

Authentic Teaching as the Context for Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the redevelopment and subsequent evaluation of a unit in dialectology within a foreign language curriculum (German). In doing so it is a case study which serves to offer insight into the student experience of studying linguistics within a foreign language curriculum, the potential of online/electronic pedagogies for the teaching of dialectology and the way in which creative, authentic teaching builds a context for learning. The paper begins with a brief overview of the teaching of linguistics in general and dialectology or language variation studies in particular. It presents the evaluation methodology and findings, and raises implications for further research. It also provides a summary of some aspects of the redevelopment of the unit.

Keywords

Language learning, Dialectology, Online learning, Curriculum evaluation, Authentic teaching

Introduction: The Institutional Context

Monash University is one of Australia's major research-intensive universities. It is a large multi-campus university with offshore campuses, a substantial distance education student cohort and a strong on-campus pedagogical culture at its two major metropolitan campuses in Melbourne. To sustain its strategic imperatives, the University has supported a number of centrally funded initiatives to encourage Faculty in the use of technology supported learning, one of which has been the Unit Innovation Grant Scheme (UIGS). In 2003, the UIGS awards were made to academic applicants who could demonstrate the way in which technology-supported learning using the University's corporate learning management system (WebCT) might potentially enhance students' on-campus learning experience.

The Faculty of Arts awarded a UIG to the German linguistics unit 'Dialects and Dialectology' in 2003. The grant application proposed to integrate on-line and face-to-face teaching by developing a WebCT unit as a resource centre, which would (a) allow students flexible access to a range of digital resources in dialect geography (e.g. the Digital Wenker Atlas, various audio data files), and (b) provide a virtual environment (a 'meeting place') for student discussion in-between classes (through the use of the discussion board module).

The grant application also outlined the intention to develop a general model for online learning within a foreign language curriculum that could usefully be applied in other pedagogical settings. It was intended that the grant funds support the development of an online learning environment, and the development of prototypical electronic interactive activities to support student learning. Centrally, the unit was to be redeveloped to integrate an academic focus with the fact that the student cohort were language students and that the unit was also intended to support their process of second language acquisition (in this case German).

Teaching Dialectology within a Foreign Language Curriculum

One of the key challenges for tertiary language departments is to ensure that students get sufficient opportunities for both their language learning and their academic development. Students necessarily spend many of their contact hours in language classes, i.e. in a teaching and learning mode which does not contribute directly to the acquisition of research or academic writing skills. Whereas a linguistics student will have three years of discipline-specific lectures (48 points in the Monash system), a language student specializing in linguistics at Monash will only attend a maximum of three linguistic electives (18 points; the minimum requirements are 2 electives, 12 points). It is thus important to ensure that the available class time is optimally used, giving the student a firm grounding, not only in the target language but also in the wider academic field of study (literary studies, social/cultural studies or linguistics).

The study of language variation, traditionally known as dialectology, is one of the key areas of sociolinguistic research. Following Britain's (2002) *Good Practice Guide* any unit in dialectology should:

- provide students with a critical overview of the research tradition which has its roots in nineteenth-century historical linguistics ('traditional dialectology');
- introduce students to new approaches to the study of language variation as formulated by sociolinguists (following the seminal work of William Labov in the US) from the 1960s onwards, including an emerging focus on social dialects (in addition to regional dialects; 'sociolinguistic dialectology'); and
- give students opportunities for original data collection and analysis.

In other words, students of dialectology should not only be able to understand, explain and critically evaluate these various research traditions (in particular the contrast between traditional and modern/sociolinguistic dialectology), but also acquire the skills to 'do' dialectology, i.e. to design research projects, conduct interviews and analyse the thus obtained primary linguistic data. This will help students to develop practical research skills and to engage directly in processes of discovery, analysis and integration of knowledge which are central goals of university teaching (Elton, 2001). Dialectology units can also serve to introduce students to questions of language attitudes (opinions people have about 'good' and 'bad' language usage) as well as ideological concepts such as standard language, correctness and language norms (cf. in this context the study by McKinney & Swann, 2001). This can be described as the Research or *Academic Focus* of the unit.

At the same time the unit is intended to contribute to the students' acquisition of their second language (in this case German). This aspect of the curriculum can be called the *Acquisition Focus*. The incorporation of first-hand language material and the collection of new data, in particular, allow foreign language students direct and authentic access and exposure to a range of linguistic data in the target language, including historical texts, audio recordings, 'raw', i.e. not yet interpreted, dialect maps.

The notion of authenticity is commonly used in second language pedagogy to describe learning interactions which are not artificially constructed, but which are socially and contextually meaningful to the students (Kramsch, 1993; Van Lier, 1996). Much dialogue in second-language classrooms falls into the category of 'pretend' conversations and tend to involve rehearsed and predictable question-answer sequences. Authentic conversation, on the other hand, 'refers to students' active and creative engagement with the foreign language' (Swann et al., 2004, p. 19).

In addition, careful presentation and discussion of the primary language material, based on the well-established principles of contrastive linguistic analysis, supports the students' understanding of dialect forms and the dialect/standard opposition, and helps to develop their metalinguistic knowledge about the target language (Tulaswicz & Zajda, 1998 discuss the role of language awareness in language instruction and literacy teaching; as does Fairclough, 1992; cf. appendix 1 as an example).

The challenge of the unit re-development was to maintain a balance between these two learning and teaching goals through the pedagogically-sound selection and incorporation of off-line and online teaching material into the unit. In this context the teacher plays a central role; he or she frequently mediates between the different learning goals and re-focuses the students' attention as appropriate.

An exemplary teaching unit which combines dialectology and language acquisition in an online teaching environment is 'Dialekt in Deutschland' ('Dialect in Germany'), which was developed by staff and students at the University of Mainz (see http://www.daf.uni-mainz.de/landeskunde/2002_1/Dialekt/inhalt.htm). The unit 'Dialekt in Deutschland' consists of three 90 minute modules and introduces the student to a number of issues and debates surrounding the structure and role dialects in Germany (dialect use and dialect loss, media

representations of dialect, attitudes). However, unlike the current project, 'Dialekt in Deutschland' is situated firmly within the curriculum of *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (DaF, German as a Foreign Language), and does not form part of an academic linguistics curriculum at a research-focused university. Nevertheless, 'Dialekt in Deutschland' is highly innovative in that various online resources are used and the student is exposed to a wide range of authentic language material. It was this unit's focus on electronic resources which inspired the re-development of 'Dialects and Dialectology' which this paper discusses.

Innovations in the Assessment of 'Dialects and Dialectology'

Today, the production of hard-copy dialectological maps as well as the publication of linguistic corpora is no longer economically viable for most academic publishers. Researchers in the field of regional and social dialectology therefore make extensive use of online technologies to present their work to the wider research community. This includes maps and (written or acoustic) samples of language data (Deumert, 2001 for an overview).

Maps: Detailed geolinguistic information and data files are available, for example, for the North American Linguistic Atlas (<http://us.english.uga.edu>). Some of the maps of the Phonological Atlas of North America, which was produced under the leadership of William Labov, are also available online (http://www.ling.upenn.edu/phono_atlas/home.html). In the context of German dialectology, the Research Institute *Deutscher Sprachatlas* (<http://www.uni-marburg.de/dsa/>) allows online access to its digitalized German dialect maps (DIWA, Digitaler Wenkeratlas; see below).

Corpora: Moreover, a wide range of linguistic (dialectal, non-standard as well as standard language) corpora are available online. The language data is either presented in its raw form or annotated (i.e. tagged for grammar or semantics). Michael Barlow's Corpus Linguistics page at Rice University (<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~barlow/corpus.html>) provides links to corpora in several languages (including, for example, Chinese, Gaelic, Malay, Russian etc.), as well as links to sites providing parsing software. Linguistic data bases and parsing software can also be found at the Linguistic Data Consortium (<http://ldc.upenn.edu>). The Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES; <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/>) gives access to its database of transcripts of first and second language learners (of English, German and other languages), as well as to software for data analysis. The *Institut für Deutsche Sprache* (Mannheim) and the Max Kade Institute (University of Wisconsin) allow access to their extensive German language corpora.

Given the wealth of linguistic and, in particular dialectological material online, it is highly desirable to incorporate aspects this material systematically into university teaching and research training. One of the re-development aims of the unit was to combine available public-domain internet resources in the area of dialectological research and corpus linguistics with specially developed linguistic exercises (available online and off-line), discussion groups and notice boards using the WebCT environment. The development of a multi-layered on-line component allowed a flexible approach to course delivery and self-directed learning, and was combined with small-group tutorial work.

The assessment of *Dialects and Dialectology* included several components: two practical homework exercises (20%, discussed below), a class presentation and a research essay based on the presentation (15% for the presentation, 40% for the essay), and a final exam (25%).

Analysis and Integration of Knowledge (Assessment 1) - In one of the assessments (Appendix 2) students were asked to work with original and unedited dialect maps. In the lecture they were introduced to a range dialect-geographical concepts and the assessment task allowed students to apply this knowledge in a practical research exercise.

This exercise was made possible by the online availability of Georg Wenker's 'Linguistic Atlas of the German Empire' (*Sprachatlas des Deutschen Reichs*; data collected between 1876 and 1887). The so-called Wenker-Atlas shows language data for approximately 50 000 different locations in the German-speaking areas. The original maps were hand-drawn and are unparalleled in their attention to detail and clarity. The original atlas has never been published and until recently has been available only to senior researchers at the University of Marburg. The situation changed when the German Research Foundation (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*) funded the digitalization of the original maps through a major research grant (as part of its "Retrospective

Digitalization of Library Holdings” program). The Digital Wenker Atlas is currently in the developmental phase; however, many of the maps are already available online and are thus accessible to Australian university students.

The dialect maps of the Winker Atlas include all the detail of the original questionnaires and need to be interpreted carefully. These ‘raw’ dialect maps contrast strongly with the simplified, interpretative maps provided in textbooks (e.g. Barbour and Stevenson, 1990), and give students an opportunity to engage with the ‘real-life’ complexities of linguistic analysis. Data reduction and pattern recognition are skills which students will employ in the completion of this assessment.

Collecting and Analysing New Data (Assessment 2) – Authenticity was not only achieved by providing students with authentic research material (unedited maps or conversational transcripts), but students also engaged in data collection themselves. Since the unit is taught in Australia the opportunities for German language data collection and fieldwork is limited. In order to allow students to experience dialects first-hand, two research assistants were appointed to accompany the course. Both research assistants had grown up with a German dialect (Swabian and Swiss German respectively) as their first language.

Students were given a short introduction to the methods and approaches of linguistic fieldwork (including vocabulary collection, establishing morphological paradigms and syntactic structures), and were provided with a comprehensive reader which introduced them to the practicalities and ethics of linguistic fieldwork. They were then divided into groups of three and were given 60 to 90 minutes with each of the native speaker consultants. Prior to their meeting with the native speaker, students had the opportunity to develop and discuss their collective fieldwork design, using the WebCT discussion board module (in addition to face-to-face meetings which were scheduled during a study week).

Students were allowed to record their data collection session and were asked to focus either on phonology or well-defined aspects of grammar (e.g. verbal paradigms). Students submitted their analyses of the collected data as part of their assessment. In addition, students were asked to reflect critically on the fieldwork session and to make suggestions for improvement in their research design.

The fieldwork session allowed students to interact with native dialect speakers, collect (record and transcribe) authentic data for further analysis, demonstrate their linguistic skills and abilities in the analysis, and learn about linguistic methodology (elicitation techniques).

We developed the assessment strategies with the hope that they would be motivating for students’ learning (after James, 2002) as well as measures of successful student learning outcomes, the usual purpose of assessment tasks. This is discussed in more detail in the Evaluation Findings section.

The Evaluation Method

The unit coordinator (the first author) believed that the unit required a systematic and thorough evaluation *integrated* with the re-development. The unit coordinator collaborated with the second author, then a senior academic in the University’s Centre for Learning and Teaching Support, in conceiving a qualitatively focussed evaluation strategy. The unit evaluation in this case report is ‘illuminative’ (Fetterman, 1989) and provides insight into the current students’ experience of the pedagogical strategies adopted especially the seminar approach to unit ‘delivery’, the assessment tasks and the student use of an embryonic online learning support site developed in WebCT. It was anticipated that the outcomes of the evaluation would inform the way in which the unit re-development could be aligned with the intentions of the UIGS award proposal outlined above.

The co-authors have a shared understanding that unit evaluation is iterative, fundamental to curriculum renewal, and requires academic teachers to ‘catch themselves in the act’ of teaching so to speak, that is to be critics of their own practice. We also hold central the view that students ought to be active participants in curriculum evaluation. Student participation in the evaluation was voluntary. As the student cohort was small and as we were eager to integrate evaluation with the re-development, formatively, a *primarily qualitative evaluation method* (focus group interview) was used. Monash University does support a standardised approach to the collection of student evaluation data through survey questionnaires. We asked students to complete the standard survey questionnaire: too few were returned to be of value. However, anecdotally, students told co-authors that they felt that the opportunity to be ‘heard’ through the focus group interviews and their day-to-day interaction and feedback with the unit coordinator made them feel confident that they had ‘*said what we wanted to say*’ and they were disinclined to fill in an institutional form (they claimed ‘evaluation fatigue’!).

Over the course of the semester, two focus group interviews were conducted with the students, one at Week 4 (15 of 20 students participated as did the Faculty's Associate Dean of Teaching) and again at Week 10 (11 students of 20 participated). In the following discussion, direct quotes from the qualitative data drawn from the focus group interviews are in quotes and italicized. The co-authors collaborated on developing the semi-structured interview schedules, which were based on identified areas of pedagogical interest, especially the assessment strategy, the seminar approach and the use of the WebCT site. Qualitative data from the focus group interviews was collated and analysed and key themes emerged which are discussed subsequently.

Evaluation Findings

Student's conception of the unit – Students anticipated the unit would assist them '*broaden their knowledge of dialectology*'. Students understood that the unit's primary aim was to develop their skills in German dialectology and they believed that the best way for them to do this was to be '*doing practical things*'. The cohort had varied backgrounds and experience in the field; three students were native German speakers, some perceived they had a good background in linguistics, others did not. In the Faculty of Arts at Monash University linguistics is studied formally at Year 1 as part of a core of German language units. Students generally agreed that the Year 1 linguistics unit was '*overloaded*'. Many of them '*didn't remember a thing about it*' [Year 1 linguistics]. They did not believe that their limited experience and recollection of linguistics would affect their learning detrimentally in this unit.

Perceptions of successful learning in the language classroom – Students clearly enjoyed the unit and they uniformly attributed this to the '*fantastic teacher*'. This group of students would not change the seminar approach. They liked the three-hour face-to-face sessions and saw the online activities as '*complementary*'. They enjoyed participating in extra-curricular activities organised by the unit coordinator as part of the pedagogical program. Students stated they '*had no specific goals*' for themselves when they began the unit aside from a general aspiration to '*learn more about dialectology*'. The students were generally pleased that they enjoyed the unit and learnt more than they anticipated. They argued that the general unit goals articulated in the formal course documentation were a means of '*laying a foundation*' and '*providing stepping stones*' for their study. They commented that in other units they have studied the unit outcomes or synopsis are '*often rubbish*' and bears little resemblance to the way the unit is taught and structured. They liked descriptive terms used in understandable language to help them move forward. They were uniformly supportive of the approachable teaching style. Once they started the unit, they '*did not want to turn back*' and they claimed they '*learnt a lot*' and '*it was enjoyable*'. Students valued clarity in knowing what was expected of them and a clear articulation of how the unit activities were intended to help them learn.

Students believed that this unit has given them a '*broader experience than just learning*'. They considered the unit to be 'diverse' in its approaches such as the use of media through WebCT contributing to their perception that the unit was 'well rounded' and gave them a 'comprehensive' exploration of dialectology. They attributed their success to the way in which the unit coordinator set her expectations clearly, they believed strongly that '*she wanted us to succeed*' and this contributed to their motivation for learning in the unit. The students perceived '*personable*' and '*responsive*' teaching as integral to their success as learners.

Using WebCT to support language learning – The participants had used WebCT in other courses they have studied at Monash. They appreciated that accessibility issues for students are very important to consider when designing online learning environments. They discussed this briefly in relation to accessibility to the Internet and also in terms of students having software capability appropriate to online learning activities e.g. file size of audio/video and having appropriate download capacity. The WebCT site was highly valued as a single point of access to resources: they liked the fact that '*there was one point of reference for unit material*'. They also appreciated that the WebCT unit site meant that they could '*access it from home*' or '*anywhere they wanted, even at 2am*'.

Participants liked the online discussion forum and used it purposefully when they thought they needed to. They believed that online learning environments ought to be '*relevant to the purposes of the unit*' and interesting to them intellectually. Participants recognized that the success of any online discussion lies in its '*responsiveness*'. In this context particularly they spoke highly of the unit coordinator and appreciated the consistency of her approachable teaching approach to their work in the face-to-face classroom and the shared online spaces.

Perceptions of 'valuable' assessment tasks – Participants agreed that unit assessment contributes to helping them gauge 'workload and effort' required by any particular unit. Generally, they believed that success in any unit assessment was a good measure of their learning. They believed that assessment at tertiary level ought to be cohesively integrated continuously throughout a semester and they believed that this unit tried to achieve this where many of their other units did not.

They debated the value of the end-of-semester examination as a measure of successful learning as they felt that they had demonstrated their expertise enough in the other assessment tasks. They also argued that 'weighting' is often problematic where the demands of some assessment tasks meant that 'a lot of real work goes in to some assignment that might only be worth 20%'.

The use of group assessment tasks is often problematic for students and indeed teachers. Participants believed that all assessment ought to have 'clear, unambiguous criteria'. They felt strongly that they 'don't need group work in every subject' and they did not seem confident that 'individual marks from group assignments are always realistic of an individual's effort and learning'. The students in this unit believed that 'different students have different goals and expectations of group assessment'. They felt strongly that good teaching ought to assist them succeed in group learning and peer assessment by helping them understand its purposes and processes.

Summary findings

In summary, the illuminative evaluation reported in this case study provided data about the students' *experiences of learning in a particular setting*. The key issues raised are summarised here.

A well designed WebCT site can enhance learning – Participants saw the WebCT site evolving as a valuable 'adjunct' to their face-to-face sessions. They considered it a 'meeting place' which gave them increased flexibility; as a central point where they could easily access print and other online resources and discussions they needed for their learning development. Having experienced this unit with its use of the tools of WebCT they agreed that there was potential for language units such as this to be available to a wider audience of off-campus learners. The associated potential of multi-media applications in the pedagogy of language learning was also obvious to them. Importantly however, while students can see the value and potential of educational technologies such as WebCT, they were quick to point out that 'nothing can replace face-to-face teaching with a teacher like [the unit coordinator]'.

Assessment tasks ought to be relevant, pragmatic and challenging – It is widely accepted in tertiary teaching that assessment largely defines the curriculum for today's busy students. Participants in the evaluation reported here clearly articulated the way in which assessment tasks assist them in gauging both workload and anticipated effort of a particular unit of study. As Schell (1986: 411) articulated in a key paper two decades ago, if students 'are to learn desired outcomes in a reasonably effective manner, the teacher's fundamental task is to get students engaged in learning activities that are likely to result in achieving outcomes'.

The re-development of the unit, and especially the design of assessment tasks, demonstrates a dynamic and innovative approach to the development of pedagogical strategies to meet the outcomes outlined in the first section of this paper. The authors believe that it offers a potentially exemplary model for academic teaching in foreign language departments. Since the (language) acquisition focus of this and other linguistics units is cumulative and contributes to the incremental development of meta-linguistic knowledge, it was not practical to assess actual improvements in the language learning of the students at the end of the semester. Moreover, students had different levels of German and were distributed over a number of classes (from intermediate to advanced). The acquisition effects of the unit are believed to be gradual, stretching across the three year undergraduate course of these students. However, the student cohort showed progressively higher marks across the semester, in many cases moving from marks in the mid 50s or low 60s to distinctions in the exam and final essay. It would certainly be a worthwhile longitudinal research project to compare the language performance of students specializing in linguistics (where all academic seminars incorporate an explicitly articulated acquisition focus and aim to contribute to the development of meta-linguistic skills) with that of students specializing in literature (where language is primarily a tool for accessing the national literary tradition and the focus is on meaning rather than form). Other linguistic seminars offered in the German program at Monash University include *Second Language Acquisition* and *Language and Society*.

Assessment ought to see students motivated, engaged and active. While students often take a strategic and pragmatic approach to assessment as our findings have indicated, we believe that assessment ought to refocus

students' attention so it is conceived as central to learning; that is, assessment tasks ought to 'capture learner attention, they ought to promote motivation, encourage students to harness their time and other personally-held resources towards defined outcome goals, and as such encourage the prioritisation of these resources' (James 2002, p. 10) In other words as James (2002) argues, assessment ought to be 'performative': students actively engaged in assessment tasks that can both promote and indeed measure learning.

Students recognise and value 'authentic teaching' – Promoting authenticity in tertiary teaching needs to recognise the 'creativity' inherent in it. The unit coordinator and her 'pedagogy' was seen by her students as personal, unique and exemplary. She was perceived by her students as an inventive, critical thinker, a scholar whose open, responsive manner demonstrated explicitly her student-centred teaching philosophy, her innovative approaches to pedagogy and curriculum development and her recognition that student learning is the crux of pedagogy; that is teaching as the 'context' for learning (Green 1998). Teaching 'style' is central to students' understanding of good practice and successful learning in face-to-face and online settings.

Participants were clearly able to differentiate what they believed contributed to 'good' teaching practice in the face-to-face classroom and online, as *'being responsive and encouraging'*, with what they perceived as 'bad' online teaching practice which several had experienced in other units; *'where lecturers just can't be bothered'* to develop meaningful and relevant learning and teaching strategies or to interact in ways participants believed would assist their learning.

O'Dea (1992) has argued that being an authentic teacher implicates those so recognised with a responsibility to live in the knowledge that they are 'self-creating, self-legislating beings' and that acting 'authentically' is to act sincerely and honestly in a manner that is true to oneself as such a being' (p. 44). In this case study, participants regarded the unit coordinator highly. They clearly respected her expertise and appreciated her experience as an academic teacher and researcher and the contribution this made *directly* to their development as learners in this unit is evident. An open, responsive and engaging approach on the part of the teacher is central to developing a very positive learning experience for students. In this case participating in the evaluation demonstrated to students that the unit coordinator took her teaching seriously and evaluation seriously; they appreciated *'being heard'*. They felt confident that their contribution to the evaluation would result in demonstrable change and ongoing improvement in this unit. In this case study the unit coordinator articulated and demonstrated in her practice the deep connections between the ethics and morality of teaching and pedagogical behaviours. As she has come to create such forms of excellence in pedagogy and pedagogy for transformative change she exemplifies the 'cultivation and exercise of the virtue of authenticity' as a teacher (O'Dea 1992, p. 48).

Concluding comments and implications for further research

As a case report this paper allows us to present an 'evidentiary boundary around which we can discuss educational problems' (Walker, 2002: 10) and propose areas of interest for further research. For us, the insights drawn from the evaluation have allowed us to propose a curriculum redevelopment which will be conceived and designed so that online strategies can both add flexibility and learning enhancement to the face-to-face seminar series and to develop the program for online/off-campus delivery.

Principally, the evaluation has reinforced for us that the nature of online interactive exercises and assessment ought to be driven firmly by the intended educational purposes and that the online as well as the classroom environment needs to be interesting, challenging and, importantly, responsive. The evaluation in conjunction with the unit coordinators creative pedagogy has established an imperative for unit redevelopment which will include:

- The strategic use of electronic linguistic data and the development of specific online and offline exercises to develop students' linguistic research and data collection/analysis skills.
- The further development and refinement of the existing WebCT site so that it becomes reflective of a learning environment that will support the pedagogical strategies, the student learning experience and act as a 'resource repository'.
- The development of a CD-Rom which will accompany the learning process and which allow students to work off-line.

The evaluation has helped us recognise that assessment is a learning strategy not merely a summative 'measure'. Moreover, we have become more aware that student perception of assessment and their beliefs about the impact of assessment on their learning can be powerful tools to assist academic staff develop relevant and valid assessment tasks. James, McInnis & Devlin (2002) conceded in their recent major study 'Assessing Learning in

Australian Universities', that students value 'unambiguous expectations, authentic tasks and choice and flexibility' in assessment.

Finally, the evaluation has served to reveal in this case, that students hold very firm beliefs about what constitutes 'good teaching' and that it is essentially about creativity and authenticity. Spratt (2002: 157) has argued that creative teachers as early adopters of technology 'look like' Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi's (1976: 183) creative problem-posing artists:

who approach their work with personal commitment yet without stereotyped problems in mind, not only produce drawings that are rated more original and of greater aesthetic value, but persist in art longer. It would seem that problem finding is an integral part of a person's cognitive style: it is a reliable characteristic. A problem finding orientation seems necessary for creative work.

Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi (1976: 247) conclude that 'a creative problem cannot be fully visualised in the "mind's eye"; it must be discovered in the interaction with the elements that constitute it'. Perhaps 'interaction with the elements that constitute it' in the context of creative teachers as early adopters of technology equates to the intellectual, cognitive and emotional engagement with practice that so characterises the way in which academics 'become' creative teachers. The capacity to become creative, reflective and problem-posing may force creative academic teachers engaged in technology and pedagogical innovations, to take risks in their practice, to avoid oversimplifying the curriculum, and to look for ways to engage learners in authentic learning environments which are more deeply concerned with creating intellectual transformative change in students (Spratt 2002). The paper has also supported the growing literature exploring collaboration between academic colleagues and their students to develop quality learning environments.

There are several areas for further research which the work has highlighted for us. Importantly these include issues related to the pedagogical discussion laid out in the first section of the paper. In this way the evaluation and its findings has served to support in an iterative and reflective way the pedagogical thinking of the unit coordinator about the redevelopment of the unit as the evaluation unfolded. We are led therefore to potential investigations of the way in which online environments ought to be structured so that students are engaged in a rigorous pedagogy that prepares them to work in a field that requires advanced skills of linguistic analysis and research. It has also raised research interests for us in ways in which language teachers may develop peer assessment tasks and group learning opportunities that demonstrate valid and reliable measures of individual learning outcomes from shared experiences. Exploring the way in which the undergraduate foreign language curriculum can best support growth over time towards the development of advanced language skills, discipline knowledge and practical research skills remains a challenge as does characterising the most effective 'teaching' discourses for the language classroom to prepare students for the challenges of their chosen discipline. Finally, investigating teaching as the 'context' for learning may illuminate 'authenticity' in teaching and the impact this has on the experience of learning for students.

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Appendix 1: In-Class Group Exercise

In this exercise students were given a short dialogue from an *Asterix* cartoon (the popular Asterix cartoons have been translated into a number of German dialects). The students were asked (a) to translate the dialect text provided in the cartoon into standard German, (b) to identify phonological and grammatical features of the Cologne dialect.

Asterix dialogue (available at <http://www.cologneweb.com/asterix/>)

The opening dialogue between Asterix and Obelix from the volume *Däm Asterix singe Jung*, translated by Alice Herrwegen, Ingeborg Nitt, Volker Gröbe, Gerd Schumacher (members of the Akademie für uns kölsche Sproch ‘Academy for our Cologne Language’).

- Picture 1: Wie alle Dääch, su jeit och hück de Sonn üwer däm kleine jotbekannte Dörp vum Asterix op, wo luuter Freud und Fridden es ...
- Picture 2: ... bloss jestört vun däm einzije jallsche Hahn, dä schnorks
- Picture 3: Kock, Kock, wat läuf Kock?
Kick Kick es et ald widder esu wick?
- Picture 4: Erus us der Lappenkess! Dat weed secher ne herrlije Daach!
Huah!
- Picture 5: Dis Naach han ich janz jet jeckes jedräump, Asterix.
- Picture 6: Ich han jedräump, de Stösch wören üwer uns Dörp jefloge, för de bestellte Quös afzeliwere. Einer vun denne hät sich ävver verdon un eine Ditz he bei uns afjesatz.
- Picture 7: No saach bloss, do jläüvs noch aan de Klapperstorch, dä de klen Kindercher brengk?
Woröm dann nit? Ich liwere jo och de Hinkelstein, oder?
- Picture 8: Eines Daachs muss ich deer een ‘n paar Saache usenanderpusamenteere, Obelix!

The exercise allowed students to discover a range of phonological and grammatical features of Kölsch, an urban dialect spoken in Cologne and surroundings.

Phonological features include e.g.

Standard German f > p (*dorp* instead of *dorf* ‘village’)

Standard German g > j (word-initial; *jeit* instead of *geht* ‘goes’)

Standard German g > ch [x] (word-final; *daach* instead of *tag* ‘day’)

Consonant cluster simplification (*jedräump* instead of *geträumpt*, ‘dreamed’), etc.

Grammatical features include e.g. plural formation through vowel change rather than suffixation:

Standard German *Tag* (‘day’) – *Tage* (‘days’)

Kölsch *Daach* (‘day’) – *Dääch* (‘days’)

The phonological features discussed in this exercise then form the basis for the following lecture in which students are introduced to the *Hochdeutsche Lautverschiebung* (‘High German Sound Change’) which is of central importance to the linguistic classification of the German dialects.

Appendix 2: Dialect Map Interpretation Exercise (accessible to students via WebCT)

Instructions

Go to the website of the *Forschungsinstitut für deutsche Sprache* ('Research Institute for the German Language', Marburg; <http://www.uni-marburg.de/dsa/>) and follow the link to the *Digital Wenkeratlas* (<http://www.diwa.info/>). Click on the link *Kartenverzeichnis*.

It is possible that you will need to install additional software (plugin). This software is free of charge and can be downloaded from the webpages of the *Digital Wenkeratlas*.

Look at the following maps:

Dorf ('village', <http://137.248.81.135/DiWA/ECW.asp?ID1=221&V=0&S=0>)

machen ('to make', <http://137.248.81.135/DiWA/ECW.asp?ID1=417&V=0&S=0>).

Carefully describe the linguistic variants which can be found in the area around Düsseldorf, Köln and Bonn. Compare the detailed map with the interpretative map given in Barbour & Stevenson (1990). Critically evaluate the differences between the detailed map (also called display map) and the interpretative map.