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Teaching culture in the 21st century language classroom

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Abstract

The paper presents an overview of the research on teaching culture and describes effective pedagogical practices that can be integrated into the second language curriculum. Particularly, this overview tries to advance an approach for teaching culture and language through the theoretical construct of the 3Ps (Products, Practices, Perspectives), combined with an inquiry-based teaching approach utilizing instructional technology. This approach promotes student motivation and engagement that can help overcome past issues of stereotyping and lack of intercultural awareness. The authors summarize the research articles illustrating how teachers successfully integrate digital media together with inquiry learning into instruction to create a rich and meaningful environment in which students interact with authentic data and build their own understanding of a foreign culture's products, practices, and perspectives. In addition, the authors review the articles that describe more traditional methods of teaching culture and demonstrate how they can be enhanced with technology.

> **"The digital revolution is far more significant than the invention of writing or even of printing. It offers the potential for humans to learn new ways of thinking and organizing social structures."**
>
> Douglas Engelbard (1997)

The advent of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999) drew attention to the vital role of culture in language classrooms and defined culture as a fundamental part of the second language (L2) learning

process. Professional conferences and journals focused on cultural learning "as an instructional objective equally as important as communication" (Moore, 2006, p. 4). While language teachers have recognized the need to incorporate more cultural activities in order to promote students' cultural and intercultural understanding to "help combat the ethnocentrism that often dominates the thinking of our young people" (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999, p. 47), the question lingers as to how such cultural teaching should and could most effectively occur at the classroom level.

The purpose of this article is to summarize the research related to the teaching of culture that describes effective pedagogical practices and can be integrated into the second language curriculum in ways that engage learners actively in the acquisition of language and culture. This overview will attempt to advance an approach to the teaching of culture and language through the theoretical construct of the 3Ps (Products, Practices, Perspectives) (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999), or content, combined with an inquiry teaching approach (pedagogy) utilizing digital media (instructional technology) and provide guidelines for successful classroom application.

The benefits reaped by students through authentic, collaborative, and contextualized learning tasks that result in digital products for an audience are well documented in the research (Maor & Roberts, 2011). When teachers integrate powerful technological tools into their instruction, students are allowed to personally interact with real data and solve open-ended problems. Integrating technology in this manner places the majority of responsibility for negotiating meaning in the hands of the learners. This learner-centered approach allows students to start with what they know and build their own understanding of culture. The integration of content, pedagogy, and instructional technology when constructing knowledge promotes a rich and engaging learning environment for foreign language learners. In addition, the authors will review the research that illustrates how teachers can utilize more traditional methods of teaching culture (e.g., folklore, fairytales, authentic pictures, art, etc.) and improve them with technology to make them more effective.

Culture in a Foreign Language Classroom

Research on teaching culture has shown that language and culture are closely related (e.g., Brown, 2007; Kramsch, 1998; Kuang, 2007; Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005; Schulz, 2007; Tang, 1999) and are best acquired together (Schulz, 2007). Brown (2007) describes the interrelatedness of language and culture stating "that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. The acquisition of a second language, except for specialized, instrumental acquisition […], is also the acquisition of a second culture" (p. 189-190). Based on these findings, it is clear that language and culture learning are inextricably linked, but what role does culture play in language teaching and how is it being taught? Lafayette (1988) noted that teachers spent the greatest amount of time and effort on teaching grammatical and lexical components of the language, leaving the culture as the weakest component in the curriculum. Strasheim (1981) concluded

earlier that teachers spent approximately 10% of teaching time on culture, whereas a study conducted 25 years later by Moore (2006) found that at least 80% of the teachers surveyed indicated they were teaching culture more than half of their instructional time. Although teachers have begun to incorporate more culture in the lesson, the major concern that remains is finding effective ways for integrating culture and language that prepare the learners to communicate and collaborate effectively in the 21st century.

A number of definitions of culture have emerged over the past 50 years. In the 1960s, social scientists viewed culture as closely related to human learning. Since that time, there has been an ongoing discussion on the definition of culture. Despite multiple attempts and continuous efforts to define the term "culture," researchers have not yet come up with a single agreed-upon definition (Tang, 2006) or a common denominator, because culture is a "very broad concept embracing all aspects of human life" (Seelye, 1993, p. 15). The lack of an overarching definition presents foreign language teachers with the challenge of determining which components or segments of the target culture should be taught. As a result, culture is viewed as composed of many different parts, some of which are emphasized in the classroom, while others are not. Moreover, this lack of a common definition results in a separation of culture in terms of the fine arts, history, and geography that does not represent the full range of features involved in a culture. Tang (2006) cautions teachers to remember that "in categorizing culture for practical purposes, [they] should be cautious not to lose sight of the inherently holistic nature of this concept" (p. 86). Although foreign languages may be no longer taught as a compendium of rules through drills and contrived dialogues, culture is still often taught separately and not integrated in the process of foreign language learning. According to the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999), "the true content of the foreign language course is not the grammar and the vocabulary of the language, but the cultures expressed through that language" (p. 43).

According to research, classroom activities that are not contextualized and attached to real life issues, activities, and concerns, do not help the students learn to use L2 (e.g., Firth & Wagner, 1997; Hall, 1997; Stoller, 2006; van Lier, 2000, 2002). Second language learning has been reconceptualized over the last decade as a participatory process, in which a learner is not only a learner of new ways of expressing ideas but rather the learner becomes a learner of new ways of thinking, behaving, and living in an L2 community (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Young & Miller, 2004). Below, the authors will review the research pertaining to the three components – 3Ps, inquiry-based instruction, and technology, that supports the importance of incorporating them in the teaching of culture.

Products, Practices, Perspectives (3Ps)

Germane to this discussion is an examination of the currently available most effective practices in teaching culture to achieve the cultural goals stated in the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1999):

2.1 Students should demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

2.2 Students should demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Although there has been an extensive discussion on how to teach culture in a foreign language classroom, educators are still looking for effective techniques and approaches that allow language teachers in the 21st century to teach culture in ways that promote authentic communication.

Since language emerges from societal interactions, L2 learners cannot truly learn the language without acquiring knowledge about its culture and native speakers. As mentioned earlier, learning about another culture is now one of the core objectives in the foreign language classroom. *The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for K-12 Learners* include sections on both cultural competence and linguistic performance and delineate how well students should perform in L2 linguistic and cultural domains as a result of foreign language instruction. These guidelines come from the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999), a document which describes a set of goals for foreign language learning. These Standards, organized around five main goals (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities) articulate the essential skills and knowledge an L2 student needs in order to achieve language proficiency. The definition of culture that the authors will be using and consistently referring to in this article emanates from the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999) and its Cultures goal, in which the term "culture" […] includes the philosophical perspectives, the behavioral practices, and the products – both tangible and intangible – of a society" (p. 47). Such a categorical approach and the relationship among the three components are represented in a triangle diagram that reflects "how the products and practices are derived from the philosophical perspectives that form the world view of a cultural group" (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999, p. 47). In this context, cultural practices are "patterns of behavior accepted by a society" or, in other words, "what to do where and when" (Lafayette, 1988, p. 213), as well as other forms of procedural aspects of culture (e.g., rites of passage, use of the forms of discourse, etc.). Cultural products might be tangible (e.g., a sculpture, a painting, a piece of literature, etc.) or intangible (e.g., political system, a system of education, a dance, etc.). Cultural perspectives can be described as popular beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions held by the members of L2 culture. Figure 1 depicts the relationship of the three components of culture (3Ps) according to the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (1999). This triangle model of the cultural framework represents how products, practices, and perspectives are interrelated, and allows teachers to see the relationships among the three elements of culture to consider when planning instructional lessons.

Perspectives

Products   **Practices**
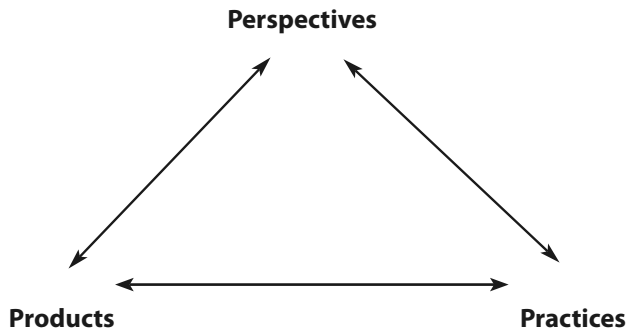
Figure 1. The Culture Triangle (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999, p. 47) [Note: Reprinted with permission from ACTFL.]

The most significant improvement of the 3P framework in comparison to its preceding concept of the "big C" and "little c" cultures (Alatis, Straehle, Gallenberger, & Ronkin, 1996; Phillips & Terry, 1999) is the expansion of the definition of culture to include how a specific culture behaves and interacts. According to Lange (1999), defining culture in terms of the 3Ps avoids "the common, overworked conflict between C and c by interweaving the formal and informal aspects of daily life, as one normally lives it in any culture" (p. 60). Regarding materials and resources for teaching culture, the 3P approach "permits the use of any document — be it an advertisement, newspaper article, or literature text — for cultural learning where appropriate" (Lange, 1999, p. 60).

This re-conceptualized approach to culture shifted the focus of teaching culture to a study of underlying values, attitudes, and beliefs, rather than simply learning about cultural products and practices. As pointed out by Morain (1997), L2 learners experience little difficulty with understanding L2 cultural products and practices, however, they have trouble identifying and understanding cultural perspectives. According to Morain (1997), the challenge with cultural perspectives lies in the fact that values, beliefs, and attitudes are intangible, and therefore cannot be easily introduced by a teacher. Textbooks also rarely contain any information on values, attitudes, and beliefs in L2 culture, making the teacher's task even more challenging.

One of the challenges teachers face when introducing cultural products or practices is that delivered information, such as bits of trivia, can appear to be disconnected, and possibly lead to stereotypes. By using the 3P cultural framework in their planning, teachers can ensure that culture is explored in a systematic and contextual way, as well as allow for some flexibility (Lange, 1999). In addition, this framework helps teachers tie together the disparate knowledge about products and practices, while helping students begin to relate products and practices to perspectives and acquire a deeper understanding of culture overall.

Inquiry Teaching Approach

There has been no shortage of methods and approaches for teaching culture. These include the use of authentic materials (Galloway, 1985; Omaggio, 1986), cultural capsules (Taylor & Sorensen, 1961), culture clusters (Meade & Morain, 1973), culture assimilators (Fiedler, Mitchell, & Triandis, 1971), incorporation of proverbs, music, songs, celebrations of festivals (Hendon, 1980), and finally, study-abroad programs. For example, Hughes (1986) proposed teaching strategies for cultural awareness that include the comparison method, culture assimilators, drama, TPR (Total Physical Response), newspapers, and media. Krasner (1999) promoted observations through movies and other authentic materials, having students visit ethnic restaurants or sections of their hometown, presentations on the customs and traditions of L2 culture, and role-plays in which students demonstrate appropriate cultural behavior in a given situation. Peterson and Coltrane (2003) recommended opportunities for students to communicate with L2 native speakers and the use of literature.

Moore (1996) examined the teaching of culture in high school foreign language classrooms, specifically how frequently it was taught, which teaching techniques were most frequently used, and how effective they were in achieving the stated cultural objectives. Moore (1996) grouped the identified ten techniques into two types: 1) techniques that focus on the products and practices only; and 2) techniques that allow for the discussion of the relationship between the 3Ps – products, practices, and perspectives. A questionnaire was sent to 210 randomly selected foreign language teachers in upstate New York. The results of the study indicated that only 26% of the respondents taught culture in all their lessons. More than half of the respondents (54%) indicated that the most frequent activity for teaching culture in their classrooms was asking students to read the notes in the textbooks, followed by 46% of teachers who used authentic materials, whereas 41% of the respondents used lecture to present information. These findings indicate that the teachers tend to resort to sources like textbooks and lectures to teach basic facts about the L2 culture that do not engage students in the process of deeper understanding of the target culture. As a result of the shift from teaching to learning, the acquisition of culture, much like that of language, should be changing from teacher lectures about culture to students discovering culture first hand through inquiry projects and activities, placing the learner at the center of the learning process. Such an approach changes the nature of a classroom from a place where language is taught, to one where opportunities for learning of various kinds are provided through the interactions that take place between and among the participants (Kramsch, 1993). It is important that teachers recognize that students need to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of their own culture that will allow them to create a bridge from their culture to L2 culture (Kramsch, 1993).

A deeper understanding of daily life culture, such as housing, food, and patterns of behavior through the lens of sociological and anthropological studies can be achieved through the integration of the theoretical model of the practices, perspectives, and products by using digital media. According to Savignon and

Sysoyev (2005), "cultures are never static" (p. 36). Certainly, there are aspects of culture that do not change or change at a slower rate, such as values, norms, and historical heritage (Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005), but teachers need "to recognize the limits of this static nature and to understand that the teaching of culture is more related to the process of discovery than it is to static information" (Lange, 1999, p. 60). This underscores that culture, as well as language, is constantly changing, it is in flux (Lange, 1999). The dynamic nature of culture brings a number of challenges and concerns for teachers trying to choose relevant teaching materials and activities (Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005). While textbooks often depict culture as static, the digital media, authentic products and texts provide a more dynamic environment through direct access to most current practices, perspectives, and products. The teachers' major task is to bring both language and culture in their social reality (Lange, 1999), in order to make sure that the students do not possess incomplete or outdated knowledge about the target language and its culture. With the development of the 3P model, according to Lange (1999), there is a new focus "on learner performance with products, practices, and perspectives" (p. 106).

This paradigm shift from passive receivers of information to active constructors of knowledge places the learners in the role of inquirers who investigate and discovers their own, as well as a second or third culture. In inquiry-based teaching, the students are engaged in meaningful learning that fosters higher-order thinking to assist students in uncovering and exploring the hidden meanings and significances embedded in L2 culture. According to Tang (2006), "not only should students know the *what* and *how* about a culture, but also the *why*. It is the *why*, as has been argued previously, that enriches and sustains the memory about a second culture accumulated in the learning process" (p. 89). Since the Standards promote making meaningful connections and comparisons (Goal 3, Connections and Goal 4, Comparisons), it is important that students develop reasoning skills to make these kinds of connections and comparisons. One of the major goals for a teacher is create inquiry questions that provoke interest in the target culture and will lead to important discoveries about the L2 culture and people and thus, develop understanding of cultural differences. According to Short, Harste, and Burke (1996), "curriculum as inquiry is a philosophy, a way to view education... Inquiry is more than problem solving...inquiry suggests alternate answers," (p. 51). A number of researchers (Allen, 2004; Grittner, 1996; Tavares & Cavalcanti, 1996) state that the teaching of culture is most effective when students discover L2 culture, rather than having information delivered. For instance, Tavares and Cavalcanti (1996) believe that the main aim of teaching culture is "to increase students' awareness and to develop their curiosity towards the target culture and their own, to make comparisons among cultures" (p. 19). Grittner (1996) acknowledges that culture learning should give students multiple opportunities to explore various facets of L2 culture and make meaning of their discoveries. Allen (2004) supports this idea indicating that being actively involved in the discovery process develops students' ability for deeper thinking that promotes comparing and contrasting L2 and L1 cultures and becoming "more aware of their own metacognitive processes and developed critical thinking skills" (p. 238). Thus, an

inquiry approach to teaching allows students to ask questions that are relevant or particularly interesting to them, collect necessary information, create answers by investigation, generate a theory, present their findings to other students, and then formulate new questions that are derived from the original questions.

Technology in Teaching Culture

Technology has changed the nature of instruction and learning. Teachers are exploring digital technologies to make learning more effective and engage students actively. Technology promotes socially active language in multiple authentic contexts due to its "accessibility, flexibility, connectivity speed and independence of methodological approach" (Gonzalez, 2009, p. 62). It gives foreign language teachers various opportunities to create better and more effective instructional materials to teach not only the language structure, but also the target culture. Students can take advantage of technology by learning in formal and informal settings through interactive social spaces (Kukulska-Hulme, 2010). Technological devices such as smart phones, laptops and computers, PDAs, etc., as well as Web 2.0 technologies are widely used to support student learning in a classroom setting, and they have opened new vistas for language learning and teaching in particular (Lee, 2009). One of the alluring benefits of technology is that it provides authentic communication in an interactive environment that facilitates the teaching of culture (Lee, 2009). Through the use of interactive media, students become less dependent on the printed word and more engaged with authentic cultural content they can access and explore freely, because they have more control of the selection and application of materials and resources. These numerous resources and materials allow teachers to tailor digital media to make culture learning more relevant and accessible to the students in their classroom (Moore, 2006). With the incorporation of technology, both the teacher and the students become part of the interactive environment. Technology creates an "open-ended" (Hellebrandt, 1996, p. 257) learning environment in which the results are not predetermined. More importantly, with interactive web resources that provide the benefits of networking and real time communication, the students can continue to learn the target language and enhance their cultural understanding outside the classroom (Moore, 2006). Technology permits both teachers and students "to go beyond quick and superficial stops on the information highway and establish meaningful interactive learning scenarios" (Hellebrandt, 1996, p. 263).

A number of researchers have investigated the use of technology in an L2 classroom. For instance, Levy (2009) describes technologies that can be used in a foreign language classroom in relation to skills, including grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, pronunciation, listening, speaking, and culture. Levy (2009) suggests that "simply accessing an L2 Web site can expose learners to numerous aspects of the target culture" (p. 776). However, when exploring the websites, learners are engaged passively, which may result in low retention. Similar results were found in Moore's study (2006), in which it was concluded that the majority of classroom students simply "surf the net" rather than being engaged in the

learning. On the other hand, only a few teachers indicated that they use Internet for meaningful activities.

Kukulska-Hulme (2010) and Lee (2009) provide a list of various activities, which have emerged during the period of 2005-2010, that can be used in a FL classroom. These activities include social applications (e.g., Facebook) and blogging (e.g., Twitter); mobile Internet access (browsing websites and reading news); use of multiple media (watching movies, listening to audio books, podcasts and vodcasts); location-based activities (using GPS to find a place); and user-created content (making a film, creating a podcast) (Kukulska-Hulme, 2010, p. 8). Such activities allow language learners to maximize the opportunity to be exposed to L2 in meaningful and authentic contexts and audiences. This leads to learners' construction of their own L2 cultural knowledge (Kukulska-Hulme, 2010). In addition, these tools increase opportunities for students to communicate in L2 not only within the classroom walls, but also outside the classroom (Lee, 2009).

Web 2.0 Media

Teachers find blogs attractive for at least two reasons—interactivity and collaboration (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008). Blogs promote reading and writing, knowledge sharing, feedback and reflection, as well as cultural learning. By reading blogs written by native speakers, students can gain cultural understanding of different perspectives of L2 native speakers (Lee, 2009). There are a number of freely available blog publishing tools, such as LiveJournal, Edublogs, Blogger, etc., that can be adapted in a foreign language classroom. Blogs are powerful vehicles for self- expression and self-empowerment (Blood, 2002). Oravec (2002) suggests that blogs can enhance students' critical- thinking ability, literacy skills, as well as assist in using the Internet as a research tool. Although the research on blogging in a FL classroom is still emerging, teachers are beginning to incorporate blog projects in FL instruction in order to teach practices and perspectives of the target culture (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008).

For instance, Ducate and Lomicka (2008) conducted a study on a year-long blogging project in French and German classrooms. In particular, the researchers explored the steps students go through when reading and writing blogs, using a blog server in the target language, their reaction to blogging, and how self-expression is characterized in blogs. Topics for blogging varied from daily life, to current events, to popular culture of the target language. According to researchers, from these varied topics, students could "get a taste of everyday German and French culture, such as public transportation or striking, as well as a feel for the blogger's personality and interests, including both practices and perspectives of the Bloggers regarding French/German and international issues" (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008, p. 15). The students were surveyed at the end of the semester, and the results from these surveys demonstrate that the students found blogging helpful in terms of improving their reading and writing skills, in particular vocabulary and grammar, as well as their knowledge of L2 culture. The students were able to gain a better understanding of not only the target language products and practices, but also its perspectives. Blogs "provided students with a window into the target culture that

they would never get from their textbook alone" (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008, p. 24) and presented "the opportunity to understand their own culture in a new way while learning about the foreign culture" (Ducate & Lomicka, 2008, p. 22).

Another digital application, podcasting, has become a popular Web 2.0 tool in the FL classroom (Lee, 2009). This online audio file allows L2 learners to listen digitally to authentic recordings and record and publish their own original contributions. Such online native speaker podcasts make it possible for the students to explore the target language and culture at their own pace (Lee, 2009). Lee (2009) conducted a study that explored language learners' perspectives on the use of blogs and podcasts in a foreign language classroom and reports that students had a positive attitude towards the inclusion of these digital technologies. Students reported that they were able to exchange cultural perspectives with native speakers that helped them develop cross-cultural knowledge and a deeper understanding of certain aspects of the target culture. Lee (2009) suggested that "learning the target culture from native speakers' experiences and perspectives is more meaningful than the surface learning of a set of simple facts about the target culture in a traditional classroom setting, as shown in the previous research" (p. 433). Foreign language teachers can engage the students in listening to native speaker podcasts and have them create their own with such popular software programs as Audacity (http://audacity.sourceforge.net/) and iMovie (http://www.apple.com/ilife/imovie/) (Lee, 2009). For example, Notes in Spanish (www.notesinspanish.com) contains a number of podcasts about conversations in Spanish on real-life topics that range from beginning to advanced levels (Lee, 2009).

Incorporating virtual worlds in classroom instruction presents an opportunity for learners to experience L2 culture online (Levy, 2009). For instance, Active Worlds (http://www.activeworlds,com/) and Second Life (http://www.secondlife.com/) are popular online programs that are "richly articulated examples of a virtual world, in which avatars that represent individual users can interact with one another in a wide variety of situations, including dedicated spaces for language learning" (Levy, 2009, p. 777). For teachers of Spanish, virtual world—Croquelandia (http://sites.google.com/site/croquelandia/) engages students in additional practice of Spanish pragmatics (Levy, 2009).

Traditional Methods of Teaching Culture Improved with Technology

The more traditional methods and approaches to teaching culture, such as movies and video, can be enhanced through the integration of digital media. Feature films have become readily available and have been included in numerous textbooks and designed to actively involve the learner (Aparisi, Blanco, & Rinka, 2007; Blanco & Tocaimaza-Hatch, 2007). Foreign language instructors are beginning to incorporate more movies in the FL classroom as "an accessible window" (Bueno, 2009, p. 319) to the target culture through "combined effects of images, sounds, camera, plots and dialogue" (Stephens, 2001, p. 2). According to Bueno (2009), media literacy promotes cross-cultural competence and comprehension focused on meaning rather than on form, as well as repeated exposure to L2 cultural products, practices, and perspectives, and the target language itself.

Herron, Cole, Corrie, and Dubreil (1999) conducted a study investigating the effectiveness of using FL video with sound to improve students' cultural knowledge. Video was incorporated in a university first-semester French coursework, and students were required to listen to French scripted videos which introduced the students to French people, customs, traditions, food, cities, and dwellings presented in culturally authentic situations. The overall finding revealed that students were able to significantly improve their knowledge of French culture from watching videos and participating in the activities associated with the videos (Herron et al., 1999). Videos place students in the role of observers of first-hand images of L2 culture, social norms, habits, and interactions. This helps students be less apt to make judgments on whether these practices are "good" or "bad." In turn, this leads to less stereotyping and a realization that customs, values, and language vary by regions, country, or culture (Bueno, 2009).

Folklore and fairytales have been examined as effective venues for teaching culture in a foreign language classroom (Akpinar & Ozturk, 2009; Davidheiser, 2007; Gholson & Stumpf, 2005; Kowalski, 2002; Morain, 1997; Seelye, 1993) because they are an integral part of people's everyday life (Gholson & Stumpf, 2005). Morain (1997) proposed the idea that folklore is superior to literary writing because it depicts the attitudes of large groups of people. According to Seelye (1993), "a study of carefully selected folk materials could illuminate some of the important cultural themes that underlie a country's thought and action" (p. 19). Gholson and Stumpf (2005) believe that folklore might help promote cultural dialogue in which L2 learners gain respect for differences between their native culture and L2 culture, as well as acknowledge the similarities in both cultures. Akpinar and Ozturk (2009) suggest that folklore can be taught in an L2 classroom through an inquiry approach. Folklore engages the students in exploring the theme and structure of a folktale, relating these to their L1 background knowledge, and then drawing conclusions about the target culture, its beliefs, values, lifestyles, history, etc. (Akpinar & Ozturk, 2009). Furthermore, such use of an inquiry approach to teaching L2 culture through folklore "broadens the pool of ideas from which they [L2 learners] expand their problem-solving and decision-making skills" (Temple, Martinez, Yokota, & Naylor, 2002, p. 160).

In particular, fairytales provide students with opportunities to explore not only the historical background information, but also learn about values and morals and to construct their own judgment (Davidheiser, 2007). As one of the ways to incorporate technology in teaching culture with folklore and fairytales, a teacher can ask the students to write their own conclusion to the fairytale or folklore story they are reading, or create their own story using storybird.com. Storybird (http://storybird.com) is a virtual collection of artwork writers can use to build their stories. Students can work either independently or collaboratively, and the finished work can be easily shared with peers and even with a global audience. Such a learning activity fosters interpretation of the cultural information the students learned from the fairytale, promotes creative writing, and contextualized language practice. Having the students write their own conclusion, or a new fairytale, makes

them process cultural knowledge they gained while working with the authentic fairytale, as well as its vocabulary, on a deeper level (Davidheiser, 2007).

The availability of technology resources at a teacher's disposal has made it easier for teachers to find culturally authentic materials (Bush, 2007). When instructors integrate authentic images found online, the teaching of cultural awareness becomes more motivating and effective, as it increases the cultural content of the course (Bush, 2007). In addition to authentic pictures, art is another venue for teaching culture in an L2 classroom. Berho and Defferding (2005) propose the incorporation of target culture artwork, as well as student-created art pieces. Since culture is claimed to be an integral part of language learning, using art, as well as the study of artists' lives, presents L2 learners with the opportunities to explore the values and themes of the target culture (Berho & Defferding, 2005). One of the ways to incorporate art that can be used to visit museums in the target language country is Google Art Project (www.googleartproject,com). It allows the learners to virtually tour museums and peruse artwork. Students can collect pieces of art that appeal to them and save them in their own collection using "Create an Artwork Collection" feature. They can also add comments to each painting explaining why they chose that particular artwork. The whole collection can then be shared with the teacher and the classmates by either presenting it to the whole class or discussing it in small groups. The students can analyze the common themes, write stories inspired by the art piece, research the artists' lives, and what inspired them to create their particular masterpieces. These can then be shared digitally with audiences using Prezi (http://prezi.com), a free Web 2.0 presentation tool.

Berho and Defferding (2005) observed college-level Spanish and French classes in which art and student art projects were incorporated in the instruction. Target culture artwork provided abundant resources for language development while examining the history and culture of the foreign language (Berho & Defferding, 2005). Presenting various art works from a target culture that have a common theme allowed the students to practice comparing and contrasting skills either orally or in writing; asking students to create their own pieces of art encourages them to be creative, to communicate their ideas through art and later share them with the class (Berho & Defferding, 2005). Organizing exhibitions of student artwork engaged the students in a communicative activity during which they had to describe their work, talk about the inspiration, the techniques, colors, materials, the message behind their work, as well as to practice giving and receiving praise and expressions of emotion. Such a student-centered communicative activity provided "a welcome venue for communication, both as receptor and producer" (Berho & Defferding, 2005, p. 272). VoiceThread (http://voicethread.com), a totally web-based application, allows the teacher to place collections of media, such as images, videos, documents, and presentations at the center of an asynchronous conversation. A VoiceThread allows language learners to have conversations and to make comments using any mix of text, a microphone, a web cam, a telephone, or an uploaded audio file. VoiceThread runs inside a web browser, so there is no software to download, install, or update. By placing an image of a work of art or

an artifact on the screen, students can share insights and reactions through oral or written comments.

Conclusion

The digital resources allow teachers to create new techniques, as well as reevaluate and improve the more traditional techniques that help bring the target culture into the classroom. Research has shown that language learning should occur in a dynamic and active manner. Technology-based activities together with an inquiry learning approach allow students to interact directly with the second language and its culture without time and place restrictions and to explore and construct a deeper understanding of L2 cultural knowledge.

Technology incorporated in the existing 3P model can expand teaching opportunities and offer new venues for the learners through which they can build their language and culture knowledge. As illustrated in this article, a variety of technology tools and applications exist to allow the teacher to tailor language learning to individual students as they interact, explore, and experiment with the target language and culture. The digital platform serves as a dynamic learning environment that promotes an understanding of the intersection of culture and language in all aspects of cultural understandings, both tangible and intangible, and develops and improves strategies that are conducive for learning the L2 cultural concepts.

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