Culture Learning in Spanish Companion Book Websites: An Analysis of Tasks

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Abstract
The Internet with its World Wide Web feature opened up a whole new frontier for language-culture learning that foreign language textbook authors have integrated into their programs. Designing tasks that progress beyond promoting learners’ passive consumerism and reiteration of facts remains a goal and a challenge. Thus, three research questions characterized this study that sought to examine the online tasks associated with six current Spanish textbook programs. The design focused on an analysis of these tasks in light of prevailing culture learning concepts and other pedagogical paradigms posited by reputable foreign language educators to determine if they filled the gap left by textbooks in facilitating second culture acquisition. The first question asked for evidence that learners were encouraged to recognize their own cultural conditioning. Evidence was present only to a miniscule degree. The second question sought to determine the extent of opportunities provided to learn about the target culture - Hispanic - as they mirrored the objectives of the perspectives on culture learning. Low-level thinking skills and a predominance of tasks concerning products, whether they were prompted to identify authentic problems, suggest solutions, and apply new knowledge. Evidence for these situations was minimal. Additional findings revealed factual information questions to be a majority with a few tasks inviting learners to respond to hypothetical and creative situations. Results indicate that in this early stage, the World Wide Web remains an authentic venue for culture learning; however, future directions ought to include expanding the scope of adjunct tasks as they complement the multiple presentations of culture in the textbook chapters.

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Cultural Knowledge. • The culture questions are in Spanish and are part of Section 1 (Listening) and Section 2 (Reading). • Questions focus on connections among the perspectives of the target culture and its practices and products. Section 3 - Interpersonal and Presentational Writing. This section includes three tasks and is designed to measure different aspects of your ability to speak Spanish. Although you need not speak for the entire time allotted, you should give as complete a response as possible. For each speaking task in the test, you will be given time to prepare your response and time to record your response. Want to learn Spanish quickly and easily? Spanish is the 2nd most commonly spoken language in the world behind Chinese Mandarin. 470 million people speak. The perfect companion for tourists and business travelers in Spain and Latin America, it features words, phrases, and sentences that cover everything from asking directions to making reservations to ordering dinner. Over 700 conveniently organized expressions include terms for modern telecommunications as well as phrases related to transportation, shopping, services, medical and emergency situations, and other common circumstances.