

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

TABOU

This activity stresses oral communication and develops essential circumlocution skills. It can be used with any vocabulary. The teacher must prepare cards or slips of paper ahead of time, on each of which is written a vocabulary word in French. 10-15 words per group are needed. In class, the teacher will divide the class into groups; 3-4 students per group is an ideal size, but the activity can work well with groups of 2-5 students. An instructor pressed for preparation time might also choose to have each group select the words for another group, from an assigned vocabulary review section and write up the slips. This technique takes up more classroom time but provides additional vocabulary review.

The rules are a take-off on the word game *Taboo*. The instructor provides each group with a stack of the prepared cards, placed face down, and sets a time limit—five minutes works well. The first student in each group picks up the top card and must then explain what the word is without saying it until any other student in the group succeeds in guessing it. That word is then placed to the side, and the next student in the group picks up the next card and explains it until someone guesses, and so on around the circle. A student may choose to skip a word that he or she does not know or cannot get the others to guess, but the instructor should circle around the room and make sure students are keeping two separate piles for successfully guessed words and “passed” words.

What is TABOU? (1) use of English, (2) use of gestures, (3) use of related words (e.g., it would not be acceptable to say *une pomme légume* to get group members to guess *une pomme de terre* or *boire* for *boisson*). If the instructor catches any of these rules being broken, he or she should take the card in question away. The group that has the most successfully guessed words when time is up wins.

As an aside, it could be fun to mention the Tahitian origin of the English word “taboo” and the French word *tabou* and ask students to find Tahiti or French Polynesia on a map and guess what languages are currently spoken there (French and Tahitian) and what its relationship is to France (a territory).

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WHERE IS JANUARY?

This activity reinforces months of the year and weather expressions. It is designed for twenty-four participants, but it may be modified for use with fewer students by reducing the number of information cards which are distributed. Prepare two sets of identical information cards, but break up each set before distributing the cards in class so that students receiving identical cards will not be seated next to each other. Give one card to each student. Each card is representative of a specific month and contains (1) a weather condition (written in English) which is characteristic of that month, and (2) the name of the month itself (written in English). Each student circulates around the room, trying to find the one other person whose card is identical to his. January tries to find January. Each student selects a partner and student **A** asks “Quel temps fait-il?” Student **B** looks at his or her card and answers by giving in French the weather expression which appears there in English. If this answer does not match the weather expression contained on Student **A**'s card, each student moves on to question another member of the class. If the answer matches the expression on Student **A**'s card, Student **B** asks Student **A** what month it is. Student **A** looks at his or her card and states the month in French. If this answer does not coincide with the month on Student **B**'s card, each student again moves on to question another student. If the month coincides with the month on Student **B**'s card, January has found January, February has found February, etc. Students then compare cards for verification purposes. If the cards are not identical, play again resumes. If the two cards are identical, these students sit down in order to reduce the number of circulating students and facilitate the search activity for the remaining students.

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