

9 Ways to Support Resistant Language Learners

...and see everyone thrive!

Become a team.

Let them know, "Hey, we're in this together, so let's make this a good environment for all."

1. Brainstorm with them!

Remind them:

The class has all kinds of personalities and backgrounds, and we need to respect one another's time and interests while supporting each other.

Ask them, and give them time to think about this question:

How can we respect one another and make progress possible?

Solicit and note their ideas!

Write out ideas that take a proactive, respectful approach to learning and to coexisting. Post it in the room as a reminder.

2.

Start Small!

Something is better than nothing!

If your student shuts down at the idea of conjugating a verb, back up a step and allow them to focus on vocabulary building.

Break it down into chunks.

If you expected a paragraph for the class assignment, have them start with a list of words that apply. Then ask for one sentence, and consider building from there.

Consider shortened assignments, but...

Ask them to attend tutorials to build upon the completed shortened assignment together.

Stay positive!

Take note of what they do correctly before pointing out what is lacking.

3.

Connect their interests to the target language and culture!

Invested students are more driven.

If they are forced to focus on a topic that is irrelevant to their life, they are less apt to care.

Give them choices, when possible.

Artistic students may be apt to create a poster, whereas fact-based minds may be prone to charts and graphs.

Comparisons can be a good thing!

Allow them to compare their own lives with those of a person featured in an article or video who speaks the target language and lives within the culture of study.

Harness their youthful interests.

Feature music, videos or trends they may be familiar with in lessons, and allow them to expand on them in the target language.

4. Plan the assignment expectations with them!

Again, an invested student is going to be more motivated!

If they play an active role in setting the expectations, they will be more eager to achieve goals.

Make space for discussions

Set aside time for writing out expectations with one another, and create a rubric together that everyone can access.

Allow a variety of voices

Be sure that each person is heard, even if they are displeased or frustrated.

Encourage compromise.

Drum up ideas together that create win-win situations for everyone.

5.

Allow time and
space for
exploration
and co-
creating!

Be open to changing course.

Sometimes an idea or question that at first seems like a target can lead to some deep learning experiences.

Embrace an inquiry methodology.

Allow students' projects to be founded on the questions that THEY ask.

Let them map out their projects!

Going back to students being invested in their own learning, if they own the project, they will OWN the project! ;-)

For more on inquiry-based language teaching, see

[Investigative Language Learning_- 100 ways to use a Constructivist Approach.](#)

6. Prioritize their understanding!

Scaffolding

Double check that lessons are building upon one another so students will be empowered by their prior knowledge rather than discouraged and overwhelmed.

Frequent Check-ins

Be sure to utilize a way to check in with your students, whether it's a phrase, a thumbs up, or a nod.

Opportunity for anonymous questions

Have a system for students who are reluctant to ask questions or express doubt in front of others. A Q&A box, or a reflection form are a couple of ideas.

Be open to taking a detour.

Based on questions and feedback take necessary action to ensure understanding before forging ahead. Sometimes this is just a quick pause in a lesson, and sometimes it means planning a new lesson for your next class together,

Have an ongoing backup plan in place

In case you are absent, or you have those students who just need some sort of ongoing support, be sure you have resources on-hand that can work on autopilot.

7. Get out ahead of it!

Anticipate questions or roadblocks.

Use what you know about your students to help you preplan for whatever questions or reactions you think they may have.

Extra reinforcement for
Beginners in Spanish

Be sure students who need added practice or a different explanation of beginning skills have a resource available to them outside of class.

8. Make reflection part of their routine!

Honor and Celebrate

Students should be allowed to be proud of their accomplishments and progress. When a big assignment is complete, allow time to reflect and discuss.

Room for Growth?

Yes! There is ALWAYS room for growth in some way. Encourage students to identify ways they can improve.

Real Life Skills for Lifelong Learning

Reflection on what we have done is something that helps in all areas of life. Also, we want our students' language learning to go on throughout their lives, right? So let's equip them with independent reflecting skills.

Stay Positive

If things didn't go so well, be sure to point out that it's just one bump in the road, and they can move forward.

9. Encourage mistakes!

"I hope you make mistakes today!"

Throughout the year, let your students know that you expect mistakes to happen, because they are learning a new language and mistakes indicate effort is being made.

The more we fail the more we grow!

Let them know how important mistakes are for progress! If you are also a language learner of the target language, share about learning through mistakes.

Celebrate risk-taking.

Be sure to communicate how important risk-taking is for the community as a whole. We can learn from one another, with one another!