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Challenging assumptions: Student engagement and language learning – a novel approach
“By learning you will teach; by teaching you will learn”

- Latin Proverb
Brief Summary of Project

• Service Learning in Italian
• Community Knowledge initiative (CKI)
• 2 modules: Semester 1 theory, Semester 2 practice
• Final Year Arts Students
Aims of the Project

- Bridge gap university and community
- Foster positive attitude towards language learning
- Give students opportunity to engage in practical work
- Civic mission of higher education
Italian Day 2007
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• It was a learning experience, and every week our confidence and abilities as teachers grew. We picked up hints and ideas from the children in every lesson. In my opinion, learning from experience is perhaps the best way to sum up the learning cycle. The students learn the language from experience during the communicative approach whereas Joanne and I learnt from the experience of teaching the class. Watching how children reacted and writing it in our weekly reflections our knowledge grew.
• I didn’t expect the six weeks teaching to change me as such as I did. I really grew in confidence, not only in general but also specifically, in terms of confidence in my ability in Italian.

• It was reciprocal learning. The pupils taught me so much about myself as I hope to have done for them also.
Teaching Italian for the past six weeks has been an incredible experience for me both personally and academically. Language is fundamental in breaking down barriers to opening the mind to new possibilities, new diversities, and a new way of living. I have been studying the theoretical side of Italian for the past four years and now after just six weeks with Claddagh N.S. I have seen its practical side.
• Teaching Italian not only increased my awareness about social issues but also enhanced my own educational experience and personal development. I got the opportunity to see Italian is in most practical and real sense.

• It was different from all the other modules. It challenged different aspects of my educational experience. But I thought it was very good as it gave us great freedom but also great responsibility.
• Over the six weeks I noticed a significant development in my own confidence in the class-room. I started to relish the whole experience by coming up with innovative and new ideas to make learning but also teaching fun.

• On a more personal level, teaching Italian in Claddagh N.S. has been an eye opening experience. Not only were the children learning something new and valuable but we the “teachers” were being taught something just as significant.
• How can you express all that we have learned in words, it’s impossible. This idea of Service Learning is important not only in showing us that we bring our skills to the wider community to provide a service that was missing. It is also important because of how much I have learned and grown as a person. The students also learned so much.
• I have personally matured. I had a wonderful experience and would do it again next week if I had the opportunity.

• It was interesting to discover both my own development as a teacher and that of my partner. I would like to see Service Learning modules taken up by other faculties.
The Students
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