

How We Spend Our Free Time

Classroom at a Glance

Teacher:	Katie Quackenbush
Language:	Arabic I
Grades:	8
School:	Boston Latin Academy, Boston, Massachusetts
Lesson Date:	May 4
Class Size:	14
Schedule:	47 minutes daily

Video Summary

In this lesson, eighth graders in Katie Quackenbush’s Arabic I class continue a unit on hobbies and practice asking and answering questions using “you” and “I.” Ms. Quackenbush reviews the lesson agenda with the class and starts students off with a speaking activity in which students in groups pass around a paper bag as music plays. When the music stops, the student holding the bag picks a card from the bag and asks a classmate whether he or she likes doing the activity pictured on it. Ms. Quackenbush assesses student understanding of unit vocabulary and subject-verb agreement in their questions and responses, and provides corrective feedback. After the game, students survey classmates about whether they enjoy doing certain activities in their free time and create a bar graph using the data they have collected. Then Ms. Quackenbush tells students that in the next class they will compare their free-time activities with those of students in Saudi Arabia.

Standards Addressed

- Communication: Interpersonal Communication
- Communication: Interpretive Communication
- Comparisons: Cultural Comparisons

Read about these standards at the end of this lesson.

Key Terms

- dialect
- learner-centered classroom
- thematic units

Definitions for these terms can be found in the Glossary located in the Appendix.

Class Context

“My classroom is very intentionally filled with tables and not desks because I feel that tables promote conversation, and in the language class I want the students to be speaking to each other [in Arabic]. I do a lot of group work and a lot of partner work in all of my classes, and having tables is much more conducive to that kind of work. I think it really encourages students to be a community at their table and speak to each other, use the language to have conversations, and also help each other and support each other in their learning.” —Katie Quackenbush

School Profile

Katie Quackenbush teaches Arabic levels 1–4 to students from grades 8 to 11 at Boston Latin Academy (BLA) in Boston, Massachusetts. The 1,700 students enrolled in the school come from all over the city of Boston and make up a culturally, racially, ethnically, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse student body. BLA is an exam school; while it is part of the Boston Public Schools district, students are admitted based on past grade point average and the results of an academic entrance exam. About 43 percent of students are English Language Learners. First languages include Spanish, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, Somali, Mandarin, Urdu, Cambodian, Bengali, and Pashtu. BLA offers students an education that combines classical and contemporary curricula. All students study Latin starting in seventh grade and add a modern foreign language, including Chinese, French, Japanese, Spanish, and Arabic, beginning in eighth grade. BLA began offering Arabic five years ago.

Year at a Glance Meeting People

- Greeting each other in a culturally appropriate manner
- Giving basic information about ourselves (name, age, where we’re from, nationality, etc.)
- Basic Arab world geography (paired with discussing nationality)
- Numbers 0–20
- Introduction to Arabic writing system; first third of the alphabet; short vowels

Class Context, cont'd.

Lesson Design

Ms. Quackenbush uses backward design when planning lessons. She starts with a thematic unit related to the cultures of the Arab world and develops objectives for the unit based on state frameworks as well as the World-Readiness Standards and the Five Cs goal areas. From there, she creates subunits and then individual lessons. Ms. Quackenbush designs each lesson to maximize student language production and help build student confidence during the first year of study. She plans a lot of student-led hands-on activities, and infuses cultural and linguistic authenticity into her curriculum. She also seeks to balance language skills across the three modes of communication (Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational) connected with cultural knowledge so that students are able to function with the language in varied contexts.

Ms. Quackenbush feels that setting learning in real-life contexts naturally enables her to bring in all of the Five Cs. In addition to communication, she emphasizes cultural understanding in her teaching. She views language as a means to learn about other peoples—in this case, about different Arab cultures. She believes relating the language to something that can help them understand the world better improves students' motivation to learn. To discourage students from resorting to English, she intentionally avoids translating directly between Arabic and English.

Year at a Glance, cont'd.

Making Plans with Friends

- Days of the week, times of day
- Asking and answering questions about our schedule
- Making plans with others
- Second third of the alphabet; other writing symbols

Visiting and Hospitality

- Inviting others and accepting/rejecting invitations
- Hospitality and insisting on invitations
- Likes and dislikes
- Final third of the alphabet
- Project: write and illustrate a comic strip

About Me

- **Hobbies and sports**
- Family members
- Talking about others' likes and dislikes
- Remaining symbols for reading and writing; practice whole alphabet
- Project: create a children's book about me

Class Context, cont'd.

Ms. Quackenbush uses conversational activities as opportunities to informally assess student learning. She listens for the target vocabulary and structures that are the focus of a unit or subunit. When she notices repeated mistakes being made, she tries to be reflective and conscious about how much she corrects students. One strategy she uses when giving corrective feedback is to repeat what the student said in a questioning way to encourage students to notice their own errors and build self-correction skills.

Ms. Quackenbush uses classroom setup and materials to support her teaching. She fills her classroom with tables (not desks) because she feels that tables promote conversation. She emphasizes group work and partner work in her classes, and having tables is much more conducive to that kind of work than individual desks. This year, she is piloting an Arabic I high school textbook that includes authentic readings, audio recordings by native speakers, and videos in which native speakers act out culturally relevant scenes representing authentic scenarios. She supplements textbook materials with YouTube clips, children's books, and authentic materials that she has collected during her travels in the Arab world.

Class Context, cont'd.

The Lesson

All students in Ms. Quackenbush's Arabic I class were in their first year of study. None were native speakers. Several of the students were Muslim and had been exposed to the letters and sounds of the language through their religious upbringings, but they did not enter the class with any communicative proficiency. In this lesson, which comes partway through a unit on hobbies, students activated vocabulary they had been learning and asked and answered questions using "you" and "I." With respect to grammatical structure, Ms. Quackenbush focused on helping students recognize patterns among different kinds of words and then had students use them in a meaning-driven, communicative fashion.

The lesson activities were designed to follow an authentic reading that students had done in the previous class session about how Saudi Arabian students spend their free time. Students worked in groups to answer some questions in their textbook about the reading. They followed that up with a full-class conversation about how they can use the Saudi Arabian students' responses to formulate questions to see if the Boston Latin Academy students liked to do those activities as well.

Ms. Quackenbush designed the lesson to be student-led to maximize student production yet allow students of different abilities to work at their own pace. The lesson was carefully scaffolded: the warm-up game required students to practice the question formation that would be necessary for the main activity. Instructions were communicated to students twice in the target language—first on the whiteboard in visual format using both words and images, and then orally by the teacher. These were restated in English on the students' handout. This variety of formats for instructions differentiates learning for all students.

After students completed the main activity, Ms. Quackenbush explained the extension: in the next day's class, they would compare what they liked to do in their free time with what Saudi Arabian students like to do in theirs. This provided students a mental roadmap of what was coming next.

Class Context, cont'd.

Key Teaching Strategies

- **Appealing to Multiple Intelligences:** The teacher incorporates different nonverbal approaches, such as bodily/kinesthetic and musical/rhythmic ones, into lessons.
- **Contextualizing Grammar:** The teacher embeds grammatical practice in meaningful contexts; meaning precedes a focus on form.
- **Providing Corrective Feedback:** In a process of negotiation, the teacher mediates student learning by verbally or nonverbally helping the student focus on a point of confusion around a language form.
- **Visualizing Vocabulary:** The teacher uses visuals to establish concrete images of vocabulary and to help students remember the terms.

Analyze the Video

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

Before You Watch

Respond to the following questions:

- How do you see the role of the teacher in providing corrective feedback?
- What might grammar instruction look like in a communicative classroom?
- What are some strategies you might use to maximize communication among students in class?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

Watch the Video

As you watch "How We Spend Our Free Time," take notes on Ms. Quackenbush's instructional strategies, particularly how she sequences activities, how they relate to the objectives for the day, and what techniques she uses to remain in the target language. Write down what you find interesting, surprising, or especially important about the teaching and learning in this lesson.

Reflect on the Video

Review your notes, and then respond to the following questions:

- How does Ms. Quackenbush introduce and model the various activities while staying in the target language?
- How did the warm-up game prepare the students for the subsequent activities?
- How did Ms. Quackenbush design the information-gathering activity to ensure that students were exposed to new vocabulary words?
- How did Ms. Quackenbush sequence the activities in the class to ensure that the information gathered by the students would be used authentically in the subsequent activity?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

Take a Second Look

Watch the video again, but this time, focus on the following teaching practices: contextualizing grammar and providing corrective feedback.



Practice: Contextualizing Grammar

Ms. Quackenbush integrates the study of grammar into the conversation-based activities.

- How were grammatical structures introduced and practiced in the class?
- What are some of the benefits of practicing the target grammatical forms through contextualized communicative activities rather than through direct, rule-based grammar instruction?
- How did Ms. Quackenbush approach grammar mistakes while using this approach?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.



Practice: Providing Corrective Feedback

Ms. Quackenbush actively listens to student conversations and offers corrective feedback on mistakes such as speaking in English or making grammatical errors in a manner that does not discourage students.

- What types of errors led Ms. Quackenbush to decide to intervene and offer corrective feedback? What strategies did Ms. Quackenbush use to correct her students?
- How did this method minimize negative emotional and motivational factors (i.e., the affective filter) among her students?
- How did the students respond to teacher feedback? Cite evidence to support your answer.

Connect to Your Teaching

Reflect on Your Practice

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

- What are some of the different approaches you can take in modeling a task?
- How can you incorporate communication into beginning-level classes whose students may not have expansive vocabulary knowledge?
- How can you help make these activities more interpersonal and authentic so that students feel like they have a reason to negotiate meaning?

Watch Other Videos

Watch other videos in the *Teaching Foreign Languages K–12* library for more examples of teaching methodologies like those you've just seen. Note: All videos in this series are subtitled in English.

- Hearing Authentic Voices (Spanish) shows students using all three modes of communication as they prepare for a conversation with native speakers about how they spend their free time.
- Daily Routines (Japanese) shows students working together to practice vocabulary related to daily routines and making comparisons between two different cultures.
- My Future Plans (Arabic) shows students engaged in authentic conversations about what activities they will be doing in the future.

Connect to Your Teaching, cont'd.

Put It Into Practice

Try these ideas in your classroom. Where it's not already evident, reflect on how to adapt an idea that targets one performance range for other performance ranges.

- For homework, have students make a photo story of how they spend their free time. Each student should take pictures that represent their favorite hobbies and activities and caption them in the target language. They could then present their photo stories to the class.
- Ms. Quackenbush has students engage in cultural comparisons about how both Saudi Arabian and American students spend their free time. Identify communities of native speakers nearby that could connect with the students in your area and invite a member of the community to teach a microlesson about a popular hobby or activity in the target culture. Alternatively, plan a joint activity between your students and students of that community to engage in a hobby together. For example, have students play culturally appropriate card games together or a game of soccer. If you do not have access to communities of native speakers, take time to do a hands-on activity related to a popular hobby in your target culture so students can experience it for themselves.
- Use Total Physical Response (TPR) to introduce the vocabulary for a unit on hobbies or free-time activities. Because many of these activities have clear movements associated with them, they are especially well suited to TPR. Once the movements are well established, you can use TPR Storytelling to make the target vocabulary come alive for your students. Lead your students interactively through the story-creation process, where you use movement and TPRS questioning techniques to actively engage them in the storytelling process. After the story, reinforce the vocabulary further by providing your students with recall activities. Finally, give the students a reading activity aligned with the story in class so the vocabulary can be listened to, acted out, spoken, and seen.

Resources

Lesson Materials

Lesson Agenda*

Slides that Ms. Quackenbush presented and reviewed with students at the beginning of the class

Do Now Graph: What Saudi Arabians Do in Their Free Time*

A bar graph with questions for student data interpretation

Free-Time Poll: Instructions and Interview Chart*

Instructions for interviewing classmates about their free-time activity preferences, and a chart for recording data

Free-Time Poll: Bar Graph Handout and Samples*

A blank graph with instructions for plotting interview data, and samples of student work

Infographic Miniproject: Assignment and Samples*

Instructions for completing the infographic miniproject assignment, and samples of student work

* These lesson materials can be found in the Appendix.

Curriculum References

Massachusetts Foreign Language Curriculum Framework (Aug. 1999)

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/foreign/1999.pdf>

Katie Quackenbush's Additional Resources

Web Resources:

Al Jazeera: Learning Arabic

<http://learning.aljazeera.net/arabic>

A source for simplified news articles. Each news article is accompanied by vocabulary words and different forms of assessment.

Resources, cont'd.

TeachMideast

<http://teachmideast.org/>

This Middle East Policy Council website is useful for learning about the culture and history of various Arab countries. It's also an excellent resource for research projects.

Arabic Signs of Foreign Words

<https://plus.google.com/u/0/photos/110086530013803430233/albums/5662922681403633265?hl=en>

This site presents a collection of photographs of foreign signs in the Arab World transliterated into Arabic.

Toyoraljanahtv

<https://www.youtube.com/user/toyoraljanahtv>

This YouTube channel contains a collection of songs and other videos geared to children.

Print Resources:

Ms. Quackenbush is piloting the following high school textbook: Standish, Sarah, Richard Cozzens, and Rana Abdul-Aziz. *Jusoor* (tentative title). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, in press.

Standards

World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages

The *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* create a roadmap to guide learners to develop competence to communicate effectively and interact with cultural understanding. This lesson correlates to the following Standards:

Communication

Communicate effectively in more than one language in order to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes

Standard: Interpersonal Communication

Learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions.

Standard: Interpretive Communication

Learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.

Comparisons

Develop insight into the nature of language and culture in order to interact with cultural competence

Standard: Cultural Comparisons

Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Notes
