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# Crynoldebau / abstracts

The ‘Linguists Toolkit’ Initiative: A Project to Promote a Peer Assisted Modern Languages Community

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Pedagogical literature emphasises that active student participation practices give students the opportunity to deepen their knowledge, to acquire transferable skills, and to develop a metacognitive awareness of their learning. These practices call for learners to take collective responsibility for learning (not simply to be a recipient of knowledge), and they increase student motivation, engagement, attendance and promote active learning. Such approaches place learners in the forefront, having a focus on the collective instead of the individual, which makes learning more social, collaborative, and context-specific (Iversen et al., 2015). In addition, students’ different backgrounds and perspectives can provide an opportunity for educators to critically reflect on their own teaching methods, while enabling students to understand educators’ pedagogical choices.
This paper will illustrate some of the initiatives currently being designed for the creation of a community of modern languages students, which will give students the opportunity to reflect on their learning while actively taking part in the choices that shape learning and teaching. It is also hoped that such an initiative will help address rising levels of student anxiety in the creation of a sense of communality, or a supportive group identity (Krashen, 1985: von Wörde, 2003).

Some of these initiatives are:

* Student-designed learning seminars/workshops with a focus on all the languages being taught in the department and in which students will have the opportunity to develop the skills required in their field outside of the classroom.
* Student-led workshops where students can design activities connected to a specific learning outcome.
* Supplemental peer-assisted instruction interventions, where second year students will help (ex-) beginners’ students increase their confidence and overcome common difficulties.
* Discussion groups in which students can exchange ideas on a specific section of an assignment before submission.

Even if students’ contributions are about their insights on learning, active student participation requires both educators and students to take on new responsibilities and, as such, it may cause challenges, frustration, and even resistance from both educators and students. As much of the literature testifies (e.g. Nonesuch (2008); Felder (2011); Kloss (1994)), it will be important that we acknowledge and address these challenges as part of the process.