

# My best 10... Ideas for language learning at home

Help students to support their language learning at home with these top ten practical tips

## 1 Make your own word games

This is even more fun if you can create some competition between family members or friends. We've found some of the traditional board games are the best. Snakes and Ladders or *Blockbusters* templates can be laminated and reused for different topics and snap cards can be stored and revisited later.



## 2 Ask your child to teach the language to a family member

The deep understanding needed to be able to teach something should not be underestimated. Teaching language to family members can be a really fun way to gain confidence. This works really well with high frequency words. One of our students challenges his family at dinner to only say numbers in Chinese.



## 3

### Watch familiar children's TV in a foreign language

Thanks to YouTube there is a wealth of resources that are at a really good level for novice students. *Peppa Pig* has been translated into many of the languages students might be learning at home. The language in these types of shows tends to be simple, repetitive and high frequency, which is exactly what our students need at this stage. Even better, as the premise of the episode is often familiar to students, they can understand much more than they anticipate.

## Biographies



**Vicki Lewis** is Department Leader for Modern Languages at Helsby High in Cheshire where she teaches French and German. Helsby have launched Language Futures this year and are working with universities and local primaries to engage more students in extra-curricular languages.



**Grace Magilton** is a Spanish and French teacher at Sawtry Village Academy near Peterborough, where she is also a Lead Teacher for Raising Achievement. After graduating from UCL she spent several years teaching in Mexico before returning to the Cambridge area.



**Clodagh Cooney** manages Nottingham Trent University's School of Arts & Humanities CPD Language offer to schools. A former Head of Languages and Advanced Skills Teacher, since August 2015, she has also been based at the Association for Language Learning where she is project manager of the Language Futures initiative.

## 4 Get online

There are many free websites which present language learning in a visually appealing and addictive way. **Memrise.com** has hundreds of ready-made courses for a range of languages where you have to repeat or spell words against the clock. You can also create your own courses with your own vocabulary. You can even generate a leader board where students try to beat their peers. It's great for homework and the competitive element never fails to engage the students.



Students enjoy competing against each other

## 5 Key words

Focus on transactional language and daily use. Switch phones, tablets and apps into the target language or get students to text friends in that language. Make a list of phrases that you are not allowed to say in English or label items in the kitchen. Repetition and familiarity build confidence.



## 8 Watch soaps

Choosing a soap in a foreign language to watch regularly can be a great way of practicing listening skills and expanding vocabulary. As well as being fun and engaging, storylines are easier to follow than you think. Getting to know characters over time and understanding verbal and non-verbal cues can help pupils to build up a natural conversational style.

## 7 Parental support

Parents can provide lots of opportunities to experience the culture of the target language their child is studying through theatre, travel, food etc. Online research can also be a good way of building up knowledge about customs and traditions: parents can ask their child to research a particular custom or tradition and report back to the whole family.



## 9 Stories, literature and songs

Encourage students to ask their parents to share stories, literature and songs from their home language and culture. Parents could read books about the culture of the target country with their child or attend local cultural events connected to the language and culture being studied.



Parents can share stories and cultural traditions

It's important to give students time to correct their own mistakes

## 6 Experimenting with language and making mistakes

Some children can become frustrated by their inability to express more complex thoughts in a foreign language. Frustration can often be overcome by setting short-term targets e.g. "I will learn eight new words today and try to put them into sentences" or "I will listen to a Spanish radio station for 20 minutes a day". Students can also be overly concerned about making mistakes but they are part of the learning process. Parents can support their children to experiment with language and offer some corrections, but should also give students the time to correct their own mistakes.

## 10 Making the case to parents

Research has shown that parental influence is very important when it comes to choosing subjects, so it is important to communicate the advantages that languages can provide. This can be done via a presentation at an open evening for new parents, or at an event where pupils can showcase their learning and work in the language. A 'Parents into Languages' evening could offer an insight into what is being learnt and how to support learning. For more ideas see the new 'Making the Case' section of our website: <http://tinyurl.com/ALLMakeTheCase> or [www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/resources](http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/resources).