

Notes from Group Discussions and Concurrent Sessions

Information Literacy in the Foreign Languages: A Collaborative Workshop

Cornell College, September 24-25, 2010

Main Ideas about Information Literacy Activities in the Classroom:

- The contextualization of all classroom activities is essential.
 - All assignments and discussions must be framed appropriately so that students understand what the learning goals are. For beginning-level courses, more framing and scaffolding is necessary to help students learn how to learn.
- Assessment works best when there is a high level of student engagement.
 - One example of facilitating student buy-in to assessment is giving them more choice of what is to be assessed. Use of a class wiki in order to collectively produce a cultural lexicon for an upper-level culture course in the target language was one idea proposed to facilitate student engagement.
- Information literacy activities should not be conceived in isolation from the larger learning objectives of a course or of a curriculum.
 - Information literacy principles can be used as a guiding framework for curricular and course development in such a way that recurring tasks reinforce previously-taught ideas and strategies.
- Information literacy activities are appropriate at all levels of the foreign language curriculum, and should not be left for the upper-level courses.
 - Culturally-rich assignments and material should be incorporated as much as possible in the lower-level courses in order to engage students and encourage them to take more courses in the language.

Main Ideas from the technology presentation by Renata Debaska-McWilliams, World Languages Center Director, St. Olaf:

This hands-on presentation focused on the use of Nanogong to record voice files in Moodle.

Key information:

- This is free of cost if a campus already has Moodle, but it must be embedded into Moodle by IT.
- This obviates the need to go to Audacity and use another interface.
- Videos can also be embedded.
- An information literacy activity could be conceived using this technology by having students sort through and make sense of various sites.

Notes from Concurrent Sessions I:

Authentic Inquiry & Critical Thinking:

- Librarians and Language Faculty may need to begin their collaborations by learning to speak a common language.
 - Librarians and language faculty use the term “authentic” differently. For librarians, “authentic inquiry” suggests breaking down students’ mental models of what research is, which they often view as reporting, and turning those models into dispositions of inquiry, asking authentic questions of situations, texts, films, etc.
 - For language faculty, “authentic” can be a beneficial and a problematic term.
 - The “communicative approach” to language teaching privileges activities grounded in an “authentic” cultural context.
 - However, the term “authentic” can also be problematic, for language learners tend to conflate “authentic” with “native” when thinking about both language and culture. Faculty work to both familiarize and defamiliarize their students when it comes to ostensibly “authentic” cultural contexts, so that they do not bring unquestioned cultural assumptions to bear upon their analysis and understanding of that culture. Oftentimes, students’ ideas of what constitutes an “authentic” culture are reductive, and confuse “indigenous” with “authentic.”
- Compromises to the rule of staying in the target language at all times may need to be made in order to invite consulting librarians into the classroom to participate in workshops on research and inquiry strategies.
- A great deal of scholarship in foreign language, literature, and culture research is published in English. This needs to be taken into account by language faculty who are initiating their students into a community of scholars.

Cultural Literacy:

Goal from the session: Develop students’ awareness of cultural differences through concrete examples: nude pictures of French Rugby players, and analysis of a visual poem from a Chilean author.

- Cultural literacy is a slippery concept to define, due to concerns about both who gets to define and produce culture as well as what culture is. Also, the diverse nomenclature doesn’t help when trying to address the issue: cultural competency, trans-cultural literacy, multicultural literacy, cross-cultural literacy, intercultural literacy, global literacy. Another factor to consider is at what point students become literate in a culture and what literacy comprises.
- It is important for students to recognize context when dealing with cultural artifacts and texts so that they better understand these items’/texts’ meaning and/or impact. This can be tricky when approaching texts or images that include themes or elements considered taboo, risqué, or inappropriate in a student’s home culture, and dealing with students’ anxieties about or rejection of such subject matter can be delicate. (For example, nudity, violence, etc.)
- Finally, cultural context does not have to be spoon-fed to students or provided in lecture or readings. It can be advantageous to lead students into cultural comprehension of a text through

a series of activities or questions designed to get them to notice what they don't know or to get them to construct their own body of knowledge through guided inquiry.

Making Sense of It All: Analyzing and Synthesizing:

Our definitions for “analysis:”

- Breaking a whole into parts
- Understanding how the parts fit into the whole and the various purposes the parts play
- Context is important

Our definitions for “synthesis:”

- Putting parts together to make coherent sense within a particular context
- “Portrait” is a good metaphor – by the end of the course, students should have a mental portrait showing the aspects and their inter-relationship.

Activities that promote synthesis and analysis in the language classroom:

- Teach cultural history by synthesizing various events into a hypothesis then test the hypothesis to determine whether it explains all of the actions. Example: Konrad Adenauer’s role in Germany
- Use films and discuss the filmmaker’s style. For example: the color red may be important to a particular director – pay attention to where red is used, ask how it illuminates the action in the scene, and how red fits into the movie as a whole.
- Have students develop a chart to help them track the variety of uses and meanings for prefixes or compound words while doing their reading.
- Work backwards: Provide a number of examples of a particular grammatical concept and have the students study the examples to provide the rule that they illustrate.
- With videos and documentaries, ask the students to analyze with a variety of questions: what is the perspective evident in the film? Who made the film and for what purpose? What is omitted from the film and why?
- Study period newspapers or other primary sources to learn about particular cultural concepts.
- Show visual representations of words so the students can match the word with the image. Discuss nuances of meaning.
- Provide opportunities for students to figure out word meaning or the function of prefixes/suffixes in the context of the text, rather than defining before they read.
- Ask students to develop a list of the ten key words necessary for understanding a passage. This is different than asking them to list the words whose meanings they had to look up.
- Ask students to identify from the text the key phrase that sums up the entire passage.

Notes from Combined Discussion of Technology Session and Round Table:

Part One: Collaborations between Librarians, Language Faculty, and Academic Media Specialists:

- The establishment and formalization of regularized channels of communication between language faculty and librarians is key in order to break down perceived institutional, language, and disciplinary barriers.
- Workshop participants agree that collaboration is best achieved in the planning phases of a course rather than during the course itself.
 - An example of this is happening at Carleton College. A planning meeting, or “curriculum caucus” takes place between a faculty member who is proposing a course, consulting librarians, and technology specialists. At this meeting, all members brainstorm about how to best implement the learning objectives of the course, and map out strategic interventions by librarians and other specialists in the initial planning of the syllabus. One example at Carleton was a course on the diaspora in which students were asked to give a historical presentation using timeline software. In this course, students learned how to use timeline software and Google Earth Maps to complete their course assignments. Carleton uses a platform entitled “Libguides” to post research guides for students and faculty.
- There are perceived obstacles to the incorporation of information literacy activities in the classroom and visits to the foreign language classroom by librarians. Solutions to these problems were proposed:
 - Language faculty desire to keep all communication in the target language in the classroom.
 - Librarians could lead Information literacy seminars for language faculty. When faculty teach their courses, they could convey the principles and activities of information literacy in the target language to their students.
 - Faculty who are new to the incorporation of information literacy activities in the classroom may perceive them to be an inefficient use of already-limited class time.
 - Through collaboration in the *planning* phases of the course, faculty can design their syllabus in a way that works for all parties involved.
- Collaborations between language faculty and librarians benefit from the unique perspective of librarians, who can both “think like a student” and “think like a colleague.”
 - Librarians work with many different faculty members from different disciplines, and are well-positioned to suggest innovative, interdisciplinary ideas to faculty as they design their syllabi.
 - Joint research projects are another possible collaboration.
- More exploration of how librarians could help with information literacy components of study abroad is needed. (le: researching cultural context/guidance of archival research)
- An excellent collaborative model proposed was the “curriculum caucus.” A team consisting of a librarian, an IT specialist and a faculty member meet in order to brainstorm ideas about the faculty member’s future course.

- Research, technology needs, and librarian interventions in the classroom can be planned in conjunction with the development of the course syllabus.
- The idea of a listserv for ACM librarians to share ideas and consult one another about their collaborations with language faculty was proposed as an outcome of the workshop.
- Collaboration takes time and work.
 - How would all the extra time and effort involved in such innovation, collaboration, and technological skill-building be recognized and rewarded for language faculty, librarians, and IT specialists? Workshop participants agree that for this to be successful, there needs to be institutional commitment and buy-in from colleges to train faculty and recognize the professional contributions of such collaborative efforts by all parties.

Part Two: List of Ideas for Using Technology in the Foreign Language Classroom:

- There is a need for instructional technologists who can solve technological issues for language faculty and also see the issues from a pedagogical perspective.
- “Roving” librarians and/or technology specialists can visit each ACM school once a year in order to present the latest technological tools with potential pedagogical application in foreign-language classes.
- Librarians and IT specialists should communicate available resources to faculty members by email, newsletters, etc.
- Ipads could be purchased for the language classroom to access iTunes music lists and games in the target language.
- “Hot potatoes” is a free program, but faculty have to learn to create the activities.
- “Teachers’ Discovery” online catalog has a lot of ideas for new technologies.
- “Delicious.com” was mentioned as a useful social bookmarking site.
- *EBSCO Host* can be accessed in languages other than English.
- “Lean-Q” provides online language learning for free.
- Digital storytelling as used by Classics faculty at Carleton College was mentioned as an innovative use of technology.