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CAN WE GET TENURE WHILE TEACHING ONLINE LANGUAGE FOR PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES?

The development of online language for professional purposes has all of the characteristics of any research project in the field of foreign languages and literatures and yet faculty members feel that this type of work will not help them when it comes to tenure or promotion (Young 1). A recent Colloquy Live conducted by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (February 20, 2002) and moderated by Jeffrey Young asked: "Are departments and colleges giving professors enough credit, in tenure and promotion decisions, for their work with technology? How should the creation of scholarly Web sites and electronic teaching tools be evaluated?" (1). These are questions that we want to raise within the narrower context of developing, implementing and evaluating online Spanish for Professional Purposes courses. Our main argument is that the development, implementation and evaluation of online Spanish for Professional Purposes can be considered a serious work in the context of tenure and promotion when it is conducted as a scholarly activity.

The reward system for faculty performance based on the traditional triad of research, teaching, and service is outdated and does not correspond to the everyday realities of university life. A new definition of scholarship is beginning to emerge within Foreign Language Departments, in part influenced by the work carried out by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Boyer, 1990; Diamond and Adam, 1995; Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff, 1997; Paulsen and Feldman, 1995; Rice, 1992) and the "Report of The MLA Commission on Professional Service. Making Faculty Work Visible: Reinterpreting Professional Service, Teaching, and Research in the Fields of Language and Literatures" (Denham et. al.). The latter proposes a model where intellectual work and academic professional citizenship are the primary components of faculty work. "The basic principle of this new model is

that the quality, significance, and impact of faculty work are more important than the category to which the work belongs" (2).

Teaching online Spanish for Professional Purposes becomes a scholarly activity when it is part of a systematic effort to develop a subject-matter knowledge base, to apply that knowledge to the teaching of online courses, to critically analyze teaching practices in order to contribute to a professional understanding of how language for professional purposes is learned, and finally to share this information with colleagues.

It is in this spirit that we describe the development, implementation and evaluation of a Spanish for the Professions online course. We consider five different phases to be important in this process: the evaluation of readiness; class design; implementation; classroom research and course evaluation. Our aim is to propose this model as an illustration of a scholarly approach to scholarly online teaching.

Readiness Evaluation

This first phase in the process involves an evaluation of the institution, the instructor and the student in order to take stock of the strengths and weaknesses of each. The first question is where this course fits in the overall academic mission of the institution. In our particular case at California State University, Monterey Bay, the mission of the institution calls for the development, implementation and evaluation of this type of course and this type of delivery. It is part of the University Learning Requirements (ULRs), that is, in order for a student to graduate he/she needs to demonstrate a certain level of second language ability and cultural proficiency, and this course can be used to fulfill the requirement. Alignment between the individual faculty member's work and the departmental/institutional mission is part of the faculty's professional responsibility. As the MLA *Report on Professional Service* points out "Intellectual work comprises faculty members' individual and joint advancement of knowledge and learning in accordance with the academic mission" (2).

The second question is whether or not the institution has the necessary infrastructure to support the delivery at a distance of this type of course. A good way to approach the task is to check the "Guide to Develop Online Student Services" to gain a sense of the type of comprehensive support that is needed in order to make the online experience a successful

one for the student (Krauth, screen 1). We need to support the students from the moment they express interest in our program to the moment they graduate. This includes admission, financial aid, registration, orientation, academic advising, technical support, career services, library services, services for students with disabilities, and bookstore access, among others. Can we state that our institution offers learners all the necessary support to make the online experience a successful one? If the answer is yes, then we can move to the next level of readiness.

Many of us who are involved in teaching Spanish for Professional Purposes and who teach online may come from a background with a more traditional departmental structure. We are familiar with teaching literature or linguistics and have little exposure to language acquisition, pedagogy or instructional development. If that is the case, we need to consider our own personal readiness to tackle this task. Many of our teaching techniques and models that we use in the face-to-face format may not work in the online environment where our presence becomes virtual--embodied in a written text.

We agree with Dave S. Knowlton's assertion that the online learning environment requires a student-centered, constructivist approach to teaching where students assume responsibilities for their own learning and become autonomous adult learners (5). This assertion is also supported by David H. Jonassen in his book *Learning with Technology. A Constructivist Perspective*. His main argument is that "students cannot learn *from* teachers or technologies. Rather, students learn from *thinking*—thinking about what others have done and believe, thinking about the thinking process they use—just thinking. Thinking mediates learning" (2). This view of teaching and learning essentially agrees with the conditions for optimal language learning identified by second language acquisition learning theory (Egbert et. al. 4).

If we do not have the necessary background or training in second language pedagogy or language for professional purposes, we can use the resources available from The National Foreign Language Resource Centers. They are federally funded programs offering information and training to all faculty members interested in improving the teaching and learning of foreign languages. In addition, the Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBERs) offer the same type of support and training in the specific area of professional uses of languages.

Our awareness and knowledge of pedagogy is important, just as is our understanding of basic instructional design principles. The chances of success for an online class hinge on our ability to create a set of learning tasks that can be accessed at any time, anywhere and that are clear, engaging and conducive to the learning outcomes desired. There are many instructional design models; a very useful one in our opinion is the University of New South Wales' Web-page Principles of Instructional Design and Adult Learning, and Instructional Design of Learning Materials. It gives us a model of instructional design that includes analysis (who are the learners? what are we trying to achieve with instruction?), design and development (what are our objectives? what resources and strategies will we use in our classes?), implementation (how do we coordinate, manage and deliver our class?), and evaluation (how can we document achievement of our learning outcomes?).

The final question about our readiness as instructors concerns our own knowledge of the technology used in Web-enabled teaching and learning. The University of Maryland University College's Virtual Resource Site for Teaching with Technology provides us with such information. Their site includes a brief description of the technology, examples of different uses, requirements for using the technology on the computer, requirements for using it to create class materials and examples. They divide the technology in terms of complexity as follows:

EASY	MODERATE	HARD
Asynchronous Communication	Animated Graphics	Animations
Images	Downloaded Media	Applets
PowerPoint AuthoringPrograms	Repositories	
Synchronous Communication	Scripts	Databases
Text (HTML, PDF)	Web Sites	Streaming Media

Once we have dealt with our personal readiness we can move to an evaluation of student readiness. We want to know whether or not our students are ready to move from a face-to-face format to an online environment. Do they have the necessary skills to succeed? Do they have the minimum language proficiency level for the class? Loyd Ray Ganey Jr. has identified eight readiness factors that can be used in the process of assessing student readiness for the online experience:

Readiness Factor #1: Your Understanding of Distance Education
To be a successful distance learner, you need to understand that distance education is very different from traditional classroom education because it puts more responsibility on you—the learner.

Readiness Factor #2: Your Distance Education Program
To be a successful distance learner, you will need to become well acquainted with your educational program (Is it accredited? Does it offer support services? etc.).

Readiness Factor #3: Your Participation and Interactivity
To be a successful distance learner, you need to know that your participation and interactivity is a crucial part of education.

Readiness Factor #4: Your Computer System
To be a successful distance learner, you must have access to a reliable computer system and the Internet.

Readiness Factor #5: Your Computer Skills
To be a successful distance learner, you need some basic computer skills to succeed in your distance education courses.

Readiness Factor #6: Your Self-Motivation Skills
To be a successful distance learner, you need to know that distance-learning courses require a higher level of discipline and motivation than most traditional courses.

Readiness Factor #7: Your Communication Skills
To be a successful distance learner, you will need good reading and writing skills to express thoughts, ideas, and concepts in writing.

Readiness Factor #8: Your Online Research Skills
To be a successful distance learner, you need to develop the ability to use online research skills. (1)

A presentation by the author can be seen at Horizonlive Desktop Lecture Series at <http://www.horizonlive.com/lecture/dlsarchive.pl?channel= ganey_2000_1130_1707_13 > (1 April 2002).

To these eight readiness factors, we would add two more, namely a language placement exam and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. This inventory, developed by Rebecca Oxford, can promote learner awareness of the importance of autonomy and self-direction in the process of completing the necessary tasks that facilitate second language acquisition. It helps to develop awareness of the different learning strategies that students can use when learning a foreign language. A good example of how the inventory works can be found at the Monash University site. Also, the National Capital Resources Center has developed its own questionnaire that can be downloaded and given to students so they can gain an understanding of the language learning strategies.

Class Design

The second phase of the process (once we have evaluated our readiness) is to begin to develop a syllabus. The creation of a syllabus needs to take into account the previously mentioned principles of instructional design and an understanding of how adults learn. This document provides direction, guidance, scope and pacing for the student and the instructor. It needs to include the title of the course, the instructor's name and how he/she can be contacted (telephone, fax, e-mail), information about technical assistance (who is responsible for questions about hard and software and communication tools), information about minimum language and technical proficiency

requirements, materials (Lapuente 273-306), evaluation procedures, course goals and a detailed schedule of class activities.

The last part, the schedule, is especially important for the online environment. It needs to include clear assessable learning outcomes, a description of the tasks that provide the necessary practice to achieve them and an observable way to assess them. In addition, we need to provide the students with an approximate time for task completion, a deadline and abundant feedback. In contrast to a face-to-face class, the online environment requires the extra step of calculating the amount of time the student will need to complete the assignment. As an illustration we will describe below a unit in a Spanish for Business class that uses *Éxito comercial* by Fryer, et. al:

Learning Outcome
Students will be able to describe the characteristics as well as advantages and disadvantages of different types of companies.

The estimated time for task completion is four hours.
The assignment is due April 1 by 5 p.m. Pacific Time.

Task 1
Identify a colleague to work with. Read the orientation questions and the reading "Organización y clasificación de la empresa commercial."

Task 2
Each student will prepare a PowerPoint presentation of part of the reading. The presentation will be evaluated on its ability to provide clear, succinct characteristics of different types of companies and the advantages and disadvantages of each one.

Student one will cover:

Asunto	**Sociedades de Personas**	**Sociedades de Capital**
Tipo de sociedad		
Constitución Legal		
Número y clasificación de propietarios		
Responsabilidad social		

Student two will cover:

Asunto   Sociedades   de   Personas   Sociedades   de Capital
Gestión
Razón social
Financiamiento
Distribución de ganancias

Task 3
Edit, correct and create one presentation out of the two prepared and send it to the instructor for feedback.

Another important difference in the online environment that needs to be included in the planning of the instruction is the conscious effort to develop a sense of community among the members of the class. Online classes can make a student feel disconnected and isolated. We need to recognize and discuss this problem and create opportunities to build a sense of belonging to a community of learners. One way of achieving this goal is by creating working teams. Their main purpose is to serve as a support group and to allow for student-to-student communication and interaction. Students need to get to know each other and to identify their academic goals and how they can contribute to achieving them with the support of the team. As instructors we need to create activities that encourage group work and where each member of the team contributes to the learning process.

Another strategy that can support a learning community is the inclusion of a "Student Café." This is a virtual place where all students can discuss any topic at all, whether or not it is related to class. It is a place for small talk, complaints, personal anecdotes, etc.

To this broad outline of class design, we would like to add a more detailed discussion of the issue of assessment in the online language for the professions class. We feel that it is an area often ignored when talking about this topic. Also, we need to keep in mind that a scholarly approach to curriculum development rests on the ability of the instructor to document student learning.

As mentioned in the section of student readiness, we need to place students appropriately to try to avoid classes with a wide diversity of language proficiency levels. Brigham Young University has developed a web-based placement exam called WebCAPE. This "is a web-based implementation of the BYU Computer-Adaptive Placement Exam (CAPE) series. These exams use adaptive procedures to assess language ability, drawing from a large bank of calibrated test items. Tests are administered from a web server computer through the internet to a browser application on students' computers. Test security in WebCAPE is maintained through a combination of application design and standard web methods." Also, Northwestern University has developed its own version that can be seen at its Web site.

In terms of information about measuring student achievement, the place to start is at the Second Language Assessment site of the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA). This federally funded center provides:

1. guidance to teachers in the construction of formative and summative assessment instruments,
2. usable and flexible templates for quizzes, performance-based measures, and proficiency-oriented instruments,
3. interactive professional development activities that cover fundamental aspects of language assessment, and
4. means for teachers to do automated scoring, perform item analyses, and generate score reports for students

For those interested in a brief view of testing and technology, Bob Godwin-Jones has written a short chronological description of how computers have been used in assessment since the 1960s. Of particular interest is his resource list which includes references to Web-based testing resources, organizations and institutions, booklets, language tests, oral proficiency testing by ACTFL, sample online practice tests, language placement tests online, test makers, tools, and templates.

In the area of Spanish for Business a good place to begin is with Michael Scott Doyle's "Evaluating Learner Outcomes in Business Spanish: An Inventory of Testing Exercise Typologies." This article provides a good model of what professors of Spanish for Business consider important learning outcomes to be assessed. The areas of

evaluation include: business vocabulary, culture, geography, business correspondence, forms and documents, and cross-cultural communication. Finally, he includes a very useful matrix for a comprehensive or generic examination in Spanish for Business and International Trade. Many publishers now include a Web site as part of their teaching packages. A good example is *Éxito comercial*'s online quiz section.

Finally, there are some proficiency tests that are being used to measure students' Spanish language abilities with reference to the workplace. These can be used as an independent measurement of student learning and as a means of evaluating course effectiveness. Exige, an exam developed by San Diego State University's Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) and San Diego World Trade Center (SD WTC) "measures test-takers' reading, writing, listening and speaking skills based on principles, practices and language utilized to do business in Spain as well as in Latin America." Language Testing International offers a written Business Spanish proficiency test. Finally, the Cámara de comercio e industria de Madrid has the "Certificado Básico de Español de los Negocios," the "Certificado Superior de Español de los Negocios" and the "Diploma de Español de los Negocios" (the web sites for these exams appear in the "works cited" section at the end of the article).

Implementation

The implementation phase of this curriculum development process is the area that gives the greatest opportunity to pursue our scholarly goals. Here we engage in a systematic effort to observe, reflect and theorize about language acquisition, Spanish for the Professions, and online teaching and learning. The Classroom Assessment and the Action Research movements provide us with the necessary intellectual support to pursue our objectives.

Classroom Assessment is a learner-centered, teacher-directed, formative, ongoing and content-specific approach to teaching. It can be described as follows:

> Through close observation of students in the process of learning, the collection of frequent feedback on students' learning, and the design of modest classroom experiments, classroom teachers can

learn much about how students learn and, more specifically, how students respond to particular teaching approaches. Classroom Assessment helps individual college teachers obtain useful feedback on what, how much, and how well their students are learning. Faculty can then use this information to refocus their teaching to help students make their learning more efficient and more effective (Angelo 3).

Action Research focuses on the questions we ask ourselves about our teaching and the learning process while teaching our class. We need to record our questions, evaluate their importance and relevance to our practice and select one that we can seek to answer. Jarvis identified the following five steps in this research process:

1. Specify and refine the research question
2. Consult the relevant literature to help refine the research question
3. Undertake the actual research
4. Analyze the data
5. Implement the findings and disseminate them. (95).

In the following example, we illustrate how we developed an action research question. The learning outcome for the particular lesson stated that the students will be able to describe a chart representing the results of a survey done by a Spanish magazine and explain why they agree or disagree with the results. In the survey people were asked to rank a variety of professions in terms of trustworthiness. In first place appear the professionals they trust the most and in last place the professionals they trust the least.

Before students were asked to do this exercise, we reviewed vocabulary associated with the professions and structures most commonly used when expressing an opinion. Then, students were asked to do the exercise and to post their responses in the Discussion Board area of Blackboard, a software we use in the delivery of online courses. As a result of students' performance we became aware of the difficulty of the task for many of them. The question that arose was whether or not students at this level of language proficiency (intermediate-high) are able to explain why they agree or disagree with the results of a survey.

We then consulted the literature on language acquisition relevant to this question and decided to collect appropriate data and analyze them. Our results were then checked against the literature on learning and language acquisition. Our last step was to make the information public and open to peer evaluation before we recycled it into our course review and, in particular, our learning outcomes review.

It is this process of observation, reflection and theorizing that makes the online teaching of Spanish for the Professions a scholarly activity worthy of reward in the process of retention, tenure and promotion.

Course Evaluation

The last phase lies within the larger context of Department Assessment, in our case the World Languages and Cultures Institute. We want to know whether the Spanish for the Professions course is meeting the program mission. Is it achieving program objectives? Is the course achieving student learning outcomes? Can we document them? Are these results public? Have we opened this information to peer review?

A good source of information about this process can be found in Ball State University's "Assessment Workbook" published in 1992 and available online. Also of interest is John F. Wergin and Judi N. Swingen's "Departmental Assessment. How Some Campuses Are Effectively Evaluating the Collective Work of Faculty."

Conclusion

The development, teaching and evaluation of Spanish for the Professions online can be considered a scholarly activity when it is part of a systematic effort that begins with an awareness of the academic mission of the institution and the department and ends with the evaluation of its fulfillment. We have argued that by 1) developing a critical evaluation of all participants, 2) teaching a class that is informed by research in second language acquisition, language for the professions and instructional design research and finally 3) conducting action research we can consider it part of our role as researchers at our institutions. To this we need to add that this process of reflection and research needs to be made public and open to peer evaluation.

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