Suggestions for Garnering Support of Foreign Language Instructors

The American Council for Teaching Foreign Language's (ACTFL) World Readiness Standards suggest that foreign language instructors incorporate the five goal areas in their teaching to prepare students to participate fully in the local and global community alike. The five C's, as they are known, Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities are goal areas of learning that push the learner to engage with the foreign language outside of the classroom experience. The Mixxer language exchanges implemented in second and third semester language classes as well as an upper level Hispanic Linguistics course allow an instructor to incorporate four of the five C's. It goes without saying that the C for Communication is perhaps the easiest standard to attain in a foreign language course with the Standard calling for learners to "communicate effectively in more than one language…" The C for Culture can also be relatively easy to integrate in the classroom but is effortless with a Mixxer language exchange. The Culture Standard is defined as learners who have the ability to "interact with cultural competence and understanding". Memorizing vocabulary and conjugations are not enough to be considered fluent in a language but employing that knowledge with an awareness of cultural differences and the competency to know when something is appropriate or not, is. The Comparisons Standard requires learners to "develop insight into the nature of language and culture in order to interact with cultural competence". Again, we see that language is inextricably linked with culture in which acquisition of a language cannot be considered complete without knowledge of both. When learners engage in a conversation with a language partner, they are, by the very definition, achieving the Community Standard by "communicating and interacting with cultural competence in order to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the word." The last two C's are more difficult to achieve within the confines of the classroom than the first two C's. The Mixxer language exchanges facilitate communication outside of the classroom to places in the world that *virtually* become a phone call away. The Connections Standard is an ever-elusive Standard as it has learners connect with other disciplines to create a better understanding for diverse perspectives. Depending on your particular application, you might be able to achieve this fifth C.

To pedagogically support your decision to add language exchanges to the curriculum, below are a few references that can help support/defend your choices. Much research has been done on the efficacy of language exchanges between native speakers of different languages. Lin (2014) synthesized 59 computer mediated communication studies dating from 2000-2012 and found an overall positive impact on second language acquisition. Written language exchanges were the focus of Appel (1999) in which she found that participants benefitted from a greater sensitivity to problems inherent in language learning (Appell, 1999, p. 58) as well as a built-in record of interaction that allowed participants to further reflect on their progress (Appell, 1999, p. 58) to name just a few benefits. Bower, J., & Kawaguchi, S. (2011) studied negotiated meaning in text-based chats and found post-chat corrective feedback between English L1 and Japanese L1 participants to be effective. O'Dowd & Lewis' 2016 book *Online Intercultural Exchange: Policy, Pedagogy, Practice* is an excellent reference that describes online intercultural exchanges (OIE) with an extensive lit review as well as a section devoted to studying the impact of OIEs. And lastly, Díaz (2016) describes a parallel curricular decision with insights and rationale to include such a curricular change through the lens of the student, the instructor and the college/university.

Citations

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