Abstracts

“Decencuentros in Metropolitan Contact Zones: la Frontera, a Quilombola and Latinx as Untranslatables We Need for Reading and Teaching ‘American’ Cultural Difference” (online presentation)

Laura Lomas, Rutgers University-Newark, USA

The metropolitan public research university harvests the fruits of empire and presents an opportunity to critically engage historical and cultural narratives that inform the peculiar shifts of the first half of the 21st century, marked as it is by racial terror, climate crisis, and migrant detention along borders of overdeveloped and wealthy European and white-dominant North American nation-states. These same nations, or at least the United States, has its own internal crises, of addiction, police violence and colonial displacement, that run parallel to colonial processes still displacing migrants from the Caribbean, South and Central America. Despite the fictive homogeneity of the 19th and 20th century nation-state, the 21st century, especially since COVID 19, has resulted in a recognition of differences that have always been with us. Minor cultures defy mainstream attempts to ignore or suppress these minor cultural forms in literature, art, performance, and linguistic expression. This presentation will examine 20th and 21st century representations of “la Frontera,” the Afro-indigenous Brazilian verb “quoilombar,” and the descriptive neologism “Latinx,” as untranslateable theoretical terms and cultural identifiers that address the complexity of American cultural difference that is irreducible to the United States, is multilingual, and that in fact directly rejects colonial and imperial identification, by continuing to nourish imaginaries of femme, queer, Black, indigenous, P.O.C., Latinx, which is to say, non-Anglo, impure, non-white, self-emancipation. This presentation will make special reference to the work of decolonial representations of the Americas, including José Martí, Gloria Anzaldúa, John Keene, and Maria Sueli Rodrigues de Sousa, in order to define the parameters of contact zones that shape research and teaching of linguistic and cultural difference today.
Abstracts

“Embracing Diversity in Digital Spaces – Perspectives for Foreign Language Education”

Christiane Lütge, LMU Munich, Germany

With the ever-growing significance and diversification of media, there is a call to challenge, renegotiate, and expand on current discourses that have formulated digital literacy as an integral objective in 21st century education. If we venture to shed light on digital innovations in foreign language education that are associated with cultural and global learning, issues of identity, and the move from traditional print literature to digital textualities, we need to come to terms with the challenges and paradoxes of digitalization. In this presentation I will address two perspectives on diversity in digital spaces with regard to inclusive learning cultures.

On the one hand, aspects of (visual) representation of diverse backgrounds, e.g. in digital tools, VR and AI learning environments need to be more thoroughly explored in the context of a more equitable (foreign language) teacher education.

On the other hand, issues of diversity as topics for the foreign language classroom are required in order for educators to embrace the opportunity of preparing and educating learners for the textual and communicative practices encountered in today’s digital environments. Exploring cultural practices associated with participatory digital cultures suggests a timely concept of digital-cultural competences. Embracing diversity in various digital spaces of the foreign language classroom might be among the most pressing challenges for the future and requires an inclusive paradigm that invites a myriad of meaning making and pedagogical practices.
Abstracts

“Virtual Exchange: Attending to diversity in online collaborative contexts”

Robert O’Dowd, University of León, Spain

Virtual Exchange is an umbrella term which refers to the numerous online learning initiatives and methodologies which engage learners in sustained online collaborative learning and interaction with partners from different cultural backgrounds as part of their study programmes and under the guidance of educators. Although Virtual Exchange has been employed in university foreign language education for over 25 years, for most of that time it has very much been a peripheral activity, carried out and promoted by a small but convinced group of practitioners.

However, current debates on the economic and environmental cost of study abroad programmes, as well as the challenges to physical mobility posed by global pandemics have made Virtual Exchange an increasingly attractive option for institutions of higher education as they search for sustainable models of international learning which will serve as an alternative or complement to physical mobility programmes.

But what do we know about the impact of Virtual Exchange in foreign language education? And how can VE be designed to attend to the needs and abilities of diverse learner groups in our classrooms?

The past three years have also seen the publication of a plethora of impact reports and studies which present the findings or projects and organisations such as Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange, the Stevens Initiative and the EVALUATE and EVOLVE projects who are engaged in promoting large-scale Virtual Exchange initiatives. For the most part, these publications present both qualitative and quantitative data on what students learn from Virtual Exchange and what teachers and institutions can do to support this learning.

In this presentation I will use these publications as well as other key publications from the VE literature to explore how VE can provide appropriate learning opportunities for heterogeneous learner groups and how it can incorporate the particular abilities and needs of learners.

A list of resources on Virtual Exchange curated by the author can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fbQ1xpPM_HHbiOulk_mISN0MkgrRyZpVM4lTx-BrM0/edit?usp=sharing

This project is part of the „Qualitätsoffensive Lehrerbildung“, a joint initiative of the Federal Government and the Länder which aims to improve the quality of teacher training. The programme is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The authors are responsible for the content of this publication.