

Q:

What specific methods do you choose to get your students using the target language??

ACTFL Invites Educators to Air Their Views on Topics in *So You Say*

JANUARY

Q: What advocacy activities are you planning for *Discover Languages* Month? What evidence do you have that they are effective?

FEBRUARY

Q: How do you connect with other colleagues in language education? What type of information do you find most helpful to share with one another?

So You Say is the section where **you** can speak up on the issues most important to **you**.

Each issue of *The Language Educator* will include this feature where our readers can offer their opinions on topics relevant to language education. Representative statements will be published in the magazine.

To offer your views on a topic, please go to www.actfl.org. You will be taken to a form where you may enter a message of no more than 150 words. When finished, click submit and your message will reach the editor.

Thanks in advance for contributing to more representative content for *The Language Educator*!

Students are generally eager to use the target language because I am a native speaker and I often play dumb and act like I don't understand student comments and questions when they use English. My e-mails to students are in the target language and I try to use simple language which encourages them to use the target language as well. Sometimes, if the matter to discuss is complicated, they ask whether they can use English, however I respond in the target language. Ultimately, the students are thankful and are not afraid to voice their opinions and feelings in the target language.

*Margrit Zinggeler, German
Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI*

I am a proponent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). I firmly believe that it is crucial for a teacher to facilitate interaction and immersion between the students and native speakers of the target language. I like to invite other native speakers, if conditions permit, to my class, to conduct interviews or other activities, so that students have opportunities to interact with people from the target country whom they do not know. In addition, for each of my classes, I try to pair up my students, if they want, with my friends or Chinese students studying in Monterey as language partners, so that they can interact more with native speakers after class. Moreover, these language partners can bring my students to their Chinese community, thus increasing their language and cultural awareness.

*Judy Zhu, Chinese
Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center
Monterey, CA*

Every week we have a video conference with students from our sister school, Lycée Louis Bertrand in Briey, France. Our students speak French to the students in France. Then the French students speak English to our students. Everyone benefits from that exchange.

*Gerard Gatoux, French and Spanish
Holy Innocents' Episcopal School, Atlanta, GA*

At the beginning of the semester this year, I put a wide strip of bright red duct tape on the floor marking each of the thresholds of our Spanish classrooms. Then on the first day of class, my colleagues and I made a big deal out of standing on the outside the door, speaking English and then standing on the inside and speaking Spanish. (We use only the target language in class.) The red line is so simple but seems to have made a big impression on the students, plus they see it every day when they come in—a good reminder. They are staying in the target language inside the classroom, even in their personal chit-chat before and after class! Who knew?!

*Jean LeLoup, Spanish
USAF Academy
Colorado Springs, CO*

Having students speak in the target language can be a daunting task no matter what level you are teaching. I teach in a Title 1 urban school. Most of my students have never heard French in the community or anywhere else for that matter. I am their first and only contact with the language and the culture. I speak French with them beginning day one. They can answer in English, of course, specifically in French 1 and 2 to check for understanding. I use a lot of TPR [total physical response] and music. My students learn “to do” French before they can speak, read, or write. All teenagers love to sing, so I use YouTube videos of French songs to get them excited about the language. They even download them in their iPods. I love this since they take French out of the classroom and into the community when they share the music with their family and friends. I also teach my students to send text messages in French so they can practice with each other. They learn a lot of vocabulary and syntax without me having to teach it in class.

*Jocelyne Waddle, French
Frankfort High School, Frankfort, KY*

Even at the intermediate and advanced levels, I give students a “toolkit” of vocabulary items (on a handout or overhead transparency) to spark their imaginations and get them using diverse and sophisticated words and phrases. For example, if students are walking around surveying their classmates’ opinions of various foods, they have phrases in hand like “In my opinion . . .” or “I would say . . .,” as well as a variety of adjectives for describing food items (ranging from “delicious” to “disgusting”). Putting together these “toolkits” requires preparation on the part of the teacher, but they really do work.

*Jennifer Redmann, German
Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster, PA*

I have a verbal participation rubric where the students earn 5 points per day for speaking in Spanish with me and/or classmates. They give themselves the points and at the end of the week, I collect it and turn it into a quiz grade. The students get into it because they are helping their quiz grades since I don’t have a retake policy or allow dropping the lowest grade, etc. When students complain that they want to raise their grade, all they have to do is speak more Spanish in class. Speaking Spanish not only helps their immediate grade, but it also helps their long term grade because they begin to realize their mistakes.

*Deborah Karpel, Spanish
Middle Creek High School, Apex, NC*

I have students work in pairs to do information gap activities. I also have students do pair interviews, asking and answering questions with one another. I also have students use the Rich Internet Applications (RIA) technology tools, “audio boxes,” for speaking assignments. The students like to record themselves speaking Spanish.

*Sonia Steckert, Spanish
Lakeland Christian School, Lakeland, FL*

I teach my students to “lie”! Well, before one starts thinking negatively about teaching students to lie, one needs to know that children understand when I say “lie” better than the directive, “Be creative.” I start out with silly TPRS-like stories in first year and whenever the students create these stories that focus on three main structures, they can get ridiculous and far-fetched. But these exaggerations and “stretches on the truth” do not matter to me as long as they get in the repetition of the three chosen structures. So, this method lays the groundwork for when I get students to independently narrate in written or spoken forms. After I give them a prompt, I remind them to “lie” in order to get better samples that are creatively developed. So a simple prompt to tell me about a personal collection is more successfully completed because students now know that I do not care if they truly have a doll or toy train collection. I just care about the targeted words and phrases being used correctly!

*Linda Zins-Adams, German
Highlands High School, Fort Thomas, KY*

I use a variety of methods, but perhaps the most important is on the first day of class discussing techniques for them to be successful language learners. One of those important techniques shared is that they stay in the target language during the entire class. I then make sure that I structure the class activities so that they will indeed be able to stay in the target language and not be tempted to use English. I also have a substantial class participation grade that rewards students for remaining in the target language. I make sure that they know early on in the semester what their class participation grade is so that they can either maintain or alter their behavior. Other successful techniques include teaching a high-paced class, and changing partners weekly, if not more frequently.

*Audrey Heining-Boynton, Spanish
The University of North Carolina at
Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC*