Online Learning Communities for LCTLs

Cultura-inspired learning models

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Cultura Exchange at MIT

• Overall goal is to make culture the focus of a language class.

• Students taking a French class at MIT work with French students taking an English class.

• MIT: third semester students of French; their partners are usually more advanced students of English.
Cultura Exchange at MIT

• French partners are college level students, in science and engineering.
• Different partners over the years:
  Ecole Supérieure d’Aéronautique et de l’Espace, Institut National des Télécommunications, Université Paris II, Ecole Polytechnique, Université de Lille, Université de Brest, ENSAM, Enseirb-Matmeca
Cultura Exchange at MIT

• MIT students meet 4 times a week for a 50 minute class.
• The French students meet once a week for a two hour class.
• Exchange takes place over 8 weeks (traditionally); occasionally shorter, depending on calendar.
• At MIT it is the central part of the course.
• French partners have some constraints due to institutional requirements.
Cultura Exchange at MIT

• Both groups use L1 on the forums, and L2 in the classroom.
• Two videoconferences during the semester (in large group, or in small group skype sessions), L1 and L2
• Occasionally, ‘shadowing project’ with 2 students exchange (during spring break)
Adaptation to Different Contexts
Business School (Bentley)

• French for Business Graduate Course
• Goal: gaining awareness of the French business environment
• Partner: Université de Toulouse College of Social Sciences (Institut d’Administration des Entreprises/Business Administration)
Adaptation to different contexts
Business School (Bentley)

• Adapted the intercultural questionnaire to the context of business: ‘favorite brand’, ‘a good product’, ‘a good negotiator’

• Developed a set of comparable items, juxtaposing in particular web sites of large corporations, on her own Cultura biz website.
Adaptation to different contexts
Canada/Morocco exchange

• University of the Fraser Valley, in Canada, worked with Université Chouaib Doukkali in Morocco.

• Immersion program in both schools: all questionnaires and forums in L2

• Goal: language and culture
Adaptation to different contexts
Canada/Morocco exchange

• Adapted the intercultural questionnaire: ‘colonialism’; ‘a good wife’/’a good husband’
• Brought different types of materials to compare:
  - Guide Vert (tourist guide) to reflect on how each country is represented
  - Moroccan and Canadian proverbs
Adaptation to different contexts
Canada/Morocco exchange

• Casa Nayda, a documentary about the musical scene in Morocco, in particular rap music.
New tools, new modes of communication and collaboration

- Skype
- Wikis
- Google docs
- Facebook
- Flickr
- blogs
Exchanges based on the Cultura model

• Many variations in terms of the language ability, the choice of language, the modes of communication, the motivation of each partner.

• The biggest challenge: to try and create one common space (the online space) where both sides achieve their goals, however different those may be.