Incorporating a New HIP into Online World Language Courses

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Abstract

High Impact Practices (HIPs), as first described by Kuh (2008), are being used in higher education to improve student learning, engagement, and retention. Linder and Mattison Hayes (2018) state that the evaluation of HIPs has been focused mainly on traditional, undergraduate courses on residential campuses. HIPs have now entered the community college arena. This past year a new HIP, Global and Cultural Awareness, was accepted by the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), the governing body for community colleges across the state. According to the TBR website (n.d.), Global and Cultural Awareness consists of “experiences in which students learn how to communicate across cultures while developing an understanding of global interdependence and how it is influenced by culture…These courses explore difficult differences such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, as well as struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power” (para. 1). One would think that culture is already included in higher education world language (WL) courses, when actually many courses neglect the cultural element (Yagi, 1995). WL courses are an ideal place in which to expose students to cultures and issues that are faced by people groups around the world. In asking WL instructors why they do not include much culture in their lower level WL courses, the Instructional Designer (ID) was told that they either did not know how to teach the culture or did not know how to assess the learning. This article will address how to use existing media from the internet to create activities and problem-based learning (PBL) assessments connecting the Global and Cultural Awareness HIP with traditional vocabulary and grammar themes taught in the lower level WL courses that can be embedded in an LMS.

Introduction

One would think that culture is already included in higher education elementary and intermediate level world language (WL) courses, when actually many of these courses neglect the cultural element. Traditionally, these higher education WL courses focus more on the grammar and vocabulary than culture (Yagi, 1995). By teaching the culture in elementary and intermediate level WL courses, students can develop a global awareness to expand their understanding of their own culture as well as that of other people groups. This past year a new
HIP, Global and Cultural Awareness, was accepted by the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) the governing body for community colleges across the state. My institution began implementing badging for HIPs in the course management system in the Fall 2022 semester allowing advisors and students to see which courses implement HIPs. The focus of and examples used in this article are based on higher education Spanish courses since I am an Associate Professor of Spanish. Only two of my courses were able to be marked as implementing the Global and Cultural Awareness HIP, Spanish for Hospitality Services and Spanish for Healthcare Workers, since those courses were developed by the ID. The other Spanish courses are taught by a variety of instructors with differing implementations of culture resulting in a lack of consistency in the emphasis needed in the area of culture in order to qualify for the HIP designation.

Problem

Traditionally, elementary and intermediate level world language courses in higher education do not have culture integrated in such a way as to create a significant impact on student learning. This ongoing action research project looks at ways to incorporate activities into asynchronous online WL courses to increase the global and cultural awareness elements of the courses.

Literature Review

Brief history of HIPs

While high impact practices (HIPs) have been around for a long time, the name was first mentioned by Kuh in 2008, who looked at learning activities that make an impact on students to increase learning. In this original article, Kuh did not mention online education, but it has since become an item of interest for online education. Originally there were only a few HIPs, but the number continues to grow. Linder and Hayes (2018) slightly adapted the list of HIPs to include first-year seminars, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive classes collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity and global learning, eService learning, internships, and ePortfolios. Their adaptations moved some of the elements into the online course environment. Kuh et al. (2017) state that even ten years later, HIPs continue to grow in popularity and importance for their impact on student learning. Building HIPs into all courses is considered a good practice since it can increase student learning, but it can be challenging in asynchronous online courses.

Description of a new HIP

During the 2021-2022 academic year, TBR approved a new HIP. Global and Cultural Awareness is an off shoot from the diversity and global learning HIP. Because not all students can do a study abroad program and with access to the world via the internet, a different approach was sought that could allow global learning or awareness to be done without traveling to another country. According to the TBR (n.d.) website the minimum definition of the Global and Cultural Awareness HIP is:

Global and cultural awareness courses are credit-bearing experiences in which students learn how to communicate across cultures while developing an understanding of global
interdependence and how it is influenced by culture—understood as the values, beliefs, practices, rituals, and behaviors held by groups of people. These courses explore difficult differences such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, as well as struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. These courses will provide tools to increase students’ critical analysis of the global and intercultural nature of society and practice ethical reasoning to successfully navigate this world. (para. 1)

This new HIP opens up a world of possibilities for WL courses to expand student learning beyond the cookie-cutter, superficial culture traditionally taught, if any culture is taught, in higher education WL courses.

Cultural elements in traditional higher education world language courses

As I went through college level world and classical language studies, the only cultural emphasis came from looking at the literature from the culture in the upper level courses. In the lower level language courses, which is what a majority of higher education non-language major students take to satisfy their world language requirements, there is a bare minimum of culture added to the course, if any. In Spanish courses, the culture is usually just a basic introduction to the different countries that speak Spanish which is included in the textbook. This snapshot view of culture can develop stereotypes and provides a very narrow view of each country or culture (Yagi, 1995). In both situations, there is no real connection made between the culture and the language. This trend has continued to this day although a few instructors have been selecting intermediate level textbooks that are more literature or culture based, which does increase the cultural exposure to a slightly higher level depending on the course design.

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) (2022) encourages the inclusion of culture in all language courses based on their 5 C’s (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities). While several of these are interrelated, the focus on Cultures ties most directly to this HIP. According to ACTFL (2022), the Cultures section is described as “Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the cultures studied”. All three of these elements, investigate, explain, and reflect, are important to the Global and Cultural Awareness HIP. The main area that may be difficult for elementary level students could be using the target language in these activities. While not all language students are able to use the language well enough to reflect on the relationship between these cultural aspects using the target language, they can still reflect in English. This would allow for a scaling of target language usage in the activities depending on the level of the course.

Why cultural emphasis should be included in higher education world language courses

Culture, as defined by Yagi (1995), is “beliefs, values, perception, and attitudes” (p. 6) of people groups. Studies have shown that language is an important part of culture and cultural identity (Abiog & David, 2020; Rashidi & Meihami, 2017). For students to be able to better understand the language, they must also understand the culture by exploring the significant aspects of the culture and comparing and contrasting it with their own culture.
Methods

As an Associate Professor of Spanish, I have researched ways to implement cultural activities and projects that incorporate the culture, for elementary level and specialty area Spanish courses, and both the language and the culture, for intermediate level Spanish courses. These activities were then incorporated into the web classes that I designed.

Discussion

Including culture in a WL course must be more than just having the students read the cultural blubs in the textbooks. Students need to be exposed to the specific issues that are alive and active in the culture of the language. They need to be able to see or hear about more than the tourist areas, music, and food. With the use of the internet and immersive technologies, IDs or WL instructors can now bring the world to the students. Unfortunately, discussions over the years with higher education WL faculty revealed to me that many faculty do not know how to teach and/or assess culture if it is included in a WL course. It is my hope, that this article can be a starting point for why and how culture can be included in a higher education WL course to increase the level to a point where it is able to be badged as a HIP course.

Activities

Activities that promote language learning as well as global and cultural awareness can take many forms, from basic discussion boards requiring some research into authentic materials to project-based learning (Nguyen, 2021), to authentic scenario video projects (Nikitina, 2011). For the research activities, some training is required, especially if the students will be doing the research in the target language. Currently, a search can be done on the internet of other countries by using “site:(country code)”. For example, by typing “site:mx la comida” in the search bar, one would be directed to food sites on Mexico’s internet. This allows students to access authentic materials from the different countries. A list of country codes can be found at https://www.worldstandards.eu/other/tlds/. Some activities that I have used include short, directed items like discussion boards and audio recordings submitted to a drop box to more detailed semester long projects. See examples below.

Discussion boards – These can vary according to vocabulary, but should require the students to dig deeper either in the target language or in English. Once the vocabulary has been presented to the class, then students can search for information or information can be provided by the ID or instructor. The following sample allows students to explore different naming traditions and compare them to their traditions. A basic grading rubric is included in the appendix.

Sample from Elementary Spanish I: After reading the section in the textbook and watching the teaching video on the culture of last names in Spanish-speaking countries, do a web search to find out more about the history of last names on the internet. Create a discussion board post giving the following information: 1. What is one interesting thing that you found about last names from your web search? Include the link to the website. 2. How does this tie to the culture of last names in Spanish-speaking countries? 3. How are the previous items similar to/different than the culture of last names in the United States? Once you have answered these questions, read your classmates’ postings and comment
on at least two of them. Remember that your comments must contribute to the conversation and show that you have read their posting.

Audio recordings – These can also vary according to the vocabulary and grammar, but should require the students to do some research to expose them to authentic materials and allow them to practice the target language. These can be submitted via the LMS drop box or another submission method. The following sample, while it does not ask for a comparison, it does expose them to information and authentic materials from the target culture. A basic grading rubric is included in the appendix.

Sample from Intermediate Spanish I: After watching the teaching video and reading the pages in the textbook over the vocabulary for technology, do a web search for a newspaper article in Spanish from a Spanish-speaking country that discusses technology use in that country. Create an audio file (1-minute minimum) of you reading the article in Spanish. Then post the audio file and the internet link to the article in the drop box.

Project based learning or assessment has been found to increase cultural competency and awareness (Nguyen, 2021). This is especially beneficial for higher level or specialty area courses where longer, semester long assignments or cultural projects can be used to integrate global and cultural awareness into the courses. The sample project below would require multiple submissions and assessments throughout the semester.

Sample from Intermediate Spanish II: Brief description of assignment – Each student selects a different Spanish-speaking country as their point of focus for the entire semester. Each chapter (4) covered in this semester long course covers a different topic. For each chapter, students are required to find specific information on their country from authentic sources. This allows the students to practice their research and language skills. This part of the project is submitted to four discussion boards where the students share their information, including web links to information and compare/contrast information from their countries with other country information posted. At the end of the semester, students create a 5-minute audio/visual recording presenting information about their country in the target language. The presentation must include at least one item from each of the discussion board postings as well as any additional information that they want to include. Specific grammatical elements from each chapter are also required to be used in the presentation. The final project is posted in a discussion board or similar site where their classmates then are required to watch each presentation and make comments on the information presented by choosing one element from the presentation and compare/contrast it either with their presentation country or the United States.

For the specialty courses I designed, a final cultural project is required and is usually completed in English since there is a separate final oral project that assesses linguistic and oral competence. A basic grading rubric is included in the appendix.

Sample from Spanish for Hospitality Services: Throughout the class, students are required to read and respond to (compare/contrast) cultural elements that are included in the course either in the textbook or the teaching videos. This final cultural assignment requires students to choose one area and pursue it deeper. Instructions for the Final Cultural Project: In this project, you will combine everything that you learned this semester about the culture in Spanish for Hospitality Services. Choose one of the fields
covered in this class (restaurant/kitchen operations, housekeeping operations, engineering operations, or human resources) and contact a restaurant, hotel, or other organization in your area that employs Spanish speakers to request to schedule an interview with one of the supervisors/managers who works with the Spanish-speaking employees. This interview can be via phone, an online conference system or in person. Before the interview, create a list of at least 10 questions, in English, about the cultural items that you have studied to ask in the interview about their work at the organization. You might also want to ask some open-ended questions about how the supervisor/manager feels about working with Spanish-speaking employees. Take notes on the responses and record the interview. Be sure to inform the person that you will be recording the interview for class before the interview begins. After the interview, type up a document that includes information on the type of organization in which the person works, the date and time of the interview, the first name of the person you interviewed, your questions, and a summary of the responses given. You also need to include a summary of your thoughts on the interview. Also consider the following questions: Did the supervisor/manager’s views match with what you learned about the Hispanic culture in class? If yes, how was it the same? If no, how was it different? Submit the document, in the Final Cultural Project Assignment.

Conclusions

In my WL courses using these activities promoting global and cultural awareness, a majority of the student responses have been positive. The students appreciated the chance to be more immersed in the culture of the target language. Some even reported that this focus on global and cultural awareness was their favorite part of the course. In courses with live sessions, the students reported that the days that incorporated more of the culture were days that they wanted to be sure that they were present in class. The students from the Intermediate Spanish II course who completed the semester long project reported that they felt that they had learned more about the language and culture and felt a genuine connection to and understanding of the culture. There was also a noted increase in student participation in these activities and days.

As technology continues to advance and more applications and websites are created, more opportunities are created for students to interact with the world. This article only presents a brief view of some activities that can be used with free resources and that can be created inside the LRM system to expand student learning. There are many more ways to bring the world into the classroom using various other applications and websites. In general, an effort needs to be made in higher education WL courses to bring more cultural elements into courses to engage students and expand their thinking about issues and concerns in other cultures to increase their connection with the language and culture that they are studying.
Resources


## Appendix

### Sample scoring rubrics

For discussion boards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Meets expectations</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Not acceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion</td>
<td>5 pts. – Submission includes all of the assignment components and meets or exceeds all requirements indicated in the instructions.</td>
<td>4 pts. – Submission includes most of the assignment components and meets requirements indicated in the instructions.</td>
<td>3 pts. – Submission is missing some components and/or does not fully meet the requirements indicated in the instructions.</td>
<td>0-2 pts. – Submission is missing essential components and/or does not address the requirements indicated in the instructions or does not complete the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensibility</td>
<td>3 pts. – Message is clear and contains appropriate level of complexity in syntax.</td>
<td>2 pts. – Message is mostly clear but confined to simpler sentences or structures.</td>
<td>1 pt. – Message is not clear and contains basic types of errors which affect comprehensibility.</td>
<td>0 pts. – Message is largely incomprehensible or does not complete the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical quality</td>
<td>2 pts. – No grammatical or spelling errors.</td>
<td>1.5 pts. - One to two grammatical and/or spelling errors.</td>
<td>1 pt. – Three to four grammatical and/or spelling errors.</td>
<td>0 pts. – five or more grammatical and/or spelling errors or does not complete the assignment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For audio recordings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Meets expectations</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Not acceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion</td>
<td>2 pts. – Completes all elements of the assignment.</td>
<td>1.5 pts. – Completes most elements of the assignment.</td>
<td>1 pt. – Is missing two or more elements of the assignment.</td>
<td>0 pts. – Does not follow instructions or does not complete the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Exemplary</td>
<td>Meets expectations</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Not acceptable</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Technical quality</strong></td>
<td>5 pts. – No grammatical errors.</td>
<td>4 pts. – one or two grammatical errors.</td>
<td>2-3 pts. – Three to four grammatical errors.</td>
<td>0-1 pts. – five or more grammatical errors or does not complete assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary</strong></td>
<td>3 pts. – Uses a wide variety of vocabulary correctly; no errors.</td>
<td>2 pts. – Uses a variety of vocabulary; one or two errors in usage.</td>
<td>1 pt. – Uses only basic vocabulary; three to four errors in usage.</td>
<td>0 pts. – Uses limited vocabulary; five or more errors in usage or does not complete assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pronunciation and fluency</strong></td>
<td>5 pts. – No pronunciation errors; smooth delivery with 0-1 pauses/repeats</td>
<td>3-4 pts. – One to two pronunciation errors; fair delivery with one to two pauses/repeats.</td>
<td>2-3 pts. – Three to four pronunciation errors; rough delivery with several long pauses and/or repeats.</td>
<td>0-1 pts. – Excessive pronunciation (5 or more) errors that impede understanding; very rough delivery or does not complete assignment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For final cultural project:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Meets expectations</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Not acceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>9-10 pts. – Organized as a coherent, thoughtful essay. Language and tone are professional and appropriate to the topic</td>
<td>7-8 pts. – Organized mostly as a coherent essay. Language choices and tone are mostly consistent and professional.</td>
<td>5-6 pts. – Organization is basic, such as a summary or list of points. Tone is mostly professional.</td>
<td>0-4 pts. – Little or no apparent organization. Tone is unprofessional or no assignment submitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description of the interviewee</strong></td>
<td>18-20 pts. – Student write-up shows an exceptionally vibrant description of the interviewee and his/her roles.</td>
<td>15-17 pts. – Student includes brief bio of interviewee and describes his/her roles in a few sentences.</td>
<td>10-14 pts. – Student only states the name of the interviewee and his/her role.</td>
<td>0-9 pts. – Student does not include any information about the adult interviewed or no assignment submitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the interview</td>
<td>18-20 pts. – Summary of the interview presents an excellent record of the answers to all of the questions in the instructions.</td>
<td>15-17 pts. – Summary of the interview presents the answers to all of the questions in the instructions.</td>
<td>10-14 pts. – Summary of the interview presents the answers to more than half of the questions in the instructions.</td>
<td>0-9 pts. – Summary of the interview presents the answers to less than half of the questions in the instructions or no assignment submitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of experience and learning on cultural aspects</td>
<td>36-40 pts. – Student fully reflects on and describes in appropriate detail insights from the interview to illuminate the cultural differences.</td>
<td>32-35 pts. – Student adequately reflects on and describes sufficient details from the interview to illustrate the cultural differences.</td>
<td>28-31 pts. – Student only partially reflects on and describes only minimal details from the interview to illustrate the cultural differences.</td>
<td>0-27 pts. – Student does not reflect on and does not describe sufficient details from the interview to illustrate the cultural differences or no assignment submitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar and spelling</td>
<td>9-10 pts. – Assignment has no grammar or spelling errors.</td>
<td>7-8 pts. – Assignment has one grammar or spelling error.</td>
<td>5-6 pts. – Assignment has two grammar or spelling errors.</td>
<td>0-4 pts. – Assignment has more than two grammar or spelling errors or no assignment submitted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>