

## Using Menus in the Language Classroom

### Sample Lesson Plan Overview

**Level:** Beginning-intermediate

**Aims:** Increase food-related vocabulary and descriptive adjectives, practice pronunciation, practice language related to decision-making

**Class time:** 30-40 minutes

**Preparation time:** 20 minutes

**Resources:** Assorted product labels

Menus provide an easily accessible source of authentic materials that can be used to teach a wide variety of skills. They also provide a point of departure for talking about target language cuisine and can lead to experiential learning, with students either sampling local cuisine or following recipes to make dishes themselves.

The following three lesson plans exemplify ways in which recipes can be used promote general literacy and critical thinking skills while enhancing students' knowledge of food and nutrition-related vocabulary.

$\frac{3}{4}$  **Excuse me, what's xiao long bao?—Practicing pronunciation with menus**

$\frac{3}{4}$  **Where should we eat tonight?—Practicing problem solving with menus**

$\frac{3}{4}$  **How much are fish and chips?—Menu gap activity**

## **Excuse me, what's xiao long bao?—Practicing pronunciation with menus**

**Level:** Beginning

**Aims:** Practice pronunciation, learn food-related vocabulary

**Class time:** 30 minutes

**Preparation time:** 20 minutes

**Resources:** Menu, prepared food (optional), pictures of a popular dish (e.g., of food items, restaurant settings) (optional)

### **Procedure:**

1. Before class, do the following:
2. Locate a menu in the target language
  - a. Prepare enough copies of the menu for students to work individually or in pairs;
  - b. (Optional) Where possible, located a visual (e.g., a photo, a magazine picture) of a popular dish on this menu.
  - c. (Optional) Prepare one of the dishes on the menu to bring to class.
  - d. Begin class by passing out copies of the menus to students.
3. Draw their attention to the selected dish on this menu.
4. Elicit student reactions in the following manner:
  - a. Ask if any students are familiar with this dish and/or have ever tried it?
  - b. If so, have them share their experience with the rest of the class.
  - c. Elicit general reactions to the dish from the students using their available vocabulary (e.g., delicious, too spicy).
  - d. If you have actually prepared the dish, allow students to sample it and again elicit descriptions or opinions (e.g., hot, cold, tasty, disgusting)
5. Configure students into pairs or small groups.
6. Allow 2-3 minutes for them to study other dishes on the menu and circle any food vocabulary that they are unfamiliar with.
7. Going around the room, elicit from students the food items they were unfamiliar with. Have them guess what these words might mean, noting the new food vocabulary on the blackboard.
8. Practice pronunciation of these items with the whole class, drawing attention to stress, tone, differences between spelling and pronunciation etc.
  - a. For further literacy and pronunciation practice introduce the form:
  - b. “What is \_\_\_\_\_?”
9. Have students take turns asking this question of each other, using the newly-learned food vocabulary.

### **Caveats and Options:**

1. Certainly making a dish and bringing it into class is optional, but usually fun for students to see this sort of “authentic material”.
2. Once this activity is completed, it would not be difficult to convert this into a bingo game.

## **Where should we eat tonight?—Practicing problem solving with menus**

**Level:** Intermediate—advanced

**Aims:** Practice the language of decision making

**Class time:** 30 minutes

**Preparation time:** 40 minutes

**Resources:** Menus, cue cards

Deciding among friends where to dine out can be a difficult endeavor since different people's preferences provide limits on which restaurant to select. The process is even more complicated when attempted in a foreign language. Using restaurant menus, this activity helps students acquire the necessary language to negotiate this decision-making process and reach an agreement on where to go for dinner.

### **Procedure:**

1. Before class, do the following
  - a. Locate 3-4 menus in the target language
  - b. Using index cards make cards expressing different
    - i. Budgets
    - ii. Food preferences (type or even allergies)
  - c. Make enough copies of the menu so that each group of 3-4 students has one of each menu.
2. In class, introduce culturally appropriate words of negotiation such as:
  - a. "In my opinion..."
  - b. "Let's not forget to consider..."
  - c. "What do you think?"
3. Present the decision-making activity to the students.
  - a. Each group has a set budget (either total or per person) as noted on their group index card
  - b. Each person in the group has a set of preferences as noted on their individual index cards
  - c. Each group has several different restaurants and menus to choose from.
  - d. The goal of each group is to decide on the best place to have dinner that night.
4. Pass out the necessary materials.
5. Move around the classroom to monitor and assist groups.

### **Caveats and Options:**

1. If the activity needs to be made more complex, information about the restaurants can be provided (e.g., how near or far away it is, how many people are there at dinner time, whether there is outdoor seating, live music, etc.)
2. Depending on the level of the students more vocabulary or phrases may need to be introduced.

## **How much are fish and chips?—Menu gap activity**

**Level:** Intermediate

**Aims:** Practice exchanging information

**Class time:** 30 minutes **Preparation**

**time:** 20 minutes **Resources:** Menu,

worksheet, index card

Being able to ask targeted questions about food dishes, prices, ingredients, etc. is an almost necessary survival skill in foreign countries. It is also a particularly difficult skill for learners to acquire as they need to overcome their hesitancy to ask information questions in the target language. This activity uses an information gap technique to help intermediate-level learners acquire a repertoire of basic questions they can ask in the LCTL about menu items.

### **Procedure:**

1. Before class, do the following
  - a. Locate a menu in the target language
  - b. Make two sets of the menus, each set with different descriptions and prices erased.
  - c. Make a worksheet (see appendix).
  - d. Prepare index cards with preferences on them (preferences should be broad and simple (e.g., You want beef for dinner. You have \$10 in your pocket, and you want a dessert.)
2. Present how to ask clarifying questions
  - a. “Excuse me, what is in \_\_\_\_\_?”
  - b. “And how much does that cost?”
3. Pair students up and give each student a different menu copy and a different preference card.
4. Working together, students should fill out the worksheet.

### **Caveats and Options:**

1. At the minimum, you can use two different preference cards giving every pair the same different preferences. For variety, you can make many different preference cards and have students share their different discoveries.
2. Depending on student exposure to restaurant terms and local food, you may need to present those as well.

## Appendix

You and your partner have menus with missing information. Working together, ask each other questions so that you can fill out the following blanks.

1. Name your budget \_\_\_\_\_.
2. List 4 dinner items that are within your budget.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Name your preference \_\_\_\_\_.
4. List 4 dinner items that fit your preference.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
5. If your budget is large enough, name a dinner and dessert that you could order.
  - a. Dinner\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Dessert\_\_\_\_\_