

# Candy Activity

## I. Rational

This activity was designed to get students to practice their skills in talking about and describing food. The use of candy really motivates the students to use the language to get what they want. This was designed for beginning Alutiiq language learners, but can be modified for intermediate learners.

This activity supports language learning through these means: allowing students to focus on form during a meaning-focused activity and requiring students to produce output to get what they want.

### 1) *Focus on Form*

In her Keynote address to the Central Connecticut Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ConnTESOL) Conference, Nina Spada (2008) differentiated between Isolated and Integrated Focus on Form. She asserts, “Integrated Focus on Form has a primary focus on meaning with attention to form embedded in meaning-based and communicative practices.” According to authors Long and Robinson (1998), “*Focus on form* refers how focal attentional resources are allocated,” (p. 23). They maintain that during a meaning-focused lesson, teachers often draw attention to linguistic code features, shifting the focus to form.

The Candy activity is primarily a meaning-based activity, as the students must communicate their desires in order to get the candy they want. Using different colors and sizes of candy, the students are able to pay attention to forms that change between talking about a single piece of candy to several pieces of candy.

### 2) *Output Hypothesis*

Swain (2000) postulates that it is dialogue that constructs linguistic knowledge (p.97). She goes on to describe that the language use is mediating the learning of the L2. Swain (1995) explains that, “output pushes learners to process language more deeply- with more mental effort- than does input,” (2000, p. 99). When producing output, learners can ‘stretch’ their interlanguage to accomplish their communicative goal. When producing output, students are able to notice the difference between what they are able to say and what they want to communicate, they are able to develop and test hypotheses about how the target language works, and they can reflect on the language they have learned.

The candy activity supports students’ language development through encouraging their production of output. Students must communicate what type of candy they want, how many of a particular color candy they want, etc. Students are highly motivated to produce output in this activity because in the end, they get candy. Students are able to notice what they are unable to communicate, and very much want to communicate to get the candy.

Students test out their hypotheses about how the language works as they are telling the teacher what they want.

## II. Description

### 1) *Pre-Task*

The teacher reviews postbases that will be covered in this activity: -sinaq, -ng'cuk, +yug, +tur, -mek, -nek.

You can begin this discussion by asking the students what language do we know, do we need, to talk about this candy (displaying the Peanut M&Ms and either milk chocolate M&Ms or Skittles).

Allow the students to brainstorm all of the language we have used.

If anything important is left off of the list (colors, size, want, ending –tua, number words) the teacher can ask leading questions to get the students to add that to the list

The teacher can model how to communicate a want for a particular type of candy:

Cungartuq neqnisqasinaryugtua. – I want a big blue candy.

Qaqirngartuq neqnisqang'cugyurtua.- I want a small yellow candy.

### 2) *Task Cycle*

The teacher and students sit in a circle (on the floor or around a table).

The teacher empties candy packages onto a paper towel in front of them- you want a variety of sizes and colors (I use peanut M&Ms and Skittles [more colors]. I usually have 2 to 3 small packages of each candy).

Each student has a paper towel in front of him or her.

Begin by having the student on your right communicate which candy they want by asking them: “Naliaq neqnisqaryugcit?”- Which candy do you want?

If they have trouble, I prompt them by asking- Neqnisqasinaryugtuten, ili neqnisqang'cugyugtuten? Do you want a big candy or a small candy?

Then ask them “Caquciq kraaskaag neqnisqaryugcit?” What color candy do you want?

Once they communicate which candy they want (starting with only one piece)- explicitly correct any errors, then pass the turn on to the student to their right and continue around the circle.

Continue around the circle as many times as it takes for the students to become comfortable asking for a piece of candy, prompting as needed.

Once they are comfortable, allow them to ask for a particular number of pieces of candy (I try to limit it so that they don't monopolize the candy)

I prompt with questions such as: “Caugcinek neqnisqaryugcit?”- how many pieces of candy do you want? Then prompt them with the previous questions as needed.

Once we go around the circle a couple of times, I open it up for students to communicate without going around in turns. When they are ready to tell me what they want, they can do so.

We play until all of the candy is gone.

The students can eat the candy.

### 3) Post Task

The teacher calls the class back together. She asks the students how they felt about the activity. She can ask questions such as:

- How did you like the task?
- What did you find difficult?
- What did you find easy?
- What types of activities could help you be more successful on this type of task?

## III. Reflection

I have used this activity with my secondary Alutiiq students twice. The first time we used the large peanut M&Ms and the smaller milk chocolate M&Ms. The students enjoyed the activity because they got to eat candy. They were highly motivated to produce output, my quietest students came out of their shells to use the language to get the candy they wanted.

We were limited with the amount of colors using only M&Ms, so the second time, I got peanut M&Ms and Skittles (both tropical and sour). We had a lot more colors to talk about. The students were able to communicate what they wanted with less prompting the second time we did the activity. The period between these activities was approximately one month.

I did notice that the students had to count up to the number they wanted in Alutiiq (they don't know their numbers by heart yet). It tells me we need to work more on numbers and many students had a hard time remembering their colors, so we need to practice our color words.

## IV. References

Spada, N. (2008). *Communicative language teaching: Fact and folklore* [PDF document]. Retrieved from ConnTESOL online website:  
<http://www.conntesol.net/documents/Spada%20Keynote%20Presentation.pdf>

Swain, M. (2000). The output hypothesis and beyond: Mediating acquisition through collaborative dialogue. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 97-114). Oxford: Oxford University Press.