Online Learning Communities for LCTLs

NFLRC Summer Institute
July 13, 2011
• Understanding the role of teacher and students
• Fostering community and cohesion
• Evaluating student performance
Role of the teacher

• We are not the only voice of authority in the classroom.

• Our main role is to give students as many opportunities as possible to share with others what they have discovered, to reflect, discuss, confront points of view and allow multiple voices and perspectives to emerge in the classroom.
Fostering community – non-curricular elements

• Setting the stage (find about partner school, town/region, etc.)
• Self-introductions: pictures/audio/text
• Other icebreaker? (Barnga)
• Meeting online (Skype) after three weeks
• Pause-café (social forum)
Fostering community – educational setting

• In a hybrid environment:
  - As students go from online to classroom, teacher can help students notice what is going on socially, and deal with potential conflict

• In an online-only environment:
  - Need a design element to encourage students or give the sense that instructor is noticing what is happening – chat office hours?
  - In Cultura, there is no netiquette training – is it needed?
Online confrontation

Confrontation is often seen as the reason for “failed communication” (often avoided/ a cultural trait) but we do encourage students to raise what they see as contradictions and look at them squarely in the face. We suggest to our students that they NOT avoid conflict at all cost.
Fostering community - task

• Task creates need to interact
  – not everyone has the same piece of the puzzle
  – collaborative sorting/arranging/selecting tasks contribute strongly to sense of community ("three things to take on your desert island")

• Out of interaction, community arises
  – **design** of task is important : “discuss” is not a task
  – functions of **observing**, **hypothesizing**, and **asking/answering** questions are task elements that foster community
Fostering community - atmosphere

• Stress the idea of the classroom and the online environment as laboratories/sites of inquiry
  – stress the idea of thinking aloud
  – small group work (remove indiv. focus)
  – “correct” or “incorrect” is not the point; forming hypotheses is
  – does this mean “anything goes”?
Comments on students’ homework probe them to go further

- A student noticed that the French and American responses to “France” were very similar (they both projected a touristy view of the country, with romance, history, food, wine)

⇒ Pourquoi à ton avis? Est-ce que les réponses des Français t’étonnent? Quelles questions peux-tu poser aux Français?
Comments on students’ homework probe them to go further

A student, looking at the word associations to “elite”, wrote that, on both sides, elite = money (missing a huge element of the answers)


A student noted that there were some negative associations to “family” on the American side

→ Comment expliques-tu ces associations négatives du côté américain?
Assessment
Global Assessment

• Quantitative measures
  – statistics on participation (tracking tool)
  – statistics on task completion / homework

• Qualitative measures
  – homework includes a lot of short writing (summarizing online observations) / portfolio
  – demonstrated preparedness for class
  – participation in class discussion
  – in-class on-the-spot summary presentations
Targeted Assessment

• In-class essay
  – preparation: read all your notes, re-visit forums
  – Essay prompt example: *En vous appuyant sur les réponses françaises aux trois questionnaires (les associations de mots, les phrases à terminer et les situations) et les commentaires des Français sur les forums, choisissez un concept qui vous paraît central à la culture française. Dites dans quels différents contextes et sous quelles différentes formes ce concept apparaît. Y a t-il des cas, des situations, des exemples qui semblent le contredire, ou au contraire semble-t-il être une constante? Elaborez.*

• 4 or 5 grammar quizzes per semester
Targeted Assessment

• the French and money
• private/public spheres
• individual/group
• balance
• conformisme/anti-conformisme
• *La France, si douce mais si aigre* (France, so sweet but so bitter)
Project-based Assessment

- Teams of 2 or 3
- Step-by-step guidelines given on paper
- Process of development, some class time used
- Final class presentation and discussion
  - team presentation using PowerPoint
- Written portion
  - individual, based on their role in the group
- 10% of final grade
New models

Working with online learning communities means developing new roles for instructors and students, and calls for new types of assessment and evaluation.