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and World Languages Expo

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Homework assignment ownership in a coordinated foreign language program

Outline

Foreign language homework

Connection between instructor and homework

- *Who* is deciding what homework to assign?
- *Why* is homework assigned?
- *What* kind of homework is being assigned?
- *How* is homework being assigned?
- Do the *who*, *why, what* and *how* align with student perceptions?

Throughout, these questions are tied to the central issue of coordination of a university-level basic language program

introduction

Background

Why look into the connection between instructor and homework?

- Like many university-level coordinated programs, homework assignments used to be identical, i.e. homogeneous, across all sections of our Spanish Basic Language Program

- Currently each individual instructor in our program chooses the specific homework assignments for their sections, i.e. heterogeneous

  - General guidelines are provided with respect to how much, etc.

  - List of suggested activities is provided, but not enforced

introduction

Background

Who, *why*, *what* and *how* of online homework was disconnected from the instructor

- What does that connection look like now?
- Is it in sync with and/or communicated to students?

introduction

Spanish Basic Language Program

Elementary and intermediate Spanish courses

- **Year 1:** SP 101, SP 102; or accelerated **Year 1:** SP 103

  - MWF 50-minute classes (4 credits)

- **Year 2:** SP 201, SP 202

  - MWF 50-minute classes (3 credits)

  - TR 75-minute classes (3 credits)

- Currently 58 sections, 27 instructors, 1,181 students

introduction

Methods

Survey

- Email to all SBLP instructors and students
- Completed anonymously via Qualtrics (10-20 minutes)
- Same questions for all participants

Participants

- Instructors ($N = 13$)
- Students ($N = 111$)

introduction

Methods

Survey Structure

- Majority of 1-to-7 Likert questions
    - Divided into unlabeled blocks based on the aforementioned categories, i.e. *who*, *why*, *what*, *how*
- After each set of Likert questions, there was an opportunity for the participant to provide any clarifications via open response
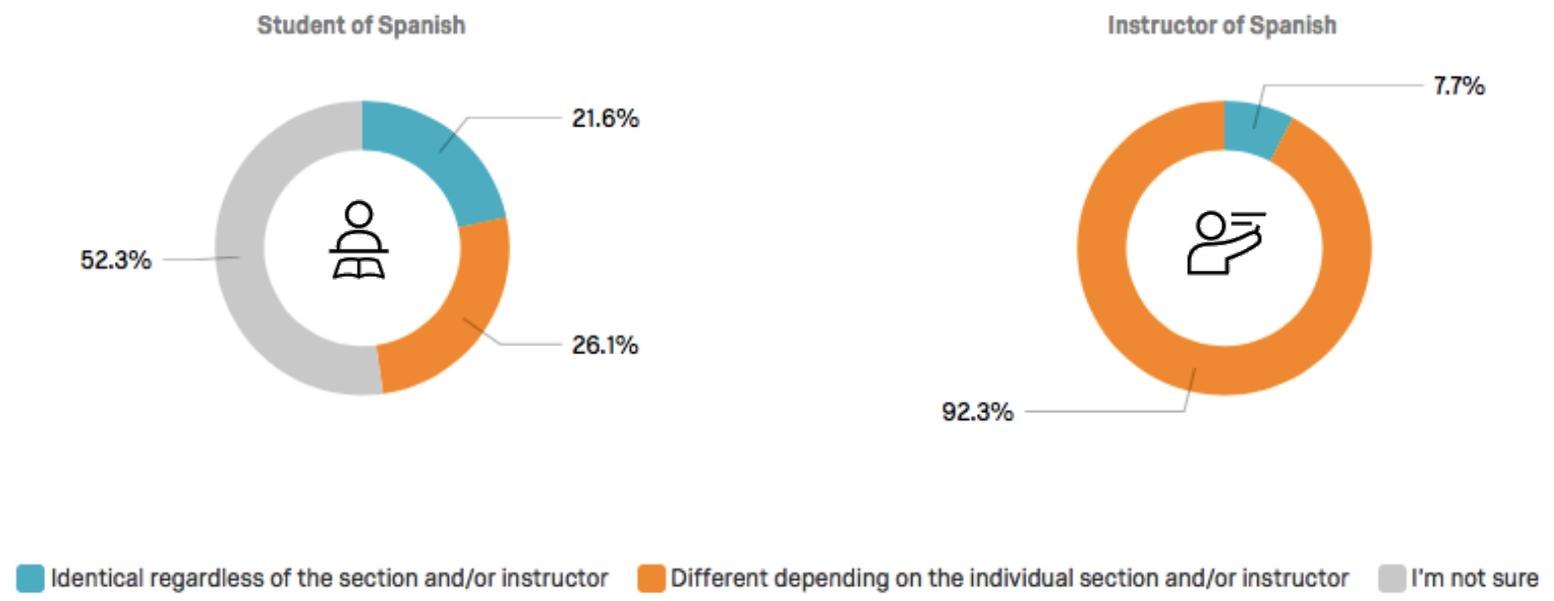
1

Who is deciding what homework to assign?
Why is homework assigned?
What kind of homework is being assigned?
How is homework being assigned?

who?

Homework assignments for a specific of level of Spanish at UA (i.e., SP 101) **are currently...**

Student of Spanish

21.6%

52.3%

26.1%

Instructor of Spanish

7.7%

92.3%

■ Identical regardless of the section and/or instructor   ■ Different depending on the individual section and/or instructor   ■ I'm not sure

who?

3

Who is deciding what homework to assign?
Why is homework assigned?
What kind of homework is being assigned?
How is homework being assigned?

why?

Why is homework assigned?

3

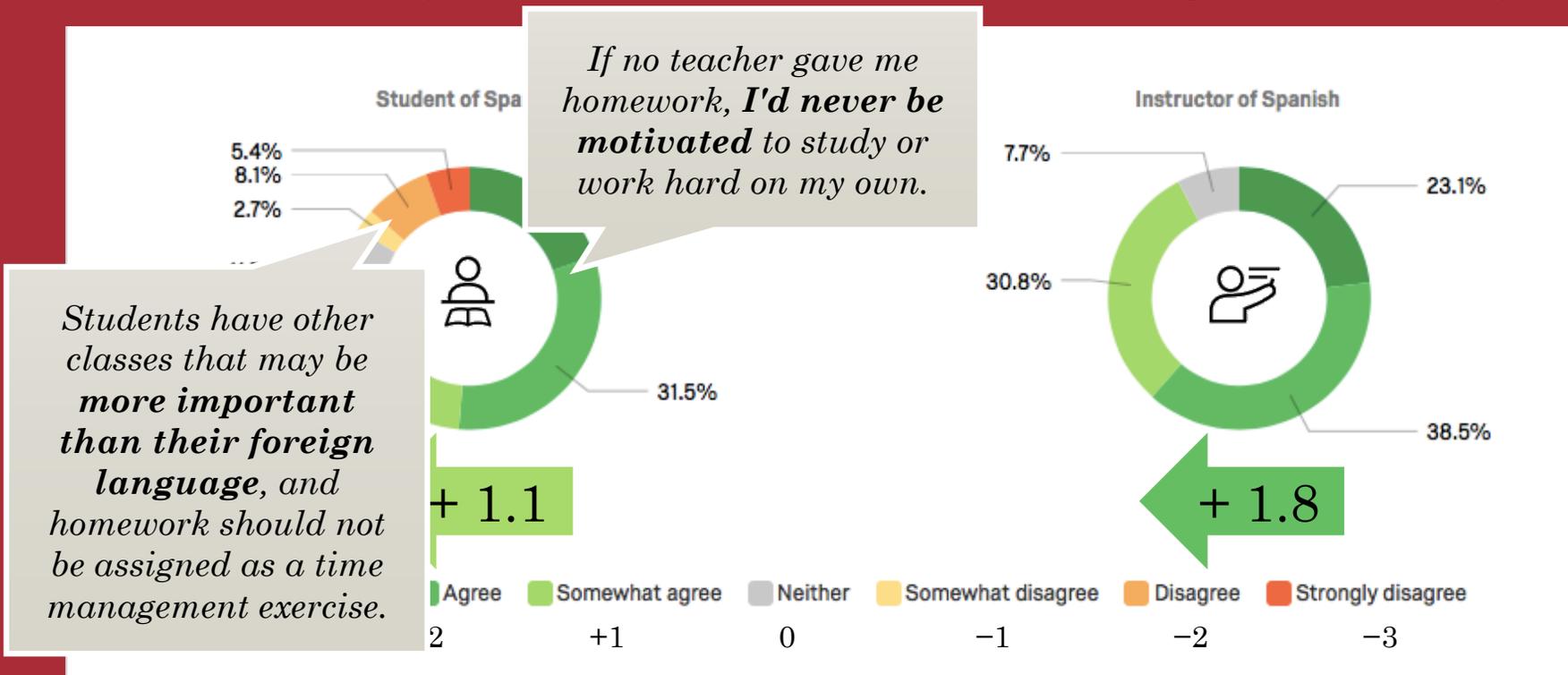Students and instructors agree that homework should be used to give students opportunities to:

- Practice language skills recently taught in class ($M = 2.4, 2.3$)
- Retain previously-learned language skills ($M = 2.1, 2.2$)
- Explicitly review work completed in class ($M = 2.1, 1.7$)
- Demonstrate general mastery of the language ($M = 1.8, 1.5$)

why?

Why is homework assigned?
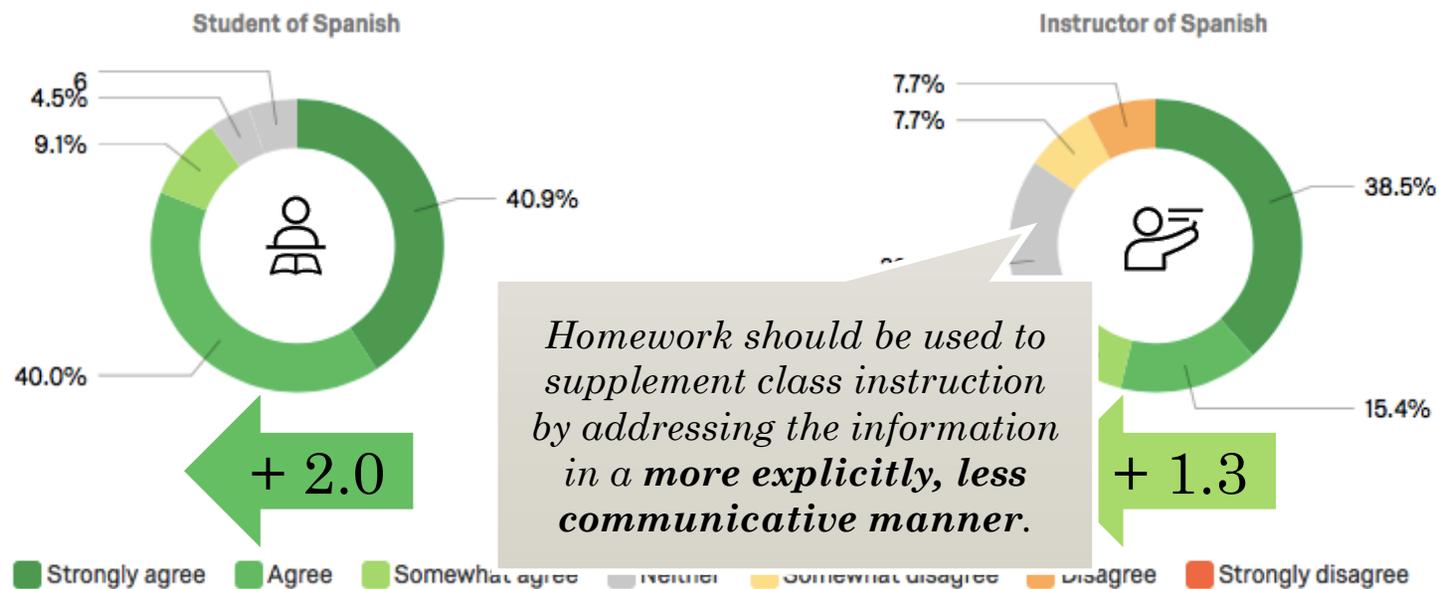
Students and instructors also agree:

- Homework should **not** be used to punish students for inattention or poor behavior ($M = -2.2, -2.8$)

3

why?

Homework should be used to increase each student's **personal development** *(e.g., their levels of responsibility, perseverance, time management, etc.).*
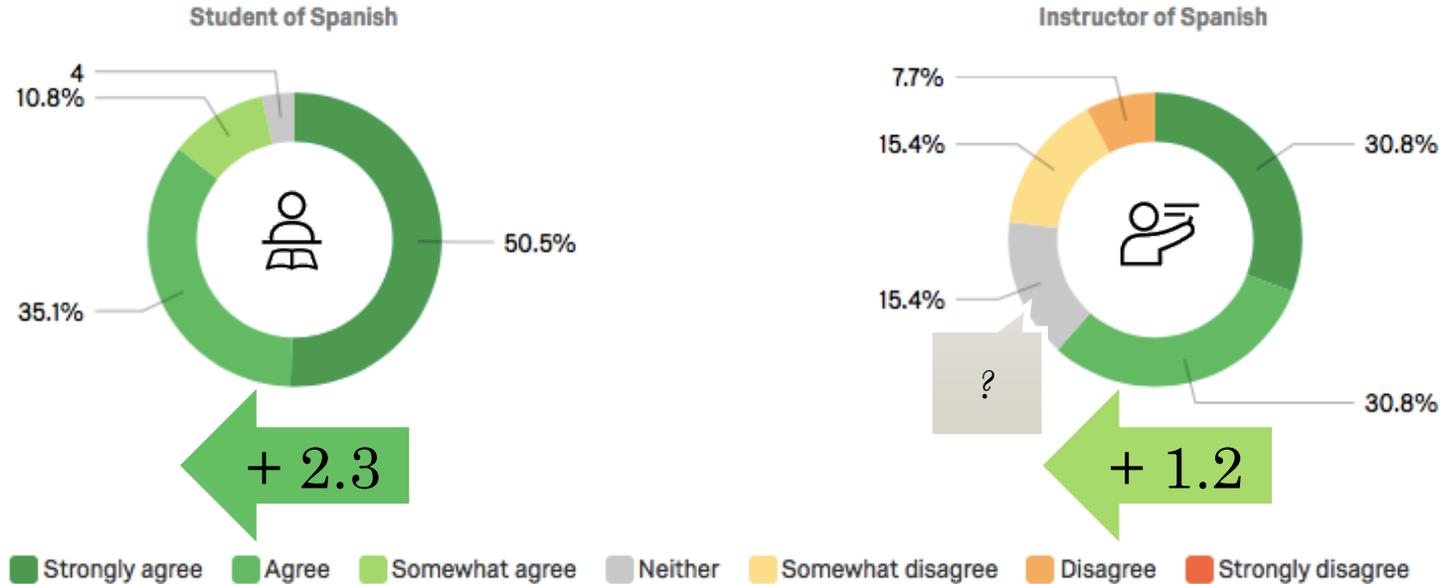
3

*If no teacher gave me homework, **I'd never be motivated** to study or work hard on my own.*

*Students have other classes that may be **more important than their foreign language**, and homework should not be assigned as a time management exercise.*

Student of Spa...

5.4%
8.1%
2.7%

31.5%

+ 1.1

Instructor of Spanish

7.7%

23.1%

30.8%

38.5%

+ 1.8

Agree   Somewhat agree   Neither   Somewhat disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

2   +1   0   −1   −2   −3

why?

Homework should be used to give students opportunities to **increase general speed and fluency with the language.**

3

Student of Spanish

6
4.5%
9.1%
40.9%
40.0%

+ 2.0

Homework should be used to supplement class instruction by addressing the information in a **more explicitly, less communicative manner**.

Instructor of Spanish

7.7%
7.7%
38.5%
15.4%

+ 1.3

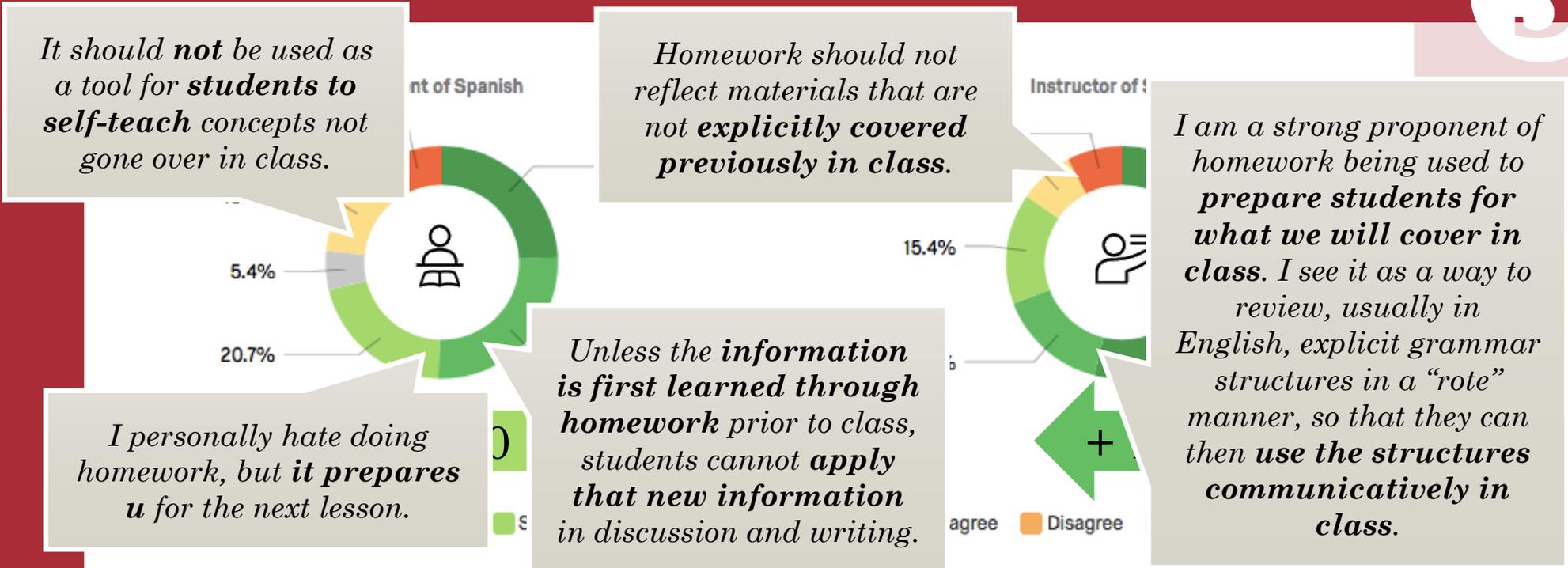Strongly agree · Agree · Somewhat agree · Neither · Somewhat disagree · Disagree · Strongly disagree

why?

Homework should be used to give students *opportunities to* **study for some sort of assessment, such as a test, quiz, or exam.**

3

Student of Spanish

4
10.8%
50.5%
35.1%

+ 2.3

Instructor of Spanish

7.7%
15.4%
30.8%
15.4%
?
30.8%

+ 1.2

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree Neither Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

why?

Homework should be used to ensure that each student is **ready for the next class period.**

3

It should **not** *be used as a tool for* **students to self-teach** *concepts not gone over in class.*

Homework should not reflect materials that are not **explicitly covered previously in class***.*

nt of Spanish

Instructor of S

I am a strong proponent of homework being used to **prepare students for what we will cover in class***. I see it as a way to review, usually in English, explicit grammar structures in a "rote" manner, so that they can then* **use the structures communicatively in class***.*

5.4%

15.4%

20.7%

Unless the **information is first learned through homework** *prior to class, students cannot* **apply that new information** *in discussion and writing.*

+

I personally hate doing homework, but **it prepares u** *for the next lesson.*

S

agree   Disagree

why?

4

Who is deciding what homework to assign?
Why is homework assigned?
What kind of homework is being assigned?
How is homework being assigned?

what?

What kind of homework is being assigned?

Students and instructors agree that an activity that:

- Is directly related to an activity completed in the most recent class period should be selected as homework more-so than one that is not ($M = 2.0, 1.6$)
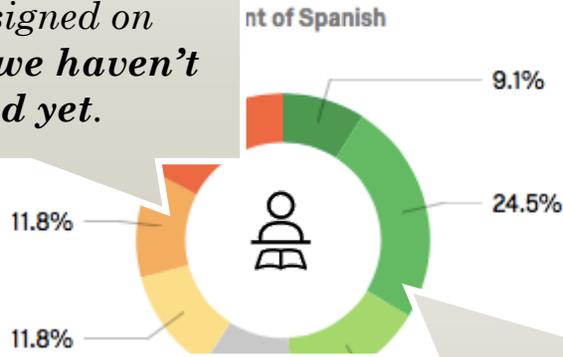
4

what?

An activity that is **directly related to an activity to be completed in the next class period** *should be selected as homework more so than one that is not.*

I do not like homework that is assigned on **something we haven't learned yet**.

nt of Spanish

9.1%

24.5%

11.8%

11.8%

I like the homework system that is set up now because it **allows me to prepare** *for what we will learn in the next class. It not only strengthens my skills, but it also* **helps me become more comfortable** *with the subject matter.*

Instructor of Spanish

7.7%

23.1%

15 ?

7.7%

7.7%

38.5%

omewhat disa
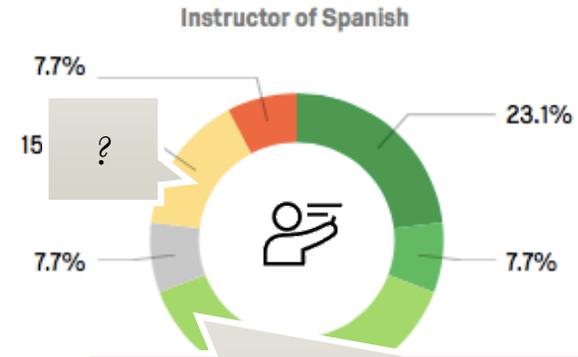
In my opinion, no output activity where more than a word is written should be a previewing activity. However, **input activities** *that focus on vocabulary can be very beneficial to* **preparing students** *for class.*

what?

5

Who is deciding what homework to assign?
Why is homework assigned?
What kind of homework is being assigned?
How is homework being assigned?

how?

How is homework being assigned?

Students and instructors agree that:

- Knowledge of the students as learners (i.e., their skills, abilities, and/or needs) should influence homework selection ($M = 1.5$, 1.8)

- Few, longer activities as a night's homework are less ideal than many, quick activities ($M = -0.7$, -0.3)

Students and instructors are equally divided on whether:

- Students should have to provide the answer or simply select it (i.e., fill-in-the-blank, short answer, etc. vs. multiple choice, matching, etc.) ($M = 0.2$, 0.5)

how?

Following up on homework activities explicitly
in the classroom after their due date(s) is a good use of class time.

*There are **tutoring sessions and office hours** available if a student needs additional help.*

*Homework shouldn't be reviewed beforehand in class because it can be used by the student to see what they've retained from the lesson and **challenge themselves to remember**.*

Student of S...

Instructor of Spanish

9.0%

6
6

15.4%

15.4%

6

?

*My instructor's selection of homework choices **does not seem to fit our class's needs**. He never previews or reviews any of our online assignments.*

+ 1.0

− 0._

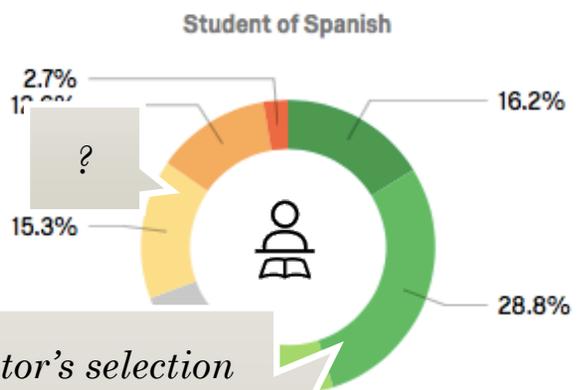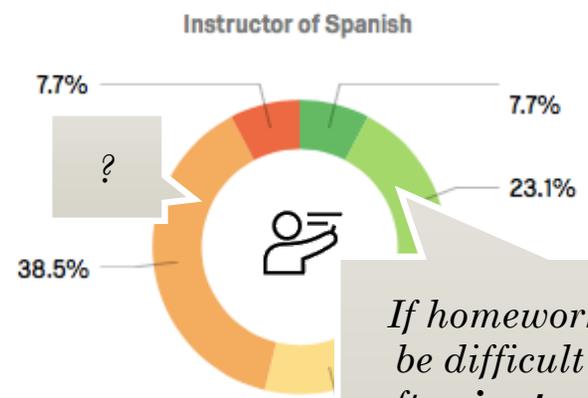*Teachers should also go over activities that the **majority of the class had difficulties with**.*

■ Agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

24

how?
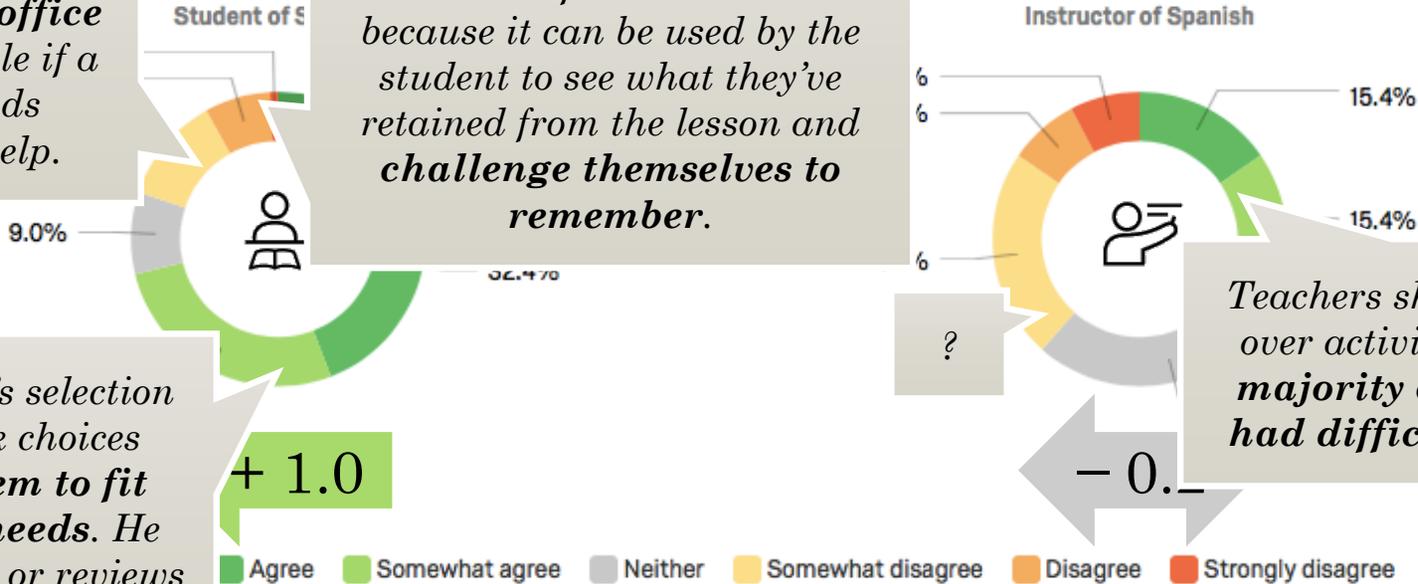
Previewing the upcoming homework activities explicitly *in the classroom is a good use of class time.*

5

Student of Spanish

2.7%
1?.?%
16.2%
15.3%
28.8%

?

Instructor of Spanish

7.7%
7.7%
23.1%
38.5%

?

0.7

−0.8

gree   Somewhat agree   Neither   Somewhat disagree   Disagree

*My instructor's selection of homework choices **does not seem to fit our class's needs**. He never previews or reviews any of our online assignments.*

*If homework is going to be difficult (or because often **instructions suck or are non-existent**), teachers should definitely preview the activities during class*

25

how?

Wrap-up

Communication is key!

- Instructors need to let students know who is assigning the homework, why it is being assigned, etc.

- Specifically important to mention:

  - *Who* – homogeneous vs. heterogeneous

  - *Why* – personal development, next class preparation, fluency/speed, test preparation

  - *What* – imagination, tied to future activity

  - *How* – individual differences, explicit review/preview

conclusion

Wrap-up

Communication guidelines for SBLP instructors:

- Heterogeneous assignment (with guidelines)
- Flipped classroom approach
    - Next class preparation / future activities
- Students as responsible learners
    - Personal development, next class preparation / future activities
- Class time focus / management
    - Fluency and speed, previewing / reviewing activities

conclusion

Wrap-up

Individualized instructor communication:

- Test preparation

- Input vs. output

- Imagination

conclusion

6

¡Gracias!

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