



Teaching Spanish with *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*

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Background: My personal journey to developing fluency in Spanish was through gaming, and so I felt strongly that this popular pastime would help my students, too. *Ocarina of Time* was a natural choice, as it is not only my favorite game, it is also dialogue-heavy and mimics real life speech, so I couldn't pass up the opportunity to play it with my students!

Aim: My main objective was to improve students' Spanish reading comprehension. Other objectives included: developing an understanding of the difference between equivalent and literal translation, developing a more comprehensive understanding of Spanish sentence structure, learning the 100 most used Spanish verbs, and being able to understand perfect verbs and object pronouns when encountered in text.

Methods: Engaging learners through play, student collaboration, ungraded practice, semantic and syntactic reading comprehension, spiraling curriculum, and gamification of rote memorization.

Results: Students' Spanish reading comprehension improved rapidly, and so did their confidence in performing this skill. Students also learned 90%+ of the 100 top used Spanish verbs, as well as a large variety of other vocabulary.

Conclusion: Video games are a viable resource for teaching a foreign language.

Tweet Synopsis

High school students play *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* in Spanish to practice reading comprehension and increase their repertoire of Spanish vocabulary.

#videogames #spanish #highschool #zelda #ocarinaoftime

1. Background

1.1. Who I am:

I'm the Spanish teacher at a small high school in Iowa, and I'm a gamer...at the same time! Literally. I use video games to teach Spanish! I purposefully specified "the" Spanish teacher because I am the only foreign language teacher at my school. I currently (2022-2023 school year) teach Spanish 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8th grade Spanish Exploratory.

1.2. My experience learning Spanish in a formal educational setting:

Most of my college Spanish education involved analyzing classic literature and poetry. While these types of texts provide excellent opportunities for exploring symbolism and metaphors, they do not resemble daily speech. I can say with certainty that reading these poems and literary pieces did not, in the slightest, help me achieve my goal of becoming fluent. However, it would be unfair of me to not give credit to my first Spanish college instructor. I learned a great deal from him, as he pushed us to practice Spanish by imitating realistic conversations. *¡Gracias Señor Ford!*

1.3. How I fell in love with Spanish and became "fluent:"

Most of my Spanish learning developed outside of the classroom through gaming. At the time that I was taking Spanish in college, I was also into playing massively multiplayer online role playing games. I played *Runescape*, *Aion*, and *The Lord of the Rings Online*. I encountered many Spanish-speaking players in these games and formed many friendships. My Spanish was still very beginner level then. The only verb tense I knew was the present, so whenever I wanted to say that something had happened, I would conjugate the verb in the present and put "(pasado)", meaning "past", behind it. Although it wasn't perfect, it worked! I was able to successfully communicate. I then experienced a massive increase in my repertoire of Spanish vocabulary and learned the past tense within a few weeks. It was at that point I decided I was fully dedicated to becoming fluent, and that I wanted my future career to include Spanish somehow.

Most of my Spanish learning developed outside of the classroom through gaming.

1.4. The decision to incorporate video games into my Spanish curriculum:

Gaming was not part of my curriculum during my first few years of teaching. I had the false presumption that school must be "scholarly" in the traditional, stuffy sense. I erroneously believed that in a "proper" classroom, all materials utilized had to have been specifically created for schools or their use in schools had to be supported by ample research. This belief stemmed not only from my college experience, but also from my interpretation of "evidence-based curriculum", which asserts that curriculum should "consist of practices that have been vetted through rigorous research" (The Wing Institute, n.d.). I now understand that this refers to employing proven teaching strategies, and does not limit the materials teachers use to only ones created for or commonly used by schools.

In my 4th year of teaching, I discovered several of my students enjoyed *Zelda* games, and they asked if we could play *Zelda* in class as a unit. The idea had crossed my mind, but I worried that the admin would perceive the use of a video game as play and not teaching. Even so, I believed video games could be used successfully to teach a foreign language. I decided then that I would no longer teach the "traditional, stuffy way", but would instead use mediums that showed modern speech, used common vocabulary, and that today's youth could connect with, so I started creating materials. Equipped with an extensive curriculum of my own creation, I finally had the courage to realize a gaming unit.

I first implemented *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* in Spanish 4. Fortunately, when the admin found out, they thought it was awesome! Soon after, I brought in *Scribblenauts* as an occasional "Fun Friday" activity for any class. In this article, we'll take an in-depth look at my most recent video game addition to Spanish 3: *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. Also, see Appendix 1 to read a Brazilian teacher's arguments for using *Ocarina of Time* to teach English as a foreign language.

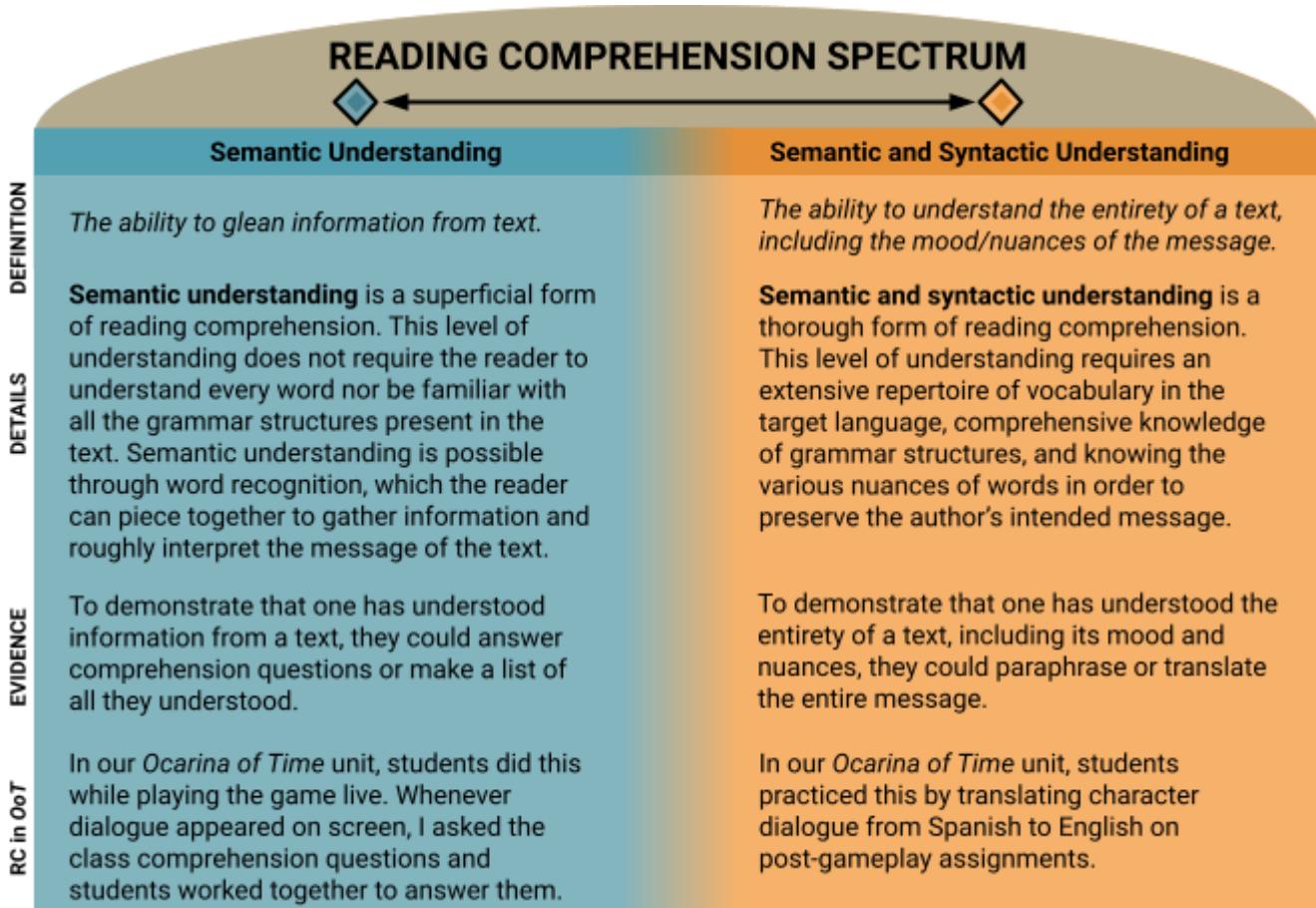
2. *Ocarina of Time*: a medium to practice reading comprehension

2.1. Spanish 3 course goals:

The primary course goals for my Spanish 3 are: improving students' **reading comprehension**, which is our focus in semester one, and developing their **ability to write at length**, which is our focus in semester two. I believe *Ocarina of Time* is a good choice for developing students' reading comprehension because it is dialogue-heavy, dialogue imitates real life speech and uses high frequency words, and the story tells a delightful tale! To progress in the game, it is necessary to speak with many Non-Player Characters (NPCs for short), and they often have something quirky to say - *which my students enjoyed!* Additionally, developing a strong foundation in reading comprehension prepares students for writing, as they will have analyzed a copious amount of text in-depth, which, combined with teacher guidance, helps them build a comprehensive understanding of sentence structure and grammar rules.

2.2. The spectrum of reading comprehension:

Reading comprehension can be evidenced along a spectrum. Students can demonstrate they have comprehended a written text by: listing details they understood, answering comprehension questions, paraphrasing the passage in their own words, or exactly translating the entirety of the text. On the lower-end of the spectrum is **semantic understanding**. On the higher-end of the spectrum is **semantic and syntactic understanding**. The figure below defines the two extreme points of the reading comprehension spectrum, and also informs when we practiced either in our *Ocarina of Time* unit:



(See Appendix 2 for more details on how low-end knowledge supports high-end understanding.)

3. Preparing students for a gaming unit

3.1. Mindset matters:

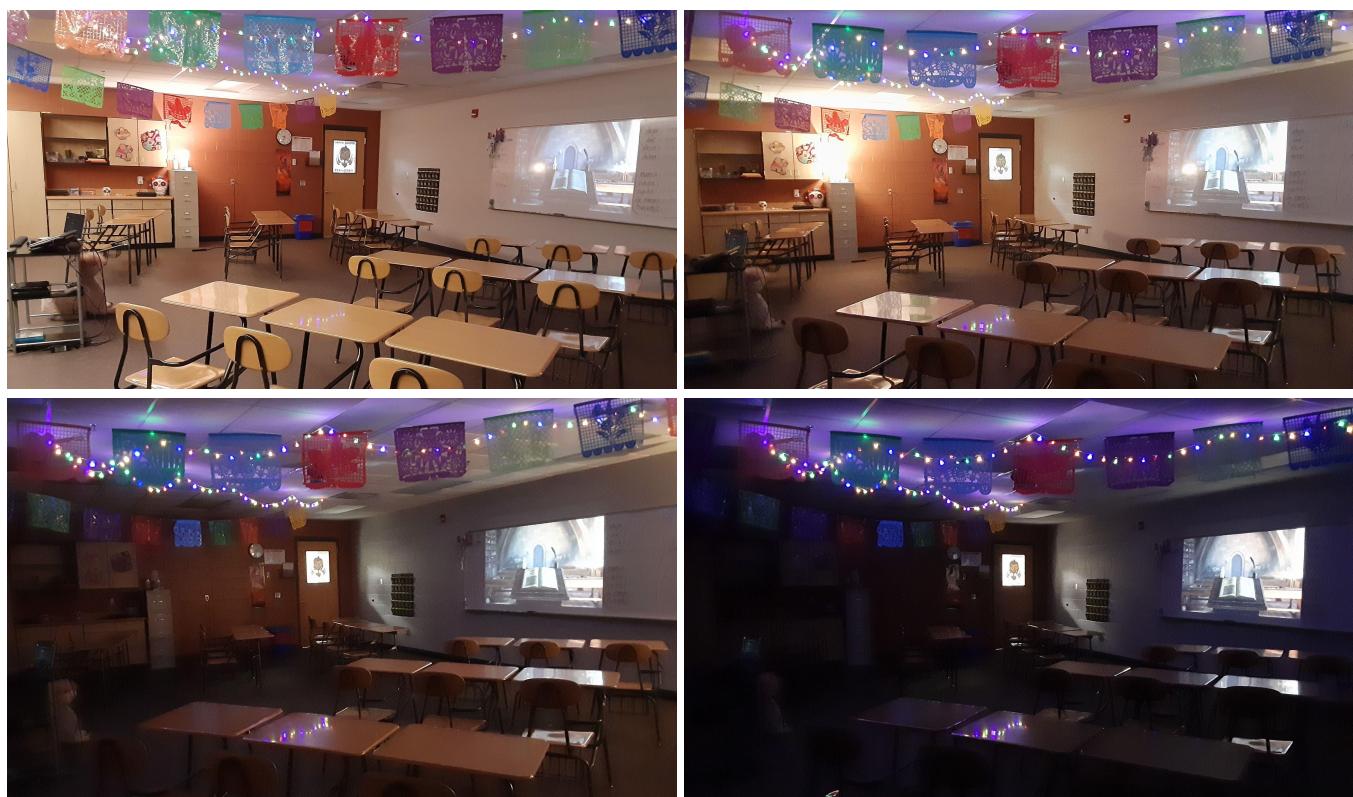
I told students they'd been hired onto the game localization team of a Mexican gaming company. The day before starting gameplay, I held a "job orientation" where I introduced myself as their micro-manager, gave each student a welcome letter along with a no-benefits package, and told them their job was to translate Spanish games into English. While the letter and no-benefits package aren't necessary for student success, giving these sets a playful mood and my students thought it was hilarious! Though more importantly, putting students in the mindset of "*I am a translator, and what I type will be published in the final product*" encourages them to put forth their best effort, resulting in deeper learning as they'll feel compelled to closely analyze the text. This mindset also helps students see the real-world application, as they could one day be hired as a translator.

Read Appendix 3 for details on how Catalan-speaking gamers also used game localization as a means to improve their English.

Putting students in the mindset of "*I am a translator, and what I type will be published in the final product*" encourages them to put forth their best effort, resulting in deeper learning.

3.2. Creating a classroom setup/environment that facilitates collaboration and promotes engagement:

Below are pictures of my classroom. I've arranged desks into groups of three to facilitate small group collaboration, but all seats face the whiteboard to encourage attentiveness during lessons. I also use lighting to set the mood for different activities. My classroom does not have any windows, but I don't mind! Instead, I use a variety of dimmable string/LED lights and lamps to light my room. During traditional instruction, all string lights and lamps are on. During gameplay, lights are dimmed and some are turned off. During a boss battle, only the colorful string lights on the ceiling stay on. Students know gameplay is about to get serious when it suddenly gets super dark! Although it is such a simple thing, I've seen that the lighting of a classroom greatly influences students' attitudes towards an activity.



Images 1, 2, 3, 4 Photos of my classroom in various lighting

4. Routine

4.1. Unit length:

The unit lasted approximately two months, which, if you are familiar with the game, got us to drawing the Master Sword from the Pedestal of Time. While we'd truly only need ~3 weeks to get the Master Sword, the unit mostly consisted of translating dialogue, reviewing grammar that students struggled with, and studying vocabulary.

4.2. Integrating gameplay with learning:

Wraparound routine:

- **1 day:** preview vocabulary for upcoming gameplay (*sometimes we did this, sometimes we didn't*)
- **2-3 days:** play game
- **1 day:** go over difficult grammar and study vocab from gameplay
- **1-3 days:** complete translation assignment(s) + whole class feedback to review common mistakes

The above-mentioned routine was not set-in-stone, but was rather how the unit usually played out naturally. We had days where we only played for half the class period and studied vocabulary the other half. We also had weeks when we didn't play the game at all, but instead worked through translation assignments and studied vocabulary/grammar. Instead of dictating a set number of days for gameplay, I selected story milestones that determined when gameplay stopped and post-play activities began. For *Ocarina of Time*, I selected the following milestones:

MILESTONE	STUDENTS TRANSLATE CONVERSATIONS WITH...
1. Before going inside the Deku Tree	Kokiri, Navi, and Deku Tree
2. Meeting Kaepora Gaebora	Deku Tree, Mido, Saria, and Kaepora Gaebora
3. Meeting Talon	Castle Town inhabitants, Malon, and Talon
4. Lon Lon Ranch	Malon, Talon, and Ingo
5. Guard at Death Mountain Gate	Kakariko villagers
6. Meeting Darunia	Gorons and Darunia
7. Saria in the Lost Woods	Skull Kids, Deku Scrubs, Navi, and Saria
8. Lake Hylia	Zora, scientist, and fisherman - also, letter in the bottle
9. Before going inside Jabu-Jabu	Zoras and King Zora
10. Obtaining the Master Sword	Navi, Ganondorf, Rauru, and Sheik

Instead of dictating a set number of days for gameplay, I selected story milestones that determined when gameplay stopped and post-play activities began.

5. Gameplay

5.1. Student collaboration during live gameplay:

Ocarina of Time is a dialogue heavy game, so gameplay days were also reading days! The goal during live gameplay was **semantic understanding** - to understand the core message an NPC was relaying, rather than translating the entire passage. Though I would point at words that I wanted my students to master and ask them what they meant or how the grammar worked.

Whenever dialogue appeared on screen, I had students work with their "desk-mates" to figure out the NPC's main message, as well as any details they understood. By working together, students could use their shared knowledge to work out meanings and to **learn from each other**. This also aligns with an important 21st Century Skill: student collaboration!

No grade was taken on gameplay days, as the focus was on *learning*. My goal was to create a setting where **students felt comfortable to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes**. Students would earn their grade later by completing translation assignments given post-gameplay (see Section 6).

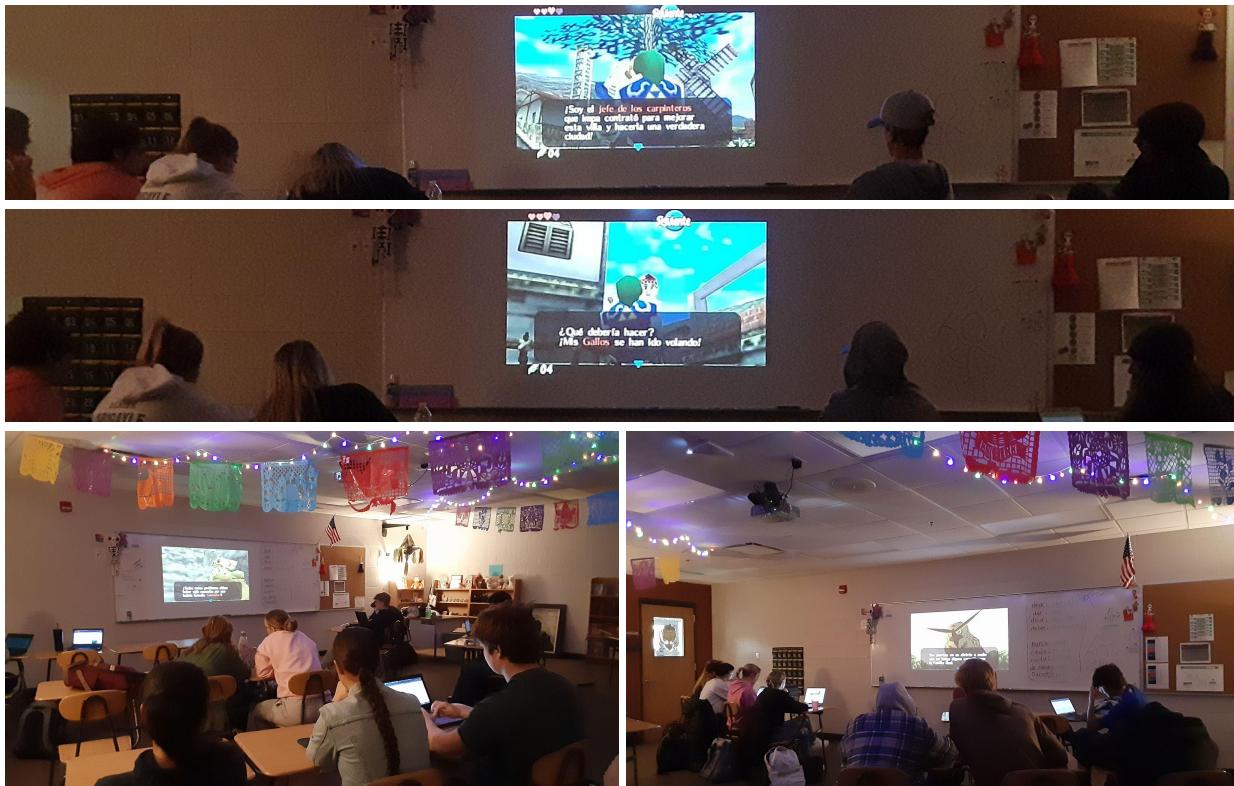


Image 5, 6, 7, 8 Students interacting with various NPCs during live gameplay

5.2. Teacher support during live gameplay:

Read the dialogue aloud to your students!

Not only does this let them hear how words are pronounced, it also helps them understand the message by hearing inflection and emotion. Throughout the unit, multiple students told me, *"I didn't understand that until you read it!"*

Project the game on the whiteboard and write on it!

I took full advantage of this surface! Using a dry erase marker, I would add helping notes to the text while students worked with their desk-mates to figure out what it said. I would first let my students tackle the text on their own while I walked the room and listened in on their discussions. Once I had ascertained what they were struggling with, I would add notes to help guide them towards a correct interpretation. These notes could include identifying the part of speech of a word such as "verb"/"noun"/"adjective", identifying the tense/aspect/mood of a verb, or underlining word strings that form an expression. This led to great teachable moments, and it was also great for morale, as students would see that their peers were struggling with the same parts.

Project the game on the whiteboard and write on it!

Ask comprehension questions!

When we first began playing, I was initially only asking what the text said. I soon learned that it is important to also ask students comprehension questions connecting to the overarching story, because students would get so caught up in translating that they wouldn't process the story within the text. To help my students follow the story, I'd ask questions such as:

- "How will helping this person also help you in your mission?"
- "This person just mentioned _____. What do you think they could be referring to?"
- "Now that you've spoken with the people in this town, have you pieced together more of the story?"

5.3. WordReference > Google Translate:

Interpreters, translators, and game localizers utilize online translators to help them do their job, so knowing how to use them properly is an important skill to develop. First, it is important that students understand the role that online translators have, which is to assist them in completing their work, *not* to do their work for them.

Interpreters, translators, and game localizers utilize online translators to help them do their job, so knowing how to use them properly is an important skill to develop.

I encourage students to use WordReference¹ during live gameplay and when completing translation assignments. WordReference is an excellent online translator for multiple reasons. First, it does not translate full sentences. It only allows the user to look up *individual words* or *short phrases*, so students can't simply copy and paste their entire assignment into it. Additionally, it gives a comprehensive list of all the translations a word or phrase could mean, and lists the part of speech of each term. It also provides sentence examples for each possible translation to show its use in-context.

Below is a screenshot of what a WordReference search looks like. On the left is the English term, the parenthesis in the middle specifies the context, and on the right are the possible Spanish translations. The letters "n", "adj", and "vtr" next to the terms indicate the part of speech. *NOTE: This image only shows a few translations that WordReference gives for "light". The actual results are much longer.*



The screenshot shows the WordReference search results for the word "light". The search bar at the top contains "light". Below the search bar, there are buttons for "LISTEN:" and "US". A dropdown menu is open, showing the selected option "luz nf". The results are listed in a table format:

light <i>n</i>	(illumination)	<i>luz nf</i>
	Could we have some light in the room? It's too dark.	<i>¿Podemos poner algo de luz en la habitación? Está demasiado oscuro.</i>
light <i>adj</i>	(color: pale)	<i>claro/a adj</i>
	Have you seen my light blue shirt?	<i>¿Has visto mi camisa azul claro?</i>
light <i>adj</i>	(not heavy in weight)	<i>ligero/a adj</i>
	(<i>formal</i>) <i>liviano/a adj</i>	
	Give me the heavy bag, and you can carry the light one.	
	<i>Dame la bolsa pesada, y tú coge la más ligera.</i>	
	<i>Dame la bolsa pesada, y tú coge la más liviana.</i>	
light [sth] <i>vtr</i>	(ignite)	<i>encender ⇒, prender ⇒ vtr</i>
	I will light the petrol to set off the fire.	
	<i>Encenderé la gasolina para hacer el fuego.</i>	

Image 9 English to Spanish translations of "light" from WordReference

I do not allow Google Translate because this translator *does* translate full sentences, so students could paste in their entire assignment. Students often ask me, "If I can use Google Translate at my job, why can't I use it here?" First, I remind them that our goal is to teach *them* Spanish at a level where they can use it independently. Second, I answer the question by pointing out the existence of translation jobs. If Google Translate were perfect, these jobs would be obsolete. Employers want **people** overseeing translation, as **only the human brain can distinguish the complex nuances of language**. Therefore, it is important to first cultivate a deep understanding of the language in order to be able to analyze the quality of a translation, identify inaccuracies, and make revisions.

¹ wordreference.com

6. Assignments

6.1. What students had to do:

Assignments were in the form of Google Docs, which I posted on Google Classroom and students completed in class using their school issued Chromebooks. On these assignments, students were given character dialogues in Spanish, which they had to translate into English. These days are when we went into roleplay mode as game localizers. I would remind students that they *"had been hired to translate the game dialogue into English so the company could increase profits!"*

6.2. Translating equivalently and preserving the mood and nuances:

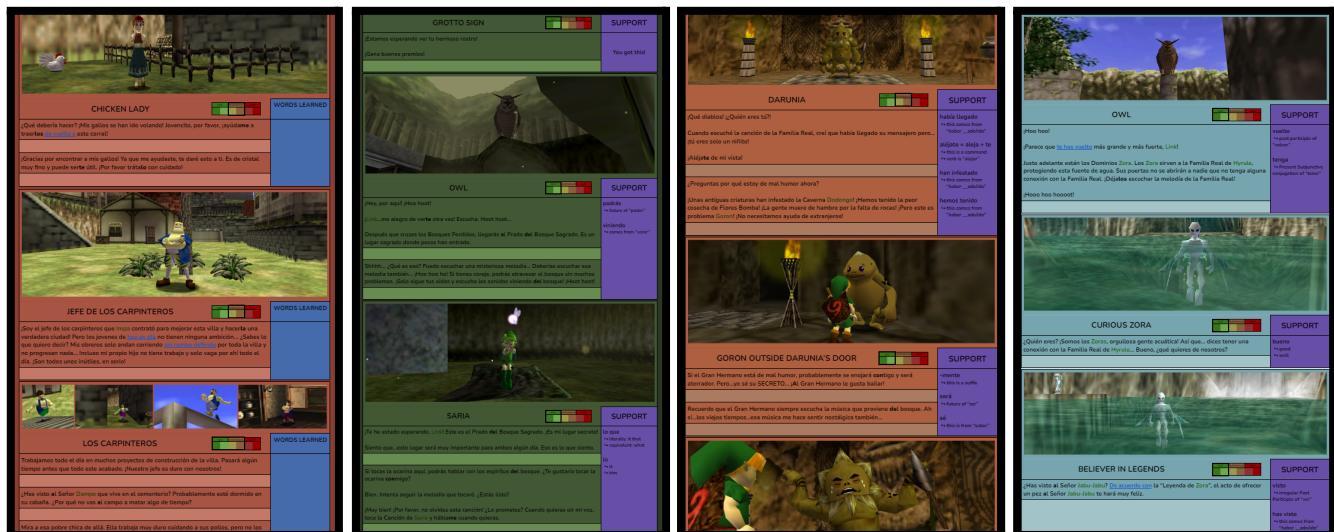
It is essential that translators, interpreters, and localizers translate **equivalently** rather than literally, and to preserve the **mood and nuances** of the intended message. I encouraged my students to do the same, as they were practicing being game localizers. I explained to my students that when translating a product for the public to purchase and read, it's not enough to accurately translate words between languages. They must ensure that their translation also sounds natural in the target language.

Example of translating **equivalently** rather than literally: The Spanish phrase “me gustan los gatos” literally means in English “me they please the cats”...but that is not how an English speaker would express that message. Instead, a translator should write: “I like cats”.

Example of preserving the **mood** and **nuance**: The Great Deku Tree, the wise and ancient deity of the forest, says in Spanish: “Los niños del bosque, los Kokiri, viven aquí conmigo” and “Ha llegado el momento de que el niño sin hada inicie su viaje”. Some students of mine translated the word “niño” in these sentences as “kid”, which would make them read in English as: “The kids of the forest, the Kokiri, live here with me” and “the moment has arrived that the kid without a fairy begins his journey”. Although “niño” can translate into English as “kid”, it can also translate as “child” and “boy”, so wouldn’t you think a wise, ancient tree would instead say: “The children of the forest” and “the boy without a fairy”? I think so! And so did the translators at Nintendo, as that is how the English dialogue reads.

6.3. Format:

I consider myself to be a visual person, so I put a great deal of effort into creating materials which are visually appealing and user-friendly. The format is the same between assignments, so students remain familiar with the layout and included elements. I've included screenshots of just a few of these assignments below (images 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14). None of these show the entire assignment, but they provide visual context for what is described below image 14.





Images 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 Screenshots of various translation assignments for *Ocarina of Time*

I endeavored to keep students immersed in the story by replicating the aesthetic theme from the game. The first thing students saw on an assignment was a screenshot of the town or area where the dialogue was encountered. I also made the background color for each document be a color that matched the area. For example, the document for Kokiri Forest was green because the Kokiri live in the lush forest, and Zora's Domain was blue because the Zora live underwater. Above each dialogue box, I included a screenshot of the character who said it. While these elements made assignments look fun, they also provided contextual information to help students connect the dialogue with the characters and their stories, which helps them more deeply understand the text.

I also used color to help students instantly identify the different sections of the assignment. For example, I made the cell where students were to type their translations to be lighter so that they'd stand out. I colored Zelda-specific terms **green** so that students would know not to translate them. I also hyperlinked phrases that wouldn't make sense when translating the individual words, such as with the phrase "[ahora mismo](#)", which means "right now", but literally translates as "now same".

I initially provided a "Words Learned" column on the right for students to keep a personal vocab study list, but few students used it, so I later converted it into a "SUPPORT" column with helping hints. Below are closer looks at the SUPPORT boxes. For the majority of the support that I provided, I tried to *guide* students towards the correct answer, rather than simply telling them. In cases where I did explicitly tell them, like in the example with "lo que" below, I made sure to provide a breakdown of each word or an explanation so students could gain a deeper understanding of the word or phrase.

SUPPORT	SUPPORT	SUPPORT	SUPPORT	SUPPORT
hecho ↳ irregular past participle of "hacer"	"prueba" can be a present conjugation of "probar", but it can also be a noun. What makes sense here?	"solo" can translate to multiple words in English. Don't rely on the first word(s) that WordReference gives you. Look further down the list and see which makes the most sense.	REMINDER: "pasar" is a cognate of "pass", BUT we've learned it can translate to <u>two</u> other English words also. "pass" does NOT work in this sentence.	lo que ↳ literally: it that ↳ equivalent: what lo ↳ it ↳ him
has hecho ↳ this comes from "haber _ado/ido"				

Images 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 Screenshots of some support boxes

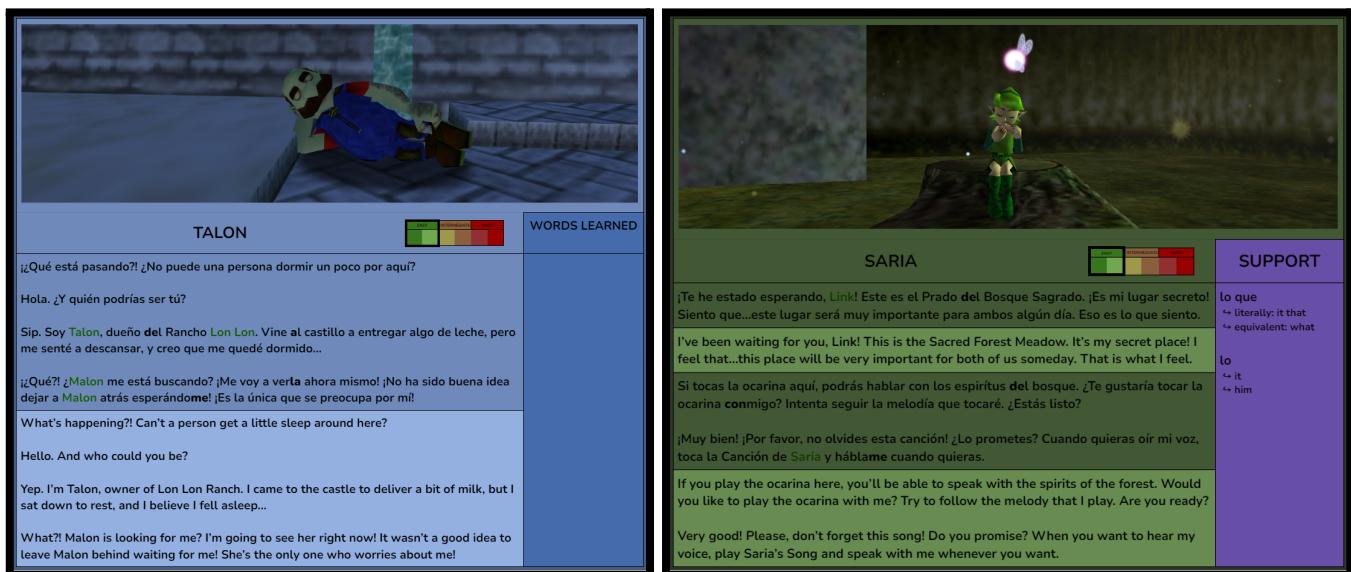
6.4. Selecting dialogue to include on assignments:

Not all text from the game became a translation assignment. This was an intentional decision to balance gameplay with Google Doc work. This doesn't mean that dialogue got ignored, because students had the opportunity to choose which NPCs they interacted with during live gameplay, making assignments be the students' **second time** working through the dialogue. When selecting dialogue to include on assignments, I endeavored to choose text that included vocabulary and grammar that I wanted my students to master. I also strove to select **dialogue which models real life communication**, including relevant vocabulary and grammar structures. Now you might be thinking, "*This is a medieval fairy tale story, how is the vocabulary relevant?*" While students did learn words like "sword," "shield," and "fairy," the majority were common words that are used in daily speech.

It is also important to "select for success", meaning, selecting dialogue within the abilities of your students to translate. This doesn't mean you shouldn't challenge your students, but I've seen students get discouraged when faced with particularly complex text. You will need to consider the group that you'll be playing with. Is this an advanced course for students who have shown mastery in various complex grammar concepts? Or is this a beginner course for students who have a handful of random vocabulary within their repertoire? I played *Ocarina of Time* with my Spanish 3 students. They knew the present, preterite, imperfect, and future tenses, as well as the progressive endings, before beginning gameplay. They also had significant reading comprehension practice in Spanish 2. In the two weeks leading up to gameplay, I gave them a crash-course on perfect verbs and object pronouns, with the goal being that they'd be able to recognize these when they encountered them.

The screenshots below are examples of the type of passages I would assign to my students to translate. I included the English translation in order to show the kind of vocabulary, grammar, and phrases that I expected my students to know in Spanish.

			WORDS LEARNED	
MALON	EASY	INTERMEDIATE	HARD	
<p>¡Oh, es el chico del hada! ¡Escuché que encontraste a mi padre! ¿Te gustó el castillo? ¿Has visto a la Princesa? ¡Jee jee! ¡Papá vino a casa rápido luego que lo encontraste!</p> <p>¡Oh sí, tengo que presentarte a mi amigo, chico del hada! Es este caballo. Su nombre es Epona. ¿Verdad que es linda?</p>				
<p>Oh, it's the fairy boy! I heard that you found my dad! Did you like the castle? Did you see the princess? Hee hee! Papa came home quickly after you found him!</p> <p>Oh yeah, I have to introduce you to my friend, fairy boy! It's this horse. Her name is Epona. Isn't she cute?</p>				
<p>Parece que Epona te tiene miedo, chico del hada...</p>				
<p>It seems that Epona is scared of you, fairy boy...</p>				



Images 20, 21, 22 Examples of dialogue using vocabulary and grammar relevant to modern speech

6.5. Determining if the difficulty level of a passage is appropriate for students:

In order to ensure that the work I asked my students to do and be graded on was reasonable, I created criteria to help me determine the difficulty level of a passage. I strove to provide assignments ranging across all difficulty levels, but I mostly graded students on easy/intermediate passages. The criteria in each of these categories was decided by where my Spanish 3 students were in their Spanish-learning journey, and so I would recommend to anyone seeking to emulate this unit to create their own criteria.

EASY		INTERMEDIATE		HARD	
cognates	words learned	high frequency words (that students have likely been exposed to via Duolingo & other sources but not explicitly taught)	words that translate to multiple words in English	low frequency words	lofty vocabulary
present tense	preterite tense	some imperfect tense phrases	perfect verbs	some conditional tense phrases	multiple recipient pronouns within the same phrase
progressives	future tense	commands	recipient pronouns	subjunctive phrases	multi-verb strings (ex: "han ido volando")

Image 23 Criteria for determining difficulty of a passage

A passage simply having “hard” criteria does not automatically classify it as a “hard” passage to translate. I labeled a passage as “easy” if roughly 80% of the text fell into that category, and it didn’t have many “hard” segments. If I were in doubt about the difficulty of a passage, I would highlight the areas that were easy, intermediate, and hard in different colors, and then “eyeball” it to determine its difficulty. As teachers, we know our students and know their capabilities, and thus are capable of determining what our students would be able to do easily or find challenging.

Below is a screenshot showing my process of determining the difficulty level of a passage. By eyeballing this passage, I determined there were enough “hard” sections to bump this passage up into the “intermediate” level. For this LLP article, I decided to analyze it a bit deeper to see if “eyeballing” really worked, and so I divided the intermediate+hard word count by the total word count (excluding

names and words such as "hey", "oh", "tee jee"). There were 86 words total, and 16 words that made up intermediate/hard phrases. $16 \div 86 = 18\%$, which makes 82% of the passage fall under "easy". Although more than 80% of the passage fell under my criteria of "easy", I still decided to classify this passage as "intermediate" because the tougher parts were mostly hard. If all the tougher phrases had been intermediate, then I likely would have determined this to be an "easy" passage. Again - it is up to the discretion of the teacher. We are experts in our field, and we know our students.

MALON

EASY	INTERMEDIATE	HARD

¡Hey, tus ropas! Son...diferentes. No eres de por aquí, ¿verdad? Ohh... ¡Eres un chico del bosque con un hada! Soy Malon. Mi papá es dueño del Rancho Lon Lon.

Papá fue al castillo a entregar algo de leche, y aún no ha vuelto. ¿Vas a ir al castillo chico del hada? ¿Te importaría buscar a mi papá? Se habrá quedado dormido en algún lugar del castillo. ¡Qué forma de actuar para un adulto! ¡Tee jee!

Oh. Si lo buscas, te daré esto a ti. ¿Lo buscarás por mí? He estado incubando este huevo cuidadosamente. ¡Tee jee!

Image 24 Process of determining passage difficulty

6.6. Practice vs. Graded:

This is a collaborative assignment. That means:

- You MAY collaborate with your peers! 😊💡😊
- You MAY ask for help from your teacher! 😊❓
- You MAY use any resources to support your learning! 🔎💻📖

This will NOT affect your grade. Why would you do it, then? To deepen your knowledge, of course! 😊

Image 25 Instructions from a Practice Assignment

For our *Ocarina of Time* unit, I prepared 12 practice assignments and 5 graded assignments. **Practice assignments** let students familiarize themselves with the process of translating, develop their translating skills, and learn from their mistakes without the worry of being graded - all of which reduces their affective filter as defined by Krashen (1986). This helped them to develop confidence and comfort in tackling this task, helping them to feel at ease when translating graded assignments.

Students were encouraged to work together on practice assignments, and they were allowed to utilize any resource to assist them. While they worked, I cycled through their documents and gave them live feedback so they had the opportunity to quickly learn from their mistakes. For 6 of the practice assignments, students were given time in class to complete them. The remaining 6 were provided as optional learning opportunities for students who were really serious about knowing Spanish, and no class time was explicitly dedicated to completing these, though there was the occasional extra time at the end of lessons when students could work on them in class.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Do NOT use Google Translate.
- If you need to look up a word, use **Word Reference**.
- TURN IN** this assignment at the end of the class period! Even if you didn't finish it.

Image 26 Instructions from a Graded Assignment

Graded assignments provided summative data to track students' reading comprehension over time. Students completed these assignments independently, but they could utilize WordReference for help (see Section 5.3. for more information).

Students did not begin graded translation assignments clueless to what would be on them. After playing through the section, I would tell students which NPCs from that area would be on the upcoming graded assignment. We would then have a brief recap discussion on the major story details that those NPCs talked about. To help students prepare for the more technical aspects of translating, I would give them a link to practice the tough grammar and vocabulary about one week in advance of the graded assignment².

To ensure students complied with the instructions for graded assignments, I utilized Securly³ to monitor their Chromebooks while they worked. Securly is a student device management system that allows teachers to see students' screens and a list of the internet browser tabs they have open, and it allows teachers to close tabs. On the first two graded assignments, a couple of students did try to use Google Translate. I was able to see "Google Translate" listed in their internet tabs list, and I saw entire assignment passages being highlighted on their screens. However, students quickly learned that their attempts to use Google Translate were ineffective, as I would quickly close it the moment one popped up. There were no more incidents of Google Translate making an appearance after that. If you plan to emulate this unit, but do not have the ability to manage student devices, I would suggest utilizing Google Forms' locked mode. In locked mode, students are unable to access any tab other than the Google Form itself. However, this would also prevent students from using WordReference.

For the first two graded assignments, I gave students two full class periods to translate. At the start of the second day of translating, I quickly reviewed grammar concepts and vocabulary that I had seen multiple students mistranslate. I encouraged students to look through what they had translated thus far to see if anything needed to be reworked. By the third graded assignment (*which was the ninth assignment including practice*), more than 90% of the class was finishing well within a single class period, so from then on students only had one class period to complete graded assignments, and they no longer received the quick reteach with the opportunity to make corrections before submission.

7. Giving students feedback

7.1. Individual student feedback on practice assignments:

While students worked on practice assignments, I gave them live feedback in the form of comments on their Google Doc. My intention was to provide prompt corrections so students could quickly learn from their mistakes. This decreased the likelihood that they would continue making the same mistake throughout the remainder of the assignment, preventing that mistake from becoming ingrained in their long-term memory. If I could not finish providing feedback within the class period (*which was often the case*), I would usually finish later that day and would give students a few minutes at the start of class the following day to check the comments I had left.

Assignments were posted on Google Classroom, which allows teachers to easily access and cycle through students' assignments via drop-down menu (*shown in image 27*). Teachers can easily click a student's name from this drop-down menu to load different students' documents.

² An example can be seen here: <https://www.gimkit.com/practice/635840f0175d3d0021f9b4f4>

³ <https://www.securly.com/>

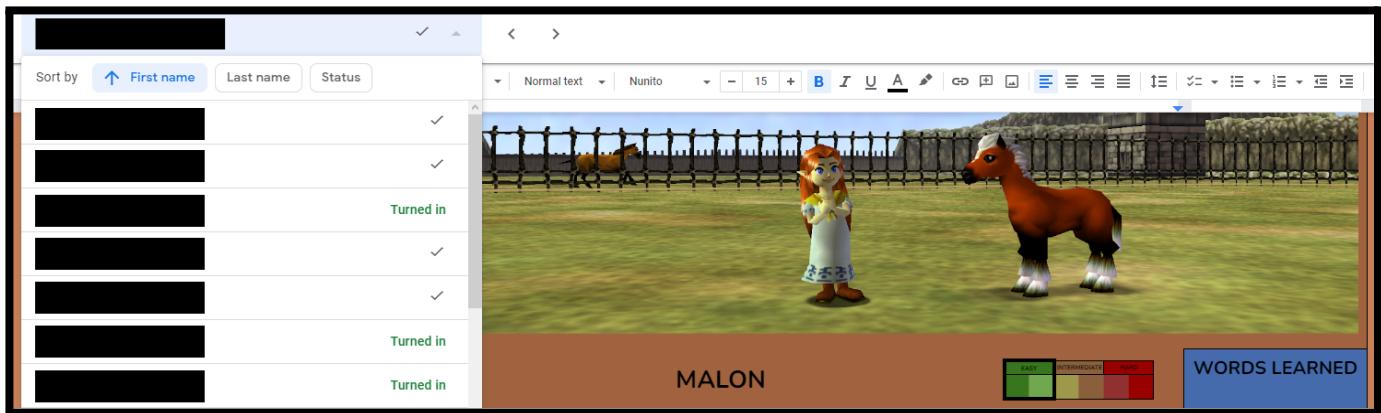


Image 27 Cycling through students' documents on Google Classroom

I strove to provide students with in-depth explanations showing how their translation had mistakes, and how to get to a correct translation. The screenshot below (image 28) shows a comment that I left on a student's document. In this example, this student incorrectly translated "Soy conocido como el Árbol Deku", which should have been translated as "I am known as the Deku Tree". In the comment I left for her, I not only explicitly told her that "soy" means "I am", but I let her know which verb it conjugates from: "ser". I pointed out that she included a word in her translation that wasn't in the Spanish dialogue, which was "well", and I let her know what the translation of that word is so that she could learn it: "bien". I also gave her praise for translating "conocido" correctly in order to boost her morale. I strongly recommend including praise in comments so that students aren't only receiving "negative" feedback. I often heard a "yay" or "woohoo!", or even a "well, at least I got SOMETHING right..." from students after they read a positive comment!

Image 28 Feedback via comment on Google Doc

7.2. Whole class feedback after practice or graded assignments:

After students had finished an assignment, either practice or graded, I would give the whole class feedback, addressing common mistakes that multiple students had made. This was a great way to spiral back and reteach concepts that students either hadn't yet mastered or had forgotten.

If many students had struggled with the same passage or assignment, we would go through that passage or assignment again, but we would do it together. I would encourage students to leave comments for themselves on their Google Doc rather than correcting their translation. This way, they could revisit their document and instantly see what they had struggled with before, and use their comments to study.

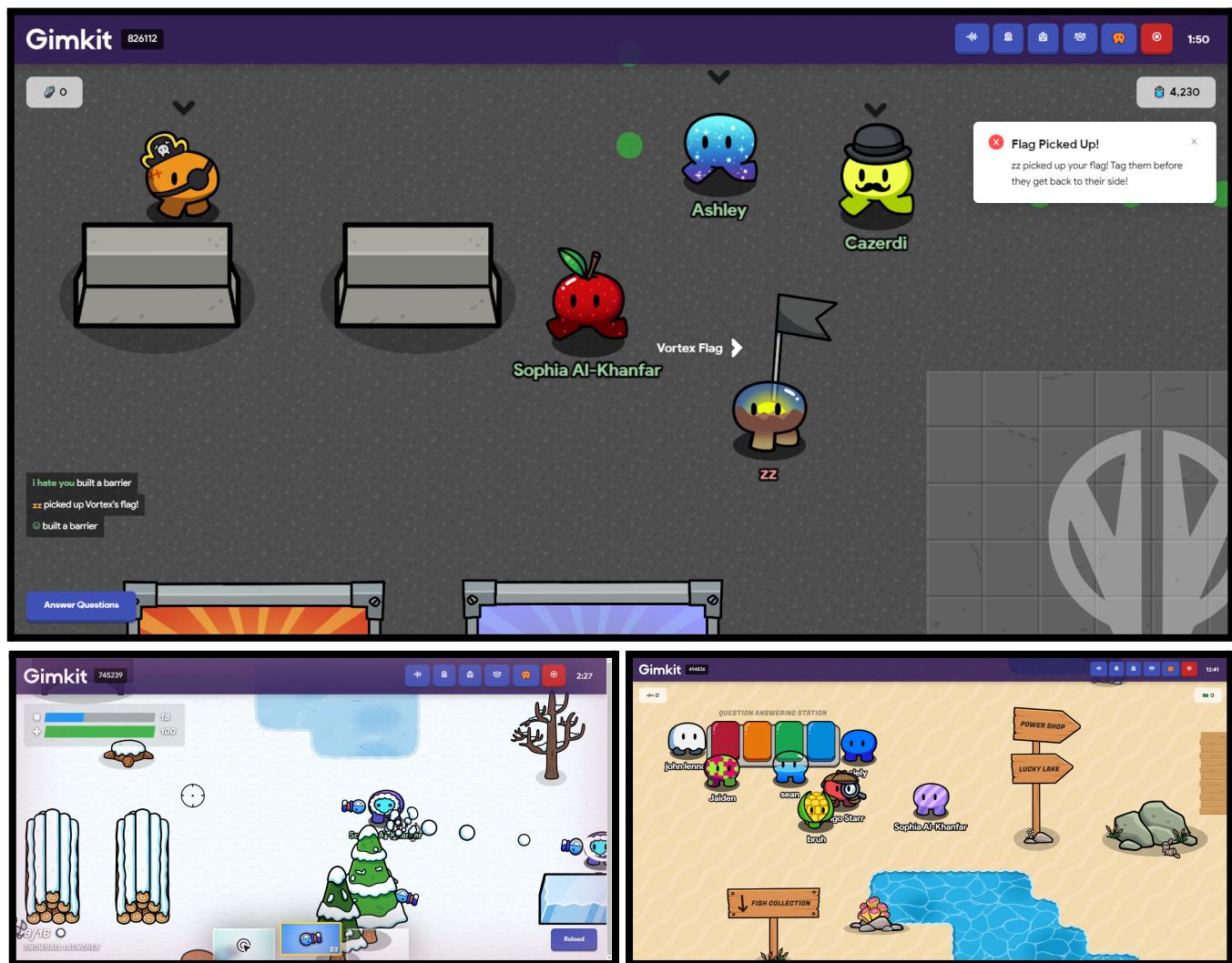
8. Vocabulary and grammar study

8.1. Gamification of rote memorization:

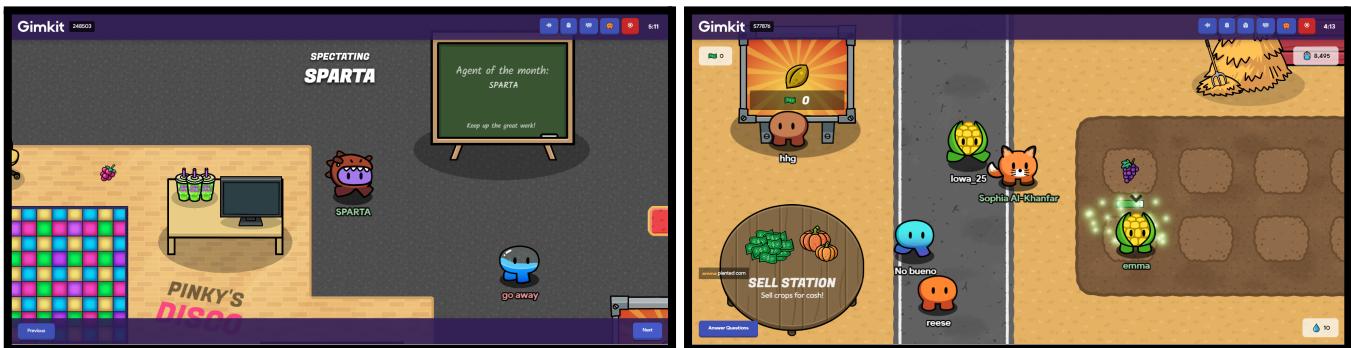
While exposure to new words in-context is a great way to form memories that help with recall, long-term memorization requires study. To make this process fun, I used GimKit⁴. GimKit is an online educational tool that gamifies rote memorization. This site offers a variety of game modes for students to choose from, in which they'll answer either multiple choice or typing questions prepared by their teacher. Unlike other academic "game" sites such as Kahoot or Quizlet, GimKit offers a variety of 2D game modes where students control a character called a "Gim". In order to play, students must answer content questions to earn some sort of consumable, which they can use to complete tasks in the game.

I utilized GimKit to preview vocabulary for upcoming gameplay, to review vocabulary and grammar seen during previous gameplay, and to study vocabulary and grammar that many students struggled with on translation assignments. I would also prepare a GimKit before each graded assignment that included vocabulary and grammar that I anticipated students would struggle with, which I shared with students approximately one week before they would do the assignment.

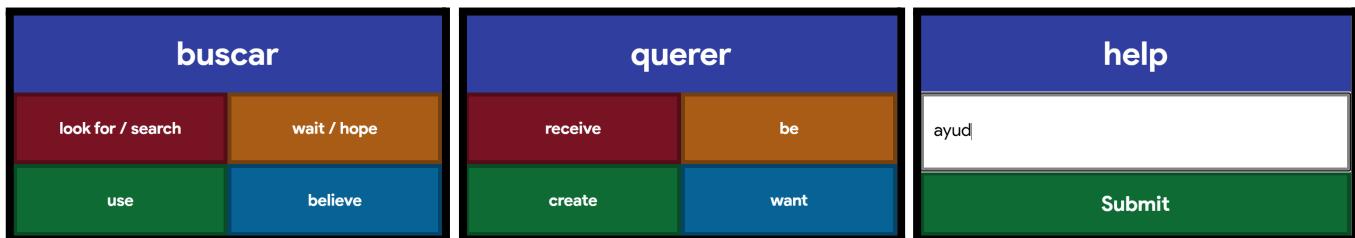
Below are screenshots of my students playing Capture the Flag, Snowbrawl, Fishtopia, Tag, and Farmchain, which are just 5 of more than 10 game modes on GimKit.com.



⁴ <https://www.gimkit.com/>



Images 29, 30, 31, 32, 33 Various 2D game modes on GimKit



Images 34, 35, 36 GimKit question examples

9. Grading

9.1. Scoring student work:

Students' scores mostly came from **semantic understanding**, and the quality of their translation was considered second. Although I urged my students to practice translating equivalently rather than literally, and to preserve the mood and nuances, I put less weight on these things when grading. Like in the example given in Section 6.2., if a student translated "niño" as "kid" instead of "boy", it would not negatively affect their score whatsoever. And if a student translated "me gustan los gatos" as "me they please the cats", it also would not have any negative impact on the score they earn. Both of these students still demonstrated that they understood the message, even if the translation is a bit odd.

9.2. Student work:

The screenshots below are samples of students' translations ranging from "exceeding" to "limited". Sections highlighted **red** are mistranslations, and sections highlighted **purple** are missing. Not all mistranslations changed the intended message, and so did not necessarily count against their grade.

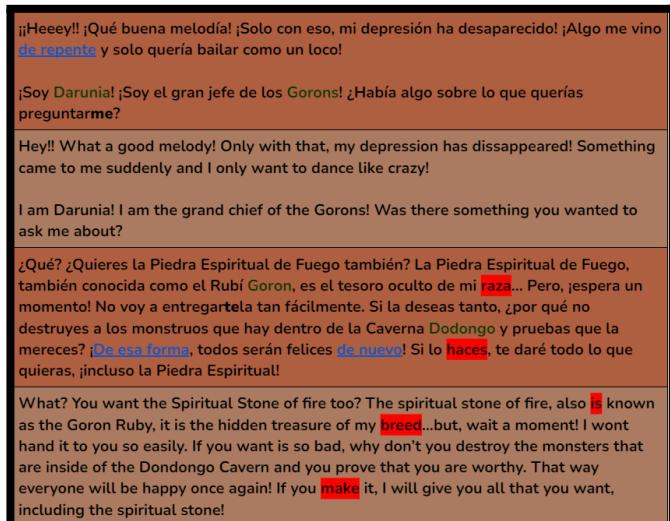


Image 37 EXCEEDING

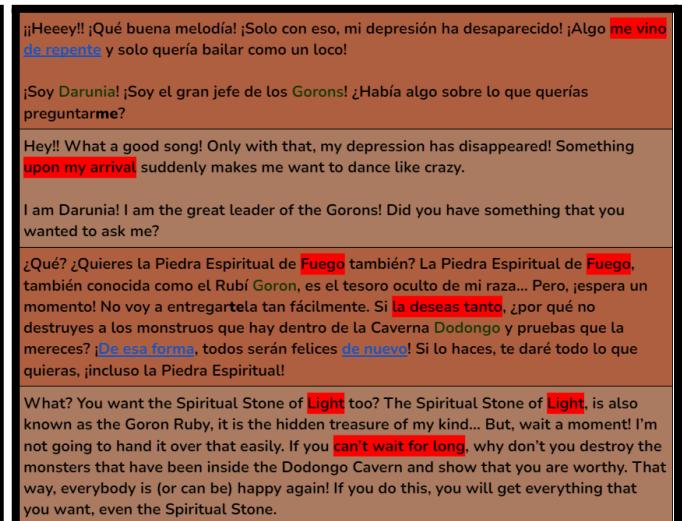


Image 38 MEETING

¡¡Heey!! ¡Qué buena melodía! ¡Solo con eso, mi depresión ha desaparecido! ¡Algo me vino de repente y solo quería bailar como un loco!

¡Soy Darunia! ¡Soy el gran jefe de los Gorons! ¿Había algo sobre lo que querías preguntarme?

Hey!! What a good song! Only with that, my depression has disappeared. Suddenly something appeared and only wanted to dance like crazy.

I'm Darunia. I'm the great boss of the Gorons. Did you want to ask something of me?

¿Qué? ¿Quieres la Piedra Espiritual de Fuego también? La Piedra Espiritual de Fuego, también conocida como el Rubí Goron, es el tesoro oculto de mi raza... Pero, ¡espera un momento! No voy a entregártela tan fácilmente. Si la deseas tanto, ¿por qué no destruyes a los monstruos que hay dentro de la Caverna Dodongo y pruebas que la mereces? ¡De esa forma, todos serán felices de nuevo! Si lo haces, te daré todo lo que quieras, ¡incluso la Piedra Espiritual!

What? You want the Spiritual Stone of Fire as well? The Spiritual Stone of Fire, also known as the Goron Ruby, is the [missing] treasure of my race... But, wait a moment. I will not hand this over to you this easily. If you can't wait that long, why not destroy the monsters that have lived in the Dodongo Cavern and prove that you deserve it? That way, you all will be happy once again. If you desire it, you will have all that you want, including the Spiritual Stone!

Image 39 PROGRESSING

For comparison, here is the translation as I would have written it:

Heey!! What a good melody! Just like that, my depression has disappeared! Something suddenly came over me and I just wanted to dance like crazy!

I'm Darunia! I'm the great chief of the Gorons! Was there something you wanted to ask me about?

What? You want the Spiritual Stone of Fire too? The Spiritual Stone of Fire, also known as the Goron Ruby, is the hidden treasure of my race... but, wait a moment! I'm not going to hand it over to you so easily! If you desire it so much, why don't you destroy the monsters that are inside of Dodongo Cavern and prove that you deserve it? That way, everyone will be happy again! If you do it, I will give you all that you want, including the Spiritual Stone!

9.3. Standards-Based Grading:

My school is in the process of making a shift to Standards-Based Grading by giving teachers the choice to opt in or out while we learn more about it.

In a **traditional grading system**, students' grades are made up of the accumulation of points from assessments, assignments, and sometimes participation. In this grading system, assessments may include questions covering a variety of concepts and content, and they are scored by the percentage of answers the student got right. Assignments may also follow this format and be scored this way, or the teacher may give points just for completion. Giving points for participation is also common in a traditional grading system. In this system, the grade book might include scores titled: "Unit 1 Test", "Unit 2 Test", "Assignment 1", "Assignment 2", "Assignment 3", "Quarter 1 Participation", etc.

In a **Standards-Based Grading system**, students' grades are determined by their knowledge or performance of standards. "Standards" refer to content, concepts, and skills that have been deemed essential for the course. In this grading system, students do not receive points for mere completion or participation. Students must learn and prove they have reached proficiency in these standards in order to pass the course. In a foreign language class, the grade book might include standards such as: "writing an event summary", "conversing in a casual setting", "interpreting speech", "comprehending text", "using verb conjugation to convey time", etc. This grade book clearly shows how well a student knows specific content and concepts, and how well they can perform specific communication skills.

As a believer in "learning by doing", I decided to plunge headfirst into trying out this new system. While it has been difficult determining what to grade and how to grade since there aren't clearly defined or universally accepted foreign language standards, what I like about this vision of grading is the **focus on student performance/knowledge rather than the "point grinding" of traditional grading methods**. There are no "completion points", "participation points", or "extra credit" in my classes. Only assessments are graded, and each assessment focuses on one skill, concept, or content.

¡¡Heey!! ¡Qué buena melodía! ¡Solo con eso, mi depresión ha desaparecido! ¡Algo me vino de repente y solo quería bailar como un loco!

¡Soy Darunia! ¡Soy el gran jefe de los Gorons! ¿Había algo sobre lo que querías preguntarme?

Heeee! What's good [missing]! I am well, My depression has disappeared ! something in me suddenly lives and only want to dance crazy.

[missing] Darunia! I am the grand man of the gorons! I have something over there to ask you.

¿Qué? ¿Quieres la Piedra Espiritual de Fuego también? La Piedra Espiritual de Fuego, también conocida como el Rubí Goron, es el tesoro oculto de mi raza... Pero, ¡espera un momento! No voy a entregártela tan fácilmente. Si la deseas tanto, ¿por qué no destruyes a los monstruos que hay dentro de la Caverna Dodongo y pruebas que la mereces? ¡De esa forma, todos serán felices de nuevo! Si lo haces, te daré todo lo que quieras, ¡incluso la Piedra Espiritual!

What? Can I have the spiritual stone of flame too? The spiritual rock of flames, also well known as the goron ruby, it's the hidden treasure of my breed... But, wait a moment! If you don't get it so easily. If you desire it so much, so for whoever destroy the monster of the dodongo cavern and proves their worth? That way, all beings are once again happy! So make him, give you what you want. Including the spiritual stone.

Image 40 LIMITED

The grading scale I use is as follows:

- Exceeding Expectations
- Meeting Expectations
- Progressing Towards Expectations
- Limited Understanding
- Lacking Evidence (*failing*)

<h1>READING COMP RUBRIC</h1>				
<i>"I can comprehend main ideas as well as detailed information that I read in Spanish"</i>				
EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS 4/4 letter grade range: A	MEETING EXPECTATIONS 3/4 letter grade range: B	PROGRESSING 2/4 letter grade range: C	LIMITED UNDERSTANDING 1/4 letter grade range: D	LACKING EVIDENCE 0/4 letter grade range: F
<p>You are able to identify the topic of the text, thoroughly explain the message(s)/purpose of the piece, and identify all supporting details.</p> <p>Any misinterpretations do not detract from the message. Example: "hice mucho dinero" translated as either "I made/ have a lot of money". Although "hice" means "I made", both translations convey the same message.</p>	<p>You are able to identify the topic of the text, sufficiently explain the message(s)/purpose of the piece, and identify most supporting details - major and minor.</p> <p>A few misinterpretations slightly alter the meaning of minor details.</p>	<p>You are able to identify the topic of the text, sufficiently explain the message(s)/purpose of the piece, and identify most of the major supporting details.</p> <p>Multiple misinterpretations alter the meaning of many minor details, and some major details.</p>	<p>You are able to identify the topic of the text and partially explain the overarching message(s)/purpose.</p> <p>Many misinterpretations alter the meaning of several major and minor details.</p>	<p>You may be able to translate some Spanish words/phrases and you may be able to identify the topic of the text.</p> <p>However, you are unable to identify the overarching message(s)/purpose of the text.</p>

Image 41 Reading Comprehension Rubric

9.4. Looking for trends:

Something new my school is promoting this year (2022-2023) is to look for **performance trends** to determine a student's knowledge of a standard, rather than "taking one and done". This means that a student will be assessed over the same standard multiple times, but only 1 score will be input into the grade book for that standard, and that score will be determined by the student's *trend* in performance.

Example: On 5 graded translation assignments "Marin" performed as follows:

1. LIMITED UNDERSTANDING
2. MEETING EXPECTATIONS
3. PROGRESSING
4. MEETING EXPECTATIONS
5. MEETING EXPECTATIONS

From this data we can see that Marin met expectations on over half of the assignments, she made improvement over time, and her two most recent assessments both met expectations. Based on this data, Marin's score would be reported as MEETING EXPECTATIONS in the grade book. NOTE: I consider a student's most recent scores more strongly than their initial scores, because recent data more accurately depicts a student's current performance/knowledge.

This method of grading simultaneously: A) Holds students to the expectation of continued high performance, and B) Allows students the grace to make mistakes, learn, and grow!

Look for **performance trends** to determine a student's knowledge of a standard, rather than "taking one and done".

10. Student scores

10.1. My Spanish 3 students:

This school year (2022-2023) I have an interesting mix of Spanish 3 students, unlike any group I've had before. Within the last year, multiple colleges in our state upped their foreign language requirements for admission from 2 years to 3 years. Because of this, many of last year's Spanish 2 students who had not planned on continuing with Spanish are now in my Spanish 3 class. Equally unique to my Spanish 3 class this year is the large number of Talented and Gifted students. I have never had a Spanish 3 class this large, nor this varied in abilities before. It is split almost 50/50 with one half being eager learners who want to reach fluency in Spanish, and the other half stating very plainly that they are only there to fulfill their college requirement. It was a unique challenge, but *Ocarina of Time* acted as a great motivator to the majority of my students as they were eager to play and learn more about the enticing story!

Table 1: Students' performance on each graded assignment

student	Assignment 1 [intermediate]	Assignment 2 [easy]	Assignment 3 [mix: easy-hard]	Assignment 4 [easy]	Assignment 5 [intermediate]
AR	MEETING	LIMITED	PROGRESSING	LIMITED	PROGRESSING
AS	LIMITED	missing	PROGRESSING	PROGRESSING	LIMITED
AB	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING
AS	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING
AL	MEETING	PROGRESSING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING
CU	EXCEEDING	MEETING	MEETING	MEETING	EXCEEDING
CS	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING
CD	EXCEEDING	MEETING	EXCEEDING	MEETING	EXCEEDING
EH	MEETING	PROGRESSING	MEETING	PROGRESSING	MEETING
FW	EXCEEDING	MEETING	EXCEEDING	PROGRESSING	MEETING
HR	MEETING	PROGRESSING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING
KD	EXCEEDING	PROGRESSING	MEETING	MEETING	MEETING
LE	EXCEEDING	PROGRESSING	EXCEEDING	MEETING	EXCEEDING
MP	PROGRESSING	LIMITED	MEETING	LIMITED	PROGRESSING
MM	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING
MIL	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	EXCEEDING	MEETING	MEETING
RU	MEETING	PROGRESSING	EXCEEDING	PROGRESSING	MEETING
TOTALS	10 Exceeding	5 Exceeding	11 Exceeding	6 Exceeding	9 Exceeding
	5 Meeting	3 Meeting	4 Meeting	5 Meeting	5 Meeting
	1 Progressing	6 Progressing	2 Progressing	4 Progressing	2 Progressing
	1 Limited	2 Limited	0 Limited	2 Limited	1 Limited
	0 Lacking Ev.	0 Lacking Ev.	0 Lacking Ev.	0 Lacking Ev.	0 Lacking Ev.

10.2. Lengthier dialogue = more context:

Initially, I was surprised by which assignments students performed best on. As can be seen in Table 1 above, students performed better on *more difficult* assignments. After observation, analysis, and reflection, I can explain this seemingly bizarre phenomenon. The more difficult assignments included lengthy dialogue from just a few NPCs, or even just one, whereas the "easier" assignments included brief 1-3 sentence dialogue from many NPCs. More dialogue from the same NPC means there is more **context** to rely on. While the dialogue on the "easier" assignments *did* use more basic grammar structures and common vocabulary, it only takes misinterpreting one word or phrase to completely jumble up the meaning of the entire passage. In retrospect, I feel like I should have anticipated this as I have experienced the same struggle myself. When reading novels in Spanish, I can always follow what is happening, even if I encounter a few words I don't know. However, when reading children's books that only have a sentence or two per page, if I don't know a word, I struggle to follow the story. In the future, I plan on only grading students over lengthier, context-rich segments.

Assignment 2 had the largest volume of short dialogue segments, and was the assignment on which students scored the lowest, so I decided to exclude it from the grade book. I have thus chosen another assignment that was used for practice this year to replace it as a graded assignment next year. I've included a screenshot below that shows part of assignment 2 (image 42), as well as a screenshot that shows part of a practice assignment (image 43) to show the difference in dialogue length. Assignment 2 had students translate dialogue from nearly all the inhabitants of a town, and each one only had a brief statement to make that was entirely unique from what any other NPC in town said. Their narratives did not connect in any way, so there was no consistent context for students to rely on to help them understand. The practice assignment shown beside it (image 43) included dialogue from just one NPC: Princess Zelda. Although her passage included more advanced vocabulary and grammar, she had a singular topic to discuss with you - thus, her dialogue provided extensive context.



Image 42 Assignment 2

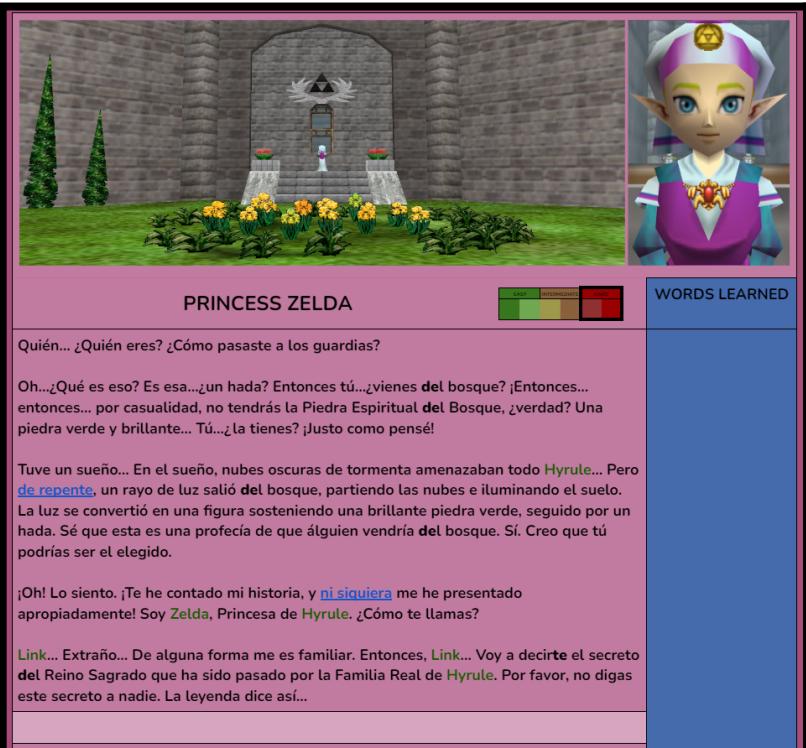


Image 43 Lengthy, context-rich dialogue from one NPC

11. Conclusion: viable pedagogy

11.1. Engagement:

Colleagues asked me the question, *“What about students who aren’t into gaming? Did you see high levels of interest from them, too?”* Although I knew the majority of my students enjoyed this unit, I decided clear data was needed to show this. The table below categorizes students based on their interest level in the game, which I determined according to the following characteristics:

ENTHUSIASTIC	INTERESTED	GRADE MOTIVATED	DISINTERESTED
3 Characteristics: - expresses excitement - often volunteers to play - wants to see all gameplay - asks lore questions	10 Characteristics: - enjoys watching - voices ideas to player - willing to play when asked - sometimes asks to play	3 Characteristics: - attentive during dialogue - inattentive during play - lacks desire to play	1 Characteristics: - off-task - requires prompts to watch - unwilling to play
Final grades: Exceeding: 2 Meeting: 1	Final grades: Exceeding: 8 Meeting: 2	Final grades: Exceeding: 1 Progressing: 2	Final grade: Progressing

The majority of my students enjoyed gaming as a means to learn Spanish. However, there were clearly some who were indifferent to this method, and one who showed disinterest. This is not unlike what I observe in other units. No matter the medium, whether we're reading a book, watching a TV show, or writing about ourselves, there have always been students that did not enjoy the activity. Students' interest level in *Ocarina of Time* was not overly disparate from other activities; moreover, I would assert that the intensity of excitement from interested students was greater for this activity than for other activities. At the end of the unit, all students that I determined to be either "enthusiastic" or "interested" begged me to let them finish the entire game, as we had only played through the first third. Even as I revise this paper two months after finishing our *Ocarina of Time* unit, my students are still asking to play. I am not letting them have their way entirely, but I have agreed to let them earn additional gameplay days if they put forth good effort in future units.

11.2. Students rapidly improved reading comprehension:

Students' Spanish reading comprehension improved rapidly, and so did their confidence in performing this skill. Although many students produced high-quality translations from the start, the speed at which they were able to produce these translations increased dramatically over the course of the unit.

During the first few weeks of this unit, the majority of students needed 2-3 class periods to translate an assignment. They were also heavily dependent on WordReference to understand the text. Approximately halfway through the unit, the majority of students needed only one class period to translate assignments of similar length and difficulty. They were also relying much less on WordReference, and were instead relying on their own memorized repertoire of Spanish words that they had learned through gameplay, previous translation assignments, and GimKit. I was able to witness this decrease in dependency through Securly (Section 6.5. for more information). As I watched them work via Securly, I regularly made an effort to jot down words that I saw students looking up on WordReference. I would then include those words on future GimKits and/or do a mini-review lesson with the whole class if any terms required a more in-depth explanation. Over the course of the unit, the lists I compiled became shorter as students needed to look up fewer words.

I observed the same increase in translation speed during live gameplay. While students needed ~3-5 minutes to translate a single text box at the start of the unit, halfway through they were translating text of similar length and difficulty within 1-3 minutes. I also frequently heard comments such as, "I know that word! _____ said it! It means _____. I fondly remember one student five weeks into the unit saying, "Low key, this is kinda easy now, no cap."

"Low key, this is kinda easy now, no cap."
- quote from student

11.3. Students learned the majority of the 100 top used Spanish verbs:

I used GimKit to not only gamify rote memorization, but to also formatively track students' progress in learning the 100 most used Spanish verbs. GimKit is a great tool for tracking learning, as it provides an in-depth report of the whole class and individual student performance after each game. Students were expected to learn the 100 most used Spanish verbs at a recognition level, and therefore the GimKits we played included multiple choice questions only. Before the start of our *Ocarina of Time* unit, the class averaged ~30% accuracy. I saw a steady incline in acquisition of these words throughout the unit, and by the end, the class consistently averaged above 90% accuracy. I assessed students again three weeks after the conclusion of the unit, and they continued to perform at above 90% accuracy.

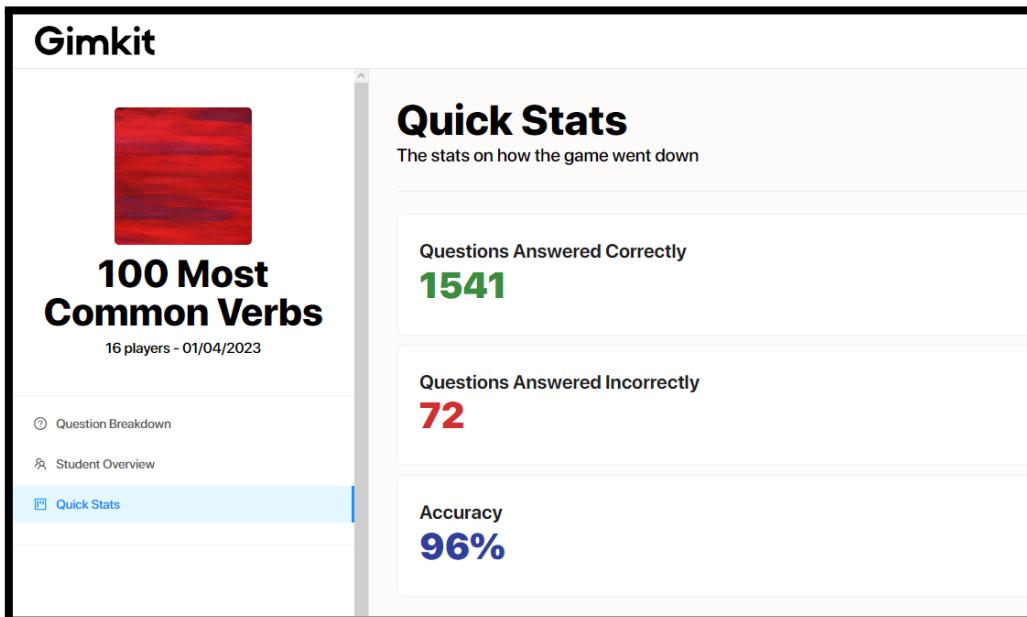


Image 44 Students' highest performance results of the 100 most used Spanish verbs

11.4. The key to making a gaming unit be a viable pedagogy:

The key element to making a gaming unit conducive to learning is having a **curriculum**. This is necessary for any medium, not just video games. Simply watching a TV show, listening to music, or turning on a podcast in the target language doesn't lead to fluency without **purposeful attention** given to the language. A curriculum obligates students to do this. This could be on-the-spot mini lessons during the activity, students translating text or answering comprehension questions, students writing event summaries in the target language, or having class discussions in the target language. The medium, which in this case was a video game, is a means for students to see the language used in-context and acts as a motivator for engagement.

The key element to making a gaming unit conducive to learning is having a curriculum. Simply watching a TV show, listening to music, or turning on a podcast in the target language doesn't lead to fluency without **purposeful attention** given to the language.

12. Next steps

12.1. Possible new approach:

I chose to focus on reading comprehension with this unit, though other communication skills could be incorporated as well. After watching my students play, I've formulated ideas for possibly including writing. One way could be having students compose Link's dialogue ("Link" being the protagonist that you play as). Although it is clear that Link shares information with NPCs, you don't actually ever see what he says. Using contextual clues, students could fill in Link's absent dialogue.

12.2 Permanent addition to curriculum:

Ocarina of Time will be a permanent addition to my Spanish 3 curriculum! Not only was this unit enjoyable for me; students begged to continue at the conclusion of the unit. Students improved their reading comprehension skills, dramatically increased their repertoire of Spanish vocabulary, and gained a more comprehensive understanding of Spanish grammar and sentence structure. It is clear that **video games are a highly motivating and effective method for learning a foreign language**.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following individuals for their support and guidance:

My principal, Alexandra Lancaster, who when I told her I use gaming in my classes to teach Spanish replied with "that's awesome!" She has full trust in her staff to be professionals and respects our expertise in our fields. Alex, you are "awesome", too!

My instructional coach, Matthew Murley, who also enjoys gaming and has played *Ocarina of Time*. On various occasions, he observed my class playing or working on translation assignments, and he was very supportive! He clearly saw the benefits that playing a video game has for learning a foreign language. Thank you for your support!

Our former ELL and technology teacher, and my personal friend, Talbot Hook, who loves *The Legend of Zelda* series and is also fluent in Spanish. He helped hype up *Breath of the Wild* to our shared students, and would come in after school to watch the kids continue playing. Those were fun times!

My former students, Tanner Smith and William Thornton, thank you for bringing in your gaming consoles when I didn't have a classroom console yet!

My former student, Avery Lees, who learned approximately 5 million* languages to fluency or near fluency before graduating high school because he's a maniacal genius. Your insight, suggestions, feedback, and evaluations of my teaching were very helpful! (*and annoying*) Please print this acknowledgements page and celebrate the same way you celebrated the results of your first Spanish quiz. It'll be cast iron squirrels in pickle shoes!

*I may have exaggerated the number a bit

My current and former students who approached our gaming units with enthusiasm and put forth their best effort to learn. You're the reason I come to school every day! The highlight of my teaching career is getting to watch you learn Spanish through gaming, and I love hearing about your continued Spanish-learning adventures after high school! Thank you for the fun, and stay in touch!

Señor Ruston Ford, ¡Gracias por enseñarme español! No solo me ayudaste a entender la gramática española, también me ayudaste a desarrollar la confianza para empezar a hablar español. ¡No podría hacer lo que hago hoy sin tu instrucción!

My mom, Katherine Al-Khanfar, who is an elementary teacher. Thank you for your continued guidance and support on how to be the best teacher I can be! (*And for raising me and putting up with me!*) My creativity clearly came from you! I enjoy hearing the stories you read to your students, and the materials you've created to go along with them have greatly inspired me! I love you, mom! 

References

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Appendix 1: Teacher in Brazil uses *Ocarina of Time* to teach English as a foreign language

Leão, an English teacher in Brazil, incorporates a variety of roleplaying games, including *Ocarina of Time*, into her English curriculum (2011). Leão has several compelling arguments for why RPGs should be used in language learning classrooms, and why *Ocarina of Time* specifically is such a great fit:

Leão's (2011) arguments for using RPGs in a foreign language classroom:

"...RPG video games provide extensive reading to learners" (p. 48).

"RPG video games in a foreign language provide learners with an authentic opportunity to use the language with no need to go to another country for that. While playing, the player will be in fact exchanging information with the text in the FL; therefore **a true communicative situation** – as defined by Morrow (1977) and Lee (1995) – will be in progress" (Leão, 2011, p. 46).

"After analyzing all the advantages to **lexical acquisition** that RPG video games bring, it is possible to say that it can and should be used by learners as an effective tool to FL acquisition" (ibid., p. 49).

"Since the English language is required in order to successfully play the game, the habit of playing videogames serves as a **motivational trigger to language understanding**. Playing the game and striving to complete it is a personal genuine intention. Hence, the player will be highly **motivated to overcome the language barrier**" (ibid., p. 44).

"Being a **pleasant and leisure activity** whose main focus is not language learning or acquisition does not diminish its value as language input. Rather, it only makes it an even more efficient means to that goal" (ibid., p. 49).

Leão's arguments for using *Ocarina of Time* in a foreign language classroom:

"The game *Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time* is an excellent example of how RPG video games provide the type of input defined as optimal for acquisition by Krashen. Optimal input is one that is comprehensible, which is possible due to the use of **common vocabulary**, shorter sentences, and ... the pace can be determined by the learner ... who has control over the continuation of the information flow by hitting a button" (ibid., p. 40-41).

Appendix 2: Higher-level reading comprehension depends on lower-level knowledge

Why have students practice translating instead of just answering comprehension questions? Two reasons: 1) Strong syntactic understanding improves semantic understanding, and 2) Students seeking to become a localizer/interpreter/translator/subtitler must be able to understand the entirety of the message, including its mood and nuances, in order to stay true to the original message.

According to Srisang and Everett (2021), higher-level reading comprehension also depends on a learner's ability at the lower level. In other words, the better a language learner's grammatical knowledge, the higher their level of reading comprehension. Learners need to have sufficient lower comprehension skills—vocabulary and grammatical knowledge—prior to achieving the deeper meanings of a text (Hogan, et al., 2011; Kendeou, et al., 2014)

By having students translate the entirety of the text, they improved their grammatical knowledge and increased their repertoire of Spanish vocabulary. This, in turn, improved their semantic understanding by obligating them to consider the mood and nuances of vocabulary and grammar.

Appendix 3: Learning English by translating video games into Catalan

Vazquez-Calvo (2020) concluded that translating video games from one's target language into their native language promotes language learning. In his study, Vazquez-Calvo observed the community "Gaming.cat" for seven months as they worked to translate the video games *This War of Mine* (TWOM) and *PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds* (PUBG) from their target language (English) into their native language (Catalan).

With just over 9 million speakers worldwide, Catalan is often overlooked by the entertainment industry when choosing which languages to provide their products in. Gaming.cat is a community of Catalan-speaking gamers that have made it their mission to translate video games into their native language for their fellow Catalan-speaking gamers to enjoy (<https://www.gaming.cat/qui-som/>).

Vazquez-Calvo found that the ability to "translate ... sentences and carry the meaning and intention of the English text into Catalan supports the idea that **fan translation helps develop language** at the levels of English **comprehension and vocabulary acquisition**" (Vazquez-Calvo, 2020, p. 9). He also observed that "language learning was manifested ... by [translators] sharing doubts" with each other, as this spurred the community to collaboratively analyze and discuss text, resulting in the collective sharing of knowledge (Vazquez-Calvo, 2020, p. 10).