Speaking

*Instant warm-ups:*

**Chit-chat:** Students spend five minutes speaking the target language (on any topic or a topic selected by the teacher) with their partner; follow-up: teacher asks what topic was chosen.

**Circle drills:** Students recite days of the week, months, verb conjugations, anything that comes in a series.

**Free-association:** Teacher (or student) says a "word of the day"; students then say what word they associate with it; associations continue with this word until everyone has said a word.

**Brainstorm:** Students come up with as many words as possible relating to a given topic; one student writes them on the board.

"Buzz" with numbers: a number or a multiple is selected for which a word or sound is substituted; students count, when that number (or multiple) is reached, student says substitute word.

*Warm-ups which require planning/preparation:*

**My Other Half:** Divide the class into halves. One group of students has the beginning of a proverb, if-clause, an entire question, etc. and the other side has the rest of the proverb, result clause, answer to a question. Each student has to find his mate.

**Scavenger Hunt:** This activity is suitable for a variety of structures. A list of 10-15 statements are given on a sheet of paper. Each statement has an empty space next to it. Students must circulate throughout the room finding someone who has done, used to do, or did the activities on the list. Example: Find someone who: 1. has won a race.

**Strip Story:** Find (or write) a short story (6-8 sentences) and give each member of a group one sentence. Students should memorize their sentences, and then, by reciting them to other members of the group, try to put the paragraph in the right order. A variety of the strip story is a cartoon version. Each group is given a cartoon strip without captions that has been cut up. Students must re-assemble the cartoon strip.

**Where's My Group?** The teacher gives each student a word (some students might have parts of the body, others colors, others clothing, and others fruit) on a piece of paper. It is the task of each student to find out which group he/she belongs to. To add to the challenge, students should not be informed of the categories.

**The Wacky Cocktail Party:** Each member of the class is given a paper describing his particular brand of craziness. One student might think s/he is made of glass, another
might have a fascination with elbows, another think all the participants are fruit, animals, children, etc. Try to think of a foil for each person i.e. the elbow-person likes to touch people and the glass (wo)man is afraid of being touched. The guests must mingle and chat with each other. At the end, members of the class will be asked to identify the craziness of each guest.

**Grab Bag:** The teacher brings to class a bag of assorted items: ax, glove, ball, etc. and the class must guess which famous person is identified with the item. This could be developed into a higher level activity by dividing the class into teams and requiring that answers be given in a complete sentences with an explanation of the association.

**Help!:** Each group is given a "serious" problem and the members must generate as many solutions (both silly and serious) as they can. Example: Being locked in a movie theater.

**Unfinished sentences:** The class is given a list of sentence beginnings (these may vary according to the grammar/vocabulary lesson of the day) and individuals must give a clever ending. Example: Parents should always...

**Picasso's My Name:** The class is shown a very blurred sketch on an overhead (or the teacher can create a wild, modernistic drawing) and students should describe to the class what they, as artists, have drawn.

**Amnesia:** The teacher pins the name of a famous person on the back of each student. Students must ask yes/no questions to discover who they are.

**Group Role Play:** The scene is the jail, employment office, hospital waiting room, principal's office, and movie casting office. Participants must mingle and tell why they're there.

**Presents!!!:** Each student receives a magazine picture of an object (or a sketch would do). The student must decide whom s/he would give it to, on what occasion and why it would be appropriate. A variation of the same would be to have each student receive a pictured gift and have to say why it is a wonderful present and how s/he will use it.

**Saints and Sinners:** This is appropriate for practicing commands. The class is divided into saints and sinners. The teachers asks the class questions like "Should I smoke a package of cigarettes? Should I give my mother a present for her birthday? Students answer positive or negatively according to which group they belong to.

**Hyperbole:** The teacher brings to class pictures of famous people, an assortment of objects, and a variety of places. Students must describe the object in a sentence with a superlative. To expand on this activity, students can be asked to give reasons why.

**Field Trip:** The teacher decides on a place or an activity...picnic, movies, athletic event, etc. One side of the class will ask questions and the other side will answer. Example: Picnic...Where will we go? What will we eat? What will we wear? How long
will we stay? When will be go? If the class isn't very creative, the teacher can formulate the questions.

**Circumlocution**: Each group or pair is given a list of words that they don't know how to say in the target language. Examples of such words might be: deodorant, hangers, inner soles, file, etc. Students must describe the article, say who uses it, where, when, why, how it is used.

**Eye Witness**: The teacher shows the class a picture (example: a busy street scene) for a few seconds. If the picture is small, s/he may walk around the class. Members of the class must then tell what they remember with the teacher asking follow-up questions. A variation of this activity is to have students describe what is behind them in the class.

**Listening**

**Instant warm-ups**:

**Categories**: Students stand, sit when they hear a description which applies to them: Everyone wearing jeans (clothes unit); everyone who is taking chemistry (courses unit); etc.

**Memory chain**: Students repeat what others have said, then add an element: First student: "In my town there is a church", second student: "In my town there is a church and a bank" etc. To make this more challenging, add numbers!

**What is it?** Teacher describes, in the target language, without naming, a film, TV show, famous person, student, event, etc. until students guess what it is. Category must be given.

**Warm-ups which require planning/preparation**:

**Call me**: Teacher has a list of the telephone numbers of students in the class; students stand at beginning of class, sit when they hear their number.

**Bingo**: Teacher hands out grids, students write in items of choice: vocabulary words, numbers, information from a story, etc. These are then read out at random.

**What's wrong here?** Teacher reads a story in which incongruous elements have been placed; students raise their hands when they hear something wrong

**True or false**: Teacher makes a series of statements, some of which are true, others false; students must say true or false. Using information on students and teacher makes this more lively.
**Find a match:** Teacher reads descriptions of four different people, two of whom have similar interests and would probably like each other; students must match them.

**A happy ending?** Teacher reads a story with a strong, simple plot line. Students then suggest an ending: either in pairs or the whole class.

**Telephone message:** Teacher reads (or plays on tape) typical telephone message; students take notes (using real message pads if possible) of information.

**What's going on?** Teacher and colleague tape a telephone conversation which is somewhat vague; students must guess what is going on or what preceded this conversation.

**Do you have what I have?** Students work in pairs, each one has a different handout on which one picture matches; without looking, students describe their pictures to determine which one matches.

**Missing words:** Song (or poem) on tape; students follow on the script with blanks to fill in.

**Is it there?** Song or poem on tape (or read by teacher); students are asked to write down certain categories of words or expressions (semantic or syntactic)

**Memory:** Song on tape or video: students write down what they remember/understand; class as a whole shares this information, then song is played again.

**What is this for?** TV commercial on video in the target language: What is the product? What qualities are stressed? Who would use this product?

**Music video:** How is this supposed to make you feel? Would you buy this singer's records? Why or why not?

**Current events:** News clip of current event TV or radio): Identify the event; summarize what happened (advanced)

**American news:** News clip of event in US, presented by target culture TV or radio: How does this compare with American presentation of this event? (advanced)

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**Reading**

**Instant warm-ups:**
**Reader-response**: Texts written by the students in a previous warm-up can be distributed to be read by others: students can write questions about the text, or be asked to "edit".

**Missing words**: Cloze activity with familiar text (xeroxed from textbook: students work with partners; or on overhead transparency: whole class activity); any appropriate word is accepted.

**Who asked this?** Each student is given a question to read and must state in what situation, or by whom, such a question can be asked.

**Warm-ups requiring planning/preparation:**

**Statistical Treasure Hunt**: Each student is given a sheet with statements requiring numerical information about him(her)self. The student must supply the information and then add up the numbers. The student with the highest (or lowest) score wins. Example: Shoe size, month of birth (numerical), last number of telephone number, number of siblings, last number of year born, number of pairs of jeans that you own, etc.

**Trash**: Students read a passage with incorrect words inserted. They must circle the words that don't fit.

**Cartoons**: Students are given a cartoon (or even a sketch) and must decide which of a list of captions fits.

**Real Estate Agency**: Each small group is given a description of a family. The members must read 4-5 ads and decide which apartment/house is most appropriate to its needs. A variation of this situation would be ads for cars, vacation places, movies.

**Proverbs**: Each pair or group is given list of proverbs and their English translations. Members must match the two.

**Haiku**: Students must read a haiku poem or cinquain and then decide on the last line.

**Sense(less)**: Each student receives a list of sentences and must decide which ones make sense. Example: All dogs have fur. The tomato is a fruit.

**Headlines**: The student is given a short article from a newspaper and a list of 4-5 headlines. S/he must decide which one fits.

**Weaving**: The student (or small group) is given two short and rather simple paragraphs that have been interwoven or combined. The student(s) must separate one from another.

**Possible, Impossible, Unlikely**: Students are given a list of famous personalities and statements that are attributed to them. Students must read and then mark each sentence according to the three categories above. Variation: Students are given a paragraph describing the teacher's day. The same decisions must be made on the assertions made.
**Guest Editor:** The teacher should copy a short magazine or newspaper article and cut it into strips. Students must reassemble it.

**Show Your Smarts:** The teacher should copy a list of 20 questions and 20 answers. Questions might have to do with science, geography, or any type of general knowledge. Each pair of students is given the cut-up 20 questions and answers and must match them. To give the activity the challenge of a competition, the teacher should give students only a limited amount of time.

**What You Read Is What You Get?** The student is given a picture and its detailed written description. The student must note the discrepancies between the two.

**Writing**

**Instant warm-ups:**

**Free-writing:** Students spend five minutes writing in the target language (on any topic or a topic selected by the teacher); teacher can take up and write reactions (without corrections) or use as reading warm-up.

**Memory test:** Students write as many vocabulary words as they can remember from the lesson.

**Details:** Students write as many "facts" as they can remember from assigned reading or culture lesson.

**Passing Notes:** Students write a note to someone else in the class (teacher assigns the recipient); notes can be used as a reading warm-up or an answer can be written in the next class period.

**Warm-ups requiring planning/preparation:**

**Creation:** Teacher distributes envelopes with pictures of certain objects; students work in groups to write prediction (future), history (past), description (present) for person named on envelope.

**Expansion:** Teacher (or student) writes a sentence on the board or on transparency; students, working in groups, expand and/or extend the sentence.

**Invent:** Photos of non-famous people are distributed to groups of students who write a CV for that person, or a paragraph about that person's childhood/adolescence/professional life; or a description of that person's home.
The perfect house: Photo/picture of houses; students write a brief description of the kind of family/couple/person who lives in it.

Endings: Teacher writes the beginning of a story on the board/overhead transparency; students volunteer to continue the story (can be done in groups)

In the middle: Teacher gives students beginning and end of a story, middle section is missing; students (individually or in groups) write the middle piece.

As for me: Personal sentence completion: Student finish sentences on a handout.

Same/different: In pairs, students write three ways they think they are like their partner, three ways they think they are different; then they compare and react.

Please ask: Individually students write five questions they would like to be asked; as follow-up students find a partner who asks them the questions; follow up can be used as warm-up (speaking and listening) the next class period.

Questions: Students are given answers to interview questions; they write the questions which could have generated these answers.

Problem solving: Each group has the same task, i.e. You have to make a phone call but have no money; How many uses can you find for a plastic bag/pencil/your language book/etc.; How many ways can you find to have a cheap vacation. All ideas are written down by the group secretary; groups can select five most interesting, or practical, etc. (intermediate/advanced)

Lists: Desert island: Make a list of eight to ten things necessary for your survival; students compare lists and agree on common list of maximum ten; Moving: List of what you need for your new apartment/house; Going to college: List of what you need to take. Can be developed further in speaking when students are asked to justify their items.

Find the words: Students write texts (dialogue) for cartoon bubbles.

Scramble: Groups/partners see how many other words they can create out of a word they are given.


A special note of recognition to the many stimulating textbooks we have encountered and to our teaching assistants who bring us fresh approaches.