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Grammar for Mateo: Form-Focused Online Activities for FRN 320

Project description

The goal of this project was to develop supplement the short story used for the class ('Mateo Falcone' by Prosper Mérimée) with form-focused activities to guide students through the reading process as well as prepare them for the writing assignments to be completed. While several products are available on the market, I wanted grammar lessons that better fit with the story of Mateo Falcone and include more cultural information on Corsica, where the story takes place.

In order to do this, an assistant was hired to write a series of input paragraphs, input activities, and guided output activities that are grounded in a culturally relevant so that students can not only acquire the language functions needed to read and understand the story but also be exposed to the cultural context that helps explain the characters' unexpected actions and behaviors. In addition, once the content was finalized, the assistant recorded some of the input paragraphs so as to provide students with written and oral input (the rest being recorded by me).

Outcomes

Thanks to the work with the assistant, we developed grammar lessons for all 13 weeks of the online summer version of FRN 320. These grammar lessons include the following elements:

- Describe and compare (adjective agreement, comparatives, and superlatives)
- Lengthen your sentences (relative pronouns)
- Tell what happened (past tenses, including the introduction of the French simple past, a literary tense)
- Tell what is going to happen (future tenses)
- Express wishes, opinions, and advice (subjunctive)
- Avoid repetitions (pronouns)
- Describe relationships (possessive and demonstrative pronouns and adjectives)
- Make hypotheses (conditional)
- Ask questions (question formation and interrogative pronouns)
- Express regrets (past conditional)

Some of these lessons were transferred and uploaded on D2L before the end of the fellowship but most of that work will be done this summer. All content, however, has been finalized.

Impact

The most immediate impact will hopefully be that the students enrolled in the class will benefit from these activities and understand that, in language learning, grammar and form are tools necessary to express oneself and understand others, rather than a separate entity that is disconnected from language usage and communication. In addition, I hope that these activities can help students transition from a more communication-focused classroom in the 100 and 200 levels to a more form-focused format at the 300 level.

Additionally, we now have a complete self-contained set of material that can be used when the class is taught face-to-face during the academic year. I had previously shared all the activities developed to go with the reading of the short story with other FRN 320 instructors. They will now be given access to the summer class on D2L so they can see how everything fits together. In the long run, in collaboration with these instructors, I hope to develop additional vocabulary activities as well as activities promoting meaningful oral interactions that can be used in class.