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Katya Jordan

Brigham Young University

Jennifer Bown

Brigham Young University

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Students as Co-Creators of a Russian Media Literacy Course

KATYA JORDAN, JENNIFER BOWN

1. Introduction

In past decades, language teaching has undergone a radical transformation, motivated by the introduction of the proficiency guidelines, focused on what students can do in an L2, as well as by broader movements in education emphasizing development of skills through student engagement in sustained inquiry. Among the critical skills, information and media literacy have become areas of increasing pedagogical focus, as fake news and disinformation have proliferated. The question of media literacy may be even more urgent in countries like the Russian Federation, where the state controls much of the mass media and has enacted laws that severely limit the dissemination of information from sources it deems threatening, particularly in the wake of Russia's war in Ukraine.

The fourth-year Russian language curriculum at Brigham Young University has focused on Russian news media for several years. Early instantiations of the course used the news media to promote language development, relying on news reports as materials for improving listening and reading comprehension and as topics of conversation. However, in 2016, as a means of building important 21st-century skills, a new fourth-year Russian course was developed to promote media literacy among other important career-readiness skills.

This inquiry-driven course has undergone continuous revision since its introduction. Although this language course focuses on developing proficiency¹ in listening, reading, and presentational speaking and writing, its content is Russian current events, and its focus is developing media literacy. This course is inquiry driven and informed by the ACTFL *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2015) and the *21st Century Skills*

¹ Language Testing International (n.d.) defines language proficiency as the ability to use a language for real-world purposes to accomplish real-world linguistic tasks across a wide range of topics and settings.

Map (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2011). The course shares many important features with Open Access Curricular Design (OACD) (Leaver, 2021), although the course was developed independently of the literature on OACD. In the following section, we outline the theoretical underpinnings of the course.

2. Theoretical underpinnings

2.1 World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages and 21st-Century Skills ACTFL's revised *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (National Standards for Foreign Language Education Project, 2015) draw on the 21st Century Skills map developed by ACTFL in collaboration with the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2011), illustrating the intersection between core academic subjects and the skills required for success in the current global economy. These important skills include communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, as well as technology, information, and media literacy.

The 21st Century Skills Map identifies both information and media literacy as critical skills in today's world. Learning outcomes for information literacy include the ability to access information effectively and efficiently, evaluate information critically and competently, and use information accurately and creatively. Students demonstrate media literacy if they 1) understand how media messages are constructed, for what purposes, and using which tools and conventions; and 2) examine how individuals interpret messages differently, how values and points of view are included/excluded, and how media can influence beliefs and behaviors (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2011). Both types of literacy are closely related, and the terms are often used interchangeably, broadly understood as "active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create" (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009, p. 7). Both types of literacy require the following interpretive skills: distinguishing between fact and opinion, defining the credibility of a source of information, ascertaining the accuracy of a message, differentiating supported claims from non-supported, locating prejudice, and identifying underlying assumptions (Silverblatt, 2014). In this paper we will use the terms information and media literacy synonymously.

2.2 *Open architecture curricular design (OACD)*

OACD is a term coined by Leaver in 2015 to describe a curricular model that emerged in U.S. government language institutions. Many university programs, informed by the *World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning* and by learner-centered, task-based curricular approaches, implemented aspects of OACD, whether or not they were aware of the particular framework of OACD (Leaver, 2021). The course described herein is one such program.

Leaver (2021) outlines four fundamental principles of OACD:

- 1) Courses structured around a theme-based syllabus, rather than a textbook, integrating interchangeable un-adapted authentic² texts, tasks, and other activities.
- 2) Ongoing learner involvement in the selection and delivery of content and design or directing of activities.
- 3) Continual and systematic tailoring to learner and cohort needs.
- 4) Evolution of the role of teacher from facilitator of learning toward mentor/coach/advisor, who provides resources and informed guidance to individuals and groups of learners in support of their short- and long-term activities and projects.
- 5) Campbell (2020) indicates that these features are far more common at Level 1+/Intermediate High and above, indicating that this approach may not be as well suited to lower levels of instruction.

OACD represents a radical transformation in the teaching of foreign languages, shifting away from coverage of grammar to engaging learners in situationally and contextually appropriate tasks that require accessing L2 texts for information purposes. OACD puts students at the center of language learning, embracing learners' "voice and choice" (Cox & Montgomery, 2019), allowing learners to select and deliver content that is meaningful to them.

² Traditionally, authentic texts have been defined as materials created by native speakers for native speakers for a real-world purpose other than language learning. This definition has been criticized for its narrow definition of native speakers as the only legitimate producers or consumers of such texts. Herein we use the term "authentic materials" to describe texts that reflect real-world situations and contexts, and with which readers interact for real-world purposes.

2.3 Inquiry-based learning

In essence, OACD is an inquiry-based approach to learning (IBL). Broadly speaking, IBL is a process that involves students exploring an issue for research, often, but not always, generating their own research question (Chiappetta Swanson et al., 2014; Zakrajsek & Nilson, 2023). The term covers a variety of learning methods, but central to them all is giving students some control over the content and methods of their own learning, in essence allowing them to become co-creators in a course curriculum. Research suggests that IBL does an excellent job of fostering students' academic achievement and improving critical thinking, reflective learning, and problem-solving skills (Archer-Kuhn et al., 2020; Lu, et al., 2019; Zakrajsek & Nilson, 2023).

The many IBL approaches to teaching Russian are detailed in several recent volumes, including Nuss and Martin (2023) and Dengub, Dubinina and Merrill (2020). Moreover, a recent issue of *Russian Language Journal* dedicated to students as co-creators details a variety of projects in which learners co-authored curricular materials, including the *Construxercise* website (Endresen et al., 2022) and a reference grammar for elementary learners (Nesset et al., 2022).

2.4 Collaborative learning theory

IBL is often, though not necessarily, accompanied by collaborative work. Collaborative learning is a time-honored teaching strategy in which students work in small groups to pursue a common goal (Prince, 2004). Collaborative learning theory is rooted in Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development, which postulates that learning occurs through collaborative interaction with more knowledgeable peers. This kind of learning can effectively accommodate individual differences and preferences (Calderón et al., 2016; Ismail & Al Allaq, 2019), while also enhancing communicative competence, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities (Liu et al., 2018).

3. Course design

Russian 421 is a fourth-year undergraduate course that focuses on the development of language proficiency—especially oral and listening—through exploration of Russian news media. It is a modular course built primarily on recently published news reports that students find

on their own. Approximately two-thirds of the course is devoted to student-driven research. Though the primary goals are communication (chiefly interpretive and presentational) and media literacy, additional goals include collaboration, creativity and innovation, flexibility and adaptation, initiative, and self-direction. The modules are built less on the content of student research than on the research process, beginning with an individual research project, moving toward paired projects, and culminating in a group project.

As of the most recent iteration of this course, taught in Fall 2022, many of the students in this class had spent 18 months to two years in the Russian-speaking communities of such countries as Russia, Ukraine, or Latvia. For nearly all of them, Russian is a secondary major, complementing their studies in political science, international relations, business, or other academic fields. Many students have achieved at least Intermediate Mid speaking proficiency prior to enrolling in the class.

3.1 Learning contracts

The students enrolled in Russian 421 are often at a variety of proficiency levels, ranging from Intermediate Mid to Advanced High. In order to accommodate all of the learners, students sign learning contracts (see Appendix A) at the beginning of the semester. They are first introduced to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines (ACTFL, 2012) and the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (National Council of State Supervisors & ACTFL, 2017). According to the Can-Do statements, learners assess their own proficiency in interpersonal communication, presentational speaking, interpretive listening, and interpretive reading. They then set a goal for the proficiency level they wish to achieve in each of the four areas and make a plan for how they will get there; at the end of the semester, students complete the second part of the learning contract, evaluating their overall progress in the course. The learning contract allows the instructor to differentiate assessment based on the learners' individual goals and abilities; students' familiarity with the Can-Do statements also allows them to perform within their own limits. For example, students who are aiming for Advanced-level proficiency can focus more on narration and description, while those aiming for Superior can attempt more extended discourse and argumentation.

3.2 Module 1: Introduction to media literacy

The first module in the course, in contrast to the remaining modules, is teacher-driven, though still focused on reading authentic texts. This three-week module sets the stage for the rest of the course, introducing students to important concepts related to intercultural competence and information literacy. Early discussions focus on the role played by empathy in language learning. Because metacognitive practices are an integral part of the course, students are invited to begin by reflecting on instances when they have experienced cultural empathy, and by considering why there was room for cultural empathy in the first place. Jiang and Wang (2018) show a connection between cultural empathy and communicative competence. Moreover, recognition of another's perspective is part of media literacy, as well as an essential element of intercultural competence, as defined by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and compassion, as defined by Rifkin (2019). The goal for these discussions is to make students aware of (1) their own goals for linguistic fluency, (2) their perspectives and biases as consumers of information, and (3) the motives and biases of creators of information within a foreign cultural context. It is hoped that this conversation increases awareness of the complexity of elements important to members of other cultures in relation to their history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, beliefs, and practices. Students also take a survey to determine their own attitudes toward mass media and biases in information consumption. These elements inevitably underlie the texts that the students will be working with in this class and in their future studies.

Other topics for discussion in Module 1 include "Information Types: News, Commercials, Propaganda," "Evaluation of Reliability of Sources," "Attitudes Towards Mass Media in American and Russian Societies," and "Our Own Attitudes Towards Mass Media." During this part of the course, students read assigned news media articles, watch teacher-selected relevant videos, and complete written assignments prior to coming to class and then engage in group discussions in class. Students are also introduced to Russian Federation laws related to freedom of the press; an understanding of them allows learners to appreciate the constraints faced by Russian journalists and bloggers. Though this portion of the course is teacher-driven, students engage with authentic texts and are introduced to important content in the target language. These early

discussions serve to scaffold the student inquiry that follows, introducing them to the skills they will need to conduct research and allowing them to practice those skills with instructor guidance.

In the case of information types and reliability of sources, students are guided through the process of evaluating the purposes and biases inherent in media sources. At this point students learn to look beyond the headlines and to pay attention to a reporter's name, professional qualifications, and affiliation, as well as a media outlet's geographical location and source of funding (see Appendix B for a list of questions students answer in evaluating sources). This becomes especially important as they begin to conduct their own research.

The rest of the semester is devoted to students' research. In total, students engage in three separate research projects: an individual project, a paired project, and a group project. In each case, learners choose their own topics (within certain parameters) and select and evaluate sources. The final products of each project include a written component and an in-class presentation. At the conclusion of each research project, students are asked to reflect on their learning process and to apply what they have learned to future projects.

Each project involves extensive opportunities for feedback from the instructor, a teaching assistant, and peers. At the conclusion of each project, students submit written reflections on their learning processes, as well as self-evaluations. In the following sections, we outline the various research projects.

3.3 Module 2: Individual research projects

The second module lasts four weeks and involves the students in individual research projects, which allow them to use trustworthy Russian-language sources to research a topic of interest to them. The project culminates in a five-minute individual oral presentation accompanied by digital slides. The topic of the first research project must deal with one of six themes (Environment, Science, Healthcare, Sports, Culture, and Information Technology) as discussed in contemporary news media.

Students choose a theme and identify a related current event for further research. For example, of the two students who chose "Information Technology," one researched Russian troll farms, while the other chose to focus on technology used in the Russian military jet Sukhoi Su-35.

Of the two students who chose “Culture” as their theme, one examined the morality and efficacy of boycotting Russian culture outside of Russia, whereas the other concentrated on the challenges that anti-war artists face inside Russia.

After choosing a theme and selecting a topic, students identify relevant and reliable news sources. They are asked to start with two or three recent Russian-language sources from newspapers, radio, online TV programs or high-quality professional podcasts. Using guidelines discussed in class, students evaluate all the sources they come across for reliability and write an overview of three main sources (guided by the questions in Appendix B). To further develop media literacy skills, students must prepare a slide show to accompany their oral presentation. As a class, we discuss what makes for a good slide show. Students learn that lengthy texts or irrelevant stock photos can detract from the main argument and that all sources, including images, must be appropriately cited. Students are also directed to create a meme on their topic; this requires them to use language and images creatively.

After their in-class presentation, students meet one-on-one with the teaching assistant (TA) to deliver a revised, polished version of the presentation. This meeting allows learners time to rehearse and incorporate feedback they received on their in-class presentation. The TAs are specifically instructed to ask hypothetical questions that push students to engage in conjecture. Moreover, they ask students to support their arguments with specific evidence. In this manner, the TAs push students to perform such functions as hypothesis, conjecture, and supported argumentation, required at the ACTFL Superior level. Those students with lower proficiency are usually able to respond to such questions in a more concrete and less abstract manner. Following the presentation, students write a brief reflection essay in which they think back on their experience working on the research project and what they have learned not only about their topic but, more importantly, about their research process, preparation, and presentation. The list of questions that the students should reflect on consists of the following: What did I do well? What did I learn from this experience? What do I still need to learn? What is my goal for next time? How can I achieve my goal?

The individual presentations allow learners to work on several 21st-Century Skills: information, digital, and media literacy (in the

identification, evaluation, and attribution of sources), technology literacy (in the creation of effective slides), creativity and innovation (in the creation of a meme), initiative and self-direction (in planning and executing the research project on their own). The first research project familiarizes the students with the process that will be repeated, with modifications, in Modules 2 and 3. Additionally, the instructor and teaching assistant are available to provide guidance at any stage of the project. As they go through this process, they gain the confidence necessary for the next research assignment. Students are also encouraged to take risks and make decisions about the research process and their final products.

3.4 Module 3: Partner research projects

The third module lasts for four weeks and involves another research project. The assignment for the second research project builds on the first, with some modifications. The topics for the second project include the following: Education, Economics/Finances, Social Problems, Law, International Diplomacy, and Religion. This list, as well as the list for individual research projects from Module 2, deliberately omits Politics as a separate topic because, as is discussed in class, any one of the topics offered can be considered from a political point of view.

This assignment largely repeats the previous assignment, with several important modifications, detailed below. The primary change is the requirement to collaborate with others in the class. Students extend their communication skills by analyzing their audience and adapting their presentation to meet the needs of the audience. Further modifications include the addition of a slogan in their presentations, the transcription and re-writing of a portion of the presentation, and peer- and self-evaluations.

Whereas the individual project allows students to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses as researchers, the paired project requires collaboration. Pairs of students choose a theme and consult with each other to formulate their approach to the project, deciding on the extent and nature of their cooperation. Furthermore, each pair of students decides how much information they will share with each other prior to the presentation. This approach helps learners to develop collaboration skills and offers them some say in the structure of their final product. The students may decide whether to research one problem and discuss

two aspects of the same idea or to choose a controversial problem and present two opposing points of view. For example, two students who chose Economics/Finances as their theme prepared separate presentations that argued opposing points of view on the effectiveness of sanctions as a means of stopping the war in Ukraine. By contrast, another pair of students chose to research possible ways of improving the Russian education system, presenting several important points that supported one shared thesis.

The only formal component that students are required to create together is the audience survey (see Appendix C). This procedure helps students understand their audience and customize their message to make their presentation more engaging. Students first consider what they already know about their audience and then formulate survey questions that may touch upon any of the following:

- What does our audience know about our chosen topic?
- What are their attitudes towards the topic?
- What would they like to learn about this issue?
- Which demographic characteristics of the audience do we need to be aware of?
- What would peak our audience's interest in this topic?

The survey not only allows the student researchers to better understand their audience, but it also involves the rest of the class in the research process, contributing to development of a classroom community. Additionally, the public survey process allows students to learn from each other as they take note of the kinds of questions their peers have come up with.

While the students are asked to include survey results in the digital slides for the in-class presentation, they can choose which results to include. Students are asked to exercise creativity in formulating questions and deciding what information to include, thus increasing (a) their sense of ownership of the project and (b) their awareness of their audience.

Instead of writing an essay, this time students provide a detailed outline of their presentation. Having written an essay for the first presentation and an outline for the second, students can later determine which approach better suits their learning style as they prepare for the

next research project. At this point, however, the outline is meant to be their main guide during the presentation and should include all the key points without turning it into a formal essay.

The digital slides remain an important component. Student voice and choice is ensured by allowing the pair to decide whether they will use one or two sets of slides. This practice also gives space for creativity and innovation. One year, two students chose to present two opposing points of view on the same topic using the exact same images to argue both sides. No matter how many sets of slides are presented, at least one of them should contain pertinent survey results, a meme, and a political slogan created by the students, allowing the learners to play with language. Students are given links to several Russian-language sites that explain what constitutes an effective political slogan and are directed to an online slogan maker where they can create their own slogan in Russian.

Learners make an audio recording of the second in-class presentation. Following the presentation, they listen to the entire recording before writing their reflection. Additionally, they choose a one-minute segment to transcribe, including the pauses, false starts, hesitations, etc., and then re-write that portion to the best of their ability. The purpose of this assignment is to facilitate self-assessment.

At the end of the project, students evaluate not only their own performance, but also the work of their partner. This is done to 1) help the instructor better understand the working dynamic within the partnership, 2) hold both students accountable, and 3) prevent students' grades being dependent entirely on their partners' level of engagement.

The collaboration on the second research project is left up to the students. The projects continue to reflect student voice and choice, as the students choose not only their topics, but also the extent and nature of their cooperation as well as their approach to the presentation of the final project.

In the case of both the Individual Research Project and the Partner Research Project, great emphasis is placed on the students as co-creators of content. During the in-class presentations, the audience is asked to listen actively and take notes. They write down each presenter's thesis, main arguments, and their own questions for class discussions. Each presenter understands that they are the experts on the topic and that they are not simply giving an oral presentation but are teaching their audience.

This practice, along with the freedom to choose their topic and approach, serves to enhance their level of engagement.

3.5 Module 4: Group projects

The concluding four-week module involves a group research project. Whereas up to this point students did the bulk of their research and preparation outside of class, the final portion of the course is structured in such a way that a large part of the work is done in class, following best practices for collaborative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

The instructor chooses groups of three to four students to ensure a maximum variety of interests and experiences. Seven 50-minute class meetings are devoted to preparing the final project, guided by carefully scaffolded tasks for each day (see Appendix D for lists of daily tasks). In the first meeting, students get to know their teammates and choose a team name, mascot, and motto. This process serves as an icebreaker for new groups and helps facilitate group cohesion, while also promoting creativity. Groups consider how they will work together and what roles each person will fill, as well as how members should be held accountable. After these preliminaries, students brainstorm ideas for their research topics, then begin the process of grouping the topics and, finally, settling on one. The goal is to identify a research topic that does not relate to any of the team members' academic majors or the topics that they have already presented on in this course. Students then find materials (articles, podcasts, videos, etc.) on the topic. In subsequent meetings, the instructor employs a variety of activities to guide learners through 1) selecting topics and arguments and analyzing the audience, and 2) formulating a project purpose and a thesis statement. After working through these initial steps, each group prepares and delivers a two-minute preview of their presentation to elicit feedback from the class. By this point, learners have produced a rough outline of the presentation and are able to fine-tune their presentations. The rest of the meetings are dedicated to polishing the thesis statement and selecting information; identifying main points and proofs; choosing cohesive devices to improve transitions between ideas; and selecting methods for engaging and persuading the audience. By the end of this process, most groups have prepared a very detailed bullet-point text that is only one step away from becoming an essay.

The last three or four class meetings of the semester are dedicated to project presentations. Each team has 50 minutes to present and to answer questions from the audience. After the in-class presentation, each team turns in an edited outline, list of sources, audience survey, digital slides, peer evaluations, and a self-reflection.

4. Assessment

Although the instructor uses rubrics to evaluate student learning (see Appendix E), the grading for this course is less about performance on individual tasks and more about student engagement in the learning process. This approach also allows the instructor to better address the different proficiency levels of the students. Learners who participate in the entire process receive sufficient feedback and scaffolding to successfully complete each assignment. Student comments on course evaluations indicate that the course stretched them intellectually and linguistically. They appreciate receiving a grade based primarily on effort, as in the following example:

I appreciated that we weren't graded too hard for the class. At first, it seemed like a lot of work for this class, but once I realized that I wouldn't be graded hard and that it was more about putting in the effort to learn, I was able to work and learn in this class without worrying.

5. Effects of the war on the course

Although Russia's invasion of Ukraine posed new challenges to the teaching of this course, its structure has remained largely the same. Certainly, the war has emphasized the urgency of information and media literacy, drawing further attention to the ways in which information can be weaponized and used to promote a particular agenda. Students become acquainted with the new Russian laws that further restrict freedom of the press and drive out news sources that are not aligned with the Kremlin's point of view.

Due to the changing Russian-language news media landscape, a stronger emphasis was made in class on journalism standards. If in previous years journalistic standards and practices were part of the information literacy discussion, in 2022 students became familiar

with such labels as a “foreign agent,” “extremist organization,” and “undesirable organization,” which the Russian Federation’s Ministry of Justice assigns to individuals and organizations of whose activities it disapproves. In consuming media, students also had to understand the legal implications for the author(s) of the piece, which further emphasizes the need to know the context in which the message was produced.

At the beginning of the course in Fall 2022, few reliable independent Russian-language news sources were available. *ДОЖДЬ* [TV Rain], *Новая газета* [Novaya Gazeta newspaper], and *Эхо Москвы* [Echo of Moscow radio] had been shut down and had not yet relocated. In previous iterations of the course the instructor had limited students to sources no more than one year old. Because of the relative dearth of media outlets at the time, students were allowed to choose sources up to two years old, depending on their selected topics. Similarly, a stronger emphasis was now placed on rhetoric, or the form in which information is delivered. If in the past students learned about rhetorical devices and strategies to become better writers and presenters, in 2022 they analyzed how the same devices and strategies are used by Russia’s state-funded propagandists as well as by the Kremlin’s critics; in other words, they learned in real time that the same means can be used to achieve very different ends.

The relocation of independent Russian-language media outlets to various EU countries also highlighted the global reach of the Russian language far beyond the territory of the Russian Federation. Though the course had never exclusively focused on Russia, as of 2022 students were explicitly instructed to consider topics of interest to Russian speakers around the world. The subsequent attempts to shut down *ДОЖДЬ* [TV Rain] by Latvian authorities drew attention to the tensions between Russia and its neighbors, as well as to issues of identity among the Russophone populations within the former Soviet space (Cheskin & Kachuyevski, 2021).

Despite these challenges, the changes implemented in Fall 2022 served to enrich the course, increasing learners’ awareness of the tools, characteristics, and conventions used in constructing media messages, and ways in which these components can be used for differing effects. It had the additional benefit of helping learners to recognize the complex issues of identity and power related to Russia and Russian speakers.

6. Lessons learned and future plans

Russian 421 has developed over several years into its present form, based on the instructor's own assessment of the course, student performance on assessments, and student feedback. Initially, it was designed as a language course focusing on Russian current events, where students read and listened to materials selected by the instructor. Gradually, it began to incorporate metacognitive elements and media literacy tasks. At present, the course is built around student-driven research and includes elements of rhetoric; it is also designed to improve the students' audience awareness as part of their media literacy.

Another change was made in the instructor's messaging about course goals and assessments. The instructor learned that students find the lack of a textbook and the unpredictability of the course content—current events—disorienting. They require constant reassurance from the instructor, as well as careful scaffolding of assignments. This outcome is not unexpected; research on inquiry-based learning indicates that many students are initially uncomfortable with the amount of freedom afforded them (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2010; Chen, 2021; Zakrajsek & Nilson, 2023). Additionally, in early iterations of the course, the syllabus used the term “presentation” to describe the final product of the students' research. Changing the focus from the product (the presentation) to the process (the research project) signals to the students that the skills learned as part of the project are as important as their ability to make a presentation in Russian. Basing the grading of the course primarily on engagement had a similar effect.

The design of this course required new approaches to manage the classroom, support inquiry, and scaffold not only research, but also student language learning (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2010; Zakrajsek & Nilson, 2023). The research process is broken into component pieces and is carefully scaffolded. Several full class periods are devoted to group work on the final research project, with structured tasks that require individual accountability as well as social skills and group processing (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Zakrajsek & Nilson, 2023). Several tasks were added to the course to improve students' language learning. These include multiple iterations of written and oral texts, such as the one-on-one presentation following the individual project; the recording, transcription, and revising of a segment of the second presentation; and reflections after each research project.

One of the main concerns that arose early on had to do with creating interdependence and engagement among the students. Implementing the audience survey not only helped students shape their message for their listeners, but also allowed for a sense of classroom buy-in to the research process. The instructor created tasks for the audience to better engage them during the individual, pair, and team presentations. These tasks promoted active listening, formulating pertinent questions, and evaluation of others' performances. The audience tasks gradually increase in complexity with each successive presentation, beginning with taking notes, to analyzing the rhetorical devices used by students, and to evaluating how those devices affected the success of the presentation. The audience is also directed to formulate various kinds of questions, including fact questions, open-ended questions, and rhetorical questions (see Appendix F for a sample audience task). The questions serve to help the presenters formulate the written portion of the assignment by addressing any gaps in the presentation. These strategies help to create a truly collaborative environment, in which all are active participants in the learning process and co-creators of the course. Future plans for this course involve creating a public product that goes beyond the confines of the classroom. The instructor is exploring ways to build an online presence within the target language community through said products, including blogging, website creation, or participation in online discussions.

7. Adaptation to other contexts

The course described herein is an advanced-level language course; most of the learners have achieved a minimum of Intermediate Mid proficiency, with the majority at Intermediate High or above. As noted above, Campbell (2020) indicates that OACD can be more effective for students approaching Advanced-level proficiency. However, some of the methods can be adapted to those with more limited proficiency. Shorter texts with more scaffolding will be required for Intermediate-level learners working with authentic materials. Teachers can gradually introduce fragments of authentic texts, where grammatical features, semantics, and background information can be addressed as they emerge (Van Lier, 1996). Teaching language learning strategies such as inferring from context, risk taking, and circumlocution can also help learners approach difficult texts and gain valuable skills in the process.

Presentational assignments can be adapted to the learners' proficiency levels. Rather than being expected to offer their opinions or analysis, learners may simply be asked to summarize the information they have found. Writing tasks may also be simplified; learners can create infographics or Instagram stories. Memes and political slogans also allow learners to play with language at the word and sentence level. On the other hand, this course can also be adapted for learners honing such Superior-level skills as constructing arguments, discussing matters that pertain to special fields of competence, and developing hypotheses. Furthermore, because this course is not tied to any particular textbook with pre-selected texts, its structure can be adopted in a variety of content courses.

8. Conclusion

The open architecture design of this course and the focus on student inquiry allow students to become co-creators of content and co-instructors of the course. In this manner, students not only increase their language proficiency, but they also learn important 21st-century skills such as collaboration, creativity and innovation, flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, productivity and accountability. They develop these skills as they become more savvy consumers and producers of information and media.

Appendices

All appendices can be accessed at the link or by scanning the QR code below: <https://sites.google.com/view/jordanbownappendices2023/home>



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