“Connecting Classrooms: A Foreign Language Teaching Project at UCF”

Presented by:
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Pragmatic Goals:

- Help Students Communicate Successfully
- Help Socialize with Native Speakers
- Prepare Students for Future Classes and Study Abroad Programs
- Motivate and Arouse Interest in the Foreign Language
Educational Goals:

• Cultural Understanding
• Positive Attitude
• Overcome Stereotypes
• Reduce Prejudice
• Eliminate Ego Centricity
Byram’s Five Factor Model of Intercultural Competence (1997)

The attitude factor which refers to the ability to relativize one’s self and value others.

Knowledge of the rules for individual and social interaction both in the home and target cultures.

Critical cultural awareness which describes the ability to use perspectives, practices, and products in one’s own culture and in other cultures to make evaluations.

The skills of interpreting and relating.

The skills of discovery and interaction.
Project “Connecting Classrooms”

- Multidimensional
- Combines Instruction with Experience
- Fosters Social, Cultural, and Personal Learning

Photo: LiveMocha
Project Goals

• To improve students’ proficiency and communication skills in Russian

• To increase student motivation and interest

• To encourage mutual respect and openness to different ideas
First Year: “Breaking Down Barriers”

Objective: Get to know each other at personal, institutional, and cultural levels

Activities: Students exchange letters, e-mails, videos, and CDs that include information about themselves

Evaluation: Skype Conferences at the end of each month
Second Year: Group Projects

Cross-Cultural Projects on Different Topics:

Example:

Students collected, translated, and wrote folk tales from different Russian and American regions. With these stories, students created a book of folk tales. The final examination required students to present folk tale in target language.
Results

- Improved pronunciation and rate of speech
- Increased in utilization of new vocabulary
- Connects language learners with native speakers
- Chat opportunities to practice language skills in real-time
- Six students applied for Fulbright Scholarship to teach English in Russia
- The project provided the students with greater enthusiasm and motivation concerning their study of Russian language.
Results cont’d

• Students received an enriching experience that provided them with an opportunity to expand their cultural understanding.

• Students had a chance to establish long-term friendships with Russian students.

• Students participated in activities that brought them closer to their own culture and rich heritage.

• The project benefitted local Russian Communities and developed deeper knowledge and understanding of cultures and societies in other countries, allowing both parties to gain a better understanding of different cultural backgrounds within their own communities.
KNOWLEDGE

CULTURE

VALUES

BELIEFS

ATTITUDES

Research by Alla Kourova, Ph.D.