

Grammar Activities of Spanish Language in Albanian Auditorium.

Dr. Viola BITI

Spanish Department, University of Tirana, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Albania

Dr. Admira NUSHI

Spanish Department, University of Tirana, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Albania

Abstract

The attitude towards grammatical exercises of a foreign language is one of the fundamental pillars upon which differences and changes of methods are historically produced. It's like an image of teaching practice. Switching from the traditional approach to the direct method, from the audio-visual method to the actual communicative methods through natural access is complemented by grammar with its own activities as a concrete way to develop language, as well as a way to see how it can be best learned. The place where grammatical activities can be developed, "the auditorium" where the student learns being a participant and cooperating with other students, with the teacher in the real process of research and joint construction of knowledge in personal and relevant social issues. The teaching process of foreign languages may take place in various forms: linguistic projects, occasional texts analysis, solution of situations or problems or preparation of topics that may arise during scientific activity. The grammar of Spanish language is consulted between lecturers who define a basic method that serves to orientate, but in many cases it happens that each of the teachers uses methods that are considered appropriate based on the requirements and capacities of students' learning process who are participants in the auditorium.

Keywords: grammar activities, auditorium, Spanish language, method.

1. Introduction.

In this paper we are going to analyse grammar activities of Spanish language that take place in the Albanian auditorium. The latter is considered as the right place where a foreign language and its grammar activities are learnt best.

We are focused on grammar learning through activities and practices of foreign language learning specifically of Spanish language in Albania. An analytic treatment of grammatical exercises has been done classifying them into: grammatical activities practiced oriented to given grammatical structures; and grammatical activities independently practiced.

Following it is continued with the analysis of some exercises of Spanish language manuals which serve as an orientation of the situation as well as the use of grammar of this language. We are also going to see to what extent is grammar used in those manuals and language methods. Generally, the main objective of the practice books is the work done in class to understand and immediately verify grammar exercises. Most of the exercises in written way is given as homework in order for students to fix grammatical forms and have time to reflect on them. This has to do with the production and disposition of the exercises individually. The exercises also prepared in the independently form aim at developing student's autonomous learning.

2. Place of grammatical activities in Spanish language teaching.

Attained developments in teaching and educational research have led to increased demand to present new forms of work organization in the auditorium. The auditorium is the precise place where teaching and learning can be better promoted and it is in this context or occasion where we can consider the classroom to be transformed in a community of acquiring knowledge.

The auditorium is the place where the student learns being a participant and cooperating with other students, with the teacher in the real process of research and joint construction of knowledge in the relevant personal and social issues. The main idea of the class as a learning community is presented as a platform or a basic support for each student where he has to develop his knowledge.

As stated above we rely on the fact that learning is a social process, which is also based on the interaction and cooperation between people that in most cases are real situations.

According to this theory, teaching activities in the auditorium are not structured according to the traditional method that focuses solely on teachers-centred approach, but mainly focused on research study by students themselves. The latter has decided to review the predefined topics with the teacher, consistently cooperating with each other. These learning processes can be held in various forms such as language projects, random analysis of texts, situations or problems solution or preparation of topics that may arise during scientific activity, such as a small conference.

Besides its peculiar form, it is essential that these processes refer to situations, tasks and activities which are original and important to its participants. Thus, original because it is similar to situations and activities out of school, and we say important because they refer to cultural and thematic issues, to which the student gives personal prominence and value. In other words, we can say that the student becomes a critic of different situations.

Thus, the auditorium is organised as a learning community, where teachers and students develop different activities including all language learning skills. These activities may be of stimulating or reproduction nature, or they adapt to real situations in ways that are meaningful to students.

2. Types of the grammatical activities.

In recent manuals of Spanish language grammar activities are more focused on the grammatical form then go to the discovery of the rule. This is specifically shown at manuals such as *Español Lengua Viva*, *Español Gramática Progresiva*, *Gente*, *Planeta E/LE*, *Aula*, *Prisma* dhe *Sueña*, that are currently used in groups of Spanish language as a second language. More specifically the student is offered a written or an oral text, and is asked to perform various grammatical activities, the types of which are mentioned below.

a. Classification: is one of the most common techniques. An example of this type of activity in elementary and intermediate levels may be included: it is provided a fund of verbs and students are asked to classify their grammatical forms in its explicit way through the data provided.

Table 1.

Ya conoces bastantes tiempos verbales. Intenta clasificar los verbos que te damos a continuación en el lugar que les corresponde. Presente Imperativo Indefinido Perfecto Imperfecto

For more advanced language levels B1-C1, may be offered examples of use of a certain grammatical form and the student is further required to classify as in the example illustrated below:

The example taken from the method of Alfredo Gonzales Hermoso y Carlos Romero Dueñas, « *Puesta a Punto B2* », Edelsa, Madrid, 2009.¹ Classify different types of discourse connectors whose nature is of comparison, consequences or cause hypotheses.

Table 2.

Clasifique correctamente los conectores siguientes : muy diferente a/de, peor que, así pues, luego, como, mas...que, no se parece en nada a, dado que, en consecuencia, por lo que, eso demuestra, puesto que, la más, ma menos, de aquí sacamos, la mejor, la peor.

Comparar _____ _____ _____ _____	Sacar consecuencias _____ _____ _____	Deducir causas _____ _____ _____
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b. Filling: this technique appears in all language manuals. Initially it is given a text, orally if possible, and the student is asked to complete sentences or groups of words. The aim is to highlight some grammatical forms so that the teacher can understand and discern whether the student finds it hard to acquire and use them in the written form after having encountered them. Following, it is done some explicit grammatical analysis or questions intended to apply linguistic analysis.

c. Answer the questions: it is also a very common technique in the Spanish language manuals for all language levels. The questions are intended to direct the attention of students on the grammatical forms and their features (such as place, distribution), and slowly push to the discovery of the rule. Let's illustrate what was said above in point B and C in the below table:

The example involves the activity of classification, filling and question-answer at the same time. (Taken from *Esespañol 1*, Cuaderno de recursos y ejercicios, Espasa Calpe, Madrid, 2002)².

Table 3.

¿Te acuerdas de los adjetivos posesivos? Ahora vamos a enseñarte los pronombres posesivos. Escucha los dialogos y rellena con los posesivos adecuados. : (Do you remember possessive adjectives? Now we are going to teach possessive adjectives. Listen to the dialogues and complete with the correct possessive adjective:)

- ¿Dónde están gafas? ● ¿Dónde está.....casa?
- Ahí, encima de la mesa. ○ Cerca de la, casi sois vecinos.
- No, esas son las

Ahora rellena la tabla, no te asustes y usa la lógica. (Complete the table.)

Masculino				Femenino			
Singular		Plural		Singular		Plural	
El	Mio	.....	.....	....	.....	.....	Mias
.....	.....	Los	Tuyos	La	Tuya	.....	.....
.....
El	Nuestro	...	.....	...	Nuestra	.....	.....
....	.....	...	Vuestros	....	.....	.....	vuestras

¹Alfredo Gonzales Hermoso y Carlos Romero Dueñas.(2009), « *Puesta a Punto B2* », Edelsa, Madrid, , Exercise 1, Pg.21.

² VVAA. *Esespañol 1*, Cuaderno de recursos y ejercicios, Espasa Calpe, Madrid, 2002, Pg.52

		
.....	.....	...	Suyos	....	Suya	.....
	

Contesta a las preguntas siguientes: (Answer the following questions:)

¿Qué hay delante del adjetivo posesivo? (What is placed before the possessive adjective?)

¿A que persona se refiere el adjetivo posesivo suyo? (Which person is referred the possessive adjective his?)

d. Discovery activities: It is given a written text and students are asked to highlight or look for the target grammatical form to be put into practice. Generally this activity is addressed to a more advanced language level, B2-C1, because to find a grammatical form in a text prior knowledge is needed. The example on this type of activity can be shown as below which I got from *Prisma C1, Consolida*¹

Table 4.

Escucha la versión de una entrevista realizada a una conocida actriz. ¿Cómo calificarías el tono de la conversación? Subraya en la transcripción los elementos lingüísticos que presentan emociones, los organizadores del discurso y los marcadores temporales si hay. ¿Para que crees que están utilizados los organizadores del discurso? ¿En que posición aparecen en la oración? (Listen to an interview with a famous actress. How would you define the tone of the voice? In the text transcription, underline the organising elements of the discourse and the time linkers if there are any. Why are the organising elements of discourse used? What is their place in a sentence?)
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e. Rules' formulation : in this case the student is given some sentences and is asked to formulate the grammatical rule which is used.

Table 5 taken from the method *Esespañol 2*²

<p>Ej.1a. Observa las siguientes frases. Fijate en las expresiones destacadas y en la relación que hay entre los elementos de la frase: Como (causa) he perdido la entrada (consecuencia) tengo que comprar otra. (consecuencia) Tengo que comprar otra entrada porque (causa) he perdido la que tenía. (consecuencia) Tengo que comprar otra entrada ya que (causa) he perdido la que tenía. Ya que (causa) has cobrado, (consecuencia) invítame a comer. Ahora intenta completar las siguientes reglas:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>_____ + (causa), (consecuencia)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(consecuencia) + _____ + (causa)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(consecuencia), + _____ + (causa)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>_____ + (causa), (consecuencia)</td> </tr> </table>	_____ + (causa), (consecuencia)	(consecuencia) + _____ + (causa)	(consecuencia), + _____ + (causa)	_____ + (causa), (consecuencia)
_____ + (causa), (consecuencia)				
(consecuencia) + _____ + (causa)				
(consecuencia), + _____ + (causa)				
_____ + (causa), (consecuencia)				

In this kind of activity *blank schemes* are available, the use of which was originally proposed by Cesarini S. according to whom: "the term *blank schemes* meant a kind of rule skeleton where the the students set the gathered data. " ³Cesarini also confirms:" the use of blank schemes is more functional in comparison to the answer-questions type of activities, because on one hand it allows students to come to the formulation of a rule, and on the other hand enriches them with the metalinguistic support"⁴.

In fact the student, especially the one who owns a beginner language level, although understands grammatical rules through examples, is unable to formulate it because he does not possess the necessary technical terms.

¹ Evelyn Aixalá, Marisa Muñoz, Eva Muñoz, "Prisma C1, consolida", Libro del alumno. method of spanish language for foreigners, editorial EDINUMEN, Madrid, 2007, Pg. 32.

² VVAA. *Esespañol 2*, Cuaderno de recursos y ejercicios, Espasa Calpe, Madrid, 2002, pg.49

³ Cesarini Sforza, "L'uso degli schemi vuoti nella riflessione metalinguistica", in *Educazione permanente*, nr. 1-2, 1995, pg. 113.

⁴ Same place, pg. 114.

All these types of activities above mentioned are usually used to detect grammar inductively or differently said under the guidance of teachers. There may also be methods in others language' manuals, but usually the methods used in grammatical activities are not only inductive. They are also used in a mixed form, where several elements are deductively presented through a question which aims to make students think about the grammatical form required.

Exercises and activities of inductive practice are specifically handled by Stephen Pit Corder, generally known as Pit Corder, a professor of applied linguistics at the University of Edinburgh, known for his contribution for the study and analysis of errors. He was the first leader of the British Association for Applied Linguistics, 1967-1970, and his contribution was important in developing the field of applied linguistics in the UK.¹ Mechanical exercises, which aim to verify hypotheses built on the so-called *testing exercises' hypothesis*.², were distinguished by him through the inductive practice. All these activities aim to practice gained knowledge. This author also distinguished *recognition type* of activities, in which the students should find the right choice from two or three options that are provided. This type of exercise is called in English *multiplical choice*.³

2.1. Grammatical activities that are practiced oriented to given grammatical structures.

To practice grammatical rules in a more accurate manner are used DRILL exercises (exercises according to a provided model) or the so-called *PATTERN DRILLS*, more concretically used for the audio-oral method. It is suggested that the unchanged model is repeated without altering it or with some very small changes at lexical terms, which enable the student to use the analogy student until the student acquires given structures. These exercises are reviewed by changing them and giving them communicative values by including personal experience. In this way, questions dealing with personal facts and everyday life are built. Let's illustrate this example with the use of adverbs *ya, todavía, nunca -already, yet, never*:

o Think of the latest movies you've seen. Ask your friend if he has seen it or not.

-Si, ya lo he visto.

¿Has visto las películas de? -No, todavía no lo he visto.

-Nunca lo he visto.

Through this example the student memorises the structure of the answer form in any other kind of following built by him.

Using photos and images can result very successful in these exercises. The teacher asks students to bring a photo of their family, then work in pairs and ask questions about them. Generally, bringing personal things is considered motivating and a key to success in communication. Analytical and comparative methods can be used between two pictures. This category includes descriptions imagining for example the map of a personal room. Although same structures are repeated, this type of activity enriches vocabulary bringing a list of names of objects.

Another category used in our auditorium is combing activities. A typical requirement used for these types of activities is: Connect or combine images to the right words, or words to the definition that best fits with them. I use these kind of exercises in Spanish language syntax to connect the main clause with the subordinate clause using different connectors that belong to that clause.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pit_Corder

² Corder, S.P., "*Introduzione alla linguistica applicata*", Bologna, Il Mulino, 1983, pg. 383.

³ Corder, S.P., "*Introduzione alla linguistica applicata*", Bologna, Il Mulino, 1983, pg. 383.

Table 6. (example taken from the method of Alfredo Gonzales Hermoso y Carlos Romero Dueñas, "puesta a B2 Punto" Edelsa, Madrid, 2009) ¹

Una cada frase de la primera columna con su correspondiente de la segunda. Utilice en cada caso un conector adversativo distinto : 1. El toro bravo es tratado a cuerpo ...tampoco tengo problemas de aparcamiento. de rey hasta su muerte.... 2. No tengo coche para ir lejos....el animal sufre enormemente.

Table 7 (taken from *Esespañol 2*, Cuaderno de recursos y ejercicios, Espasa Calpe, Madrid, 2002²,

Ordena las palabras de estas frases y escríbelo: navegar/que/se/sabes/supone _____ que/ciudad/dicen/es/bonita/más/la _____
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Putting in order irregular paragraphs to form a text is also used. This helps students to exercise on anaphoric structures or the use of connectors. This kind of exercise is to help students practise language forms of composed sentences in subordinate causative clauses using *porque* – because, time clauses using *cuando* - when, etc.

Multiple-choice activities: are exercises that are related to the completion of a sentence or text and students must choose the correct grammatical form from several given options. Multiple choice may appear somewhat complicated when incorrect grammatical forms, which do not even exist, are given so that they take away students' attention.

Table 8: examples of multiple choice:

Busque la forma correcta: Te he traído los libros que me pediste _____. 1. <i>El día otro</i> 2. <i>El otro día</i> 3. <i>Otro día</i>	B. ¿Podrías completar estas frases para que tengan sentido? 1. ¡Espero que <i>llueve/ llueva/ lloverá</i> porque hace mucho tiempo que no llueve. 2. a. Me voy de viaje. - b. ¡Que te <i>lo pases / pasas / pasarás</i> bien!
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In case B the student must have an advanced language level. He must distinguish incorrect grammatical forms, made up by the teacher, and be able to finish the task referring to the accordance of the topic of grammatical categories in number and gender.

Transformation or manipulative activities: are most frequently used and consist of transforming the sentences or short texts (such as the shift from singular to plural or vice versa). There may also be used exercises which consist of transforming the sentences from affirmative form into negative form or otherwise.

Following I will show an example when complex sentences are transformed without changing their meaning using the structure *aun + gerundio* (though + gerund form of the verb):

Table 9. (example taken from Alfredo Gonzales methods Hermoso y Carlos Romero Duenas, "Puesta a Punto B2" Edelsa, Madrid, 2009) ³

Transforme las siguientes frases concesivas en otras equivalentes construidas con la forma AUN+gerundio: Aunque es importante el secreto profesional, todavía lo es más la libertad de expresión. Es difícil de decidir, con todo y con eso me quedo con la libertad de expresión. A pesar de ser peligrosa, prefiero la moto a cualquier otro vehículo. Pese a que es difícil el aparcamiento en la calle, la moto se puede dejar en cualquier parte.
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¹ Alfredo Gonzales Hermoso y Carlos Romero Dueñas, « *Puesta a Punto B2* », Edelsa, Madrid, 2009, Ushtr.a), pg. 53.

² VVAA. *Esespañol 2*, Cuaderno de recursos y ejercicios, Espasa Calpe, Madrid, 2002, pg.31

³ Alfredo Gonzales Hermoso y Carlos Romero Dueñas, « *Puesta a Punto B2* », Edelsa, Madrid, 2009, exercise B. pg.77

Activities identifying the incorrect form: are considered even more motivating exercises than those with multiple choice and are preferred by students because they urge the pleasure of discovery to them. The following example is referred to beginner level students where they are asked to find the wrong form of the prepositions of Spanish language:

Table 10. (example obtained by the method of the Spanish language for foreign learners: *Prisma método de español para extranjeros: A2 Nivel elemental. Libro del alumno*. Madrid, Edinumen, 2007)¹

Busque la forma incorrecta de las preposiciones en las oraciones siguientes: (find the wrong form of the prepositions in the following sentences.)

El avión que está aterrizando llega a Madrid.

Me gusta ir en pie a la escuela.

Estoy enamorado con Luisa

Normalmente sueño en árboles y jirafas.

2.2 Grammar activities which are practised independently.

After the student has memorised the grammatical structures under the guidance of the teacher, students can switch to another step that is practicing grammatical activities independently. At this point there is a wider range of choosing of activities but it is conditioned on the typology of form or the grammatical rule aimed to be achieved through these activities. Celce Murcia Marianne and Sharon Hilles, authors of a perfect manual, address teachers of English as a foreign language, according to whom language presents three different areas: social area which is dedicated to the role of interlocutors; semantic area dedicated to the understanding of linguistic elements and discursive area which has to do with the order of the words, with the cohesion of a text, sequence and order of given information.² This means that grammatical arguments will be treated on the basis of linguistic areas presented. An examples may be the use of personal pronouns as a polite manner to be linked to the social field and in this case it is practiced the use of role-play activities (acting).

Storytelling technique - fits perfectly to the use of verbs in the past tense. The student can be asked to tell a story in the past using a fund of words given or illustrate with images these kind of activities. The use of images has helped a lot in teaching *typology of descriptive texts*, from the moment that the main function of the use of images is describing the given pictures. This technique helps students to be independent in the formulation of responses because in this case he has already acquired grammatical structures needed to describe an image. Except the use of adjectives, another important grammatical category used to describe an image is the use of adverbs of place which indicate the location and position of different objects that appear in the images provided. Another grammatical aim of this technique is the use of names and verbs mainly used to ask questions about the images such as: What is presented in figure? What is happening? What are the people in the picture doing? etc.

In the subject of *typology of argumentative texts*, we have used some free activities. This subject based on the curricula of Spanish language in Albania is practised in the third year of studies, because we are dealing with students with a language level already advanced and this fact makes them more independent in the design and use of a foreign language. Following it is listed a series of free activities in the form of game which we think are motivating and funny to the students. From previous experience we can say these activities have made the Spanish subject and language become more attractive to students.

- How to defend an idea: the class schedules groups of three students, each group chooses an idea. Each of the students prepares the topic independently. The presentation of the topic is done in front of the class; the student chooses to use notes or an orientation scheme. This is the way each group presents its topic. The other students should evaluate the correct use of the arguments presented to defend the presented topic. Some suggestions for this activity-game include: - start with a brief introduction; - give at least three arguments on the topic; - short conclusion; - use appropriate connectors.

¹ Evelyn Aixalá, Marisa Muñoz, Eva Muñoz, "Prisma método de español para extranjeros: A2 Nivel elemental. Libro del alumno. Madrid, Edinumen, 2007, pg.14.

² Celce-Murcia Marianne, Hilles Sharon, "Techniques and Resources in teaching grammar", Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, Pg. 10. Celce-Murcia Marianne is actually a professor of applied linguistics in the University of California. She has published various books on teaching techniques and linguistic methodology.

- **Compare and discover:** in this case the aim is to identify which are the best options for a theme to compare then with other options. Students must choose one of three topics given to be discussed and developed. There are five groups of students and each of these groups prepares a set of arguments on the topic which was previously chosen by the students. Each group elects its representative to express the arguments. At the end it is voted for the group which provided the most convincing options. Some suggestions for this activity-game include: - mention the advantages of the given options; - predict disadvantages in order to discuss on them; - draw positive conclusions; - show the negative consequences making a comparison on the options and finally discover the correct one.
- **Create a job interview:** the class is divided into pairs where one student is the employee and the other is the interviewer. Meanwhile each pair of students prepares a series of questions to present in front of the class to act out the interview. Some suggestions for this activity-game include: - prepare specific and short questions; - allow sufficient time for the interviewer to answer the questions, while the interviewee has enough time to prepare the following questions; - lead the interview in a formal style. The aim of this activity is: the use of forms of courtesy; the right formulation of questions; give opinions and receive explanations using correct grammatical structures acquired earlier.
- **Exchange of objects:** in this case students need to bring in a variety of objects and exchange them with others convincing each other on the value, use, or the reason why they should have such an object. This is a form of barter which urges the student to use descriptive structures on the object which manages to exchange. Grammatical forms of communication on the refusal, rejection, acceptance, etc. are used throughout this technique. Some suggestions for this activity-game include: description of the facility; - material, form, the reason why to take the object and its use.
- **Preparation of a leaflet and an advertisement.** This activity requires group-work where each student must accomplish various tasks in compiling a written leaflet. It can be varied: advertisement of a language course, a cosmetic product, a business, a tourist guide, etc. Guiding suggestions for the realization of this activity can be: observing and taking into account of the real leaflets to see the techniques used, which are topics that can generate interest to the public; - use of exclamatory sentences; - written texts should be short and precise; use of images to attract public attention.

3. Summary of techniques, types of texts and grammatical forms of free independent activities from several Spanish-language manuals.

We can make a list of independent or free activities, in almost all Spanish language manuals which include: the techniques which are used, the types of texts proposed and grammatical forms that are practised. All of the above mentioned are summarized in the following table. To accomplish this, we have specifically used these language manuals: *Prisma A1,A2,B1,B2,C1,C2*,¹ *Sueña 1,2,3*,² *Puesta a punto B2*,³ *Esespañol 1,2,3*⁴:

Techniques	Texts types	Grammatical forms
Use of images	Narrations	-use of verb tenses -time expressions (time adverbs) -use of anaforic elements and articles -comparisons using different verb tenses: <i>Antes era un estudiante ahora es un buen abogado.</i>)
	Descriptive	-use of adverbs of place; -use of adjectives; -relative pronouns; -use of <i>donde, y que.</i>
Narration of a story	Narrative	- verbs in the past tenses -time expressions (<i>hoy, ayer, mañana, la semana pasada, esta semana...</i>)

¹ Evelyn Aixalá, Marisa Muñoz, Eva Muñoz, "Prisma método de español para extranjeros: Libro del alumno. Edinumen, Madrid, 2007

² VVAA. "Sueña 1, 2, 3 y 4": Libro del alumno. Libro del profesor. Cuaderno de actividades. method of Spanish language for foreigners Madrid, Anaya, 2000-2001.

³ Alfredo Gonzales Hermoso y Carlos Romero Dueñas, « Puesta a Punto B2 », Edelsa, Madrid, 2009.

⁴ VVAA. « Esespañol 1,2,3 », Cuaderno de recursos y ejercicios, Espasa Calpe, Madrid, 2002

Activities games	Presentations, Job interviews, Phone situations , etc.	-use of courtesy forms; -use of imperative form; -use of personal pronouns
	Argumentative	-use of relative clauses using verbs which express opinion (pienso que, opino que...) -discourse organizations (<i>en primer lugar, por un lado, por el otro, primer argumento, además, en resumen, para finalizar...</i>) -argumentative connectors (<i>desde el momento que, por esta razón, aun+imperativo, no obstante...</i>)

4. Conclusions.

As a conclusion of this paper we can say that the auditorium is the place where the student learns being a participant and cooperating with other students, with the teacher in the real process of research and joint construction of knowledge, in personal and relevant social issues.

The teaching process of foreign languages may take place in various forms: linguistic projects, occasional texts analysis, solution of situations or problems or preparation of topics that may arise during scientific activity.

The aim of learning activities and assessment tasks is to promote the learning process itself, the use of language in the classroom, including original processes of communication.

Summing up what was above written and based on our experience as lecturers of Spanish as a foreign language, there are a series or set of activities that we develop in the classroom, which are connected to the outside world and arouse particular interest to the students and also promote and enrich the processes of teaching and learning of a foreign language. These processes raise a student's awareness on assignments and activities making him more active and giving him a prestigious position in society.

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