



## **Weaving Language and Culture: Engaging Students through Experiential Learning**

**Roisin Dewart<sup>1</sup>  
Coralie Huckel<sup>2</sup>**

Université du Québec à Montréal (Canada)<sup>1,2</sup>

*Using an experiential approach, a new language course immerses students in Montreal's rich culture in order to promote personal engagement and optimize learning. This is one of two culminating courses in a bilingual language program, where students learning English and French in Montreal (Canada) are taken out of the classroom to experience Montreal's culture first-hand. Qualters, (2010) posits that meaningful experiences "can and should be transformative, creating new knowledge, skills and attitudes", and the course objective is to ensure that students are not only experiencing, but also actively engaging in their language learning and building their linguistic competence as well as culture awareness. Based on Kolb's Cycle of Learning (1984) which promotes concrete experience followed by reflection then application, students are presented with a model (interviews, guided tours, etc.) and then reflect and create a related project to help them find their place in Montreal's society. By giving students the opportunity to visit different historic and cultural sites, interact with notable Montrealers and research their own personal interests connected to these topics, learners develop their language skills and deepen their cultural knowledge in a unique bilingual setting. This pedagogical approach is supported by Wurdinger (2005), who emphasizes shifting the focus from doing to thinking in order to deepen the impact of students' experiences and promote learning. Through their own actions, interactions and reflections learners explore how their story is woven into the fabric of Montreal.*

**Keywords:** *Experiential, bilingual, culture, engagement, reflection.*

### **References**

- [1] Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- O'Dowd, R. (2019). A transnational model of virtual exchange for global citizenship education. *Language Teaching*, 1-14
- [2] Qualters, D. M. (2010). Bringing the Outside in: Assessing Experiential Education. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, (124), 55-62. Retrieved from:  
<http://ezproxy.lib.ryerson.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true &db=eric&AN=EJ912853&site=ehost-live>
- [3] Wurdinger, S.D. (2005). *Using Experiential Learning in the Classroom*. Lanham: Scarecrow Education