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Web 2.0 Use to Foster Learners' Intercultural Sensitivity: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

This chapter reports on a qualitative investigation on the development of adult Spanish language learners' intercultural sensitivity while using Web 2.0 technologies to explore living abroad. Comments provided by 33 participants on wikis, Pinterest, and journal entries were analyzed using a line-by-line interpretative approach (Charmaz, 2006). Data analysis revealed that while investigating studying and living abroad using Web 2.0 technologies, learners often remained in an ethnocentric stage of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993). However, upon the completion of reflective activities, many learners began to progress in their intercultural sensitivity, demonstrating a shift away from ethnocentric thinking.

Key words: *Web 2.0 technology, Pinterest, Wiki, Intercultural Sensitivity, Spanish*

Introduction

Within the past several decades, foreign language education has been impacted by the increase in globalization around the world (Kramsch, 2014). Blommaert (2010) describes globalization as the rapid growth in the dispersing of "capital, goods, people, images and discourses around the globe" (p. 13). As a result of this dispersion, today's world consists of blended cultures and peoples. Additionally, with all of the technological advancements in the 21st century, people are able to connect with one another around the globe on a daily basis. Therefore, it has become increasingly important for foreign language education to focus not only on developing learners' communicative competence but also their interculturality. Intercultural competence (IC) is necessary so that learners may become "viable contributors and participants in a linguistically and culturally diverse society" (Moeller & Nugent, 2014 p. 1).

A concept such as IC, however, can be difficult to operationalize in the foreign language classroom for several reasons. First of all, research in the field points to the difficulty of actually defining such a complex notion as culture, which is at the core of understanding IC (Moeller & Nugent, 2014). Another aspect that adds to the complexity of cultivating IC in foreign language learning is the rapid pace of change that is characteristic of the 21st century. With instant access to information in a technologically advanced world, the concept of interculturality and how to develop it constantly changes (Moeller & Nugent, 2014). Finally, the broad concept of intercultural learning and multiple frameworks used to assess IC add to the difficulty

of operationalizing it in the classroom. There is "no common yardstick" being used to currently measure the concept, thus making replication more difficult (Garrett-Rucks, 2014, p. 2). In consideration of the aforementioned difficulties, the purpose of this study is to provide insight into the implementation of Web 2.0 pedagogical interventions intended to foster learners' intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993).

Review of Literature

Developing IC in Instructed Language Learning

In terms of developing learners' IC in the foreign language classroom, previous literature frequently pointed to the use of various pedagogies focused on student interactions with native speakers. Examples included implementing virtual exchanges via telecollaboration (e.g. Ducate, Lomicka-Anderson, & Moreno, 2011; Ducate & Steckenbiller, 2013; Lee, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Lee & Markey, 2014; Schenker, 2013), service-learning projects (Bloom, 2008), or long-term ethnography projects (Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996) to name a few. Unfortunately, interaction with native speakers has not always been possible inside the foreign language classroom (Abrams, 2002). Previous research showed IC often developed or increased most in advanced-level language courses or when studying abroad. However, the majority of U.S. foreign language learners never take part in either of these experiences (Garrett-Rucks, 2013). The development of learners' interculturality is still vital though considering the necessity of being interculturally competent in today's globalized world. In order to address this need for intercultural learning within the four walls of the classroom and at all levels, it is important to develop pedagogies that incorporate meaningful cultural instruction. In studies conducted by Abrams (2002) and Schulz (2007), cultural portfolios exposed learners to diverse cultural perspectives. In particular, learners in Abrams' (2002) study created Internet-based culture portfolios, and by using the Internet, they were exposed to cultural perspectives, "bring[ing] insider's views of other cultures into the L2 classroom" (p. 141). Schulz (2007) suggested a similar methodology in using portfolios but focused on tasks that were not necessarily Internet-based, yet still guided learners in a process of learning about culture. Both scholars focused on developing learners' cultural awareness as a result of exposing them to the complex notion of culture within the foreign language classroom.

Culture in Foreign Language Learning

The concept of culture has been a hot topic of debate with the last several decades of foreign language learning (Kramsch, 2003). Most recently, focusing on *which* culture to teach, as well as *when, where, how*, and *why* to teach it has been under examination (del Valle, 2014). Kramsch (2014) has long claimed that an emphasis on cultural instruction fosters learners' deeper understanding of complex environments that are characteristic of the globalized 21st century in which we now live. Schenker (2013) revealed that by focusing on culture in the foreign language classroom, learners become more interested in their foreign language studies (Schenker, 2013).

It has long been established that culture instruction, as learning of any type, must be relevant to learners (Greenstein, 2012; Kramsch, 2014). In today's world, many learners are digital natives who desire to learn about culture in a way that is

applicable to their everyday lives (Dechert & Kastner, 1989; Prensky, 2001; Schenker, 2013). Considering that these digital natives spend thousands of hours in the digital realm, it seems natural to tap into this interest in the foreign language classroom as well. Not only does a pedagogically sound use of digital technologies make learning more relevant and interesting, but it also develops 21st century skills, increases global competence, and provides opportunities for meaningful interaction with authentic cultural content (Galileo Educational Network, 2011; Greenstein, 2012; Kramsch, 2013; Paily, 2013).

Developing IC through a Digital Approach

Incorporating Web 2.0 technology in the foreign language classroom has numerous benefits. If used appropriately, technology can provide access to foreign languages and cultures like never before, allowing students to delve into a new and unknown world (Kern, 2014). The use of technology can not only create an engaging environment for learners, but it can also provide exposure to diverse cultural perspectives. Rather than reading about a cultural fact or acquiring cultural knowledge from a textbook, the digital realm allows learners to become autonomous in their learning (Paily, 2013).

When considering Web 2.0 technologies, any type of website that is dynamic, interactive, and allows users to create, edit, and change content on a regular basis falls into this category (Chartrand, 2012; Paily, 2013). The concept of Web 2.0 applications developed out of the idea that online users and consumers desired to be active participants who contribute to the creation of content on the Web, thus cultivating a more socially driven and connected environment (Paily, 2013). Inside the educational setting, Web 2.0 applications afford learners opportunities to create new knowledge through active participation with content individually or collectively. Specifically, these types of applications allow for learners to develop a sense of community where they communicate with one another, share information, and work together toward a goal. The main emphasis when using Web 2.0 technologies is on "the construction of knowledge with the others for the others" (Paily, 2013, p. 44), and the focus is on the "collective intelligence" (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007, p. 666) of multiple users. As McLoughlin and Lee (2007) noted, this type of cooperative and collaborative learning environment can produce more productive results than an individual working alone or without joint knowledge from others. Therefore, in the educational setting, these applications provide avenues for learners to actively engage in productive, collaborative environments where they use the language to create and develop new information (Paily, 2013).

In the field of foreign language learning, researchers have reported positive results from Web 2.0 use in formats such as podcasts (Lee, 2009), blogs and microblogging (Borau, Ullrich, Feng, Shen, 2009; Lee, 2009, 2010a, 2011, 2012; Lee & Markey, 2014), and wikis (Ducate et al., 2011; Ducate & Steckenbiller, 2013; Lee, 2010b). These studies demonstrated that Web 2.0 technologies exposed learners to authentic cultural artifacts and subsequently increased learners' cultural awareness. As Garrett-Rucks (2013) noted, technology can be used to encourage learners to "prepare for the challenges posed by our increasingly multicultural and global societies" (p. 206).

This study investigates the ways in which the incorporation of two different Web 2.0 technologies—wikis and Pinterest—might foster learners' intercultural sensitivity development in an introductory Spanish language course. While previous studies incorporated the use of wikis in foreign language learning, there have not been many studies in the field focused on the incorporation of Pinterest to develop learners' intercultural sensitivity. The present study seeks to add to the body of knowledge on pedagogical practices incorporating Web 2.0 technology that can be used to deepen learners' cultural awareness. The central questions of investigation are:
(1) How do collaborative cultural projects completed on wikis and Pinterest affect the development of learners' intercultural sensitivity in the foreign language classroom?
(2) How does the use of Web 2.0 technologies—wikis and Pinterest—compare to the use of reflective activities (i.e. journal entries) in the development of learners' intercultural sensitivity?

Methods

This chapter reports on the findings from a study conducted in two separate sections of the same accelerated introductory Spanish language course at a large Southeastern university. While learners did not communicate or collaborate with one another across sections, project topics that learners received in each section were identical. The goal of the present study was to assess learners' intercultural sensitivity during their engagement in Web 2.0 cultural projects—one on a wiki and one on Pinterest. Learners enrolled in the two sections of this study did a majority of the same assignments as students enrolled in typical introductory Spanish sections at the university of investigation. However, I adapted the curriculum in the last two months of the semester to account for the cultural projects. Usually, coursework centered exclusively on the textbook and any supplemental materials provided by the instructor. For the purpose of this study, learners worked in groups of four to five students and researched cultural information on the Internet as it related to the theme of their particular project. Learners collaborated by adding, editing, and finalizing all content on the Web 2.0 application. In each project they set their Web 2.0 application to "private" or "hidden" to maintain privacy.

Cultural Projects

The data used in this chapter is part of a larger study that investigated the effect of culturally focused pedagogies on learners' cultural awareness. In this current chapter though, I focus on how the use of wikis, Pinterest, and reflective activities such as journals entries affect learners' intercultural sensitivity. Specifically, I look at two different cultural projects that learners completed.

In each section where the study took place, one group of learners completed a wiki or Pinterest board at a time. In their production of the Web 2.0 tool, they also created discussion questions, and the other classmates answered a discussion question after all content was posted online. Then, all learners wrote individual journal entries in English in order to reflect on the cultural content on the Web 2.0 tool. Overall, for the purpose of this chapter, I analyze two wikis, two Pinterest boards, the discussion boards on each Web 2.0 tool, and learners' journal entries from each project.

As for the Web 2.0 tools used, I selected them based off of Ducate et al.'s (2011)

and Lee's (2010b) studies. Specifically, I used wikis and Pinterest as methods to develop learners' linguistic skills (in particular their writing skills) while at the same time cultivating their cultural awareness through the exploration of the target culture. As for the topics of the cultural projects, I based them off of studies conducted by Abrams (2002) and Schulz (2007). In particular, I created projects where learners envisioned living in the target culture.

In the first project (Appendix B), I provided learners with a context where they imagined they were going to study abroad in Central America. The context I gave them said that they needed to develop a wiki for their friends and family where they described a study abroad program of their choice. In this project, students described (in Spanish) the country, city, and university where the study abroad program was. Then they also provided images and/or videos to accompany their descriptions.

In the second project (Appendix B), learners imagined they were going to return and live in the same country where they had studied abroad, but they needed to find their own housing. Therefore, they envisioned themselves participating in the popular television show, *House Hunters International*. In this project, students described the country, the city, and the housing in that city in Spanish (Mitchell, 2015).

Wikis. At the onset of the study, learners used wikis, which are blogging websites that allow users to collaborate, write and edit content (Evans, n.d.), to explore diverse cultural perspectives. According to Ducate and her colleagues (2011), previous studies most often used wikis to develop learners' writing skills, but others (Evans, n.d.; Lee, 2010b; Pellet, 2012) have also incorporated them to develop intercultural competence, give tests, and develop L2 content knowledge.

After investigating different online wiki platforms, I selected the PBWorks (pbworks.com) platform due to its accessibility, ease of use, and free services offered to educators and students. On PBWorks, learners created free user accounts, divided into their pre-assigned groups, and collaboratively conducted research.

Pinterest. The second Web 2.0 technology used in the study was Pinterest. Pinterest is an online curating website where users create a free account, set up various types of "pinboards," and attach different visuals (e.g. images or videos from the Internet) to their pinboard (Pinterest, n.d.). The name Pinterest is indicative of the function of the site – users pin what is interesting to them. As with the project completed on the wiki, learners received a contextualized scenario and worked in pre-assigned groups to complete their cultural project.

In both projects, to encourage further collaboration, the project instructions indicated that learners were to edit each other's work on the wiki and Pinterest before finally submitting it to their instructor.

Discussion posts. The group of students who was in charge of creating the wiki or Pinterest board also wrote discussion questions in Spanish on their boards or wiki pages. These students posted their questions in Spanish and focused on topics they discussed on the Web 2.0 tool. The other students in the course who did not create the wiki or Pinterest board then read the content on the Web 2.0 tool and posted to the discussion board in Spanish with 50 words or more (Appendix C). There was no requirement for the number of questions that needed to be answered on the discussion board. Instead, the only requirements were a minimum amount of words and a time limit of when they had to complete their posts (two full days). In order to al-

low learners to freely express their opinions, discuss the target culture, and respond openly, I only monitored the discussion boards to ensure that learners completed them. However, I did not intervene in any other capacity as to avoid any influence on learners' perspectives.

Participants

During the spring semester, 33 students (18 females, 15 males) participated in the study. All participants were students enrolled in two accelerated introductory Spanish courses, but all volunteered to participate. One course contained 15 students and the other had 18. The study took place during the Spring semester, which is why the enrollments for these courses were lower than usual (typical enrollment is 25 students at the introductory level). At the university of study, enrollments for this accelerated course are always higher in the Fall semester than the Spring.

All participants reported on a background survey (Appendix A) that they were originally from the United States. Thirty-two participants reported that they were native English speakers while one declined to comment on his native language. Two participants reported that had studied abroad in Germany, Honduras, and/or the Dominican Republic while 31 had no prior study abroad experiences. As for experience traveling abroad, 10 participants reported they had visited countries such as Mexico, countries in Latin America, Canada, or some countries in Europe and Asia such as Ireland, Spain, Japan, and China.

Description of Courses and Curriculum

The two courses under study were accelerated introductory courses designed for learners who had completed approximately two to three years of Spanish language study prior to beginning their university studies, excluding heritage language learners (who are only allowed to enroll in upper-level courses at the university of study). These accelerated courses are an intensive review of Spanish and are one semester of language study. The course covers first- and second-semester university-level study and completes the university requirements for language study. Students placed into the accelerated course based off of their score on a university placement test or based off of their previous number of years of study. Classes met face-to-face three times a week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) for 50 minutes and course outcomes emphasized the development of learners' communicative competence and general knowledge about culture across the Spanish-speaking world.

Instruments

In order to gain further insight into the development of learners' intercultural sensitivity throughout the completion of the cultural project, I used the following instrument to collect data after learners completed each project.

Journal entries. After completing the cultural projects online, learners continued with the contextualized scenario (Appendix D) and composed a journal entry in English on the topic being covered. Considering that learners were at the novice level, they completed their journals in English so they would be able to reflect more deeply on the relationships between the cultural perspectives and cultural products and practices (Sandrock, 2015). They completed and submitted their entries via their

online course management system already being used in their course. The purpose of the follow-up journal entries was to continue learners' progression of cultural understanding throughout the duration of the projects. As Moeller and Nugent (2014) pointed out, in order to develop learners' cultural awareness, educators must prepare activities in the foreign language classroom that allow for "cultural exploration and discovery" (p. 2). Thus, the cultural projects provided the time and space for learners to explore, and the journal entries encouraged them to discover and "to reflect on language and language use" (Kramsch, 2014, p. 306).

In their entries, learners imagined that they were writing an email to their family or friends about the scenario they had just researched. In project #1, learners wrote an email to their family and friends in which they compared and contrasted the university where they would study abroad with their current home university. In project #2, they imagined they were writing an email to a friend in which they were trying to convince him or her to live abroad and help share housing expenses.

Data Collection and Analysis

To gain a more holistic perspective of learners' intercultural sensitivity during their engagement with the cultural projects, I first conducted a line-by-line coding (Charmaz, 2006) of all data produced in learners' wikis and Pinterest boards. I searched the data specifically for ethnorelative or ethnocentric comments as related to the target culture and then tallied the total number of comments in each aforementioned category. I then derived more specific themes to further clarify the categories. Within the ethnocentric category, themes centered on touristic attractions, housing, and general information about the country. As for the ethnorelative category, themes centered on housing, daily life, and general information such as climate, food, and geography.

Next, I conducted the same type of line-by-line coding (Charmaz, 2006) for all the data produced in learners' journal entries. I again searched for ethnorelative and ethnocentric perspectives as expressed in learners' comments about the target culture. I subsequently created categories and then developed more specific themes. In the ethnorelative category, themes that emerged centered on learners' desires to immerse in the culture and on comments where they conveyed that interaction with the target culture can broaden their perspectives. As for the ethnocentric category, the themes I derived represented either no desire to go abroad, a desire to only go abroad as a tourist, or an interest in studying abroad for pragmatic purposes only (i.e. to improve language skills or become a more marketable employee).

Finally, once I established the categories and themes, I then analyzed all of the data according to the different levels of Bennett's (1993) DMIS to determine learners' level of intercultural sensitivity throughout the completion of the cultural projects. Bennett's model consists of six different stages, ranging from ethnocentric (denial, defense, minimization) to ethnorelative stages (acceptance, adaptation, integration). A brief description of each stage is provided below:

(1) Denial: No understanding of cultural difference
(2) Defense: Some understanding of cultural difference but often attended to from a negative viewpoint, i.e. negative stereotyping or through the expression of cultural superiority

(3) Minimization: Acknowledgement of cultural difference but cultural understanding is understood only through one's own cultural lens
(4) Acceptance: Acknowledgement and appreciation of cultural difference
(5) Adaptation: Frame of reference shifts to understand different cultural perspectives
(6) Integration: Integration of more than one frame of reference into cultural identity

Findings

The findings below report written and oral comments produced by learners. As seen in the data and interpretation below, many learners progressed in their intercultural sensitivity throughout the duration of the study, demonstrating a shift from "avoiding cultural difference" to "seeking cultural difference" (Bennett, 2004, p. 63).

Learners' Approach to Culture via Web 2.0 Technologies

In the following sections, I provide an analysis of data as produced in learners' wikis and Pinterest boards. This data (which learners wrote in Spanish) include all cultural content that learners posted online as well as all content from the discussion boards. Tables 1 and 2 show the categorization of their responses on each Web 2.0 platform:

Table 1

Perspectives Found in the Web 2.0 Technologies

Platform	Total Ethnocentric comments	Total Ethnorelative comments
Pinterest	52	25
Wiki	59	21
Total	**111**	**46**

In both cultural projects, learners more dominantly expressed an ethnocentric viewpoint on their wiki and Pinterest. In total, 111 comments pointed to perspectives in the defense and minimization stages of Bennett's (1993) DMIS. Conversely, only 46 total comments found on the Web 2.0 applications expressed a perspective that aligned with an ethnorelative viewpoint, specifically in the acceptance stage. This data support Bloom's (2008) findings that most learners at the beginner level of foreign language study often demonstrate perspectives in the denial, defense, or minimization stages of Bennett's (1993) DMIS. Tables 3 and 4 show the more specific themes of learners' perspectives when researching the target culture via Web 2.0 technologies.

Table 2

Explanation of Perspectives in the Web 2.0 Technologies

Type of comment	Total Ethnocentric comments	Total Ethnorelative comments
Touristic attractions	65	0
Housing/Living arrangements	29	12
General country information	17	9
Daily lifestyle	0	25
Total	**111**	**46**

A majority (111) of comments on both the wiki and Pinterest reflected an ethnocentric perspective. In particular, 65 different comments centered on touristic attractions through which learners expressed interest in visiting a country but had no desire to actually immerse in the culture. Representations of the minimization stage were especially prevalent in these comments as learners wished to study or live abroad because of *"muchas excursiones que puedes hacer"* [many excursions you can do]. For instance, learners often remarked that they would love to study or live abroad in Costa Rica because it would give them the opportunity to experience *"los lugares más populares en Costa Rica"* [the most popular places in Costa Rica] and participate in excursions such as *"nadar, hacer kayak la costa, y también tirolina sobre los árboles"* [swimming, kayaking on the coast, and also zip lining on top of the trees]. For these learners, they acknowledged cultural difference, but, they often applied their own cultural understanding to the target culture by describing it as *"exótico"* [exotic].

Twenty-nine comments also indicated that while learners would want to live or study abroad, it must be on their own terms and provide the everyday comforts of their home. Learners often revealed a desire to live in a hotel because *"es perfecto"* [is perfect] and *"no cuesta mucho y está en una buena ubicación"* [it doesn't cost much and is in a good location]. Comments in this category typically expressed learners' desire to have *"tres cuartos, dos baños completos, y dos baños medios. También tiene un extra parte con una cocina, un baño y sala para invitados de la casa. Por fin, la casa tiene mucho espacio para aparcar sus coches"* [three rooms, two complete bathrooms, and two half baths. It also has an extra part with a kitchen, a bathroom, and a living room for house guests. Finally, the house has a lot of space to park your cars]. These remarks demonstrate a viewpoint that is characteristic of what learners in the United States are typically accustomed to, perspectives that represent the minimization stage. In other words, learners' understanding of what housing accommodations should be like in other countries guided their approach to culture.

The final 17 comments that demonstrated an ethnocentric perspective were present in learners' comments about general information about the country. For these learners, even though their research had shown them typical customs of the country, they preferred not to take part in these customs because it was not what they were used to. Additionally, after commenting that they were not comfortable with a certain type of custom, learners then provided an alternative that was representative of their own culture. For instance, one student commented that *"montar una bicicleta por todas partes sería horrible"* [riding a bike everywhere would be horrible] but instead, he or she would use a shuttle service because *"es la mejor forma de transportación […] cuesta $125 dólares americano"* [it is the best form of transportation [and] costs $125 American dollars]. Another student provided a picture of a bus that is typically used by people living in the country and commented, *"¡No me gustaría viajar en esto porque me daría miedo que se vendría abajo! Se ve muy viejo"* [I would not like to travel in this because I would be scared it would collapse. It looks very old]. It is also worth noting that learners often reported the price of transportation and hotels in American dollars rather than converting the price to the local currency. Through all of these comments, learners demonstrated perspectives still in the defense and minimization stages because they either displayed a stance of cul-

tural superiority (defense) or applied their own cultural understanding to the target culture (minimization) (Bennett, 2004).

As seen in Table 2, a total of 46 comments revealed an ethnorelative perspective. Upon analysis of these comments, data revealed that learners demonstrated a worldview in the acceptance stage of Bennett's (1993) DMIS. In their comments, they acknowledged that living or studying abroad would provide a different cultural experience, and they desired to take part in this experience and grow to appreciate another culture.

Twelve comments centered on different housing types and showed a desire to fully immerse in the culture by living with a host family while abroad. For these learners, this type of opportunity was interesting to them because *"se puede pasar un rato con ellos y se conoce amigos magníficos mientras aprender mucho"* [you can spend time with them and meet magnificent friends while you learn a lot]. Twenty-five other comments focused on daily life in a Central American country. Learners often remarked that participating in typical daily events and customs while abroad would give them experiences *"con la cultura de Costa Rica y también les da una experiencia universitaria diferente que los Estados Unidos"* [with the culture of Costa Rica and also give them a university experience different than the United States]. The final nine comments centered on general information about the country. Learners in this category commented on the food usually eaten in Central American countries, such as *"gallo pinto [que] es muy delicioso"* [gallo pinto (that) is my favorite] and *"mi favorito"* [my favorite]. Other comments in this theme centered on the type of climate, the geography of the area, or information about the city, as seen in this learner's remark – *"Elegí San José, Costa Rica, porque he visitado Costa Rica antes y me encanta el país. San José es la capital de Costa Rica y es la ciudad más grande del país"* [I chose San José, Costa Rica because I have visited Costa Rice before and I love the country. San José is the capital of Costa Rica and is the largest city of the country]. Through their research, they learned about different traditions and customs and subsequently acknowledged these cultural differences. Furthermore, their comments revealed not only an awareness of difference, but they also demonstrated a desire to experience these differences.

Learners' Understanding of Culture through Reflective Activities

Upon the completion of each cultural project, learners also wrote journal entries in English based off of the same contextualization. While the aforementioned data in Table 2 showed that a majority (111) of comments initially conveyed ethnocentric perspectives, many comments later (86) revealed a shift toward a deeper cultural understanding when writing their reflective journal entries. As learners reflected on what they had learned, they began to connect the cultural practices and products to cultural perspectives, which in turn broadened their understanding of the target culture. Tables 3 and 4 provide an outline of learners' comments from their journal entries.

Table 3
Ethnorelative Perspectives Expressed in Journal Entries

Type of comment	Total # of comments
Immersed in/part of culture	58
Being abroad expands perspectives	28
Total	**86**

The development of learners' intercultural sensitivity became apparent as 86 different comments indicated an ethnorelative perspective, specifically viewpoints in the acceptance and adaptation stage of Bennett's (1993) DMIS. Learners' remarks showed that they began "to imagine other cultural frames of reference," "seek to explore differences," and their frames of reference began to shift to understand different cultural perspectives (Bennett, 2004, p. 63). A breakdown of these comments is as follows.

Fifty-eight comments conveyed a viewpoint that learners desired to be immersed in the culture and become a part of it while they were living or studying abroad. For them, living abroad would allow them to "dive into their culture." Specifically, learners desired to "live with a local family to truly experience like [sic] as a Costa Rican" and expressed excitement for being able to become partakers in the target culture as seen in this comment: "I don't think it can be overstated how wonderful it can be to experience the differences in culture that can be understood from studying abroad."

The next 28 comments focused on how studying or living abroad can expand perspectives and provide opportunities to "broaden my horizons," learn about a "wholly new perspective," and "make you a more well rounded person because of new exposures." These comments indicate that studying or living abroad is advantageous because "you will be able to be exposed to a different culture" and "see what else is out in the world." For one learner in particular, "Studying abroad would be an amazing experience to have. It would be a great way to learn about a different country's culture." Other learners expressed the same sentiment by stating that "studying abroad offers new experiences" that can be "incredibly enriching" and that it "will only expand our minds." As a result of this increased cultural awareness, learners began to understand and explore cultural differences.

While these comments showed a progression to ethnorelativism in many learners, 99 comments still pointed to an ethnocentric approach to the culture (Table 4) and conveyed the same sentiment that was seen in learners' comments made on the wiki and Pinterest boards. Even though these comments continued to represent an ethnocentric perspective, it is worth noting that many of them did begin to express a desire to go abroad, which points to a progression in their cultural awareness.

Table 4

Ethnocentric Perspectives Expressed in Reflective Activities

Type of comment	Total # of comments
No desire to study/live abroad	20
Go abroad but only as tourist	48
Go abroad but only for pragmatic purposes	31
Total	**99**

Twenty comments indicated learners did not desire to live or study abroad at all because their life at their home university was more enjoyable and more comfortable. For example, they believed studying abroad "never made financial sense and it would have hamper [sic] my ability to graduate this soon." Others echoed this sentiment by stating that they would rather stay at their home university because "I understand the culture here and I don't have to adapt to anything like I would have to studying abroad." This type of perspective was commonly illustrated in these learners' comments, as they saw studying abroad as "very difficult" because of "fall[ing] behind on credits," "cultural differences," and "you have to leave your life back home."

In the ethnocentric category, those who did want to go abroad only wanted to participate in the target culture as a tourist (48 comments) or for pragmatic purposes (31 comments). For these learners, studying or living abroad for a short amount of time "gives you the opportunity to live in a different country without the commitment." Through their comments, it is evident that learners understand that the target culture is different, but they often still attend to it from an outsider's perspective. One student reinforced this notion by stating that while he or she wants to go abroad, he or she "would bring an American bought car because the cars there kinda [sic] look run down and not too safe."

Learners also remarked that they only desired to study or live abroad for pragmatic purposes because it "could really help me improve my Spanish skills" and be "very helpful in my future." Other students said they would want to visit different places in Central America such as the Panama Canal because "there is so much history behind the canal that involves the United States." These comments show that learners in this category often sought to change the culture or only experience it as it related to their cultural comforts in the United States. They often lacked an understanding that would lead them to respect and value difference. Thus, these learners typically identified with the defense stage considering that their comments expressed a type of negative stereotyping and cultural superiority. However, it is worth noting that they were beginning to visualize themselves as going abroad, which is a step toward seeking cultural difference (Bennett, 2004).

Discussion

As the data show, when investigating and researching cultural information using Web 2.0 applications, learners in general expressed an ethnocentric perspective. During their investigation, they often struggled to make connections between the cultural perspectives and the products and practices, which subsequently led them

to objectify the target culture. However, while their perspectives were limited when using Web 2.0 technologies, the advantages of incorporating technology into the process of learning about culture were numerous. As their demographic information indicated, 31 out of 33 participants had never studied abroad before, and the exposure to cultural information via Web 2.0 technologies, thus, provided access to foreign cultures. By incorporating these types of projects, learners were able to expand their cultural knowledge through a more in-depth investigation using the Internet (Kern, 2014).

In both projects (wiki and Pinterest), as learners spent additional time learning about the culture, many began to shift and develop an ethnorelative perspective. With the reflective journals, the data show that learners generally began progressing in their intercultural sensitivity because they expressed perspectives that were open to perceiving differences (Bennett, 2004). As a result of developing a more reflective pedagogy, like Kramsch (2014) suggested, learners were able to not only see relevancy in their language learning, but they connected with it and began to deepen their cultural awareness. Thus, relevant and interesting cultural learning afforded students opportunities to expand their perspectives and reflect on the dynamic and complex concept of culture. Albeit they did not progress to the highest level of intercultural sensitivity in Bennett's (1993) DMIS, learners did begin on their journey of becoming an intercultural individual, which is a realistic expectation for a college-level introductory language course. In light of the findings of this study, it can therefore be concluded that Web 2.0 applications have positive implications for developing cultural awareness inside the four walls of the foreign language classroom. These applications engaged learners because they are relevant and applicable to their everyday lives, and they provided an avenue for learners to explore the target culture in an authentic manner that interested them.

Pedagogical Implications

Learners indicated that they "learned more about culture" by participating in these cultural projects because they did not have "to cram for a test" but rather used "what they already know," which allowed them to focus more on using the language to learn about culture. One learner in particular commented that the projects required them to "investigate their own knowledge," and another reiterated this notion by stating that the cultural projects allowed them to learn "different aspects of different cultures around the world." However, while students indicated that learning about culture with Web 2.0 technologies was more interactive than a textbook, technology should not be the only tool that develops their linguistic and cultural knowledge. In this study, the cultural projects centered heavily on the development of the Web 2.0 tools with an added reflective component at the end. Instead of focusing primarily on uploading content to the Web 2.0 tool like these projects did, it would be more beneficial in future projects to use the technology platform as a facilitator of student research and investigation. After completing their research, students can then use the information they collect to complete written activities and/or oral activities that align with the project themes. By implementing these types of activities into the projects, learners are able to further progress in their intercultural sensitivity as a result of reflecting even more deeply on what they learned. Additionally, writ-

ten and oral activities that continue with the project contextualization would also enhance learner collaboration. Within the projects for the present study, learners cooperated with one another on their Web 2.0 platform and worked together to add and edit information. However, they did not collaborate in the sense of creating and producing information together as a group. Instead, the mentality was more "divide and conquer" than collaborate together. Therefore, by adding activities to the cultural projects where learners create and develop an actual product, collaboration becomes a more central component of the assignments. For project #1 that focused on studying abroad, ideas for other activities could include creating a flyer or website to advertise for the university where they imagine themselves studying. Learners could use the information they gather on the Internet to develop their flyer or website, and then for an oral activity, they could make a promotional video. As for project #2 that centered on *House Hunters International*, learners could create mock written scripts and audition videos as their application to be on the show (Mitchell, 2015).

Another implication of this study centers on increasing learner motivation and engagement. While they did use Web 2.0 applications as a part of their cultural learning, learners did not publicly share their products, which were their wikis and their Pinterest boards. Based off of feedback from learners in their journals and from previously conducted research, they are more motivated when they are creating and producing content for an audience (Conole & Alevizou, 2010). Therefore, suggestions for future projects would be to make the content on Web 2.0 applications public so that motivation increases. By making their content public, the expected outcome is that learners will take more ownership of what they create because they are producing content that someone outside of their foreign language class will read and view. In conclusion, the incorporation of additional reflective activities in tandem with the cultural projects and journal entries can strengthen learners' cultural awareness and prepare them to be successful global citizens of the 21st century because they have even more opportunities to make connections between cultural products, practices, and perspectives (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015).

Study Limitations and Conclusions

To conclude, I discuss three different categories of limitations of this study. First, I consider the design of the study, specifically focusing on the order in which learners completed activities. I also include suggestions for future research in this section in order to clarify how projects could be better structured in future endeavors. Second, I review the discussion boards and posts and the limitations incurred with these. Third and finally, I discuss how to increase validity and reliability in future research.

First, it should be noted that the progression of activities in this study were as follows: learners completed activities on wikis or Pinterest and then wrote a journal entry. With this outline of activities in mind, a limitation is that learners received more time to process cultural differences since they completed their journals after their research on the Internet. Thus, it is not unusual to find that in their journal entries, they displayed more ethnorelative perspectives. One way to address this limitation would be to include opportunities for more guided reflections on the Web 2.0 applications rather than separating learners' exploration of the target culture from

their reflection like the present study did. This conclusion also leads into the second limitation of the study, which centers on the discussion boards of the project. Learners created each of the discussion board topics on the Web 2.0 technologies, and thus, the discussion boards did not include the Comparisons Standard (4.2) that was later found in the journal entry. This limitation also ties into suggestions for future research. The journey of cross-cultural exploration typically begins with a subjective reflection (Knutson, 2006), and therefore, future projects could include some form of journal entry before learners explore the target culture via Web 2.0 technologies.

Finally, the third limitation of this study centers on validity and reliability. Realizing that the findings were subject to my own opinions and interpretation (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), future research could increase inter-rater reliability by having a different researcher outside of the investigation identify and categorize statements. In doing so, the data would reflect a more objective interpretation.

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Appendix A

Background Survey

1. Name (your information will remain confidential):
2. Are you originally from the United States? Yes/No
3. If you answered 'No' to question #2, please list your country of origin.
4. Sex: Male/Female
5. Who is your current Spanish 103 instructor?
6. Do you speak more than one language? Yes/No
7. If you answered 'Yes' to question #6, please list the language(s) that you speak.
8. If you answered 'Yes' to question #6, please explain where you learned another language(s).
9. Have you ever studied abroad (for a month or more)? Yes/No
10. If so, where?
11. Have you ever traveled outside of the United States? Yes/No
12. If so, where?

Appendix B

Instructions for projects #1 and #2

Project 1: Studying Abroad
Instructions for creating your wiki post

Congratulations! You received a scholarship to study abroad! You are going to study abroad for two months in the summer.

Before you leave, you need to explain what a study abroad program is to your friends. You need to create a WIKI in which you describe the best programs to study abroad in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, or Panama (you can choose the country you want from the three provided). You are going to provide information through Internet images and complete phrases that describe the programs using your own words.

Step 1: Decide on the country where you want to study (Costa Rica, Nicaragua, or Panama) (mlsa.org and cea.org are good websites with a lot of information. There are more on the Internet.).

Step 2: Describe the selected program in your own words. You should include the following information:
- City and region of the program
- The university that has the program
- Lodging - Are you going to live in a student residence, in a house with a host family, or in an apartment?
- Available classes
- Available excursions

Step 3. Search the Internet for information that illustrates your selections. You should include
- photos, images, videos of:
- The city and the university
- The types of lodging
- The classes available in the program
- The excursions available through the program

**You should also cite the websites you use in the WIKI.

Step 4: Write descriptions of the program that you choose. Each person should write at least 150 words in Spanish. You should use your own "username" on the WIKI to write your part. Use the vocabulary from the current chapter in your book and think about these things:

Why did you choose this city? _____

Why did you choose this university? _____

Why did you choose this program? _____

Think about the subjects that a person can learn in this program. What are they?

_____

Do you think that the excursions are fun or boring? Why? _____

Step 5: Finally, you should create a discussion forum to facilitate discussion about the study abroad programs between your classmates. Think about what you just posted to your wiki and each person should create one question for the forum for your classmates to answer and discuss. Some examples are:

- What do you think about studying abroad? Does it interest you? Why or why not?
- Out of the described programs, which is the most interesting in your opinion? Why?

Project 2: House Hunting
Instructions for creating your Pinterest board

In project 1, you received a scholarship to study abroad. You loved studying in Central America and so you want to go back another time. After studying abroad, you decided that you want to live in Central America.

Now you need to find the perfect home and to do this, you want to participate in the show *House Hunters International.* To do this, you have to investigate where you want to live … in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, or Panama? Also in order to participate in the show, you have to write to the producers and explain why you want to live in the place that you choose and explain why you should be chosen as participants in the show. You should compare your home in your current town with the type of house that you want in Central America. You are going to create a Pinterest board in which you explain why you should appear in the show and where you want to live. You are going to provide information through Internet images and complete phrases describing the above information.

Step 1: Decide on the country where you want to live (Costa Rica, Nicaragua, or Panama)

Step 2: Describe the following things:
- Country and city/region where you want to live
- Your current home (Is it similar or different than the home that you want in Central America?)
- Home - Are you going to live in an apartment, a house, or something different?
    As a requirement of the program, House Hunters International, you have to give 3 options of a possible home.
- Why you should be chosen for the program

Step 3. Search the Internet for information that illustrates your selections. You should include photos, images, videos of:
- The country where you want to live
- The specific city where you want to live
- Possible homes (3 different types)
- Regions/Areas surrounding the homes (i.e. the neighborhood)

**You should also cite the websites you use on Pinterest.

Step 4: Write descriptions of the homes that you choose. Each person should write at least 150 words in Spanish. Use the vocabulary from your current chapter and think about these things:

Why did you choose this country and city? _____

Why did you choose these types of homes? _____

In your opinion, which is the best home? The worst? Why? _____

What is the price of each type of home? _____

Where are the homes? In the city? In the countryside? _____

What are the characteristics of the homes? Are they furnished? Do they have parking? _____

Step 5: Finally, you should create a discussion forum to facilitate discussion between the producers (your classmates). Think about what you just posted to Pinterest board and each person should post one question to guide discussion between your classmates. Some examples are:

- What home is most interesting? Explain your answer.
- What are some important characteristics in a home?

Appendix C

Instructions for Posting to the Discussion Board

Project 1: Studying abroad

Once project #1 is complete and posted to the wiki, the rest of the class has two days to read the information on the wiki and post to the created discussion board. The posts that you write should be in Spanish and should be at least 50 words.

- In your responses, you can respond to:
- The questions written by the group AND/OR
- The content on the wiki

Project 2: House Hunting

Once project #2 is complete and the Pinterest board is posted, the rest of the class has two days to read the information on the board and post comments on the pins. The posts that you write should be in Spanish and should be at least 50 words.

In your responses, you can respond to:
- Any questions written by the group AND/OR
- The content of the pins

Appendix D

Journal Prompts

Project 1: Studying abroad

Your reaction

At the end of project 1, write a reaction in your journal. The reaction should be in English and should include 300-350 words.

There is a possibility of studying abroad next semester but before deciding, your parents and friends have a lot of questions about the foreign university and your home university. In your reaction, you need to write an email to your family and friends to describe the similarities and differences between the two universities.

FIRST, think about all that you read in the wiki about the study abroad programs and the foreign universities.

THEN, use the following questions to guide you when you write. Think of the comparison between studying abroad and studying at your home university.
- What are some advantages of studying abroad?
- What are some advantages of only studying at your home university?
- What are some disadvantages of studying abroad?
- What are some disadvantages of only studying at your home university?
- What is the best place to study in your opinion? Why?
- What are some similarities between the two options (the university described in the wiki and your home university)? Think about the classes, lodging, and the excursions.
- What are some differences between the two options (the university described in the wiki and your home university)? Think about the classes, lodging and the excursions.

Project 2: House Hunting

Your reaction

At the end of project 2, write a reaction to the Pinterest research in your journal. The reaction should be in English and should include 300-350 words.

There is a possibility of living in Central America in the future, but it is expensive to do alone. Thus, you need a roommate to help with the rent or mortgage, but your friends don't feel like living in Central America. Now you have to explain your perspective to your friend. You should write an email in order to explain why living in a Central American country is a good idea and explain the similarities and differences between Central American life and life in your current town.

FIRST, think about all that you read in on Pinterest about homes in Central America.

THEN, use the following questions to guide you when you write.

- What are some advantages of living in Central America?
- What are some advantages of living in your current town?
- What are some disadvantages of living in Central America?
- What are some disadvantages of living in your current town?
- What is the best type of home in your opinion? Why?
- What are some similarities in between a home in Central America and a home in your current town? Think about the types of homes, the price of homes, and the characteristics of the homes.
- What are some differences in between a home in Central America and a home in your current town? Think about the types of homes, the price of homes, and the characteristics of the homes.
- Why (or why not) should your friend move to Central America?