

## **FROM PROFESSORS TO ASSESSORS? ANALYSIS OF THE SPANISH CURRICULUM GENTE AND THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY**

¿De docentes a evaluadores? Un análisis del currículo de Español GENTE y el impacto de la tecnología

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### **Abstract**

In recent years, the number of students of Spanish language in the US has grown exponentially. There is a need for high quality Spanish curricula that can create intercultural competent world citizens that are also independent and active learners. The use of technology in language education has created unlimited new opportunities, but also many challenges.

From September to December 2015 the author worked as a part-time adjunct instructor in the Spanish Language Department of Romance, German, and Slavic Languages and Literatures at The George Washington University. In addition, during that period of time the author was also a researcher at the Ed.D. doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction at the Graduate School of Education & Human Development at The George Washington University in Washington D.C.

This paper analyzes the Spanish curriculum GENTE taught by the author while he was a Spanish language instructor and relates it with the concepts of several Curriculum Theories and technology in education.

First, the main ideas of the curriculum are introduced, and then they are analyzed through different lenses: particular theoretical positions, specific models of curriculum and specific constructs (language, culture, etc.) Second, based on the analysis and critique of the curriculum, the author discusses which elements are visible and which ones are missing from the selected curriculum. To end with, final conclusions and further research questions are stated.

**Keywords:** curriculum, instruction, language teaching, Spanish, The George Washington University

### **Resumen**

En los últimos años, el número de estudiantes de idioma español en EE.UU. ha crecido exponencialmente. Existe una necesidad de currículos de español de alta calidad que puedan crear ciudadanos globales, que además de ser competentes interculturalmente también sean estudiantes independientes y activos.

De Septiembre a Diciembre de 2015 el autor trabajó como profesor ayudante en el Departamento de español de la Universidad *The George Washington* y también fue investigador en el Ed.D. Programa doctoral en *Curriculum and Instruction* en la Escuela de Grado de Educación de dicha universidad en Washington D.C.

Este artículo analiza el currículum GENTE que el autor utilizó como libro de texto principal cuando fue profesor en dicho departamento y lo relaciona con diversos conceptos pertenecientes a teorías sobre currículum y tecnología en educación.

En primer lugar, se introducen las ideas principales del currículum y a continuación son analizadas según diversas perspectivas: teórica, modelos específicos de currículum y construcciones (idioma, cultura, etc.) En segundo lugar, basándonos en el análisis y crítica del currículum, el autor debate qué elementos son visibles y cuáles están ausentes de dicho currículum. Para terminar, se presentan una serie de conclusiones finales y preguntas futuras de investigación.

**Palabras Clave:** currículum, metodología, enseñanza de idiomas, español, *The George Washington University*

## **1. FROM PROFESSORS TO ASSESSORS? ANALYSIS OF THE SPANISH CURRICULUM GENTE AND THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY**

This Spanish curriculum *GENTE* was chosen mainly because it is a coherent model and representative of the Spanish curricula used in higher education in the United States of America. This piece of curriculum is a good example of a Spanish task-and content-based blended program. In addition, I have used it in my course as a language instructor at The George Washington University in the fall 2015 term; therefore I gained more practical knowledge and insights of *GENTE*. Besides, language learning and teaching is one of my main personal and professional interests.

## **2. THE CURRICULUM GENTE: MAIN STRUCTURE AND PHILOSOPHY**

The curriculum *GENTE* is articulated in two main ways: horizontally (across sections of courses with same goals) and vertically (from level to level of language instruction; from language program to major/minor program). The Spanish curriculum (Delafuente, Martin & Sans, 2015) is divided into elementary, intermediate and advanced.

The Spanish curriculum *GENTE* links goals, content, instruction, and assessment; has a solid and consistent theoretical foundation across levels; incorporates language and content at all levels of the curriculum and considers real-world needs of students. Language is much more than grammar. Language learning is a developmental process, not an outcome. Language use (interaction) is the driving force for language development (from learning to talk/write, to talking/writing to learn). Task- and content-based approaches in *GENTE* promote: contextualized language use, reflection and analysis of language/culture, critical awareness of

language and culture, deeper processing of structures (internalization learning).

### 2.1 Main Goals Of The Curriculum

The two main goals are (1) acquiring functional and communicative proficiency in Spanish –oral and written-, and (2) acquiring cultural literacy and cross-cultural awareness.

### 2.2 Unit Selection And Objectives

For this paper, four units from *GENTE* (Delafuente et al., 2015) of a total of twenty were selected:

Unit	Communicative objectives	Cultural objectives
4	Talking about needs and obligations. Talking about price of products and services. Describing and valuing products.	Argentina Hispanics in the United States
6	Greetings and introductions. Using <i>tú</i> and <i>usted</i> . Giving directions. Talking about work qualities and abilities.	El Salvador Hispanics in the United States
11	Talking about past and circumstances surrounding them. Relating biographical data: events and circumstances.	Nicaragua Hispanics in the United States
17	Narrating stories. Situating events in time.	Bolivia Hispanics in the United States

The units chosen are the most representative for the objectives of this study. Units 4 and 6 are relevant to conduct research about the way the cultural component and regional influence is presented. Unit 4 is about Argentina, a country who has a strong local variation in Spanish language. Unit 6 is about El Salvador, which has the largest population of immigrants in Washington DC. Besides, in Unit 4 the communicative goals seem to be “real world needs”. It is important for this study to analyze how local culture is presented to students in these two units.

To end with, units 11 and 17 have similar grammatical goals (past tense) but are taught in a different sequence, which shows evidence of a spiraling curriculum. (Bruner, 1960)

### 3. CURRICULUM AS A PRODUCT

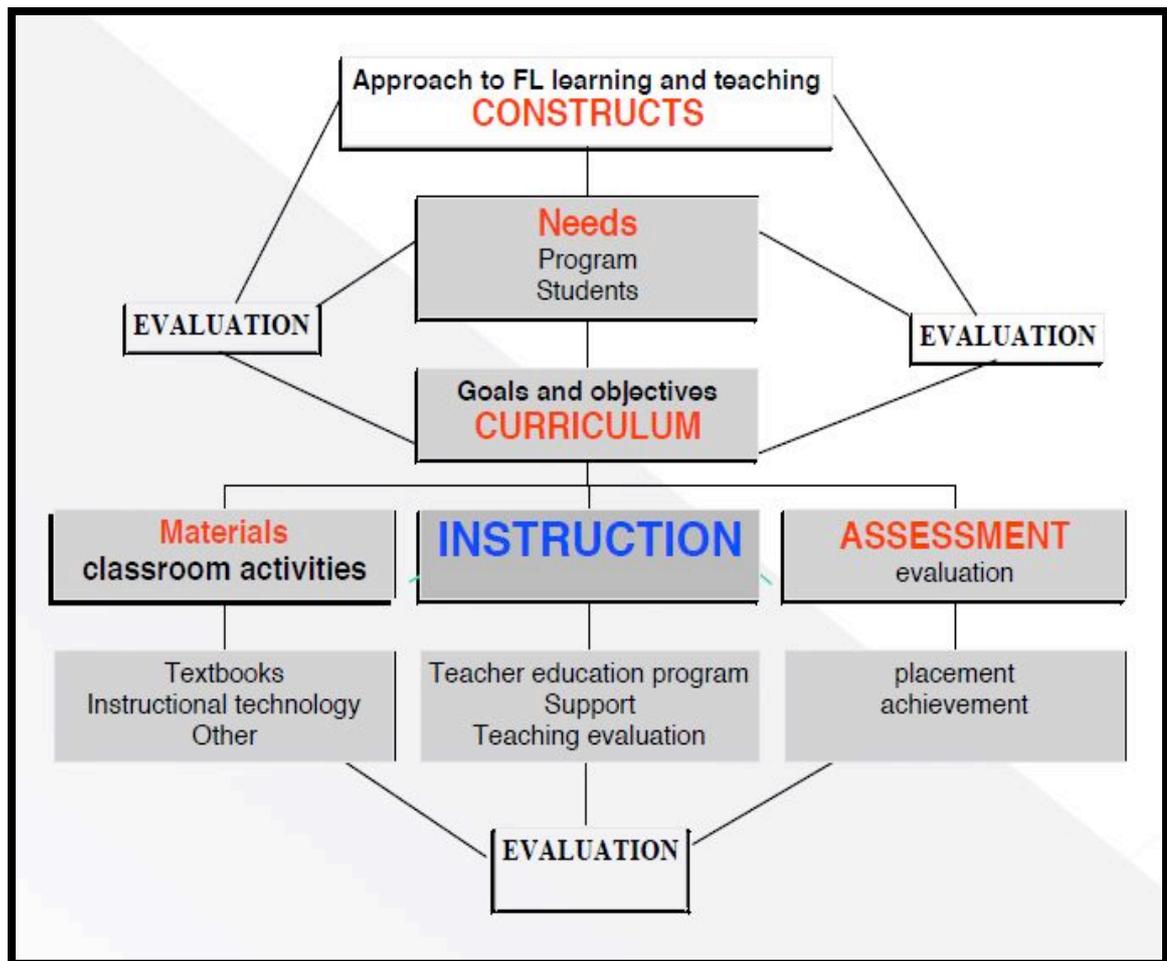


Figure 1 Delafuente et al. (2015) Diagram of Spanish curriculum GENTE.

If we carefully look at the diagram of the Spanish curriculum GENTE, we can see that the curriculum is located at the center, linking goals and objectives. It seems that this curriculum could be seen as a product (Tyler, 1949). The Spanish department needs a curriculum that is structured and able to be scaled to different levels. At The George Washington University, the Spanish department has several levels: beginner (SPAN 1001, 1002), intermediate (SPAN 1003, 1004) and advanced (SPAN 2005, 2006). Therefore Tyler's model is suitable for this need.

The Spanish curriculum GENTE follows a structured guide that consists of several processes and there is a clear link between objectives and experiences to the function of evaluation. This guide is specific enough yet also vague enough to be adapted to all the different Spanish levels.

We should analyze four basic principles of Tyler's approach that are visible in this curriculum:

#### 3.1 Defining Appropriate Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are present and are divided in two types: communicative and cultural.

### **3.2 Establishing Useful Learning Experiences**

This principle is also visible in the curriculum as it uses adequate classroom materials (textbook, multimedia, online, etc.) and also by providing students with a wide range of different classroom activities that are relevant to the context related to target language.

### **3.3 Organizing Learning Experiences To Have A Maximum Cumulative Effect**

All the units have communicative goals that are achieved through tasks and collaborative activities. Some of the grammar concepts are introduced in several units during the curriculum. Also, at the end of each unit, in the writing section, content is built from previous units and expanded further in future units. That gives the curriculum the cumulative effect mentioned.

### **3.4 Evaluating The Curriculum And Revising Those Aspects That Did Not Prove To Be Effective**

There is evaluation and assessment in all levels of the curriculum: language teaching and learning constructs, program and students needs, goals and objectives of the curriculum and instruction. One of roles of the student is to be observed and evaluated. This curriculum has a continuous assessment plan to meet this goal. But it is not clear the part of how to revise the aspects that did not prove effective. It is not directly stated in the diagram or the introduction, who, how and when these adjustments shall be made if required.

## **4. ANALYZING THE CURRICULUM THROUGH THE LENS OF UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN.**

The "Big Ideas" of Understanding by Design UbD (Wiggins & McTigue, 1998) might not be present in the Spanish curriculum with that name. One of the main ideas, backward design, means that in order to begin, one must start at the end. Plans need to be well aligned with goals and objectives in order to be effective. The stages involved are:

### **4.1 Identify Desired Results**

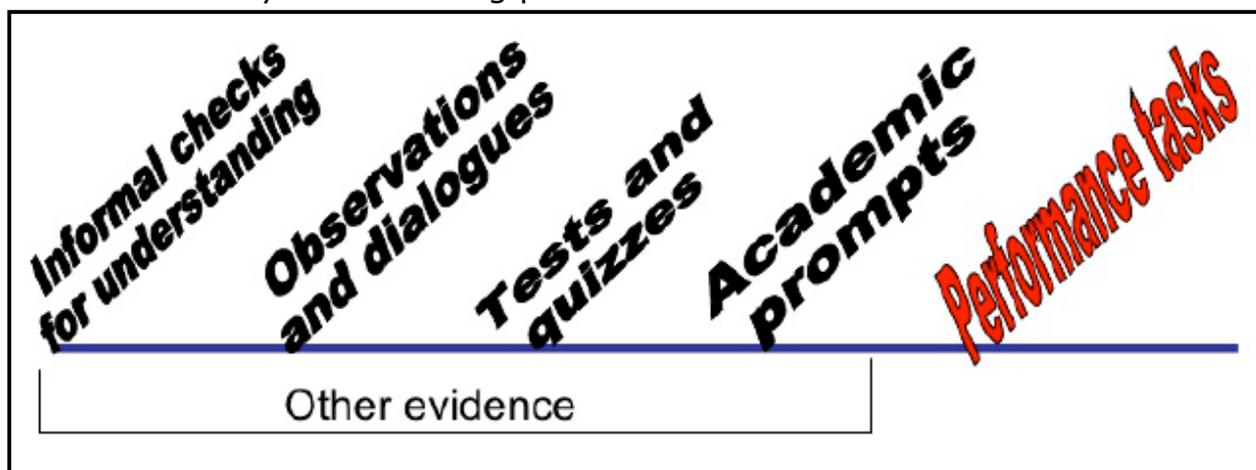
What is that teachers want students of Spanish to understand and know and be able to do? This is visible in the communicative and cultural objective of the curriculum of each unit.

### **4.2 Determine Acceptable Evidence**

How will teachers check that students of Spanish know what teachers want them to know? There are extensive assessment points in the curriculum, for example: end of unit tests, midterm exams, computer exercises using Pearson's "My Spanish Lab", graded blogs, oral recorded exams using *Voicethread*, written homework from the textbook, Blackboard online tutorials and graded exercises, etc.

The problem is that in GENTE the concept of "continuum assessment" was misunderstood. Continuum assessment doesn't mean that the

curriculum has to consist of a repetition of a series of tedious tests that don't give enough information about the student's progress. Instead, less frequent but more specific test at key points in the curriculum should be more effective in assessing student's progress than the current system. Teachers and students following the Spanish curriculum at GWU often feel overwhelmed by the assessing process.



**Figure 2 Continuum of assessment in the curriculum according to UbD**

The Spanish curriculum of *GENTE* uses multiple assessment methods.

In-class participation (2 grades) 6%	Attendance (1 grade) 4%
Homework (4 grades) 10% (MySpanishLab: 3%; all other: 7%)	Blogs (2 grades) 15%
Oral tasks (4 grades) 10%	Written tests (4 grades) 15%
Oral exam (midterm) 10%	Oral exam (final) 15%
Final written exam 15%	TOTAL Grade 100 %

As we can see in this table, 80% of the final grade is based on demonstrated language proficiency (oral and written). There are several tests and performance tasks (oral tasks, blogs).

### 4.3 Plan Learning Experiences

What do teachers need to do in the classroom to prepare them for the assessment? The curriculum facilitates the main goals by (a) allowing students to develop communication processes in the classroom – providing students with opportunities to speak and write Spanish in a variety of contexts–, (b) exposing students to the necessary contents for communication (grammar and vocabulary) in and out of the classroom – independent work, and (c) exposing students to relevant cultural content (media and printed form).

For example, in Unit 6 the main communicative goals are: greetings and introductions, using *tú* and *usted*, giving directions, talking about work qualities and abilities. According to UbD, before we plan the activities and lessons, we must plan the assessment (Spanish grammar and unit tests). What then logically follows is an orderly progression of activities. We want the students to learn grammar to speak and write in any

situation for maximum effect independently. Therefore we should design the unit backwards from communication challenges and problems we want students to be able to solve on their own. All these activities are found in the units.

Although there are not essential questions visible in the curriculum, they could be inferred from some Big Ideas included in the curriculum, such as literature, culture and topics related to the human condition. In Unit 17 the work of famous Bolivian writer, Victor Montoya, is introduced by asking students to read a passage of one of his novels and then identify the basic aspects shared by narratives in all languages (orientation, story line with a problem and a resolution and finally some sort of conclusion or reflection). Essential questions are important questions that will reoccur throughout student's lives that help them make sense of Big Ideas through questioning and making decisions. These

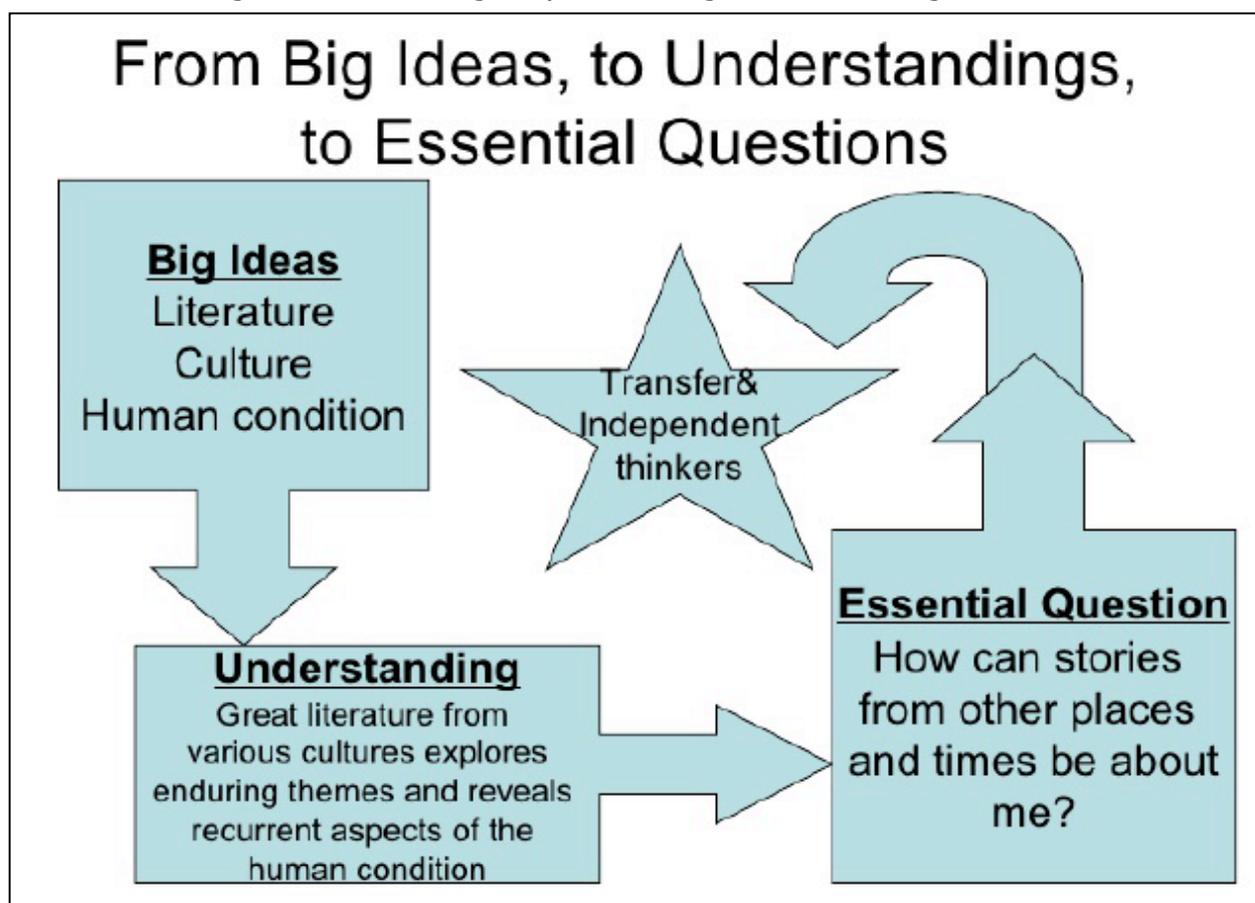


Figure 3 Example of part of the Spanish curriculum GENTE using questions should engage and motivate students.

## 5. CURRICULUM AS A PROCESS AND THE NEW ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE TEACHER

Spanish curriculum GENTE is task-based and includes multiple communicative activities. Curriculum is not a physical thing – but rather the interaction of teachers, students and knowledge. Curriculum could be seen as a process. The Spanish Language Program does not approach grammar in the traditional way (working with isolated linguistic structures

where meaning is ignored). Rather, the curriculum approaches grammar instruction emphasizing a form-meaning connection, i.e. by exposing students to grammar within contexts and through communicative tasks. Grammar rules are explicit to adult language learners. For this reason, students need to study the grammar explanations in their textbook, self-assess their understanding, and apply this explicit knowledge by doing the assigned online exercises. There are two days in each lesson cycle when the class will focus on grammar understanding and grammar use in context. The instructor will clarify/explain further what students did not understand after their independent work; then the class will focus on tasks where students will process and use the target grammar in context.

We should distinguish explicit and acquired knowledge. For example in units 11 and 17:

Explicit knowledge: "I know the imperfect and preterit tenses; I know the rules that determine when to use one or the other tense in Spanish".

Acquired knowledge: "I can use the imperfect and preterit tenses fairly well when I tell a story". (Delafuente et al., 2015)

The objective is to help students with the first type of knowledge and facilitate the best conditions for the second type (student's ultimate goal) in and out of the classroom.

For Wiggins & McTigue (1998), teachers are designers, assessors; the role of the teacher is also that of a cooperator and a collaborator. Teachers are coaches of understanding, not mere purveyors of content knowledge, skill, or activity. In *GENTE* it is visible in the way grammar is taught. Students prepare at home the concepts and the teacher creates the conditions in the classroom for students to produce in the target language, constantly checking for successful meaning making and transfer by the learner. The teacher's role expands from solely a "sage on the stage" to a facilitator of meaning making and a coach giving feedback and advice about how to use content effectively. Obviously another important point in the UbD framework is to recognize that factual knowledge and skills are not taught for their own sake, but as a means to larger ends. For example: in unit 11 and 17 the past tense contrast in Spanish is taught for the large end of being able to tell stories and biographies, not just for the grammar.

## **6. CURRICULUM AS PRAXIS.**

Praxis, as contrasted to 'theory', is often depicted as the act of doing something. From theory can be derived general principles. In *GENTE's* language curriculum, theory could be seen as Spanish grammar rules, phonetics and vocabulary. These in turn can be applied to the problems of practice. For example in unit 4 expressing necessity, mastering numbers and colors are the communicative objectives, and the activities involved are: planning a trip to a city in Argentina, going shopping to a handicraft store and planning a party. In unit 6 the topic was finding a new roommate for an apartment. Theory is 'real' knowledge of the language while practice is the application of that knowledge to solve problems.

*GENTE* approaches the concept of “learn by doing” (Dewey, 1916). Dewey's approach is student-centered, placing the emphasis of learning on the needs and interests of the student.

Ideally, interest in the material to be learned is the best stimulus to learning, rather than such external goals as grades or later competitive advantage. In an age of increasing spectatorship, motives for learning must be kept from going passive... they must be based as much as possible upon the arousal of interest in what there is to be learned, and they must be kept broad and diverse in expression. (Bruner, 1960)

In *GENTE* the *tarea* (final task) is the central element in every chapter in which students use the contents of the previous sections to carry out a collaborative task. The focus is on free output that could be based on student's interests. But this activity is also controlled by the teacher, shifting from an open free format to a more controlled one in the end. Also, it is not clear whether the selection of the topics really represent student's interests that, according to Dewey and Bruner, are essential.

## **7. CURRICULUM AS A POLITICAL TOOL.**

The curriculum *GENTE* encourages students to think critically, to think-in-action. It includes, for example, two activities of blog writing, where students are asked to write in Spanish about topics such as the environment, social justice, world commerce, indigenous rights, etc. Understanding is revealed when students autonomously make sense of and transfer their learning through authentic performance. Students must first write their blogs and then publish them on the Internet for everyone to see. They are also asked to comment on them. Their political ideas could potentially affect any reader in the world. This is an example of curriculum as a political tool.

In Unit 11, history of Nicaragua is introduced, describing past military dictatorships and the revolution that happened in the 1960's. Afterwards, students are asked to use historical and political facts to write a narration in the target grammar (past tense in Spanish).

In Unit 17, there is a reading about president of Bolivia and his historical significance being the first indigenous person to become president. Students are asked to compare indigenous rights from Bolivia's constitution with Native American rights in the US Constitution.

In Unit 6, a text from an NGO from El Salvador that helps poor people access housing is presented to students. They have to analyze it and think about its political and social implications.

In Unit 4 there is not seen any topic that could be considered as political, as the main focus is on shopping.

To sum up, 3 out of 4 of the selected units have a political content of some sort, but further research should be done about the concept of this curriculum as a political tool.

## **8. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN THE CURRICULUM**

Educators in the world have realized that teaching language structures without teaching the culture is not enough to create culturally competent individuals. The same problem happens when we try to teach culture in the classroom and teachers do not know how to use the appropriate language. Should we teach language using culture or should we teach culture using language? Culture plays an intrinsic role in foreign language development.

People express facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge about the world that other people share. In other words, language expresses cultural reality. This people do not only express experience but they also create experience through language. (Claire J. Kramsch, 1993)

We should focus attention on cultural knowledge not just as a necessary aspect of communicative competence, but as an educational objective in its own right as an end, as well as a means, of language learning. It is clear that language teaching is always to some extent culture teaching. When the traditional content-based idea of culture pedagogy is abandoned, that means that 'language' and 'cultural context' are inseparable. Possibilities open up for other topics and discourses, other contexts. Learners develop cultural awareness within the context of language learning, helping them understand the intrinsic role that culture plays in language development.

Every unit in GENTE includes relevant and authentic cultural input (both visual and written), providing contextualized cultural content throughout the chapter that reinforces the connections between language and culture. For example, in unit 4 a map of Argentina is provided; in unit 6 several historical and cultural landmarks of El Salvador are introduced; unit 11 has an introduction of Mr. Augusto Cesar Sandino, a historical figure in Nicaragua; unit 17 archaeological Inca's cultures in the Andes Mountains of Bolivia are introduced in readings.

### **8.1 The Complexity Of Teaching Spanish Language**

Teachers and students should be aware that 'Spanish language', 'culture' and 'the nation' where it is spoken are historically constructed ideas each with its own conceptual history and significance. Spain and Latin America had and still have a complex relationship. There are a lot of cultural differences between Cuba, Mexico, Argentina, El Salvador and Spain, for example.

Not only most learners at the George Washington University have little prior understanding of the Spanish-speaking cultures but also they often do not have an objective awareness of their own cultural precepts. The *Nuestra gente* (Our people) section gives learners the opportunity to reflect on and make comparisons within the Hispanic world, as well as within their own context. For example, in unit 17 students are asked to compare indigenous rights in Bolivia with Native American rights in the

United States. By doing this, learners develop an increased cross-cultural awareness.

In addition, teaching Spanish language faces a 'national identity' dilemma for teachers and also for students. Spanish language is the official language in more than 20 countries and has influence all over the world. At GWU Spanish department, 80% of the instructors are from Spain, and there are a few from Ecuador, Venezuela, Mexico and the US. Students will be exposed mainly to standard Spanish accent in the instructor. We should further examine the content of reading and audio materials designed.

Every unit of the *GENTE* curriculum is content based and culturally oriented, revolving around a specific Spanish-speaking country. For example, unit 4 is Argentina and unit 17 is Bolivia. Historical facts and cultural content relevant to different countries are introduced to students. But for example, *Guinea Ecuatorial*, a Spanish speaking country from Africa, is left out from the curriculum. The influence of Spanish in the Philippines or in Brazil is also missing in *GENTE*.

One of the main shortcomings of this curriculum is the lack of appropriate contextualized language for different Spanish speaking countries. Specific examples of different regional uses and variations of Spanish language in different countries are missing from the curriculum.

*GENTE* doesn't mention to students Spanish language regional variations in grammar, vocabulary or phonetics. For example in Unit 4, dedicated to Argentina, in the vocabulary list section, the word for 'skirt' is listed as '*la falda*' (used in Spain) instead of '*la pollera*' (used in Argentina). Also, there is no reference to the use of "vos" instead of "tu" as subject pronoun and the second to third person change in verbs is a characteristic of the local language in some countries such as Argentina or Central America. In addition, there are no examples given about social conventions or customs specific to different countries, such as greetings, introductions, protocol, etc. Important aspects of regional culture such as folkloric music and dance are not introduced, food and culinary variations are mentioned briefly but not with enough contexts.

One of the big contradictions of this curriculum is that it uses standard Spanish from Spain to introduce cultural content related to other Spanish speaking countries, without further explaining the regional and local variations of the language. It assumes that students would be able to communicate with any native speaker regardless the country of origin using standard Spanish from Spain. The outcome is that students would be able to use Spanish language from Spain to talk about other Spanish-speaking countries.

Therefore, the learning outcomes of the curriculum do not completely match the communicative and cultural objectives (sometimes in category and sometimes only in content).

## **8.2 The Dilemma About Teaching Contextualized Spanish Language**

On the one hand, "we have the necessity for language teaching to be as realistic as possible to encourage contact with environments in which the target language is used, including first-language contexts" (Risager, 2007). This is what we can call the use of "authentic language materials" that include "authentic contexts" and use "authentic language". Some of the curriculum audio recordings from unit 17, for example, are made by native speakers (actors) in a speed too slow to seem natural. But some of the videos taken directly from online news or interviews are authentic materials. I believe that *GENTE* curriculum should only use authentic materials.

On the other hand, there is the necessity for the aim of language teaching to be so clear-cut and unambiguous that learning is not complicated by sheer confusion about what is required. Homogeneity must be created to optimize learning. Language teaching must be based on (one of) the existing (national) standard norms for the target language, especially as far as the written language is concerned. *GENTE* curriculum chose Spanish from Spain. Nevertheless, based on the fact that this curriculum is specifically designed for American students in Washington DC, there should be more content about language variations in spoken Spanish from the American continent. The population of Spanish speakers and Latino population in the US is far larger than Spanish from Spain. For example, in Washington DC most of the Spanish speaking population comes from El Salvador, in New York City, from Puerto Rico, in California and Texas, from Mexico, etc. Therefore, it would be more useful for students to include in the curriculum more authentic materials, especially in oral form, that relate to all those countries.

## **8.3 Final conclusions and further research questions**

The *GENTE* curriculum has elements of the Tyler model, linking objectives and goals in a structured way, establishing and organizing useful learning experiences and evaluating the curriculum. It can be scaled and can be seen as a product. In addition, it has elements of Understanding by Design and it can also be seen as a process that follows a task based approach. Moreover it is also curriculum as praxis, with real life applications. Furthermore it could be seen as a political tool, because it has several tasks and blog writing about political matters. In the cultural aspect, *GENTE* integrates culture and language in search of the ultimate goal to provide students with the tools to be able to communicate in the target language while being culturally aware and functional in a foreign environment. However it doesn't include regional variations of the Spanish language or other forms of literature other than prose.

The curriculum focuses too much on assessment, and not enough on learning. Professors have the risk of becoming just 'assessors'. Further research should be done about how to make assessment more efficient and focused. Students have the risk of going from 'active learners' to

'hyperactive learners' due to the excessive workload of the curriculum. Would a decrease in the quantity of the workload and an increase in the quality of the assessment improve the learning outcomes?

Regarding the integration of culture in the curriculum, we can use this sentence: "Culture shapes our mind" (Bruner, 1996) to stress the importance of culture in language teaching. In the curriculum in the selection of some literary pieces from some relevant authors only narrative forms are present. In the literature part, other forms of literature should be included, such as essay, poetry, etc.

The question is: how the curriculum can find balance between teaching contextualized authentic materials that represent all the Spanish speaking countries and at the same time choose a standard language that is unambiguous and homogeneous to optimize learning?

In GENTE, The 'active learning' approach means that students should work and study independently at home, for example, with the grammar section. Further research should be done to see whether this model is the most efficient way to learn grammar. We should do a study with a control group and the research group, using different curriculums and comparing the final outcomes.

It would be useful to obtain more information about other language departments at The George Washington University, for example, French, German, Italian, Russian, Chinese, etc. Are they using active learning? How about their curriculums approach to assessment? Having less homework necessarily mean having a poor language outcome?

To end with, further research about the student's interests and needs should be done in order to recalibrate the curriculum if necessary. How could we include in the curriculum more authentic relevant materials that are truly interesting for students and also have real life application?

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Publications.

## **10. APPENDIX**

### **10. 1. Comments of 33 students about the course (Dec 2015)**

Too much busywork that doesn't help with learning, there are no traditional lectures, hard to work in groups when classmates are unmotivated.

Let the individual professors have more control over the course.

N/A Best course ever!

I would review grammar more in class to answer questions.

Best teacher ever.

Keeps class engaged.

Complete reform of every aspect. Base classes on less structured curriculum and give the professors more flexibility to teach what they feel the class needs to learn. The oral midterms are in insult to my tuition money. I don't pay 65 grand a year to speak to a computer and have that dictate 30 percent of my grade. How can you expect us to speak to a computer? 80 percent of communication is done through body language. It's almost as if the heads of this program don't understand basic facets of human communication. My parents are livid about this course. Whoever structured this program should be thoroughly embarrassed. The professor was fantastic. That is the one aspect of this whole course that works well. There is a lot of course work and exams which is difficult to manage. For example I had a chapter exam and oral project due the week before my oral final and then I have the written final a week later.

### **10.2. Question: provide suggestions on how to improve this course**

Encouraged to speak in class, small class size.

I learned more Spanish than any other year of high school.

Professor is very enthusiastic and fun. He is very passionate about teaching and very good at applying the language.

Active participation of students.

I took 4 years of high school Spanish so I had to take Spanish 1004, which I felt was much too challenging.

Be clearer in interpreting the placement exam. I should not have been in this level and by the time I tried to switch out, the other classes were full.

I genuinely enjoyed every class. The structure was fun and interactive.

The professor was the only strength of the course.

The curriculum is highly organized which helps me to learn better.

I wish we spoke in Spanish in class more, or had a warm up conversation in Spanish before starting the lesson.

I wish the class was longer.

There really isn't any way to study for the tests.

Not so many MSL activities.

The tests ask too much. There is not enough time to complete all three sections completely and well. I understand and agree that all parts I am tested on during the test are necessary for my development in Spanish, but it is too much for a single sitting period of 50 minutes. I wish it could

be broken up more in that one day we may have an in class essay and another an audio and reading quiz, or something like that. Furthermore, the finals schedule is super imposing and scary! Three large assessments right three days in a row is very daunting. I wish these could be spread out more.

If the department could provide like three extra videos that students could watch before taking the exams that would really help with listening. The one video for homework helps but once I watched it once I knew what it was saying so I would like more videos for extra practice.

Should be that we only talk in Spanish, no English, and we do less group work in class because usually we just talk.

Mistakes are deducted points in class and homework as well as tests. Obviously for tests, mistakes cost students points but for something that is based so much on repetition, application, and practice losing points for mistakes on homework were detrimental to the learning process.

### **10.3. Question: comments on strengths of the course**

In class skits.

This course could be more oriented towards speaking and include some practice writing.

It was very interactive and a hands on learning experience. I felt like I had a lot of practice speaking.

It really tests one's knowledge of Spanish.

This course helped build foundations in many important parts of Spanish. I have become a better listener, although I still struggle with this.

I felt like most of the homework was busy work and did not require a lot of thought. That part was not challenging and did not help me to learn the material, specifically the grammar activities.

Very engaging

Loved that we acted out scenarios in Spanish and had debates.

The course has a good format in terms of the material it is trying to cover in the allotted period of time. It reviews topics that most language learners struggle with and allows the students to practice them.

