

Addressing the Goals
Projects 4b Year 2 and 4a Year 3

Stephan Lhotzky

Title of Project: Writing in German: Assessing the Gulf Between the Intermediate and the Advanced Level

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Grant section: 4a, 4b

Project timeline: July, 2004 – June, 2005

Statement regarding the four overall goals of the Faculty Development Grant:

The above project relates to points 1, 3, and 4 more directly than to point 2.

Overall Goals:

1. In what ways have we achieved better understanding of student-teacher relationships and their significance to learning?
3. In what ways have we explored and applied familiar and unfamiliar enhancements of the teacher-student relationship?
4. In what ways have we enhanced assessment of student learning? How can we apply that to the curriculum?

Point 1:

The student-teacher relationship with its significance to learning was certainly one of the main areas of work in the project.

Student understanding of the purpose of the project was crucial – without that understanding, the project would not have been successful. The students understood the significance of the project's features in regard to their learning. Specifically, they understood that, in order to increase grammatical correctness and lower the frustration of writing in German, they must follow the guidelines the project provided via the worksheets developed for the course. There was complete cooperation between the students and the instructor – that, in itself, enhanced the student-teacher relationship.

Point 3:

The project clearly meant an enhancement of teacher-student relationship. While the purpose of teaching should always have the students' learning in mind, there are other factors in that complex relationship, such as pressure to learn through deadlines, teacher expectations, classroom atmosphere, etc. In this project, the students' positive response provided the instructor with a definite re-enforcement of the project goals. In short, it was a positive experience for the instructor and lead to an expansion of the project to other advanced German courses at Augustana.

Point 4:

A contribution to the overall assessment of student learning in the German program at Augustana was one of the objectives of the project. The notion that students who graduate with a major in one of the languages offered at Augustana (as well as at other US institutions of higher learning) have "mastered" the specific language must be questioned, because the standard is not clearly defined. Part of the project's premise was that, in many ways, American undergraduate academic programs pretend to deliver outcomes that fall short in international comparison. It is, for example, highly deceptive to declare graduates of a foreign language program "proficient" in the language without the clear distinction between the four language skills. This project, however, has successfully begun a course of academic honesty in the area of writing in a foreign language. American college graduates in foreign languages are not fully proficient in writing, but through a systematic approach such as the one the project developed they can become proficient at a certain level.

Point 2:

Relating the project to point 2 is somewhat difficult due to the common, mostly utilitarian approach to foreign language education in the United States. It is hoped that this project will make a modest contribution to the identity of Augustana College as a college that does not promote quick personal gain through skills acquired but rather the acquisition of skill and, most importantly, the intellectual growth of the student.

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