

**Learning, Student Well-being, and the Classroom:
Reimagining a Class through Focus on Community**

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Abstract. Observations of low student motivation, siloed learning, student loneliness and anxiety, along with a disconnect between classroom learning and life application inspired the authors to explore possible causes. They studied the correlates of classroom-community-life connection and implemented their learning in the revision of a language and culture course. Their work has resulted in a shift in teaching, one that moves away from a purely academic outcome to one that prioritizes community. Approaching teaching and learning through this community lens, the authors are discovering new excitement in their learners, higher levels of student engagement, and increased student motivation to learn and connect learning to their larger life context.

The process of learning and teaching is both surprisingly simple and deeply complex, and decades of teaching reveal insights at often unexpected points in time. Not long ago, we both stood in front of a new class and experienced an epiphany that has changed everything about our teaching, something that seems obvious enough but is easily forgotten in the midst of the planning, execution, and evaluation that belong to the teaching process. Like many college instructors, we teach certain classes that are required for graduation. Such classes bring a broad spectrum of students together, students representing a variety of interests, expectations, life backgrounds, and no particular central bond.

One semester, this reality became especially apparent. The group that we encountered in our introductory language and culture class represented a broad spectrum of our university's student population in terms of age, gender, socio-economic status, and race. As we informally surveyed the class on the first day, we learned some important details. One was that without exception every student had enrolled due to graduation requirements and that the goal of the vast majority of students was merely earning "good grades" in the class. Another detail was the thought-provoking realization that many of the students were carrying with them negative memories of the course's subject matter from high school experiences. We also found no up-front evidence of students desiring to be in the class, and although everyone was polite, little to no excitement was noticeable. As is often the case at the beginning of the semester, students, upon entering class, scanned the room for familiar faces and sat near those people. Those who knew no one sat alone, shuffled into the group of other equally unknown students or remained anonymous in the presence of those who had gravitated toward each other. There we stood in the first stretch of a semester-long course. We were prepared to share a topic that we are both passionate about but to a group of students who, out of disconnection or general disinterest, ran

the risk of merely going through the motions or entirely detaching themselves from the deep learning and from one another. We thought especially about students who were clearly alone, outside of the pack, carrying memories of negative experiences. We pondered what we could do for them.

Initial Ponderings

Experiencing this phenomenon, we engaged in a process of deep observation and even deeper reflection on the meaning of our experience. In doing so, we began to sort out what we knew and then proceeded to ask ourselves questions. We knew that we would be meeting with these students roughly three hours each week for fifteen weeks. We knew that the students needed to earn credit for the course in order to graduate. We knew that we very much wanted to share our excitement of the course's content with our learners and do so in a way that allowed them to truly learn, not merely earn passing grades. Furthermore, we desired our students to experience an enjoyment in learning through our classes and to develop a connection between the content and life that would point at lifelong learning. Beyond all of this, we sensed a deep level of compassion for the students, especially those who appeared to be alone that first class, and for several thereafter. For in studying the students in front of us each class meeting, we saw eyes, some filled with anxiety, others loneliness and still others detachment, but why? What combination of factors could possibly result in this outward despondency?

What was our best response to these observations? Did the outward signs that we observed represent what we thought they did? Were we looking into faces filled with anxiety? Were the looks that we saw looks of loneliness? What could be causing it? What could we do to positively affect it? Moreover, was what we were observing an isolated phenomenon, or could it be that others were seeing it as well, at our institution and in other places?

Initial Responses, Catalyst for a Study

In reflecting on this phenomenon, both individually and together, we realized that we stood at a nexus and desired to design a solution to the challenge. Our journey of discovery started during the Fall semester of 2016 and continues to the present. A timeline of our study is included in Table 1.

Table 1

Study Scope and Timeline

Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Summer 2017 – Fall 2017- Spring 2018	Summer 2018 – Fall 2019 - Spring 2019	Summer 2019 – Fall 2019 - Spring 2020
LIN 100 class “epiphany” moment	Explored “community”; used ice- breakers	Reading and Meta-Analysis started	SoTL Project #1: <i>Students as Members of the Learning Society</i> ; survey constructed; surveys collected in LIN 100 classes	SoTL Project #2: <i>Establishing a Learning Collective in LIN 100</i> ; the class “reimagined”

The course we were teaching was Linguistics (LIN) 100, *Language in Culture* which was first offered in Fall 2014. This team-taught course brought together a linguist (Michael) and a language content expert (Brian). Michael taught language learning theory and applications while Brian taught class sections in French and German. Michael earned a PhD in Linguistics while Brian earned an MA in Education with teaching qualifications in French and German. The course was designed to be hands-on, reflective, and practical. The course also was offered as part of the world language and global studies requirement at our university.

In that first semester, our initial response was to find a way to satiate our curiosity. We yearned to know more about our students, where they called home, what excited them, what skills and talents they possessed. And so, we began conceptualizing possible ways to answer some of these questions. We made it a point to open classes with ice-breaker questions and listened to how students answered. From there, we worked toward drawing students into groups for work in class, to mix even more ice-breaker activities into our teaching, and to reach out to students more than we had previously done. And so we did, recognizing some observable responses in certain students, but the benefits were limited. Most students joined in the activities and became more animated during the process, but upon returning to academic learning, the energy in class returned to something very similar to its previous state.

We decided to take the next step in studying our classes--learn the chemistry of the whole and try to develop that sticky substance that could potentially bond individuals to one another, establish an authentic sense of belonging among the students and us, and link our work to life beyond our direct learning space. How could we draw students together, though? How could we help them see the connection between their learning in our classes and life beyond the classroom? How could we positively affect the troubling looks that we observed in many eyes? How could we encourage the students in our class toward becoming a learning community that could act as a catalyst for growth?

Observations

In seeking out answers to these questions, we decided that we also needed to learn whether our observations were merely ours or if what we were experiencing held broader implications. We developed two research questions that guided our discovery process. First, does (a sense of) community have an impact on student success (i.e., both academically and emotionally)? Second, what are the characteristics of a class embodied with 'community'? This conclusion led us to explore in two specific directions. One was to perform a meta-analysis on topics related to our questions. We searched to verify and validate our perceptions of student challenges with loneliness, anxiety, and depression. We read broadly on learning communities, collaborative learning, and factors contributing to a person's sense of belonging to establish a better understanding of the scope of our study. In our reading, we found that the question of anxiety had received a great deal of focus, as studies show the extremely high levels of student loneliness (Diehl et al., 2018; Pijpers, 2017) and anxiety (Pisarik et al., 2017) among college students. We also found a broad spectrum of work on the topic of collaboration, benefits of collaboration, challenges (Gadgil & Nokes-Malach, 2011;

Sumers et al., 2005) to the practice, and teacher competencies (Brookfield, 2015; Kaendler et al., 2015) necessary to effectively implement it.

Secondly, as part of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) projects (Pasquale & Pickerd, 2018, 2019), we constructed our own survey to learn from student experiences and perspectives on a variety of factors connected to learning: environment, community, relationships, atmosphere and their effects on student disposition to the material, other students, and desire to learn (see Appendix A). We also included a selection of questions to learn about the connection of the instructor to a sense of community. Ultimately, we wanted to learn about the meeting point of learning, community, relationships, and well-being.

From this initial survey we discovered a great deal. Reading through responses to the qualitative questions, we were able to begin painting a picture of student preferences, attitudes, responses, wishes, and factors that weighed heavily into students' learning, sense of belonging/connectedness, and desire to invest. Some of the connected ideas that emerged were unsurprising, words such as *application, fair, organized, and interest in material*. Such ideas could be easily surmised without a survey. What drew us even more into our results were other words and ideas: *community, connection, caring, joy, laughter, enjoyment, trust, vulnerability, interaction, accepting, needs-recognition, personal, life-application, openness*. Other descriptors specifically connected to what students want their instructors to be: *humble, approachable, prepared, planned, sets the tone, models, welcomes, present, knows names, passionate*.

Discussion

As a result of our 2018 SoTL project, we developed a list of descriptors as a guide to how we re-imagined our class. Analyzing survey text responses, we noticed numerous themes and ideas emerge to describe a class that is effective. First, we analyzed the results with a word repetition technique. These are words or phrases that emerged frequently from student feedback and survey results. The most common themes and associated words are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Word Repetition and Emerging Themes

Theme:	Associated Words/Phrases:
Hospitality	Hospitable, friendly, welcoming
Authenticity	Authentic, real
Trust	Vulnerable, vulnerability, trusting
Interdependence	Collaboration, work together, depend on other
Life-connected	Common, one another, relationship

According to our original survey and results, we found the following as it relates to community in the classroom. First, it must be *hospitable* (Burwell & Huyser, 2013; Loewen, 2016). Students entering the learning space must be able to gain a sense that the place in which they will be learning and the instructor who will be teaching the course welcomes them into the space. The next characteristic is *authenticity*

(Cranton & Carusetta, 2004; Ramezanzadeh et. al., 2016). Everything about how the instructor plans and facilitates the course, approaches the students, and engages in the material must communicate a real, honest, and true interest in the subject matter, the call to teach, and the student. Another requirement for a community-driven classroom

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is *trust* (Huddy, 2015). Vulnerability and trust are key building blocks of connection. Knowing that one can trust another allows one to risk vulnerability and open up to others' thoughts and ideas. Then comes the combination of positive *interdependence and collaboration*

(Kelly, 2002). People who can work together, depend on each other, and accomplish goals together are also able work through other challenges together, build resilience, and support one another which are important ingredients in community. Finally, there is the requirement for a class to strive to be *life-connected* (Beck et al., 2017; Barkley & Major, 2020). Connecting course material to a larger life context draws students to a greater focus beyond themselves, helps them identify common goals, and relate to one another, the course, and the instructor.

We believe that drawing these qualities together and employing them in every aspect of course creation and facilitation works toward achieving both our students' well-being and learning goals. As instructors who highly value their students, we desire their success and well-being in all areas. Their academic well-being ranks high for us, for certain, but on the way to helping students achieve this success, we would be remiss if we were to ignore the many factors that feed into that success, especially factors that we can reasonably play a role in positively influencing.

Our study revealed high levels of connection between learning and community in the learning environment. This understanding emerged in the form of student responses to questions about instructor roles in one's sense of belonging, willingness to invest, and learning in general. Likewise, the results clearly communicated a strong tie between these same areas and the student-to-student connection in a class. Given this information, we are drawn to respond in a positive way. We are inclined toward building an environment in which students can achieve their goals, in which they are encouraged to invest, in which they experience a sense of hospitality and belonging, in which they can know those around them, and in which they can be known (Palmer, 2010). We desire for them to reap the benefits of a learning and work space that helps them grow in learning and develop as individuals though community.

Next, we wanted to see if there was any change or progression in how students viewed our classes. We compared our final class evaluations and student feedback from the LIN 100 courses from Fall 2016 until Spring 2019 semesters. We randomly selected five student evaluations per class in order to see what words or themes emerged and if there were any changes. The list of common words and phrases that emerged are presented in Table 3.

In analyzing the results of our word repetition study from the Fall semester of 2016 through the Spring semester of 2019, we observed a telling trend that corresponded directly with our work. In the beginning of our study, before we began

Table 3*Word and Phrase Progression*

Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019
Enthusiasm	Enthusiasm of	Productive	Teammates	Building
Passion of the	the instructor	work	Learn about	relationships
professor	Instructor	All	each other	Collaboration
Enjoyed	shares own	contributed	Be ourselves	Community
group	struggles (in	Journey	Banned	Not afraid to
projects	learning	Getting to	together	fail
Energy of the	language)	know others	Need to be	Learning
professor		Sharing ideas	intentional	together
Working in				
groups				

to intentionally integrate a focus on community into the classroom, the words and themes that surfaced in our study tended toward instructor focus with an infrequent mention of group work. Students noticed the "passion of the professor" or the "energy of the professor." As our reading, study, conversation, and implementation of our learning grew, however, student responses shifted. The instructor as an individual no longer was mentioned. Rather, the focus became the class, i.e., the community. Students began naming descriptions of the environment and how it positively affected them. They mentioned the descriptors *belonging* and *team*, rather than *alone*, *vulnerability*, or *benefitting from one another*. In essence, students were experiencing what we desired for them, i.e., learning and growing as a result of community.

The goal of our students' learning and success is, after all, aimed at preparing them for success in life: vocational (or professional) and life in general, and in both of those areas of life we see individuals having to live and work in varying types of community. We also see them needing to work in collaboration with others in an assortment of ways. By building our teaching and learning with a focus on community, we can aid our students in both. We can model community for them from within our work together, for it is in working together, through easy and challenging times, that we come to show our true selves and learn to work well with others. Likewise, it is in collaborating that we learn to collaborate. Leaving compartmentalized mindsets behind and understanding that there are times when we must share our insights and experiences to the benefit of others (and ourselves), we learn community and build skills for working effectively with others. We learn what works and what doesn't work. We become part of a community through our shared efforts and shared selves. We build success in our learning, and we grow in our well-being. Sharing this with our students helps them develop a mindset that works to their benefit, their success, and their well-being.

At the beginning of our discovery process, we began with questions about student anxiety, depression, and disconnectedness. We dove into how to address them, who was affected, and how these aspects related to class outcomes. We read, learned, applied, discussed, and did so again. Along the journey, which we thought was linear, we learned that this process was actually messy and meandering. We have learned that

what we really desire is an “atmosphere” that causes students to “want to be there” and one that likewise causes us as instructors to “want to be there” as well, all of which becomes independent of the subject or the particular group of students.

During this process our understanding of *community* has evolved. At first, for us, community related mainly to the classroom environment. As we explored and asked what that “sticky substance” was that got at success, we re-read classics such as Dewey (1938) and Vygotsky (1978) on learning communities, but these definitions did not match what we were trying to get at. Each of these works argued that community and belonging were essential, but what does that look like and what are the essential components? Zhao and Kuh (2004) discuss learning communities as programs, especially containing a residential element. Tinto (1997) suggests that community involves collaboration. Further work on “communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998) was related (e.g., the importance of engaging in learning with a group) but also did not encapsulate what we wanted to see at the classroom level, which includes the elements of relationship building. Then we tried to conceptualize what learning in community was and how students learned successfully. Initially we coined terms like “learning collective” and “learning society” to try to explain that learning in community was highly interdependent. What we ended up with was not just that learning together was important but crucially learning happened *through* community, that is, *community-driven learning*.

How is Community-Focused Learning Implemented? Our Class Reimagined

We have included and involved every aspect of teaching and learning, and since it is the role of the instructor to set the table, so to speak, the work of building a learning community begins during the first stages of conceptualizing and planning a course. As we laid out the framework of our course, *community* necessarily ranked high on our list of objectives. It stands equally with other key curriculum and learning outcomes and makes up the foundation of student well-being in the course. And just as all aspects of a course look back to the learning objectives, everything involved in the course refers back to our community-building objectives as well.

So as we revised our syllabus, chose our materials and sources, and designed the flow of a course, we constantly asked ourselves how each element would work toward encouraging and building community between ourselves and students and among the students, between the students, and in the connection of the material to life (for example, see Appendix B). When we organized our pacing guides, including assignments, due dates, and timing, we considered relationship. The manner in which we build learning support for and among our students must speak to our understanding of the group (see Appendix C). Likewise, how we evaluate learning must take positive feedback and community-building into consideration.

In redesigning our course, we also considered the physical atmosphere of the learning environment. The classroom is, after all, our shared workspace with our students. It is where we sit and stand, listen and share, create and apply. It is where we challenge ourselves and one another, and the physical space in which we work can encourage or hinder all of the above. It includes the physical arrangement of the space and what it communicates about our vision of learning and the juxtaposition of student

and instructor, student and student. It comprehends the aesthetic nature of the room, the lighting, the temperature, and the sound. It understands that each of these factors, though small or perhaps seemingly insignificant, plays into the activity of learning, teaching, togetherness, and ultimately a sense of welcome, belonging, and community.

Once a class begins, or perhaps even a bit before, we considered our introductions, how we started with that first greeting, how we welcome students into the learning space for the very first time, and each time thereafter. This was our first and ongoing opportunity to bring community into live action with our students to extend hospitality through our first words, our first expressions. It is where we established first personal contact to introduce ourselves and begin community with students. Those first greetings, our first exchange of words, our reading of body language and faces offer us an important opportunity to begin understanding students and allow them to begin gaining a peek at who we are. And in as far as we continue to employ this understanding, we continue to model what we desire for our students.

To do so, we needed to look beyond ice-breakers and class add-ons that are often recommended to improve the feel of a class and offer a façade of community. We needed to shift the entire ethos of the class and develop a set of standards such as to have a new lens through which all aspects of the class would be seen (before, during and after). We wanted community to embed the very fiber of our class. Our desire to establish community is far broader than the outward sense of welcome at the beginning of each course meeting. It extends into the marrow of our work with students. When we build assignments and create discussion prompts, we build on community or tear at its foundations (for example, see Appendix D). The care with which we build an assignment or prompt a discussion to include individual and collaborative elements among students and between students and ourselves can build community. The extent to which we arrange elements that challenge students to depend equally on others in their teams builds community. Helping students to envision something beyond themselves through the assignment or discussion and connect learning to life draws a broader vision of their work and encourages them to connect their academic work to life and their collaboration in class to how they can work in this manner beyond school. This might include built-in challenges in which students must work past differing perspectives on how a problem will be solved. It may also involve reaching individually and collectively outside the team for resources and experience to bring the learning to light and application.

Establishing rubrics and using them for assessment can also offer a strong opportunity to build community (see Appendix E). Inviting students to participate in creating a rubric, applying it to the material, its life-connection, and thinking together through practical application can offer a profound space for dialogue in which students and instructor collaborate and consider and respect each other's points of view in an important manner. Doing so not only welcomes a deeper sense of membership in the group but also a stronger bond among its members. This type of work permits students to gain understanding of the instructor's vantage point in the learning process while simultaneously giving the instructor an opportunity to listen to the students' needs, concerns, and ideas--the reward of which is knowing and being known in yet another way.

As students work through individual assignments, collaborate on larger projects, and complete stages of the course, we learn to interact, encourage, and connect to the vision and goals established for the assignment, the project, the course, and life. How we look for positives in student work to highlight and affirm, how we redirect misgivings, address missed deadlines, and reinvest students in the community of our learning requires us to consider our wording, our posture, our timing, and place of interaction. Choosing well-thought-out words that give students a good name to live up to will build relationship and community. Likewise, wisely considering when and where to discuss an area of growth may take more effort on our part, but the dividends gained can do a great deal to build a deeper sense of belonging by showing how we value each student in the group. Taking time to regularly and consistently interact with students and participate in their collaborative learning shows our desired involvement in their development beyond what a lecture-based “stand and deliver” mindset would offer. Moreover, doing so places us in a much stronger position to encourage students toward excellence in their work and strong assessment outcomes.

Assessments are, of course, necessary, and this represents another place for us to teach beyond the lesson, further build community, and affirm belonging. The manner in which we word our responses to student work, understanding that assessments are truly a checkpoint along the road. Even final assessments are. They punctuate learning and give opportunity to say, “Here is where we all are right now, and here are some areas to focus, redouble efforts, and grow.” If we believe that learning takes place in community, and that we, as instructors, are a part of that community, then assessment speaks of all in the community, not merely any one individual student or collaborative group. We are in it together and all can benefit from an opportunity to grow through community-building.

Conclusion and Next Steps

In the course that sparked our first inquiry we have engaged in an extensive revision process. We reconsidered our materials to truly represent what we desire students to take from our course into life. We reimagined our curriculum-related and life-connection course goals as well as our well-being objectives. In designing the syllabus, we have created a learning cycle that represents pre-class learning to familiarize the students with what will be presented in class so that students are already somewhat familiar with the material. Students also complete individual work related to the pre-learning. In class each week, we arrive early to greet students as they arrive. We work together to arrange our work space in a manner that suits our learning.

Once class starts, we begin by checking in with students to learn about how life is progressing. Sometimes this means that we hear good things other times it means that someone shares a struggle. Then, we review the previous week’s lesson and transition into new themes. We move from large-group learning to oscillating and shifting small-group application, and then collaborative wrap-up. Each class session is designed to connect to life, for students to draw the learning into their lives and use it to discover more about the lives of their classmates. This work is relatively easily accomplished in our class, since it is a course on language and culture. We discover

how the mind acquires language and how culture and language influence one another. Then we solidify the learning and apply it to actually practicing a language.

All related topics are able to be knit into life and be used as a catalyst for self-reflection and collaborative learning that connects people to each other and the learning to life. In as far as building a course like this in a manner that incorporates community seems very intuitive, it might be just as easy to leave it out. The difference is in the intentionality involved. We intend to draw students in. It is our intent to build an environment that encourages belonging. We strive to model hospitality. We aim to specifically connect learning to life. We do this because it is our desire to positively affect what we say that first class session from that day forward for the sake of student well-being, overall growth, and above all--community.

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Appendix A

Classroom Learning Community Questionnaire

Questions:

1. When do you feel most invested in your learning in a class? Which factors play a role?
2. When do you sense the greatest connection to a class?
3. Would you categorize yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?
4. What motivates you to be a part of a community in the classroom?
5. How does the learning structure of a course play a role in the sense of community in a class?
6. To what extent do the activities designed in the course play a role in the sense of community in a class?
7. Which classroom learning tools and props best augment the sense of community?
8. To what extent do the relationships among students in a class play a role in learning (in general)?
9. How does *relationship* to other students affect your personal learning?

10. To what extent does the relationship between the instructor and students affect your commitment to learning?
11. Does this change from one type of class to another?
12. Does the physical layout of the learning space play a role in the sense of community in a class? (e.g., rows, circle, etc.)
13. Does class size play a role in the sense of community in a class (e.g., small vs. large classes?)
14. To what extent does the approach-ability of the instructor play in the sense of community in a class?
15. When it comes to having a sense of belonging, to what extent does it matter whether you have had the instructor in a previous class?
16. How can an instructor best help you achieve a sense of community in a class?
17. How important is it that the instructor knows each of the students' names?
18. How is *community* affected by what the instructor DOES – before class (e.g., planning), during class (e.g., strategies in class), and after class (e.g., debrief, etc.)?
19. Rate how your purpose for being in a class plays a role in your sense of community (general required/elective/major requirement).
20. Rate how your interest in a subject plays a role in your sense of community.
21. In what way does the time of day (of the class) factor into your learning?
22. To what extent does class meeting frequency play a role in your sense of community in class?
23. What aspects of a class best contribute to community?
24. What level of importance do students perceive between a sense of belonging and their willingness to invest in a given class?
25. What relationship exists between that sense of belonging and academic student success?
26. How do you see technology playing a role in community building? Where does it stand in the way?

Appendix B

Vision Statement of Community in Syllabus

We are very excited to be working with you in LIN 100 Language and Culture. For over 20 years, we have enjoyed the gift of working with foreign language students. Some have come to us with an unquestionable gift and penchant for learning language and applying it immediately. Some have needed to struggle through self-doubt and personal hurdles before finding that first success. Others have recognized their ability and simply needed to find connection with language through community. The beauty has come through seeing learners of many age groups find success (some modest, others quite considerable) in learning language. Our vision for this class is that together we grow into a community of learners that experience a true sense of belonging through life-connected and authentic, learning experiences that are founded on trust, positive-interdependence, and hospitality. As we work toward this goal, it is our desire that each of our individual personalities, gifts, and backgrounds will weave their way into the fabric of this community.

Appendix C

Building Pre-Class Survey and Post-class Assessment

By means of assessing the impact of classroom community, we have established a pre-class survey and a post-class assessment. The pre-class survey is designed to establish a baseline of students' previous experiences with the subject that will be learned, their engagement with the topic, their strengths, and their weaknesses.

Pre-Class Survey Questions:

1. What level of previous engagement have you had with learning language? (Choose all that apply.)
[None / One high school course / Two or more high school courses / Some college / Life experience]
2. How would you rate your level of language-learning confidence upon entering this course?
[1 = very low; 3 = medium; 5 = very high]
3. Please tell me about your areas of strength and weakness in learning a language as you perceive them.
4. Help me understand how I can encourage you in your learning?
5. Which factors play the largest role in your learning success?

The post-class assessment is designed to learn the following:

- how each student has changed and grown as a result of the class
- students' sense of belonging in the class
- what factors played a role in establishing that sense of belonging
- how classroom community and a sense of belonging have played a role in their learning

Post-Class Assessment:

1. In reflecting on our work together this semester, how/in what ways would you say that you have changed/grown as a result of this course?
2. In what ways has your picture of language learning in connection to life changed or grown?
3. In what ways has your picture of language and culture changed or grown?
4. Please share how community and belonging in this learning community have played a role in your learning?

Appendix D
First Day Activity

Working Toward Community: First Day Activity

 Name: Hobby: Favorite: <u>Must Know:</u>	 Name: Hobby: Favorite: <u>Must Know:</u>	 Name: Hobby: Favorite: <u>Must Know:</u>	 Name: Hobby: Favorite: <u>Must Know:</u>	 Name: Hobby: Favorite: <u>Must Know:</u>	 Name: Hobby: Favorite: <u>Must Know:</u>
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Shifting the typical first-class meeting from a syllabus preview and question and answer time, we have intentionally re-envisioned it into a time to begin getting to know each other. To achieve this, we took our class list and manipulated the instructor's and each student's pictures into a table with four questions below each: Name, Hobby, Favorite, Must Know. The goal in doing this was to encourage the instructor and the students to immediately begin moving around the classroom space, and one another, and to begin connecting all faces with names as well as to begin connecting classmates' names and faces with important details about them. Upon completing the task of filling out these sheets. The class reshuffled away from the seats they had chosen upon entering the class, which were in most cases near people whom they already knew. From that point, we began a game of speed and recognition. We began by moving toward a student at random and asking, "Who is this?" and gaining an answer. Then, we named someone in class and asked one of the other questions about this person, and then another student another question, etc. Then, the first person who had been named stood up and followed the same pattern that we had modeled. By the time we finished this process, and each person in the class had played my original role, the comfort level of the class had already increased. Consequently, all were in a position to begin the next activity of answering some questions on the reverse side of their own sheets and then joining in new groups to begin sharing about themselves.

Our goal and vision in conducting this type of activity on the very first evening, before launching into our actual curriculum are to model that coming together and

establishing hospitality, sharing, and looking to relationship play an integral role in learning and will, in the end, augment the curricular learning.

Languages you have learned (or tried)?
Reason(s) for learning?
What went well/Challenges?
Where have you succeeded in learning well?
What factors helped you to succeed?
Tell something funny or exciting that has happened to you, ever.
What is something that you dream of doing someday?
Where is a place that you would love to visit?
What are 3+ gifts that you have that you can use to serve others?
What are 6 great reasons for learning another language?
What have you learned about our LIN-100 community today?
What should others know about you to best understand you?

Over the course of the semester, we design and build intentionally collaborative practice in class with the goal of engaging students in learning material through each other and coming to know each other through the material. Our vision is that as the semester progresses, all students will experience opportunities to know and be known through the positive interdependence of learning together, regardless of natural introvert or extrovert tendencies.

Following is the final collaborative practice for the semester. It serves as the remaining bookend in a series of learning that started with the previous activity that we share above. In this final piece, students will engage in both divergent and convergent thinking to integrate top-tier learning from the semester into this work.

This final culminating community activity is intended to be a part of a celebration of our learning together, building of community, and expressing gratitude for one another. On our presentation day, we share these presentations with the larger class while partaking of a meal together. This activity is followed by a time for sharing favorite memories from the time spent together, greatest challenges overcome and an invitation to continue the community and relationships built through our time together.

Appendix E

Culminating Community Activity

Each week, we have been practicing our learning by collaborating in class and getting to know each other through our learning. Our goal for this final *Pratique Collaborative* (Collaborative Practice) is to find that person (or those two people) in class whom you have had less opportunity to encounter and get to know that person (or those two people) by bringing together our learning from the past 10 weeks into a final in-class *pratique*. This work will also transfer into our final project.

Our task today is to brainstorm with your team all of the lessons that we have covered so this semester. What are the themes? The questions? Your personal responses? What culture have you learned about? How is it similar to your home culture? How is it different?

Then creatively develop a manner in which you can get to know each other through the work, share about yourselves with others in the class, and accomplish it through class material. In doing so, please also demonstrate some of the cultural learning from the semester as well as other important learning insights from our readings texts from the course.

Your presentation can be bi-lingual, as our language is still limited, but what can be done in our target language should.

Brainstorming Space:

Please share your thinking here. Boxes will expand as you type.

Themes:
Questions:
Responses:
Culture:
Reading Connections

How we could build it: (Divergent thinking...Just getting ideas out...anything goes)
How we decided to build it: (Convergent thinking...Putting it together...How we will do it)

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