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Culture learning in Spanish companion book websites: An analysis of tasks

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Culture Learning in Spanish Companion Book Websites:

An Analysis of Tasks

by

Angela Cresswell

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Secondary Education
College of Education
and
College of Arts and Sciences
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Culture Learning in Spanish Companion Book Websites:

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ABSTRACT

The Internet with its World Wide Web feature opened up a whole new frontier for language-culture learning that foreign language textbook authors have integrated into their programs. Designing tasks that progress beyond promoting learners' passive consumerism and reiteration of facts remains a goal and a challenge. Thus, three research questions characterized this study that sought to examine the on-line tasks associated with six current Spanish textbook programs. The design focused on an analysis of these tasks in light of prevailing culture learning concepts and other pedagogical paradigms posited by reputable foreign language educators to determine if they filled the gap left by textbooks in facilitating second culture acquisition. The first question asked for evidence that learners were encouraged to recognize their own cultural conditioning. Evidence was present only to a miniscule degree. The second question sought to determine the extent of opportunities provided to learn about the target culture – Hispanic – as they mirrored the objectives of the perspectives on culture learning. Low-level thinking skills and a predominance of tasks concerning products, in contrast to those concerning behavioral practices or perspectives, characterized the extent of target-culture learning. The third question sought to discover if learners were engaged in process-based tasks, whether they were prompted to identify authentic problems, suggest solutions, and apply new

knowledge. Evidence for these situations was minimal. Additional findings revealed factual information questions to be a majority with a few tasks inviting learners to respond to hypothetical and creative situations. Results indicate that in this early stage, the World Wide Web remains an authentic venue for culture learning; however, future directions ought to include expanding the scope of adjunct tasks as they complement the multiple presentations of culture in the companion textbook chapters.

Chapter One

Introduction

Background to the Study

The issue of teaching culture in the foreign language classroom has absorbed the attention of language educator-researchers for close to five decades. With increasing conviction that the primary purpose of studying a foreign language (FL) is to understand people of another culture, language scholars have insisted that culture be integrated in the teaching of language. During the early 1960's the discussion translated to script as educators began to pen dissatisfaction with the manner in which culture was treated--or not treated in second language (L2) teaching (Brooks, 1964). They contended that rather than existing as an addendum to language instruction, culture and language enjoyed a "nuptial state", not one of separation as evidenced by most foreign language curriculum.

Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) described the situation in these words:

...although culture and language are in reality "married", language curricula responds to them as if they were still only "engaged." Generally speaking more cultural activities can be observed in foreign language classrooms today than at earlier times. There is a consciousness among teachers that culture should be included in the curriculum;...Yet, this inclusion of cultural content continues to be seen as an issue separate from that of language. The groom is still waiting at the altar. (p. 140)

Gradually, as the voices rose in noticeable chorus, more research literature emerged proposing methods and paradigms for presenting this matrimonial pair to language learners (Nostrand, 1988, Robinson, 1981; Seeyle, 1976; Valette, 1986). Although teachers followed the recommendations by using authentic materials and audio visual materials, textbooks continued to be the primary source of culture instruction. Frequently, texts that were examined for cultural content received a less than favorable appraisal. Language experts compared and scrutinized textbooks alongside theories of culture learning only to conclude that the structure of questions and activities yielded little more than a superficial knowledge of cultural facts (Byram, Esarte-Sarries, Damen, 1987; Kramsch, 1987; Kramsch & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Maxim, 2000; Moore, 1991; Nostrand, 1988; Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, & Colby, 2003; Taylor, & Allatt, 1991; Ueber, & Grosse, 1991; Wiczorek, 1994).

As rapidly evolving technologies, particularly the computer, impacted businesses and daily life in the United States, educators soon became aware that their curriculum and classrooms would not escape the invasion of this latest pearl in the collection of instructional resources. The innovation of technology took the classroom by storm and became the topic of numerous investigations in the decade of the 1990s and 2000s for disciplines across the board--including foreign language (Brandl, 2002; Lafford, & Lafford, 2005; Levy, 2007; Liu, Moore, Graham, & Lee, 2002; Osuna, & Meskill, 1998). With the growth of computer assisted instruction (CAI) educators discovered that computer networks provided unprecedented assistance in the task of extending the intellectual borders of knowledge for students. Language educators joined the caravan of sojourners traversing the fields of digital technology with its seemingly limitless borders.

Herein lay a vehicle for transporting the learner to virtual experiences of target culture hitherto unimagined.

Statement of the Problem

Computer technology--the Internet with its synchronous, asynchronous and World Wide Web features--opened up a whole new frontier for language-culture learning. Numerous opportunities to gather, produce, and disseminate information characterized this digital environment. Yet little was known about ways to mine this information quarry. Were those culture-Internet tasks from FL textbook programs structured in ways that enabled learners to experience culture learning as a process in which they construct meaning en route to developing cultural competence? Did these activities progress beyond promoting learners' passive consumerism and reiteration of facts in response? What current pedagogies serve as instruments to gauge the World Wide Web tasks in teaching culture? This study seeks to examine those on-line tasks in light of prevailing culture learning concepts and other pedagogical paradigms posited by reputable FL educators to determine if they fill the gap left by textbooks in facilitating second culture acquisition.

Conceptual Framework

Initially the scope and breadth of culture-learning may not be evident. The concept of culture retains an elusive quality defying one definition "that fits all"; it encompasses a myriad of connotations. Pedagogical scholars have sought to flesh out a definition that suits, clarifies, and distinguishes the concept from related studies such as anthropology, geography, sociology, history, folklore, literature, and civilization (Brooks, 1964). With each of the aforementioned disciplines one encounters varying

interpretations, insights, opinions, and research despite the commonalities inherent in the concept. Teachers of foreign language and culture form yet another explorer in this field of inquiry. They must face the challenge of accomplishing the goal of assisting students in gaining knowledge and understanding of another culture through the acquisition of the foreign language.

Together with communicative competence and cognitive growth, cultural knowledge is a major goal of foreign language education (Kramsch, 1993). But what is meant by cultural knowledge? Kramsch (1995) explains that there are two ways of referring to the events of everyday life in defining a social community: one, emanating from the humanities, the other from the social sciences. The former also known as the “Big C” focuses on the way material productions represent the social group, e.g., literature, works of art, social institutions, etc; the latter known as the “little c” focuses on the shared beliefs, attitudes, behavior, and thinking of the community. Because culture is taught and individuals tend to view their own culture as natural with its links to moral values, notions of good and bad, right and wrong, Kramsch reminds lecturers that the elements of culture are arbitrary, having been generated by people. Therefore, teaching culture includes informing students of how things could have been and could be, as well as how they are and have been.

A brainstorming activity which explored alternative behaviors in one’s culture might re-enforce the factuality of culture as conditional and arbitrary in contrast to inherent. Such cultural practices as which hand to hold one’s eating utensil, introductions, use of “thank you” cards, and practice of courtesy constitute topics for discussion. When

viewed from this perspective, culture learning becomes a dynamic, evolving, process rather than an exercise in fact-gathering.

Language is a tool used to reveal culture. The two are inextricably linked--a fact often overlooked by some language teachers who may view culture as an enrichment feature, tangential to foreign language instruction. Brooks (1964) posits that no true language learning takes place where instructors have failed to teach what that language means to the native speaker. "This amounts to saying that instruction in a foreign language, even at the start remains inaccurate and incomplete, unless it is complemented by appropriate studies in culture" (p. 206).

Culture in the broadest terms includes the collected manifestations of human achievement: arts, and social institutions as well as perspectives, behaviors and products of a particular nation or social group. The target culture (C2) refers to the culture(s) related to the foreign language studied. The Internet has markedly increased the exposure to both the "Big C" and the "little c" in learning culture with the added capacity of exploring sub-cultures of the foreign country.

Four perspectives on culture learning inform this qualitative study of the ways in which the Internet feature of computer technology functions as a tool for involving students in the process of learning culture authentically and interactively: intercultural competence (ICC), constructivism, the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards, 1999), and the *National Educational Technology Standards for Students* (NETS·S).

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence (ICC) goes beyond knowledge of the foreign language because it implies the ability to interact with as well as accept the perspectives and perceptions of the “other” conscious of the differences from one’s own culture. Fisher (1996) notes that:

This learning should lead students to be reflective, inquisitive and to question their own beliefs. It is the teacher’s task to guide the exploration by creating a stimulating environment and directing activities that lead students to acquire meaning from this exposure to the other social reality. (p.74)

Sercu (2002) recounts the long-standing natural pedagogical aim to open students to cultural awareness as well, noting that foreign language teaching:

...always includes at least two languages and cultures, namely the learner’s own culture and language on the one hand and a foreign culture and language on the other. Therefore, it seems natural to try and raise awareness in learners of the fact that people speaking other languages may also organize and perceive the world in ways different from their own. (p. 62)

Thus, the interculturally competent foreign language learner, with an attitude of openness, acquires particular skills, values, second language (L2) ways of looking at life in addition to communicative competence. Obviously, the FL teacher is able to promote such awareness only if the objectives and goals of culture teaching are clear from the onset of such an undertaking. Once learners perceive themselves as operating out of cultural contexts, the teacher is free to attend to the content of foreign culture (C2) learning.

Constructivism

Constructivism is one of four major scientific paradigms positing ways to view the nature of knowledge and the process by which it is acquired. According to Driscoll (2007) constructivism can best be understood as a collection of views sharing a fundamental understanding about learning rather than a single theory. In contrast to objectivist epistemologies constructivism posits that individuals construct reality based on their previous knowledge as well as their experiences and interpretation of the world. An authentic environment of interactivity facilitates the process of learning. In light of this paradigm culture learning springs from tasks based on content which invite and encourage the learner to investigate autonomously another social reality in meaningful tasks and solve meaningful problems of interest to the learner in a natural setting. How might the FL teacher provide such an environment? Assistance has been provided in a document designed to offer guidance accomplishing this formidable task.

Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century

The National Standards are a product of the Goals 2000 Project, initially funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities to provide a task force of language educators with the opportunity to develop standards for the study of the world's languages by American youth. The document is organized around five goals: Communications, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities. Three interrelated components comprise the topic of the second goal which is culture: perspectives, practices, and products. Two standards explain Culture objectives; the first centers on learner understanding of the relationship between practices and perspectives; the second centers on learner understanding of the relationship between

products and perspectives. Culture is intrinsically connected to the other goals particularly the fourth, Comparisons which expects learners to demonstrate an understanding of the concept of culture by comparing the target culture with their own. Based on student level and resources, teachers are to create tasks which allow students to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between a culture's perspective, practices, and products and how they compare with the student's native culture (C1).

National Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS·S)

At present the advantages of using computer technology in the study of foreign languages and culture are clearly evident to teachers knowledgeable of and trained in its effective use (Abrams, 2002; Ducate, & Lomica, 2005; Green, 1997; Hertel, 2003; Lee, 1997; Luke, 2006; Warschauer, 1999). In addition to the National Standards mentioned previously, another useful lens through which Internet tasks may be examined is the updated guidelines published by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). Developed with educators from all 50 states and 22 countries, the *National Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS·S)* provides the benchmark for technology integration in education not only throughout the United States but around the globe. This 2007 document contains six broad categories with performance indicators designed to be general enough to customize in order to accommodate all academic levels. Today's generation of students has been raised in the midst of ever-changing forms of technology and electronics to learn about the world. If students are to experience education as a relevant factor in their lives, teachers must assist them in developing academic skills within a digital environment. By creating meaningful technology-based

activities in their respective disciplines, teachers prepare students for success in their future careers where predictably technology will assume a major role.

Common Threads

What then are some common threads that weave these four perspectives on cultural learning together to make a useful fabric in covering the issue of culture learning? Each posits the application of previous knowledge to support and construct new knowledge encountered. Intercultural competence strongly advocates raising learners' awareness of their own cultural conditioning as a foundation from which to study and compare the target culture. Constructivism holds that previous knowledge and past experience forms the basis for the construction of new knowledge. Recognizing the frequency of cultural misunderstandings, the *National Standards* reflects this vision in the standard on 'comparisons'. They propose that students recognize the different patterns in the target culture and apply this knowledge to their own culture. *The Technology Standards* prescribe applying existing knowledge to generate new ideas, and products in the learning process.

The issue of self-awareness and cultural conditioning will be an essential component to the study of the perspectives, practices, and products of another culture. The presence of authentic materials in an authentic environment of interactivity is yet another feature common among the four concepts for learning. Key words emerge from these constructs and paradigms in promoting knowledge and skills associated with culture learning; students engaged in the learning process gradually become competent in searching, locating, reading, identifying, observing, examining, investigating,

experiencing, synthesizing, analyzing, evaluating, interpreting, explaining, comparing and contrasting information, identifying authentic problems, and possible solutions.

The aforementioned key words are reminiscent of those encountered in the examples of Bloom's category of learning in the cognitive domain (Bloom, 1956). Bloom posited that there were different levels attainable in the process of learning; that is, students can "know" about a topic or subject at six different levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The categories can be thought of as degrees of difficulties with an order in the mastery of each level. The recalling of information describes the lowest category labeled knowledge with key words such as: lists, defines, describes, identifies, and names; this is the level that formerly characterized most culture learning tasks in foreign language textbooks. As one moves up the ladder of Bloom's taxonomy, key words are arranged in a hierarchy from less to more complex such as: explain, use, analyze, compare, contrast, interpret, critique, and evaluate. This taxonomy of learning behavior represents a process by which the learner becomes skilled in high-level thinking. With a goal of fostering higher-level, critical thinking among today's culture learners, it is not surprising to encounter these key words in the goals of the four pedagogical influences. Table 1 illustrates the key terms used to describe levels of learning in *Bloom's Taxonomy*, ICC, Constructivism, the National Standards, and NETS·S.

Table 1 – Categories of Learning

Bloom	ICC	Constructivism	National Standards	NETS·S
Knowledge - Learner recognizes, memorizes, recalls	identifies products, practices		identifies, reads, recognizes, examines, observes	
Comprehension – Learner explains, summarizes, paraphrases,	explains		cites, describes	Defines problem
Application – Learner uses, applies information to solve problems, identifies connections	acquires, discovers, applies new knowledge	applies current knowledge, identifies new elements	searches, locates, Explores, hypothesizes	applies, existing knowledge, locates, identifies trends, forecasts possibilities
Analysis – Learner identifies components, analyzes, categorizes, compares, contrasts	analyzes, identifies problems	compares knowledge	analyzes, compares, contrasts	Process, analyze data (to solve problem)
Synthesis – Learner combines information, to form product, creates, designs, develops		constructs new meaning		synthesize
Evaluation – Learner judges, recommends, critiques, makes decisions	interprets, evaluates critically	interprets	interprets, compares and contrasts	evaluates

In tandem with the expansion of concepts of culture learning by language educators is the expansion of culture content over the Internet. Previous research has focused on FL textbook tasks and activities in teaching culture to determine their efficacy in promoting a change in the learner’s knowledge and understanding of the target culture (Kramsch, 1987; Moore, 1991). The current innovation merits a similar inquiry. The technology component of contemporary FL textbook programs warrants an investigation of its tasks and activities in supporting current perspectives on culture learning to

determine their efficacy to do the same. This study examined the on-line culture tasks and activities of six large postsecondary introductory Spanish FL textbook programs published and currently used in universities and community colleges throughout the United States.

Purpose of the Study

Foreign language educators have recognized the limitations of teaching culture from textbooks alone since the 1960s. As the notion of culture learning in FL classrooms expanded, the dissatisfaction with its presentation increased among educators. In two earlier studies Kramsch (1987) and Moore (1991) examined and compared FL textbooks in their approaches to the teaching of target language culture. Both studies yielded similar conclusions; second culture (C2) teaching was relegated largely to the transmission of facts in the presentation and subsequent tasks or assignments. With the innovation of computer technology infiltrating most foreign language textbook programs, the frontiers of target-culture teaching and learning have expanded. Since the mid-90s, with each new edition of textbooks, content has been amplified to include activities that use the Internet, interactive CD-ROMs, and DVDs in addition to word processing. The Internet in particular provides a venue for auxiliary tasks and activities associated with the culture topics of textbook chapters. These adjunct activities permit learners to explore the target culture at a depth beyond that offered by the textbook.

The purpose of this study was to investigate Book Companion Websites to determine ways in which the tasks, assignments, and activities proposed facilitate the process of culture learning. This process expands to include the development of intercultural competence and is characterized by autonomous and interactive experience.

The Internet with its visual and interactive dimension appears to be a viable tool for closing the gap in learning culture left open by the linguistic and contextual information found in textbooks alone. With this digital environment as the venue not only for constructing new cultural knowledge, but also for deepening an understanding of present cultural knowledge, the tasks and activities support a crucial premise of the four pedagogical influences.

Research Questions

The research questions that addressed in this study are:

1. How are the adjunct Internet culture tasks of Spanish Companion Book Websites articulated to encourage learners to become aware of their own cultural conditioning?
2. What opportunities do the adjunct Internet culture tasks of Spanish Companion Book Websites provide for learners to explore the perspectives, behavioral practices, and products of the C2, that is, to identify, recognize, locate, explain, describe, discover, compare, contrast, analyze, synthesize, interpret, and forecast aspects of the target culture?
3. In what ways do the adjunct Internet culture tasks of Spanish Companion Book Websites (a) engage the learner in process-based tasks, (b) prompt the learner to identify authentic problems or significant questions along with possible solutions, and (c) apply new knowledge?

Significance of the Study

Over this past decade, a growing number of research studies on the integration of technology in the classroom indicate that the classrooms of many teachers who vocalize support of the integration of technology bear scant evidence of its realization (Judson,

2006). In addition to time constraints, insufficient or inadequate resources, feelings of incompetence due to absence of training in teacher preparation programs, research suggests that lack of awareness of how to use computer-mediated instruction by teachers possibly explains the discrepancy between belief and practice (Kramsch, Cain, & Murphy-Lejeune, 1996). This explanation is no less true for foreign language teachers and their use of technology. In her recent study Moore (2006) gathered data from a three-year study of Spanish teachers and their use of technology in teaching culture. Her findings indicated that FL teachers show a preference for the “simpler technologies like television and video recorders. There was very little use of more interactive technologies such as the Internet” (p. 579). Contributing to the reasons cited above for the discrepancy between belief and practice may be the lack of adequate knowledge of a target culture (Kramsch, Cain, & Murphy-Lejeune, 1996). It is unlikely that most FL teachers possess in-depth knowledge about the cultures and sub-cultures associated with the foreign languages and countries they teach.

It is also unlikely that most have explored the Internet component to discover how it may assist them to attain the goals proposed by contemporary language research educators in furthering their own knowledge of culture as well as guiding their students (Moore, 2006). This study proposed to inform foreign language and culture educators about the usefulness of the Internet component in their textbook programs. The significance of this in-depth study is that it provides insight into the structure and support of the tasks, activities, and culture content of the Internet which the Spanish teacher may utilize to increase personal knowledge as well as enhance student investigation of Hispanic culture.

Operational Definitions

1. Culture – the collected manifestations of human achievement: arts, and social institutions as well as perspectives, behaviors, and products of a particular nation or social group.
2. Intercultural Competence (ICC) – the ability to relate effectively and appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts, conscious of the differences from one's own culture.
3. Cultural Sensitivity – the ability to identify, appreciate, and adapt to cultural differences.
4. Constructivism – implies a learning environment characterized as student-centered, autonomous, and interactive in which the learner applies previous knowledge to meaningful real-world tasks to construct new knowledge.
5. Interactivity – refers to the hyperlink feature of the Internet which permits learners to autonomously select courses of action, that is, to navigate among web sites in the case of assigned culture tasks, and write responses to information read.
6. Culture-learning process – a series of stages initiated by an instructor to assist learners in acquiring culture knowledge. Pre-culture learning activities include defining and discussing culture, types of human behavior (universal, cultural, individual), culture conditioning, stereotypes, and the relationship of culture and language.
7. Content of website – the information contained on the webpage; that is, short scenarios that provide a context for learners to follow the hyperlinks listed in order to answer questions or obtain information in completing the tasks.

8. Tasks – the instructions and questions on the webpage for culture learning; that which the student is directed to do.
9. Process-based or project-based task – real-world or authentic tasks requiring several or more than one step. In contrast to traditional cultural tasks that focused on the information (product) obtained, in process-based tasks learners ideally make a series of choices autonomously as they progress toward ultimate obtainment of cultural information (product). Examples included such acts as planning a vacation, selecting a restaurant, making a reservation, soliciting help for directions, etc., that require a series of steps created in following hyperlinks in a variety of web sites relevant to the target culture.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Overview

This second chapter presents the research literature of scholars concerned with the issue of culture learning. Four pedagogical perspectives serve as models in supporting an in-depth study of culture: intercultural competence (ICC), constructivism, the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards, 1999), and the *National Educational Technology Standards for Students* (NETS·S). Previous research reported on culture learning and related tasks or activities targeting foreign language textbooks as principal and traditional sources of information (Kramsch, 1987; Moore, 1991). This review reports on culture learning and related tasks or activities targeting the World Wide Web--an innovative and additional source to foreign language (FL) textbooks. The purpose of this review is to assess current conceptualizations of culture learning from the perspectives cited which provide a framework for a discussion of Internet-based tasks as a tool for facilitating foreign culture (C2) learning.

Language and Culture

The concept of culture and the concept of intercultural competence share a common phenomenon; scholars pursue the elusive task of reaching consensus regarding their definitions. As noted by Davis & Cho (2005)

Culture has been identified in many different ways.... Culture has tremendous influences on the way people think, perceive, communicate,

learn, teach, and use technology. Although culture can be perceived in almost everything humans make, most people are not aware of how cultures affect their social behavior and attitudes. (p. 3)

Researchers have investigated the role and salience of culture in the teaching of foreign language over the past four decades. Initially and continually, they have sought to flesh out a definition of culture that would encompass its myriad connotations as a prerequisite for promoting instruction in the classroom.

Language conveys meaning in personal and societal life. To understand the meaning and use of words is to gain knowledge and insight into the culture of the users of that language. According to Brooks (1964), the concept should be explicitly communicated to foreign language textbook writers, and incorporated into initial language instruction. He cites the seminar held in the summer of 1953 at the University of Michigan as a landmark in addressing the role of culture in language instruction. A few years later, in the spring of 1960, the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages selected culture as the topic for its yearly discussions. The decades of the 1970s and the 1980s produced additional publications dedicated to suggesting or examining ways in which teachers and textbooks might integrate culture in foreign language (FL) education (Jarvis, 1977; Moreau and Guenter, 1978; Robinson, 1981; Seelye, 1976). For Claire Kramsch (1983) the topic of culture and foreign language recurs in her prolific writings throughout her more than 40 years as a language scholar.

Role of Culture in Language Education

Historically, the role of culture in foreign language education parallels that of second language teaching over the last five decades. In the 1950s and 1960s the trend to

emphasize grammar and translation with a focus on understanding structure characterized language teaching and learning. With the transmission of information as a focal point, culture teaching targeted facts, commonly referred to as the “Big C” facts such as great events, civilization, artifacts, literature, geography, and fine arts. Knowledge of culture was acquired primarily for the reading of literature.

In the late 1960s the audio-lingual movement, based on the theory of Behaviorism, stressed habit formation by repetition, drill, and practice in second language acquisition. Teaching language involved dividing material into small units with particular attention on correct pronunciation. Concentration on the “little c” facts or daily living patterns such as eating habits, social etiquette, transportation, and clothing, dominated culture instruction because ignorance of the differences might impede communication in the target language. Learning culture necessitated building and supporting vocabulary.

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the advent of socio-linguistics which targeted communicative competence and the introduction of proficiency guidelines. Four competency skills emerged as principals. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing shifted the attention to language learners; in culture learning attention shifted to the mastery of language pragmatics and sociolinguistic facts to avoid communication faux-pas or breakdown. According to Webber (1987) genuine communication stimulated by interesting and meaningful topics was more likely to foster competence *in* culture in contrast to knowledge *about* culture. Nevertheless, communicative competency would prove to be insufficient to prevent cultural problems. Attention centered on cognitive aspects, without consideration for understanding an individual’s motives, intentions,

desires, and reasons for behavior, that is, the beliefs, and patterns of social organization underlying the interactions.

Intercultural Competence

Thus, in the late 1980s a movement emerged in the teaching of language and continues to the present--intercultural communicative competence--often shortened to intercultural competence (ICC or IC). The concept suggests something beyond the factual knowledge of a foreign culture. If one considers the prefix “inter” to imply a state of being between, and the concept “competency” to imply the ability and effective performance of some skill, intercultural competence means the ability to efficiently interact between the native and target cultures. Acquiring factual knowledge, the focus of culture learning in previous decades, is not sufficient to become an interculturally competent individual.

As stated previously, intercultural competence incorporates multiple definitions. Nevertheless, commonalities emerge as evidence of mutual perceptions of the concept among its proponents. Fisher (1996) states that intercultural competence goes beyond the knowledge of the foreign language because it implies the ability to interact with as well as accept the perspectives and perceptions of the “other” conscious of the differences from one’s own culture. Fantini (1997) echoes this view in acknowledging that a stage in the process approach to developing ICC in the learner includes “comparing and contrasting the target culture with the student’s native culture” (p. 41). This is only possible if learners are consistently prompted to a conscious awareness of their own cultural conditioning.

Fantini drew upon the international membership of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and a professional society known as SIETAR (the Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research) to flush out individuals actively engaged in teaching culture and intercultural dimensions as part of their language classes. The result yielded a volume with five introductory articles offering “a theoretical and conceptual framework for why and how to include culture and intercultural dimensions when teaching ESOL” (p. xi). The remaining four sections contain some 50 classroom activities contributed by culture-teaching proponents from around the world. The activities address another often neglected area, that of the “intercultural” or contrasts between target and native languages and cultures. Fantini’s text extends the growing list of language educators actively engaged in bridging the gap between target-language and target-culture study. Fantini (2000) cites three characteristics of ICC: the ability to develop and maintain relationships, to communicate effectively and appropriately with minimal loss or distortion, and to attain compliance and obtain cooperation with others. “Intercultural competence offers the possibility of transcending the limitations of one’s singular world view” (p. 13). Along with developing proficiency in the foreign language is the development of awareness, attitudes, skills, and knowledge that may lead learners to an understanding of cultures and how they coexist in the global family.

Straub (1999) echoes this belief regarding learners’ foreign culture study, asserting the need to be familiar with the meaning of their own culture from a discussion of its values, traditions, customs, and rituals unconsciously adopted, before reflecting with a high degree of objectivity upon those of the target culture. The failure to guide students in this crucial step in second culture learning may result in negative

consequences particularly when a foreign custom has no equivalent in the learner's culture. Unless learners are led to see themselves as cultural beings, that is, as inheritors rather than selectors of their culture, they are likely to judge the other social group negatively without examining their own customs that may be incomprehensible to others.

In his 60-hour English as a Second Language (ESL) course in intercultural communication, Straub echoes other culture educators regarding the importance of acquainting learners with their own culture as a prerequisite to learning that of another social group. He begins by defining what culture is, then allowing students to brainstorm freely, leading them to understand culture as a total way of life of all groups of humans. He teaches that "inferior" or "superior" cultures do not exist, and that cultures are formed to meet human needs. The initial part of the course proposes to heighten learners' awareness that they are members of a particular culture. As they explore their own culture, students acquire vocabulary to describe values, expectations, behaviors, traditions, customs, rituals, and forms of greeting familiar to them. The latter part of the course considers assumptions, values, and behaviors of the target culture--in this case, the middle class American way of life. Straub explains his view:

Once students know how to talk about their culture, they are ready to discuss the values, expectations, and traditions of others with a higher degree of intellectual objectivity. We explore the students' cultural values and compare and contrast them with mainstream American values. We do this by examining such popular proverbs and sayings as "All that glitters is not gold," "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours," "No pain, no gain," since cultural values are embedded in

sayings. As many cultures have similar sayings that transmit attitudes and values, you will find students eager to compare such memorable maxims. The point, however, is to note the cultural values that are associated with the sayings and proverbs. (p. 2)

With over ten books devoted to investigating the relationship between the integration of the language and culture, and numerous scholars referring to his works, Byram (1986) may well be considered a “guru” on the subjects. His publications on the topic of culture and language date back to the mid-1980s. Over a decade later Byram (2000) summarizes the concept thus:

In short someone with some degree of intercultural competence is someone who is able to see relationships between different cultures--both internal and external to a society--and is able to mediate, that is interpret each in terms of the other, either for themselves or for other people. It is also someone who has a critical or analytical understanding of (parts of) their own and other cultures--someone who is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is natural. (p.8)

From his numerous publications on the topic of culture in foreign language teaching, one of the most widely accepted incorporates his five principles of intercultural competence: (a) attitudes, (b) knowledge, (c) skills of discovery and interaction, (d) skills of interpreting and relation and (e) critical cultural awareness explained in his 1997 text. The model he presents in his seminal work on teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence--which he distinguishes from intercultural competence--is

based on foreign language teaching theory and insights from other disciplines. The inclusion of the word “communicative” in the construct assumes that the individual is able to interact with people from another country and culture in the foreign language; the construct minus the word “communicative” assumes that the individual is able to interact with people from another country and culture in the learner’s language.

In the FL classroom language educators utilize strategies to promote target culture and communicative competency in their endeavors to enable learners to develop intercultural competence. In distinguishing the two competencies, Byram confirms the reality for individuals who never attain mastery of a foreign language and yet manage to transcend an ethnocentric view of the world and progress toward becoming culturally competent. To illustrate, one need only consider professionals employed in the business world, social and health-care workers, and administrators of academic institutions. Along with educators, they too require intercultural competency in their local and our contemporary global community.

According to Byram (1997), the intercultural communicative speaker possesses linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competencies in addition to the five elements which characterize intercultural competence: attitudes, knowledge, two distinct skills, and critical cultural awareness. Communicative ability in the target language enhances all the elements of ICC. Upon initial reading of his principles, the 29 objectives drawn from these *saviors* appear daunting and untenable for the ordinary college instructor whose encounter with students is often limited to one semester. The teacher will need to select those objectives that are appropriate and feasible.

A summary of the elements captures the principal ideas: (a) attitudes refers to the learner's frame of mind as curious, open, ready to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own; (b) knowledge signifies that individuals have an understanding of the processes of societal and individual interaction, as well as that of the products and practices in their own and other cultures; (c) one set of skills refers to the ability of individuals to interpret and explain documents or events from another culture and relate them to their own; (d) another set of skills refers to the ability to discover new knowledge of culture and its practices, as well as operate the knowledge, attitudes, and skills in real-time situations; (e) critical cultural awareness/political education means that individuals are able to evaluate critically the perspectives, practices, and products of their own and the other cultures and countries. The *saviors* or elements of intercultural communicative competence in Byram's model find affirmation in the models of other interculturalists albeit they vary in their explanations and categorizations.

Bennett, Bennett and Allen (2003) posit similar assumptions with additional distinguishing features identifying an intercultural individual engaged in culture learning.

...intercultural competence refers to the ability to relate effectively and appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts. It requires culturally sensitive knowledge, a motivated mindset, and a skillset...Another distinction...is that between "culture-specific" and "culture-general" approaches to effective interaction. (p. 244)

Culture-specific approaches involve gaining mastery of the worldview and behavior specific to a particular culture, generally that of the second language (L2) being studied. Culture-general approaches involve "internalizing cognitive frameworks for

cultural analysis, overcoming ethnocentrism, developing appreciation and respect for one's own culture and for cultural difference... (p. 245). Once again, this approach concerns individuals not actively involved in the study of a particular language.

Having considered the perspectives of prominent culture learning scholars, it seems to me that individuals in the process of developing intercultural competence are able to transcend the worldview of their native culture. They have the ability and the desire to move beyond ethnocentrism. Thus, they consciously embrace an attitude of openness and acceptance of another culture which renders them capable of understanding and interacting effectively with the other social reality.

How then does intercultural competence develop in L2 learners? Kramsch (1987) believes students come to understand a foreign culture as a result of confronting facts from the foreign culture (C2) with analogous or contrastive facts from the native culture (C1), arriving at new concepts that bridge the cultures to provide them with intercultural understanding at a higher level of abstraction. Essential to an understanding of intercultural competence is the awareness of culture as a phenomenon perpetually changing, always in flux. The learner with an open mind begins the process of gradually developing the knowledge and skills necessary to critically evaluate the perspectives, practices, and products in the learner's own and the target culture.

Damen (1987) in her publication on culture learning writes:

Culture learning, like all learning, should be seen as a process; the general goals of all cultural training programs should be to facilitate this process. There are several ways to regard culture learning. It may be seen as a series of stages

along the road to the development of intercultural communicative skills and personal change. (p. 216)

Clearly, acquiring intercultural competence involves time; the level of acquisition will vary according to the individual. It will also be affected by place and Byram (1997) refines his comprehensive model by including a summary of the three locations where ICC can be typically acquired: the classroom, the field, and independently.

Language Learning and Intercultural Competence

Language learning and intercultural competence are related in much the same way as language learning and culture learning. Proficiency in the target language (L2) maximizes the potential for interaction in the target culture. The scope and breadth of culture learning may not be initially apparent. Culture remains a complex, multifaceted construct encompassing almost every aspect of an individual's life--from the way one views the numerous "worlds" or sub-cultures to which one claims identity (gender, social status, education, religion, political affiliation)--to all the acceptable behaviors and artifacts associated with those worlds. People learn the culture of the society in which they are raised. Every individual is culturally conditioned and the study of a foreign language and culture may well be the first time a person consciously considers this reality.

Although culture learning does not require proficiency in the (L2), nevertheless, because culture is embedded in language, language study is ideal for gaining knowledge and insight into the users of that language (Brooks, 1964). Without an insight into the perspectives of the other culture, the learner will be unable to develop intercultural competence. Individuals who are developing ICC understand culture as a socially

constructed concept (Phillips, 2001). They are open and accepting of the truths and realities of another culture, eventually coming to know how social groups function in both the C1 and C2. Proficiency in the L2 equips the C2 learner with a deeper insight into the thinking, behavior, and objects of that culture, and enables the learner to evaluate critically both cultures at a deeper level.

Ideally, ICC individuals move beyond a limited personal world view toward attitudinal and behavioral changes. Proficiency in a foreign language along with intercultural competence may well affect the extent to which an individual becomes a fuller participant in a culture whether on a local or global level. Developing ICC is challenging for both educators and learners, possibly distinguished more by signs of progress rather than acquisition. These signs easily include the demonstration of “affective, behavioral, and cognitive abilities, such as openness, empathy, adaptive motivation, perspective taking, behavioral flexibility, and person-centered communication” (Davis & Cho, 1995).

Approaches, Strategies, and Activities

Throughout recent decades, concern for how intercultural competence develops in L2 learners prompted a number of language scholars to suggest approaches, strategies, and techniques, or to create models by which learners might become proficient. What follows is a brief sketch of their views on guiding learners to develop ICC. Again, several common threads consistently surface such as: (a) learners’ awareness of their own cultural conditioning; (b) comparison of the C1 and C2 cultures, and (c) culture learning as process, hence, the need for a systematic approach to teaching. Kramsch (1987) repeatedly emphasized the task of the teacher to lead learners to an awareness of their

own attitudes and values that underlie cultural behavior. In a previous publication Kramersch (1983) proposed using a grid showing how people from different cultures interpret the same events differently. The purpose was to broaden student understanding and help them realize that their personal constructs must not be used as a barometer for understanding another culture.

In her publication Damen (1987) presents levels through which learners are guided by the teacher in the process of culture learning in order to arrive at the hoped-for final level where growth and change in behavior and values of the foreign language learner takes place. She lists the levels beginning with the most superficial, that is, the level involving information, perception, and awareness. This is followed by the second level of observation and data management. At the third level of cultural instruction the student learns the art of synthesis as patterns and themes emerge. At the fourth level, the student not only comprehends but also values change and action. By the fifth and final level the students reach a state of “empathy” enabling them to experience the “feeling of being inside the head of others, especially those who do not share our cultural patterns. It is the ability to identify with and understand...literally to stand in the shoes of another” (p. 217).

Obviously, not all will move through these stages smoothly and in order. Individual attitudes will vary; attitudes toward self and native culture as well as the target culture will also vary because all three will have a direct influence upon the learning process. Here, the teacher’s role is indispensable and “one goal of cultural instruction should be to provide valid information to dispel any misinformation a student has received that might contribute to negative attitudes” (p. 224). Specifically she suggests

that an appropriate approach would be to choose a culture-specific project, choose between implementing integrated or specific learning projects, delineate the goals and objectives, choose appropriate instructional material according to content, methods and techniques, administer the project and follow it up with student response evaluations before evaluating the project itself.

Valette (1986) suggests dividing cultural goals into four categories. The first consists of leading the student to develop a greater awareness and broader knowledge about the target culture and the characteristics of the speakers of the language under study. The second consists of assisting students in acquiring a command of the etiquette of the target culture to enable them to react appropriately to daily-life situations. Understanding differences between the target culture and the students' culture comprises the third goal; students observe how many facets of daily life are organized differently and learn how to interpret unfamiliar cultural conventions. These steps may successfully lead to the fourth goal of understanding the values of the target culture. As students assume the challenging task of analyzing the target culture "they will begin to realize that their own culture incorporates a complexity of patterns they were never aware of" and eminently "discover that a culture is not a static but an ever-changing phenomenon" (p. 193).

Hughes (1986) contends that carefully guided psychological questions facilitate student occasions to relate to the value system of the target culture as well as to reach personal decisions about their own values. He presents a brief list of several successful techniques employed by language teachers and teacher training experts in promoting cultural awareness among students: the comparison method, culture assimilators, culture

capsule, drama, Total Physical Response, newspapers, projected media and the culture island (target-culture classroom ambiance).

Jourdain (1998) proposes a model for assisting students of foreign language study to discover and understand the foreign culture's value system. Her aim is to propel students away from a superficial knowledge of cultural facts and figures and to place the responsibility for doing so upon their shoulders. The teacher then is free to offer expertise during the final phase of culture study--to guide students in discussion as they reflect on the values of the culture they have researched. The author proposes a three phase model in which the entire approach shifts to one that is student-centered. The teacher relinquishes her position as information- provider and passes on the responsibility for their learning to students. This of course implies that they have input into their choice of projects, and of course the assistance of the teacher who mediates their search for resources.

In phase one, small cooperative learning pairs or groups work to complete problem-solving tasks concerning the selection, collection, and synthesizing of a wealth of literature. Novice researchers make use of the library and computers about the target culture on the Web. This first step in building connections to culture is followed by phase two: activities that foster communication of this new knowledge to their peers. This may take the form of role-play or any activity which allows them to talk in the target language. Phase three involves helping students comprehend cultural traits and differences learned. Discussion of what has been learned is essential to tying together these findings aimed at building greater understanding of the values inherent in the foreign culture. She concludes by noting that this model may help the students abandon

the notion of the foreign culture as alien or incomprehensible and lead to the building of true connections to culture.

Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) also describes stages through which an individual moves in developing intercultural competence, that is, the ability to recognize one's own cultural context, to identify and appreciate differences and to develop strategies for adaptation. Two sets of major stages form an umbrella for the individual stages. Denial, defense, and minimization belong to the stage of Ethnocentrism where individuals experience their own culture as central to reality. Acceptance, adaptation, and integration belong to the stage of Ethnorelativism where individuals consciously recognize that all behavior exists in a cultural context including their own. The DMIS includes a description and diagnosis for each stage. In a subsequent publication, the researchers Bennett et al. (2003) suggest activities for the stages of his model with consideration for language proficiency and cultural complexity.

Informed by a theory of culture as process, Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) attempted to do more than simply encourage students to communicate in the target language on the way to acquiring knowledge of the target culture. They trained and required their 26 third-semester university students to employ ethnographic interview techniques as a pedagogical tool to promote positive attitudes toward speakers of Spanish. Pre- and post-measures in the form of surveys were used to measure attitude. Background reading and in-class training on conducting interviews preceded the ethnographic interviews which occurred over the term. Their reports included comments on what they learned about the culture of the person interviewed, what they learned about the person interviewed, their own culture and their own interaction style. Findings

indicated that ethnographic interviews had not only a positive effect in relation to student attitudes toward speakers of Spanish but also to the language itself.

In the title of her article Phillips (2001) shortens the initials for Intercultural Competence from ICC to IC (I See) to convey the idea of helping learners to “have new eyes.” These new eyes of awareness of cultural conditioning and positive attitudes toward the (C2) result from the teachers’ explicit attention to the development of learner self-awareness. Crucial is the teacher’s task of leading students to perceive themselves as cultural beings. This awareness is the frame of reference and a prerequisite for recognizing and being open to other frames of reference. The use of activities and ethnographic interviews to engage students in discovering themselves as cultural beings, are believed to facilitate growth in the awareness of their cultural conditioning, and a number of interculturalists have authored publications to assist the teacher (Fantini, 1997; Galloway, 1999; Heusinkveld, 1985; Smith, 1995). Thus, I have presented a brief sketch of some of the approaches researchers have applied in the attempt to facilitate the development of intercultural competence among learners.

Intercultural Competence and Technology

Language scholars have recognized the limitations of FL textbooks in teaching culture for a number of years (Kramsch, 1987; Moore, 1991). As the innovation of technology in academic settings expanded, foreign language teachers promptly explored the potential of this digital environment in their classrooms. Technology’s unique pedagogical strengths in expanding the resources for acquiring knowledge reduce the burden of the teacher as a font of knowledge. The World Wide Web (WWW) has contributed to the shift from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach

where learner-autonomy may be facilitated. Computer-assisted language learning, begun in the 1980's bears evidence to the willingness of teachers to explore new technology with their classes. The Internet with its synchronous and non-synchronous features offers a tantalizing array of culture-learning dishes: online resources, virtual tours, online collaboration projects, Web Quest projects, online chat or instant messaging, Internet telephony, video conferencing, electronic whiteboards, e-mail, bulletin boards, multimedia, blogs, wikis, podcasts, and radio as well as text. Its content-rich texts enable the learner to experience authentic culture in the target language reflecting cultural changes more effectively than textbooks.

One of the most popular uses was the asynchronous features of e-mail and chat. Connecting students of different languages and cultures canceled traditional methods of forming pen-pals. Now students were able to practice the language and learn about the target culture in much less time than with what is now known as snail mail. With the explosion of the World Wide Web as a feature of the Internet, the student had immediate access to up-to-date information where changes could be observed and the possibility for interpreting accurately the behavior of the target culture inhabitants was enhanced.

Empirical research has shown that teachers have favored the interactive features of the Internet--e-mail, chat--in teaching culture (Abrams, 2002; Liaw, 2006; Osuna & Meskill, 1998; Straub, 1999; Ziegahn, 2005) over non-interactive features. One reason may stem from the traditional belief in the efficacy of pairing non-native and native speakers. Today, however, few scholars would support the notion that language proficiency automatically leads to knowledge of or empathy for another culture or for global problems. This is noted not for the purpose of devaluing the use of e-mail as a

potential tool for learning culture; this feature of the Internet provides an opportunity for both to reflect upon their own cultural conditioning as well as that of the other partner--an essential element of intercultural competence. Another reason for favoring e-mail may be rooted in feelings of inadequacy regarding knowledge of the culture as well as inadequate training in the teaching of culture (Crawford-Lange & Lange, 1984).

Teachers would naturally choose a tool within their comfort zone as observed by scholar researcher Moore (2006), who noted the limited use of other features of the Internet. She gathered data on Spanish teachers' use of existing technologies to teach culture over a three-year period. Findings revealed that teachers showed a preference for the simpler technologies like television and video recorders, making little use of the Internet. On the other hand, those who did feel competent to teach culture reported a constraint of time and a lack of resources in accomplishing the task. In addition, Moore cites the sparse research on computer-mediated culture learning as focusing more on fact-gathering than activities designed to provide students with investigatory tools to understand the perspective of the foreign language speaker. In her recommendations for further research, she suggests using a theoretical framework that may guide research on computer-assisted language learning to research culture learning.

Clearly, the potential resources of the Internet for culture learning call for greater exploration and experimentation. The online up-to-the-minute information reflecting cultural changes and providing real use of the target language qualify it as an engaging environment for culture learners. For Sercu (2002) the learner needs to acquire the competence to learn cultures autonomously. In order for this to occur, the selection of culture topics should have relevance for the learners; the concept of culture should

adequately reflect the character of the world in which the learner is living--a world of multiple, complex cultural identities. The learner should be directed to see the multiple perspectives at work both within their own and the target culture. Culture-learning tasks need to be designed to foster autonomous learning.

In a pilot study Lee (1997) experimented with the e-mail feature of the Internet in an effort to determine its effectiveness in fostering culture learning among her Spanish students. During a two-year period 124 students in her small public university in the Northeast were linked with native Spanish speakers from three campuses to discuss Hispanic culture readings and assist the non-native speakers with their writing. Lee prefaced her study with an inquiry into her students' comfort level with technology and addressed those concerns. She recounts the results as being positive overall, with students using questionnaires to report on their favorable experience of authentic interaction with native speakers and of searching for culture information via the Internet which enhanced their research and technology skills.

Osuna and Meskill (1998) report the positive results of their study stemming from students' engagement with Internet-based projects simulating real-world tasks. They investigated World Wide Web (WWW) resources for deepening a sense of the Hispanic culture among their students. The research educators carefully constructed five original activities coordinated with the class textbook culture themes using the Internet for their 13 undergraduate students; all but one claimed to be computer literate. The diverse, purposeful, activities created focused on language forms and functions, historical and art information. After the students finished the language and culture activities they completed a post-activity questionnaire--a six-point Likert-type format--agreeing or

disagreeing with statements intended to measure and assess learners' perceptions of their learning experiences and the effectiveness of the task and technology used. Results for culture learning were positive, and in fact, they reported all activities demonstrated a high percentage of subjects identifying increased knowledge of both language and culture. Consequently, the researchers affirmed the medium (WWW) as a valuable tool for promoting cultural learning. Most likely the novelty of using the computer to complete a meaningful assignment contributed to the positive results. Meaningfulness is a factor that often determines student success in carrying out project-based tasks.

Brandl (2002) attests to the necessity of providing this element and relates it directly to culture learning:

For example, instead of having students provide general descriptions of images or photos, asking them to identify specific cultural aspects and compare them to their own cultural background makes a task more purposeful and focused, and thus enhances their awareness and understanding of cultural differences. (p. 97)

Because FL educators are often non-native C2 learners, they cannot be expected to know, understand, and address all the value and belief systems, and all the patterns of daily life characteristic of the foreign culture which is in constant flux. Assisting students in discovering their own value systems presents a challenge. Abrams (2002) used the Internet to explore cultural stereotypes with his students. During the fall semester of 2000 his third-semester German students explored stereotypical views of Swiss, Austrian, and German cultures using media from these countries as well as online contact with members of the cultures in Germany. The personal interaction between pairs of students

and the use of media provided opportunities to correct stereotyped ideas first-hand for both learners. In addition, the results of this qualitative study (students self-reported) revealed that utilizing the Internet for cultural inquiry offered learners opportunities to develop skills to investigate cultural complexity, to promote cultural curiosity, and cultural acquisition.

Liaw (2006) approached the task from a different angle. She investigated the efficacy of an on-line environment developed to foster students' intercultural competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The asynchronous communication using the discussion board between Taiwanese students and their U.S. e-pals centered on shared responses to readings and culturally relevant questions. Instead of reading articles about the target culture, the Taiwanese read articles about their own culture written in English as a prelude to studying the culture of their U.S. e-pals. Recognizing the place their own cultural practices played in their lives provided the focus for EFL learning. During the end-of-project interviews students revealed that reading English articles on their own culture and having the chance to describe, explain, and exchange views about it with others was what they liked most. E-mail exchanges among L2 learners are among the most popular uses of the Internet implemented by FL teachers to promote cultural learning.

Hertel (2003) developed an action research project to determine if electronic exchange between her U.S. learners of beginning Spanish and an intermediate – level English class in Mexico would facilitate cultural understanding and awareness among her students over the semester. Pre-exchange and post-exchange surveys with both Likert-scale and open-ended questions about students' attitudes and opinions were distributed.

In the results and discussion she reports: (a) a shift in the perception of students in recognizing a greater similarity between the two cultures, that is, a decrease in the perception of differences; (b) no quantitative increase in their desire to meet Mexicans or travel to Mexico despite numerous statements indicating an interest in Mexican culture, (c) no significant increase in their respect for the culture since initial ratings (self-reported) were already high, (d) a significant increase in students' perceived awareness of problems common to many nations--possibly because of 'real' contact with someone from another culture and (e) numerous comments on a change in their initial stereotyped ideas of Mexicans.

How effective are these attempts to use technology to foster or facilitate ICC?

Ultimately the individual teacher determines the effectiveness of the experiment.

Personal observation and experience attests to the use of other features of technology by FL teachers in their efforts to foster the development of intercultural competence among students. Each year more resources become available indicating an increase in the use of technology. Many are in the form of lesson plans, activities, and Web Quests which are free and available as open source material for other teachers. This fact is also true for the latest technologies such as blogs, wikis, and podcasts. Because most teachers are not researchers, there is a paucity of articles describing these experiments and future research may consider tapping into these 'silent' gold mines of experience.

A recent addition to the growing number of technological tools is that of the Web Log or blog, a website where entries are written in chronological order and commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. They may be used as journals to share news about topics or experiences in foreign countries, and can include, images, and links to

other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs.

In discussing how this Internet feature may be used in the foreign language classroom Ducate and Lomicka (2005) offer this caveat. The purpose for using this form of communication in an educational environment should be clear to the learners. This is true for the use of any technology tool. They cite Ferdig & Trammell (2004) who outlined four benefits of student blogging as it encourages students to become subject matter experts, more autonomous learners, more active participants in a community of practice, and open to a multitude of diverse perspectives.

With respect to culture, these public journals can be used to further culture understanding as students read about the personal experience of another student living or traveling in the target culture or view their photo logs (flogs). Contingent on the level of language proficiency of both writer (blogger) and reader, the blog could be written in English or the target language to chronicle the experiences of the sojourner. For those who do not have the opportunity to travel, the authors suggest using the blog as one of the products students use for learning about the practices and perspectives of the target culture. An example--reported from an actual recount and potential project for the language classroom--would be to have all students read the same target culture blog chosen by the teacher and students at the beginning of the semester. Each week students would summarize it in English and write five new vocabulary words learned. After a period of weeks they would write their own blogs as a way to think critically about cultural topics. While the authors list some weaknesses of using blogs (the necessity of continuously updating by contributors, blogger's perspective does not represent

everyone), the advantages of the opportunity to gain knowledge and to reflect upon another's cultural experience are worth the experiment of using blogs as a vehicle for fostering culture learning among students.

Constructivism, Technology, and Culture Learning

A constructivist perspective characterizes the approach to teaching for numerous educators today. In contrast to the transmission of concepts from teacher to student, constructivism highlights the role of learners in actively building new knowledge--individually and collaboratively--upon the foundation of previous knowledge. Learning then becomes a constructive process; the student assumes responsibility for transforming information, interpreting reality and constructing meaning while interacting in authentic settings. Essential questions become: What type of instruction must be designed to provide opportunities for such construction? Are Internet Web tasks capable of supporting pedagogy based on constructivism? How might these tasks facilitate culture learning--the focus of this study?

Jonassen (1994) proposed specific features for designing constructivist learning environments. Technology-based instruction would seem to promote these features in that it (a) provides multiple representations of reality and authentic settings; (b) enables context- and content-dependent knowledge construction, and (c) fosters reflective practice. Utilizing effective technologies such as the computer provides a gateway to the virtual world of language and culture because it provides convenient access to a seemingly endless supply of authentic materials in the target language. The multimedia capabilities enable students to learn in a variety of ways.

Brandl (2002) attests to the complementary role that Internet-based learning plays together with project-work in fostering learning as a constructive process. “The major strength of this approach”... project-based learning... “lies in its constructivist approach to learning” (p. 87). Project-work implies time for process learning--a hallmark feature of constructivism. Project-work in the view of Stoller (1997): (a) focuses on content learning where real-world subject matter and topics of interest to students become central; (b) is student-centered, giving them responsibility for their own learning with the teacher offering support and guidance; (c) is cooperative in that students can work collaboratively, sharing ideas and resources along the way in problem solving; (d) leads to authentic integration of resources mirroring real-life tasks; (e) culminates in an end product; (f) is potentially empowering and stimulating; and (f) stimulates higher level thinking skills.

Project or process work through Internet activities is the perfect vehicle to realize constructivist principles. Chun and Plass (2000) echo Brandl’s views in this constructivist approach to learning. “Constructivist approaches to learning advocate allowing learners not only to interact directly with information to be learned, but also to add their own information and construct their own relationships” (p. 160).

Constructivist principles, the Internet as a tool, and culture learning may complement each other to the advantage of both teacher and learner. Learners are instantly immersed in an authentic environment of C2 text and media--visual and auditory. They autonomously choose hyperlinks to discover almost limitless information to construct new meaning and broaden their understanding of the target culture. Sercu, Garcia and Prieto (2005) share the view of culture learning as a self-directed process of

constructing meaning which takes place in interaction. In their publication *Culture Learning from a Constructivist Perspective: An Investigation of Spanish Foreign Language Teachers' Views*, they report on a research project that sought to determine to what extent culture teaching practices reflected constructivist ideas among Spanish foreign language teachers who are encouraged to adopt this contemporary view of teaching and learning.

New knowledge is created every day...Constructivism views learning as a process of knowledge construction instead of absorption. Learning... requires the building of conceptual structures through reflection and abstraction. Since each learner has to construct his or her knowledge, concepts cannot be transmitted from teacher to learner by means of words. Learning occurs only when the learners are actively involved in the construction and reorganization of concepts. (pp. 483-484)

Affirming the importance of engaging learners in meaningful activities Sercu, et al. (2005) discuss the role of the teacher and what constitutes good teaching that leads to efficient learning. Influencing the conceptions and practices of both experienced and beginner teachers precedes any change in behavior because their beliefs determine which content teachers select.

The research study by Sercu, et al. (2005) focused on four issues:

1. teachers' perceptions of their students' current levels of familiarity and attitudes toward foreign cultures
2. teachers' address of cultural topics believed to be different from the learners' current understanding of foreign cultures

3. favored techniques for culture teaching.
4. whether culture teaching techniques assisted learners in constructing meaning and in comparing cultures.

Data analysis included categorizing key words from open-ended questions in addition to point-scaled analysis. The results of the study indicated that current teaching practice only in part reflected constructivist convictions on the teachers' part and that traditional approaches to culture prevailed. This teaching was based on textbooks with few activities that aimed to develop learners' cultural competence. The researchers suggested a better preparation for teachers as a means to moving them toward implementing constructivist learning environments.

Sercu, et al., (2005) sum up their views in stating:

Constructivist approaches to culture teaching will depart from the learners' current perceptions of particular cultures. The learning tasks offered will help learners to develop their own understanding of these particular cultures and their own perceptions of how culture affects intercultural communication. They will also help them to enhance their ability to independently explore unfamiliar cultures, view cultural information from multiple perspectives...reconsider their convictions and attitudes regarding foreign peoples and cultures... (p. 485)

Culture learning as a process has long been recognized by scholars. Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) posited several stages for teachers to follow in assisting students to acquire foreign culture along with foreign language. The stages included identifying a cultural theme; dialoguing along with visual representations of the theme; exploring the

linguistic and communicative needs of the unit; practice of those linguistic and communicative strategies like role-playing and games; verification of perceptions through description and analysis of the cultural theme in the target language; examination and comparison of reasons for a change of perception about the culture theme; and finally an evaluation of the language and cultural proficiency. In short, the educators proposed an integrative model for the development of cultural proficiency in the target culture through the processing of culture in language. The concept of culture learning proceeding in stages through project or task-based activities grew and developed through the 1990s.

In her publication Jourdain (1998) suggested a model for culture teaching which would become more student-centered through three phases: an information-gathering phase, a target-language communication phase, and a phase in which cultural values are discussed. She recognized the place of fact-gathering by student--active participation in the learning process--and careful guidance through teacher expertise of the subsequent phases in which students strengthen their research skills, interacts and practices--role-play--communicating in the target language and potentially building greater understanding of the values inherent in the foreign culture.

Another culture scholar, Wright (2000), reports on an empirical study of culture learning among university beginning German students, designed to test the hypothesis of a process-oriented constructivist approach in contrast to a knowledge-based approach which he labeled *instructivism*. In this research, two classes served as treatments groups (n = 47) and two served as control groups (n = 42) randomly assigned. The Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory or CCAI (Kelley and Meyers, 1995) used in pretreatment and post-treatment stage measured the effects of the two approaches following the

intervention which lasted 15 weeks. Students also completed a Personal Data Sheet with information regarding sex, age, class rank, major, previous language two (L2) study, experience abroad, and self-rated ability and interest in L2 study. The control group used the typical instruction which limited cultural information to factual knowledge and discussions with materials and tasks from the textbook. The treatment group participants used a process- and skill-oriented approach in the completion of five culture lessons and a culture portfolio. The culture lessons of the treatment group actively involved learners in analyzing, comparing, and responding to multiple stimuli with each lesson blending structure and spontaneity into a meaningful learning experience.

The lessons were designed to pose authentic problems, encourage student problem-solving, help students express and share their opinions, solutions and strategies, and reflect on the topic in relationship to their own personal goals of second language and culture learning. The researcher describes the quantitative analysis of findings to reveal significantly positive results on the CCAI assessing cultural sensibilities for the treatment group. He further affirmed the successful blending of constructivist, process-oriented tasks with the *National Standards* (1996). We now turn to this document as it attests to the essential role of culture in foreign language teaching.

Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century

With the publication in 1996 of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century* (National Standards, 1999), the foreign language profession received a guiding document for discussing language and culture teaching. In commenting on the National Standards, Walz (1998) notes that a striking feature of the document is that it makes clear that languages are not learned for the sake of knowing,

but rather for their use and potential in helping individuals learn other disciplines, to communicate, and share knowledge with others, as we do with our own language. Each of the five Goals--Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities has two or three standards. Cultures and Comparisons are particularly relevant as they provide a common yardstick with which to measure culture learning.

Byram's (1986) elements of intercultural competence are contained in the document: (a) the construct culture with its components; namely, perspectives, behavioral practices, tangible and intangible products of a society, (b) the importance of prefacing culture learning with appropriate activities, (c) a conscious awareness of cultural conditioning to avoid misunderstanding and prejudice, and (d) comparison between the C1 and C2 in the hope that students will become less ethnocentric and more open to the commonalities of humankind. In addition to the generic standards, the reference document is further tailored for application in Arabic, Chinese, German, Italian, French, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, the Classical Languages, and Spanish. The opening paragraph contains the rationale for the choice of culture as a goal area:

The exquisite connections between the culture that is lived and the language that is spoken can only be realized by those who possess a knowledge of both. American students need to develop an awareness of other people's world views...unique way of life, and...patterns of behavior which order their world....Such awareness will help combat the ethnocentrism that often dominates the thinking of our young people. (p. 47)

A brief discussion of the term culture reveals the writers' intention to avoid separating the "Big C" (formal) and "little c" (daily life) components of culture "because both aspects of culture are inextricably woven into the language of those who live in the culture, and because understanding and involvement with both is vitally important for students at all levels of language learning... (p. 48). Culture is understood to include three interrelated components: *perspectives* (meaning, attitudes, values, ideas), *practices* (patterns of social interactions), and *products* (books, tools, foods, laws, music, games). The Cultures goal includes two standards: the first highlighting practices; the second, products associated with cultural perspectives:

Standard 2.1. Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the cultures studied (p. 50).

Standard 2.2. Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the cultures studied (p. 51).

These two standards illustrate the importance of recognizing that the patterns of social interactions or practices and the products of one's culture are derived from the values, ideas or philosophical perspectives of the native culture. At the same time, they are in continual flux and so are interrelated. The National Standards proceed to provide Sample Progress Indicators or examples of how students in grades 4, 8, and 12 might practice these indicators.

More detailed examples appear in sections of the document where Standards are applied to a specific language (e.g., Spanish) and Grade 16 is included. A Sample Progress Indicator taken from Grade 12 which is similar to that of a beginning-level undergraduate student is: "Students experience, discuss, and analyze expressive products

of the culture, such as selections from various literary genres, the fine arts, architecture...and useful everyday objects” (p. 448). Clearly the writers of this document aspired to lofty goals for the culture learner citing the need for students to:

learn how their own culture is viewed by the people whose language they are studying...have access to the tools and learn the communication strategies needed to identify key cultural traits and concepts and to select, synthesize, and interpret them in ways that result in sensitive and meaningful interaction. (p. 34)

Intercultural competence, as has been noted, assumes there is an awareness of the native culture as it impacts one’s perspective of the target culture. The National Standards reflect this vision in the second standard on “comparisons.” Standard 4.2. “Students recognize that cultures use different patterns of interaction and can apply this knowledge to their own culture” (p.60). According to this goal area, using language to expand their knowledge of cultures, students continually discover similar and different perspectives, practices, and products of the target culture; in addition they learn to hypothesize about cultural systems in general. This reflective practice of comparing comes easier for some students than others. Still, all students may benefit from early practice.

Savignon and Sysoyev (2005) use the goal areas of “cultures” and “comparisons” from the National Standards and a theory of language inseparable from culture as a framework to recommend strategies for developing the sociocultural competence of language learners. They drew these strategies from their earlier (2002) experimental study of intercultural strategy training with a group of secondary-level learners of English in Russia. To introduce the sociocultural strategies, they suggested an explicit method

consisting of three stages: *explanation*, the teacher explains the role and importance of a particular strategy; *exploration*, students work in pairs or small groups to explore real-life examples of the particular strategy; *expression*, students actually practice the strategy in simulated communicative contexts.

At the conclusion of the experiment students reflected on the experience and exchanged views. The following is a summary of the eight strategies proposed: (a) initiating and maintaining intercultural contact; (b) anticipating and identifying sources of cross-cultural misunderstanding; (c) taking initiative and responsibility for eliminating cross-cultural misunderstanding; (d) using diplomacy for the purpose of maintaining a dialogue of cultures in a spirit of peace; (e) making generalizations, analogies, contrasts, and comparisons between L1 and L2 cultures; (f) identification and interpretation of unfamiliar aspects of an L2 culture through contacts with representatives of L2 cultural communities: analysis of authentic literature, video material, mass Media; (g) classification, compilation, and generalization of sociocultural information when working with mass Media (Including the Internet) and reference literature; and (h) review of authentic cultural materials. A cursory look at these strategies reveals several familiar concepts related to intercultural competence, constructivism, and to the National Standards in guiding the student to acquiring cultural learning.

The National Standards and Technology

Walz (1998) views the guidelines provided by the National Standards (NS) as an important step in the history of the language profession. He reiterates and concurs with the stated plan of the NS to avoid suggesting methods or approaches to language learning, for this lends flexibility and space for a “variety” of ways to meet the goals for

learners of all languages, and skills. In an article for FL educators he proposes activities involving the World Wide Web that emphasize learning other cultures as highlighted in the National Standards. Three assumptions are reflected in utilizing the Web for language and culture learning. "...that competence in more than one language and culture enables people to gain access to additional bodies of knowledge, that all students learn in a variety of ways and settings, and that language and culture education incorporate effective technologies" (p.104).

According to Walz, using Web activities provide tools for developing knowledge of content, for authentic resources, for visual appeal and immediacy, and for its variety. He suggests how teachers may train students in the use of URLs, search engines, and tasks requiring the following of hyperlinks to research. He supplies examples of "learning scenarios" for each standard with examples from the French language. In discussing culture he advocates using web advertising of products in the target language to compare with those products in the native culture. He concludes that not only is the World Wide Web the best available source for reading and culture but also "an integral part of meeting the Standards for foreign language learning" (p. 112).

National Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS·S): The Next Generation

A digital environment of ever-changing technologies may be considered a hallmark of contemporary life in developing countries. Revolutionizing the work place, health care, the transportation industry, and entertainment, technology has infiltrated almost every facet of daily life. Today's learners have been raised in this environment and must be prepared to make positive contributions to their professions, their local and

the global community. It is crucial that they acquire and develop academic skills to utilize these technologies efficiently and successfully. In the words of Karl Fish, (2006) a computer coordinator at a Colorado high school, “We are currently preparing students for jobs that don’t yet exist using technologies that haven’t been invented in order to solve problems we don’t even know we have yet.” With this mindset the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) convoked their National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) Team to review and refresh the original 1998 document, recognizing the ever-changing state of technology, resources, assessment, and practices. The result was the creation of a 2007 version, NETS for Students (NETS·S).

The goal of this endeavor was to clarify what present-day learners need to know and do with technology in order to learn effectively and live productively in an increasingly digital world. Generally online technologies can be categorized as interactive or non-interactive. Interactive technologies provide the student with opportunity to receive input and produce output. This descriptor can be sub-divided into synchronous and asynchronous exchange. Examples of the former include chat or instant messaging, and telephony or Voice over Internet Protocol (Voip). Examples of the latter include e-mail and listservs. Both exchanges require oral or written production responses.

Non-interactive technologies serve primarily as reference tools providing the investigator with a wealth of information in the form of Web sites, databases, encyclopedias and the case of the language learner newspapers, video and audio clips, virtual tours of art museums, literary works, and music in the foreign language--features difficult to access without visiting the culture. It may be noted here that with the hyperlink feature of the Internet it is possible to apply the term interactive in the sense

that the user responds by deciding where to go and what to see, and in the case of assigned tasks within an academic setting what to write as a response to what has been read. The tasks and activities associated with the Internet may be understood to promote interaction between the student and the reference tools. The majority of the performance indicators of the Technology Standards assume interaction with others either collaboratively or as a follow-up in the form of classroom sharing. For the purpose of this study performance indicators were chosen which permit the learner to work autonomously.

The emphasis of the original standards concerned student acquisition of skills in *using* technology. Six broad categories were selected as guidelines for planning technology-based activities: (a) basic operations and concepts; (b) tools for technology productivity; (c) tools for communication; (d) tools for research; (e) technology as it impacts social, ethical and human issues; and (f) technology tools for problem-solving & decision-making provided the framework for linking the performance indicators, that is, recommendations for implementation. The shift from emphasis on skills *in* the use of technology to that of skills *for* the use of technology reflects ISTE's philosophy and a significant expanse of vision. It is essential that today's learner apply skills acquired in using the tool to make positive contributions to the development of a global community. What skills in the use of technology may enhance learners' abilities to contribute positively to 21st century life for our world?

The NETS·S again feature six broad categories, each accompanied by several performance indicators to assist teachers as they guide learners in using an online environment. The categories are: (a) creativity and innovation, (b) communication and

collaboration, (c) research and information fluency, (d) critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making, (e) digital citizenship, and (f) technology operations and concepts.

Each category is expanded to define objectives and four performance indicators.

An example of a performance indicator from the fourth standard--*Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving & Decision-Making* follows the objective:

Students use critical thinking skills to plan and conduct research, manage projects, solve problems and make informed decisions using appropriate digital tools and resources. Students:

- a. identify and define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation.
- b. plan and manage activities to develop a solution or complete a project.
- c. collect and analyze data to identify solutions and/or make informed decisions.
- d. Use multiple processes and diverse perspectives to explore alternative solutions.

The standards are further developed into age-appropriate activities in which students might engage to practice the performance indicators such as the following excerpt which targets secondary level students.

1. Design, develop, and test a digital learning game to demonstrate knowledge and skills related to curriculum content.
2. Create and publish an online art gallery with examples and commentary that demonstrate an understanding of different historical periods, cultures, and countries.

For the purpose of this study I chose indicators from three categories. Two indicators are taken from the category “Creativity and Innovation.” The leading statement explains that students “demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology. Students (a) apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes and (b) identify trends and forecast possibilities.” One indicator is taken from the category “Research and Information Fluency.” The leading statement explains that students apply digital tools to gather, evaluate, and use information. The specific performance indicator states that “students locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize... information from a variety of sources and media.” Two indicators are taken from the category “Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving & Decision-Making.” The leading statement explains that students use critical thinking skills to plan and conduct research...solve problems...using appropriate digital tools and resources. The specific performance indicator states that students (a) identify and define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation, and (b) collect and analyze data to identify solutions and/or make informed decisions.

The complete technology standards for students may be found at <http://iste.org/NETS> . The objectives of the National Standards for foreign language education are expressed in the form of *progress indicators* while the objectives of the Technology Standards are expressed in the form of *performance indicators*. Similarly both incorporate objectives focusing on observable, interactive behaviors among learners using terms such as discuss, perform, collaborate, etc. However, as mentioned previously this study focuses on non-observable learner behavior, or interaction between the learner and Internet tasks, therefore, those progress/performance indicators featuring observable

behaviors have been omitted as examples for culture learning. Some of NETS·S indicators are reminiscent of those found in the National Standards, Bloom's (1956) taxonomy for learning, and various principles of constructivism. Familiar key ideas emerge such as: using critical-thinking skills to identify trends, define, and solve authentic problems; applying existing knowledge to construct new ideas, products or processes; applying digital tools to plan strategies, to locate, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and use information from a variety of sources and media.

NETS·S and Constructivism

A core notion of both the NETS·S and constructivism centers around learners' previous knowledge as the foundation for constructed knowledge. Individuals use their own personal and subjective experiences to "impose meaning on the world rather than meaning being imposed on the individual" (Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2005). This personal interpretation of reality makes it clear that not all learners understand things in the same way and that a variety of experiences may assist in reaching new understandings. The World Wide Web feature of the Internet makes this technology ideal for the culture learner who will navigate through authentic, multiple representations, of reality, performing authentic tasks to discover new meaning and knowledge. The presence of a hypermedia environment makes it possible for cultural learners to enjoy autonomy, that is a measure of control over the construction of content selected, as well as the opportunity for reflective practice in the context of knowledge construction.

NETS·S, the Internet, and Ethnography

The Technology Standards actually address the issue of culture learning under the second standard, *Communication and Collaboration*. Students are to develop cultural

understanding and global awareness by engaging with learners of other cultures. As noted previously, this occurs when students employ the synchronous and asynchronous features of the Internet--e-mail, chat, discussion boards. The focus of this study precludes a report on learner to learner interaction to foster culture learning through ethnographic experiences. There is evidence to suggest that the Internet may serve nevertheless, as a means for ethnographic experience without learner to learner interaction. Concerned that her French IV and V college preparatory classes experience authentic communication within the classroom setting, Carel (2001) designed and implemented *The Virtual Ethnographer*, an interactive multimedia software package. Her purpose was to use the digital environment to develop cultural sensitivity and intercultural competence in the classroom. The program used the computer to record student's behaviors as they participated in the sections accessed, the amount of time spent in each section, the responses to questions posed, and the analysis of video clips. The program consisted of two parts; a coursework module and a virtual fieldwork module.

In the first module through the medium of video, students observed situations of face-to-face natural interactions of native speakers--in contrast to contrived or rehearsed dialogues--to analyze spoken language, gaze, and gesture. The module presented underlying principles of the ethnography of communication which analyzes patterns constituting communicative norms--situations of speech, events, and acts--of people. The virtual tour module consisted of three sections. The first part took the students on tour of a French city highlighting its geography, industry, and traditions to familiarize them with its background.

The second section introduced a primary character interacting in several settings. In addition a biographical sketch of five other native respondents was presented. Later, these native speakers would provide an emic or insider's view of the primary character's interactions whose culture was identical to theirs. The third and interactive section of this module required the French students to provide an etic view of the various situations involving the primary character. That is, they were to analyze and interpret clips of the interactions for cultural insight. Upon completion of their responses, they accessed the similar analyses of the six native respondents for comparison with their own.

According to Carel (2001) the students reported that they had learned from the ethnographic experience, gained a more realistic picture of the French and their values, and were able to posit rules for French communication at the conclusion of the virtual fieldwork experience.

By learning to recognize norms of behaviour and interpretation and by critically comparing them with their own, these students learned to appreciate aspects of French communication they encountered in the program from the French perspective. It is likely that their newfound methodology provided the students with a structure with which to explore the French culture and to facilitate the development of cultural sensitivity. (p. 157)

In his publication on recent perspectives in teaching and researching intercultural competence, Byram (2005) cites ethnographic approach as the direction in which culture teaching is moving. Ethnographic studies, as Trueba (1993) notes, require long-term commitment, grounded in empirical evidence collected methodically, and are usually interpretive. Their main purpose is to interpret the meaning of behavior by providing the

appropriate social and cultural context. To undertake an ethnographic approach toward fostering the development of ICC is a challenge for both the teacher and the learner because it requires planning, training in ethnographic skills, commitment to several authentic experiences, and reflection before interpretation or conclusions. Study abroad provides the ideal setting for producing an ethnographic perspective. Because this is not always possible for cultural learners, language educators are exploring ways to accomplish this goal within the structure of the classroom. Experimental studies such as the one previously mentioned and carried out by Robinson-Stuart & Nocon (1996) attempt to equip students with ethnographic techniques before conducting ethnographic interviews as they did with Spanish-speakers. The digital environment or the Internet as a venue for virtual ethnography has the potential for increasing real-time experience in developing ICC for the cultural learner. Doubtless, it is an area that warrants future exploration.

Summary

The perspective of culture learning as a dynamic, evolving, process forms the core of this study. Particular perspectives on culture learning facilitate learners' acquisition of a target culture. This literature review has presented research on such perspectives believed to foster or enhance foreign culture learning such as (a) intercultural competence developed through acquiring knowledge, skills, and critical awareness of the learner's native and target culture, (b) constructivism, with such characteristic features as an authentic environment, student-centered, permitting personal construction of meaning, interactive, process- and project-based on real-world tasks, (c) the National Standards document, with its progress indicators for culture learning; (d) the Technology Standards

with its performance indicators defining what students should know and be able to do with technology; and (e) the Internet as a pedagogical tool supporting constructivist learning by permitting access to authentic content and providing instantaneous connection and immersion into the target culture. Cultural competence, constructivism, and the National Standards have been discussed as they relate to culture learning for over a decade. In previous research they were reviewed most often as unique issues related to culture as presented in the classroom and foreign language textbooks.

This review has sought to identify the common threads that validate their union as firm foundations for strengthening perceptions about culture learning. With the integration of technology in foreign language learning, this review included the digital environment as it impacts culture learning and became a part of the design of this study. The online tasks of Companion Book Websites were investigated to determine if and how well they aligned and corroborated with the principles of the four perspectives on culture learning discussed in this review.

Chapter 3

Method

Introduction

My interest in culture learning stems from 33 years of teaching Spanish language and culture using Spanish textbooks produced by foreign language publishers. In recent years, the Internet emerged as a viable tool for teaching culture and thus expands the limited and frequently inadequate presentation formerly encountered in most foreign language textbooks, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. The issue of culture in foreign language learning, along with other issues of FL content in textbooks, continued to fit into the ongoing conversation among FL scholars since the late 1980s.

Kramsch (1987) investigated the content of eight German language textbooks for their portrayal of foreign reality along with that of American culture. She reports a vast difference in the way textbooks manipulated concept formation and suggests that (a) a need for multiple perspectives in the presentation of C1 and C2; and (b) teachers receive more supportive information to enable them to present culture to learners because teachers cannot know every thing about the cultures of the target language.

Moore's (1991) research questions sought answers related to (a) the nature of cultural content presented in Spanish textbooks; (b) the degree of learner involvement in the learning of that content; and (c) the extent to which both reflected the published proposals of educators for the teaching of culture. She concluded that culture learning focused on generalizations and norms and neglected individuating factors.

Lally (1998) reviewed the comments and suggestions offered ten years prior in professional literature, to determine whether or not recommended changes were in effect in beginning college-level French textbooks of the late 1990s. In the recommendations of the previous decade culture content was not an issue. This is not surprising because socio-linguistics, which targeted communicative competence in FL teaching, characterized the era. Culture learning centered on mastery of language pragmatics-- authentic daily conversation--to avoid communication breakdown. This was the age in which the four competency skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing emerged along with proficiency guidelines. Therefore, recommendations such as a movement toward functional language, increased communicative activities, authentic language, and a decrease in grammar emphasis comprised the focus of her investigation.

Aski (2003) explored the degree to which Italian textbook activities relied on traditional, mechanical activities to practice grammar structures instead of more recent Second Language Acquisition (SLA) findings, that is, activities requiring the process and negotiation of meaning to practice grammar.

In justice to authors and publishers of Spanish textbooks, I have observed an unquestionable improvement in the scope and presentation of perspectives, practices, and products to language learners. This was evident in the topics and content of textbook chapters. While textbook tasks usually revolve around a slice of the cultural pie presented in an individual chapter, the Companion Book Web Site expands the topic, or field of cultural inquiry for the learner. It is the content of this digital environment feature that formed the locus for this investigation. The purpose of this study was to determine if the online tasks of post-secondary introductory Spanish foreign language textbook programs

conformed to selected elements prescribed by the intercultural competence construct, the constructivism paradigm, progress indicators from the culture and comparison goals of the National Standards (1999), and the performance indicators set by the *National Educational Technology Standards for Students* (NETS·S). Furthermore, the study sought to discover if the language of tasks prompted students to become aware of themselves as culturally conditioned beings as they explored, compared, and evaluated the second language culture (C2). Therefore, a content analysis of World Wide Web culture tasks was employed to answer the following research questions:

1. How are the adjunct Internet culture tasks of Spanish Companion Book Websites articulated to encourage learners to become aware of their own cultural conditioning?
2. What opportunities do the adjunct Internet culture tasks of Spanish Companion Book Websites provide for learners to explore the perspectives, behavioral practices, and products of the C2, that is, to identify, recognize, locate, explain, describe, discover, compare, contrast, analyze, synthesize, interpret, forecast, aspects of the target culture?
3. In what ways do the adjunct Internet culture tasks of Spanish Companion Book Websites (a) engage the learner in process- based tasks, (b) prompt the learner to identify authentic problems or significant questions along with possible solutions, and c) apply new knowledge?

A discussion regarding the research design, an overview of content analysis, the sampling scheme, data collection and analysis procedures are presented in this chapter.

Research Design and Procedures

This study is qualitative in nature in that it sought to document, analyze, and interpret naturally occurring data in online (Book Companion Web Site) instructions of tasks designed for Hispanic culture learning. As postulated by Marshal & Rossman (1999), research in the qualitative paradigm seeks to understand a phenomenon--in this study instructions of inquiry appearing in an online environment. Qualitative research allows for close examination and analysis of the nature of the instructions for categorization and for compliance with the conceptual framework described in chapter one. Because the study was essentially a content analysis it precluded any report of individual interaction or learner to learner observation, consultation, or assessment to determine the efficacy of the online tasks from a participant point of view which might have yielded different results.

Overview of Content Analysis

As is true of many constructs, content analysis may be defined in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, key terms emerge from the myriad definitions and may be described as steps or stages in the process. One begins with communication messages, moves to purposeful selection of text, coding, systematic categorization, and interpretation for reporting or narrating. Holsti (1969) offers a broad definition of content analysis as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (p. 14). Mayring (2000) describes qualitative content analysis as consisting of a bundle of techniques for methodological, controlled analysis of texts, with categories having been derived inductively from the material to be analyzed. Palmquist (2005) was instrumental in guiding his graduate students to develop and revise

a definition of content analysis. As a research tool, researchers quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of words before making inferences about the messages within the text. The students included books, essays, interviews, discussions, newspaper headlines and articles, historical documents, advertising, as well as any occurrence of communicative language and speeches as examples of text.

Initially content analysis can be traced to sociologist Max Weber who examined press coverage of German political issues in 1910 (Holsti, 1969). As a technique in communication however, content analysis became popular after World War II (Morgan, 1993). Both Hosti (1969) and Brownell (1993) comment on its value in educational research; the latter on its value in collecting data on material utilized in technology education. The content of technology education incorporates not only documents but also visual and audio media. The task of coding data is facilitated with the availability of computer software which searches text for “words, phrases, expressions, or statements that are considered by the researcher to reflect the domain of interest of the research question” (Tashakkorie & Teddlie, 2003). Thus the researcher utilized ATLAS.ti 5, a qualitative computer software in this study.

Sampling Scheme

This study targeted online task directions for analysis. I frequently receive introductory Spanish texts from publishers to consider for adoption, and over the last 30 years has become familiar with foreign language publishing companies, hence the decision to select samples from these publishers. Moore (1991) analyzed the cultural content of six postsecondary introductory textbooks for Spanish, using three randomly-selected readings from each and their adjunct questions. Textbooks commonly presented

reading selections or dialogues highlighting some cultural aspect of a country's products, social behavior, and geography. In addition to questions requiring oral discussion, adjunct tasks usually took the form of true or false, matching, or multiple choice assessment. I chose to analyze the adjunct online tasks from six chapters of six textbooks. Typically, sample size in qualitative research is small with purposeful sampling as a feature. The sampling scheme in this study was non-random and purposeful because its purpose was to select samples of similar cases for in-depth study. According to Gall, Gall, & Borg, (2007), "The purpose in selecting" ... "is to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied" (p.178). Chapter online tasks numbered from one – involving multiple steps - to 10 or more; these comprised the samples for analysis that the researcher believed would yield sufficient data from which to obtain results to draw viable conclusions.

The adjunct Internet tasks were taken from similar chapter topics customarily present in introductory Spanish textbooks. Ordinarily each chapter begins with new vocabulary related to a particular topic. Structural content or grammar and selected aspects of Hispanic culture follow, revolving around: college/academic life, meals, clothing, leisure/vacation, sports, health, family, domestic concerns, daily routine, professions/work, shopping, politics, celebrations both secular and religious, and more recently the environment and technology. With the recent addition of the digital environment to foreign language programs these same topics are expanded by adjunct activities in the area of culture learning.

Each foreign language publisher produces a variety of levels of texts such as introductory, intermediate, advanced, and literary as well as those for heritage learners.

Each level claims many authors who periodically update their works to new editions. As the principal instrument of this study, I have chosen to review Book Companion Web Sites from the most recent editions and/or best-selling introductory Spanish texts. Table 2 lists the textbooks, year of publication, and publishers from which the adjunct online culture tasks will be obtained.

Table 2 – Texts and Publishers

Textbook	Year	Publisher
<i>¡Con brio!</i>	2008	John Wiley & Sons
<i>Aventuras</i>	2007	Vista Higher Learning
<i>Entrevistas</i>	2005	McGraw-Hill
<i>Plazas</i>	2005	Thomas Heinle
<i>¡Arriba!</i>	2008	Pearson/Prentice Hall
<i>Puntos en breve</i>	2007	McGraw-Hill

Texts and Publishers

I requested and received information from the representatives of the following well-established publishing companies, regarding the adoption of selected textbooks by institutions of higher learning throughout the United States. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., publishers of *¡Con brio!*, began publishing foreign language titles for the West Point Academy just before the American Civil War, around the 1860's. This first edition of *¡Con brio!* has been well-received by instructors and has almost reached its sales goal for the first year of 15,000 copies. (M. Iglesias, personal communication, April 14, 2008). *Aventuras*, published by Vista Higher Learning, ranks in the top 3 best selling Spanish texts nation-wide, although only emerging on the scene as recently as 2000 and currently boasting 102 current adopters. (A. Peacock, personal communication, March 11, 2008). *Plazas*, their top selling introductory Spanish textbook, is published by Thomson/Heinle, (recently re-named Cengage Learning), a company in business since the early 1950s. (C.

Overstreet, personal communication, March 10, 2008). Published by Pearson Prentice Hall, *¡Arriba!* represents its current best selling introductory text with over 160 adopters. (D. Miller, personal communication, March 16, 2008). *Puntos en breve*, a briefer version of *Puntos de partida* and sharing the same online component is published by McGraw-Hill (2007). This text enjoys the position of best selling introductory Spanish text in the country, with its seventh edition selling more copies than any previous edition. (G. Cameron, personal communication, March 11, 2008). *Entrevistas*, (2005) also published by McGraw-Hill and considered to be another excellent text replaced *Nexos*, (2005) published by Houghton Mifflin. *Nexos*, the sample text proposed was unavailable at the time of data collection because the online components were undergoing revision and the deadline date for uploading material has not been announced.

Selected Topics

Each text includes 13 to 18 chapters with the customary cultural topics of the Spanish-speaking world: college academic life, meals, clothing, leisure, sports, health, family, domestic concerns, daily routine, professions, shopping, politics, celebrations, the environment and technology. The aim of this study was to analyze the online adjunct tasks from each text by selecting six similar themes: (a) leisure or vacation, (b) professions or work, (c) family or relations, (d) celebrations, (e) health, and (f) technology. These topics were chosen because they appeared to offer the potential for responses soliciting higher-level thinking (Bloom, 1956) in contrast to responses soliciting primarily factual information. For example, while exploring a Web page of classified jobs in a Latin American newspaper, the learners are requested not only to identify cultural differences, but also to identify any information considered unacceptable

to ask in U.S. newspapers; further the learners are asked to give an opinion about asking for such information. In a task such as this example, the learner may be prompted to a greater depth of exploration in contrast to simply listing the types of jobs advertised.

Ideally, tasks soliciting surface facts are minimal. Online tasks did not always mirror textbook chapter contents or have the exact same six topics I had originally selected. Politics and the environment were two other topics with the potential for higher-level thinking and I proposed to use either in the event that a text lacked online coverage of the topics I had chosen. In the event that this plan did not work I would examine the text to see if there was another topic which might serve my purpose. Such was the case with *Con brio!* which did not have a chapter topic on technology nor the environment; the online tasks were therefore taken from the chapter concerning global economy. It also did not have one on celebrations; professions and work were treated as two separate topics and both chapters were used.

Arriba! did not have a chapter topic on celebrations; the one on the environment was selected instead. Finally, *Plazas* did not have a chapter topic on technology; in its place I used the one on the environment. The remaining topics corresponded in all the texts. I have justified my reason for selecting particular topics; however, they were never a focus of this investigation. There was no need to include corresponding topics. The selection could have been completely random taken from any of the 12 to 18 chapters within the texts. My focus was on the actual online tasks.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

According to Merriam (1998) data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity in qualitative research. As the online documents were retrieved from the selected

chapters, they were copied to a Word document and filed in folders labeled according to similar topics. For example, the folder “Leisure/Vacations” will contain the culture-learning tasks assigned from each Companion Book Web Site associated with the topic of leisure and vacation. Later, this facilitated a comparison among the Web Sites concerning the topic. As each individual task’s question, instruction, or directive was examined, I highlighted the essential part of the text as it related to the research questions. As noted by Miles and Huberman (1994) “Coding is analysis.... Codes are labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study.... They can take the form of a straightforward category label or a more complex one” (p. 56).

Of particular interest to the researcher were similar patterns of words iterative throughout the directives, and key words cited in the research questions encountered in Bloom’s taxonomy such as: locate, search, compare, interpret, analyze, explain, evaluate, synthesize, explore, identify (i.e., a problem), and propose (i.e., a solution). These key words constituted potential code words as well as categories for analyzing tasks instructions. Additional codes and possible categories included *personal preferences*, *factual information*, and *hypothetical responses*. An example of a personal preference question is: “Which sports do you like the most?” An example of a factual information question is: “Which Spanish-speaking countries do not have bullfighting events?” An example of a task requiring a response to a hypothetical situation is: “If you were a bullfighter, what part of the costume would you prefer not to wear?” According to Bliss, Monk, and Ogborn (1983), more important than the words themselves are their meaning, a choice the researcher makes about its significance in the context of the instruction. I

was also attentive in segments of text that prompted culture learners to question, explore, or be aware of their native culture as a launching pad for comparison with, or discussion of the target culture. Of further interest were tasks that required learners to design steps or stages that engaged them in a process of discovery rather than to produce a brief immediate written response. For example:

Consult the information that the U.S. government publishes to find out what documents are necessary for your trip and what type of tourist status you need to have in Honduras. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1135.html .

Then use the Web Sites below to decide in which city of Honduras you will stay. Indicate the names of cities you find most interesting and then cite information about each. Let's Go Honduras:

www.letsgehonduras.com/web/index.html and

Guía del mundo: www.guiadelmundo.com/paises/honduras

In addition to soliciting facts, text that encourages learners to do more than transmit factual information regarding the products, behavior, and beliefs, values, or attitudes of people was highlighted for coding. The researcher was assisted in this task of coding in two ways: two inter-raters and qualitative computer software.

The inter-raters, both seasoned instructors, had been teaching Spanish language and culture 15 years or more. The majority of those years have been at the college level; they were accustomed to the subject matter and familiar with companion book websites. Once they agreed to assist in the investigation each received (a) background information concerning the fundamental question “How do culture-learning tasks via the Internet reflect the models of current pedagogy for culture learning?” (b) the three research

questions along with a checklist (See Appendix A) of key words generated from the four perspectives that constitute the conceptual framework of the study, and (c) sample tasks from each of six book websites on the topic of college/academic life – a topic not used in the study. They were asked to read each task and determine what key word from the checklist might describe what learners were being asked to do as well as suggest keyword/codes not present on the checklist. Two weeks later we met to compare and discuss our results. Initial consensus was about 95% with suggestions to clarify the definitions of some words such as factual information and identifying information.

The inter-raters again contributed to the research with input on the revised checklist that included exact definitions for each keyword (See Appendix B). The keyword or code was expanded to include a reference to the native culture (C1) or target culture (C2) for research questions one and two as well as a reference to one of the three elements of culture – perspective, - belief, value, attitude (bva) - behavioral practice (bp), product (p). Therefore, an instruction such as, “Investigate the following four websites concerning Honduras and answer the question, ¿Cómo es el gobierno de Honduras? – What is the government of Honduras like?” I would label as “C2 describe p” to mean that this task invites the student to describe a product (in this case an intangible creation) of the C2 or Spanish culture. If an instruction included more than one code I included that as well. The code “C2 describe bp” means that the learner was asked to describe a behavioral practice in the Spanish culture. “C1 explain bva” means learners were requested to explain a belief, value, attitude, that is, a perspective about their own native culture.

Presented with another set of tasks from another topic to code, we later met and once again compared ideas. In reviewing the key words present in the pedagogies, I suggested that the word “read” be dropped as a code because in reality learners have to read every instruction and through every website. Likewise, the instruction to “write down the websites” from a discovery task was another directive that needed to be excluded from analysis because it served no purpose in this study. My colleagues agreed and the words were no longer considered. Where differences occurred, we explained our views and again reached 100% agreement on the final coding. Following are definitions used for the code words regarding the tasks.

Table 3 – Code Definitions

identify, name, list	recognize, indicate, pinpoint
explain	make clear by reporting, illustrating in more detail or revealing relevant facts or ideas
locate	find out or discover the exact place or position of
describe	cite, mention give the details or characteristics
discover	find (something) in the course of a search, to become aware of a fact or a situation
compare to	note the similarities
compare with	note the differences and/or similarities
contrast	note the differences
analyze	examine or inspect closely (items of info) for explanation or interpretation in order to arrive at a conclusion
synthesize	to combine (items of info) to arrive at a conclusion or form an opinion
interpret	explain the meaning of
forecast	to estimate or judge or foretell or predict a future occurrence or consequence of something
process-based	paragraph, composition, e-mail involving multiple steps to complete the task
identify problem, ques.	literal meaning
suggest solution	literal meaning
apply new knowledge	create a scenario based on what was learned in the lesson about culture

	Additional Codes
individual preference	learner requested to make a personal choice according to interest
factual info	a brief discrete response to who, what, when where, how, how much, how many, easily obtained directly from the web page to which the learner was directed
hypothetical	a contrived situation postulated to elicit learners knowledge, opinion, or reasoning
create	design, construct an original narrative according to the suggestions of the task

The third stage of inter-rater input concerned collapsing code words into categories. Initially, I had selected only 11 categories combining certain keywords particularly from research questions two and three. However, both inter-raters explained that each code word for these questions was distinct and represented mutually exclusive ideas. I understood their reasoning and deferred to their argument. For example, I thought that the words “explain” and “describe” could be collapsed into one of the two words. In some instances of daily usage they may be considered synonymous. In observing an event one might say to another individual: “Describe what you are watching” or “Explain what you are watching.” The outcome would be the same. However, while it is also possible to “Describe that dress”, “Explain that dress” would be interpreted quite differently. Proceeding in this manner we arrived at a unanimous agreement and the categories chosen were:

Table 4 – Categories of Key Words

Research Question 1 – C1 awareness
Research Question 2
C2 identify
C2 explain

C2 describe
C2 compare with
C2 discover
C2 analyze
C2 synthesize
C2 interpret
C2 forecast
Research Question 3
Process-based
Identify problem/question
Suggest solutions
Apply new knowledge
Additional Codes
Hypothetical
Factual information
Create
Individual preference
Personal factual
Personal opinion

C1 awareness refers to research question one; C2 identify, C2 explain, C2 describe, C2 compare, C2 discover, C2 analyze, C2 synthesize, C2 interpret, and C2 forecast refers to research question two; process-based, identify problems or significant questions, suggest possible solutions, and apply new knowledge refers to research question three. The directives to “name, list, or locate” were believed to be synonymous with C2 identify and categorized as such. The key word “compare with” was selected to encompass “compare to” and “contrast” because the meaning includes both ideas of similarities and differences. For this reason only “compare with” is used as a category. Additional codes include: hypothetical, factual information, and create. Those requesting personal factual information, for example, “How many siblings are in your family?” those requesting personal opinion or individual preference eventually were absorbed into the first category or C1 awareness.

ATLAS.ti 5

ATLAS.ti 5 (2004) facilitated the continuation of coding and analyzing data. A prototype of the program was initially developed in the context of a research project entitled ATLAS (1989-1992) at the Technical University of Berlin, Germany. In 1993 it was further developed into a commercially available version and released in 1997 for Windows. It claims to be one of the most prominent tools for qualitative data analysis--especially for large bodies of textual, graphical, audio, and video data. It offers tools to manage, extract, compare, explore, and reassemble meaningful pieces from large amounts of data in creative, flexible, yet systematic ways.

The fundamental design objective in creating ATLAS.ti was to develop a tool that effectively supports the human interpreter, not to automate interpretation. With this package one can code and/or annotate text or media segments in a variety of ways, search/select segments by code, and display relationships among segments in diagrammatic format. An automatic coding mode codes all similar segments according to defined patterns. Visually, annotations and links are made in a margin area of the computer display. Gall et al., (2007) asserts that “The essence of a content analysis is the coding of the document’s messages into categories. Each category should represent a discrete variable that is relevant to the research objective ... and be mutually exclusive....” (p. 289). ATLAS.ti 5 supports the task of classifying coded data into categories. As stated by Holsti (1969, p. 95) “The most important requirement of categories is that they must adequately *reflect the investigator’s research question.*” (emphasis in original)

The software program was used to manage the primary documents or online tasks so that memos, quotations, and related themes could be easily retrieved in order to analyze. One of the most commonly used methods in content analysis is the tally of items (Holsti, 1969). For descriptive purposes results include: (a) an account of occurrence of each code and category representing the total samples retrieved from the six Book Web Sites; and (b) an account of each code and category representing each individual book Web Site.

Gall et al., (2007) describes the next step of the process. “The final stage of a content analysis is to interpret the meaning of the results. The interpretive process will depend on the purpose of the study and its theoretical or conceptual framework” (p. 290). Thus, the categorized data was examined and analyzed in the light of conformity with the previously described elements of the intercultural competence construct posited by Michael Byram, constructivism, the National Standards, (1999) and the Technology Standards for Students as these have been articulated in the research questions. Findings are reported, discussed, and interpreted along with conclusions and recommendations for future research.

Credibility/Trustworthiness

Credibility is first sought through the use of inter-raters for coding and categorization to minimize researcher bias in the initial procedure. Holsti (1969) and Gal et al. (2007) both cite the importance of creating categories that are mutually exclusive. The researcher with the assistance of the inter-raters, attempted to ensure that items fit only one category, as well as reflect the purposes of the research.

Dependability

The researcher used the “memo” feature of the software program to generate an audit trail of findings and personal reflection in analyzing the data. Thus, the lector may trace the process as the investigation unfolds.

End of Chapter Summary

An interest in culture learning via the Internet tasks of current Spanish postsecondary language programs sparked the ignition for this study. Previous studies over the last 20 years investigated culture learning content in language textbooks. Contemporary classroom study features the digital environment in many disciplines; language and culture learning are no exception. As is true of any educational resource the Internet also requires periodic investigation for its viability as a tool of instruction. Thus, three research questions characterize this study in examining the online tasks for learning culture associated with six current Spanish textbook programs. The design, focused on an analysis of these tasks in light of four pedagogies for learning culture, led to the creation of a checklist or key words believed to promote such learning. With the aid of two inter-raters – colleagues with expertise in teaching Spanish language and culture – the researcher was assisted in the coding and categorizing of data. ATLAS ti. 5, a software program for qualitative research managed the data making it easier to later retrieve memos or reflections recorded throughout the process and associated with the data. Once the design was in place the researcher was then prepared to observe the stage of the digital environment where culture-learning tasks provided the scenes for analysis and report.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

Four perspectives concerned with culture learning – intercultural competence, constructivism, *National Foreign Language Standards*, and the *National Technology Standards for Students* share complementary features. An authentic, interactive environment in which learners develop an awareness of their own cultural conditioning as a prelude to exploring the perspectives, behavioral practices, and products of a foreign culture characterize these pedagogies. The prominence of the Internet as a resource tool for culture learning becomes evident in observing its integration in contemporary foreign language textbook programs. Hyperlinks prompt learners to experience foreign culture in an authentic, visual, and interactive environment.

This study investigated these online tasks to determine to what extent they mirror the objectives of the aforementioned pedagogies in relation to each of three research questions. The chapter reports the findings from the total sample of tasks, and from the individual book websites. Additional findings include a report on key words that did not appear in the culture-learning pedagogies but emerged as the tasks were analyzed. Sample tasks from three different Companion Book Websites illustrating the variation in format are presented below. As learners progress in their proficiency in Spanish the tasks are written in the foreign language.

Figure 1 – Sample Tasks from Companion Book Websites

¡Con brio!

Chapter 4 - El tiempo libre - Leisure

Costa Rica is well known for its natural resources and ecotourism. Use this opportunity to plan your next vacation. Visit Costa Rica and go water rafting on its rivers.

1. Go to <http://www.aventurasnaturalescostarica.com/espanol/php/riverpld.php>. Describe the activities you will take part of during the day in chronological order.
2. Why is it important that the participants be in good physical shape?
3. Do you think this is something you would be interested in doing? Why?

Puntos en breve

Chapter 2 – The Family

Al navegar 2 - Surfing

Surf the following two sites, then list three differences and three similarities between a Mexican family and a North American family.

la familia norteamericana:

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0101/ijss/ijss0101.htm>

la familia mexicana: <http://www.famepedregal.net>

Aventuras

Lesson 9 - Las Celebraciones

In the **Exploración** section in your textbook, you learned about festivals and celebrations. Search the Internet to find out more about **Fiestas y celebraciones**. Start your search by using the "Palabras clave" links, then answer the questions below.

Palabras clave

Carnaval de Barranquilla

Fiesta de San Fermín

Festival del Merengue

Inti Raymi

piñata

quinceañera

1. Write down three websites where you can find dresses and accessories for a **quinceañera** party.
2. What kind of celebration uses **piñatas**? Write down one website that explains how to make your own.
3. What happens at **La Fiesta de San Fermín**? Where and when does it take place?
4. Describe what happens at the **Festival del Merengue** in the Dominican Republic.

When is the **Carnaval de Barranquilla** celebrated? What is the origin of this celebration? What can you expect to happen there?

Results of Research Question 1

How are the adjunct Internet culture tasks of Spanish Companion Book Websites articulated to encourage learners to become aware of their own cultural conditioning?

Tasks were coded for prompts to identify, describe, or explain an aspect of the learner's culture: a perspective – belief, value, or attitude (bva), a behavioral practice

(bp), or product (p), such as an organization, a pastime, an event. The findings of this analysis revealed that of 253 tasks identified, only three prompted learners to identify, describe, or explain an aspect of their own culture as they explored a topic of the target culture. One of the three required learners to describe a perspective (belief, value, attitude) referring to stereotypical attitudes toward Hispanics in the United States.

“¿Cuáles son tres de los estereotipos de la cultura hispánica o de las familias hispánicas que existen en los Estados Unidos?” The other two required learners to identify and explain a product and a behavioral practice – referring to U. S. holidays and how they are celebrated. *“List three different holidays celebrated in your area, and explain how those holidays are celebrated.”*

Because tasks from additional findings such as personal factual information, individual preference, and personal opinion may be considered prompts to native cultural awareness, 20 more tasks were added to increase the evidence for C1 awareness to 23 tasks. Examples of personal factual questions included those that requested learners to tell the number of members or size of their families as well as give descriptions.

Individual preference questions targeted learners’ interests in nutritious meals, and various pastimes or favorite places. Personal opinion tasks solicited viewpoints about an important community service such as the Red Cross.

The table below illustrates tasks from the book websites as they prompted native cultural awareness. The numbers of tasks prompted appear below key words.

Table 5 – C1 Awareness Texts Results

Texts	bva	behavior	product	pers. fact	opinion	pref.
<i>Plazas</i>	1	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Puntos</i>	0	1	1	6	0	3
<i>¡Arriba!</i>	0	0	0	0	0	4
<i>¡Con brío!</i>	0	0	0	0	2	0
<i>Aventuras</i>	0	0	0	0	0	2
<i>Entrevistas</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0

As the table shows, four online book sites have no tasks in which learners explore the attitudes, values, beliefs, behavior, and products prevalent in their own culture. Only two texts asked about personal facts, one for an opinion, and four asked for preferences. In light of the sample topics chosen, it was a surprise to find so few tasks inviting learners to examine their own world view and behaviors. For example, regarding the topic of health in the United States, learners could have been prompted to describe the general attitude toward health and the care of the body, along with evidence – behaviors that support these attitudes. They might have been asked to identify major health issues in the country along with the advice of experts for the prevention of specific illnesses.

With reference to the family, learners might have been asked to comment on their perception of family life as a value and to support these perceptions with behaviors observed or experienced. It might have been useful to request learners not only to distinguish different types of celebrations – stages of life, national, religious – but also to explore behaviors similar in all three types, or what might determine the value of any holiday.

Questions centering on how foreigners might perceive American attitudes toward work might have stimulated some thought about the work ethic in the United States.

Asked to provide evidence that technology plays a dominant role in the everyday lives of

people today might have served to heighten awareness of this feature of daily life.

Particularly effective for raising cultural awareness are tasks that require learners to assume the role of observers or foreigners as they experience American culture.

To lessen the chances for taking offense or defense, learners might be asked to respond to perspectives and behaviors based on media presentation. For example, “If you lived in another country and had no personal contact with persons from the United States, what would you conclude about the American family from watching television? I have suggested only a few of the countless possible tasks that might have raised an awareness of learners’ cultural conditioning related to perspectives and behaviors.

Astonishing also was the discovery of no tasks alluring learners to plunge beneath the surface and submerge into the depths of numerous Hispanic subcultures. What better venue than the Internet to discover how the topics of health, family leisure, celebrations, work, and the environment impact the indigenous people of many Latin-American countries? Likewise the same can be said for the large segment of immigrant Asians and Europeans who have adapted to and /or adopted Spanish customs and language of Hispanic countries. This was the silent question that initiated my investigation of Internet tasks as they facilitated culture learning. What opportunities to probe the “cultures within cultures” will Internet tasks provide to close the gap left open by textbooks? Sadly, I encountered none.

Summary

According to the table above, the online tasks do not encourage learners to explore the perspectives, behavioral practices or products of the C1 to any marked degree because only two textbooks sites included such tasks. Soliciting learner’s opinion,

preference, or personal factual information, appears to be more common although not especially significant because these tasks numbered only 20.

Results of Research Question 2

What opportunities do the adjunct Internet culture tasks of Spanish Companion Book Websites provide for learners to explore the perspectives, behavioral practices, and products of the C2, that is, to identify, recognize, locate, read, explain, describe, discover, compare, contrast, analyze, synthesize, interpret, forecast, aspects of the target culture?

Tasks were coded for prompts to perform the actions appearing in the research question. As explained in the previous chapter “locate” was subsumed into the category “identify”, “compare” to and “contrast” subsumed into the category “compare with”, and “read” was dropped from analysis.

As the table below indicates, the online culture tasks addressed a little over half of the culture-learning pedagogical objectives. Tasks prompting higher-level thinking skills such as synthesize, interpret, and forecast are non-existent, with only two opportunities provided to “analyze” the results of a search in order to draw conclusions. The first concerns drawing conclusions from searching Latin American Websites for information on childcare facilities and the second on retirement homes.

Table 6 – C2 General Results Summary

C2	bva	bp	p
identify	1	1	21
explain	2	1	3
describe	0	6	8
compare with	1	8	8
discover	0	2	9
analyze	0	0	2
synthesize	0	0	0
interpret	0	0	0
forecast	0	0	0

Identifying, explaining, describing, and discovering products in the C2 occurred more frequently than doing the same for behavioral practices. In the table below illustrating how each book's tasks tallied, the letter alone indicates one task; the number in parenthesis indicates how often the task appeared. As was true of prompts to examine native beliefs, attitudes, and values, opportunities to examine these elements in the target culture also occurred minimally with only 4 instances cited. Learners were directed to compare with, that is, to cite similarities and differences between cultures in 16 tasks with an almost equal division between comparing behavioral practices and products.

Table 7 – C2 Texts Results Summary

<i>¡Con brío!</i>	Identify p Explain bva, bp, p(2) Describe bp,p
<i>Puntos</i>	Identify p Explain p Describe p Discover p (3) Compare bp (2), p(2)
<i>¡Arriba!</i>	Identify p, (6)
<i>Aventuras</i>	Identify p (13) Explain p (1) Describe bp (4), p (3)

	Discover p (2) Compare p (2) Analyze p (2)
<i>Plazas</i>	Identify bva, bp Explain bva, p Describe p (3) Compare bva, bp (3), p
<i>Entrevistas</i>	Discover bp (2), p (4) Compare bp (3), p (3)

Plazas is the only text to provide three opportunities to investigate the beliefs, values, attitudes, and behavior of the C2 with inquiries about family life in the Hispanic world. An example appears below as it appears online.

Preguntas Answer the following questions in Spanish about your family and about family life in the Hispanic world. Consult the Web links in the ¡A leer! section as needed.

1. ¿Cuáles son tres atributos importantes de las familias hispánicas? (What are three important attributes of Hispanic families?)

3. ¿Cuáles son tres de los estereotipos de la cultura hispánica o de las familias hispánicas que existen en los Estados Unidos? (What are three stereotypes of Hispanic culture or familias that exist in the United States?)

No text had more than five online tasks exploring C2 behavioral practices. Prompts to investigate products are the only C2 tasks of *¡Arriba!* while other texts have at least one task concerning a perspective or behavioral practice.

Summary

Nine categories representing 72 of 253 tasks reflect the objectives of the four pedagogies for culture-learning relating to the second research question. This means that less than 33% of the tasks selected provided opportunities to explore the three elements of culture. Because only 14 tasks involved making comparisons C1 with C2 – the other four were C2 with C2 – only 18% of the tasks specifically prompted learners to relate the target language (C2) with their own.

Results of Research Question 3

In what ways do the adjunct Internet culture tasks of Spanish Companion Book Websites (a) engage the learner in process - based tasks, (b) prompt the learner to identify authentic problems or significant questions along with possible solutions, and c) apply new knowledge?

Tasks were coded for instructions to perform the actions appearing in the research question. From a total of 253 tasks 13 engaged the learner in three or more steps to complete the assignment. The table of tasks from the book websites below shows that *Entrevistas* used process-based tasks exclusively – one assignment for each chapter topic. *Plazas* and *Puntos* also prompted multiple steps in completing tasks.

Table 8 – Texts Results of Research Question 3

Texts	Process-based	Iden. Prob.	Suggest sol.	Apply knowl.
¡Con brío!	0	0	0	0
Puntos	3	0	3	3
Arriba	0	0	0	0
Aventuras	0	0	0	0
Plazas	4	2	0	2
Entrevistas	6	1	0	1

An example of an *Entrevista* process-based task follows.

Chapter 3 - La familia

Are marriage and divorce as common in Spanish-speaking countries as in this country? First, go to following websites or others you may find and study the statistics of marriage and divorce. Then, write a paragraph in English about what you learn. Compare and contrast the numbers and trends you discover with those of this country and/or your own experience.

1. [Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, Ecuador](#)
2. [Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Spain](#)
3. [Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, Argentina](#)

In order to initiate the task the learner must read through the websites given and/or find others to discover statistics regarding Hispanic marriages and divorces. Notes must be taken and organized on the material discovered. The learner must also research other sites and take notes in order to obtain information about the situation in the United States. Another step involves establishing clear instances of similarities and differences between the C2 country and the United States, as well as trends from both countries. If learners have personal experience from their own families or friends that they wish to include, this necessitates further planning before attempting to write a coherent and cohesive paragraph.

Only three tasks requested learners to identify problems and these occurred within process-based tasks. *Plazas* asked learners what they thought might be some concerns of the Honduran people and *Entrevistas* asked the same about Bolivians in the chapter topic concerning health. Responses to the question naturally follow previous web searches about the countries. *Puntos* invited learners to choose three environmental causes and suggest slogans to promote their defense.

The six tasks in which learners were required to apply new knowledge always occurred in the context of a process-based task. These tasks required learners to compose an e-mail, a composition, or a paragraph. For example, *Plazas* created a scenario in which the learner was a native of Honduras who had studied abroad in the United States for a period. Having returned to the native country one of the learner's peers was planning an imminent trip to the United States. The learner was instructed to create an e-mail to send to the peer explaining some of the differences the classmate would most likely encounter in North American culture. In order to cite differences the learner – in reality a native

from North America – would need to apply knowledge gained about the Honduran culture from the text, the classroom, and the searches concerning the culture of Honduras.

In the chapter topic leisure/vacations *Puntos* directed the learner to write a description of plans for visiting Honduras. A few guided questions such as “What parts of Honduras are you going to visit?” assumed that the learner had already investigated and gained knowledge about the culture. Process-based tasks typically constituted the third set of tasks for all the online assignments in *Puntos*. The first set titled “Antes de navegar” – “before surfing” included questions designed to assist learners in becoming aware of things, or situations about their own culture. These were not necessarily prompts to describe, identify, or explain C1 perspectives, behavioral practices, or products. Most often they were designed to elicit personal factual or personal preference information concerning the native culture. Although these prompts did not directly reflect the objectives of the four perspectives on culture-learning, they are related to C1 awareness. The second set of tasks titled “Al navegar” – “Surfing” included directives to search among the websites before providing responses. The final set titled “Después de navegar” – “After surfing” consisted of tasks like the example above in which learners drew upon the results of their discoveries in order to apply new knowledge to the final task. *¡Con brio!*, *¡Arriba!*, and *Aventuras* offered no process-based task, nor any that prompted learners to identify problems, suggest solutions, or apply new knowledge.

Summary

From a total of 253 tasks identified, 13 engaged the learner in process-based tasks, 3 prompted identifying authentic problems or significant questions, 3 requested suggesting solutions to problems, and 6 presented situations for applying new knowledge.

Thus, with only 25 tasks to appropriate to analyze for research question 3, it seems that the ways of carrying out these objectives for culture learning via the digital environment are limited.

Additional Findings

Additional findings uncovered key words that emerged from the tasks, although not listed in the objectives of the four perspectives on culture-learning. Tasks involving a contrived situation postulated to elicit learners’ knowledge, opinion, or reasoning were categorized as hypothetical and this study identified 19 instances. Table 9 below displays the number of online tasks related to the sample texts.

Table 9 – Text Results from Additional Findings

Texts	Hypothe.	Factual info.	Create
<i>¡Con brío!</i>	4	17	0
<i>Puntos</i>	14	28	3
<i>Arriba</i>	0	33	0
<i>Aventuras</i>	0	18	0
<i>Plazas</i>	1	9	2
<i>Entrevistas</i>	0	0	1

¡Con brío! demonstrates this idea in the task that is found in the topic on global economy. Learners reveal both knowledge and reasoning in responding to the following situation which has been translated into English. “If you were the owner of a company that wanted to invest in a new factory of assembling in another country, why would it be important to know the rank of the most important cities for commerce and business?” Presumably the learner has acquired a better understanding of world economic growth after having read and responded to questions from previous website searches. On the topic of work *Puntos* asked the learner to assume the role of interviewer for a potential job candidate in Chile. In both scenarios the learner would have acquired some knowledge from previous study

of the topic as it reflected life in the appropriate countries to display adequate knowledge and reasoning.

Six tasks prompted learners to be creative. The directive usually occurred within a process-based task and often directly requested the student to be creative. Creating a C2 advertisement for an ideal job, an e-mail presenting cultural differences in a positive manner, a description of a perfect weekend of play in Puerto Rico, a unique festival with activities, were some of the examples in which learners might exhibit creativity.

Another additional finding that formerly characterized culture learning in foreign language textbooks and teaching focused on eliciting facts. Before the digital age textbook responses to culture learning tasks were obtained directly from the narration or dialogue that featured an aspect of culture in a lesson. True or false, multiple choice, matching columns, and fill-in-the-blank answers with one or a few words were easily located from the lesson. This study, investigating culture learning in the digital environment related to textbooks identified 104 tasks soliciting factual information. Although representing less than 50% of the total tasks identified, fact finding comprised the majority of tasks. With the exception of *Entrevistas* factual inquiries represented the majority of responses for each text website. Both *Plazas* and *Entrevistas* tended to have more process-based and less factual information tasks. Similar to textbook fact finding tasks, online fact-finding tasks typically directed learners to one website where they could encounter the information easily. These tasks were distinct from those that offered various sites through which learners could potentially search to amass a wealth of information before selecting appropriate data for a response. Two examples from *¡Con brío!* exemplify this category of tasks.

Chapter 3 - La familia y los amigos

One of the best ways to keep track of the members of your family is by drawing a family tree. In order to do this you must gather the information and find a Web Site or a book that teaches you how to display it.

1. Go to http://chato.cl/blog/2001/01/genograma_arbol_genealogico.html and read how to draw a family tree. Keep in mind that all the information will be in Spanish. Based on the person's sex what are the basic shapes used?

2. How do you portray when a person is dead?

3. In what order should the children appear below the parents' marriage line?

In this one site offered, learners will find the answers to these factual questions easily and

without having to visit other sites or describe or explain what is learned.

Chapter 2 - Professions

1. Go to <http://www.ticketstoros.com/espanol/corrida.html>. Two of the most important things in a toreador's profession are his skill and his costume. What is the toreador's costume called? What are the parts of the toreador's costume?

Summary

Evidence for additional classification of culture-learning tasks included hypothetical situations, factual information, and opportunities to become creative in submitting responses. I have identified a total of 130 tasks describing objectives distinct from those posited by contemporary culture-learning pedagogies discussed earlier. A detailed discussion of these additional categories appears in the following chapter.

Summary of Results

Based on the paltry sum of online tasks (23 of 253) encouraging learners to probe aspects of their own culture, evidence for C1 awareness appears scanty. Inquiries about personal opinions, preferences, or personal facts, while associated with learners' lived experiences, may result in nothing more than a superficial glimpse of the native culture.

The underlying perspectives that motivate both behavior and the creation of tangible and intangible phenomena of daily life may never be examined.

Having identified only two tasks from 70 in which learners were prompted to analyze the C2, the promotion of the highest-level thinking skills of analyzing, synthesizing, forecasting, and interpreting, appear to be noticeably deficient. I looked for evidence of C2 exploration regarding the three elements of culture – perspectives, behavioral practices, and products. Findings revealed a focus on the products or creations in the C2 (51 tasks). Fewer than 20 tasks encouraged learners to search for information revealing behavioral practices in the C2 and only 3 were concerned with perspectives. The underlying beliefs, values, and attitudes that generate and perpetuate behaviors and creations in a culture may be considered most important.

While identifying problems, suggesting solutions, and applying new knowledge totaled about 12 tasks, 14 tasks invited learners to integrate their skills of searching with discovering, creating, comparing, contrasting and applying new knowledge to pen compositions demonstrating the acquisition of cultural knowledge. Finally, as three additional categories emerged, tasks soliciting factual information responses were identified as a majority.

Thus, in this chapter 4 I have summarized the findings from this study which essentially investigated the extent to which Internet tasks from introductory Spanish textbooks may facilitate culture learning. In chapter 5 I have discussed these findings in light of previous and future research.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Implications

Introduction

This chapter will review and discuss findings related to the research questions of this study. I will then offer ideas perceived to be pedagogical implications of the study, acknowledge some inherent limitations, present suggestions for further research and summarize my conclusions from this investigation.

Research Question 1

How are the adjunct Internet culture tasks of Spanish Companion Book Websites articulated to encourage learners to become aware of their own cultural conditioning?

Findings revealed that only three tasks required learners to examine a perspective, a behavior, and a product of the native culture as presented in chapter four. How did the web site authors miss the fundamental premise of foreign language culture teaching so relentlessly expounded over the previous decades? Could the value of raising native awareness of culture conditioning failed to have made an impression? Numerous culture scholars have insisted that the first step of a planned program for teaching culture is to raise learners' awareness of the role that family, religion, country, and a myriad of social groups have contributed to their perception and behavior. Kramsch (1987) designates the teacher as the individual responsible for leading learners to an awareness of their own attitudes and values underlying cultural behavior. Damen (1987) and other culture

scholars (Valette, 1986; Hughes, 1986; Bennett, 1993; Phillips, 2001) reiterate this notion in positing that learners are guided by teachers in the initial stage of C1 awareness. Why then did I find virtually no evidence to support this essential premise regarding culture learning? Perhaps the truth is simply that Web task authors are not informed about this fundamental premise. Perhaps the reason that tasks prompting learners to native culture awareness are minimal is because C1 awareness is understood to occur gradually, emanating from guided questions and discussions more effectively managed in a classroom setting. Shaub (1999) asserts that it is through a discussion of C1 values and traditions unconsciously adopted that an objective reflection of the target culture occurs. According to Hughes (1986) guided questions by language teachers facilitate occasions for learners to grow in C1 awareness. These views suggest that exchange between teachers and learners as well as among learners may promote a more conducive environment for developing native culture awareness. Interaction may better stimulate the kind of reflective thinking involved in developing C1 awareness in contrast to Web tasks. If the online authors believe that the Web functions more as a reference it may not serve as an efficient tool for developing this preliminary stage of culture learning.

Research Question 2

What opportunities do the adjunct Internet culture tasks of Spanish Companion Book Websites provide for learners to explore the perspectives, behavioral practices, and products of the C2, that is, to identify, recognize, locate, explain, describe, discover, compare, contrast, analyze, synthesize, interpret, forecast, aspects of the target culture?

Products

To study the role of culture in language learning over the last four decades is to observe a shift in the focus. How well do the results of this study reflect the changes? Findings are reminiscent of the trend during the 1950s and 1960s when culture teaching focused on facts - the “Big C”, the created products of a people. In this study learners searched primarily for information about events, institutions, health issues, pastimes, places, and geography. Because products constitute one of the three elements defining culture today, a search for information is not discouraged. But what should be done with the information? What characterizes a meaningful exploration of a culture’s products? In 21 searches concerning products learners needed only to identify them. For example, “Locate three spas in Spain or Latin America that feature thermal waters. Write the names and locations.” Other sample tasks were similar in requesting the learner to find business schools in different Spanish-speaking countries, or art and music events from an online travel guide. The World Wide Web with its potential for offering unlimited information generally supplies abundant material on most common phenomena. Therefore, such tasks need to be expanded to include another step.

A few tasks required learners to explain their findings, for example, *Puntos* directed learners to choose an article in the C2 about a health issue and to explain it as well as give the reason for their selection. Prompts to compare and contrast, describe, and discover information each occurred less than 10 times. Prompts to compare and contrast are valuable because they assist learners in relating new information to what they already know. Kramsch’s (1987) position regarding making comparisons is clear; she states that understanding a foreign culture results from confronting facts in that culture with

contrastive facts from the native culture. Although present in the findings, eight opportunities to compare and contrast cultural elements indicate that performing these tasks may not have been perceived as significant by the foreign language authors.

Prompts to describe and discover products appeared more or less equal to those of comparing. Describing products remains a rather low-level thinking skill, but the task of using the hyperlink feature of the World Wide Web to explore multiple sites in order to accumulate more knowledge was vastly underused. Noticeably absent were opportunities to practice higher-level thinking skills; learners were never challenged to forecast, synthesize, or interpret information resulting from their searches and only twice to analyze their findings. The omission of such prompts reveals a dearth of opportunities to practice higher-level thinking as posited by contemporary culture-learning pedagogies. Findings for research question three suggest that tasks concerned with exploring products in the C2 occurred infrequently in light of the total number of tasks.

Behavioral Practices

During the 1960s the realization that culture learning included more than a study of created products or manifestations of a people, shifted the focus to the “little c” facts. Culture learning was incomplete without attention to the daily living patterns or social behavior of a people – another element defining culture. Without an understanding of how people functioned on a day to day basis and why certain practices typically characterized a people, meaningful interaction in the C2 would be severely restricted.

Results of this study yield meager testimony to the salience of inquiry concerning behavioral practices within the foreign culture. As was true of tasks related to exploring C2 products, prompts to analyze, synthesize, interpret, or forecast behavioral practices in

the C2 were nonexistent. Comparing and contrasting behaviors represented the highest instances (9) of prompts; learners were asked to describe behavioral practices on only seven occasions. When viewed against a background of 253 tasks identified these numbers pale into insignificance. Yet comparing and contrasting do represent higher levels of thinking skill than naming, defining, or describing phenomena.

Evidently little value was placed upon the merits of identifying or discovering behaviors in the foreign culture because learners were required to identify a behavioral practice once and to discover C2 behavior a mere six times. In the first instance learners' response to a search about the Hispanic family included naming a few characteristic features. Examples of C2 discover behavior were found in tasks in which learners searched through a few websites to find information about contemporary marriage and divorce procedures, how Spaniards celebrated patron feasts, and how traditional festivals were celebrated in Cuba. Occasions for explaining behavior were also nominal. It would seem that requesting the learner to explain a behavior might potentially result in a clearer understanding of the ways or customs within the foreign culture. Response to this prompt might have fostered a deeper appreciation for the diversity among peoples; yet, learners were asked to explain a behavioral practice only once.

Perspectives

Before discussing the results regarding another element of culture it is necessary to return to the late 1980s. During this period a growing awareness that there was yet another dimension to cultural acquisition gradually infiltrated the minds of foreign language educators. An individual could not fully appreciate another culture without an understanding of the fundamental beliefs, values, motives, intentions, and reasons

underlying behavioral practices. Thus, intercultural competence emerged – a movement espousing the need to go beyond factual knowledge, to gain an acceptance of the perspectives and perceptions of the “other” conscious of the differences from one’s own culture (Fisher, 1996; Byram, 1987; Fantini, 1997).

According to the objectives of the Culture Goal posited by the *National Standards* for foreign language teaching, learners gain understanding of how both C2 behavioral practices and products are related to perception. This is where the story of culture begins for a people; their view of the world shapes all that they do and create. The beliefs, values, and attitudes, determine how they present themselves to the rest of the global community. It is an essential component of every human even though the realization that perspectives are not innate and universal may not be attained until an initial encounter with a different culture.

Findings from this study number the lowest for learner inquiry concerning perspectives as it characterizes the foreign culture. Only two tasks were identified that asked learners to explain what lay behind the behavioral practices of people. One task required learners to explain why Costa Ricans consider it important to be in good physical shape. The other requested learners to explain the perceptions of Panamanians regarding the Panama Canal. One task requested learners to identify aspects of C2 family life which would include a Hispanic view of the world. Once cited, these views were to be contrasted to those of people from the United States. This was the extent of tasks exploring this fundamental component of culture and the question of “why” hovers over cyber space. Is it that the digital environment doesn’t provide this information?

Perhaps explaining, describing, discovering perspectives and perceptions of a culture require extensive searching, reading, and reflecting over a period of time to comprehend the “other’s” world view. Certainly these stages of exploration would precede those of comparing, analyzing, synthesizing, interpreting, and forecasting about the foreign culture. I can only deduce that perhaps in this initial study of Hispanic culture – which includes over 20 countries – an in-depth treatment of perspectives may not be possible at this stage of culture learning. The classroom, in which a diversity of insights may be discussed provide a more appropriate and effective way to gain knowledge about this element of culture.

Research Question 3

In what ways do the adjunct Internet culture tasks of Spanish Companion Book Websites (a) engage the learner in process- based tasks, (b) prompt the learner to identify authentic problems or significant questions along with possible solutions, and c) apply new knowledge?

As reported in chapter four only 13 tasks were identified as requiring several steps to arrive at the end product which was most often a composition or paragraph. One text, *Entrevistas* was the only one to use process-based tasks exclusively for culture learning. One reason for involving learners in process-based tasks is to move away from responses requiring factual information. Another reason is to involve the learner in a more meaningful real-world task. According to Brandl (2002) a meaningful assignment in which learners perform several steps such as discovering, identifying, comparing, and contrasting something in the C2, for example a behavioral practice, and relating what has been discovered is preferable to an task limited to general descriptions. The multiple

representations of reality, visual representations, and convenient access to a seemingly endless supply of authentic materials in the target culture demand carefully prepared scenarios allowing learners to investigate hyperlinks leading to undreamed of experiences. *Plazas* and *Puntos* bear witness to some credence in the value of process-based tasks but half of the sample texts authors are either uninformed or unimpressed.

It would follow that plunging deeply into an aspect of C2 cultural behavior might easily lead to identifying problems, or significant questions. Suggesting solutions would indicate a deep understanding of a situation following a critical view and evaluation. The presence of so few of these prompts is not surprising given the relatively few process-based tasks. These higher-level thinking prompts are more likely to issue forth from previous searches where discoveries have been examined, explained, compared, contrasted, or analyzed.

Perhaps the greatest testimony to the worth of process-based tasks lies in the learner's ability to apply new knowledge by creating a final project such as a composition or paragraph. In this study applying new knowledge only occurred in the context of process-based tasks. It is only because learners have combined the ingredients of previous searches with the yeast of reflection, and allowed those discoveries to rise, that they are able to accept the challenge of separating the mass of knowledge into a cohesive narration. This is in sink with the objectives of the *National Education Technology Standards* which recognize the digital environment to be a place where students can plan and manage projects, conduct research, and complete projects. Process-based tasks using the World Wide Web appear to be the perfect venue for realizing constructivist principles. According to Chun and Plass (2000), and Brandl (2002) activities from the

Web provide an ideal avenue not only for interaction directly with the information to be learned, but also for adding to their own information and constructing new knowledge. Conceivably then, there is room for an improvement in this under-used construct – process-based tasks – in facilitating culture learning.

Additional Findings

Additional findings relate to those categories of key words not present in the four perspectives on culture learning. In chapter four I reported on six tasks that prompted learners to be creative and which appeared only in process-based tasks – a logical actuality. Within the framework of a narrative generated from surfing cyberspace, there is potential for drawing from countless sources in order to produce an original work. In addition to acquiring cultural knowledge learners may experience the satisfaction of self-expression uniquely their own. As was true for process-based tasks I maintain that there need be no shortage of opportunities inviting learners to respond creatively to new knowledge.

Tasks which prompted learners to respond to hypothetical situations are similar to those which require learners to apply new knowledge. This study identified 19 examples which is one of the higher numbers of prompts for any one category. The purpose of inviting learners to respond to virtual experiences is to provide them with opportunities to apply or display new behavior based on the knowledge acquired about the C2. Ideally, the learner responds with an understanding of how a scenario would play out in the target culture after having searched various sites. This means, for example, that after having read many job advertisements in various Hispanic newspapers around the world, the learner is prepared to act the role of a newspaper employee in designing a page

for publication. There are an infinite number of situations that could be created to elicit from the learner new discoveries about the target culture. If the situations, based on the chapter topic, were of interest to the learner, the task would be meaningful.

Factual Knowledge

As mentioned earlier in the study factual information which characterized culture teaching in previous decades was criticized by culture scholars particularly since the 1980s. Assessment was likewise restricted to reiteration of facts. The criticism stemmed from its dominance in the way culture was transmitted to learners rather than because it was inherently incongruent with the concept of culture learning. Undoubtedly, culture learning involves the learning of facts whether it is about perspectives, behavioral practices, or products of a people. The argument targets the degree to which this transmission of facts extends. With 104 factual information tasks identified, it certainly dominated this study. Again, questions arise about this finding. How is this possible? Was there any real thought of the type of responses expected from the learners searching for answers on the Web? The online authors of *Entrevistas* were obviously of a different mind than the other online task authors, because they excluded any factual information task. I'm not suggesting that factual information tasks be eliminated from culture learning; still, the Web with its wealth of information makes it easier to go beyond fact gathering as the only end of a culture learning task.

Pedagogical Implications

I have reported what may appear to be contrasting views regarding the online adjunct tasks. But are they? They are simply pieces of the mosaic that make up the multifaceted construct labeled culture learning. The fact is that most of the objectives

posited by the four perspectives on culture learning are present in the sample chosen for this study. However, the majority of tasks employ lower-level thinking skills in contrast to higher-level thinking skills proposed by the four perspectives. While the sample tasks, taken as a whole investigated all three elements of culture, the majority favored the created products of the C2 over behaviors and worldviews. Similar to past culture learning tasks, the majority featured factual information. At the same time and at the risk of appearing to offer an excuse for such meager findings, one cannot escape the truth that they are adjunct culture-learning tasks which follow textbook culture learning and classroom discussion. The importance of classroom culture activities ought not to be discounted because textbooks tasks often invite students to work collaboratively using the World Wide Web to enhance learning.

What do these seemingly diverse views of online tasks mean? Should factual information questions or prompts to explore culture products be abandoned? Not if an extreme is to be avoided. From these findings, is there a message I would convey to culture task authors? Yes. While there is evidence that the Internet is being utilized to extend the intellectual borders of cultural knowledge, there is more to be done. Our caravan of cultural sojourners needs to traverse the fields of digital technology in ways that will transport them into deeper experiences of the target culture. Learners are capable of observing and examining C2 behavioral practices via the World Wide Web. Authentic text, video, (www.cervantestv.es) virtual ethnography, and audio materials depicting C2 behavior are available for discovery. They can be prompted to discover the underlying attitudes, beliefs, or values suggested by that behavior. The sequel to these autonomous discovery experiences take place in the classroom.

In publications by culture scholars referenced in the second chapter, the teacher evidently performs a crucial role in assisting learners through the process of developing intercultural competence. Each researcher cites the teacher as an indispensable catalyst for sparking learner interest and experience of culture in the classroom. Through guided questions, strategies, activities, and discussion of World Wide Web tasks, the teacher facilitates learner progression in cultural learning. The classroom sets the stage with an examination of aspects from the native culture, followed by discovery of aspects of the C2 presented throughout the textbook chapter. Finally the Internet is utilized as a venue for exploring the C2 more deeply and a discussion of discoveries completes the process with a return full circle to the classroom. In addition, these adjunct online tasks may also serve not only as a part of the immediate study of culture but also as an incentive to tantalize the learner to an ongoing study of culture outside the classroom.

In the opening chapter of this study I reported on Moore's (2006) three-year investigation of Spanish teacher and their use of technology in teaching culture. Her findings bore evidence of teachers' preference for using television and video recorders in contrast to interactive technologies such as the Internet. Simple to use, these visuals mask the reality of teachers' feelings of inadequate cultural knowledge about 20 Spanish-speaking countries. It is doubtful that learners expect their teachers to possess in-depth knowledge of the perspectives, behaviors, and products of every Hispanic country, nor do we have to pretend to be omniscient. Because culture is continuously evolving, the journey to new discoveries ought to be made together – teacher and learner, for in truth the teacher is also learner. Teachers do not need to know everything nor fear to join learners in this mutual quest for cultural knowledge.

Companion Book Websites, with tasks targeting the elements of culture often provide a separate set of tasks for each Spanish-speaking country. One classroom computer or lap top, a projector, and a wall, screen or whiteboard in place of a “technology classroom” suffices to facilitate the trip to explore other “social realities.” Companion Book Websites with their hyperlinks serve as a springboard for searches to other sites where teachers can create meaningful tasks for learners to do out of class. Brief oral reports on findings can be divided among learners to include five or ten minutes of daily class time.

Diverse as they are in their tasks the six Book Websites I have examined in this study convince me that the Internet component to our textbook programs is worth the effort to explore. Not only do these sites serve an immediate purpose in the study of a specific topic, but teachers are almost certain to discover how the hyperlinks propel them into deeper caverns of cultural information. How can these nascent adjunct tasks expand to align more congruently with the four perspectives for culture-learning previously reviewed?

Based on the findings from this study my recommendations are that tasks be created to challenge learners to reflect as individuals on their beliefs, values, and attitudes. They ought to encourage learners to examine how their own worldview impacts their behaviors and whether these behaviors are characteristic of all humans – universal, or cultural – taught by significant others, or individual – the result of a personal choice. Tasks can be framed to elicit stereotypical conceptions associated with C1 realities and those associated with C2 realities as a sequel. Tasks ought to invite learners to brainstorm, to discover as many groups or societies which are recognized for distinct

characteristics in the United States – for example, the Amish or the Mormons. Prompts to investigate subcultures in the C2 might follow.

Fact-finding information would constitute only part of a task rather than conclude the search. If learners must identify a place or an institution, it ought to serve a purpose, that is, examine how it might relate to the world view of the culture. For example, asked to identify two cancer-treating hospitals in Buenos Aires, learners would be required to read the sites in order to discover insights into differences both between the two C2 hospitals as well as between the hospitals in the United States. The fact that in some countries family members are never unaccompanied by another during their stay in a hospital might provoke more reflection about things taken for granted in our country. Only a few questions - perhaps in the earliest stage of surfing - exclusively used for practice of the Web as a reference tool might elicit short factual responses.

University students need opportunities to apply higher-level thinking skills in all disciplines including foreign language and culture. Because opening chapters have directions and questions in English, online tasks also written in English can require learners to identify authentic problems, suggest solutions, analyze, synthesize, interpret, and forecast based on cultural discoveries. One or two semesters of introductory Spanish do not usually produce near-native fluency among learners; hence there is no reason to neglect prompts to practice these skills for the sake of oral fluency. Prompts representing low-level thinking skills – to the exclusion of higher-level thinking skills do not reflect the objectives of the four culture-learning pedagogies. Certainly those learners who have attained a greater proficiency ought to express themselves in the target language.

Finally, if learners are to appreciate the study of foreign language culture there is a need to reverse the current perception of foreign language study. A cultural orientation has the potential for providing a more meaningful study of a foreign language which functions as a tool for learning culture. This reversal requires systematic, deliberate, and purposeful planning of cultural learning tasks both in textbooks and on the Internet. In addition, extending the present requirement of two college semesters to a minimum of four, or until learners acquire an intermediate level of language proficiency may afford time for a more comprehensive exploration of the C2. Ultimately, learning culture and developing intercultural competence may be the best way of obtaining an essential hope for humanity – harmonious co-existence in the global family.

Limitations

The limitations of this study mirror those of other qualitative research stemming from a small sampling size. Publishers produce numerous introductory Spanish texts with the same as well as different authors. From each of six foreign language publishers only one introductory text with an online component has been selected. These texts were chosen because they are recent editions (2005 – 2008). In addition, the study does not include Spanish intermediate, advanced, or literature textbooks programs, which also have Companion Websites. The findings may not accurately reflect the state of affairs at other levels of Spanish in which culture is presented.

A descriptive study such as this entails enormous amounts of data; hence results represent a partial view of assigned culture tasks encountered in extant Companion Websites. Website tasks are the exclusive focus of this study regarding culture learning. These Websites are only one component of the FL program package. Workbooks, lab

manuals, and interactive CD's complement language textbooks. It is possible that any research question posited in this study may be better addressed through another component. Thus, findings are applicable only to the texts of Websites used in the study.

In this study, addressing the process of culture learning via Internet activities, only four perspectives on culture learning have been selected to form the conceptual framework: some features of intercultural competence, and constructivism, the *National Standards (1999)*, and the *National Educational Technology Standards for Students*. No attempt was made to exhaust all the features of the frameworks, only those similar tenets were highlighted. Culture-learning theories abound within the field of language as well as within other disciplines.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study examined how a selected number of online tasks from six introductory Spanish texts aligned with four culture-learning pedagogies. Future research might examine online assignments in light of other culture-learning theories. Further, it would be interesting to examine the online tasks of intermediate, or advanced Spanish texts in light of the same pedagogies. Other advanced levels of Spanish target conversation practice and literature. The quality of online assignments following their chapters provides yet another focus for investigation, particularly in the use of higher-level thinking skills. Because the most fundamental question of the study sought to know if the use of the Internet facilitated culture-learning, future studies might solicit the viewpoint of the one for whom the assignments are intended – the learner. Studies could be designed to monitor learners' perceptions of their own acquisition of culture over a semester with little teacher intervention beyond that of introductory C1 awareness

activities. These tasks might consist of discrete, that is, structured to require specific responses or they might present topics of the C2 for general research and response. The learner would submit both findings and a type of self-inventory report.

In this present technological era we feel the effect of a shrinking world as the happenings on the Planet invade our living rooms almost moments after they occur if not even as they are occurring. Paradoxically, as global conflicts appear to escalate, the countries of Earth may seem more isolated and remote than ever. Clearly, the diversity in cultural perspectives and behaviors plays a role. Could an understanding of differences assist humankind in accepting those differences? These ruminations propel me to continue an investigation of culture learning. The next investigation would focus on deficient findings in the present study – namely high-level thinking skills. Would culture-learning tasks target higher-level thinking skills in Spanish literature texts? How complementary are the online adjunct tasks in supporting culture learning? I would look for answers in about eight samples of 20th century Spanish literature – pre and post World War II up to the 1970s, the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, and the 1970s to the present. I would want to know (a) how Spanish or Latin-American culture is presented, (b) how tasks use higher-level thinking skills to learn about the C2 culture, and (c) how C1 awareness may be raised.

Conclusion

The integration of the World Wide Web feature of the Internet into Spanish textbook programs over the last decade fanned the flames of my own growing desire to acquire more cultural knowledge. As authors and publisher refined, structured, and expanded this feature to center around common traditional topics, my excitement grew.

The small “buffet” presentation of culture that I, and probably many of my colleagues offered our learners was becoming a banquet where we could be “served” to some extent. Chapter adjunct tasks relieved me from the necessity of planning and searching for meaningful supplementary material. However, as is true for all educational resources, the time for evaluation succeeds a period of innovation. The innovation was the digital environment as it hosted tasks from Spanish textbooks.

This study sought to examine more closely those ready-made jewels of culture – learning hitherto unexamined. Four current perspectives for culture learning served as jeweler’s lens to answer three questions. The first asked for evidence that learners were encouraged to recognize that they were culturally conditioned. As reported and discussed in the finding, evidence was present only to the most miniscule degree. Because developing awareness implies discussion and time to do so, the Internet as a viable tool for culture learning is limited. The second question sought to answer to what extent opportunities to learn about the C2 were provided as they mirrored the objectives of the pedagogies. Higher-level thinking skills were absent while more attention centered on the low-level skill with a few exceptions. Also, the opportunity to gain knowledge about the products of the culture outweighed those aimed at examining behavioral practices, and the worldview or perspectives of a culture. Again, because study of beliefs, values, and attitudes require discussion, the Internet may not be the most effective tool for learning perspectives.

The third question sought to discover if learners were engaged in tasks of several steps in completing their searches, whether they were prompted to identify authentic problems, suggest solutions, and apply new knowledge. One text used process-based

tasks exclusively while two others used it only half the time. Prompts to perform the other tasks representing higher-level skills were not present. Additional findings revealed learners to be invited to use knowledge acquired from previous searches to respond to hypothetical situation and to be creative in completing process-based tasks. Finally, reminiscent of previous decades factual information responses characterized the majority of prompts.

Initially, these results appear to resemble those of previous research findings mentioned earlier in the study, regarding fact finding. However, it must be remembered that online tasks do not represent the whole picture of culture learning. They are adjunct, and as such, complement the multiple presentations of culture in text chapters. Moreover, I can attest from personal experience over the years to a measurable improvement in textbook treatment of foreign culture. Native culture awareness is usually addressed at the beginning of each lesson through guided questions in the teachers' annotated text. Photographs representing scenes in the target culture prompt initial inquiry to attract learners to explore the chapter topic and these continue throughout. Therefore, it is possible and probable that the practice of higher-level thinking skill takes place within the academic setting. Nevertheless, I am convinced that with time we will see a shift in the focus of these tasks. Although the Internet used as a tool for teaching culture may not be in its infancy, it is still in the stage of adolescence, and as such has much potential for growth because similar to the construct culture, creating tasks for culture learning continues to be an evolutionary process. In conclusion, the Companion Book adjunct tasks provided additional experiences of culture not deeper experiences.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Checklist of Codes

Research Question 1: Instruction or question prompts student to ____ aspect of native culture (a belief, attitude, value, behavior, product)

- Describe
- Identify
- Explain

Possible code = C1 awareness

Research Question 2: Instruction or question prompted to ____ aspect of the C1.

- Identify
- Recognize
- Locate
- Read
- Explain
- Describe
- Discover
- Compare
- Contrast
- Analyze (examine aspect, parts, details, components of the C2 for explanation or interpretation to arrive at a conclusion)
- Synthesize (combine items of information to arrive at a conclusion or form an opinion)
- Interpret
- Forecast/predict

Research Question 3:

- Process-based (paragraph or composition required with multiple steps)
- Identify problem
- Significant questions
- Suggest solution(s)
- Apply new knowledge

Additional

- Individual preference, personal factual, personal opinion
- Factual information
- Hypothetical
- Create

Appendix B

Refined Checklist of Codes

The following attempts to be more specific by naming which one of the three particular elements of culture the instruction refers to, that is: (a. belief/value/attitude, (bva) b. behavioral practice, (bp) c. product, (p) which includes tangible and intangible things created and used in the culture). Hence, below are the definitions as they apply to the research questions

The first research question deals with awareness of the C1 or native culture, the second deals with exploring the C2 or Spanish culture, the third also deals with the C2 but requires a higher level thinking so it is coded with specific names but not using “C2” to refer to them. There were also additional code words that were necessary to add although they were not in the 4 perspectives on culture learning, for example, factual information, hypothetical situations, create, individual preference, personal preference and personal opinion. What all this means is that instead of one word for research questions 1 and 2, I choose the letter C1 or C2, then I add the verb, that is, the checklist word (defined below) and then I add either “bva” “bp” or “p”.

Research Question 1 definitions (referring to the student’s culture) and examples of coding:

describe- cite, mention, give the details or characteristics

identify/name/list – recognize, indicate, pinpoint

explain (an idea, situation problem) – make clear by reporting, illustrating in more detail or revealing relevant facts or ideas

C1 describe bva, bp, p

C1 identify bva, bp, p

C1 explain bva, bp, p

C1 personal factual info (this is another code I found necessary to add)

So if a student were asked to explain a behavior in his culture I would code it C1 explain bp.

Research Question 2 definitions and examples of coding:

identify/name/list – recognize, indicate, pinpoint

read – (I’ve decided to drop this word as a code because in reality students have to read every instruction and through every website. I will ignore this word and continue to see what the student is asked to do beyond “read.”) Do you agree?

explain – make clear by reporting illustrating in more detail or revealing relevant facts or ideas

locate – (discover) find out the exact place or position of

describe – cite, mention, give the details or characteristics

discover – find (something) in the course of a search, to become aware of a fact or a situation

compare to (C1) – note the similarities
 compare with C1 or compare C2 with C2) – note the *differences* and/or *similarities* (an example may be to compare a product or behavioral practice between Honduras and Nicaragua)
 contrast – note the differences between C1 and C2 or C2 with C2)
 analyze – examine or inspect closely (items of info) for explanation or interpretation in order to arrive at a conclusion
 synthesize - to combine (items of info) to arrive at a conclusion or form an opinion
 interpret – explain the meaning of
 forecast – to estimate or judge or foretell a future occurrence or consequence of something

So, an instruction such as “ Investigate the following four websites concerning Honduras and answer the question, ¿What is the government of Honduras like? is labeled as C2 describe p to mean that this task invites the student to describe a product (in this case an intangible creation) of the target culture or C2, which is Spanish. If a instruction includes more than one code it is included as well.

More examples of coding for this research question might be:

C2 describe bp (meaning the student was asked to describe a behavioral practice in the Spanish culture)
 C2 discover bva or
 C2 explain p, etc.
 C2 personal opinion/guess

Research Question 3 definitions for the code words:

process-based – paragraph/composition involving multiple steps to complete the task
 identify problem/ question– recognize, indicate
 suggest solution -
 apply new knowledge to a situation - create a new scenario based on what was learned in the lesson about the culture

Additional Codes

individual preference, personal opinion, personal factual
 factual information,
 hypothetical – a contrived situation postulated to elicit students’ knowledge, opinion or reasoning,
 create – design, construct an original narrative according to the suggestions of the task.

About the Author

Angela Cresswell received her Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Holy Family University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She taught elementary school for 2 years and high-school Spanish while studying for her Master's in Education in Spanish, which she earned from Millersville University in 1981. After obtaining her MA, Angela taught Spanish at Nazareth Academy in Philadelphia for 14 years, English as a Foreign Language in Puerto Rico and Spanish at Holy Family University before pursuing a doctoral degree in Second Language Acquisition and Instructional Technology at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

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