

Experiential Language Learning as a Tool for Effective Global Leadership

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Abstract : This paper proposes to revisit foreign-language learning as a tool to increase motivation through advocacy and develop effective natural communication skills, which are critical leadership qualities. To this end, collaborative initiatives undertaken by advanced university students of French with local and international community partners will be reviewed. Close attention will be paid to the acquisition of intercultural skills, the reflective process, as well as the challenges and outcomes. Two international development projects conducted in Haiti will be highlighted, i.e., collaboration with a network of providers in the Haitian cultural heritage preservation and tourism sector (2014-15) and development of investigation and teacher training tools for a primary/secondary school in the Port-au-Prince area (current). The choice of community-service learning as a framework to teach French-as-a-second-language stemmed from the need to raise awareness against stereotypes and prejudice, which hinder the development of effective intercultural skills. This type of experiential education also proved very effective in identifying and preventing miscommunication caused by the lack of face-to-face interaction in our increasingly technology-mediated world. Learners experienced first-hand, the challenges and advantages of face-to-face communication, which, in turn, enhanced their motivation for developing effective intercultural skills. Vygotsky's and Kolb's theories, current research on service learning (Dwight, Eyler), action/project-based pedagogy (Beckett), and reflective learning (TSC Farrell), will provide useful background to analyze the benefits and challenges of community-service learning. The ultimate goal of this paper is to find out what makes experiential learning truly unique and transformative for both the learners and the community they wish to serve. It will demonstrate how enhanced motivation, community engagement, and clear, concise, and respectful communication impact and empower learners. The underlying hope is to help students in high-profile, and leading-edge industries become effective global leaders.

Keywords : experiential learning, intercultural communication, reflective learning, effective leadership, learner motivation

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