Star Academy Critique

ABSTRACT

Designed for an Advanced French Language unit at UWA, this task is a fun way to blend (popular and youth) culture, with language objectives within a language unit. The role play is set as an online critique writing competition, with face-to-face classes providing support in enabling students to write a professional film/book review in French.

DESCRIPTION

Designed by Eleanor Sandry and Helene Jaccommard (UWA) Star Academy Critique is modelled along the line of a French reality television talent show, Star Academy. The show concept has been modified to become a way to find, not singers, but film or book reviewers, and the Star Academy banner has been re-designed to read "Star Academy Critique" and sport the faculty colour scheme.

AUDIENCE/GROUP SIZE

The role play was designed for higher level French language students who have not previously experienced such a learning design. This exercise has been run for 24 level 3 students which was broken into 2 groups of students.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The intended learning outcomes for participants include:
- Develop writing, research, reading and communicative skills at an advanced level
- Write formal and informal texts of short to medium lengths with specific communicative intentions, to persuade, justify or analyse
- Develop cultural knowledge of France by viewing/reading texts from popular or high culture (films or books)
- Research and analyse film/book reviews as cultural products and writing models
- Create authentic documents to be read by students' peers

TIME AND SETTING

Set in the present day, the learning design spans over twelve weeks (usually during a 13 week semester). Students are introduced to the exercise and choose their preferred alias in the first week of the simulation. Some time needs to be allowed at the beginning of semester for changes in enrolment, and to prevent this from causing problems with student access to the application.

RESOURCES

ICT allows this learning design to utilise a shared website, which students can access and add to at any time and from any computer, whether at home or on campus. The Simulation website forms a central

part of this unit. Each student uses an alias, identified by a cartoon face. The interaction can therefore remain anonymous, which has been shown to help some students in engaging with such interactions fully. The Simulation website is essential, as it provides an interface between students but maintains their anonymity through the use of aliases. It provides a different way to interact from normal face-to-face classes, both using conversational French, and also through the writing of the book/film review. It allows for flexible access and does not enforce spatial and temporal constraints, other than final deadlines for pieces of work. The ICT component gives students the opportunity to develop a critical persona through their alias, and this can influence the style of the review they write, and can help to facilitate their use of French in a new context.

ASSESSMENT
The simulation contributed 25% to the overall assessment for the unit.
It is critical that the work prepared for the Simulation website forms a part of the overall assessment. Splitting the assessment over two interaction phases in addition to the written reviews and voting procedure helps students to maintain an interest in the simulation.

THE PROCESS
Students adopted one of 15 available roles. When in role students completed tasks including:
- Choose book/film to review, send a message about this choice
- Bring an example review about any book/film to class for discussion
- Write a draft review and email to tutor
- Read reviews and vote for the best, email reasons for choice to tutor
- Exchange messages about films/books.

FACILITATOR ISSUES
- Assessing and marking was problematic, as was monitoring students
- Important to carefully fame learning outcomes – don't inflate target outcomes
- Requires strict calendar of events for tasks and clear assessment procedures
- Reusability
- Time consuming to submit draft to tutor for correcting prior to posting online.

REUSABILITY
It was difficult to balance the contemporary nature of the setting with the need for the setting to last over time, as such the role play became stale too quickly.

REFERENCES AND LINKS
Multimedia Centre: Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Western Australia.