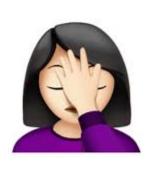# Engaging students in language learning outside of the classroom

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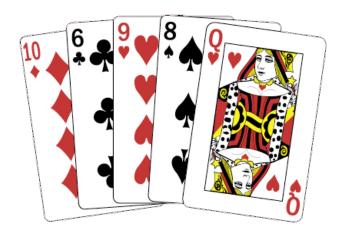
Stop me if you've heard this one before...

"I took Spanish (French, German, etc.) in high school. I don't remember anything."

"My student has been in your class for xx days. When will he/ she become fluent?"

"I wish I had paid attention in my high school foreign language classes. Now I need to speak another language for my job and I am struggling to learn."

The cards we've been dealt…

As an elementary foreign language teacher, at best, I teach my students 36 hours a YEAR.

As a high school foreign language teacher, at best, we might teach our students for a total of 180 hours (=about a week) a YEAR.

The reality of the situation…

Conservative estimates say it takes between 480-720 hours of study to reach BASIC fluency in a second language. Source: (https://blog.thelinguist.com/how-long-should-it-take-to-learn-a-language)

Others say it takes more than 4,400 hours to become proficient in another language.

Source: (https://www.fluentin3months.com/hours-to-learn-a-language/)

Either way, our in-class instructional time is no where near sufficient to produce proficiency in our students.

Clearly we need
to utilize time
outside of class
if we want to have students
who are proficient,
life-long language learners.

WHAT IS HOMEFUN?

Engaging, enjoyable projects that help students to independently practice their language skills outside of class.

WHAT IS HOMEWORK?

Worksheets, exercises out of a textbook, and other artificial language practice that bore students rather than inspire them.

TOP 10 REASONS FOR HOMEFUN

10.) It puts the responsibility of learning another language in the hands of the students.

9.) It develops the habit of practice which is necessary for learning any skill such as playing a sport or playing a musical instrument.

8.) HomeFUN occurs in a relaxed environment which lowers the student's affective domain.

TOP 10 REASONS FOR HOMEFUN

7.) More time can be spent in the L2 which builds proficiency.

6.) The materials, content, and format can all be modified to suit the students' interests and abilities.

5.) Shows the students that languages are present all around them and are an integral part of their lives outside of the classroom.

TOP 10 REASONS FOR HOMEFUN

4.) Increases intrinsic motivation by showing that language learning can be fun, cool, and necessary.

3.) Can provide the necessary individual repetition needed for proficiency.

2.) Provides enough variation that language learning doesn't become rote memorization.

1.) Gives students a positive attitude toward language learning.

Source: (https://www.linguacore.com/polyglotdream/learning-languages-in-school/)

Convinced? Here are some ideas to get you started…

✓ Interactive Notebooks

✓ Class website

✓ Language Tables

✓ Language Showcase

✓ Community Involvement

INTERACTIVE NOTEBOOKS

✓ Make them truly interactive- not just worksheets that get glued to a notebook.

✓ For younger students- make them something they will want to look at and "interact" with every day.

✓ For older students- make sure you are interacting with the students through their notebook.

✓ Ideas on Pinterest, TeachersPayTeachers, etc.

PROS AND CONS

PROS

- Something that can be done daily.

- Helps students to organize ideas.

- Students end up with something they can keep to continue practicing.

CONS

- Not easily modified for different interests.

- Somewhat labor intensive and may be hard to set-up.

- Can be difficult to stay on top of grading them and responding to them.

CLASS WEBSITE

✓ Organizes all of your media into one place: games, videos, quizzes, worksheets, etc.

✓ Can be used both in and out of class.

✓ For making a website: www.wix.com

✓ For making games and quizzes: www.quia.com

✓ For making videos: www.flipgrid.com

✓ For all other videos: www.youtube.com

✓ For taking ads off YouTube videos: www.SafeShare.tv

✓ My website: www.HenryBarnardSpanish.com

PROS   AND   CONS

Pros:
- Students LOVE it!
- Can be used for a wide variety of different activities to meet students' needs.
- Students are using technology anyway, so this harnesses their time for good.

Cons:
- Very labor intensive to set up.
- Can be intimidating if you aren't confident with technology.
- Needs to be monitored carefully.

LANGUAGE TABLES

✓ Meet with students during lunch and speak only in the target language.

✓ Higher level students can be paired with lower level students to help with practice.

✓ Have conversation topics already written out based on what students are learning.

✓ Give rewards for participating.

PROS AND CONS

PROS

- Relaxing environment.

- Easily available time.

- Good for both advanced and beginning students.

CONS

- Need to find a quiet, designated space.

- Need to give up normal free time.

- Need to organize topics and groups.

LANGUAGE SHOWCASE

✓ Set up an evening for students to show off what they have achieved.

✓ Could be skits in the target language, songs, poetry readings, etc.

✓ Invite parents and other stakeholders so that they can see the progress the students have made.

✓ Give everyone a significant part in the evening and a reason to practice at home.

PROS AND CONS

PROS

- Gives students a challenge.

- Opportunity for collaboration with other teachers.

- Shows off your program to others.

CONS

- Needs a lot of planning and organization.

- Could flop if students aren't excited about it.

- Need to find appropriate material to be used.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

✓ Poster Contest

✓ Bilingual Young Authors Contest

✓ Clubs

✓ Cultural Community Centers

✓ Restaurants

✓ Extra credit for bringing in something related to the target language

✓ Create your own competition, group, etc.

OTHER IDEAS?