking note of</td>
<td>Gaining attention of listeners</td>
<td>Checking back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requesting repetition</td>
<td>Requesting spelling of a word</td>
<td>Requesting comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correcting oneself</td>
<td>Concluding one's remarks</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signaling understanding</td>
<td>Checking if one can be heard</td>
<td>Summarizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving an example</td>
<td>Initiating, introducing remarks</td>
<td>Enumerating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasizing</td>
<td>Explaining one's expressions</td>
<td>Circumlocuting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hesitating while searching for words</td>
<td>Requesting linguistic explanation</td>
<td>Requesting help in expressing oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking if one can be understood</td>
<td>Signaling lack of understanding</td>
<td>Indicating one wants to continue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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