

## Academic Learning Center Foreign Language Feedback

- What do your students struggle the most with?
  - Exam preparation and strategies.
  - Writing in the language seems to be rocky at times too.
  - Speaking. They constantly mispronounce words, which many times can alter the meaning of the word.
  - Reading comprehension and writing. I think a lot of times students try to directly translate sentences to English rather than reading for a general understanding.
  - As for writing, students often struggle with getting their ideas out on paper.
  - Grammar concepts (mentioned multiple times).
  - Understanding the structure of sentences. Some of my tutees try to translate everything and some of them have no clue what the sentence is dealing with.
  - Making sure they remember the preterite endings for -ar, -er, and -ir verbs. They a lot of times mix up the -ar verb endings with -er and -ir verb endings. I noticed that the students were more or less trying to guess the preterite endings for their verbs especially for the oral exam.
  - Speaking is generally the hardest for most beginners because they lack vocabulary and are still adapting to the new language. Conjugation is also a common problem though is easily fixed with practice (mentioned multiple times).
  - Overall, all of my tutees struggle with the listening part of every test they have.
  - They forget little things, like articles in front of nouns. Many had difficulty with negatives and gustar, which they reviewed in lesson 1, before we began tutoring.
  - My students mostly struggle with pronoun placement. They also have trouble recognizing the difference between direct and indirect object pronouns.
  - I believe students do have some trouble with pronunciations of words but for the most part that is fixed by me repeating back there answer with the correct pronunciation (so I say yes, and repeat their answer).
  - The greatest area of trouble most of my tutees have trouble with is the dictation portion of quizzes. They struggle listening to something and then writing down what is said or even understanding what is being said is difficult for them. I tell students to listen to their CD or listening portions over and over to train their ear.
  - My tutees struggle more with listening because they aren't used to hearing a different language. They can break down a sentence better when they can visually see it then if they are basing it off of solely hearing it.
  - I believe that one of the greatest difficulties that Spanish students have is their perception of the material. Sometimes the way in which the material is presented does not allow it to "click" with them. That is why whenever I tutor someone in Spanish, I always find out the way in which the professor has presented the information so that I DON'T present it in that way. I also find that students simply

don't have the right study techniques for foreign languages. Giving them tools rather than just presenting the information usually yields better results.

- Many of my tutees say they have difficulties on the oral part of their exams which calls for them to listen to a question and write the responses.
  - The students I tutor seem to have the most trouble in listening. One student always seems to have trouble with that part on his tests. They also seem to have some trouble in speaking. They do not know how to pronounce the words correctly.
  - pronunciation and sentence structure
  - The problem I noticed most of my students having is with the oral parts of exams, especially the listening. They seem to do well with the vocabulary and verb conjugations, although they do struggle a bit with the preterite.
  - I find that students struggle the most when it comes to understanding the different cases in grammar and the differentiations between them in a sentence.
  - The students I tutor struggle most with grammar and verb tenses.
  - I have found that most students have problems with listening comprehension. However, I find that the only way to really help them is to have them constantly listen to Spanish being spoken. It is really just a problem of training the hearing of the students.
  - I found that Spanish students struggle the most with preterite vs. imperfect verb tenses. They usually do pretty well with listening when it is the professor speaking but struggle when they have to listen to a tape/CD/video. Vocabulary seems to be the easiest part of the chapters to learn, probably because it is mostly memorization and many of the vocabulary words sound similar in English. Fortunately this semester I have been assigned students that have a fairly good grasp of the language and just need me to double check their knowledge so I can't offer too much feedback.
  - They usually do have problems with conjugating verbs. I try to help them by helping them group similar conjugations together. Learning verbs in groups usually helps them remember more verbs than just learning each verb separately.
- What do they usually do well with?
    - They are really good with learning the different verb endings (present vs. preterite). When writing a sense it comes very easy to them, but when it comes time to speak it many times it takes them a few minutes to speak the sentence. They have to stop and think about what words they have to use then the correct verb ending that goes with the subject.
    - Memorization of vocabulary
    - A lot of my tutees are good at learning vocabulary and catch on quickly when I am teaching them a concept they were taught in class, but they never understood it.
    - Understanding vocabulary and particular expressions (ex: por la noche).

- I met with each individually to prepare for the oral exam, and each did very well, considering the slower pace and preparation available in advance.
  - This is different for each of them. Some of them do best with vocabulary and cognates. They also do well with the questions that they are asked at the beginning of each class that gets them speaking because its repetition, so they start to feel confident when they recognize those standard phrases.
  - They also mostly do well with conjugating regular verbs but have difficulty remembering irregular and stem changing verbs.
  - Usually my students that I tutor are very successful with reading the language.
  - Students usually do well with forming sentences after I have shown them a few examples. For example, if my students are struggling with pronouns, they are usually able to form sentences on their own after I show them 2-3 examples.
  - I have found oral exams to be challenging because the tutor doesn't have much time to look at the questions in advance.
  - vocabulary and reading comprehension
  - They usually do well with learning and applying vocabulary to the basics of sentence structure.
  - They do well with speaking and listening.
  - Most students are okay with the vocabulary for each chapter, because it is just straight memorizing.
- What are some strategies you use to help tutees?
    - Use workbook exercises together; checking over or correcting past homework assignments and exams.
    - One of my biggest strategies is I constantly make them speak what they are doing/writing. It's just like in English, you learn better when you say your sentence out loud and it helps you remember it better. Not only does it help them remember it better but it also helps them with word pronunciation.
    - I tell students to read through the paragraph for the main idea. It is very difficult to understand literature if you read word for word and try to translate to English.
    - I tell students to stop thinking in English and to just write down what they know in Spanish. That way, we can go back and review what types of grammatical mistakes they are making and they can see what they are doing wrong in Spanish rather than translating everything back to English. In verb conjugations, I always tell the student to look for patterns with conjugations. It is senseless to memorize every single verb. I usually provide examples of sentences to show how the verbs are used in context. Finally, if a student is having trouble with listening comprehension, I tell him or her the only way to get more practice is to just hear more of it (i.e. listen to the Spanish channel on TV, watch movies in Spanish, etc.). I also will practice with the student in which I will speak some sentences and then I will have the student write down in Spanish what I said. For the most part, all these strategies have been successful for the students that I have tutored.

- I'm definitely an advocate of flash cards. Also, I tell them to write a word they are having trouble spelling multiple times on a piece of paper because sometimes the repetition seals the spelling of the word in the mind. Also, I tell them that it would be beneficial to write the verb endings for the -ar, -er, and -ir verbs at the top of their paper once they get their exams so then they have a guide to conjugation.
- After I teach my tutees the main concept, we do exercises to see if they really know what they are doing or not. If not, I try a different explanation that they might understand better. I take exercises from the workbook and the book that they have not yet completed.
- Some strategies I have offered to the tutees is to not only do the exercises that are offered in their book, but also to take on-line quizzes in preparation for their tests. I also have suggested trying to meet up with one of their fellow classmates to review before a test. One of the things I suggested for the tutees for oral exams is not so much to memorize their lines as to make sure he or she is in tune and on the same page with their partner. Chemistry is one thing that I think is very important for oral exams.
- I always make sure that my students know the vocabulary for each chapter. Vocabulary is very important in order to express oneself in any language. It is also important in order to form sentences fully and correctly. Once they master the vocabulary for the section, they can concentrate more on the grammatical aspect of the chapter. I always stress repetition in my teaching. I find many times that the students I receive just need to form better study habits. Once we establish this, they generally excel or show great improvement.
- Some strategies I use are double-checking work. I always tell them to go back and translate each word in their head from a sentence and see if it makes sense. If it doesn't, they have clearly left something out. I also tell them that writing down the verb conjugation endings for preterite and present at the top of the test serves as a good reference, since some have told me they mix them up. If they write them down correctly somewhere on the paper, it's hard to confuse them. I also still have old worksheets from Spanish 101 and 102 from when I took it, and they serve as extra material to give examples of things the student is struggling with.
- I help my tutees with pronunciation, and I also show them different patterns in the language to help them make connections between ideas.
- I often try to give them little jingles or sayings to memorize things for instance songs to know the endings of verbs or little sayings to know what adjectives come before a noun and what verbs are conjugated in the past tense with etre. These really help my tutees and I think that they really stick in their memory.
- I usually spend most of the time teaching them another way to understand what was taught in class. I find that showing them another way to approach the sentences helps them understand.
- put things into perspective, by comparing it to English, or show how something seems silly to use a certain verb in English in a sentence for example when

comparing ser and estar... I also might make a game out of doing the sentences like give them a time for a goal, something to motivate them.

- Some strategies I use are making quizzes for the students to take and then reviewing with them what they get wrong, and helping them to see where they made the mistakes.
  - I re-teach them what they need help with because most of the time they just need to review and re-enforce what the professor has taught them in class or they just need it explained in another way.
  - I use the white board to teach the lesson and then I ask them to do some practice in their textbook. I correct the practice and go over what they did correctly and what they missed.
  - I mostly write out example sentences for the students to work on and have them identify the various parts of the sentence. Also, with vocabulary I will have them make flashcards and I will quiz them. As far as speaking and oral exams go, I try to act as the teacher or have the student hold a conversation and respond to different questions.
  - I show them a way to create flashcards for verbs that should help them learn both the word and its conjugations.
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- What advice do you have?
    - Allow more time for the students to prepare for their oral exams. Maybe handing out the assignment a week earlier might help. I felt the students were in panic mode over their orals because they had not only an oral to worry about but a written exam too.
    - I tell my tutees not to stress too much about exams and quizzes because worrying will only hinder them and they should try to focus their attention on studying.
    - I think it would be helpful for the language tutors to be given a packet of practice exercises that could be taken from the handouts that the teacher uses, to give to their students to help them practice, especially for exams.
    - In the end, it is up to the student to go home and keep practicing everything we go over in our sessions. I only provide the tools and techniques for studying the language. The most important thing is to work extra hard in the beginning with the students so that they can achieve some success. Once they gain that confidence in themselves they naturally form better study habits from the ones we initially established in order to repeat their success.
    - All in all, foreign language tutors should concentrate on these 3 things: formation of good study habits, repetition of skills that are weak in every session, and mastery of vocabulary...not every student studies the same, and I never force MY study habits on anyone, I only suggest them initially because they worked for me and many of my students in the past. It just takes some patience and a little extra work in the

beginning to find out what study habits work, where they need the most help and how to effectively combine the two in order to generate success for the student.

- I usually like to review old stuff after we go over new things and try to show them how it all builds on top of each other. I also encourage them to conjugate a simple sentence in every tense so they get used to it when they see it on test. (ex. when teachers give them the picture w/ a verb and a tense and asks for a sentence)
  - I always tell them to review and memorize verb conjugations because that is where I see tutees have the most issues. I have helped them look back at older assignments and they don't understand what they are doing wrong but it's not that they are wrong they are just in the wrong verb form which makes the assignment wrong by definition.
  - don't get frustrated with a student, they are more than capable of doing the work, they just need a little extra nudge in the right direction, and someone to believe in them... and as tutors, that's us.
  - The advice that I have for them is practice, its seeing these things over and over again is the best way to get comfortable with them.
  - My tutees learn better when I go slower and break the paragraphs down rather than having to focus on the whole thing, which is what they initially do. I advise students to break things down as I just said. Going slower helps much more than combining everything into a big mess. I need help with how to teach the information. I feel that I know how to present the information about some topics better than others. Sometimes I feel the method I use helps them when we are doing an activity, but when they go to try it on their own they do not understand.
- What do you have a hard time with in your tutoring style?
    - Having two hours per week with each student. Sometimes a student needs more time than that.
    - In some circumstances I have trouble reviewing because I think that practice is the best help for students who are struggling, so when I get into the tutoring session my tutee tells me what they are having problems with and then I have to search for exercises to help them.
    - Helping students with listening is very difficult to do.
    - Sometimes I have a hard time explaining why something works the way it does within the language.
    - I usually have a hard time explaining direct and indirect pronouns.
    - The one thing I have difficulty with is reviewing oral exams with them. For the most part, I usually help them correct their grammar (usually they write out their scripts). Other times I will ask them the questions in and they would have to respond. But I feel that these two techniques I use don't cover all of the learning styles that

students use. I would really like to know any other techniques I could use for helping them study for oral exams.

- I have a hard time teaching them vocabulary because there is so much. If we use flashcards that helps them with the current section, but there is so much previous vocabulary that they do not remember. They cannot do homework activities without knowing these words. But I do not like to just tell them what the word means because I feel that's not teaching them anything. I'm just giving them the answer.
  - I have a hard time remembering all their vocabulary since I have not taken an intro course for about a year, and mainly deal with culture and literature.
  - In my tutoring style I sometimes have a difficult time explaining how to find a constant rule with grammar and the change in cases. It can sometimes also be difficult to review oral exams and how one can prepare for them.
  - The hardest part to help students with is usually the listening. Sometimes, no matter how many times they listen to something, they just cannot hear what is being said. With this, I just go over what is being said and try to show them ways to listen more effectively. When facing oral exams, I usually help them correct mistakes they have made in their prepped questions and then I will ask them the questions orally, so they can hear what it is supposed to sound like.
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- Any success stories?
    - My students have had some success. They feel confident coming out of a tutoring session. I find that after going back and making corrections on exams they are most likely to learn from their mistakes.
    - I'm pretty sure most of my tutees have been doing better on their exams, even if it is only by a few points.
    - One student was getting C's before tutoring, and now he is receiving A's. Another girl had her friend request me as a tutor since she said how helpful I am to her!
    - After meeting with my tutees a few times, they usually have more confidence in the classroom and feel better about their work.
    - Right now I don't know I just like seeing when they are starting to get a concept we worked really hard on getting and they come to a tutoring session saying, "I did really good on this test!" or "my oral partner and I did good!" So as long as they are happy and feel like they are progressing that's what matters.
    - I tutored last year and again this semester had she has never taken Spanish before she came to Albright and she is excelling in it! She even has received an A to A+ average the last few semesters that she has taken it!

- My students seem to be doing well with their tests after I help them with their quizzes one student, who had gotten a 66 on the previous test, got a 95 on the next one after I started tutoring him.
- I have had some success though. I have one tutee who told me that I explained the material much clearer than the teacher did. It helped that I was able to go over some material more thoroughly than the teacher was able to in class. She has also come to enjoy learning the language more now that she has gotten through the tough first couple of weeks. I find that students who have never learned the language before struggle the first couple of weeks due to all the information that is being given to them at once.