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Imaginary Friends: Using Guided Imagery, Line Drawings and Webquests to Incorporate Culture into the Foreign Language Curriculum

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IMAGINARY FRIENDS:

USING GUIDED IMAGERY, LINE DRAWINGS AND WEBQUESTS TO
INCORPORATE CULTURE INTO THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE
CURRICULUM

J.E. BUCKINGHAM

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING DEGREE AT THE SCHOOL FOR
INTERNATIONAL TRAINING, BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT

MAY 2009

IPP ADVISOR: DR. PATRICK R. MORAN

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the integration of authentic cultural experience into the foreign language curriculum through the use of guided imagery, line drawings, and a WebQuest designed to facilitate the creation of an imaginary friend living within a country where the target language is spoken. The student uses these techniques to vicariously communicate with and experience a proscribed facet of that imaginary friend's life. Through the use of the guided imagery and web-based research, the student will breathe life into a black and white line drawing by coloring in an appropriate complexion and by giving the character a name which would typically be found within the imaginary character's country of origin. In addition to learning about the culture of the friend's country, the student will inadvertently be creating relevance for learning the language of this friend thereby stimulating a natural desire to study in order to communicate with greater ease and understanding. Within the parameters of the WebQuest, the student will be directed to produce various artifacts which are then shared in a culminating activity where the students introduce their "friends" to the larger group of participants. Lesson plans for the project are given in detail and implications for the use of this project are considered in terms of its flexibility and potential application to any foreign language classroom at any level or age group.

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Descriptors

Curricula/Programs

- Curriculum Development
- Modern Language Curriculum
- Languages
- Modern Languages

Materials/Media/Technology

- Computers
- Computer Assisted Language Learning
- Instructional Materials
- Teacher Developed Materials
- WebQuests
- Foreign Language Instructional Materials

Culture

- Cultural Awareness
- Cultural Differences
- Cultural Education
- Cultural Images
- Foreign Culture
- Intercultural Communication

Methodology/Classroom Practices

- Computer Assisted Instruction
- Creative Teaching
- Instructional Innovation
- Multimedia Instruction
- Simulation

Other

- Language Attitudes
- Language Relevance
- Student Attitudes
- Vocabulary Development

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INTRODUCTION

Breathing Life into Language

One of the greatest challenges of a public education secondary teacher is to bring the curriculum of the foreign or second language into the realm of reality for the student. The term "relevance" in education is constantly discussed and emphasized in the literature of best practice. Yet, when we are teaching young people in the heartland of America or, indeed, in any environment that is primarily English-speaking and monocultural, the actuality of using a foreign language on a daily basis or even having the opportunity to use a foreign language in life appears remote and improbable. Indeed, Bateman (2002) and Mantle-Bromley (1995) make it clear that this attitude of irrelevance is neither ethnically bound nor age-related:

One important influence on students' attitudes is the FL requirement that many colleges have for entrance, graduation, or both. Mantle-Bromley (p. 373) asserted that the majority of students enroll in FL classes not because they are motivated to learn another language, but because two years of FL study are recommended or required for college entrance. Such a requirement does not provide sufficient motivation to continue language study. (Bateman 2002, p. 320)

In addition, if we wish to incorporate the learning of the culture of that foreign language, it appears to be even more challenging because, unfortunately, many students see little or no connection between language learning and culture learning. (Bateman 2002, p. 318) Breathing life into the culture of the target language would appear to be a universally-recognized difficult task.

Description of the Paper

This paper describes a set of language learning materials, techniques, and activities designed to “breathe life into the culture of the target language.” The core materials feature WebQuests, guided imagery, and black and white sketches of human faces. The techniques and activities are based on engaging the natural imaginations of the learners. Through a series of activities, the learners are encouraged to stretch their own capabilities by creating their own imaginary multi-dimensional characters imbued with real-life cultural depth.

These materials were developed for use with a beginning Spanish class at Napa Valley High School in Napa, California, where I teach introductory French, Spanish, and Advanced ESL. In the fall of 2008, I tried them out with a small group of students in my Spanish 1 class as a pilot project to see how students would respond. The results were extremely positive, and showed me and the students that learning Spanish and

Hispanic culture could indeed be relevant within the context of their own lives. Although this paper concentrates on beginning Spanish students, I believe the materials are applicable for learners of any foreign language, with appropriate modification. Many foreign language teachers in the U.S. face this challenge of making foreign language learning relevant and accessible, and I believe that the use of imagination and web-based cultural research can help these teachers, just as they have helped me and my students.

This paper has been organized into four parts. In the *Introduction*, I describe the rationale for and the genesis of the project, the key pedagogical components, the overall learning goals of the material, and their impact on the students. In *Chapter 1: Imaginary Friends*, I provide a detailed description of the lessons, written so that other language teachers can either teach these lessons as I did or use them as a guide to create their own. In *Chapter 2: Reflections*, I discuss some of the implications and applications of the lessons and use of imagination to enhance the learning experience. In addition, some of the students' reflections and suggestions are included. The original WebQuest created for this project, as well as the students' final products and materials developed as part of the work on this project are included in the *Appendix*, the fourth and final section of the paper.

In this Introduction, I begin by looking at the rationale behind the inception of this project: an examination of the importance of cultural exploration as a critical component to fostering diversity and acceptance of others, and how this goes beyond the foreign language classroom. Next, I move from the discussion of its rationale to a recount of the project's history: the genesis of the project and its context for implementation. I continue by discussing the key teaching techniques used in this project and their origins - character creation, guided imagery, and WebQuests - accompanied by students' commentaries. I conclude the Introduction with a brief discussion of the value of using supplementary materials and, in particular, recent developments in using the internet specifically for foreign language training.

Rationale: Cultural Exploration Is Critical

Limited cultural relevance

In California, when students are choosing electives as incoming freshmen in high school, many parents insist that their children learn Spanish giving the rationale that Spanish is "useful" whereas other foreign languages are simply requirements for college entrance. Unfortunately, although we do have a large percentage of Spanish-speakers within the population in our state, the probability of other than superficial communication with students who have Spanish as their native language

is slim. In fact, the opportunity for interaction with *any* native-ability Spanish-speakers to the level of experiencing or sharing the multiple cultural perspectives that so tightly bind the varied Latino communities is highly limited. Therefore, although knowing Spanish may, indeed, be useful within a few limited contexts, for most high-school students in California true experience of the extensive heritage, the centuries-long history, and the deeply-held values of the Spanish-speaking world still remain out of reach and difficult to envision for the typical monolingual English-speaking freshman. Immediate and external relevance for the learner has not yet been established before entering a foreign language classroom. Spanish may be useful from the perspective of a parent; not so much from that of the student.

Limited cultural perspectives

This lack of relevance is exacerbated by that the fact that schools today face a formidable antagonist: societal conditions that work against students, impeding their academic growth and preventing them from carrying into the world beyond the school the skills and concepts taught in the classroom. (Jackson, p. ix) No better example can be found of that impediment to true academic growth than the required use of exclusively state-approved texts. Without delving into either the politics or the profound influence of the textbook industry upon the state

approval process, it is nonetheless worthwhile mentioning that not all cultural perspectives - foreign or domestic - are deemed "standard," nor will they be approved for, or taught to all learners in the public schools. If there is any question about mandating mainstream values as a fundamental criterion for curricula taught in our public schools, we need look no farther than to the campaign waged by the supporters of the recent Proposition 8 in California which sought to limit the definition of marriage to the union of one man and one woman.

According to the proponents of the proposition, not only was same-sex marriage unequivocally wrong according to the Bible, it was also likened to bestiality, polygamy and pedophilia. Also, the campaign went on to say, if Prop 8 failed this perversion would then become mandated curriculum in public elementary schools and even taught in kindergarten! In the best spirit of Anita Bryant, the social hegemony's use of fear that deviance from the socially dominant perspective would be taught to our children in public schools provided enough support to pass the proposition on Election Day, 2008. In essence, Prop 8 legalized discrimination against a minority segment of the population and silenced a legitimate cultural voice. Is it any wonder, then, that a state-approved curriculum would seek to limit the teaching of cultural perspectives to the safe superficialities of cuisine, holidays and tourism?

Limited cultural truth

However, can the limitation of cultural perspective be called “best practice” in education, particularly when that limitation flies in the face of what is right and what is law in the country whose language we are teaching? In restricting the presentation of cultural values to those which are officially deemed “approved,” does that truly serve in the interest of our children? Do we really want to teach that not all truths are created equal?

What is noble in a quest for the common good may be ignoble in a quest for truth: truth is not determined by democratic means...for truth by majority rule is no truth at all. (Palmer 1997, p. 92)

Therefore, despite the best efforts of a mandated text to limit non-standardization, and specifically focusing on the laudable goal of teaching students how to live in society after they leave the school (Jackson), with a wink and a nod to the venerable Mr. Stevick, the genesis of this project was to design a *method* to create an individual’s awareness of cultural *meaning* which would stand in the *memory* of my students long after leaving the classroom. If our goal is to foster student awareness of other possible truths in the global community, aka “foreign cultures,” then the risk of challenging the status quo had to be taken.

The hallmark of the community of truth is in its claim that reality is a web of communal relationships, and we can know reality only by being in community with it. (ibid., p. 95)

History of the Project

The genesis of this project stemmed from a presentation I gave at the Sandanona Conference in August of 2008 in Brattleboro, Vermont. Its title was Questing for Culture: Embedding Culture into Standardized Language Curriculum (Buckingham, 2008) and, based on the commentary from the participants following the session, I was encouraged to develop the presentation into a full lesson plan which I would use in my classrooms the following academic year. Fortuitously, my high school had already scheduled me to teach several Spanish 1 sections and one section of French 1 for the upcoming academic year. It appeared to be the perfect opportunity for a pilot implementation of such a project and I therefore began to implement the project in my classes on September 16, 2008.

As a teacher of beginning level Spanish and French at Napa High School in Napa, California, I am privileged to be most of my students' first window on the world. This year, wanting more specific information on the level of my students' awareness of countries beyond their own border, I did an informal survey of my three Spanish 1 classes at the beginning of

the course. I knew beforehand that the kids' knowledge would be limited; nonetheless, it came as somewhat of a surprise that fewer than 10% of the more than 120 total students could even name a country other than Mexico or Spain where Spanish is the official language. This is despite the fact that, according to the Napa county records of 2007, (Napa County Community Health Needs Assessment, 2007) over 53% of my students' neighbors and schoolmates are Latino. What this means, in part, is that when my students hear Spanish being spoken, they are most likely assuming the person is from Mexico and layering on assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices from there.

It was initially as an effort to counter this level of assumption that I decided to design a series of cultural WebQuests. I needed to find a way to surmount my kids' prevailing perception of the taco as the national cuisine of Mexico, Cinco de Mayo as their biggest national holiday and beach-bound excess as the primary reason to travel south of the U.S. border. Simply put, I needed a vehicle for exploration of the true cultures that lie within the Spanish-speaking world.

I presented the first lesson of the project during the second week of class when I took my students through a fifteen-minute guided imagery. I had them close their eyes and picture themselves as a person in a country where only Spanish was spoken. They were to choose a gender, coloring, physiognomy, community structure, socioeconomic situation, family,

school, transportation available to them, and finally to imagine the hopes and dreams of their imaginary person. I specifically did not mention the name of a place or location where their characters lived; only that Spanish was the native language of the country.

In their lists of required materials, the students had been instructed to bring a simple spiral notebook that they would use throughout the year to record and journal about their learning experiences in our class. It was into these notebooks, or Reflective Journals as they came to be known, that they then spent 35 minutes writing about this imaginary person. The last 10 minutes of class were spent in voluntary sharing of their characters. Each and every student was so absorbed by the exercise that they begged to be able to hear and share more of the stories in the following class period, which we did. From this I could see that the development of an imaginary friend would be the “hook,” a bridge serving as a link to language and cultural relevance for these students in first-year Spanish classes who knew so very little about anybody else’s world outside of their own.

Genesis: Curricular Expectations in the School

Context

In our high school of over 2500 students, finding any kind of link to language relevance is a major cause for celebration. With No Child Left

Behind continually watching and monitoring our Annual Yearly Progress, this is the third year that we will be in Program Improvement. The consequences of this for foreign languages are that most resources are directed towards the teaching of math and English, the two disciplines which determine the testing data. There is little encouragement for innovation, less funding, and even less tolerance for deviance from the expected curriculum in departments where electives are taught. Finding relevance in today's curriculum is simply not anticipated by any teenaged student. "From my past experiences doing projects, this one was very different. It really let me be creative and get an idea of what another country is like," said Natalie, a freshman participant in the project. (Melton, 2008)

Expectations

Echoing what many educational professionals have found recently, in good education, expected curriculum is not necessarily the best curriculum. Sadly, however, under the magnifying glass of data-based instruction, teachers who reject the expected and teach to integrity are often questioned and repudiated by both parents and administration. Indeed, when students walk into my room and see chairs in a circle around a centerpiece of flowers on the floor instead of desks neatly in rows, I often get immediate questions from home. When students new to my classroom take home reports of the posters on my wall proclaiming

the validity of diverse cultures, parents pull their children from my classes citing reasons of “discomfort.” Then, when each young person is issued a journal where reflections on learning will be written, the anxiety level usually increases even further, having *expected* to be issued, instead of a blank notebook to be filled with their own thoughts, a textbook that includes all the answers: no thinking required. As Natalie went on to say in her write-up, “I hadn’t really done anything involving reflective learning. It’s something from a completely different point of view.” (ibid.)

Implementation

Amidst the panic, complaints, and rebellion it is then that I take refuge in The Courage to Teach:

Good education may leave students deeply dissatisfied, at least for a while...students who have been well served by good teachers may walk away angry – angry that their prejudices have been challenged and their sense of self shaken. That sort of dissatisfaction may be a sign that real education has happened. (Palmer 1997, p. 94)

So, although the students may begin with discomfort, the parents may become angry, and the administration may react with disapproval, I take strength in thinking that it may just be a sign that real education has indeed been happening in my classroom.

Key Pedagogical Elements

Imaginary Characters

A central teaching technique is the students' creation of imaginary characters from a culture where the target language is spoken. I used this 'character creation' technique as described in Faces: Characters in Search of Authors (Moran, 2008), which consists of 50 faces: line drawings of human faces from around the world. Students choose one of these faces as the basis for their character, and, in response to specific questions, they build a biography and identity for this character who is situated in a specific country.

In the introduction to his book, Dr. Moran, Professor of Intercultural Communication for Language Teachers at the School for International Training states:

When learners have the opportunity to set aside their own lives and backgrounds, they can construct new lives and place themselves in other worlds, other cultures... (Imaginary) characters allow learners to anticipate this process and to explore the possibilities of other selves. Imagination, coupled with culture-specific research, helps learners match their characters to cultural realities. (Moran 2008, p. v)

Once the student has been guided to create that fully-dimensional character, once that character has been taken from a black and white sketch (as provided in Moran's text, for example) to a face in living colors,

we then direct the student to take the imaginary person's development one step further by using the internet to create a virtual friendship with that character who just so happens to live in a community where the L2 is spoken. Here is the voice of Sophia, one of the freshman participants, as she discovers the power of her virtual friendship:

What would it be like to live the life (my imaginary friend) lives? When I was working on this project I was so enthralled! It feels like she actually is real, making dishes from her country, and watching videos of her country. Trying to comprehend what it would be like to be her... There was never a dull moment. (Vandagriff, 2008)

As we know, immersion in the target culture/language is the optimal way to learn a language, and simulated realities aim to offer a more modest version of that experience. (Godwin-Jones, 2009)

The concept is not so different from that of creating an avatar by overlaying the features of an already-known character. We simply then place that avatar's life into a Spanish-speaking country. In this day and age when avatars represent us in all sorts of environments, from on-screen computer help to internet dating, the use of a virtual friendship to explore another culture is not a difficult concept for today's student to grasp. In fact, for those students who already have an avatar "living" in a Second Life community or a similar parallel environment it is rather the norm, and the concept of creating an imaginary character fits right in. "In many

ways, learning a second language is about learning to play new roles in a second culture, even creating a second identity.” (Moran 2008, p. v)

As a matter of fact, there are already in existence sites where avatars and virtual communities are used to teach foreign and second languages and their cultures. Although these “in-world” communities may seem to have their own unique culture, the home page for Second Life English makes it clear that

“(w)e do much more than just teach and learn languages. In here, we help build bridges for intercultural communication and understanding. And we do this in 3D, which means multiple dimensions of multilingual fun as far as the eye can see!” (Second Life English, 2009)

Sadly, we must also admit that the virtual reality where the avatar lives is often much more appealing and realistic to our student than that which occurs in the classroom on a daily basis! Moran’s sketches used in conjunction with the WebQuest, though, provided that intense interest we often see reflected on student faces when engrossed in activities outside the normal classroom. Sophia said,

One of the highlights of this project (was) when we first got our faces. It felt like the picture was a real person. Ms. Buckingham told us beforehand that her professor went around the world and sketched these people, and they were real faces. That probably added to the feeling of the reality. Then when I colored the image it felt like Ingrid was coming to life; she was really my friend! (Vandagriff, 2008)

However, be the environment virtual, concrete, or foreign, to fully reveal the culture, we must examine the language. Members of the culture have created the language to carry out all their cultural practices. Language, therefore, is a window to (that) culture. (Moran 1998, p. 35) Hence, the relevance of knowing the language and its culture is thus created *by the student* as it is she, herself, who breathes the life into her Spanish-speaking imaginary friend. The learning of both language and culture then becomes exciting and exploratory instead of something forced upon her by a teacher, a textbook, or standards that have already done everything for her. For example, listen to Holly Cloud's shock and dismay as she discovers for herself that some indigenous languages are endangered:

There is this village in Oaxaca and the people are called the Ixatec people. The language that they speak is becoming extinct and people from the United States are trying to document it so that it doesn't become extinct. I bet you didn't know that every two weeks a language dies somewhere in the world! (Cloud, 2008)

This kind of revelatory reaction to knowledge is not something that can usually be taught in the classroom. It must, by definition, be discovered for oneself.

Guided Imagery

The second key technique is Guided Imagery. This teaching strategy consists of asking students to reflect on a series of questions that invite them to visualize or create images of a scene, a situation, or a person, using their imaginations. The technique originates in complementary and alternative medical therapies but is now used extensively in education as well.

While much instruction is concerned with left brain activity, that is, the processing of information through words, the addition of right brain activities involves the whole brain in the learning process and provides for individual differences in learning preferences and modalities. The use of imagery in therapy and in the classroom is not new; however, by consciously using it as a teaching device, the teacher can put it to use consistently and effectively. (Herr, 1981)

Indeed, guided imagery is now used extensively in reading and literacy development (Harp, 1988; Barry, 2002), in the science classroom (Santa and Alvermann, 1991; Rachelson, 1977), and even in the development of software programs for Intelligent Tutoring Systems (Chaffar and Frasson, 2004). Used within the context of this project, I employed guided imagery as a strategy for getting students to establish the larger situation in which they would then create their characters.

WebQuests

The third key teaching technique in these materials is the WebQuest. In 1995, Bernie Dodge, a professor of Educational Technology at San Diego State University, developed a teaching strategy called WebQuests which began to help teachers catch up to their students. According Dr. Dodge's website, "A WebQuest is an inquiry-oriented lesson format in which most or all the information that learners work with comes from the web." (WebQuest.org) Essentially, a WebQuest is a list of specific research questions, a research procedure, and an accompanying list of websites where students can find answers to the research questions.

The WebQuest for this particular project was designed specifically for the beginning language level and the student product is written in L1; however, at more advanced levels, it is easy to see how both the websites visited and the written component could be required in L2, or even a combination of L1 and L2 for heritage speakers learning L2 as an academic language. In fact, using L1 at the beginning language level for a work on culture is well-documented. In his discussion of incorporating culture into a foreign language class, Mike Levy, of Griffith University, comments,

The choice of the L1 for much of the work ... emphasizes the importance of representing one's own culture and one's relation to it as accurately as possible. Thus, there is more likelihood that discussion will centre upon culture differences

rather than inadequacies with the target language. (Levy 2007, pp. 118-119)

He goes on to say that,

It is noteworthy that the language chosen for the (project) is the native language; the target language is reserved for classwork... the decisions concerning occasions for the use of the L1 and the L2 are well-reasoned and deliberate. The L1 is used when expression of "cultural nuances" is a priority. (ibid.)

However, the true value of using the internet for any project is the ability to transport a student into a situation of realia where the language under study is the language in use and, in order to accomplish the task(s) designed by the teacher, the student must be able to negotiate within both the target language and the culture that surrounds that language. This brings immediate relevance into play for the learner. The task simply cannot be accomplished without some knowledge of the language under study. The flexibility designed into this particular project allows for lessons geared toward elementary through post-secondary education level and language levels from zero to advanced.

The WebQuest for this project was written using a template from Zunal.com. Many websites are available online, some for a fee, which can guide the author through the process of creating any WebQuest desired for any subject. In addition, there are authoring sites available without pre-built templates which are targeted toward the more experienced and savvy WebQuest designers.

The format for *Imaginary Friends* is consistent with most other

WebQuests:

1. title page,
2. introduction,
3. tasks,
4. process,
5. conclusion,
6. evaluation.

Some templates include a page for information about the author as well as reviews of the Quest by its users. I chose to forgo those pages in this particular Quest.

Imaginary Friends was created to be simple and straightforward and include very little embellishment. I did not want to confuse or overwhelm my inexperienced students as they embarked on their first Quest. However, as mentioned above, WebQuest design can become as complex and creative as the author should desire. Most librarians in public school systems are trained to create Quests as a support for the faculty and are an invaluable resource for those teachers who, for one reason or another, do not choose to or cannot create their own. In addition, there are literally hundreds of published WebQuests online which should be consulted before embarking upon one's first project.

It is important to mention that, although the actual authorship of a WebQuest is relatively straightforward, it is quite easy to vastly underestimate the time required to do the necessary online research required to make the information available to students. For me it became very clear very quickly why many teachers choose to work with a librarian who has multiple resources at her fingertips and who is also a skilled researcher. Unless you are collaborating with such a colleague, or are, yourself, a very skilled online researcher, make sure you leave adequate time to find and sort through all the information which you will come across in your own "scavenger hunt" for interesting, engaging, and relevant material that is also appropriate for your age group and language level.

The use of the internet in the classroom is not unusual. In 2009, the use of computer technology is assumed and its more sophisticated applications will soon be de rigueur for every class in every discipline. The fact that language teaching in the United States has only begun to exploit the potential of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) within the last five years is largely due to the mistaken assumption that computers are more appropriately used in the "hard sciences." As a consequence, many language teachers may soon have to upgrade their own skills in order to maintain pace with their students. We can easily see this in the generational differences between basic approaches to

interpersonal communication: texting versus talking, cell phone versus home phone, and throwing LAN parties for communal cyber-gaming versus throwing a dance party on a Saturday night.

Learning Objectives

Professional Development: Means to the End

Ironically, we can begin to see the necessity for substantial professional development in order to better address the needs of our students on their level when we look across the Atlantic and take note of what European educators have been doing for the last nine years. In 2000, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science provided a grant to support a project called TalenQuest (*talen* means *language* in Dutch). In a paper delivered to the 2002 CALL Conference in Antwerp, Ton Koenraad introduces the natural link between WebQuests and foreign language learning:

Since the Internet itself provides an ideal digital learning environment for language learning, (we) believe in presenting learners of modern languages with challenging tasks to be solved by exploring the Web. The WebQuest model is appealing in this respect because (it) relates well with modern Second Language Acquisition (SLA) views and MFL pedagogy. The WebQuest concept is seen to have the potential to help MFL teachers to relate learning to the real world, enhance and replace textbook based learning activities and support transdiscipline curriculum activities. (Koenraad, 2002)

The original TalenQuest project has grown into what is now the organization called LanguageQuest. In 2006, LQuest familiarized participants from 21 countries with the project's main goals as well as increased their skills thereby enabling them "to estimate the effect of a LanguageQuest on SLA, improve existing LanguageQuests in terms of better SLA outcomes, and to design and construct effective LanguageQuests." (LQuest.net)

As well as teaching other language teachers to develop WebQuests for SLA, LQuest is also involved with the project MICaLL, Moderating Intercultural Communication and Language Learning, an EU organization whose main goal is to contribute to the innovation of education and general professional development for all teachers of modern languages. In his paper introducing MICaLL at the International Conference on Task Based Language Teaching, Koenraad expresses some of the same frustrations that I mentioned above in my own context about the lack of relevance of second language learning for students, the relatively rare use of the language in the classroom, and the heretofore untapped potential of using web-based projects designed to remediate or alleviate those situations. Speaking in relationship to the original concepts of MICaLL, Koenraad says,

The ambition is to design the project module materials in such a way that the virtual contacts and collaborative activities and the related authentic materials can offer a rich learning

environment for the development of language skills and intercultural communicative competence, if adequately supported with...language and cultural awareness raising activities and/or reflection...(Koenraad 2005, p. 6)

Student-Centered Learning Goals

Although the MICaLL project is specifically geared toward the development of teacher materials, there is much within its domain and recently-released portal which support the student learning goals of the project discussed in this paper:

- to bring personal relevance into foreign language study,
- to bring cultural awareness into the foreign language classroom, and
- to bring the international wonders available through the world wide web into the foreign language lesson.

As I continue to develop this project for use in future classes, I certainly intend to take advantage of the copious resources the EU has made available to all of us.

Conclusion

This paper focuses on a project developed for and piloted to a select group of beginning Spanish language learners in ninth and tenth grades in an American public high school. The focus of the learning was designed to bring relevance for the language study to the student as well as to bring awareness of the vast cultures and differences among the

Spanish-speaking peoples. This was done using a combination of guided imagery, line-drawings of faces, and a WebQuest. In the following chapters of this paper, specific lesson plans and a reflective learning on the result of the project are included. The final student products are in the Appendix as are various materials developed along the way. Although it may be interesting and perhaps even somewhat embarrassing that the majority of language teachers in the United States may never have heard of WebQuests, or written them into their lesson plans to facilitate the learning of French, Spanish, German, or ESL, it does not mean that they have not been used. After all,

Since (the) beginning days, tens of thousands of teachers have embraced WebQuests as a way to make good use of the internet while engaging their students in the kinds of thinking that the 21st century requires. (WebQuest.org)

I am one of those tens of thousands and, as you will see in the lesson plans that follow, it will not be such a great stretch for you to become one, too. Perhaps, when you read the final chapter of this paper, when you see the impact upon the students, when you hear the voices and reflections from the students themselves who participated in *Imaginary Friends*, you, too, will experience the excitement of finally finding a way to bring relevance, cultural awareness, and student engagement into the foreign language classroom. At the end of this paper, you will see how

truly easy it is to open the cybernetic door to that infinite world of possibilities just waiting to be explored by both the student and her teacher.

CHAPTER 1: Lesson Plans for Imaginary Friends

Introduction

This chapter will outline and explain those lessons that were included in the overall project. The entire project took place over the space of six weeks: the second quarter of the first semester of Spanish 1. It is important to mention that this was a work in progress as it was being implemented and my own learning experiences and reflections will be shared in a later chapter. If another teacher wishes to attempt this project, the lessons in this chapter should prove useful as templates; they are not meant to be hard and fast plans engraved in stone. On the contrary, it is my hope that each person will modify the lessons to suit his or her particular context and students. These lessons were designed for a beginning language level at the ninth and tenth grade levels in a public high school but, as you will see, can be easily adapted to lower or higher levels of both language and/or grade. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to provide a sequence of annotated lesson plans: plans for the entire project but with first-hand commentary and insights that you, as a teacher, can use to develop, design and deliver your own project tailored to your own needs and foreign language classroom.

Overview

This chapter consists of an overview of the key learning objectives for this project, followed by the sequence of the lessons in an outline format which I used as the syllabus handed out to the project volunteers. In the next section of the chapter, the individual lesson plans will be discussed in detail followed by a personal commentary at the end of each lesson. Student commentaries will end the section on lesson plans and the final section of the chapter will be devoted to the details of the WebQuest which was developed as the heart of this experience.

Key Learning Objectives

The primary learning objectives for the participants of this project were to gain and demonstrate a preliminary understanding of the depth and breadth of the diversity of cultures within the Spanish-speaking world. At the beginning level of language study, most of the research is done in L1; however, there is considerable exposure to L2 within the websites used to do the research and the students learn how to navigate within the language using primary sources, thereby developing literacy in L2. In addition, students learn about the variety of historical backgrounds within the countries explored as well as the profound influence of the indigenous peoples of the regions involved. Using a combination of imagination and technology, the students also experience what it is like to live within the

cultures and then to share those cultures with outsiders through tourism, cuisine and discussion.

Syllabus: Imaginary Friends in the Spanish-Speaking World

1. Tuesday, October 28 – Break (10:00am – 10:20am)

Topic: Lesson 2

- Initial discussion
- Schedule handout
- Choose face

2. Tuesday, November 18 – Lunch (12:25pm – 12:55pm)

Topic: Lesson 3

- Character names
- Grading contract handout
- Questions, concerns, suggestions

3. Tuesday, November 25 – Break (10:00am – 10:20am)

Topic: Lesson 4

- Turn in Grading Contract
- Final country assignments
- Final and complete names for characters

4. Monday, December 1 – Lunch (12:25pm – 12:55pm)

Topic: Lesson 5

- Check-in on progress with WebQuest
- Questions, concerns, suggestions

5. Friday, December 5 – After school (3:15pm – 4:00pm)

Topic: Lesson 6 (Show and tell!)

- Food from your character's country
- Come as character
- Bring pictures of your country
- Bring your travel brochure

6. Thursday, December 11, 8:00AM – Turn in Final Project
Due at the time of the Final Exam

7. Tuesday, January 12, 2009 – Lunch (12:25pm – 12:55pm)

Topic: Lesson 7 (Debrief and Discussion)

What did you like about the project?

What did you find to be a challenge?

What would you do differently the next time?

Detailed Lesson Plans

Lesson 1 (Preliminary): Guided Imagery / Data Collection (50 minutes)

Overview: With eyes closed and heads down, the students will be guided through the image of a non-specific Spanish-speaking country and led to imagine a person living in that country. At the conclusion of the imagery, information as to the students' tacit knowledge of the cultures of the Spanish-speaking world will be gathered to be used as a starting point for further instruction.

Learning objectives: Students will explore and share their own unconscious imagery of the Spanish-speaking world. The students' writings in their Reflective Journals immediately following the guided imagery are used as a means to personally explore their own thoughts and then to generate in-class discussion regarding attitudes and preconceived notions of Spanish-speakers that were held before studying the language. The same guided imagery and reflective writing can then be done for comparison after having studied Spanish for a semester and/or after having done the WebQuest project.

Materials/Resources:

- Script designed to elicit imagery;

- background music to facilitate elicitation;
- whiteboard and markers;
- student notebooks that will be used throughout the year for reflective journaling

Procedure:

1. At the beginning of the class it is explained that, for the next fifteen minutes, we will be doing a guided imagery activity.
2. Classroom lights are dimmed and the students are asked to put their heads down and close their eyes.
3. A softly-playing Latin music soundtrack is turned on.
4. While the music is playing, the students are directed to visualize themselves in the following situation: (Script)

Picture yourself as a native speaker of Spanish. You are living in a Spanish-speaking environment where everyone else is also a native Spanish-speaker.

You are just waking up in the morning and from somewhere the music you are hearing is playing; maybe it's from across the street, maybe it's from a little radio in the kitchen, maybe it's just playing in your head because you heard it recently.

After you get up and you start to get ready for your day, you look at yourself in the mirror. What do you see? What do you look like? How would you describe yourself? What is your hair like? Your complexion? Are you tall, short, heavy, slim? What kind of clothes do you usually wear? Do you wear the same kind of clothes every day or do you have different clothes that you wear on the weekend? What do they look like?

Now, after you get dressed, where do you go? Do you eat breakfast? What do you eat? What are your favorite foods and when do you usually eat them? Think about how good they taste and how great they smell when they are cooking. When you walk out of the door to start your day, what does it look like around you? What country do you live in? What kind of place do you live in? Are there a lot of people around you? Do you live in a city or a town or a small village or perhaps you live out in the country? What are all the smells and sounds and colors around you?

As you leave your house, think about where you are going today. What do you usually do all day? Do you go to school? Do you go to work? If you go to school, what does your school look like? Is it a big school with many classrooms? Is it a small school? How many kids are at your school and in your class? What grade are you in? If you go to work, where do you work? What do you do there? Do you work inside or outdoors? Do the other members of your family work? Your parents? Your siblings? What do they do?

Now think about how you are going to get to wherever it is you are going. Do you walk? Do you ride a bicycle? Do you take the bus? Do you drive? Do you or your family members have a car? Do most people around you have cars? How do most people get around where you live? Is it noisy and busy where you live with traffic all the time? Or is it fairly quiet with not much going on and not much traffic in the streets?

Finally, what do you think about after you get home from your day? What do you hope to do in the future? Do you speak more than just Spanish? Have you ever studied another language? Do you have friends who speak more than one language? If you do, when do you or your friends use those other languages? TV? Movies? Everyday conversations? Just in school? Is the other language useful? When?

5. Stop talking and allow students, with eyes still closed and heads still upon the desks, to spend the remainder of the designated fifteen minutes imagining the situation and developing their scenarios.
6. Turn on the lights and ask them to write down what they had been imagining during the exercise by copying into their Reflective Journals (the spiral notebooks reserved for this purpose) and addressing the following questions:
 - a. Where do you live and what does your living space look like?
 - b. What is the name of your country?
 - c. What does it look like around where you live? City, town, countryside?
 - d. What do you do every day? Do you go to school? To work?
 - e. What does your school or your work look like?
 - f. How do you get around from place to place? Do you or your family have a car?
 - g. What kind of clothes do you wear? What do they look like?
 - h. What is your favorite kind of food? What do you eat every day?
 - i. What are your plans for the future? Do you or your family or friends speak more than one language? If so, when do you (or they) use it and why?

7. Information gathering

On the whiteboard, total the responses to the following questions:

- a. In what country did your person live?
- b. What did your person look like?
- c. What was the context of the living situation?
- d. What was the person's economic level?

Note: These questions are only for basic data gathering to be used by the teacher in order to determine the level of the students' tacit knowledge of the diversity of the Spanish-speaking world. Detailed answers to the questions listed for the students will be shared when journal entries are read.

Culminating activity: Ask for volunteers to read the story written in their journals. Make sure to leave enough quiet time between each reading for the students to absorb the story of their classmate before continuing on to the next.

Suggestions/Commentary:

In all three classes, totaling slightly more than one hundred people, fewer than ten students had placed their scenarios in any country other than Mexico or Spain. All students had envisioned dark skin and brown hair, although some chose green or blue eyes. Most students had placed the scenario within small towns or villages although a couple of people chose big cities and a few chose rural settings. Two students from differing classes wrote amazing stories about living in desperate circumstances,

working and caring for younger siblings while still in their early teens. Of course, there were also those youngsters who had chosen to be in their early twenties and absurdly wealthy, with lots of romantic conquests, fast cars, and parties. I'm not sure they quite understood the concept of the exercise!

The writing portion of the task was scheduled for thirty minutes, which left approximately ten to twelve minutes for sharing: not nearly sufficient time in hindsight. Most adolescents are usually somewhat hesitant to share thoughts and feelings but after this activity, when I asked for volunteers to read their stories, most of the students raised their hands and we only had time for two or three people to share before the bell rang and the class was finished. I was asked and agreed to extend the sharing into the following day, but by that time the moment of intimacy within the classroom was gone and the deep feelings around the guided imagery were just not as meaningful.

Lesson 2: Initial Discussion (20 minutes)

Overview: As this is the first meeting with the participants of the project, it is here that the project is discussed in detail, the *syllabus* handed out, and the line-drawing of the face is chosen by the student.

Learning Objectives: Students will explore the idea of using imagination and technology to have a virtual living experience in a country where L2

is the native language. They will also begin to contemplate creating a virtual friend from the black and white drawing of the face that they choose.

Materials/Resources:

- Project syllabus;
- Photocopies of several different black and white drawings of faces.

Procedure:

1. Recap aims and goals of project.
2. Distribute syllabus and discuss dates and deadlines.
3. Display drawings and have students each choose one, explaining that at the next meeting, faces should be colored and, if possible, a name should be chosen for the character.

Suggestions/Commentary:

Although the timeline was extremely short (20 minutes), the primary goals of the meeting were met: the project was discussed, the syllabus was distributed, and the faces were chosen. I would suggest, however, that a typed handout of the overall description of the project accompany the syllabus. In fact, if you have allotted adequate time, show a PowerPoint of some of the websites they will be exploring. Include lots of pictures and audio. That will definitely help to pique the students' interest. In addition, as the next meeting includes time for questions,

concerns and/or suggestions, have the students come prepared with a copy of their questions, concerns and suggestions written down that you can collect and make notes upon as they speak. It will organize your time better and keep the students focused on the main points of their concerns and questions.

Lesson 3: Names and Grading Contract (30 minutes)

Overview: This meeting is primarily to distribute and discuss the grading contract with the participants. Secondly, it is to share the names chosen for the characters. Finally, it is also to gather and discuss any questions, concerns or suggestions that the students may have so far.

Learning Objectives:

- Primary learning objective - to discover and discuss the concept of a grading contract;
- Secondary objective – share process of choosing the character names.

Materials/Resources: Photocopies of grading contract (see Appendix)

Procedure:

1. Distribute and read-around grading contract, taking and answering questions as they occur in the reading.

2. Discuss and emphasize that the choice of a grade is entirely dependent upon how much work a student is willing to do on the project and that it is no one else's decision or responsibility what the choice of that grade may be. The decision is theirs alone.
3. Share and discuss the character names chosen by students.
4. Discuss students' questions, concerns or suggestions.

Suggestions/Commentary:

❖ *Grading contract*

In addition to being exempt from the Final Exam, the grading contract turned out to be the singularly most appealing part of the project for the students. It enabled them to each choose her or his own level of participation and grade. The sense of empowerment that a grading contract gives to a student is a strongly motivating factor to achieve the exact degree of accomplishment that one has chosen oneself as well as enabling the student to pull the blanket of mystery off of the grading process and truly make it her own. It held true in this case as well. Four out of five students chose to earn an A and the other student wisely chose to earn a B. Each one met his or her goal; indeed, a couple with distinction.

In this day and age, parental buy-in can be crucial for the success of anything out of the curricular ordinary, so in addition to that of the student, I also required a parent signature on the grading contract. Apart

from avoiding any unfortunate parental misunderstandings, this also provided a potential support for student performance had the learner decided to play video games or watch TV instead of finishing a task required for the project. I received no negative parental feedback on the forms and rested more comfortably knowing that we were all on the same page.

❖ *Choosing a name*

The major surprise came when the students shared that choosing a name had not been easy and most of them had not been able to do it as of yet. Nor had it been easy to choose the coloring for the face, hair and eyes. Apparently they were beginning to look upon the drawings as their friends and felt a responsibility to make the coloring and name choices correctly reflect the personality and background of their character. In fact, several of the students decided midway through the project that the colors they had initially chosen for their characters had been wrong. They asked for clean copies of their faces so that they could make them right. When it came to choosing a name, in one case, Jason, the tenth grade boy, did not actually find one that fit until the very end of the project. He talked about the struggle in his Reflective Learning paper:

But what kind of friend can you have without a name? That was the next task we had to accomplish. Once again, this was no easy task. I wanted a unique name that suited my character as best as it could. And it took me until the end of

the project to figure it out. So I put that task aside keeping it in my mind every day. (Priestly, 2008)

Jason does not ever specify the exact time he finally did come upon a name nor what circumstances surrounded the final choice. We do know, however, that he had chosen one by the time we had the culminating activity.

Lesson 4: Collecting grading contract and assigning countries for

WebQuest (20 minutes)

Overview: This is a short meeting designed to collect the signed grading contracts and to hand out country assignments for the WebQuests.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will explore their initial reactions to the country chosen for their WebQuest.
- They will learn where the country is and how to find it on the map.

Materials/Resources:

- List of WebQuest countries assigned to students;
- World map

Procedure:

1. Collect grading contracts. Make sure that they are signed by both student and parent. Verify the grade and criteria that each student

has chosen to make sure there are no mistakes or misunderstandings.

2. Assign countries to students.
3. Have each student locate her/his country on the map.

Commentary/Suggestions:

I cannot overemphasize the need to verify the contracts with each student and to revisit the criteria required for the successful accomplishment of the grade chosen. The possibility of misunderstanding a requirement is a potentially critical pitfall in the use of grading contracts with younger people: perhaps with students of all ages, for that matter. Actually, a photocopy of the signed document, criteria checked off and initialed as they are completed, should be included in the project in order to avoid any possible problems at a later date.

The major event of this meeting, however, was the assignment of the countries for the WebQuests. As there were several stages involved in completing the WebQuest and two different end products required, I felt that it was necessary to overemphasize the importance of leaving enough time to complete the project before the deadline. This meeting was intentionally held on the day before the Thanksgiving Break was due to begin. That gave the students a total of five days in which to accomplish the tasks before they were due the following Monday. To be

honest, I exaggerated the level of difficulty in order to avoid any temptation on their part to procrastinate until Sunday night.

Originally, I had intended to design a quest centered around the celebration of *Día de Los Muertos* which occurs annually on November 1 and 2, However, I vastly underestimated my own time required to complete the actual research necessary to create WebQuests for four different countries and so was forced to push back the date to the end of November. It was at this meeting that I delineated to the students the exact process of doing a WebQuest. I explained that the only thing they had to do was to go to the URL of the Quest and follow the directions that they found there. Everything that needed to be done would be made clear step by step but that they had to follow the instructions to the letter. They themselves made the connection between a WebQuest and a scavenger hunt which, as it turns out, is a perfect analogy. As they would be sharing travel brochures at the Monday meeting, I repeatedly stressed to them not to procrastinate and wait until Sunday night to begin the project. As it turned out, all participants expressed how glad they were that they had not waited until the very last day and a couple of the girls even decided to get together over the weekend to work on one of the projects that was behind schedule so as not to miss the Monday deadline. They were grateful for the extra time allotted and felt that it would have been stressful to accomplish it in less.

Lesson 5: Sharing the brochures and check-in on progress with project (30 minutes)

Overview: At this gathering the students shared the travel brochures which were one of the end products required in the WebQuests. It also functioned as a check-in to make sure that students had not fallen behind on production of the final project.

Learning Objectives: Students will share their travel brochures with each other and teach each other about the destination of their WebQuest.

Materials/Resources:

- Students must provide brochures for discussion.
- World map

Procedure:

1. Briefly check in on student progress on project to make sure that all are on task and will make the final deadline.
2. Have each student show and tell about her/his brochure, including where the location is on the world map.

Commentary/Suggestions:

As the first brochures were being shared, the excitement generated was palpable. The students were so proud of themselves – and of each other!

Lesson 6: Culminating Activity (1 hour minimum)

Overview: The final activity consisted of coming to the gathering in the character of the imaginary friend (including wearing the face as a mask), talking about the character's country of origin in the first person, and bringing a regional specialty to share with the other students.

Learning Objectives: Students will use L2 to introduce themselves to the group, show on the map and tell where they are from, how old they are, and briefly describe their interests and their families. In addition, the students will also make, share, and taste regional dishes while talking about their countries.

Materials/Resources:

- Students provide faces, food, plates and utensils.
- World map
- World music
- Camera or videocam for project documentation
- Tape recorder or audio recording device for project documentation

Procedure:

1. Before beginning the introductions, have the students place their dishes on the table with the recipe and serving utensils next to it.

2. While wearing the drawing as a mask, and taking on the persona of the imaginary friend, have each student introduce herself/himself to the group in L2 following the criteria determined in the learning objectives. Include student showing where his/her country is on the world map.
3. Depending upon the number of students, either sit down at a table to eat the food prepared by the students or create a buffet-style meal. Before eating, and still in character, have each student tell why the dish that s/he brought is unique or special to his/her region. At the beginning language level, this can be done in L1.
4. Out of character, students then spend the rest of the hour eating and sharing all the new, surprising, fascinating and unexpected things learned about the countries, the people, the languages and their cultures,
5. Remember: take pictures and record dialogue! You will want it later!

Personal Commentary:

After school on Friday, December 5, all the project participants gathered in my classroom at Napa High School for what came to be regarded as the "Show and Tell." Anticipation was high as they appeared, one by one, bringing all the elements of their particular project

experience together to share with each other. As instructed previously, for this meeting the students were to have their characters' faces strung with elastic for wearing as masks, food and recipes indigenous to the Imaginary Friends' cultures, and their prepared tour guide pamphlets for the area in which the friends were "living."



Food, faces, brochures

The atmosphere we created was one of a buffet meal where different international students were meeting for the first time in order to get to know one another and form a social network. As I had done that many times para-professionally as an undergraduate student working in my university's Office of International Programs, the concept was not foreign to me and I was prepared with both music and the camera for documentation. The one surprise was the appearance of a parent who had become so involved in her daughter's

participation that she, too, wished to experience the moment!



Finding Ecuador

The first thing the students were asked to do was to point out where their friends lived and where they had travelled while visiting them. One of the kids came totally unprepared for that part and we all supported her, both giving her hints as she struggled to find Ecuador on the map, and cheers when she was

finally able to do so. The others had no discernable difficulty – after they were gently prodded south of the United States’ border!

The next part was to don their masks and to speak “in character” which, of course, meant using Spanish



Students in character

for the conversation. Perhaps I should have warned them to prepare for this part but, frankly, I did not want to scare them before the fact. In addition, I was truly interested to see how much of the foreign language the learners had absorbed and could use on an impromptu basis. It was quite rough going in the beginning and, with the presence of her parent, it became noticeably embarrassing for the daughter to engage. However, after the initial stress wore off, all of them effectively negotiated the oral task and were able to laugh and encourage each other with Spanish-language prompts much as they would have done in a true second-language environment.

The food was truly amazing. Each learner had obviously gone to



Characters’ food and pictures of their countries

great lengths to prepare a dish that was not only native to the exact region of the imaginary friend, but also to prepare a dish that was as enjoyable to the eye

as it was to the palate. What I found of personal interest was that some of food that the kids thought so exotic was, in reality, food that is regularly prepared in my home. For me as the teacher, their sharing and comparison of individual experiences was absolutely the best part. Apparently the kids thought so, too. Listen to Jason again as he proclaims,

This was the most fun part about the whole project. All of us coming together with all the tasks of our project and talking about what we thought and just having a good time while doing it. We all sat around the table and we introduced ourselves as our character in Spanish, and told where we were from and what our dish was. (Priestly, 2008)

I became a fly on the wall as they ate, chattered, laughed, and exclaimed how wonderful the whole project had been for them. Each person had specific advice for me as to how to improve the project for the next group of, as they called them, lucky students who would get to go through the experience.

Lesson 7: Debrief (30 minutes)

Overview: The debrief took place after the termination of the project and was designed to facilitate discussion of and reflection on the learning processes of and by the students.

Learning Objectives: During this discussion, the students look at their own learning from the project and evaluate their individual learning processes.

Materials/Resources: recording device: audio and/or video

Procedure: Facilitate discussion on the following questions:

1. What did you like about participating in the project?
2. What did you find to be a challenge while participating in the project?
3. What would you do differently if you were going to participate in another project like this?

Commentary/Suggestions:

Unfortunately, I scheduled the debrief for after the winter holiday. What is obvious now is that the debrief would have been far better had it occurred directly after the conclusion of the project while the process was fresh in the students' minds. In addition, I scheduled it at lunchtime and, as lunchtime is only 42 minutes, the students and I were acutely aware of every passing minute. With so much to say in so little time, my kids were not as forthcoming as I'd found them to be previously. Plus, in their defense, a month is an eternity in the mind of a teenager – especially a month off school! These were major oversights on my part and I will absolutely schedule it differently the next time I run the project.

In addition, I had no recording device during the debrief session and I regret that I had not planned to bring one. From an educator's standpoint, this was the heart of the project, where the students openly discussed reflections on their learning and participation in *Imaginary Friends*. I did take notes during the meeting but, sadly, I feel that the main substance of the students' commentary was lost. Some of that commentary is included below.

Student suggestions and commentary on project

Suggestions

- The project should be expanded to include all my classes.
- This project should be done for all three languages that I teach.
- A project should be created for all of my students every year.
- Each week a different WebQuest should be assigned in order to have the maximum variety of participation in the maximum number of different cultures.



**Jason, Natalie (top), Sophia,
Michelle, Holly**

Student commentary

Natalie Melton

- *In the debrief*

I liked it. Some of the places were similar, some of them were different. It really makes you want to go there. It makes you want to travel, especially in Mexico. I really thought it was cool the way they have those busses just for women. I thought it needs to be longer. I felt rushed.

- *In her learning reflection paper*

Mexico isn't as foreign of a country as it may seem to you. (There are differences) but the people are still like us. They may speak different tongues, but we are still all the same people... We may have different beliefs, but we are still the same people that god created. This project definitely made me see Mexico in a different way. (Melton, 2008)

Michelle Cole

- *In the debrief*

I don't like computer work. I just get frustrated and it made me fall behind in my other classes. But, it was sorta', like, shocking, you know, because of all the differences in the way we live. It just stressed me out.

Holly Cloud

- *In the debrief*

The project really helped my learning. For example, I learned that Spanish really is relevant to my life; it really is important to learn. But, if I were queen, I'd want it to be spread out over a schedule of more weeks so we could do more stuff. It gave me the urge to learn more.

- *In her learning reflection paper*

It has been a rewarding experience for me because I've learned a lot that I didn't realize existed and definitely didn't expect. I now realize that there is a lot to learn about different places that make up the world. (Cloud, 2008)

Jason Priestly

- *In the debrief*

I really, really liked it. It gave me, like, a *reason* to learn Spanish. But now, I want to go there and see all those things my friend was showing me. I felt really excited! It makes you want to travel there, you know? Especially in, like, Spanish-speaking places.

- *In his learning reflection paper*

We talked about the good things about the project, and the bad things about the project. Turns out, most of us could only think of good things to say, because we all really enjoyed doing it. We all loved the information that we learned, and we had fun doing it...I can speak for the group when I say that I have no regret in taking on this challenge, and I would do it again any day. This was a truly successful project, and I hope that she continues it for years to come. (Priestly, 2008)

Sophia Vandagriff

- *In the debrief*

I thought it was fantastic! It, like, it really changed my life! I wish *everybody* could learn like that! Plus, because I knew that the face was real (*you mean that it is a face of a real person?*), yeah, it made me feel like my friend was real, like I was talking to a real girl in Peru and her family. I think you should do it for all your classes. It really helps tear down all those walls between us and help us understand each others' cultures.

- *In her learning reflection paper*

Ultimately, I'm really glad that I agreed to this because there is no doubt that I will always remember this experience. Also, after going through this process I feel like Ingrid has become a part of me. I feel like I have made a friend. Because of her, I now know what it is like to live in another country. (Vandagriff, 2008)

Conclusion

In this chapter I have enumerated and detailed the lesson plans which were used in this project. For each lesson, I have included an

overview, the learning objectives, the materials required, and the procedures I used. In addition, at the end of each lesson, I have given personal commentary about the lesson and/or suggestions as to how I would make it better the next time or how another teacher might improve upon the lesson. At the end of the chapter, I included student commentary on both the lessons and the project in its entirety.

As a final note, on December 11 at 10:00AM, right on time, each and every learner walked into the classroom proudly holding their completed projects, the contents of which had been delineated in the WebQuest and grading contract. Each one proclaimed it was the best work s/he had ever done. I would concur. Indeed, as I write this, I am aware of a huge smile spreading across my face while reliving the memory of their pride, their commentary and their suggestions. When I think back to the look on their faces as they submitted their completed projects, I know that most of their exuberance was probably at having successfully completed what was, in essence, their final semester project. However, I cannot help but also feel that part of the glow was the joy of having been awakened to a brand-new global perspective and a commitment to creating a better world for us all.

CHAPTER 2: Reflections

In relationship to my students

One of the suggestions made by the participants in *Imaginary Friend* was to provide the same kind of project for my students of English as a Second Language and my students of French as I had for these beginning students of Spanish. Unfortunately, having now run this pilot project, I now believe that for one teacher to create such projects for a multitude of languages would not be possible while handling a full teaching load at a secondary school. This is certainly not to say that it would not be a worthwhile goal: on the contrary. After the feedback from my own student participants, as well as my first-hand observations of these learners' enthusiasm, access to a cultural WebQuest for every foreign language classroom would reap untold benefits, within both the realms of culture and language acquisition and increased levels of motivation and relevance for the learner. After all,

...teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal – or keep them from learning much at all. Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions. (Palmer 1997, p. 6)

I now have no doubt that providing WebQuests for foreign language classrooms most assuredly creates those conditions. Holly would agree:

I have learned multiple things through my adventure with my Imaginary Friend from Oaxaca. It has been a rewarding experience for me because I've learned a lot that I didn't realize existed and definitely didn't expect. I now realize that there is a lot learn about different places that make up the world. (Cloud, 2008)

The other commonality was that all the students agreed that the entire project should be spread out into increments over the whole semester instead of being one big project. They suggested one little task each week followed by a meeting to discuss that task and then bringing it all together at the end.

Characters in search of authors

It was interesting to me that when I asked about any feelings they had had around their characters, they expressed something that looked almost like trepidation. One of the girls actually admitted to feeling scared.

They had chosen their individuals' faces and had gone right home and colored them in after the first meeting. When they came back the next time to share the faces, they had all chosen light complexions and blue or green eyes. After I gave them their country assignments, though, every one of them came back in wanting another copy of the sketch so

they could do it again. The consensus seemed to be that they had all colored the skin of their characters with northern-European complexions because that was what they were familiar with. But, when the students went online to find out about the countries and found out that most people in Central and South America are darker, they all showed great anxiety and were adamant that they be able to recreate the Imaginary Friend in the image that he or she “should” be. It was as if the kids had already formed an emotional relationship with their imaginary friends and were very concerned that they were doing them an injustice.

Jason shares this anxiety in his paper when he talks about the task of coloring in the face he had chosen:

What we had to do with this face was to color it and bring it to life, and make this friend our own. As easy as I originally thought this was going to be, it was no walk in the park. I had all of the colors in front of me, but I could not seem to pick the ones that suited my character the best. I sat and looked at him, trying to figure out what color I wanted his skin to be, his hair to be, his eyes to be. Then finally, I chose the colors that I thought were right for my character. To my surprise, he turned out great. He became my friend with whom I was about to embark on an amazing journey...To my surprise, I wasn't the only one who had trouble coloring the faces, and picking out names. But to see the other peoples' faces was neat because to see what the faces used to be and what they were now, was amazing. Who knew some colored pencils could make such a difference! (Priestly, 2008)

In relationship to myself

It was to have been so easy! I already had the *knowledge*, the *experience*, and the *technology*. Using a WebQuest to incorporate culture into the Foreign Language curriculum was something that I just knew was the right thing for me to spend a couple of months figuring out and then, well, just write it up! “And Bob’s your uncle,” as my friends say in England.

Hubris should always be followed by laughter at one’s inflated ego; and so it was and has been for several weeks. Yes, it should have been easy and only became difficult upon implementation. I found that the critical element lacking was time: time enough to accomplish the research necessary to create an exemplar WebQuest for four different locales in three different countries tailored to elicit specific learning outcomes employing constructivist teaching methodology. Yes, there were other WebQuests already made for Spanish-speaking countries but none with the exact criteria I required in order for my students to accomplish the goals I that I had designed for this project.

That was the other humbling, yet strangely exhilarating experience: in hindsight I should have realized that other language professionals must have been working along the same lines incorporating culture into language learning using web research tools. However, I had done

copious research and found nothing that clicked into the correct groove; until I discovered Koenraad and his team in the EU. At that point, it was as if I'd been buried underground for months and suddenly found a source of fresh air. In page after page, source after source, I found inspiration and motivation to continue the fight; continue the struggle to bring the light of global awareness into the prejudicial isolation of Small Town, America. Unbelievably, although we are only 50 miles north of San Francisco, one of the most internationally diverse and cosmopolitan centers of the world, the sports teams at our high school are named, and will continue to be named for the foreseeable future, the Indians, indicating such a lack of intercultural respect and sensitivity that those of us in the Department of World Languages often despair for both our students and our children. How will ever they learn that we are a part of our global community and not apart from it?

It is only then, from that position of fear and humility, that I remember Palmer's exhortation to stay in one's undivided self:

In the undivided self, every major thread of one's life experience is honored, creating a weave of such coherence and strength that it can hold students and subject as well as self. Such a self, inwardly integrated, is able to make the outward connections on which good teaching depends. (Palmer 1997, p. 15)

When I re-enter my undivided self, I remember that I do have the *experience* of intercultural friendship and can share it with my students so

that it becomes real and tangible instead of imaginary and pointless. I remind myself that I do have the *knowledge* it takes to dig into another's cultural ground and find the artifacts left from ancestors long gone but who still speak to us in ways unimaginable ("Some of the information that I put into (the brochure) I couldn't believe myself! - Jason); that I can show young learners how to take up that spade and dig on their own, and rejoice in the unfamiliar soil, showing them that treasure lies just beneath their feet ("It was like a scavenger hunt with no wrong answers in it..." - Holly) It was only after remembering all those different facets of self that the final piece of *technology* fell into place. I am thrilled knowing that by incorporating culture into the standardized FL classroom by means of internet research tools there is another major thread of my life experience honored: the ancient systems analyst I was in a time so long ago that a mainframe computer contained all of 64K and took up an entire room.

Understanding my identity is the first and crucial step in finding new ways to teach: nothing I do differently as a teacher will make any difference to anyone if it is not rooted in my nature. (Palmer 1997, p. 71)

So this paper, this project which I thought would be an unnecessary hoop has evolved instead into a cathartic loop bringing together my past forty years of professional growth, my present deep and continuing call to teach, and my future educational interests linking cultures, kids and computers; all of which has managed to maintain the critical focus on the

one overarching goal of my life: first honing and then passing along the required skills to those whose turn it will be, sooner or later, to create a global community that cares not only for itself, but for and about each other. The young people who participated in this project with me gave me hope in every meeting and on every page that my goal may be one day accomplished. As usual, Parker Palmer reminds me why:

Teaching...is the dance of the spiraling generations, in which the old empower the young with their experience and the young empower the old with new life, reweaving the fabric of the human community as they touch and turn. (Palmer 1997, p. 25)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Imaginary Friends WebQuest

Appendix 2 - Grading Contract

Appendix 3 - Student Work

- Cloud
- Cole
- Melton
- Priestly
- Vandergriff

Appendix I



Title: Imaginary Friends in Spanish-Speaking Countries

Description: Through the tasks on this web quest, you will be able to bring life and breath into your imaginary friend from the Spanish-speaking countries that we have chosen.

Author: Buckingham, JE

Grade Level: 9-12

Curriculum: Foreign Language

Keywords: Spanish, culture, Latin American history, Latin American tourism, brochure

Last Modified: 11/25/2008 04:59:04

Introduction

Imaginary friends are often the best kind to have: they are always nice, they never dis you to their friends, they always have something interesting to say, and they never talk back!

In this WebQuest, it gets even better because your Imaginary Friends will also be multilingual in English and Spanish and probably even one more language from their indigenous heritage. He or she will be able to act as a bridge between you and the culture that s/he knows best whether that culture be from Mexico City, Oaxaca, the Yucatan, Ecuador or Peru. Just think of all the cool things you will be able to discover together!

As time goes on, we will add different tasks and fun activities but, for now, we'll just KISS*, shall we? (*Keep It Simple Sweetheart!)

Have fun!!!

Tasks

Thanks to the Internet, you are going to be hosted by your Imaginary Friend in his or her native country that is somewhere in a Spanish-speaking country. Your friend will show you some *amazing things* that you probably never even dreamed of! He or she will be your own private tour guide around the most fascinating areas of her country and you will even be able to bring back a souvenir!

In addition, you will also end up with a cool brochure that you will be able to bring back to show your friends and family to prove how really unbelievable your friend's country turned out to be. Maybe if you are lucky, you will be able to have your friend come visit you in *your* country and you will be able to show her all the sights the way that she will do while you are there!

And remember to learn how to cook your favorite dish while you are there so that we can all sit down together and share our adventures over a luscious and adventurous meal.

Happy travels!

Process

By the time you reach this point, you will have already given your Imaginary Friend a full name and a nationality. In this part of the WebQuest, you will discover who she/he really is when s/he is at home in his or her own country.

At the bottom of this page, you will find attachments that will take you to a wealth of information, music, photos and videos that will let you see, hear, and experience the sights and sounds that are most important to your Imaginary Friends. Each friend will act as your own tour guide and, by your clicking on the different references that have been provided, s/he will take you around the culturally significant places that are nearest to his or her home town. From that information, you will be required to create a travel brochure (one page that folds into 3 sections) that includes the following:

- 1) the name of the tour that you took as well as the location and how to get there;
- 2) photographs and/or images from your tour;
- 3) information about what you saw in your tour;
- 4) the most striking or exciting experience that you had while you were on the tour;

5) why you would recommend this tour to your friends at home and what they should make sure that they see while they are there.

In addition, you need to have a packing list of essential clothing that a tourist would need while in your friend's country that includes one outfit for a nice dinner in a restaurant as well as clothing to wear while you are kicking back or seeing the sights. *This list needs to be written in Spanish* so the Customs Officials will know what you are bringing into their country!

Ready? *Here we go!!!*

Attachment # 1- Ecuador and Peru

Attachment #2- Mexico (Mexico City, Oaxaca, the Yucatan peninsula)

Attachment # 1

Websites for Ecuador and Perú

Ecuador

- <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/ecuador>

The Shuar People of the Amazon

- <http://link.history.com/services/link/bcpid1305149612/bclid1309585750/bctid1485315205>
- <http://www.head-hunter.com/headhunter.html>
- http://encarta.msn.com/media_461532887/Ritual_Shuar_Music_of_Ecuador.html
- Shrunken Heads: http://www.head-hunter.com/art_TOLife.html

Galapaqos Islands

- <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/ecuador/the-galapagos-islands>
- Vampire birds:
http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/02/0209_060209_vampire_video.html
- Way cool vid: http://www.divedarwin.net/galapagos_video.htm

Peru

- http://video.nationalgeographic.com/places/countries/country_peru.html
- http://video.nationalgeographic.com/places/gallery/peru_mountain-machu-picchu.html
- http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/worldmusic/view/page.basic/country/content.country/peru_16?fs=video.nationalgeographic.com

Cusco Culture

- <http://www.culturefocus.com/peru.htm>
- http://images.google.com/images?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1T4DKUS_enUS241US242&q=Cuzco+Peru&um=1&sa=X&oi=image_result_group&resnum=4&ct=title

Mysterious Nazca Lines

- <http://www.culturefocus.com/peru-nazca.htm>
- http://www.world-mysteries.com/mpl_1.htm
- http://images.google.com/images?q=Nazca+Lines&hl=en&sourceid=qd&rls=DLUS,DLUS:2007-38,DLUS:en&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&oi=image_result_group&resnum=1&ct=title

Machu Pichu

- http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/player/places/regions-places/south-america/peru_machupicchu.html
- <http://link.history.com/services/link/bcpid1305149612/bclid1309585750/bctid1483866307>
- <http://www.machupicchu.org/>

- http://www.sacredsites.com/americas/peru/machu_picchu.html
- <http://www.machupicchu.perucultural.org.pe/ingles/>
- http://video.google.com/videosearch?hl=en&rls=DLUS,DLUS:2007-38,DLUS:en&resnum=0&q=Machu+Picchu&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&oi=video_result_group&resnum=8&ct=title#

Attachment #2

Websites for Mexico: Mexico City, the Yucatan Peninsula, Oaxaca

Mexico City

- http://www.tripfilms.com/Travel_Video-v62870-Mexico_City-Coyoacan_Mexico_City-Video.html
- <http://video.nytimes.com/video/2008/02/10/world/americas/1194817111722/in-mexico-a-bus-of-womens-own.html>
- <http://www.lonelyplanet.tv/Clip.aspx?key=B7D3D9B539F72B55>
- <http://www.totalvid.com/Travel-Clips-WC/Mexico-City-Preview>
- http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travelstories/article/mexicocity_0707

Aztec Culture

- <http://link.history.com/services/link/bcpid1305149612/bclid1309585750/bctid1311218594>
- <http://link.history.com/services/link/bcpid1305149612/bclid1309585750/bctid1485315206>
- <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/player/news/history-archaeology-news/mexico-ruins-apvin.html>

Teotihuacan

- <http://link.history.com/services/link/bcpid1305149612/bclid1309585750/bctid1483885801>
- http://www.world-mysteries.com/mpl_7.htm
- <http://jqjacobs.net/mesoamerica/teotihuacan.html>
- <http://www.mexperience.co.uk/quide/archaeology/teotihuacan.htm#GetThere>

Yucatán

- <http://www.travelyucatan.com/>
- http://www.tripfilms.com/Travel_Video-v66153-Cancun-Tony_s_Travels_Mayan_Riviera_Pt_1_Trip_Summary-Video.html

Cancún

- <http://www.travelyucatan.com/cancun.php>
- http://www.cancun.bz/cancun_info/cancun_history.php
- http://www.tripfilms.com/Travel_Video-v67147-Cancun-Jungle_Tour_Cancun-Video.html

Xcaret

- http://www.xcaret.com/About_us/History.html

Cenotes

- <http://www.yucatanoday.com/destinations/enq-cenotes.htm>

Chichen Itza

- <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/player/specials/ancient-mysteries/chichen-itza-temples.html>

Mayan Civilization

- <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/08/maya-rise-fall/quqliotta-text>
- <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/08/maya-rise-fall/map-interactive>
- <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/08/maya-rise-fall/maya-quiz-interactive>
- <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/player/specials/ancient-mysteries/chichen-itza-temples.html>
- <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/player/news/history-archaeology-news/apocolypto-consultant-vin.html>

Oaxaca

- <http://oaxaca-travel.com/guide/index.php?lang=us>
- <http://www.oaxacamio.com/>
- <http://www.allaboutoaxaca.com/>

Images

- http://images.google.com/images?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1T4DKUS_enUS241US242&q=oaxaca+mexico&um=1&sa=X&oi=image_result_group&resnum=5&ct=title

Language

- <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/player/news/culture-places-news/mexico-language-apvin.html>

Monte Alban

- <http://www.planeta.com/ecotravel/mexico/oaxaca/montea.html>
- Part 1: <http://www.brightcove.tv/title.jsp?title=769464789&channel=372260593>
- Part 2: <http://www.brightcove.tv/title.jsp?title=769921221&channel=372260593>
- Part 3: <http://www.brightcove.tv/title.jsp?title=769311503&channel=372260593>
- Part 4: <http://www.brightcove.tv/title.jsp?title=769433278&channel=372260593>

Oaxaca City

- *Radish Night: <http://www.planeta.com/ecotravel/mexico/oaxaca/rabanos.html>

Conclusion

Hopefully you have enjoyed the visit to your Imaginary Friend's country and are now planning your next trip!

Do you think you packed well? Too much stuff? Not enough? Did you remember to wear your sunscreen??? :-)

In addition, I hope that you remembered to get a good recipe while you were "traveling" so that we can all share a taste of your adventure!

Good Luck and Happy Travels!

Evaluation Rubric

Score: Exemplary (5) Very Good (4) Satisfactory (3) Needed further development (2)

Total possible: 20 points

Categories:

I. Provided all required information according to instructions in WebQuest

Reflects a beginning level of performance.	2
Reflects development and movement toward mastery of performance.	3
Reflects mastery of performance.	4
Reflects the highest level of performance.	5

II. Information on area's culture was interesting and informative

Reflects a beginning level of performance.	2
Reflects development and movement toward mastery of performance.	3
Reflects mastery of performance.	4
Reflects the highest level of performance.	5

III. List of clothing was complete and in correct Spanish

Reflects a beginning level of performance.	2
Reflects development and movement toward mastery of performance.	3
Reflects mastery of performance.	4
Reflects the highest level of performance.	5

IV. Brochure is a "keeper"!

Reflects a beginning level of performance.	2
Reflects development and movement toward mastery of performance.	3
Reflects mastery of performance.	4
Reflects the highest level of performance.	5

Appendix 2

GRADING CONTRACT

WebQuest Address: <http://zunal.com/webquest.php?user=15494>

This is a grade contract which will determine your grade for your final project. You will be the person who chooses the grade that you will earn for your final project according to the requirements outlined below.

- ***In order to earn an A (100 points) on your project, you must:***
 1. Attend all project meetings on time;
 2. Participate in all project meetings;
 3. Come to all project meetings with your character prepared for that meeting's discussion topic;
 4. Complete the assigned WebQuest thoroughly and accomplish the designated tasks with thought, care, and organization;
 5. Complete a Learning Reflection paper:
 - a. a minimum of 750 words (approx. 3 pages),
 - b. typed, 12 point font
 - c. double spaced
 6. Place all tasks and documents, along with a cover page, into a report folder to turn in on the day of the Final Exam.

*****Completed project DUE no later than Thursday, December 11 at 10:00AM.*****

- ***In order to earn a B (85 points) on your project, you must:***

1. Attend all project meetings on time;
2. Participate in all project meetings;
3. Come to all project meetings with your character prepared for that meeting's discussion topic;
4. Complete the assigned WebQuest thoroughly and accomplish the designated tasks with thought, care, and organization;
5. Complete a Learning Reflection paper:
 - a. a minimum of 500 words (approx. 2 pages)
 - b. typed, 12-point font,
 - c. double spaced
6. Place all tasks and documents, along with a cover page, into a report folder to turn in on the day of the Final Exam.

*****Completed project DUE no later than Thursday, December 11 at 10:00AM.*****

- ***In order to earn a C (70 points) on your project, you must:***

1. Attend all project meetings on time;
2. Participate in all project meetings;
3. Come to all project meetings with your character prepared for that meeting's discussion topic;
4. Complete the assigned WebQuest thoroughly and accomplish the designated tasks with thought, care, and organization;

5. Complete a Learning Reflection paper:
 - a. a minimum of 300 words (no fewer than 3 paragraphs),
 - b. typed, 12-point font,
 - c. double spaced,
6. Place all tasks and documents, along with a cover page, into a report folder to turn in on the day of the Final Exam

*****Completed project DUE no later than Thursday, December 11 at 10:00AM.*****

I understand that when I contract for my grade on this project, **if I do not meet the criteria for the grade I chose, I will receive zero points** for this project and that my grade will not be negotiable after I sign below.

In addition, I understand that this project **takes the place of** my final semester exam.

I choose to contract for _____ points (_____ letter grade) for my Final Project.

Signed below,

Student: _____

Date: _____

Parent: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3

Student Work

I. Cloud, Holly

II. Cole, Michelle

III. Melton, Natalie

IV. Priestly, Jason

V. Vandagriff, Sophia

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