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Going Beyond the Textbook: Revitalizing Culture in the Spanish Classroom

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Introduction

In the past, foreign language in schools has been viewed as largely linguistic, with a focus on grammar in order to develop reading and writing proficiencies in the target language (Byrd, 2014; Castro, Secru & Garcia 2004; Moore, 1995). Since the 1930s, however, researchers and critics have been calling for more integration of cultural aspects of the target language into American classrooms. It wasn't until the 1990s that the country's national core curriculum announced that the focus of foreign language was to be the cultural aspects rather than acquiring linguistic knowledge and skills (Moore, 1995). First, the Spanish National Curriculum for Secondary Education was released in 1990, focusing on the cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral aspects of studying target languages (Castro, Secru, & Garcia, 2004). Then, target language direction was added to public school curriculum in 1994 (Moore, 1995). Two years later, the Standards for Foreign Language Learning were published (Moore, 2006; Yang & Chen, 2016), providing no methods or explicit instruction on how to teach culture but attempting to accurately define and breakdown the umbrella term that 'culture' had been up to this point. These standards introduced the "five C's" (communication, connections, communities, comparisons, cultures) with a focus on the practices, products, and perspectives of the Spanish-speaking culture(s) (Moore, 1995; Moore, 2006). It is noted that this was the first time such explicit cultural standards and guidelines for curriculum had been implemented (Moore, 2006), which began to shape the perspectives and opinions of culture for secondary education teachers. Yang and Chen (2016) offer valuable insight as to the impact of this change. The same National Standards that published the five C's created a new definition of culture in 1999, providing teachers with a curricular direction of foreign language culture that would be used for decades to come. Since the publishing of these standards, "foreign language instructors have generally accepted that

teaching culture is an indispensable part of language" (1128). A report from the Modern

Language Association of America in 2007 "emphasized the importance of teaching both

language and culture at the post-secondary level" (1128), one of many indications that the

education system was now embracing culture as a valuable aspect of studying foreign language

(Yang & Chen, 2016).

<div align="center">**Research**</div>

What is Culture?

The definition of culture has changed over the last several decades and continues to be

shaped by not only national standards but other individuals taking on a variety of perspectives.

Looking at national standards, Kramsch (2013) breaks down the framework used by secondary

foreign language teachers across the country. First, "big C" culture focuses on "the product of a

canonical print literacy… synonymous with a general knowledge of literature and the arts" (65).

Because it was so vital to the development of the nation-state in the early 19th century, Kramsch

(2013) states, it has become the traditional form of culture taught in schools and has remained so

to this day. The other type of culture that is often used but not prestigious is "little c" culture,

where students look at the everyday activities and behaviors members of the target language

experience and initiate. It includes their beliefs, routines, and social customs, everything that is—

in a general sense—typical of the target culture. Kramsch (2013) points out that this type of

culture generalizes the people of a given country and fails tremendously to look at the cultural

aspects from a historical perspective, giving students a very surface-level look into life in the

target culture. While this perspective on culture has become "the most relevant concept of

culture since the 80's" (65) due to demands for more interactive and contextual culture learning,

it still leaves the history and meaning of the target culture unexplored.

Moore (1995) shortens this definition of big C and little c cultures into "aesthetic... or anthropological" (597) and provides further insight as to how these definitions expanded as theories began to change in the 1980s. They reference Vicki Galloway's four approaches to culture, different categories of methods which most teaching methods now tend to fall into:

(1) The Frankenstein Approach: A taco from here, a flamenco dancer from there, a gaucho from here, a bullfight from there.

(2) The 4-F Approach: Folk-dances, festivals, fairs, and food.

(3) The Tour Guide Approach: The identification of monuments, rivers, and cities.

(4) The "By-the-Way" Approach: Sporadic lectures or bits of behavior selected indiscriminately to emphasize sharp differences. (Moore 597)

Howard Lee Nostrand's work in the 1970s created a framework for teaching to reign in and somewhat standardize how students in the education system learned culture, believing that they should be capable of "synthesizing, analyzing, and comparing cultural patterns" (Moore, 1995, p. 597). They believed that students should be able to understand the social contexts of a different culture, know how to respond accordingly, and be able to roughly foretell what might happen thereafter. Others copied and modified this definition as time went on, creating more and less detailed definitions of what culture should be in the education system (Moore 1995). Chahak & Basirizadeh (2012) also provide different perspectives on defining culture. They cite Donald Larson and William Smalley's (1972) definition of culture as "a blue print that guides the behavior of people and is incubated in family life. It governs our behavior groups, makes us sensitive to matters of status, and helps us to know what others expect of us…" (522).

Among all these definitions of culture and how to teach it lie a plethora of reasons why culture is taught in foreign language. Chahak & Basirizadeh (2012) assert that "students should realize that there are many ways of looking at things, many ways of doing things and expressing things. The study of another culture helps the students to respect and understand other viewpoints and other forms of manner" (522). They go on to discuss how some students do not understand the importance of such differences and cannot grasp the significance of cultures different from their own without exposure. Teachers can help with this by imparting knowledge and experiences to help the student become more aware of the world they live in.

Kramsch (2013) expands on this by making the point that educating students about culture is preparing them for a future where global interaction requires people to be more intercultural. "The term 'intercultural' emerged in the eighties in the fields of intercultural education and intercultural communication. Both are part of an effort to increase dialogue and cooperation among members of different national cultures…" (69). Kramsch (2013) continues in discussion about different jobs that involve communicating, collaborating, and using a variety of core problem-solving skills together with people of different countries. While this is already true for positions in the field of business, the ever-increasing use of technology makes intercultural contact in any field more possible than ever before. Learning that there are a variety of differences between cultures and learning how to be aware of these differences is key knowledge that professionals must be equipped with. Castro, Secru, and Garcia (2004) also agree with this need for interculturalism, asserting that "teachers are now expected not only to teach the foreign linguistic code, but also to contextualize that code against the sociocultural background associated with the foreign language and to promote the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence" (92). They go a step further in stating that the teacher's

responsibility is to not only hand the students knowledge, but to develop interest in pursuing this competence, prompting students to take initiative to further their own understanding.

In addition, Kramsch (2013) and Herman (2007) both assert a very interesting point. With the growing awareness of racism, monolingualism, and other ideologies that tie directly into cultures different than one's own, there is a need to teach students about the importance of understanding other cultures. Students may believe that their culture is superior or inferior, and that other cultures can be studied in school, but kept at a distance so as not to threaten the student's own identity. Teachers need to help students understand the value of their own culture as well as others' and to instill in this this idea. Additionally, it is a foreign language teacher's responsibility "to challenge students' assumptions about... the role of language" (Herman, 2007, p. 199-120) and help them gain a more intercultural perspective.

Teacher Perspectives

These various definitions indeed impact how teachers view the teaching of culture in their classrooms. Depending on a teacher's background and experience, their beliefs and views of culture differ, therefore impacting how they teach culture to their students (Yang & Chen, 2016). This challenge is made even more subjective by attempting to teach a curriculum with both cultural and linguistic aspects, two major components of foreign language that quickly become a balancing act for teachers. While recent shifts in education philosophies indicate that culture needs to be more integrated into foreign language curriculum, determining what, how, and to what extent this integration must occur is indeed a daunting challenge (Moore, 1995).

Most educators believe that culture and language are closely connected. Chahak & Basirizadeh (2012) explain the strong ties between the two using context:

Language only involves knowledge of syntax, phonology and lexis… but also it cannot

be separated from the culture in which it is deeply embedded. Any listening to the

utterances of native speakers, any reading of original text, or any use of the language to

convey messages will introduce attention to cultural elements. (Chahak & Basirizadeh

522)

Yang and Chen (2016) agree: "despite different operational definitions of culture, a majority of

scholars agree that there is a close relationship between culture and language" (1129). Again, the

difficulty comes with discerning the meaning of this connection and what that looks like within

the constraints of the secondary education classroom. Yang and Chen (2016) look into this in a

discussion of their findings from their study on teacher's beliefs, opinions, and inclusion of

culture at Rocky Mountain University. Although the context is that of a college level rather than

a secondary school, the results give valuable insight as to views of culture from professors. Data

from such specialists in the field of foreign language as well as the variety of different languages

included in the study make these results quite relevant to this argument.

Using conversation, observation, and teaching materials, Yang and Chen (2016) studied

the culture-teaching methods of six different professors, ranging in age, who demonstrated an

"intensive interest in the teaching of culture in the foreign language education" (1129). These

participants also had more passion for and interest in teaching culture than many of their

colleagues. Results indicated that instructors did agree that culture was important in the

classroom, but individual beliefs of the instructors and their lack of professional training on

teaching the cultural aspect were the main impediments to instructors' cultural teaching.

First, two types of beliefs emerged from the study. One viewed culture as an addition element of foreign language, described by Yang and Chen as "adding an appetizer to a meal in order to entice people to eat the main course" (1130), where the "main course" is the target language. Instructors who viewed culture in this manner indicated that "teaching language is their ultimate goal, and teaching culture becomes necessary only for the purpose of attracting their students' attention" (1131). The other attitude "considers culture as a broad and important context for language" (1131) rather than just one part of it. Language is immersed in the culture, where the latter is the focal point instead of the former. One instructor who held this belief indicated "that language could serve as a tool for students to understand culture" (1131), a perception that is a near opposite of the first. When an instructor of the "appetizer" belief was compared to one who held the "context" beliefs, it was found that the latter was well aware of the National Standards implemented in public schools and had had specific training on how to teach language and culture in the classroom. The former instructor, who did not integrate culture into her classroom as much, did not know about the standards and had had no specific training. It should also be noted that this instructor was a native speaker of the foreign language they taught, while the one who emphasized culture in her teaching was not (Yang & Chen, 2016). While this is only one example of how teachers' education may affect their beliefs, it supports the idea that working with the National Standards helps equip teachers to integrate culture into the classroom.

Castro, Secru and Garcia (2004) surveyed Spanish teachers who taught English as a foreign language (EFL), asking them to give feedback about their perceptions of the Spanish National Standards for teaching and how they defined "intercultural competence" (96). In reference to this second objective, teachers were asked to rank various roles of culture in the classroom on a scale of most important to least important. Results indicated that, according to the

most highly-ranked definition, "teachers viewed culture from a pragmatic point of view, which means that culture teaching was defined in terms of the acquisition of information which allows pupils to participate and survive in the sociocultural reality of the foreign language" (98). While this perspective begins to look at the more important meaning of cultural understanding, simply participating and surviving in a culture is only a starting point in truly understanding cultural significance.

Challenges with Teaching Culture

There are many challenges that arise when determining what, how, and to what extent to teach culture in the classroom. While the National Standards provide a framework for this, it leaves much to interpretation (Moore, 2006, p. 579). In this section, I will discuss the most common and inhibiting challenges teachers face when incorporating culture into curriculum by discussing teacher preparation, time constraints, testing, and materials.

Castro, Secru, and Garcia's study (2004) of Spanish EFL teachers indicated that "the way in which teachers were taught as students affects the way in which they approach teaching" (p. 101). Referring to the opposing views of culture found in Yang and Chen's study of college instructors (2016), we can see that might hold true. The way an individual is taught will greatly impact how they teach in the future. If future educators are being taught by a professor who does not value culture and tends to omit or sparingly incorporate it in the classroom, that educator will likely develop a similar mindset, which their actions will reflect in the classroom. Moore (1995) echoes this idea, indicating that in their findings, "teachers defended their selection of techniques by arguing… most of all that they needed training in techniques and methods of culture teaching" (p. 600). Crawford and Lang (1987) identified this problem long ago:

...[teachers] are familiar with a variety of culture-teaching strategies, but they do not

know how to integrate the strategies into a systematic study of culture, nor how to

integrate culture study with language learning. Under these circumstances, it becomes

easy to relegate culture study to Friday afternoon or to "notes culturelles," thus limiting it

to facts and information. (Crawford & Lang 258)

Thus, universities, teaching programs, and the like bear a significant portion of the responsibility

of training future foreign language teachers how to effectively teach and incorporate culture.

Because culture has been increasingly recognized as valuable in the foreign language classroom,

the methodology taught in instructional practices such as these need to reflect this value of

culture in order to equip secondary teachers to do the same for their students.

Most if not all teachers of any subject area indicate that time is a constraint for them

during the semester. Foreign language is no exception. Byrd and Wall (2009), in suggesting a

particular method for teaching culture, indicate that teachers "do not feel that they have time in

an already full curriculum to thoroughly examine cultural topics to give them full justice" (774).

Being able to effectively incorporate culture in a way that does not take up a significant amount

of planning, classroom, or grading time often proves to be difficult, especially when there is

already so much additional material to cover that is not strictly cultural. Moore (1995) asserts

this several times throughout their publication, mostly explicitly stating that "[recommended

cultural additions] became burdensome and time consuming in an already over-demanding

profession" (598-599). A later study by Moore conducted in 2006 concerning how Spanish

teachers utilized technology observed one practicing teacher tell an observer not to "waste time

on the culture thing..." (587). Time constraints are clearly a factor in determining how teachers teach all content, especially cultural portions.

The remainder of the quote above is as follows: "don't waste time on the culture thing. They will not be tested on it. Spend more time on vocabulary and grammar" (Moore, 2006, p. 587). This leads into our discussion of the challenges with testing that teachers face. Here, we can see that the popular phrase "teaching to the test" applies, where teachers feel so pressured to meet testing requirements that they sacrifice other important aspects of their subject to focus on test preparation. Another challenge that is more specific to FL culture is how to test culture. Moore (1995) discusses several different educators' and theorists' explanations for the difficulty in testing culture. Problems they mention include teachers' lack of training on how to test and a lack of literature on how to do so. Others made the point that the standards' framework was not very explicit, leaving much to interpretation. This conflicts with a third issue: "Tests have to be valid, reliable, and standardized" (600), which can lead to a watering down of cultural content to basic facts and knowledge, such as dates or geographical locations. Thus, much of these testing questions test students on how well they can comprehend a written paragraph rather than how well they actually understand cultural aspects of the target language. Some of the methods explored later demonstrate more creative and comprehensive ways to test culture.

Materials

To effectively teach any subject, teachers must have appropriate materials. Authentic materials, or resources that are truly from or closely relating to a given culture, allow students to obtain a true understanding of a cultural element or idea from the start rather than reading about or hearing from a second-hand, less authentic source. Moore's 2006 study of the use of technology in secondary Spanish classrooms supports this idea. Observers, while noticing the

technology used in the classrooms, noted students' interest level with different authentic

materials. A "multicultural day" with community speakers and culturally-different foods

provided a very interactive day of activities and learning in which students were able to learn

about culture in a more hands-on way (587). However, this was a large event and not something

that can realistically happen on a daily or weekly basis. Another more common type of activity

that also gained and held student interest was when a teacher showed the class pictures of their

time in Spain, providing the class with authentic visuals of Spanish culture in order to teach

them, in this particular lesson, about Moorish influence in the country. These pictures helped

create a "lively" learning experience for the students (588). This use of authentic materials can

help students to see beyond the stereotypical "textbook" representations of culture and is

therefore more interesting to students, engaging their curiosity and allowing them to have more

voice in pursuing knowledge and understanding about a topic. If the purpose, scaffolding, and

placement of the lesson is done well, the use of authentic materials can be very effective in

cultural learning.

Kramsch (2013) notes how foreign culture is generally taught in schools regarding

authenticity: "In foreign language (FL) classes taught outside of any direct contact with native

speakers, culture is mostly of the practical, tourist kind with instructions on how to get things

done in the target country. FL learners... try to adapt to it or temporarily adopt it as their own

when they travel to the country" (66). The absence of this "direct contact" causes teachers to

gravitate toward the substitute of using certain aspects of culture to create survival tools:

"Striking in this concept of culture is the maintenance of the focus on national characteristics and

the lack of historical depth" (66). This approach fails to look at the bigger picture and explore the

culture of a given country, whereas this "depth" is exactly what students need to expand their perspective on a culture different than their own and understand its value.

Of course, simply having authentic materials is not sufficient—teachers must help students utilize and reflect on experiences with authentic materials and native people, guiding them in the process of meaning-making to maximize learning and understanding. Kearney (2010) notes that cultural immersion is critical in the classroom, and that it is often through direct contact with native speakers that teachers and professionals believe this to be possible. A most common form of this contact is through study abroad, which Kearney (2010) says is thought to be "the primary instrument through which learners gain experience with and appreciation of other cultures" (332). Kearney notes that research has proven how study abroad is not always as effective as it is thought to be, but that cultural immersion by other means is certainly possible in the classroom. By using a narrative approach (discussed later), students can use language as a medium for learning culture in a way that allows them to personally identify with and reflect on a culture different from their own. This requires guidance and assistance from the teacher in order that students can effectively utilize the materials given to them and properly understand how they are important to exploring culture.

The cultural knowledge that students do receive often comes from the textbooks schools use. "The commercially produced textbook is the dominant *authoritative* voice of the modern classroom, rivaling at times even the voice of the teacher" (Herman, 2007, 117). With information that is easily accessible and ready to be taught, usually correlating with a given chapter, these snapshots of cultural life from a variety of countries make teaching culture convenient for teachers. These snapshots, Herman (2007) notes, usually align with standards and standardized tests, again making it easier for teachers who do not have time to plan for these

requirements. However, Herman (2007) summarizes the results of past studies regarding

textbook cultural content. One particular 1987 study done by Arizpe and Aguirre indicated the

finding of "factual inaccuracies, racial and ethnic stereotypes, oversimplification of complex

cultures, and omissions of key cultural facts" (122) in textbooks. Results from other tests

concluded similar issues with cultural representations. After more recent studies, Herman (2007)

notes that "over time overt expressions of racism have disappeared… subtler stereotypes

remain… there is an avoidance of discussion of societal-level issues that might aid teachers in

making cross-cultural comparisons and connecting to other course content in the students' school

experience (e.g., history, social studies)" (125).

It might be assumed that more modern-day textbooks would not have the types of errors

described above. However, after conducting a study of four Spanish textbooks used in schools at

the time, Herman (2007) found that results were not much different than they were in the late

1980s, with minor improvements. The four textbooks Herman used for their study are *¡Buen

Viaje!* (Woodford & Schmitt, 2005), *¡En español!* (Gahala, Carlin, Heining-Boynton, Otheguy,

& Rupert, 2004), *Realidades* (Boyles, Met, Sayers, & Wargin, 2004), and *¡Exprésate!* Humbach,

Velasco, Chiquito, Smith, & McMinn, 2006)" (125). In terms of regions covered, "all four

textbooks examined mention a variety of countries and regions with some variation in

frequency" (127), noting that while it is important to include a variety of different countries,

focusing on only a few "would be better able to include more challenging, intellectual material"

(128). Herman (2007) also notes that the study looked at "whether the textbook goes beyond

grammar acquisition to present intellectual material that tells students something about the

sociocultural reality of the countries mentioned. For *¡Exprésate!, ¡En español!* and *¡Buen viaje!*,

the answer is often 'no'" (130), while *Realidades* overall does attempt to include "more

challenging, age-appropriate, material" (129). It would be difficult for these textbook companies to make dramatic changes in their curriculum, Herman (2007) says, to better present more accurate and in-depth cultural information about Spanish-speaking countries' societies, economies, politics, etc. Some possible issues would be loss of sales (due to possibly offending consumers), difficulty in avoiding stereotypes, managing controversial issues in the classroom, and needing to rewrite years of lesson plans that are centered around language and grammar acquisition rather than culture (134-135).

Moore's 2006 study involving the use of observations in the Spanish classroom also says that "the textbook was the main source of cultural information… used as reading comprehension passages" (588). The observer noted a conversation where the student asked a question and the teacher did not know, the latter insisting that the class move on with the culture curriculum, leaving the student unhappy and without an answer. This also supports the idea that Spanish teachers may not be adequately educated about individual countries and cultures, therefore making the teaching of culture, both outside of and within the textbook supplements, even more challenging. Preparation to make up for this discrepancy would require a considerable amount of time that teachers simply do not have, leading them to rely on the information from their textbook.

In addition to textbooks, the technology available to teachers is a valuable and helpful resource, especially with the advancements of the last couple of decades. Furstenburg (2010) notes how the Internet brings "the outside world right into our students' homes and into our classroom, providing students with direct and equal access to the complex, rich, and multifaceted world of the target culture via an abundance of texts, images, and videos" (329). They go on to discuss how while this does not necessarily make the integration of culture into the curriculum

any easier, it does allow students to "work and interact with people of diverse cultures and [that students] need to be able to communicate effectively across boundaries that are not just linguistic" (329-30). With the growing ability to communicate with and access the lives of people in other countries, the goals of culture-learning need to—at minimum—keep up with the availability of resources and adapt to the opportunities that are available on a global level. The earlier reference to Moore's (2006) study observations where a teacher brought in pictures from Spain also supports the idea that even simple technological tools can lead to more engaging, authentic cultural experiences in the classroom, and should be utilized for such purposes. Determining what changes to make and how to implement them, however, is a more difficult task that will take time, resources, and a reorganization of curriculum to be effectively developed.

Lastly, another valuable resource in teaching any subject is the collaboration with other teachers. This can take on different forms… teachers may teach their subjects with overlap in their focus so that students have a more well-rounded understanding of a topic or idea. This could very easily be done with history: a Spanish teacher could collaborate with a World History teacher to create a unit on any of numerous historical aspects of a Spanish-speaking country. The history teacher might teach a unit that expands on some of the points students would be studying in their Spanish classes. This overlap helps students see the importance of the topic if it is emphasized in multiple classes, especially when the topic is looked at from different perspectives and for multiple purposes. The sharing of materials, curriculum, and ideas, with other professionals at any level can also be extremely helpful in creating richer, more supplemented lesson plans. Chahak and Basirizadeh (2012) note that for students learning about a target culture, it is critical that they also be taught about that culture from a more sociopolitical

perspective of a history or social studies class. This type of activity can help students to gain a more in-depth look at a culture and be able to draw their own conclusions about the importance of learning about those different from themselves. Here, language would be a part of the learning, but it would not be the sole focus. An example of such collaboration is demonstrated by high school Spanish teacher Pablo Muirhead at Shorewood High School, Wisconsin. In order to integrate culture into his classroom using a hands-on approach, Muirhead collaborated with his father and the school's band teacher to create cajones (Browne & Gay, 2003). These drums are commonly used in African culture—Muirhead uses them to help students understand the African presence in Latin America, teaching students some basic rhythms to engage them in learning. Then, Muirhead and his colleagues discovered a community event, a concert, that looked at the African influence in Mexican culture, a perfect opportunity for students to further their understanding of the learning they'd attained through Muirhead's unit. While these types of events and resources may not always be available for teachers to utilize, being connected to and aware of community events and communicating with colleagues can largely expand the resources available to teachers and supplement their units with meaningful, engaging content.

Student Perspectives

Feedback from students about different types of lessons is critical for teachers to understand how students are engaging with and feeling about the content they are learning. Yang and Chen (2016) noted how teachers in their study indicated that college-level students are often bored with grammar and tire of it easily, an observation that would likely be just as true if not more of secondary school students. Therefore, these teachers used culture as a way of engaging students with grammar. Another teacher indicated that students' learning about German culture was largely based on stereotypes seen in videos, leading this teacher to worry about whether or

not students had misconceptions of who Germans really were since they had never met one in person (Yang & Chen, 2016). Kramsch (2013) indicates a similar concern: "Because [students] are imbued with moral value, language learners who have grown up with other values find it often difficult to understand foreign cultures on their own terms. They find refuge in cultural stereotypes or in literary fiction" (65). A lack of understanding about other cultures and a contrast with the culture they know and live can prevent students from embracing the realities of different cultures they encounter, either in the classroom or in real life.

Although not surprising, various sources indicate that students enjoy more hands-on activities when learning about culture. Observers in Moore's (2006) study noted that students were very engaged when they were able to participate in an event where they heard a community speaker, watched different cultural dances, and heard music from the target culture. As referenced before, the teacher who brought in pictures of his trip to Spain also engaged students in the learning about Moorish influence on Spanish culture in Spain. This was also true of Muirhead's use of African drums and the community events his students attended (Browne & Gay, 2003). Speaking with native speakers—whether in person or through technology—would also be considered "hands-on" as it allows students to converse with speakers by formulating their own conversations, applying vocabulary and oral skills from the curriculum while gaining meaningful insight about the speaker's life.

While it is common knowledge for teachers that students are more engaged when they are actively involved, another important student perspective to consider is helping students relate to the content on a personal level. Kearney (2010) discusses their narrative approach to helping students understand culture, using writing (fiction or nonfiction) to give students a starting point for understanding their own culture before immersing themselves in another. In one such project,

students were asked to step inside a character from a different culture than their own and make decisions based on the cultural circumstances. "...By speculating what they would have done themselves… can lead students not only to understand other perspectives and experiences but also truly identify with them" (335). This vital connection between self and other allows students to see the importance of understanding other cultures; while students are learning about the sometimes vast and stark differences another culture may incorporate, they can also learn and develop their own sense of self, on multiple levels. Kramsch (2013) echoes this idea in a historical context: "Learning about a foreign culture without being aware of one's own discursive practices can lead to an ahistorical or anachronistic understanding of others and to an essentialized and, hence, limited understanding of the Self" (69). If teachers and scholars and find a way to facilitate learning that moves students toward this self-to-others connection, students will learn how to make these connections themselves and thus understand the importance of culture in a more meaningful way, one that goes beyond a country's vocabulary, foods, and media.

Methods

Some specific methods of teaching culture have already been mentioned in previous sections. This section will summarize some additional, explicit methods for helping students better understand foreign culture in a way that is engaging, meaningful, and practical for teacher use. To begin, we will look at a range of traditional methods Heidari, Ketabi, and Zonoobi (2014) refer to that have been used in foreign language teaching in the past.

Beginning with older approaches, the Direct Method fully immerses students in language learning, strictly limiting communication to the target language—with any helpful images or props—to convey meaning. This approach has a "lack of a well-defined socio-linguistic and

socio-cultural theoretical basis [making] the teaching of the cultural content incidental and subordinated to the teaching of language" (Heidari, Ketabi, & Zonoobi, 2014). Similarly, the Audio-Lingual Method, being partially authentic, conveys culture in the form of "pattern drills [describing] everyday life" (Heidari, Ketabi, & Zonoobi, 2014). Other methods incorporate culture on a more authentic level where the teacher is the facilitator and the students guide their own learning through conversations of interest or problem-solving.

More modern approaches address culture from a more socio-linguistic perspective, such as the Communicative approach, which largely incorporates discussion about "the society, economics, culture and the people who use it" (Heidari, Ketabi, & Zonoobi, 2014). Cooperative Language Learning and Content-Based Language Instruction utilize culture according to students' individual goals and future plans. Task-Based language teaching allows students to handle physical artifacts of culture and utilize them in a variety of activities. To conclude, Heidari, Ketabi, and Zonoobi (2014) discuss the rising importance of intercultural competence in foreign language teaching, that learning a language goes beyond correct grammar and vocabulary usage. Now, one must know, understand, and have the appropriate skills to interact within a certain culture, using the appropriate language but also the behaviors that are associated with them (Heidari, Ketabi, & Zonoobi, 2014). The more modern approaches to language teaching have taken some steps toward enabling students in the classroom to develop this perspective, but there is still more work to be done in order to revitalize the curriculum to adequately develop an intercultural approach to language learning.

One specific method for teaching culture that was used more in the past than it is today is the culture capsule, which is simply a paragraph comparing and contrasting an element of the target culture with a similar example of the students' native culture. Moore (1995) uses the

example of bread in America versus bread in France. They discuss that, while this method and

similar ones "are believed to be effective in encouraging greater analytical thinking and cross-

cultural comparisons" (599), the prior knowledge required (from both teachers and students) and

the preparation time involved in the process make for a very time-consuming and therefore

unrealistic method for teachers to implement in the classroom. Furstenburg (2010) confirms that

these culture capsules "are fast disappearing" (329) for similar reasons in addition to their being

pieces of knowledge taken out of context. Time constraints and context of the content are

important factors to consider with any lesson plan, and culture capsules are likely to have

problems in these areas. This method, however, could still be effective, if utilized appropriately.

Most likely to be helpful as a supplementary, introductory, or scaffolding tool for exploring a

larger context or meaning, this method could be integrated into new or established curriculum,

ready for teachers to use. This would save preparation time and would also solve the problem of

the lack of cultural context.

Another method that also focuses on intercultural competence is *Cultura*, a language

program described by Furstenburg (2010) to be challenging to implement but also successful in

achieving its purposes. Using the Internet, students would regularly converse and interact with

students from the target culture, constantly using the language and getting an inside-look at what

life is like for foreign students. Both groups of students would benefit from the long-term

interactions, which would begin with something simple such as conversing about media and

would eventually expand to more socio-political themes and issues happening in the country.

Together, they compare and analyze a large variety of digital textual and

visual materials from their respective cultures and then exchange perspectives

about these materials via online discussion forums to collaboratively gain a better

understanding of their respective cultures…

In the forums, students...compare the French and American materials,

share their observations, ask and respond to questions, make hypotheses, raise

paradoxes and contradictions, and revisit issues to understand the other point of

view in a constant and reciprocal process of inquiry... in search of more expanded

and in-depth understanding of the other culture… in the process, they discover the

underlying values inherent in their own culture as well as in the other. (330-31)

With the rise in the use of the Internet and other classrooms around the world also striving to

obtain a more intercultural position on foreign language, programs like these would largely

benefit students in the classroom, requiring more facilitation and guidance from the teacher

rather than preparation. This method also allows students to have an experience like immersion

that does not require traveling overseas. Furstenburg (2010) acknowledges that this method

"offers a new holistic approach to the teaching of culture, [where] cultural content is not thereby

directly specified. In drawing no separate lines between products, practices, and perspectives and

linking all the pieces with each other, teachers lead students through a process that is akin to the

process of acculturation itself" (332). While this approach may be unsettling for some teachers

and is not specifically structured to closely align with teaching standards, the resulting cultural

understanding would be more in-depth, culturally accurate, and beneficial for students. Lastly,

this type of program ties back in with Kearney's (2010) narrative approach that, although on not

as thoroughly, enables students to better understand the perspective of the target culture and

thereby be able to look more closely at their own culture and identity.

Another approach to culture that is long-term but looks intently at one area or topic is portfolios. Byrd and Wall (2009) explain the purpose of portfolios (in their case, long-term cultural portfolios, or LCPs). Throughout the academic term, students will use a cultural artifact to explore themes, issues, and ideas of the target culture that their artifact encompasses. "A cultural artifact can be an involved picture, short story, novel, film, advertisement, or piece of art" (775) and need to be of sufficient content to sustain students' research throughout the portfolio. Through a series of scaffolded activities, organizers, and focal points, students will investigate their artifact, create and present a portfolio, and then present their findings either in segments throughout the term or collectively at its end (Byrd & Wall, 2009). While Byrd and Wall (2009) do not provide an example, one such artifact students could use would be an advertisement for a local restaurant. A student could use the advertisement to investigate little c culture by researching the region in which the restaurant is located, the diet and types of foods eaten there, typical meal times and business hours, etc. Depending on the length of time permitted for the portfolio, students could expand their research to the town/city, focusing on food or choosing to look at additional aspects of the city, such as festivals, dialect, etc. Comparing and contrasting to one's own culture, creating their own menu, and writing a fictional piece using the context of the artifact are all possible elements of a portfolio that students may construct.

Moore (2006) notes that while they are most often used as a form of assessment, "one of the most frequently documented benefits in using the portfolio is the enthusiasm and zeal which are infused into classroom activities and into learning in general, as a direct result of renewed interest of the teacher" (602). In addition to increased motivation, portfolios allow students to look at a cultural element more in-depth and to take on much of the learning responsibility, a

structure which would likely be most effective for intermediate or advanced levels of Spanish classes, and/or those of a more mature age group. LCPs would also be difficult to manage if the teacher had many students, in which case the assignment may be done in groups and/or modified to prevent the teacher from being overwhelmed throughout the term. Another option might be to explore a few cultural artifacts (each dealing with different countries/regions and themes) as a class, enabling students to be engaged and to reflect on the content but perhaps only requiring a small presentation or project.

A simple way to structure a class that brings culture to the forefront is thematic units. *Routes to Cultura* (Browne & Gay, 2003) provides a look into this method through Pablo Muirhead's class. The theme of Muirhead's unit was African presence in Latin America. In addition to using traditional drums and attending a community event, Muirhead's students used Spanish vocabulary to discuss ideas and practices in their personal lives, which they were then able to relate to what they had recently learned about a historical figure, Onama, and her life in Latin America. These discussions also scaffolded students' thinking and related it to African music, another focus on the unit (Browne & Gay, 2003). This type of unit, as we have discussed, might require more preparation for the teacher and would likely conflict with the grammar-focused approach most textbooks have. In this case, the cultural content of the unit would be the focus of students' learning, where the textbook would be a resource for grammar, activities, etc. and vocabulary and sentence structure would be practiced, utilized, and discovered as the cultural elements were explored. This approach, if done correctly with meaningful content, would likely be more engaging for students than those that focus more heavily on grammatical aspects.

Another way to utilize thematic units for classes where resources are more limited is found on the webpage "Unit Samples by Theme" on the Ohio Department of Education's website. Of the various units provided on the page, we will look at *El Bosque Tropical*, created by Lori Langer de Ramírez. This is a thematic unit designed for beginning Spanish speakers that explores the vocabulary and basic grammatical structures used within the theme of tropical rainforests. As it stands, this unit would most likely be used for middle school students due to the vocabulary and grammar objectives and the dynamics of the lessons. Throughout the unit, the lessons involve a variety of activities, many utilizing written and verbal communication. Repetition of vocabulary and grammar structures is evident—however, the repetition for a group of words or phrases ends after every three to five lessons and may require more time and practice for students to master. Some activities, such as having students choose items from the "secret box," are used repeatedly and allow students to become familiar with this form of beginning a lesson while also engaging them in learning through mystery/anticipation. Examples of activities include worksheets and graphic organizers, which are typically found in most units. Other activities that take on a more creative approach include constructing stories with learned vocabulary and acting them out. Hiding pictures underneath plastic cups and having students communicate to determine where a particular image might be is another example ("Unit Samples by Theme"). Units such as these represent what a typical thematic unit would look like in schools today—quite frankly, it is nothing new beyond what students are used to seeing in a modern classroom. Adding some authentic materials, community resources, cross-curricular supplements, etc. would allow for a more engaging unit that would also permit students to further their understanding of different topics.

A more engaging example of this type of unit would be Beatriz Redondo's lesson plans posted on a Spanish teaching blog, FluentU. Although only four lesson plans are provided, these lessons do an excellent job of focusing primarily on culture; vocabulary and grammar are not only required, but essential to learning and engagement. Through various materials and activities focusing on different festivals in the Spanish-speaking world, these lessons tie culture and language together in a way that makes it impossible to separate them. Technology, art, and student brainstorming and opinion are all key elements of these lessons. The first lesson, for example, focuses on the annual *Sanfermines* festival in Pamplona, Spain. This festival is known for its running of the bulls, a tradition that even many Americans have heard referenced. This festival is used to help students learn and practice vocabulary and grammar associated with the body and health in general. First, students discuss pictures of the festival and share prior knowledge they may have. Redondo recommends using a PowerPoint presentation and YouTube videos (she includes links) to give students a visual of the festival's activities and to begin introducing vocabulary. Students then use role playing to practice this vocabulary by pretending to visit the doctor. Writing scripts, time permitting, allows students to practice their writing skills. To end, Redondo recommends an all-class discussion where students can express their views and opinions about the festivals (Redondo, 2018).

As we can see from this lesson, typical worksheets are almost unnecessary, although they would likely be essential for learning and/or expanding on grammatical structures and keeping track of vocabulary. These details are left to the teacher to decide based on their classes and student needs, which would make alterations and scaffolding of some of the less interesting material much easier. The theme of festivals is an engaging and unique way to learn Spanish language and would likely be an excellent start for a semester or unit. There is also plenty of

opportunity for student voice and creativity, which would surely be engaging and motivating for all types of students. Lastly, these lessons could easily be expanded and modified for different levels of Spanish, depending on the purpose and structure of the class. Regardless of how it is adapted, we can see that viewing and learning language through the lens of culture, as demonstrated in these lessons, provides students with much more cultural knowledge, awareness, and interest that would likely benefit them in future language courses and other subject areas.

Lesson Plans

Based on this research and evaluation of sources, I have developed an outline of my own thematic unit with sample lessons. These lessons, depending on the flexibility with curriculum and the student dynamic, may be used in the classroom to better integrate culture into teaching Spanish in secondary schools. These lessons can be modified or adapted for a variety of class sizes and skill levels, although here they are made for Spanish 4 or higher. This unit generally follows the format of the thematic unit discussed above, with some alterations made due to my experience working with modern-day students. I will note that while these are lessons that I would like to utilize in my classroom, I am not excluding other approaches that also integrate culture as a key component of learning.

España a primera vista (Spain at a Glance)
Thematic Unit
Spanish 4

Week 1: Introduction to Spain
      Brief history, autonomous communities

Week 2: Daily Life
      Schedule, lifestyle, pastimes

Week 3: Festivals
      Baños de Ola, Semanas Grandes

Week 4: Culture
      El Camino, tourism

Week 5: Current events
      Spanish news, Barcelona attack, Cataluña
      Final project due

Sample Lesson: Week 1, Day 2

Learning Objective	• Cultures: Practices and Products (Standards 2.1 and 2.2) Compare and reflect on products, practices, and/or perspectives of the target culture(s). • Comparisons: Language (Standard 4.1) Evaluate similarities and differences in language use and idiomatic expressions between the target language and one's native language • Comparisons: Cultures (Standard 4.2) Evaluate similarities and differences in the perspectives of the target culture(s) and one's own culture(s) as found in multimedia and digital/print resources.
Lesson Objective	• Students will become familiar with the different autonomous communities in Spain and how these communities are similar and different than the structure of America's states. Students will also become familiar with Spain's geographical layout. This information will be used to practice their speaking skills (especially the use of past and future tense). *Note: this information will provide the foundation for a more in-depth project the following day.
Materials	• Blank maps for students • Maps of Spain's autonomous communities • Video of Spain's geographical layout • Pictures from Picos de Europa and Potes • Grammar handout reviewing the future tense (if textbooks are not available)
Anticipatory Set	5 minutes • Students will work with a partner to take turns giving directions to different places within the school. Basic vocabulary ("to turn", "on the left", etc.) will be provided in the form of a list on the board. This will be done in a game format, where the listener will have to figure out where the speaker is directing them based on knowledge of the school and the speaker's directions.
Input	25 minutes

	• Student will watch a brief video about the geographical landscape of Spain. To supplement this, the teacher will show students pictures of the Picos de Europa and Potes (see included photo folder). • The teacher will then present the map of the autonomous communities and will briefly explain their freedoms and restrictions within the government, comparing and contrasting with America's states. Students will receive a blank map and will copy the names of the communities, label the oceans, major mountain regions, and bordering countries. • A brief handout will be distributed that reviews the basics of the future tense (if not textbook is available). The class will practice a few examples aloud.

Guided Practice	10 minutes
	• Working with the same partner, students will be asked to utilize the future tense (and past tense) by taking turns describing different routes and locations in the country. This will be done using any of the following (theoretical) prompts below:
	  ▪ Which part of Spain do you think was the hottest last summer? Which part will be the coldest in the winter?
	  ▪ Where will you/where did you vacation in Spain? Why?
	  ▪ If Spain is attacked from an outside country, where will that attack come from? Where will you go to avoid it?
	  ▪ Where do you think a pirate (un/una pirata) buried his treasure, where did he hide it? Why?
	
	The teacher will circulate and converse with students, correcting and explaining grammatical or vocabulary mistakes.

Check Understanding	5 minutes • The class will share out some of their answers. The teacher will also ask students to give directions from one point to another, making any corrections necessary.

Sample Lesson: Week 3, Day 1

Learning Objective	• Cultures: Practices and Products (Standards 2.1 and 2.2) Compare and reflect on products, practices, and/or perspectives of the target culture(s). • Connections: Acquiring New Information (Standard 3.2)

	Acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the target language and its cultures.
	• Comparisons: Language (Standard 4.1)
	Evaluate similarities and differences in language use and idiomatic expressions between the target language and one's native language
	• Comparisons: Cultures (Standard 4.2)
	Evaluate similarities and differences in the perspectives of the target culture(s) and one's own culture(s) as found in multimedia and digital/print resources.
Lesson Objective	• Introduce and begin to explore the Baños de Ola festival by providing students with an overview of the event and introducing new vocabulary that will be utilized throughout the course of the unit.
Materials	• Pictures from Baños de Ola festival • Handouts of Baños de Ola festival description and projection on the board
Anticipatory Set	5 minutes • Students will be asked to work in partners. They will each choose an American holiday and describe it to the other using the vocabulary for the unit and any vocabulary already known. This will lead into the teacher introducing a festival in Cantabria, Spain.
Input	7 minutes • Students will be shown pictures from Baños de Ola festival (see photo folder). The teacher will point out different interesting cultural similarities/differences, traditional wear, etc. while discussing the experience of being at the festival.
Guided Practice	8 minutes • A summary description of the festival (written in Spanish) will be projected on the screen. Each student will also each receive a hard copy of the summary to annotate. The teacher will read the first sentence and ask the class to help translate it to the best of their ability. Words that are unknown will be written on the board, beginning a list, and the teacher will ask students to look at the context of the word to try and make educated guesses as to its meaning. They will then define the word and write the meaning on the board.

Check Understanding	20 minutes
	• Students will be asked to repeat the above process with the remainder of the paragraph, working in pairs but writing their ideas/guesses on their individual papers for future reference. The teacher will circulate and keep track of time while students work, answering questions but not providing answers. Students will not be permitted to use their translation dictionaries.
	• As a class, students will read the paragraph with the teacher and define unfamiliar words, adding to the list of words and definitions on the board. Students will add to their own sheets as the class progresses through the activity. They will be asked to copy the list on the board into their vocabulary notebook. Some words that will likely be defined and discussed are included below:
	    o Mercadillo- flea market
	    o Talleres- workshops
	    o Cuentacuentos- storytellers
	    o Canotiers- straw boater (sombrero)

Independent Study	10 minutes
	• Students will be asked to finish the following two sentences according to what they have read as an exit ticket for the end of the class period:
	    o "Lo que quiero ver en este festival es _____."
	    ("What I want to see at this festival is _____.")
	    o "Tengo curiosidad sobre _____."
	    ("I'm curious about _____.")

Sample Lesson: Week 5, Day 2

Learning Objective	• Cultures: Practices and Products (Standards 2.1 and 2.2) Compare and reflect on products, practices, and/or perspectives of the target culture(s). • Connections: Acquiring New Information (Standard 3.2) Acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the target language and its cultures. • Comparisons: Language (Standard 4.1) Evaluate similarities and differences in language use and idiomatic expressions between the target language and one's native language • Comparisons: Cultures (Standard 4.2)

	Evaluate similarities and differences in the perspectives of the target culture(s) and one's own culture(s) as found in multimedia and digital/print resources.
Lesson Objective	• Begin exploring what is happening in Catalonia by reading and researching sections of an article summary of the issue.
Materials	• Copies of the article "Catalonia's independence standoff: How we got here, what comes next" for each student • Computers (or cell phones) for online research
Anticipatory Set	5 minutes • As a class, brainstorm various current events happening in the U.S. and around the world. Create a list on the board. Ask the class if anyone is aware of what is happening in Spain. Answers may or may not reference Catalonia's push for independence. The teacher will direct discussion to the issue.

Input	10 minutes
	• The teacher will hand out copies of the article for a jigsaw activity. As a class, students will read the first few paragraphs together and gain a basic understanding of the issue. Students will then be split into groups according to each section of the article (four groups in total). The teacher will explain that each group is going to become "experts" on their section by reading the information and doing any research necessary to elaborate on the **ideas, parties, and/or terminology** mentioned in their section. For example, for the section "What comes next?", the summary should focus on the enactment of Article 155. To do this, research should be done on the following:
	    ○ Who is the Guardia Civil?
	    ○ What did Rajoy mean by "liquidate our country"?

Guided Practice	15 minutes • Students will read and discuss their section together, then delegate work among themselves to conduct research on the ideas, parties and/or terminology. Group members will share what they have found and will prepare to present to the class. The teacher will circulate to ensure that students are explaining key points and that all members are contributing to research.
Check Understanding	20 minutes • Each group of students will present their ideas and findings in the order that their section appears in the article. After each presentation, the class will review or discuss further any points that need clarification or elaboration.

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