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**Language learning enhances cultural connection**

The connection was serendipitous.

Last fall, Sacramento State Anthropology Professor Raghuraman Trichur brought his honors class to the College of Continuing Education’s One World Initiative symposium on migration. There he encountered Instructor Niccole Scrogins, whose English Learning Institute (ELI) class was doing presentations for an event she had coordinated. Students from both classes began to converse and – better yet – learn from one another.

ELI provides international learners with opportunities to obtain an excellent education while becoming familiar with people and cultures from around the world. The curriculum emphasizes intensive language learning, in which students develop communication skills for professional and social settings.

Trichur’s students were fascinated by the array of cultural differences while the ELI students were excited to try out their English skills, which both instructors believe is the best way to learn a new language.

Geology Professor Lisa Hammersley, who oversees the One World Initiative – a program that prepares Sacramento State students for their future as world citizens – sees this symbiotic connection between international and Sac State students as “exactly the kind of unique, meaningful and impactful activity that we should be promoting. The fact that it is an outgrowth of the One World Initiative makes me particularly proud.”

Trichur urged his class to continue the connection, and thus began periodic meetings between the students that produced some positive results. When several South Korean ELI students communicated at length with an American student of South Korean descent, he says, they came away with a greater awareness of their cultural connections and differences.

“Connection” is the operative word. Trichur and Scrogins are inspired by the symbiotic relationship that has developed during the last several months between their students. This semester, an advanced linguistic anthropology class is continuing the project that should produce even greater cultural connections with ELI students.
The educators agree that the possibilities for expanding this process are endless. “This is real-world education,” Scrogins says, that gives meaning to ELI’s concept of classrooms without walls. Trichur’s enthusiasm intensifies when he imagines what could happen if other departments get their students involved in this cross-cultural dialogue. Scrogins is no less excited by the University’s recent agreement that ELI students who successfully complete the program will receive conditional acceptance to Sacramento State.

Their unofficial collaborative effort that began several months ago to bridge cultural and linguistic differences not only complements the One World Initiative’s overarching theme, but encapsulates the University’s motto: “Refine the Possible.”

For media assistance, contact Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156. – Alan Miller

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