SYDNEY TEACHING COLLOQUIUM 2014

Practice example

Didactics of French as a foreign language: engaged assessment for learning

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Abstract

This joint presentation is a collaboration between students of FRNC2644 (2012 and 2014) and the UoS coordinator. It focuses on the challenge to design assessment tasks that engage a varied cohort of students whose motivations are on the one hand shared: they all want to develop research expertise and enhance their written and spoken French; and on the other varied: students from the B.A/B.Ed degree training to be teachers of French have a practical and professional incentive to develop authentic material for use in the foreign language classroom, whilst students from other degrees have a more personal and broader interest in extending their understanding of contemporary French culture and literature.

I developed the unit’s assessment tasks based on principles derived from both scholarly literature and my own teaching practice. A continuous assessment model was used in accordance with research summarised by Gibbs and Simpson (2004-2005). I started from the premise of assessment for learning first, and of learning second (Ramsden, 2003). I put students at the centre of the assessment process, giving them choice in their research topic and creating a community of shared practice (Elwood and Klenowski, 2002). I scaffolded the assessment tasks by providing students with sequential formative assessment opportunities based on authentic and relevant material and incorporating feedback, prior to programming summative tasks, in line with Meyers and Nulty’s (2009) curriculum design principles.

At the STC, students from 2012 and 2014 will present and evaluate the assessment tasks, explaining how their design and implementation motivated them to learn. They will highlight modifications made after the first iteration in response to student feedback, and their impact on student learning. The design principles underlying the assessment tasks outlined in this presentation will be of interest to those outside the field of modern languages, through their application to other units of study linked to specific professions. Audience participation is anticipated through a group activity involving the design of an assessment task based on a particular theme and document.

References


Theme
Assessment that engages students in learning that is relevant to the disciplinary, professional and community contexts (theme 1)