

Abstract

Although it is generally accepted that language and culture are fundamentally inseparable, most high-school world-language classrooms remain primarily grammar-oriented and culture deficient (Hendon, 1992). In grammar-focused classroom environments, culture tends to be treated as a tool to teach language. The present study traces the history of culture instruction in secondary education and reports on data from an innovative classroom intervention. Specifically, changes over time in pedagogical approaches to culture and grammar methods serve as the backdrop for an empirical study carried out with beginning and intermediate learners of Spanish. Participants ($n = 47$) were undergraduates enrolled in SP102, SP201, and SP202 courses at a large, Midwestern university (whose level of Spanish is not vastly different from more advanced high school learners) who completed three surveys (pre, immediate post, and delayed [one-month] post-surveys) after taking part in a 50-minute intervention that integrated grammatical and cultural elements. Analyses include how changes over time in students' attitudes are affected by gender, class standing, and the change over time of students' attitudes towards the importance of culture. Results showed that the majority of data was inconclusive due to a small sample size and missing data. The only significant conclusion that can be drawn from the data is that gender does seem to affect the way a student views culture, as females believed that culture was more important than males. In addition to sharing the details of the methodology and results, there will also be a discussion of future directions for research and practice in world language classrooms that could help students and future teachers (in Spanish and perhaps other languages, too) have a sharper understanding of how and why having authentic culture activities in the world language classroom is important.

Honors College
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306