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What to Do When Intermediate Czech is Elementary Czech Redux

Now that Czech enrollment numbers have dwindled in the United States and its status as a “boutique” language is more and more confirmed, strategies for recruitment for the language have become more aggressive and, in some cases, desperate. Perhaps for survival reasons—coupled with inadequate and uneven competency examination, the Less Commonly Taught Languages find themselves in the singular dilemma of addressing students of varied competencies at the Intermediate level, students who may not have appropriately mastered elementary skills or have wildly differing skills and deficits. In this presentation I will draw on my experience of teaching a highly dispersed set of Czech language learners vis-à-vis proficiency at the Intermediate level and offer suggestions for exercises, assignments, and projects that might be implemented equitably across the aptitude divides.

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“Learning to Write: Genre-Based Writing Projects in Beginning and Intermediate Polish”

The teaching of foreign languages is not a light task for any teacher as, often, they are also teaching skills which go beyond the language classroom. Writing, as a skill, is one that is cultivated in the native language (L1) for the entire education of the student and, upon entering into a foreign language (FL) classroom, many teachers assume that there will be carryover of those skills on the part of the students. In fact, many post-secondary students lack strong writing skills, even in their L1, upon entering college, thus it is often the case that FL teachers find themselves needing to also teach basic writing skills in concurrence with teaching a FL. The vast research in second language acquisition (SLA), that considers FL writing skills, covers an array of topics and traditions and considers the cognitive factors that play a role in learning to write in a FL. The research on the impact of writing on FL development suggests that new forms first emerge in journal writing (Weissberg, 2000), that the act of writing can help learners in paying attention to forms (Kim et al., 2001), that providing scaffolded pre-writing activities in conjunction with planning time increases grammatical accuracy (Ellis and Yuan, 2004), along with various perspectives and implications for feedback provided to learners and how learners respond it to (Ellis, 2001, Norris & Ortega, 2000, Williams (2004) and many more).

After a brief a summary of the recent SLA research on approaches to writing (including: process writing, genre-based writing, digital writing, feedback, writing assessment practices), I will suggest how to effectively integrate the two perspectives of writing to learn (learning language through mass writing and writing with feedback) and learning to write (developing literacy skills through awareness of genres), and conclude with implications for genre-based writing projects in the FL classroom.