

Title: Experiential Language Learning: Teaching Czech to Study Abroad Students in Prague
Author: Eva Eckert, Anglo-American University, Prague

The purpose of the presentation is to highlight links between the foreign language and its sociocultural environment during a study abroad semester, and show how to design tasks and activities for students so that they benefit from experiencing directly the cultural context. The language course focuses on the fact that language is inseparable from culture whose meanings it reveals in Czech concepts, phrases and contextual cues as part of linguistic and nonlinguistic communication. Throughout the semester this fact is illustrated through activities in and out of the classroom. The teaching materials are organized in such a way so as to enhance the classroom learning with cultural experiences the city offers tied into the lessons on grammar and conversation.

Among the experiential learning environments the following ones are discussed and illustrated in detail: Trams, poster walls in streets, and the city streets. Through daily encounters students are drawn into the Czech cultural space whose novelty is highlighted for them to appreciate. In the classroom they are specifically instructed on how to benefit from the visual and auditory stimuli of Czech cultural expressions and behaviors played out in the environments.

The value of students' culminating experience and the final test, i.e., a day trip to a historical town near Prague will be analyzed for the tasks assigned, directions given, questions followed, cultural environments encountered and skills tested out. The purpose of the trip is for students to act out independently the conversational strategies of shopping, traveling and asking for directions and to gain the joy of managing the Czech sociocultural space while discovering the makeup of a medieval city.

Over the course of the semester the foreign language was taught and experienced with a goal for the students to appreciate the value of cultural diversity and reject the notion of a global understanding.