

Willary Fellows Curriculum Transformation
Lois Redmond – Dallas High School, Dallas, PA
Course Transformed – SPANISH

The initial changes that I have decided to make to the Spanish course (I see this as a gradual and continuing process) basically concern bringing actual personal awareness of the students' own cultural assumptions to the conscious level and then lead them to see that other people's choices of how to live, dress, what to eat, and the like are expressions of the culture in which they are raised and as such are just as valid as the choices that they make even though they may not be as familiar to them. I want the students to understand that for the things that really matter there is more that is similar about what all people want from life than those superficial choices that we all make or the social circumstances that shape the choices we may have. It is only the way that we go about achieving our goals that makes us appear more different than we are.

Our textbook has been developed with great attention to the National Foreign Language Standards which includes mention of appreciation for other cultures, but the way that the book attempts this cultural appreciation is very predictable. It tells about major historical events (as seen from the perspective of the European/North American historian), famous individuals from each country (authors, artists, politicians), main products, holidays, and touristy points of interest, but it doesn't bring the individual young person from the other country into the classroom to tell my students about what their life is like and what their hopes and dreams are. This understanding of the other culture needs to be personal and it is with that in mind that I have made my transformation.

Our curriculum requires that each teacher cover a certain portion of the text so that the teacher who may have a mixture of students from several different teachers the year before may assume that a certain amount of material has been introduced. As such, the suggestions that I make below are supplemental to the required material and may be introduced at various intervals to continuously give the language experience flesh.

Standard Category 1. - Diversity of Self

Content standard:

The student will demonstrate understandings of his/her unique cultural lenses that contribute to individual identity and behavior.

Rationale: Essential to the study of diversity is the understanding of self as a cultural being. This leads to heightened awareness of oneself and others shaped by culture.

Activities:

1. Analyze and interpret external and internal factors that contribute to shaping a person's identity, e.g., family, age, race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status and membership in organizations.
2. Examine how our ancestral beliefs, attitudes, customs, and values contribute to shape and affirm ones identity.
 - a. One of the activities that I do each day is to have a "Frase del Dia" that I have printed on oaktag and displayed at the front of the room. Each day we translate these "Frases" to English and discuss what historical situations might have provoked the acceptance of these maxims as collective wisdom. For instance "Al hierro caliente, batir de repente" is comparable to our "Strike while the iron is hot". This obviously came from a time when blacksmiths were an important part of the cultures from which the frase comes.
"No se gano Zamora en una hora" refers to a difficult battle in Spain that was eventually won after great effort. (Zamora was not won in an hour.) We then discuss how this is expressed in English as, "Rome wasn't built in a day." These sayings and many more can be found in the book Dictionary of Proverbs – Spanish/ English and English/Spanish cited at the end of this work.
3. Following the analysis above, each student will fill out a personal survey (see appendix – modify and adjust to your needs) helping him/her to see his/her own unique position as part of the culture in which he/she lives.
4. As a culminating project, the students will create an identity collage including as many factors as possible which shape their identity.

Essential questions for assessment

1. What influences who I am?
2. How do my beliefs shape my view of myself and others?
3. How does studying diversity increase my understanding of myself and others?

Standard Category 2. – Diversity Appreciation and Value

Content Standard:

The student will demonstrate understanding of diversity in our society through appreciation and respect for others.

Rationale: As students broaden their knowledge of the layers of diversity, they begin to appreciate and respect the uniqueness in each other and will be open to the contributions of all culture.

Activities:

1. Describe how people in different societies and cultures are alike and different.
 - a. A wonderful resource for cultural comparisons that I have found is the Maryknoll World Productions videos of young people around the world. I have and use regularly the videos of “Cuba Close-up”, with two fifteen minute vignettes of a male teenager from Havana and then a female teenager from Pinar del Rio. These videos show the student the life of a young person his/her own age and what is important to him in his culture and daily life. Issues of socio- economic levels, professions, dress, transportation, hobbies, and other real life issues are visually presented, which makes them much more real than descriptions in a book.
 - b. The individual videos come with wonderful discussion points that focus on the issues mentioned above. There are before and after questions that help the student interpret what he/she has seen.
 - c. Once the first segment is shown, I ask the students to comment in their journals about the similarities they find in their life and the life of the Cuban boy. (I ask them to discuss briefly at least 5 similarities that they see.)
 - d. After the second segment, I ask the students to fill in a venn diagram (an example of a Venn diagram appears in the appendix following this text) comparing the two Cuban young people and themselves, i.e. helping them to see that there are similarities for the three of them and then other things that they may share with only one Cuban child or the other.
 - e. At a later date we watch a second video, “Central American Close-Up” that focuses on the lives of a young girl from Guatemala and a young man from El Salvador. Journaling can again be used as well as the Venn diagram between the students of Central America and Cuba and the United States.
2. Evaluate the impact of cultural traditions in our society with those of another culture.
 - a. The above-mentioned videos are a rich source of visual expression of the cultures that they portray. In the Cuba video the religion of Santeria is briefly presented. A discussion of the roots of that religion in the African slaves that were brought to this country would be appropriate. In the Central America video there is the Mayan dress of the girl and her family and the problem faced now in Guatemala with the shrinking land which can no longer be divided among the children of the family as was once the custom.
3. Analyze the media’s portrayal of different cultural groups and consider how this has contributed to stereotyping.

- a. After viewing the video, the students can say what they might generalize about “all” Central Americans or “all” Cubans. They should then consider choosing a television program that they have seen about a “typical” American family and then see what they might guess would be stereotypes of the United States population as a whole. This should be followed by journaling about the question, "Why are stereotypes a bad way to approach a group of people about which you have limited information? What better ways might there be to learn about people with whom you are unfamiliar?"

Essential Questions

1. Compare your community and the life of a young person in it to that of a young person of one other culture studied. How has culture shaped both the community and the expectations of each young person?
2. What evidence of other cultures enriches our lives today?

Standard Category 3. – Diversity of Community and Society

Content Standard:

The student will demonstrate understandings of similarities and differences among diverse people in the United States and how privilege impacts the opportunities individually and collectively.

Rationale: Students should examine discrepancies between the ideals and realities in the life and history of the United States.

Activities:

1. Explain common cultural tendencies of communities in regard to ethnicity, race, class, social class, family structure, language, politics, language and religion and how these cultural tendencies impact communication.
 - a. Research the media to see how newspapers, TV, and the radio influence our thoughts and assumptions about cultural tendencies of groups with which we are unfamiliar.
 - b. Research cartoons that point out, explicitly or implicitly, an acceptance of a stereotype, prejudice, or discrimination. Discuss how the acceptance of this type of humor affects the person who identifies with the group being made fun of. (Do we question when a friend or tells such a joke?)
2. Analyze how an understanding of culture enhances societies throughout the world.
3. Analyze the extent to which a homogeneous community experiences difficulty in adapting to change.

Essential questions for Assessment

1. How might a person who has lived in only one place all his/her life benefit from travel out of the area, state, or country in which he/she was born?
2. What elements of what we now consider United States culture are really “imported “ or adopted from other cultures of the world?
(Christmas traditions from Germany; Tacos, burritos and enchiladas from Mexico; the rodeo in the Southwest from Mexico; batik and madras material from India; soccer from Europe and Latin America; jai alai from South America ; find more examples yourself!!!)

Standard category 4. – Diversity in a Global Society

Content Standard

The student will demonstrate the role of diversity in a global society and his/ her responsibility to challenge social injustices.

Rationale: In a global society we need to honor differences and reinforce commonalities realizing that what we do as individuals makes a difference.

Activities

1. Describe circumstances in which citizens may have a responsibility to monitor and challenge social injustice and advocate equal opportunity in a democratic society.
 - a. This area of discussion can be accessed through local , state, or national news issues. Where I teach there is a great reliance on migrant labor to plant and harvest the tomatoes that are grown here every summer. Although this happens less than 20 miles from my school I am sure that the students here have no idea that this is the case. Teaching about Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers Union in California can be an introduction to an issues that can be seen as global and then local, with opportunity to see that as citizens of this area we have a responsibility to make sure that these visitors to our area are treated with respect and not made to feel like outsiders and that their rights as contributing members of our economy are upheld. This topic is best approached by discussing an issue that is relevant to the area where the students live.
2. Analyze and evaluate characteristics of a productive member of a global and diverse society.

- a. Brainstorm the characteristics that would make a person a “citizen of the world” i.e. able to feel comfortable with anyone in any place. What steps might be important in helping to become that person?

Essential questions for Assessment

1. In what types of activities might a citizen of a global and diverse society participate?
2. What organizations might he/she join and become active in to help support a world with great diversity but with great problems to solve?

Conclusion:

It is hoped that by the end of these activities each student will recognize that all people have a right to the same freedoms and opportunities and that it is the responsibility of all citizens to ensure that those guaranteed rights are preserved for all.

Resources

Dictionary of Proverbs: Spanish/ English and English/ Spanish, Carbonell Basset, Delfin, Barron's: World English Language, New York, 1998.

Maryknoll World Productions
P.O. Box 308
Maryknoll, NY 10545-0308
<http://www.maryknollworld.org>

Videos:

1. Central America Close-Up – Guatemala and El Salvador
2. Cuba Close-Up - Havana and Pinar del Rio

Self- Disclosure Inventory - used by permission from Diversity Institute, Northeast Pennsylvania Diversity Council, College Misericordia, Dallas, PA 18612

SELF-DISCLOSURE INVENTORY

INTRODUCTION:

In this class our discussions will revolve around the subject of culture and its relationship to social background and teaching practice. Your self-disclosure via this inventory will help your instructors and classmates listen insightfully and discuss issues sensitively. In this class it is helpful to know where the listeners and speakers are coming from and going to. Today we will share our self-disclosures and then explain how you provide via these self-disclosures. However, when you introduce yourself to the class you will only have to disclose those elements of the self-disclosure that you feel comfortable sharing with the class. Please use additional paper to complete your response when necessary.

1. Name: _____
2. Specialization: _____
- 3a. Sex: Male / Female
- b. Age: _____
- c. Race and/or Ethnicity: _____
- d. Religious Affiliation, if any: _____
- 4a. Are you fluent in any language other than English? YES / NO
If yes, please specify: _____
- b. What languages were or are spoken in your childhood home? _____

5. How long has your family/ancestors (both sides) been in the United States? _____

6. Where did your family/ancestors (both sides) come from before arriving in the United States? _____

7. What is the name of your hometown/city and state? _____
8. Indicate the distance of your hometown/city from the **School** :
_____ less than 50 miles _____ between 100 and 200 miles
_____ between 50 and 100 miles _____ more than 200 miles

9a. Check all of the adjectives that describe the type of community in which you spent most of your time growing up:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> rural | <input type="checkbox"/> low-income |
| <input type="checkbox"/> suburban | <input type="checkbox"/> working class |
| <input type="checkbox"/> urban | <input type="checkbox"/> middle class |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> upper middle class |

b. Was this community either racially/ethnically segregated or predominantly of one racial/ethnic group? YES NO

If NO: Skip to 9c

If YES: What was the predominant racial/ethnic group?

c. Was this community racially/ethnically integrated? YES NO

If NO: Skip to question 9d

If YES: What racial/ethnic groups were present and in what proportions/percentages?

d. Provide other descriptors of the community in which you spent most of your time growing up:

10. Indicate the highest level of education completed by your parents or guardians.

11. Indicate the occupations of your parents/guardians.

12. Please check the option that best describes the social class background of your household.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> low income | <input type="checkbox"/> middle class |
| <input type="checkbox"/> working class | <input type="checkbox"/> upper middles class |

13. How many siblings do you have? _____

14. Have you traveled outside of your home state? YES NO

If YES, please indicate where:

15a. Please identify an author, book, film that you have especially enjoyed or was significant to your life. Why?

b.If any religious texts such as the Bible, Koran, or Torah particularly significant in your life, please discuss how and why they were significant.

16. Please describe a ritual or significant event that you value or has been especially important in your life. Explain why this is the case.

17. Have you ever experienced interpersonal conflict because of your race, ethnicity, gender, cultural group, or an organization you were active in? If so, please describe one or more of these conflicts. Was this conflict resolved in any way and, if so, how?

18. Do you feel that your racial, ethnic, and/or cultural group membership (and the latter includes gender) has been a positive feature in your life? If so, briefly explain why.

19a. How many CLOSE friends do you have? _____

b. How many of these close friends are of a different racial/ethnic background than you? _____

If more than zero, to what racial/ethnic groups do they belong?

c. How many of these close friends are of a different social class background than you? _____

20a. Why do you think students fail in school?

b. Why do you think students succeed in school?

21a. In what ways (if any) do you think you were advantaged in school?

b. In what ways (if any) do you think you were disadvantaged in school?

22. Briefly discuss your most memorable high school teacher. Please explain why this was the case.

VENN, DIAGRAM



