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Learning Through Correspondence: Creating Inter-Classroom and Global Understanding Through Letter Writing

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Learning through Correspondence

Creating Inter-Classroom and Global Understanding through Letter Writing

An ORTESOL Presentation
By Della Abrahams

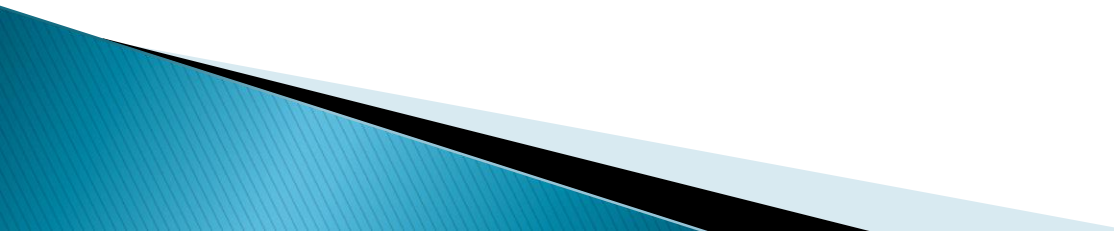
Why this Project?

- ▶ An intermediate community college writing course
 - A need for an authentic writing purpose!
 - How?
- ▶ An upper level university reading course
 - A need for authentic source of information!
 - How?

Background: The Reading Class

- ▶ *The Immigrant Experience: A focus on Immigration in the U.S.*
- A small class of international students
- A focus on non-academic learning
- 3 main texts
 - *Newcomers to America* by Judith Greenberg
 - *Girl in Translation* by Jean Kwok
 - *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan

Background: The Writing Class

- ▶ A small, “intermediate” (mixed-level class)
 - ▶ A variety of cultural backgrounds
 - ▶ A focus on the paragraph with a goal of getting to the essay
 - ▶ No class textbook
- 

Steps to Collaboration

- ▶ Students in the Immigrant Experience used *Newcomers to America* as a guide
 - Studied and discussed issues faced by immigrants
 - Learning English, finding a job, cultural assimilation
 - Worked together to write interview questions similar to those in the book
- ▶ Students in the writing class worked on “life paragraphs”
 - Their families, their jobs, their hometowns, their futures

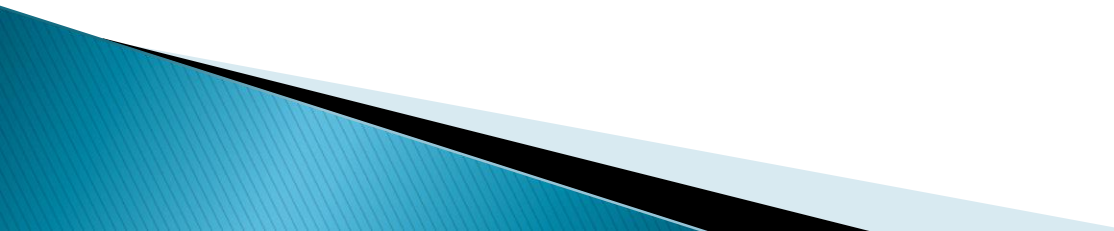
Letter Exchange

- ▶ Students in the Immigrant Experience class wrote letters
 - Letters were peer edited before sending
[immigrant experience\carla letter to linda.pdf](#)
- ▶ Each student in the writing class received a letter and wrote a response
 - Wrote responses about their lives
[immigrant experience\Linda_ letter to Carla.pdf](#)

Afterward: The Immigrant Experience Class

- Researched populations of immigrants and specific issues faced by them
- Used pen pal letters, internet resources and textbooks
- Created a presentation detailing the experiences of that population in Oregon
 - Somalia, Mexico, Vietnam, El Salvador, the Ukraine
- Wrote thank you letters to pen pals

Afterward: The Writing Class

- ▶ Used letters to pen pals to compose “life essays”
 - ▶ Peer edited each other’s essays
 - ▶ Made a class compilation of “life essays”
- 

Learning Outcomes


▶ Reading:

- Evaluating, synthesizing and summarizing sources
- Comparing and contrasting rhetorical styles
 - Textbook interviews, personal essays, pen pal letters, internet materials, newspaper articles

▶ Writing:

- Paragraph / Essay / personal letter structures
- Sentence level grammar
- Peer editing techniques

▶ Critical Thinking and Culture:

- Comparing life experiences
 - Increasing geographical, political, and historical awareness
 - Analyzing themes of racism, classism, poverty
- 

Final Comments

- ▶ Students from both classes loved the project!
- ▶ Project could be altered to fit class objectives:
 - Two sections of the same class
 - Two lower level / upper level writing classes
 - Classes of different age groups
 - A variety of different themes
- ▶ Could you do a project like this with your class?

*Thank
you*

