Teaching Communications, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities with Multimedia: A University-Middle School Service-Learning Project[1]

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RESUMEN

Se describe el uso de tecnología en forma de presentaciones de multimedia para facilitar la enseñanza de las Normas para el Aprendizaje de una Lengua Extranjera del Concilio Americano para la Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras. Las normas abarcan las comunicaciones, las culturas, las conexiones, las comparaciones y las comunidades. El estudiantado universitario aprende a crear, con multimedia, presentaciones sobre un tema cultural en la lengua meta. El componente de aprendizaje por servicio comunitario se fundamenta en las presentaciones creadas para estudiantes de colegio, quienes tienen acceso a las presentaciones en un sitio web de la universidad.

ABSTRACT

A description is provided of how the use of technology in the form of multimedia presentations enhances the teaching of the Five C Standards for Foreign Language Learning of the American Council on the Teaching of

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Foreign Languages: communications, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. University students learn to create multimedia presentations on a cultural topic in the target language. The service-learning component provides the multimedia presentations for middle-school students who access them from the university website.

Introduction

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages has set Standards for Foreign Language Learning that include the following categories, commonly known as the "Five Cs": communications, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities.[3] Technology facilitates the incorporation of the Five Cs in classroom instruction with multimedia presentation software that provides the language instructor and student with the tools needed to incorporate cultural images with grammar or vocabulary lessons. Although the details of this project refer to the teaching of Spanish, the format of the project can be used in teaching any second language.

Through the national education project, Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers with Technology, advanced Spanish Phonetics students at West Chester University of Pennsylvania model the instructor's use of technology for teaching language and culture. The instructor's multimedia presentations use images of fine art as a cultural context to practice specific language forms and to present new vocabulary.

The university students, many of whom are pre-service teachers, gain language, cultural and technological experience by creating short

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[3]   American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. *National Standards: A Catalyst for Reform* (Alexandria. VA: ACTFL. 1996).

multimedia presentations in Spanish on a specific topic of Hispanic culture. In addition, students create the multimedia presentations for a specific audience (eighth grade Spanish students at the C. F. Patton Middle School in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, located near the university).

Standards for Foreign Language Learning

Lewelling and Rennie provide a concise summary of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning that include communications, cultures, connections, comparisons and communities.[4]

Communications refers to communicating in languages other than English. It indicates that "students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics."[5] With the instructor's multimedia presentations, students use specific language structures and vocabulary to describe the fine art image in Spanish. The advanced Spanish students learn to create a cultural lesson in Spanish with language that is appropriate for a middle-school class.

The Cultures standard holds that students "gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures" and that they "demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied."[6] In the instructor's multimedia presentation, university students are introduced to culture through paintings by Hispanic artists with the images of fine art on a large screen. The university student presentations expose middle-school students to cultural images from different parts of the Spanish-speaking world. In many cases, the photographs are ones that the students themselves have taken during their own study abroad trips.

Connections states that students "connect with other disciplines and acquire information" and that "students recognize the distinctive

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[4]   V. Lewelling and J. Rennie. "National Standards: Preparing for the Future." *The Eric Review: K-12 Foreign Language Education.* 6.1 (1998).

[5]   Lewelling and Rennie, 25.

[6]   Lewelling and Rennie, 25.

viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its culture."[7] When university students produce their own multimedia presentations, they present new cultural concepts to the middle-school children, such as culinary customs, music, architecture, and religious celebrations of various Hispanic countries. If the university student happens to be a native of that particular country, the middle-school students also hear the language variant from that country.

The Comparisons standard seeks to "develop insight into the nature of language and culture. Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own."[8] In the instructor's presentations, functional language exercises are based on the context of the art image. In the student created presentations, the middle-school students realize how English and Spanish are related through the use of cognates. When the pre-service students create their own presentations, they apply structure rules in the context of culture. They meet the standard of demonstrating an "understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own."[9]

The multimedia presentations address the Communities standard as they introduce both university and middle-school students to other cultures that they may not have the opportunity to experience first hand. Through multimedia, students "participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world" and they "use the language both within and beyond the school setting."[10] The university students experience Spanish in a new and different way by communicating their knowledge of Hispanic culture to a real audience outside the university community. The middle-school students view the presentations either in class or on their home computers and are able to observe the second language skills of advanced learners who serve as role models for the middle-school children.

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[7]   Lewelling and Rennie. 25.
[8]   Lewelling and Rennie. 25.
[9]   Lewelling and Rennie. 25.
[10] Lewelling and Rennie. 25.

Instructor-Created Multimedia Presentations

The author has found *Microsoft PowerPoint* effective for creating multimedia presentations that include culture along with the teaching of grammar and conversation. Each instructor presentation consists of a brief grammar explanation followed by several slides of Peninsular or Latin American art. The grammar segment includes formation rules, examples of form, and examples of the linguistic structure in context. This information is followed by questions that use the specific grammatical structure. The final part of the presentation includes several art slides or the author's own photographs reflecting Hispanic culture. Students are able to comment on the images through questions that elicit the use of the specific grammatical structure or vocabulary topic presented.

Format for Classroom Presentations

An important feature of Microsoft PowerPoint allows the creator to superimpose text on an image. The images selected for the presentations are paintings by well-known Hispanic artists and provide a visual, non-textbook topic for a guided conversation that incorporates the grammatical structures explained in the presentation. The teaching of culture is an important component in second language instruction and it is best done with visual aids and in the second language.

In choosing an image for the presentation, it is important to consider the visual appeal to students and the theme of the work, such as food, fashion, landscape, music, and the individuals represented. Paintings provide a wealth of culture, as many depict some aspect of Hispanic life and history, be it past or present. In addition, the theme of the painting should promote a conversation that includes the grammatical structure studied. With a PowerPoint presentation, the instructor is able to explain cultural information in Spanish while key words are displayed along with the image on the screen. The author developed this classroom presentation format in order to include,

153

along with the teaching of grammar and conversation, more fine art culture, rather than pop culture as is typically found in elementary level textbooks.

Linguistic Components of the Multimedia Presentation

Each presentation consists of a grammar presentation that includes formation rules, examples of form, and examples of the structure in context. Next a series of questions that include the specific grammatical structure appear, first with the question and then the answer. The separate· display of question and answer allows for conversation practice with the students. The final part of the presentation includes several slides of photographs reflecting Hispanic art or culture. Students are able to comment on the images through a new set of questions that elicit the use of the specific grammatical structure or vocabulary topic studied. The use of colors, font size, lines, and boldface are visual aids that help students recognize changes in language forms. With each slide of the presentation, students can interact with the instructor by repeating, changing forms, or responding to questions.

A sample slide from a multimedia presentation on the subjunctive mood with nominative clauses demonstrates the function of a nominative clause and contrasts indirect commands with direct commands, as seen in the following set of responses: *¿Qué quieres? Quiero un nuevo disco compacto. Quiero escuchar el nuevo disco compacto. Quiero que tú escuches el nuevo disco compacto. Escuche Ud. el nuevo disco compacto. No escuches los discos de los 70.*

When presenting *ser* and *estar,* key questions with each verb are displayed along with the semantic differences. This format facilitates conversation practice and builds the conversation practice into the multimedia presentation.

¿Quién es?	*(identificación)*
¿Cómo es?	*(características permanentes)*
¿De dónde es?	*(origen)*
¿De quién es?	*(posesión)*

¿De qué es?	(materia)
¿Para qué es?	(función)
¿Qué hora es?	(la hora)
¿Cómo está?	(condición temporal)
¿Dónde está?	(posición física, geográfica)

Cultural Components of the Multimedia Presentation

Following the linguistic component incorporated in each presentation, students engage in a short dialogue on a cultural topic represented either by a fine art painting or a photograph depicting some aspect of Hispanic culture. The cultural image is inserted in the presentation in such a way that the image occupies the full space of the viewing screen (See Appendix A.). The cultural image on the "big screen" has a greater impact for students than does a small two-inch square photograph from a textbook. The questions about each art image create a guided conversation about the figures, action, and the setting of the painting, utilizing the specific grammatical structure studied. Vocabulary words pertinent to each painting are hidden behind "hot spots" at different points on the image. They can be revealed as needed during the presentation to facilitate conversation in Spanish.

In a presentation on the subjunctive mood in nominative clauses, Clemente Orozco's painting, Zapata,[11] provides an appropriate context to elicit these clauses. The Mexican general appears in a back-lit doorway with two soldiers at a slightly lower level, one of them holding a sword. In the foreground are two kneeling peasants. This scene fosters a conversation with the subjunctive mood on the anticipated actions of the soldiers and can be used to generate direct commands. The following questions and answers are superimposed on the painting:

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[11]   José Clemente Orozco, Zapata, Art Institute of Chicago. Chicago. Illinois.

¿Qué le dice Zapata al hombre? Le dice que es necesario que los soldados lo arresten.

¿Es verdad que los soldados lo van a encarcelar? Es verdad que van a encarcelarlo.

¿Es posible que lo ejecuten? Es posible que lo ejecuten.

Practice with direct commands is provided through the beach scene in Joaquín Sorolla's *Paseo a la orilla del mar.*[12] This painting depicts two young women dressed in long white dresses typical of the late 19th or early 20th century, strolling along the water's edge. PowerPoint has the feature of superimposing lexical clues on the art image in order to elicit direct commands from the students. They are as follows: *venir tú > Ven conmigo; quemarse en el sol > No te quemes en el sol; ponerse > Ponte el sombrero.*

The contrast between Goya's *Maja Vestida*[13] and the *Maja Desnuda*[14] provides a humorous opportunity to practice the verb *estar* with the following questions: opportunity to practice the verb *estar* with the following questions: *¿Dónde está la mujer? ¿Cómo está la mujer? Está vestida y tendida en la almohada* (in the first painting). *Está desnuda y tendida en la almohada* (in the second painting).

This author's photograph of the running of the bulls in Pamplona, Spain, during the feast of Saint Fermin sets the stage for a short exchange with the subjunctive mood in adverbial clauses. The photograph of the bulls entering the bullring at eight o'clock in the morning exposes students to a cultural event that they most likely have not experienced first-hand. A question prompts students to decide how they would participate in the event. The last statement of the group below contrasts a past time frame with the previous sentence in the present tense.

¿Quieres correr con los toros? (con tal de que — tú venir)
Voy a correr con los toros con tal de que vengas conmigo.

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[12] Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida. *Paseo a la orilla del mar,* Museo Sorolla. Madrid, Spain.
[13] Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. *La Maja vestida.* Museo del Prado. Madrid, Spain.
[14] Goya. *Maja desnuda.* Museo del Prado. Madrid, Spain.

Iba a correr con los toros con tal de que vinieras conmigo.

With a photograph of the Royal Palace in Madrid, students are asked to consider their future travel plans and respond with the subjunctive mood in an adverbial clause:

¿Cuándo visitarás el Palacio Real? Visitaré el Palacio cuando vaya a Madrid.

Questions or cues are superimposed on all images, along with key vocabulary words, to aid students in forming sentences with the new language structures.

This multimedia presentation format, created for teaching grammar and conversation, is designed, not to replace the professor who is the fluent role model for the students, but to enhance and motivate students' verbal interaction with the professor in the classroom. This format allows the instructor to incorporate Five C standards when students engage in conversation about the cultural images in the target language. At the same time, students learn differences in structure between their native language and the target language by responding to questions with specific linguistic structures.

Student Created Multimedia Presentations

Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers with Technology (PT3)

The author began her project as part of the West Chester University of Pennsylvania (WCU) PT3 Partnership for Excellence in 2002.[15] The goals were to provide the following: cutting edge educational experiences for WCU students; working relationships with local kindergarten through 12th grade educators; alignment of teaching with current standards; technology integration; and collaboration with colleagues, students, and kindergarten through 12th grade teachers. The project required students to model the instructor's use of technology in the classroom. As described earlier, this author uses

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technology, in particular PowerPoint, as a tool to teach and reinforce language structures. The presentations introduce fine art that is not typically found in many Spanish L2 textbooks. Through the PowerPoint multimedia presentations, the instructor is able to engage students in conversation on a topic defined by the fine art image, such as the Mexican Revolution in Orozco's *Zapata*.[16]

Objectives of the Spanish Project

Through the participation in the WCU PT3 project, the main objective for the students is to gain experience with technology, in particular with multimedia presentations. Because the project is implemented in the Spanish phonetics course, the second objective is to gain experience in delivering a formal presentation in Spanish to a real audience, the eight grade students of Spanish at the C. F. Patton Middle School in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. Because of the formal nature of the presentations, the university students must be aware of accuracy in pronunciation and structure. Another objective is to apply their knowledge about culture of the L2. They may choose a topic on any aspect of Hispanic culture, and if possible, use their own photographs from trips to Spanish speaking countries. Cultural topics include the Days of the Dead in Mexico, the Mezquita de Cordoba in Spain, childhood in Bolivia, Old San Juan in Puerto Rico, and how to make a Spanish tortilla. Students limit their presentations to cultural topics and do not include grammar instruction.

The Service-Learning Component

In addition to technology, this project includes a service-learning component, consisting of providing cultural presentations for the C.F. Patton Middle School 8th grade students of Spanish. When students engage in service-learning, they provide service in the community in such a way that the content material of a particular course is applied

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[16]   Orozco. *Zapata*, Art Institute of Chicago.

and enhanced during the community experience. In addition, an opportunity for "systematic reflection on the experience"[17] is an important component of the methodology.

In this project, students from the Spanish Phonetics course need to apply correct pronunciation rules in their delivery of the multimedia presentation. They realize that one error is magnified on the screen. The reflection process involves several revisions of each student's own multimedia presentation for language and content accuracy, and visual effect. Students also conduct anonymous peer reviews of classmates' presentations using the following criteria: content, organization, appropriate cultural images, precise grammar, accurate pronunciation, and overall evaluation. Each category is rated on a scale of five to ten, with ten being the highest score.

Format for Student-Created Presentations

Joyce Kasman Valenza in her article on the effective use of PowerPoint in the classroom, warns that "students may devote more of their time to special effects than to the issues they should be studying and explaining."[18] In the guidelines for the Hispanic cultural project, the content, organization, appropriate cultural images, and correct usage, and pronunciation of Spanish are the criteria for a good presentation (See Appendix C.). The "bells and whistles" or special effects are merely superfluous components of the presentation. Students know that their presentation grade is primarily determined by accurate language forms (both written and oral) and by information that corresponds to the context of images used in the presentation.

To allow for the elementary comprehension level of middle-school students, the PowerPoint presentation is short, consisting of only three or four photographs with a frequent use of cognates in the

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[17]   National Service-Learning Cooperative. *Essential Elements of Service Learning* (St Paul. MN: National Youth Leadership Council, 1998) 4.

[18]   Valenza, J. Kasman, "PowerPoint Effective, but Often Misused." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* 29 Mar. 2001: F4.

narrative. In addition to the images, the presentation format includes a title slide with the topic, student's name, major, and West Chester University. This slide is followed by one that lists the important information included in the presentation. A credits slide appears at the end with any pertinent bibliographical information. In order to make the presentations interactive and help students focus on key information, a slide with two or three comprehension questions appears after each image. The answers to the questions also appear separately on the screen.

Different from an instructor's PowerPoint presentations, those of the university students do not include grammar instruction, but contain a recorded narration. In the early years of the project, students recorded their narration with PowerPoint Broadcast or the continuous recording format. Students found it difficult to edit their narrations in these formats, because it was necessary to re-record the entire narration. A more efficient recording format involves shorter narrations that are inserted into the image at strategic points. An icon of a loudspeaker shows the viewer where to click to activate the audio component. The shorter narrated segments make the presentation more interactive, as the viewer can replay the segment as many times as needed, whereas this was not possible with the continuous narration formats (See Appendix B).

In order to ensure success in the project, students prepare preliminary outlines and give presentations in class. Once the multimedia presentation is complete, students save their presentations in a password protected locker on the university server. In this format, students and the instructor have the ability to review, revise, and critique other presentations on the locker website. Once the revisions are complete, the presentations are saved to a university website where they can be viewed by the middle-school students and other university students as well.

The middle-school participation

Since the presentations are web-based, the middle-school students are able to view them either in class or at home. The university students

also have the opportunity to visit the middle school and to give a live presentation in the eighth grade Spanish class. The middle-school students have the opportunity to react to the presentations and assess their comprehension by answering questions such as the following prepared by the middle-school teacher, Marc Mawson: *¿Cómo se llama el narrador/la narradora? ¿Cuáles son unos cognados que hay en la presentación? ¿Aprendiste nuevas palabras? ¿Cuáles? ¿Cuál es la idea principal de la presentación? ¿Es el narrador/la narradora nativohablante? ¿De qué país hispano se habla en la presentación?* This project provides a service to the C. F. Patton Middle School by supporting their Spanish curriculum for the teaching of culture.

Benefits to university students

In the multimedia presentation project, university students use the L2 in a professional context with a real audience and provide a service to the middle school by developing materials for the teaching of language and culture in the target language. The service-learning component gives pre-service teachers an opportunity to create a multimedia presentation designed for a specific audience. The university students learn to limit the amount of information that can be successfully presented to eighth grade students and to incorporate an interactive component in their presentations. Due to the visual and oral components of the multimedia presentation, students learn to focus on accuracy in the written and spoken word. The project also includes the opportunity for peer review of the presentations, self-editing, and editing by the instructor through use of the locker website.

Conclusions

With the PowerPoint format, the instructor is able to incorporate authentic fine art images or her own photographs with the instruction of grammar and vocabulary. The multimedia presentation format enhances and motivates students' verbal interaction with the professor

in the classroom and incorporates the Five C standards of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

The *Communications* standard is applied when students engage in conversation with their instructor and interact with the images and text in the multimedia format. Middle-school students communicate with the interactive components of the university student presentations. When students respond to images on the big screen and to questions regarding the cultural images, they are engaged in *Culture*. *Connections* are established when the university students create multimedia web-based presentations for middle-school students who connect to new cultural information through their university role models. Students make *Comparisons* when they hear and see differences in structure between their native language and the target language and when they hear and observe the similarities in the cognates used in the presentations. *Communities* are expanded when students experience culture from a Hispanic country via the image on the large screen of a multimedia presentation created by a community of university students.

The service-learning component of the project allows university students to create their multimedia presentations for a real audience, middle-school students, and brings a different level of engagement to the study of the second language and its culture for both groups of students. The university students display enthusiasm for a particular cultural topic that they may have experienced first hand. The middle-school students have the opportunity to experience this enthusiasm and perhaps will aspire to continue their second language studies in college. This is a rewarding multimedia project with multiple dimensions that enhance second language learning while addressing the Five C Standards.

APPENDIX A. *Instructions for writing on the inserted image in PowerPoint presentations.*

1. After inserting the image in the new slide, the image will hide the slide layout design. The image should be stretched to occupy the full space of the PowerPoint slide.
2. Right click twice on the image. Two windows will appear.
3. In the first window, scroll to *Order*. In the second widow, click on *Send to Back*.
4. The slide layout design will reappear. It is now possible to write text on the image.

APPENDIX B. *Instructions for recording and inserting audio in PowerPoint presentations.*

This option allows users to click on the speaker icon to listen to a recorded sound (music or voice). Multiple recordings can be inserted in a slide.
1. From the file menu click *Insert.*
2. Highlight *Movies and Sounds* then click *Record Sound.*
3. The *Record Sound* box will appear, when ready, click the red record button, and then click the stop button to finish recording. The record sound box will disappear and a speaker icon will appear on the slide.
4. Place the speaker icon in an appropriate location on the slide.
5. Repeat step 1 on the same slide or move to the next slide.
6. After finishing the last recording on the last slide, save the presentation.

APPENDIX C. *Guidelines for Student Project*

Propósitos del proyecto
1. comunicarles información sobre un aspecto cultural del mundo hispano a los estudiantes del octavo grado del Colegio C. F. Patton;

163

2. darles a los estudiantes de la clase de la fonética española la oportunidad de aplicar sus conocimientos de la cultura hispana, de obtener la experiencia de hacer una presentación formal en español y de concentrar en una exactitud de pronunciación y estructura de la lengua;

3. aprender a hacer una presentación en español con PowerPoint e imágenes.

    Tema: Un aspecto de la cultura hispana

Participantes: los estudiantes de español del octavo grado de Charles F. Patton Middle School, y su profesor Marc Mawson, graduado de WCU, con concentración en español.

Etapas del proyecto

I.   Informes breves sin PowerPoint sobre su tema en clase.

II. Presentaciones con PowerPoint en vivo sobre su tema. Se entregan las diapositivas impresas de la presentación en PowerPoint el día de la presentación en clase (ver fechas en el programa de curso).

III. Se copian las presentaciones en el sitio web y se hacen las grabaciones.

IV. Se evalúan las presentaciones de los compañeros.

V. Visita (opcional) al colegio para hacer la presentación en la clase.

Formato de las presentaciones (diapositivas o *slides* + un segmento auditivo para cada diapositiva + preguntas para la comprensión después de cada foto):

1. Diapositiva titular: título de la presentación, su nombre, foto personal (opcional), su concentración, nombre del curso, West Chester University, fecha.

2. Introducción: una diapositiva que presenta la información importante de la presentación en forma de esquema.

No se debe leer palabra por palabra la información que se presenta en la diapositiva.

3. Tres a cuatro fotografías: cada foto debe representar la información clave de la narración.

4. Preparar preguntas y respuestas para la comprensión para cada fotografía.

5. Créditos de las fotografías.

Evaluation of Project

1. You will not be graded on the "bells and whistles" component of your presentation, but rather on content, organization, appropriate images, and correct usage and pronunciation of Spanish.

2. You will be evaluated on your oral work (accurate and clear pronunciation), as well as on the written material as it appears on the screen (grammar and content). *Remember an error is magnified on the screen.*

3. If you research your topic in English, do not attempt to translate the information directly from English to Spanish; it is better to paraphrase the information in Spanish.