

REFLECTION ON STUDENT WORK AND VIDEO:

How does the teacher engage students in cultural activities beyond the classroom, including strategies that are appropriate for students at different levels of instruction? Both in my classroom and out, I engage students at all levels in cultural activities. My teaching context requires that I not only differentiate instruction linguistically, but culturally as well. My students come to me with varying degrees of cultural exposure; a few have traveled extensively, a few have never left the county, and most have never left the United States. Because their experiences are so diverse, I begin to incorporate culture from the very beginning of their language study so they will all be exposed to the world around them to some degree.

If I can't take all of my students to see the world, I am going to try to bring the world to them. Whether their lack of exposure comes from financial roots or from the culture of ethnocentricity that surrounds them, they all have the opportunity to see that the world beyond their small town has much to offer.

From the moment they walk through the door of my classroom, these students are surrounded by pictures from my travels, the flags of the countries I have visited, textiles, clay figurines, musical instruments, and handicrafts. As we talk about foods, drinks, and desserts, I bring them samples from the local Mexican store. When they have perfected their skills at asking for something that they want, they join me at the Mexican store and make their own purchases. Whenever possible, I host speakers who provide my students with something that I cannot; a first hand view of what life is like in another country.

As they enter the intermediate level of study, I offer students the opportunity to travel to Chicago to visit the Mexican neighborhoods of Pilsen and Little Village. On this trip, they experience Latin dance lessons, the National Museum of Mexican Art, a mural tour of Pilsen, and the authentic foods, beverages, and products available from stores in Little Village. The tour opens their eyes not only to Hispanic culture but also to the world of a big city.

The students who travel abroad with me are the ones whose lives are the most changed. When they have the opportunity to LIVE life in another country, they can't help but fall in love with the language. They become walking advertisements for my travel program because they return to our classroom with a passion for learning to speak the language. The other kids want to travel because seeing the pictures and hearing the stories from each tour we take say more than any testimonial I could ever give!

I design my lessons around cultural themes from novice level through advanced so what we have isn't a study of language with a splatter of culture, it is a study of culture woven throughout comprehensible use of the language.

The connection between the student work and how the teacher addresses the national standards in the classroom: The student work samples that I have included demonstrate how I try to include the 5Cs at all levels of language study. I find that lessons designed around the 5Cs and the three modes of communication create both learning opportunities and assessments that equip students to USE the target language beyond the classroom. I chose one lesson that represents each of the 5Cs but the common theme of culture is present in every lesson, every day. My students live in an environment where my class may very well be the only cultural diversity they are ever exposed to and I have to take advantage of that at every opportunity!

CULTURES: Although my entire curriculum is designed around cultural units, the assignment I chose to feature here is one of my favorites. Designed to complement the study of WW2 in US History and symbolism in both English 3 and art, students use Spanish to discuss the geography, politics, and financial situation of Spain just before the Civil War. They learn about the political parties, and they learn how to interpret propaganda. As they study, they read my novel, "La hija del sastre", and watch the film "Butterfly" searching for how the war is represented in each. The classroom discussions provide the opportunity to reinforce grammatical concepts through usage, and add essential vocabulary necessary to discuss the war. Students use their new skills to discuss symbolism in the painting Guernica by Pablo Picasso and then use this idea of symbolism to expand their study of the war.

I show them two Guillermo del Toro movies, Pan's Labyrinth and The Devil's Backbone, both set during the Spanish Civil War. Throughout the first movie, I help them understand symbolism in the film and then encourage them to find the symbols on their own as they watch the second. When they have finished viewing both, they choose five symbols that represent both films and/or one film and Guernica. They use these symbols to create a work of art that they will display, art gallery style, in class. This summative assessment allowed them the opportunity for interpretive listening (the films), presentational speaking (sharing their work with the class), presentational writing (sharing their work with me), and interpersonal speaking (question and answer session with each student who visited their work of art). More than just CULTURE, this assignment represented communication, connection to history, and the comparison of the two films.

COMMUNITIES: While this project is not assigned a grade, it is an example of what I am doing in my classroom to incorporate 21st century skills and to extend our use of Spanish beyond the classroom walls. Students have adopted a virtual classmate from Panama. They are Tweeting and Facebooking with him on a regular basis but the underlying motivation behind the project is for them to COMPARE the products of our culture with the products of Panama.

Every other week, students send a package to Andres with a product from our home town and he sends back a video reply of his opinion of the product. They get to practice their interpretive listening skills, but more importantly, they get to see that what is popular here is not always popular elsewhere! Financially, it is impossible for Andres to mail products back to the students. But on our tour of Panama in June, he is going to share some of his favorites, and I will bring them back to my class as they return for Spanish IV.

We have taken advantage of our connection with Andres throughout the year by tweeting questions related to each unit of study. For example in our "Eat to live or live to eat" unit, we asked him about the foods he ate regularly and the diet common to Panamanians.

COMMUNICATION: I often encourage my students to do interpersonal debates as we study cultural topics, but I got the idea for this graphic organizer from a workshop presented by Paul Sandrock. As we began to study bullfights, a topic that does not bring an immediate reaction from students, I wanted to incorporate a topic that would be equally polemic for American students. I chose school uniforms. In a whole group style discussion, we created a list of the pros and cons of school uniform use and then used Paul Sandrock's discussion sheet to carry on 1 to 1 target language conversation that pushed them to use more and more detail each time they turned the paper over.

They began with a 2 minute discussion, after which they took notes on the discussion sheets. The discussion sheet categories gave them additional ideas and so the second part of the discussion lasted 2 minutes. They took additional notes on their discussion sheet and then had a one minute wrap up and note session. At the end, I had been able to listen to each group speaking as I circled the room and I also had a detailed note sheet that allowed me to see everything the groups had talked about. This activity was a home-run that I owe to Paul.

COMPARISONS: In my classroom, the thematic vocabulary list is outlawed. I don't like the idea of vocabulary out of context. We cover this material, but I am trying to create realistic situations so that, as students learn the vocabulary, they are also learning how to use it to speak the language. My novices were interested in learning about clothing, and I decided that it was the perfect time to introduce a unit that had its roots in a lesson shared on Twitter by a member of my PLN, my Personal Learning Network, "Las Botas Picudas" or "Pointy Boots."

This is part of the same unit that is featured in my video and is a formative assessment early in the unit. These novice students had already been exposed to clothing vocabulary and styles of music the day before, so this lesson was the next step toward using the vocabulary both independently and in context.

At the beginning of the lesson (the video portion) you see that I ask the question “Is there a relationship between music and fashion?” Students begin to say yes, and one is explaining when “Ozzy Osbourne” enters the room. This student was selected in advance to dress up for the “hook” of this Understanding by Design (backward planned) unit.

After Ozzy has his guitar, I call up “Olivia Newton John”, my hip-hop fan, and my country music star. One by one, I use the target language to ask questions about the students who are in front of the room. At this point, my novices only have 12 weeks of language study and 1 day with the clothing vocabulary, so they give mainly one word answers.

Now that students see the connection between language and fashion, I play them the song Inténtalo by 3Ball MTY and ask them to imagine what a person who listens to this type of music might wear. They work in pairs to design the perfect outfit. In the video segment, you will notice that the groups are very quiet when they use the TL. I believe they were being camera shy as they are not normally quiet like this!

When groups have finished and presented, I show them the video for the song where they have their first opportunity to see the clothing common to fans of música tribal. This led to an excellent discussion (post video segment) of the clothing. They wanted to know more about the pointy boots.

The final part of the day’s lesson was for them to make a COMPARISON between what a tribalero would wear to a 3Ball MTY concert versus what they would wear to a concert. They could look at the picture of the tribalero to describe his clothing but had to draw the picture that would reflect the clothing they would wear.

CONNECTIONS: This assignment represents a small part of a large unit on the importance of water. In Physics, students learned about the process of creating wells and the mechanisms needed for moving water. In Chemistry, they looked at the impurities in the water from communities around the world. In Spanish, they learned where people were suffering from the scarcity of water and how they were trying to solve the problem. They also did a simple water purity experiment with test kits provided by the Chemistry teacher. Students created a lab report in which they recorded the changes to their water samples. This unit allowed me to show my class that becoming a Spanish teacher is not the only option for a Spanish major/minor. They can use Spanish in careers in science, healthcare, engineering, and more. This cross-curricular experiment was rewarding not only for me, but also for the science department.

The final assessment of this unit was a fundraiser. Students researched ways to provide clean water to people in need. When they chose the one they found the most interesting, they created a PSA in Spanish. I shared these videos with the class, and students voted for the best. Students shared the winning video with the non-profit organization “The Bernie Project” and then planned a fundraiser. Their in-class snack shop raised \$800 with which they were able to purchase a water filtration system that provides clean water for the 250 students at Wakiso School of Hope in Uganda, Africa.

The connection between the student work examples and how the teacher uses and promotes target language communication in the classroom: Through a wide variety of comprehensible input techniques, I conduct my class at or near the 90% target language goal. I believe that these student work samples and my classroom video of a novice group being taught in comprehensible Spanish show that I am promoting target language use in my classroom. I use a variety of questioning techniques to help students gain confidence not only in their ability to understand the language but to speak it as well.

For me, the most important part of target language use is that it be comprehensible to students. If I am using 90% target language and they understand none, I have not helped them increase their proficiency. Through using input at the I+1 level, I am able to hit the 90% goal while developing sharper skills in my students!

How the student work examples demonstrate differentiation of instruction and/or assessment to meet the needs of all learners: In these samples, I have shown a variety of techniques that I use to meet the needs of all learners. I begin with formative activities that allow the students the opportunity to build skills before the summative assessment.

In the video, I used the “pause and point” technique at the beginning of the discussion to differentiate for those students who had not yet become familiar with the clothing vocabulary we studied the day before. Students work together before they begin to try to create language individually. Self curated vocabulary lists and centers allow student choice.

I use differentiated questioning techniques that allow slower processors to answer simpler questions and faster processors to answer more complex questions. I teach “to the eyes.” In my opinion, it is important to maintain student engagement, and without comprehension, this is impossible. When a student seems to be confused or losing focus, I bring them back into the discussion by asking them a question at their level. TPRS, or any comprehensible input method is an excellent way to engage all learning styles. Using comprehensible input allows me to create experiences that create a successful learning environment for everyone.

In my assessments, I try to differentiate for all learning styles and often give students a choice board that will allow them to showcase their strengths as they share what they have learned with me.

How the chosen examples demonstrate how the teacher integrates culture into instruction and/or assessment: The chosen samples are a clear representation of the value of culture in my classroom. In each of these 5C’s, the C of culture is the true basis of the lesson. All of my units are backward planned with a cultural theme as the big idea, and each assessment (formative or summative) is designed to cause students to think critically about the cultural topic. These topics are relevant and useful as my students leave my classroom and use language in the real world!

How do the samples of student work and the content of the classroom video reflect the teacher’s personal statement on the value of learning language and culture? The 43 minutes per day that my students spend in my classroom are the only 43 minutes I can guarantee everyone is hearing Spanish and is immersed in culture. I hope that my video, my pictures, and my assignments are a clear representation of the high place language and culture hold for me. On a good day, a day with no assemblies or interruptions, I have 43 minutes to create lovers and life-long learners of language. I don’t want to waste those precious minutes. I am constantly seeking ways to improve the way I teach because I want my students to leave my room knowing that language can serve them in the future no matter what their career path.

Video Notes:

These students were introduced to the vocabulary one day prior to the video.

1:35, when I ask students what Lexi is wearing, one boy answers in English, and I guide them to answer in Spanish by asking a question (Is Lexi wearing jeans?) to which they reply “no.”

4:22 when I ask what type of music Mr. Osbourne listens to, students are beginning to offer more answers on their own (although they are not very loud since the camera is in the room). Mitan, off camera, adds that Ozzy listens to CLASSIC rock. Great thinking! At 8:05 students are listening to tribal music and smiling. I ask them what type of music they think it is, and some offer comparisons like salsa.

8:12, Michael, one of my quiet boys, begins to dance. He is a big fan of music, I have yet to find a type that he doesn’t enjoy.

9:57, typical comprehension check. I am using a word that I use infrequently “imagina”. I stop and ask students, “What does imagina mean?” When I am sure they understand, I continue with the activity instructions.

10:18 I review the idea of what a fan of country music might wear to get them thinking about what a tribalero might wear and to model the language they need one more time.

11:21 My three social boys are working together in a group, so I remind them that they can’t speak English during the activity!

13:22 Yellow shirt and red shirt did not include much detail, so I encouraged them to use adjectives to explain more.

18:47 Mitan describes his drawing. Because Mitan speaks loudly and clearly, I add a few funny details but do not repeat much of what he says.

19:46 Two girls were talking rather than listening. This is typical of the way that I discipline in the classroom. With the requirement to speak TL in the classroom, it is relatively easy to maintain good classroom control and rapport. At

20:24, Lexi is describing her picture, but she is quiet so I repeat everything that she says for the kids on the other side of the room.