

Sound Bites for Better Teaching

Authentic Tasks Lead to Authentic Communication

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true/false	multiple choice
translate	follow the model
repeat	recite
fill in the blank	memorize
state the facts	q&a
conjugate	spell
give the correct form of the word	
change one word for another	
complete the sentence	
make a list	change to the negative

Classroom tasks

give personal answers	prove a point
seek information	admit
summarize	paraphrase
accept invitation	explain reason
gossip	flatter
compare	contrast
write a resume	deny
tell a story	converse
demonstrate	write a poem
knowledge	
state/explain opinion, thoughts, comments	

Real-world tasks

“When dreaming up new activities, our main focus should always be authenticity. If we make activities genuine, our students will be much more inclined to participate, acquiring new knowledge through the process. Many language teachers think that being *authentic* means decorating their classrooms with flags and other souvenirs collected through their travels. But true authenticity comes from the activities we use during class time, leaving an impact on the communicative skills of our students.”(1) The communicative tasks that we plan for the students should reflect as close as possible those language tasks that are used in real life.

(1) Sarah Wike Loyola. *Mix It Up! Authentic Activities for the World Language Classroom*. 2014 www.edutopia.org/blog/authentic-activities-world-language-classroom-sarah-loyola

Self Evaluation (no right or wrong answers)

How does answering 10 questions about something you have just read prepare you to discuss the merits of the text with a friend?

When listening to a song, do you focus on the verb tenses used or do you focus on the ideas expressed?

When reading a newspaper article, do you conduct a true/false activity with a friend or do you summarize it for that friend or discuss its effects on you?

When someone asks you a question, do you always answer in complete sentences?

When was the last time that someone asked you to give the feminine form of an adjective or asked you to state a demonstrative pronoun?

How many of the activities in your textbook do you think will prepare your students to carry on a meaningful conversation with a native speaker of the language?

How many of the activities that you plan help students practice spontaneous, creative, and unprepared speech?

TIP

When planning activities that require students to demonstrate orally or in writing their knowledge of something that they have read, such as a short story, a play, an article, or a review, etc., make sure that those activities ask the students to express their thoughts and opinions rather than just the facts. It is much more authentic to give personal reactions than to recite cold hard facts.