

My reflective essay

Description of EM process

For my Experiential Module Project, I decided to create materials that would benefit both my students and colleagues. Dividing my project into two sections was challenging because I was designing and gathering resources for two different audiences. Nevertheless, redesigning and implementing a whole new online course for my students who are in their third level of Arabic was useful because I can use it now with my students at Appleby College and continue to improve it and adjust it to their needs.

My Experiential Module project is divided into two sections:

The first section is dedicated for teachers, and it includes 3 workshops that are tied together to teaching a second/foreign language. These workshops are aimed to encourage teachers to move from theory to practice and remind them of the importance of teaching critical thinking through task-based language teaching approach while building their students intercultural and communicative competencies.

In my opinion, these 3 approaches are tied together to serve one goal: To teach the whole person. The goal is to cultivate our learners' vision, by emphasizing real-life application and increasing students' critical awareness rather than just focusing on their language acquisition and proficiency.

The second section is directed to students, and it is a full online Arabic course that includes 3 units of study. This course is designed for learners who are in their third level of Arabic and are placed in the advanced low scale of the ACTFL proficiency benchmark.

Discussion on EM process

Deciding on the materials, and what I wanted to include in each section was a bit challenging for me because I wanted to do it all. I wanted to include everything I learned, and I felt that I should share the knowledge that I have gained after taking the MAFLT program with my fellow teachers and colleagues.

When I decided on creating workshops for teachers, I wanted to share with them some of the technological tools that I learned about in FLT 881 with Dr. Poole. I also thought that taking an intercultural approach to teaching and sharing what I have learned in FLT 815 with Dr. Lanier is paramount! Even though, FLT 807 was an introductory course, it was a rich course that helped me develop a new perspective. This course opened my eyes to the different methods and pedagogical approaches that language teachers know and use but also made me aware of the impact of our thoughts and beliefs on our learners. Therefore, taking an intentional approach to

teaching communicative competence through task-based language teaching was an important topic in addition to critical thinking and intercultural competence. These are approaches that I wanted to remind teachers about and share some practical techniques related to these approaches with them.

After meeting with Dr. Bruna, I realized that my plan was broad, and I needed to modify some of my goals and narrow my focus. Dr. Bruna suggested that I link my workshops to the online course that I am designing for students. This way I can share with teachers how to apply the theory of these 3 approaches into practice. For example, displaying activities that are task-based, highlighting some intercultural activities that are built into the units, and sharing critical thinking questions into the instruction, assessments, and student reflections that I am using in these units.

In Unit 1 and 2, I introduced the topics of “birthdays and celebrations”, “domestic duties and responsibilities”. These are real-world topics that students can relate to. Furthermore, intercultural content and tasks are used throughout the three units and many authentic materials are shared as well. Although, unit 3 has a different focus, “fables”, it teaches students to produce their own fables by using technology. I chose fables because, to language learning, this genre plays an important role in discourse communities. It is a socially recognized way of using spoken and written language. It combines rhetoric and social contexts.

Writing in the language classroom is a combination of process and product. While I include several activities and a variety of instructional materials, one of the most important aspects to develop reading and writing skills is to expose them to interesting stories that they can learn a moral lesson from and to demonstrate their ability of using their situated, discourse, and transportable identities because of this chosen genre.

When students work with specific genre, they develop their genre competence, linguistic competence, and communicative competence. In other words, they become able to interpret and create contextualized oral and written texts. Moreover, within the genre competence, lies the linguistic competence where students develop their linguistic and language features and communicative competence which draws upon contextual, pragmatic, and background knowledge.

Throughout this summer I focused on developing the units and uploading materials that can be used in any language by including all the four language skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening).

Finally, my final EM project included online materials that any language teacher can use and modify according to the target language they teach. The content of my project is fully launched on a web-based learning management system (LMS) which allows teachers to create their courses and post their projects online for their students.

Impact on Teaching Career

I am hoping that my project would be of benefit for other language teachers. Having these materials in one place and designing an online course that embraces the three approaches, which I truly believe are the most effective approaches into language learning, was my main goal. I need to remind myself that what I am doing is just a starting point for teachers and my project is an ongoing process where I can keep adding to it and refining it. I also felt that having my students complete this online course would be motivating and more engaging for them because of the interactive activities and the topics that the units address. This course is not a traditional one where they can focus only on application and knowledge. It goes beyond that. It increases their critical awareness and exposes them to the intercultural aspect of the language to transform them into global citizens rather than international tourists.

Working on this curriculum and researching for materials made me think about the importance of the message that language teachers are delivering to their students and the image of cultures that we are trying to project when we teach a second/foreign language. The learning objectives, discussions, reflections, and projects are just a few examples of many that can help with widening our student's horizon so they can zoom out and see beyond the static images of culture that media and other influences have created in their heads.