

Joshua Wilwohl

Teaching Portfolio

Below are three items that showcase my current work with multilingual university students. The outlined assessment and activities help students develop their critical thinking and composition skills.

Language as Art



My assessment philosophy focuses on holistic understanding and learning transfer: Can students move beyond explanations to apply concepts to the real world? The midterm in my Arts and Culture course has students create an original artwork under a specific semester theme that is guided by the core element of language. They reflect upon how they express themselves in English versus another language, and how such concepts translate into inclusivity and, ultimately, cultural fluency.

Students create paintings, sculptures, poems, and digital artifacts, such as *Mosaic Faces*, which changed with every refresh of the page—highlighting diversity in code. They share their creation, as well as their critical and creative processes, during a presentation. After they present, students curate their artworks for display in the university's foyer.

They discover their work often tells a story related to identity, which we talk about being rooted in language. We discuss language being a pillar of culture, and we question whether a culture can exist without it. This sparks dialogue about how art communicates, examining wordless forms, such as dance, and visual rhetoric created through arranging elements.

The assessment hinges not on technical skill, but on the effective execution of a good idea: How well can students articulate learned concepts within their artwork that engage real-world issues?

User Does What?



I designed an interdisciplinary course, Digital Linguistics and Discourse, that surveys technology's relationship with language—human and machine-generated. Students analyze how text shapes people's decisions and experiences by evaluating content within real-world products. They also investigate the evolution of internet slang, discover the limitations of emojis, and, through practice, craft usable text for apps and websites.

Students in the course are, usually, more advanced in English because they're in their third or fourth year at the university, but they still struggle with certain language principles, such as concision. To help enhance their skills, I created a multiple-day, non-graded activity focused on improving action-based text.

Using the course's learned concepts, students identify specific user pain points, such as unclear instructions or messages. For example, they might notice that a product description is confusing to non-native English speakers. Based on their research, students suggest replacement text that is more user-friendly and culturally appropriate. They test their suggestions with both native and non-native speakers to assess the impact on user experience. Students present their findings to the class, discussing why their proposed text was (or was not) an improvement.

Art is _____.



In my Arts and Culture course, I start with a non-graded activity: fill in the blank. The prompt? Art is _____. Students can write what they want. They come to the front of the room and type live their responses, which are later posted in the university's foyer—inviting other students to join the conversation. This usually results in various writings, highlights students' critical and creative thinking skills, and leads to some general silliness. It turns the task of defining art into a public writing project. Students enjoy it, often pointing out their contribution to friends. Of course, there are factors: setting, audience, and anonymity, but framing this activity as a performance is key.

By making the writer a performer, it lays the groundwork for an audience. Positioning students as the performers *and* the audience helps them understand the importance of public writing. Douglas Park said it bluntly decades ago: "The truth is that we demand from students—often without making it clear to them or to ourselves—a considerable rhetorical virtuosity in dealing with and inventing audience contexts." As teachers, we can change this through practice, awareness, and collaboration. John Bean states, "Think of writing...not as a way to transmit a message but as a way to grow and cook a message."

In this activity, students not only are telling others what they think art is, they are also expanding the definition by seasoning it with others' thoughts and ideas. A collaborative writing kitchen, where "too many cooks" is not a bad thing.