What Constitutes a Great Practicum Experience?

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NCOLCTL Executive Director

Outline of the Presentation

• Objective of the Presentation
• A Short Description of the NCOLCTL Teacher Training Program
• Testimonies on the Transformational Experience of the Participants
• Best Practices at the NCOLCTL StarTalk Teacher Training Program
• Open Discussion of Other Best Practices

A description of the NCOCLTL STARTALK Program

• The National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL) organizes the StarTalk Professional Development Program.
• It’s a hands-on training of prospective and new teachers of Swahili at the post-secondary level.

Overview

• There are two parts to this program.
• The first part is devoted to the Online Teaching Methods Course for LCTLs.
• The Online Teaching Methods course was developed by the UW-Madison Language Institute and NCOLCTL.
• Schleicher developed modules on teaching African languages. These modules are very critical to the Summer StarTalk Program.

• The participants were expected to complete the modules before arriving in Bloomington, IN for the residential two-week program.
• Overall, the StarTalk program is a three-week program: one week of distance learning and two weeks of residential face-to-face instruction in Bloomington, Indiana.
• First week of residential program is filled with short presentations and modeling from “Master Teachers”.
• During the second week, teachers get to do their practicum with volunteer students.
Testimonies on the Transformational Experience of the Participants

• Kennedy Onyanja, Umoja Heritage learners
  “When it came to understanding the concept of proficiency and backward design, I started questioning myself: Why haven’t we been teaching this way? You stop and wonder why you didn’t have such practices in your program. The students we had here were unlike any other students that I have ever handled. I feel like a born again teacher.

• Veronica Waweru, Southern Connecticut University
  “These students are my first Swahili teaching experience. I learnt so much about them in the little time that we spent together. Usually names are all I ever get to know about students but this time it was different. In these two weeks, I already know more about them than I have ever known any of my former students. Students will criticize you, but in a very humane way. When you are doing something right, they will let you know.”

• Mokaya Bosire, University of Oregon-Eugene
  “After having learned this new way of teaching, I have to go back and apologize to my former students. I feel like I have been cheating them”.

• Diana Arroyo, Volunteer Student, Indiana University
  As a student, I have learnt a lot from this volunteer experience. I teach Spanish and I am going to apply some of the skills that I saw here to my teaching.

• Mellisa Gueneverra, Volunteer student, Indiana University
  I can’t believe I know all this Swahili having learned it for just 4 days. The teachers responded to all the feedback that we gave them and the lessons just became perfect. I hope I can pursue Swahili in the future.

Best Practices

• StarTalk Principles
• Modelling
• The Power of Feedback
  – Self Evaluation
  – Volunteer Students’ Feedback
  – Peer Evaluation
StarTalk Principles

- StarTalk Principles of Effective FL Teaching
  - Implementing a Standards-Based and Thematically Organized Curriculum
  - Facilitating a Learner-Centered Classroom
  - Using the Target Language and Providing Comprehensible Input for Instruction
  - Integrating Culture, Content, and Language in a World Language Classroom

- Adapting and Using Age-Appropriate Authentic Materials
- Conducting Performance-Based Assessment

The Power of Feedback

- Self Reflection/Evaluation of Practicum
  - What were the performance objectives of your lesson and were you able to achieve these objectives?
  - What did you do at the following steps?
    • Overview
    • Prime
    • Practice
    • Check
  - What pleased you about this lesson?
  - What would you do differently and why?

Volunteer Students’ Evaluation

- What aspect of the lesson did you like best?
- Did you understand what the instructor was teaching?
- Was there enough repetition to help you master what you were asked to do?
- Did you have a clear understanding of what the instructor was asking you to do throughout the lesson?
- What suggestions do you have for the instructors to help you learn better?
- Any other suggestions for the instructors?
### Peer Observation and Evaluation

- **The lesson has clearly stated culturally appropriate performance objectives**

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- **The lesson is Standards-based**

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- **The instructor has facilitated a student-centered classroom**

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- **The instructor uses the target language 90% of the time**

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- **The instructor uses comprehensible input strategies and monitors students' performance**

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- **The instructor uses appropriate authentic materials**

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- **The instructor uses formative assessment of student performance during the course of the lesson**

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- **The instructor achieved the stated performance objectives**

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### OPEN DISCUSSION

- Teachers discuss with one another better strategies that could have been employed to improve their teaching.

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