



## 10 Strategies for Engaging Your Online Language Learners

### Overview

Teaching languages online can be both challenging and rewarding. So much of what we do in face-to-face language classes is communicate and practice the target language. This document outlines 10 strategies for engaging learners in your online language classes. This is not a how-to document; we simply describe some of the types of activities and strategies that may be useful in your course.

### [10 Strategies for Engaging Learners in Blended and Online Classes](#)

### Best Practices

1. Be Present in the Class
2. Create a supportive online community
3. Set very clear expectations for communication for both yourself and students
4. Use a variety of large group, small group and individual activities
5. Use both synchronous and asynchronous activities
6. Ask for feedback early - "How's it going?"
7. Prepare discussion posts that invite questions, discussions, reflections and responses
8. Focus on course resources and materials that are easily accessible from the learners' computers
9. Combine core concept learning with customized and personalized learning
10. Plan a good closing and wrap activity for the course

From Boettcher, J.V. (2011). Designing for Learning: Ten Best Practices for Teaching Online

### What tools are available to help me teach online?

Instructional Design Services with IT Solutions offers several technology tools to help you increase engagement in your online language class

#### Enterprise Tools:

- [Poll Everywhere](#)
- [MediaSpace](#)
- [Zoom](#)
- [Browse even more active learning tools](#)

#### IT Solutions

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## 10 Strategies for Engaging Learners in Online Language Courses

### Strategy #1: Flip Your Classroom

*The basics:* Instructors pre-record lectures and then use face-to-face time to employ active learning strategies including (but not limited to) answering questions, providing guidance, having students work on problems in teams, and/or asking students to present materials to peers. The flipped approach to lecture capture use is studied in Day and Foley's (2006) research where they state that by using web lectures to present lecture material before class, more in-class time can be spent engaging students with hands-on learning activities. The results of their study show that flipping the classroom with Web lectures improve student performance.

[Teaching Strategy: Blended and Flipped Instruction](#)

*Variations on the approach:* Pre-recorded lectures can be recorded using any number of MNSU or cloud-based services (see below) and then uploaded to a D2L course for student review. Videos can be sprinkled with mastery questions or even sequenced in D2L with questions or entire quizzes to ensure that everyone comes to class ready to participate. Other strategies can be used to encourage more active, engaged learners during class.

### [10 Strategies for Engaging Learners with Lecture Capture](#)

*Lecture Capture Tools to Use to Employ this Strategy:*

- [MediaSpace](#)
- [HD Recording Studio](#)

### Strategy #2: Spice Up Your Discussions

*The basics:* By bringing some technology into your online discussions, you can easily engage the students in authentic tasks. Use Yammer or Twitter to have discussions in the target language, write collaborative stories, or connect with native speakers outside the class.

*Variations on the approach:* Tap into the students creativity by posting prompts and asking for responses in a new format. Students (and instructors) can create comic strips, Vokis, animated videos, or word clouds in the target language. While this may not be an every day strategy, it can break the monotony of daily or weekly discussions while adding an element of personalization to the course.

### [10 Strategies for Engaging Your Students in Online Discussions](#)

### Strategy #3: Add Some Pow to Your (or Your Students') Presentations

*The basics:* Ask students to create projects and assignments using animated presentation tools like [Powtoon](#), [GoAnimate](#), [Prezi](#), or [Wideo](#). Students can add their content and record voice-overs in the target language.

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Ex: [Le Subjonctif Prezi](#)

*Variations on the approach:* Students can create digital stories, using photo images, with programs like [Animoto](#) or [iMovie](#). They can record voice overs and narrate a virtual trip to a city or country. Tools like [Touchcast](#) will allow students to record videos of themselves speaking, while adding items like documents or links to the same screen, making their videos more interactive.

Ex: [Une Maison Française](#) (iMovie) [Une Maison Francaise](#) (Animoto)

(\*None of these tools are supported by IT Solutions)

#### **Strategy #4: Tweet in the Target Language**

*The basics:* For quick knowledge checks or to assess whether a student can really explain the essentials of the content in the target language, ask them to tell you in 140 words or less. Summing up information or briefly explaining a concept is a skill that students can practice on sites like Yammer and Twitter. Hashtags (#hello) can be used to create a running archive of related posts.

#### **Strategy #5: Make Your Own...(In The Target Language)**

*The basics:* Sites like Armored Penguin, Toondoo and Voki allow you to personalize class materials in the target language. Students can also use the sites for peer teaching activities or presentations in the target language.

Ex: [Bonjour Toondoo](#)

Ex: [Welcome Voki](#)

*Variations on the Strategy:* With Google forms, you can create a “Choose your own adventure story” in the target language. Use question logic and branching to test students reading comprehension.

[eTools for Language Teachers](#)

(\*None of these tools are supported by IT Solutions)

#### **Strategy #6: Tap Into Social Media**

*The basics:* Facebook and Twitter have a wealth of language learning resources available for students. While you may not want to have a class Facebook page, ask your students to connect with at least one target language resource and have them report back to the class regularly on what that resource is sharing. If you have a class Yammer page, students can share interesting target language posts and news with the class.

*Variations on the approach:* Ask students to connect with native speakers or authentic target language sites on social media and report back to the class. For example, French students can follow tweets from Le Monde and report the latest news back to the class or students can ask native speakers for authentic translations for lesser-known words.

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### **Strategy #7: Harness the Power of Tablets and Smartphones**

*The basics:* There are many apps available for learners of second languages. From maps of the Paris metro to target-language games, apps are a good way to keep students learning outside the walls of the classroom. Apps like iTalk and Voice Recorder Pro allow students to practice their target language speaking skills and easily send audio files to an instructor.

*Variations on the approach:* Create an activity using Google Earth. Ask students to search for a series of specific locations or landmarks in a given country. Ask them to describe each landmark in the target language.

### **Strategy #8: Stop, Collaborate and Listen**

*The basics:* Students can use OneDrive to create group documents that they can edit in real-time. Since the document is stored “on the cloud”, the most up-to-date version of the document is always available to all group members. Group members can also control who can access, edit or view the document at any time.

*Variations on the approach:* Online collaboration with written assignments is also useful for peer review and editing. Students can share the document with the class or specific students who can view or edit, using the comment function. Instructors can also view the document and the peer edits in real time.

[10 Strategies for Engaging Learners with Online Collaboration](#)

### **Strategy #9: Give Good (Audio) Feedback**

*The basics:* Feedback on assignments plays a large role in motivation and learning. Formative feedback can be instrumental in improving the learning experience for the student. It also has the potential to provide just-in-time intervention and remediation to those students who may be struggling and would benefit from more in-depth or personalized feedback than other students. Audio feedback gives instructors a time efficient way to provide students personalized, in-depth feedback on assignments. Written feedback for many assignments, such as PowerPoint presentations or creative assignments such as infographics, wikis, or blogs, often requires the use of a separate document such as a rubric that creates a natural disconnect between assignment and feedback as the student is forced to flip back and forth between assignment and rubric. The use of screen capture software can allow the instructor to explore the assignment while providing spoken, real-time feedback. This method of feedback creates an immediate connection to the areas where the student excelled and the opportunities for improvement.

[Providing Quick and Effective Audio Feedback](#)

*Variations on the approach:* Send your students reminders, clarification notes, question answers, discussion prompts and other administrative notes using an audio tool like the D2L Record Audio feature under “email classlist”. With audio mail, you can add personalization to the course, speak in the target language, and connect with your students. You can also use online tools that allow you to email or

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download audio recordings.

### **Strategy #10: Unleash the Power of PowerPoint**

*The basics:* PowerPoint is a great tool to use for flipping your classroom, but it is also a powerful tool when you are presenting to students in the target language. Using animations and movement within the slides can visually illustrate concepts rather than giving a verbal explanation. Using audio and video embedded in the PowerPoint can also help engage students.

*Variations on the approach:* Students can add audio and video to PowerPoint presentations in the target language. In online classes, ask students to record audio as if they were presenting in class.

[Effective Design in creating presentations](#)

### Resources

- [Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition \(CARLA\)](#)
- [Designing for Learning](#)
- [Online Teaching Tools and Resources](#)
- [FLTeach](#)
- [Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning \(COERLL\)](#)

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