Speaking Activities with Images and Photos in the Foreign Language Classroom

Compiled from the work of Harry Grover Tuttle

1. One student orally describes a picture for one minute to his partner.
2. One student describes a picture orally to a partner who then repeats the description, using the picture as an aid for recall.
3. One student orally describes the picture to another student who does not see it; the second student then repeats the description to the first student.
4. Two students look at a picture; then one student looks away while the other student asks him questions about it.
5. Two students look at the picture and compete to see who can make up more questions about it.
6. Two students make up questions about a picture; one student uses question words, the other does not use question words. A continuation of this exercise would be to have the students answer each other’s questions orally or in writing.
7. One student orally describes a picture to a second student who then draws a copy of it.
8. One student orally describes a picture to another student who then is given a choice of pictures and must choose the one described.
9. Two students tell a story using a picture. One student tells what happened before the scene in the picture and the other tells what will happen afterward.
10. While one student orally describes a picture, the other student changes descriptive statements to questions.
11. While one student orally describes what is happening in a picture, the other student says the same thing in a different tense or in the negative.
12. While one student orally describes a picture, the other paraphrases what the first student is saying.
13. While one student orally describes a picture, the other repeats the same thing but changes all subjects to the plural or singular and makes all other necessary grammatical changes.
14. Two students look at a picture and one acts the angel conscience and the other the devil conscience to debate what the person in the picture should do in a certain situation.
15. Two students look at the same picture and one tells what will happen in an optimistic point of view while the other relates the future in a pessimistic point of view.
16. Two students look at the same picture and one tells all the good points about things in the picture and the second tells all the bad points.
17. Two students look at the same picture and as one describes the picture the other says the exact opposite, i.e., “the chair is big” will be changed to “the chair is small.”
18. Two students look at the same picture and supply the dialogue for the people represented. (If there are more than two characters in the picture, group students accordingly.)
19. Two students look at the same picture and act out what is happening in the picture as they are describing it.
20. Two students look at the same picture and each pretends to be an object in the picture. The two objects then talk to each other.
21. One student selects an object in the picture and tries to sell it to the other student.
22. One student tells the other student all the colors in the picture and the second student tells what objects have those colors.
23. One student tells the other student what he would do in the shown situation. The other student then tells what he would do. At a more advanced level the second student might use a different verb construction such as “should have.”
24. After selecting a picture, a student chooses a letter of the alphabet and then names as many objects as possible in the picture that begin with that letter. The student who names the most in one minute wins.
25. Two students look at the same picture; the first student names an object and describes it. The second student compares it to some other object in the picture. They do this for as many objects in the picture as possible (at least 5). For example: first student, “The bush is large;” second student, “The tree is larger than the bush.”
26. Two students look at the same picture; the first student names everything made of wood and then the second student names everything made of metal or plastic. See who can name the most objects.
27. Two students look at the same picture; the first student names everything made of wood and then the second student names everything made of metal or plastic. See who can name the most objects.
28. Two students look at the same picture; the first tells how he would add to the picture to make it more attractive and the second tells what he would do to the picture to improve its appearance.
29. Two students look at the same picture; the first names all the pretty things in the picture and the second student then names all the ugly things in the picture.
30. Two students look at the same picture; the first student tells what mood he feels is represented in the picture. The second student tells him whether he agrees with him and why.
31. Two students look at the same picture; the first student tells the other about a similar experience in his own life. The second student then tells in what way the first person’s experience is similar to the original picture.
32. One student is given two pictures by his partner. The first student describes all the similarities between the two pictures. The second student then describes all the differences between them. (He should not mention any that the first student mentioned.)
33. One student is given two pictures by his partner. The first student makes up a story about the two pictures. The second student uses the pictures in a different order to tell a different story.
34. One student is given two pictures by his partner. The first student chooses an object in one picture to put in the second picture and tells how the new object would change the picture. The second student does the same thing with a different object.
35. A student is given a picture by another student. The first student tells the physical location, the season of the year, the weather, the time of day, the health of the people involved, and their activities. The second student then tells all other information about the physical conditions and health of the people in the picture.
36. A student writes out a description of a picture and then omits at least one word per sentence which he puts at the bottom of the page. The other student then replaces the omitted words in the paragraph.
37. The first student describes the home and the family of the person in the picture. The second student tells how the described home and family is similar or different from his own.
38. A student selects a picture and tells what the person’s favorite sports or hobbies are, where he does them, and how he does them.
39. A student writes a letter of about ten sentences telling a friend about the picture, pretending it is a tourist site, a vacation trip, historical incident, or a news story.
40. The first student contrasts objects in the picture, i.e., “The chair is big but the book is small.” The second student compares the objects using equalities, i.e., “The chair is as heavy as the table.”
41. One student tells another student how he would make his picture into a TV program or movie. The second student tells what he thinks about this program.
42. One student makes up a mystery story about the picture. Another student tries to solve the mystery by creating a possible solution.
43. One student gives another student a picture and specifies a mood. The second student then writes at least five sentences about the picture reflecting that mood. The first student then makes as few changes as possible on the written description to change it to a different mood which the second student suggests.
44. One student looks at a picture and describes cultural differences between the country depicted in the picture and the United States. The second student describes cultural similarities depicted in the picture.
45. Each of the two students lists as many vocabulary words as possible from a given picture. The student who writes down the most words wins.
46. One student starts a story based on the picture. After three sentences, the second student continues the story for three more sentences. The first student then continues for an additional three sentences. The second student ends the story with three sentences.
47. Given a vowel or consonant sound, the students say all the words, objects, actions, etc., in the picture which contain that sound.
48. One student makes a statement about the picture. The second student repeats the statement and adds to it by using a conjunction such as but or since.
49. Two students see how many different ways they can rearrange three pictures to tell different stories.
50. One student looks at a picture and tells how it is similar to his house, community, etc. The second student tells how it differs.
51. In turn, each of the two students selects a picture and tells why the other should visit the place or do the activity illustrated in the picture. A third student will decide who wins and explain why.