

## FINAL REPORT ON SAT GRANT 2009

**Project title:** Multi-modal Language Acquisition Through the use of Technology  
Principal Investigator:

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### **Original objectives and strategies, and revisions to same:**

The objectives of the grant were to develop a language acquisition program that would allow students and faculty to deepen the current pedagogical approaches to language acquisition through the use of collaborative technology. The project sought to capitalize on technological resources available at UMass Dartmouth while simultaneously utilizing the digital skills that our students bring to the learning environment.

The project sought to link UMass Dartmouth students with students from the University of Cape Verde through an on line environment, where they would have the opportunity to discuss issues introduced by their respective instructors. Students at both institutions would communicate weekly as a supplement to their face-to-face classroom instruction. The project utilized both synchronous and asynchronous communication formats such as Utilization of Wimba, a synchronous voice tool. The language of use in these e-sessions would alternate between Capeverdean and English. Students were encouraged to communicate with their counterparts beyond the time exigency of the grant.

Some of the specific skills that the project sought to develop included but were not limited to:

### **Enhanced Language Competence**

We expected that students will develop increased language fluency in Creole and English.

### **Increased Awareness of Cultural Diversity and Historical Links Among the Groups**

Since the communication of students was structured thematically (history, culture), we expected that students developed an increased cultural and historical understanding of each other.

### **Critical Analysis and Inter-group Communicative Skills**

The development of collaborative projects structured around the students' realities provided opportunities for students to become critically aware of their surroundings.

### **Enhanced Multi-media Understanding**

The technical aspects of this language acquisition program provided students with an opportunity to increase their current understanding of the potential for collaborative technologies in learning generally.

### **Collective Problem Solving**

The use of collaborative projects in the assessment phase of the language acquisition program was to provide opportunities for students to engage in collective problem solving in the accomplishment of the overall objective.

Our objectives and strategies remained consistent with the grant proposal. Our ability to develop a mutual, overall assessment project was however hampered due to scheduling conflicts between the two universities, particularly during the spring semester. Because of these scheduling conflicts, the primary revisions to the project revolved around giving students the flexibility of communicating outside the time requirements provided in the original grant proposal. Our assessment of the program's effectiveness is based primarily on the qualitative reports from the project participants and administrators.

### **Activities carried out**

#### **Students on both campuses were required to communicate weekly with their counterparts through synchronous or asynchronous formats.**

The student's communication was thematically guided each week. Students were initially required to introduce themselves and find out some information about their counterparts at the university of Cape Verde. During the remainder of the semester, the students' progress was continuously assessed in class and new topics of discussion, such as, history, culture, music, food etc were introduced. The only guide to the communication between the cohorts was the thematic guide.

Additionally students were videotaped to produce tangible artifacts which could be used in future projects. These interviews were centrally geared to allowing counterparts to get a better understanding of university life on both campuses and some of the challenges and possibilities that students face.

### **Deliverables**

The artifacts developed in the project are commensurate with the current learning objectives of the foundation courses of Cape-Verdean Creole [CVC 101, 102, 201 and 202]. This particular learning format can now be replicated by other departments within the university in specific content areas.

**Assessment: what can you say about the effectiveness and/or impact of your work, on what bases?**

Assessments of the project have been accomplished primarily through qualitative reports from participants as well as project administrators. Additionally, informal assessments have been a continuous focus of the course instructors. While students have been encouraged to pursue further language studies and demonstratively show an increased level of fluency in both languages (one of the primary objectives of the project), projects administrators are particularly pleased that much of the initiated interactions during the course of the semester have continued on an informal basis through the students' own initiatives. More in-depth overall project assessments were hampered by difficulties of scheduling during the spring 09 semester.

**Issues and further questions raised by your work - things you'd like to investigate further or would leave for others**

One of the areas that as investigators we feel can be further developed relate to the critical nature of the learning process. As an initial project, our objectives have tended to remain focused on simply developing language fluency yet we can envision a more indepth learning exchange where thematically critical studies can be fused with language acquisition.

**Disposition of funds. Please note the expectation that any unexpended funds will be returned to the President's Office.**

Given our ability to utilize some recently acquired learning tools from the university as well making use of freely available online tools, our current expenditures for the development of the project were less than originally proposed. The used funds were utilized to purchase equipment which allowed us to develop artifacts for continued use as well 2 investigator stipends for development of program artifacts.

**Any other comments you'd like to make - including your assessment of the grant program itself**

This grant allowed us to initiate a study into a new mode of language acquisition with long-term potential benefits for both universities. Beyond capitalizing on skills which our students brought into the university it also allowed the instructors to engage with the learning/teaching process in the new medium of technology. We believe that this new medium can be powerful if deliberately explored for its richness. The grant has solidified a relationship with the University which will likely be enhanced in the future.

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