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Assignment #8

Collaboration

In order to make my research more meaningful, it will be necessary to collaborate effectively with other teachers. I will attempt to reach out to other teachers who teach the same level of Spanish as I do and are interested in the same topic: student motivation and how it relates to the types of feedback we provide as teachers. I may be able to work with my building's media specialists as well, particularly when it comes to the literature review of existing research on my topic. They may be able to lead me to resources I may have otherwise overlooked. Alternatively, if I cannot find another teacher who wants to do the project with me at my building, I may be able to at least use them to help me gather my data. For example, I may be able to ask colleagues who teach the same prep as I do to give out my survey to their students and I could then use that data in my study.

As far as I know there is no group of teacher researchers organized in my district. So, I could work to create a group of educators who is interested in the topic. Some ways I might do this would be to first get in contact with my building professional development coordinator in order to confirm that no such group exists (if one does, there's no sense in recreating the wheel! Instead I could simply join this group). If, however, no such group exists, then, I could ask this person to keep me informed of individuals who express an interest in conducting action research as a component of their individual professional development plans. I could make a point to contact these

individuals and meet to discuss our research plans. From there, we could agree to meet at regular intervals during the school year to support one another and share successes and struggles with our experiences conducting classroom inquiries.

Finally, if I am unable to find anybody within my local teaching assignment interested in working with me, I may still be able to collaborate with other educators who are doing inquiry in their classrooms by going online. I already use Twitter to connect with a variety of educators around the world, for example. I could extend my professional learning network (PLN) online to include those conducting classroom action research. I could begin to blog about my experiences more frequently (again, I already have a blog that is mostly devoted to my teaching & learning experiences, but, I could use it more readily to share what I've found and connect with other like-minded teachers around the world). Other ways I might connect with educators already doing research online include finding online message boards related to the topic and contributing my own ideas while looking for others who may want to work with me.

A less likely, but still possible, source of collaboration would be my classmates from OSU classes. It is possible we could get each others' contact information during a course and, after the courses have ended, remain in contact, sharing our experiences online through blogs or some other medium and occasionally supplementing with face to face meetings, since most of us live in the Columbus area.

Regardless of who I choose to collaborate with, I must collaborate. I need multiple perspectives to help me interpret my data soundly. I also need to learn from the procedures used by other teachers teaching similar and dissimilar subjects. We all have

so much to learn from each other and our voices can make a difference in this profession. It's time to stop keeping to ourselves so much and start connecting.

Financial Support

Materials Needed	Source
Computer w/ access to PowerTeacher Gradebook Web App & iTunes	Already own - both school-provided computers & personal computers
Paper for surveys	School Xerox machine or Kinkos* if necessary *Called to receive quote: 800 2-sided black & white copies = \$119.56 (22 cents per double-sided copy or \$119.56 for 800 - volume discount)
iPod or other recording device	Already own - provided by my school; if it wasn't working the day of the discussion I could use my personal iPhone or iPad voice recording app.

I am very lucky to have a lot of support in my district. We are not limited as to the number of copies we are allowed to make using our Xerox machines. Therefore making my surveys at the beginning, middle, and end of my project should not be a problem. If, however, the Xerox machine were for some reason broken, I could easily head to a local FedEx Kinkos to make my copies, which may cost around \$120 (see table above). I also will need a computer with access to both my gradebook webapp, PowerTeacher, and iTunes. Again, I am fortunate to already own a machine provided by my school with these programs. I also have access to these programs on my personal computer. If, however, I needed to get a computer to use for this purpose, I would spend at least

\$999 for a new MacBook air in order to have the most up to date technology for use in my teaching and research. I also need access to a recording device for my class discussion. I have a school-issued iPod for this purpose and if it wasn't working the day of the discussion I have several personal devices I could use, including my personal phone and iPad. If I needed to replace a device, however, I would spend \$199 to buy an iPod Touch, both for its recording abilities and other capabilities to enhance learning in my classroom.

I have a few places within my district that I can look for funding before resorting to outside organizations. First I can speak with my head of department and see if any of our department money can be earmarked for funding research in the classroom. I could also check with my principal to see if there is discretionary funding for such needs at the building or district level, particularly if the teacher conducting the research agrees to share the findings as a professional development opportunity for other teachers.

Should these routes of funding prove fruitless, I can still look other places within my local teaching assignment prior to looking at outside organizations. For example, our high school PTO provides mini-grants to teachers for "projects, activities, and/or materials that they are unable to obtain from traditional sources." As long as the need is one that will enhance or supplement learning, support students and departments, and other funding options have been at least partially explored, a teacher is eligible to complete the mini-grant application. To apply a teacher need only download the mini-grant application (a simple 1 page document emailed to us each semester) and fill it out by the due date (minigrants are offered each fall and spring). The PTO then meets

to discuss grant applications and awards grants to the best causes. Each time I have requested a grant in the past I have been awarded what I requested. Therefore, I have reason to believe that if I needed funding to help support my research this would be a good place to turn.

Sharing results

Once I can fund my research and have collaborated with other teachers to complete my project, I will have valuable insight into my topic which deserves sharing. I will share results with teachers in my department, building, and district, as well as with teachers around the world who may also be interested in my findings.

First I will share with my colleagues within my department. I will request some time at a monthly department meeting to share my findings and elicit feedback from my colleagues. Next, I will revise my presentation based on the feedback I obtain from my department and then bring my findings to my principal's attention, requesting some time to share my procedures and findings with colleagues at a faculty meeting. This may also be a good time to recruit teachers interested in classroom inquiry for future projects. I could have a sign-up sheet for teachers interesting in doing research in their classrooms available and then follow up with those teachers to build a network at my building of teacher researchers. Next, I will check in with my district's leader of professional development to see if there is a way to ensure that teachers doing inquiry projects can obtain professional development credit for their work and then ask him or her to help facilitate setting up a first meeting for teacher researchers in my district to get together to share our results from our various projects with one another and learn from each others'

mistakes and successes. This may even fit within our existing framework for ongoing professional development, PLCs (professional learning communities). Perhaps a district-level PLC devoted to teacher research in the classroom could be created and advertised for interested teachers to join.

Finally I will attempt to share my research with other teachers around the world. For example, I will blog about my research throughout the process of coming up with my wondering to designing my data collection and analysis plans, to actually sharing my findings. I will tweet links to my blog posts to my PLN as I go through my research process so that interested educators around the world can follow my work and comment, providing me with valuable insight from their own experiences.

Finally I will submit my findings to be published by relevant websites and journals. One website that may find my research of interest is www.iste.org (the International Society for Technology in Education). The findings about how students may or may not prefer feedback provided electronically would be especially relevant to this website. Another website that may be relevant is www.actfl.org (the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages). Since my research centers around students learning Spanish, my findings may be relevant to share with other language teachers who consider ACTFL's website as a source of reliable information. Finally, I could submit my findings to <http://www.eteach.ohio.gov/action-research/studies/> (the eTech Ohio Action Research page). This page is dedicated to recording research studies that have been conducted by teachers here in Ohio. The studies are organized by grade level, content area, technology incorporated, and the study title. Contributing

my findings to this site would be a way of joining a growing local community of teacher researchers!

I will also try to publish my work in journals. The Journal of Research on Technology (<http://www.iste.org/learn/publications/journals/jrte-old.aspx>), a publication of ISTE, may be a relevant place to start. This journal contains articles that are intended for an audience of teachers and teacher educators as well as tech coordinators, policy makers, and leaders in the industry of Educational Technology. Articles are typically peer-reviewed, although the reviewers may be from any of the above sub-groups and thus teachers may be included in the review process. In the most current issue (fall 2011), some of the studies published deal with blogging and podcasting in the classroom while another describes the topic of the teacher's laptop as a "hub for learning in the classroom". A variety of grade levels and teaching environments are included in ISTE's publications and I believe my study at the secondary level with language students could provide interesting variety.

The Language Educator, (<http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4114>) a publication of The American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is also a good place to begin. This publication serves language educators of all levels and tries to ensure complete and timely coverage about the profession to its readers. It therefore includes articles on trends in language teaching and learning, an emphasis on integration of technology into language teaching & learning, and articles that pertain to all levels of language study from primary through post-secondary settings. My perspective as a language teacher at the secondary level focusing on the effectiveness

of various forms of feedback, including the potential for providing feedback online, may be something that grabs the attention of many other language teachers - I know because I'd read an article on the topic!

Finally, the Journal New Horizons for Learning (NHFL) (<http://education.jhu.edu/newhorizons/submission-guidelines-1/Submission%20Guidelines>), a publication of John Hopkins University School of Education, looks like a good place to submit my work. This journal encourages collaboration among all education professionals and looks for submissions such as lesson plans, rubrics, assessments, and experiments. It accepts submissions from a wide variety of people including researchers, parents, students, museum directors, and teachers. Therefore I think my research would have a chance of being accepted for publication. Since the publication's goal is to provide a forum to facilitate open dialogue between researchers and professionals I think any teacher action research project would be of interest to the publishers of this journal.

Implications

It's difficult to imagine the outcome of my study. I have a hypothesis, of course, about what my results may be, but, it's still fascinating to wonder about whether or not my initial wonderings will be fully answered by my research. While I am studying the affects of different forms of feedback (oral vs verbal; formative vs summative, traditional vs electronic) on student motivation for learning Spanish, I have an idea in mind that students will prefer formative oral feedback that is provided electronically.

If my suspicions are confirmed, I will be very excited to write up my study and

share it with colleagues locally and globally. It's hard not to be motivated by your study turning out just the way you dreamed it would. Such a result would probably confirm my interest in classroom inquiry and give me a bit of a personal boost as well as boost to my sense of self-efficacy as a teacher. I'd get a little bit of an "I know what I'm doing here after all!" sense from a positive result.

If, however, my results are not what I expect, I may initially be disappointed. After all, to have an idea in mind and go about putting all that time into collecting and analyzing data only to have it tell a story different from the one I am expecting to hear may be a little like taking a disappointing drink of water when one is expecting a tasty frappuccino! But, after the disappointment wears off, I think I would probably learn even more from a negative result. Why? First of all, a negative result would force me to go back and review my findings and my data to determine whether or not I analyzed things correctly.

In addition, negative findings would raise all sorts of questions. Why did I think students would prefer oral feedback when in reality they liked receiving written comments? Was it because this is my own personal preference? In what ways might my own bias as a learner with specific preferences be affecting my teaching practice, and, consequently, the learning of my own students? These questions would likely lead me to another inquiry project altogether to seek clearer answers. Launching myself into another classroom action research task would probably provide new opportunities to collaborate with previously unknown colleagues and my personal learning network (PLN) would continue to expand. Who knows what opportunities, personal or

professional, could stem from this experience?

Positive results, conversely, may provide an opportunity to influence the shape of the education profession on a larger scale. If I find something very specific and replicable about student preferences for a certain type of feedback and how it links to their motivation, it could have very concrete implications for classroom practice.

Teachers could be trained to give this type of feedback over other types and student learning could be improved on a national scale. I could, long term, publish my findings in a book that could be used in teacher education programs across the country to both explain the value of one type of feedback over another and to explain step by step how to provide such feedback to students in a way that is realistic for classroom teachers.