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September 16, 2016

NEA Project: Pathways to Global Communication

My teaching philosophy encompasses an interactive methodology in the learning process coupled with focus on a cultural context. I find that engaging the student and encouraging self-mastery through guidance is effective. As a teacher of the Italian language, I allow students to grasp grammatical and structural points through repetition and practical paired or group activities tailored to the key points of the lesson. Language interaction includes movement about the classroom, blackboard and interactive work, audio/visual enhancements, student presentations and technology. I similarly incorporate a cultural component into my language instruction. With regional dialects and accents and Italy’s late linguistic unification, Italian language is uniquely linked to cultural studies. I seek to create an authentic and engaging journey in my Italian language classroom where assessment is not solely dependent on written work. Students learn and experience language and culture through other formats. I find that the most effective way to foster a challenging learning experience is through a constructive, interactive environment that encourages discussion and allows room for trial and error. The incorporation of technology into the classroom is an integral part of today’s learning culture, and I extend that opportunity to my students who might enhance classwork through technology. It is also my practice to take learning beyond the classroom through independent research, writing that links the rich global Italian cultural heritage to our coursework. Assessment is therefore based on study carried out within and outside of the classroom. The course I teach in Florence, Italy during the short-term study abroad program offers the advantage of on-site authentic learning in the non-traditional manner. In this case, we are able to immerse ourselves in the learning experience on the streets of Florence and beyond. My overall objective in Italian language and cultural studies is to help prepare students for higher learning, travel abroad, and to succeed in an increasingly global and technologically advanced workplace.

As a teacher of Italian, I see having culturally and linguistically diverse students in my class as a benefit. It allows for a more engaging and enriching environment where we can make cross-cultural and cross-linguistic comparisons. As Italy is growing ever more culturally and linguistically diverse with its new wave of migrants, the nature of the language class has also evolved. We are no longer making comparisons between Italians and Americans (Giorgio and Jane), instead, our pedagogy reaches to all parts of the globe, both within our classroom at FIT as well as within the realms of Italian culture today. This aspect speaks to a more diverse classroom setting where students might better relate to Italy’s historical regional dialects and differences and current international communities. It also fosters new vocabulary as students learn to say their country and nationality in Italian, it’s no longer: *sono americano*. One might argue a disadvantage could be that some of the international students come from backgrounds where speaking out is culturally taboo, not ideal in a language course where students are encouraged to speak. This is an area I could improve on by changing my expectations relative to participation. Students might choose other forms of participation that are less explicit.

Ideas about language, diversity, and cross-cultural communication discussed during the NEA workshops have further emphasized the benefits of having a class with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It has shed light on the idea that not all students are interpreting the language or cultural aspects and nuances in the same way as an American learner. Nor are they necessarily interpreting my own aural and bodily signifiers in the same manner a student with a similar cultural background would. Hence, I would seek to integrate more varied forms of communication and assessment as well as my own response to such. I will now strive to create assignments that do not strictly speak to a binary set of cultures (American and Italian), but that speak to a multitude and varied set of cultural and linguistic recipients. One assignment, for example, would be for students to introduce themselves in their native language in their preferred manner, whether through writing, music, song, visuals, or some other format. They would then warm up to the process of interpreting their personal introduction into Italian as they would best perceive it, not how I would best perceive it. This would likely result in a more authentic speaker at ease speaking to an Italian national in their way.

When responding to and evaluating student writing and presentations, I will reconsider my standard practice of response and evaluation and strive to embrace difference in the classroom and on paper by delving deeper into the students’ intention of communication and their unique message relative to the assignment. The idea is to listen more and correct less. I wish to instill a more naturalistic learner-centered environment that would ultimately lead to enrichment and development within today’s global classroom.

This cross-cultural reflective teaching workshop has helped me to be more critically self-reflexive about my position as teacher. My goal is to be more mindful of my interactive approach within an international context. While my methodology has generally been learner centered in the Italian language and culture courses I have taught, I plan to better consider both the verbal and non-verbal information I receive from students. This information can act as a tool to enhance productivity and performance both for student and teacher. The idea is that classroom exchanges are no longer strictly directed at an American target audience, but between learners and teachers of a multitude of languages, cultures and backgrounds where traditions may vary, but do not signify an inferior or marginalized approach. Italian language and culture are for all to enjoy in varied ways, just as *gelato* has become a universal term that brings pleasure to many.