

Using Pinterest to Facilitate the Learning of Culture

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Abstract

In an effort to make the learning of the target culture a meaningful and motivating experience for foreign language (FL) learners, the researchers designed and implemented a semester-long project in which intermediate Spanish students used Pinterest to pin and comment on cultural artifacts and websites in the target language (TL) that were of personal interest to them. Students completed a variety of assignments related to their newly acquired knowledge, such as compositions, test sections, and in-class discussions. The results of a post-project survey revealed that students' pre-project familiarity and gender had an impact on their evaluation of the project, with females and previous users of the website rating the project more favorably than males and those students without much experience with Pinterest. While there were differences of opinion about various aspects of the project, students' responses were positive overall. To conclude the article, we offer the reader recommendations of how to implement social media projects in FL classrooms.

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Introduction

This article investigates how the popular online tool, Pinterest, can assist foreign language (FL) learners in exploring and acquiring personalized cultural information.

This article investigates how the popular online tool, Pinterest, can assist foreign language (FL) learners in exploring and acquiring personalized cultural information. Many FL educators agree that the target culture should be integrated in the language classroom at some level, because “there is no doubt that language and culture are inextricably interrelated” (Schulz, 2007, p. 9). When FL instructors inform students about the various products, practices, and perspectives used by the native speakers (NSs) of FLs, student attitudes toward NSs and their cultures are more favorable (Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996). Likewise, learners find this cultural information a source of motivation to better study and acquire the target language (TL) (Ho, 1998). For these reasons, the acquisition of target culture is the area of focus of several of the World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning (W-RSLL) (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015) and formed an integral part of earlier versions of the Standards (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project [NSFLEP]), 2006). For FL instructors in the United States, the teaching of target cultures in a language classroom should be of particular benefit, as many students enroll in FL courses not out of a sincere desire to learn to speak another language or about the customs of the NSs of a particular language (Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996, p. 431), but because it is required of them. Many scholars have contended that a learner’s level of motivation is one of the most important factors in his ability to acquire another language (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013; Gardner, 1985); thus, it would be advantageous for FL educators to capitalize on and emphasize culture in their teaching—especially because culture can enhance motivation, as explained above—in order to create a fully integrated FL classroom and engage FL students. Furthermore, personalizing the cultural content that language students learn in FLs could likewise assist instructors and enhance student motivation. When students have a say in the academic material about which they will learn, empirical evidence has shown that they become more invested in the subject matter, make greater gains in learning, and have a more enjoyable educational experience when compared to those students who learned predetermined information (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2011).

Equally as important as the content woven in the FL curriculum are the techniques through which this information is delivered. Specifically related to the present article, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has been identified by many researchers as an invaluable tool to facilitate instruction aimed at technology-savvy language learners (Grgurovic, Chapelle, & Shelley, 2013; Hoopingarner, 2009). As with the inclusion of cultural information, CALL is integrated into the teaching of FLs to “enhance students’ motivation to learn a second language” (Ushida, 2005, pp. 49-50) and, if implemented judiciously, CALL has the potential to positively affect learners’ acquisition of the FL being studied (Chappell, 2009). Some scholars argue that because students use various forms of technology at home, similar programs—instant messaging, social media,

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video chat, and e-mail—in which they are engaged outside of the classroom might serve them well when integrated in an academic context, including a FL class.

For these compelling reasons, a semester-long cultural project using a popular social networking site (SNS), Pinterest, was designed for intermediate-level learners of Spanish who were NSs of English. In the following sections, we review recent literature on the learning and teaching of culture in the FL classroom, CALL, and personalization in education. Subsequently, we explain the methodology of the project in which Pinterest was integrated into the intermediate Spanish course, including the assigning of the project and the assessment of its components. Finally, we provide recommendations based on the results of the present investigation for those who plan to use Pinterest in their FL classes.

The Learning and Teaching of FL Culture

With regard to teaching culture, FL educators have a unique opportunity, as “only second language study empowers learners to engage successfully in meaningful, direct interaction, both orally and in writing, with members of other cultures” (NSFLEP, 2006, p. 49). In today’s globalized world, there is an urgent need to develop more global citizens. The teaching of FL cultures works toward that goal by helping students understand diversity and teaching them how to exercise empathy for others (Thanasoulas, 2001). Nonetheless, while many FL instructors believe that the teaching of culture is a critical element of the language classroom, some teachers and students still continue to view culture as a peripheral and optional component (Warford & White, 2012). One possible barrier to the teaching of culture is that FL teachers sometimes feel that they themselves are not well informed about the culture they are presenting to students (Moeller & Faltin Osborn, 2014). Whether FL instructors are native or non-native members of the culture that is being presented to students, these teachers do not feel that they possess the skills or knowledge to teach culture “in the same principled way they teach grammar and vocabulary” (Kramsch, Cain, & Murphy-Lejeune, 1996, p. 99).

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One perspective that might ease the minds of some FL instructors as they plan to incorporate cultural material in their classrooms comes from the work of Moeller and Faltin Osborn (2014): the teacher must facilitate the acquisition of cultural knowledge, as opposed to being an expert on the information. Along the same vein, empirical studies have shown that language students are much more receptive to learning about other cultures through guided exploration and by constructing meaning themselves, as opposed to learning about preselected information by the instructor or in textbooks (Abrams, 2002; Wright, 2000). Through a constructivist approach, students “construct their understanding of a culture by examining the relationships between products, practices, and perspectives, and by focusing initially on their own values and sense of self that evolve out of their respective native cultural perspectives (Wright, 2000)” (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 156). This technique contrasts with the information acquisition

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approach in which students “learn about information and facts about the target culture as provided by the teacher” (Shrum and Glisan, 2010, p. 156). Hence, it appears that FL students reap more benefits from activities involving the target culture when they are engaged participants in learning about and reflecting on others' products, practices, and perspectives.

As explained above, teaching culture in FL classrooms can be complex and not without its challenges, but there are many ways to resolve the issues that arise. Troubles with teaching about the target culture may be alleviated through the use of freely available materials and tools on the Internet. Therefore,

the next sections review the use of technology in language and culture learning.

CALL, Culture, and Pinterest

SNSs in the Teaching of Target Language Cultures

As advances in the digital age have become more available and integrated in daily life in the past few decades, many language teachers are capitalizing on the wealth and breadth of cultural resources available in various forms of technology to strengthen FL instruction. CALL has established itself as a permanent fixture in numerous FL classrooms, which has brought many benefits as well as some challenges to FL educators. Because educators are working with many “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001), or those individuals who were born during a time when technology is normalized and ubiquitous, it is believed that, if implemented judiciously, technology in the FL classroom can not only enhance instruction, but also take advantage of skills that many students are constantly applying in their personal lives. Moving beyond simply showing DVDs and overhead transparencies to present cultural information, FL instructors currently are availing themselves of the various forms of CALL—the Web, computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools, and Web 2.0 technologies—to expand their teaching of cultural material with the goal of creating more relatable and dynamic lessons and activities. Many researchers have determined that these technologies can greatly assist instructors as they facilitate the acquisition of TL cultural knowledge in their classrooms (e.g., Blake, 2008; Ducate & Lomicka, 2013; Ducate, Lomicka Anderson, & Moreno, 2011; Evans, n.d.; Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001). For instance, the founders of the Cultura Project—an endeavor that brought FL students together from two different cultures through CMC—concluded that the initiative made students more sensitive toward FL cultural values and attitudes, which helped learners “develop an insider’s understanding of another culture” (Furstenberg et al., 2001, p. 95).

Moreover, SNSs—those websites that facilitate conversational interaction between users, and feature one’s profile, a list of friends, and synchronic and asynchronous messaging—are making their way into FL education (e.g., Blattner & Lomicka, 2012; Lomicka & Lord, 2009; McDermott, 2013; Zourou, 2012), especially as a mechanism through which to explore FL cultures. As Kessler (2013) stated, “[s]ocial media offers each of us seemingly limitless opportunities

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to participate in the culture around us and to help redefine that culture” (p. 307). Although SNSs have great potential in an academic setting, a recent survey revealed that most K-12 educators are reticent to incorporate social media sites into their classroom due to problems with the monitoring of student use of the SNSs and a lack of training or confidence in technology for educational purposes (Bolkan, 2015). Similarly, post-secondary faculty have been reluctant to use social media for pedagogical purposes, citing a fear of increased student plagiarism and privacy concerns as the main reasons for why they have not integrated SNSs in instruction (Martínez-Alemán, 2014). Nonetheless, McBride (2009) affirmed that, if structured and monitored carefully, SNSs could be great resources in project-based learning exercises centered on an FL cultural theme. Due to SNSs’ popularity and their relative ease of use, the present investigation examined how FL teachers could implement one commonly-used SNS, Pinterest, to foster the learning of FL cultural information.

Pinterest as an Educational Tool

Launched in March 2010, Pinterest is an SNS in which users can collect, bookmark, and organize different websites in a visual manner. Pinterest members share these organized images, along with their comments, for their “followers” to view, which contributes to the interactive nature of the website. Pinterest users create thematically organized content as “pinboards” (or simply “boards”), which is where “pins,” or related websites with an associated image and description, are housed. Members can also share the pins of other Pinterest users; this reposted pin is known as a “repin.”

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Pinterest is available in 26 languages and, as of July 2015, there were at least 72.8 million registered members worldwide, with 47% of registrants using the program on a weekly basis (Smith, 2015). Pinterest had been reportedly the fastest growing SNS since its inception (Smith, 2013), and it is now the fourth largest social media site behind Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn in terms of valuation (Bercovici, 2014). In terms of user demographics, 85% of registered members of Pinterest are female, most users are between the ages of 18 and 29 (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015), and 60% are from the United States (Smith, 2015).

While the reported advantages of using Pinterest as a professional resource are usually geared to business, the visual and organizational nature of Pinterest has been used strategically in educational settings as well. Teachers are utilizing Pinterest to develop lesson plans, organize useful websites for their classes, find inspirational quotes and classroom resources, and collaborate with other like-minded instructors (Rao, 2012; Teach Thought Staff, 2012a). Educators have also designed opportunities for students to create boards for different topics related to their class or to collaborate with their peers on group projects (Morrison, 2011; Rao, 2012). In the realm of higher education, users at many post-secondary institutions have capitalized on Pinterest’s increasing popularity not only as a

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classroom tool in a variety of academic disciplines, but also as a way to publicize events and highlight student and faculty achievements (McDaniel, 2012; Teach Thought Staff, 2012b).

Pinterest in Foreign Languages

In terms of Pinterest's presence in FL education, there are only a limited number of published resources that detail how the program has been or can be implemented in FL instruction (Abbott, 2012, 2014; Klimas, 2013). Klimas (2013) claimed that the program can "offer unique advantages for the language education profession" and has become an "indispensable resource" for her and other FL teachers (p. 56). To illustrate how the visual and bookmarking features of Pinterest might be utilized in FL education, Klimas explained that Pinterest could assist teachers in locating and organizing pedagogical resources, such as cultural artifacts, realia, videos in the TL, and helpful articles detailing pedagogical strategies. In addition, Klimas advocated that FL teachers could discover and archive innovative lesson plans via Pinterest, as well as connect with language teacher blogs online that might enhance their instruction of the TL.

In addition to these benefits, Klimas (2013) contended that Pinterest is an invaluable resource for the teaching and exploring of FL cultures. She explained that "the visual aspect [of Pinterest] presents cultural products and practices in a visual way that helps bring our students to other worlds" (p. 57). As such, Klimas proposed an activity in which students utilized Pinterest to research FL cultural topics. She suggested that students could choose a cultural topic to explore, create various boards according to the subtopics of the cultural issue, read about the topic in the TL, and write in the FL in the comment box located under each individual pin. This task could then be extended into an in-class conversational activity in the TL, as students could share in groups what they found throughout their exploration of the FL cultural topic. While the information presented in Klimas' article is an extremely helpful resource regarding how FL teachers might incorporate Pinterest in their classrooms, and it is similar to the project that will be described in subsequent sections, no empirical evidence was provided to measure or corroborate its effectiveness. Thus, one of the main goals of the present investigation was to systematically analyze if Pinterest proved to be an effective tool through which students could learn about FL cultures.

Personalization in Education

Due to Pinterest's exponential growth in popularity, the purported benefits associated with the tool, and the lack of empirical evidence of the effectiveness of the technology in educational settings, we wanted to further explore the use of Pinterest in FL instruction. As FL educators had claimed that Pinterest could promote the learning of cultural material (Bronkie, Toste, Shepherd, & Earl, 2014; Klimas, 2013), we designed a project to empirically explore how Pinterest could enhance the learning of FL cultural topics. In addition, because advances in technology have provided language learners with more opportunities for autonomy and agency (Godwin-Jones, 2011), and because FL culture is best acquired when the

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student actively explores the material (Abrams, 2002; Wright, 2000), we designed a semester-long FL cultural learning initiative using Pinterest that incorporated the tenets of personalized learning.

Personalization in education gives students “a voice and choice of what they learn” (Bray & McClaskey, 2014, p. 9), is learner-centered, and builds learners’ confidence by taking students’ strengths into account (Bray & McClaskey, 2014). Studies on personalized educational models in various disciplines have found that by tailoring activities to students’ backgrounds, learning styles, and personal and scholastic interests, they will better understand, apply, and retain academic concepts (cf. Anand & Ross, 1987). Using Watkins’ (2010) analysis on learning environments, Bray and McClaskey summarized that in traditional classroom contexts the focus is on the teacher, tests and grades are emphasized, and the goal is the correct answer. However, in a personalized learning environment, the focus is on the learner, performance is linked to effort and progress, and the goal is to facilitate the acquisition of deeper understanding. Course material can be personalized in both content and process, and technological advances have greatly facilitated the personalization of both of these aspects (Hummel, Manderveld, Tattersall, & Koper, 2004). Given that personalization in education and the use of CALL often go hand-in-hand, we felt that it was appropriate to investigate how personalization of FL cultural material could be facilitated by the widely-used SNS, Pinterest. It is evident that personalization can hold different meanings for different educators (Cavanagh, 2014). In the present investigation, personalized learning was defined as a pedagogical approach that enhances learner agency and autonomy by allowing students to choose the direction, focus, and content of study in an academic setting.

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Research Questions

The present investigation took the form of action research, as it represented research undertaken by instructors in order to critically analyze and change current practice (Ducate, Lomicka Anderson, & Moreno, 2011, p. 501). Specifically, our goal was to examine the effectiveness of using Pinterest to facilitate the acquisition of cultural knowledge and its viability in FL education. To that end, the following research questions (RQs) were posited:

- RQ1. What are students’ attitudes toward learning personalized cultural information through Pinterest?
- RQ2. What are students’ attitudes toward the technology available through Pinterest?
- RQ3. What benefits and drawbacks do students report following the implementation of the semester-long Pinterest project?

Methodology

Participants

There were 44 participants in the present study: 23 males and 21 females, all between 18 and 22 years of age. All participants were enrolled in one of two

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sections of Spanish 201: “Intermediate Spanish I” at a small liberal arts university in the southeastern United States. In terms of previous experience with formal training in the language, students had taken an average of 2.95 years of Spanish in high school (range: 0-4 years) and 0.95 years of college-level Spanish (range: 0-2 semesters); the vast majority of these students ($n = 33$) had taken Advanced Beginning Spanish just prior to the course. The classes consisted mostly of underclassmen; there were 29 freshmen, 9 sophomores, 3 juniors, and 3 seniors. At the time of the survey, none of the participants had declared Spanish as their major course of study.¹

It is important to note that Intermediate Spanish I is the terminal course in the general education requirement for FLs at this particular institution, and most students indicated that they were taking the class to fulfill this requirement. Figure 1 displays students’ responses as to why they enrolled in this class on the pre-project survey (Appendix A), which was distributed at the beginning of the term.

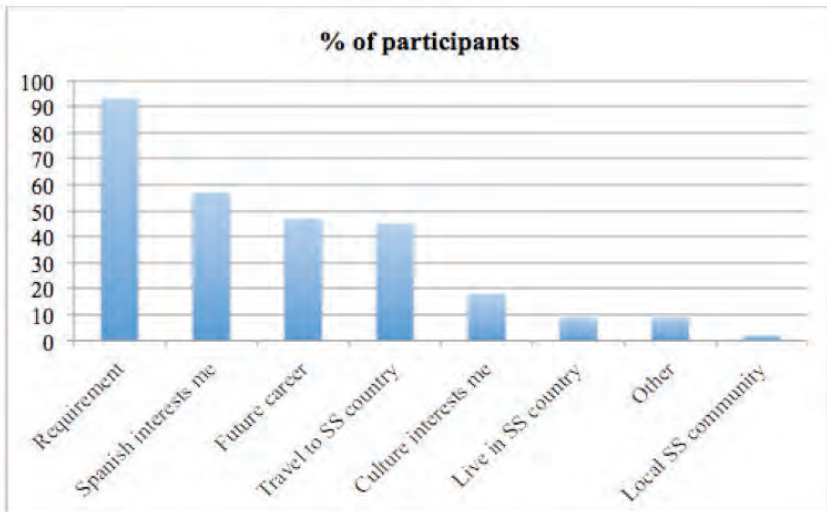


Figure 1. Distribution of participants’ reasons for enrolling in Intermediate Spanish I²

Students could choose all of the possible options they believed applied to them, as well as write in other rationales under the choice “Other.” A large percentage of the students expressed that they were in the class because of the requirement (40/44, 90.9%), as opposed to selecting the other possibilities that related to genuine interest, such as linguistic benefits for future career and travel opportunities or the ability to connect with native Spanish speakers. Regarding students’ interest level in Hispanic cultures, few (8/44, 18.1%) reported that this was one of the motivating factors for enrolling in Intermediate Spanish I. In fact, the majority of these 44 learners did not indicate that they felt confident on the pre-project questionnaire about their knowledge of Hispanic cultures (29/44, 66%), even though most had taken a few years of formal Spanish in the past. Furthermore, almost half had traveled abroad to a Spanish-speaking country. Yet, even with this

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experience in the target culture, most of the participants did not believe that they had an appropriate level of mastery of TL cultural knowledge.

Description of the Semester-Long Pinterest Project

All participants in the present study completed various tasks as part of graded classroom activities for Intermediate Spanish I (see Appendices B – F for sample instructions and assignments). Along with material preselected by the teacher or textbook, students explored FL cultural aspects that interested them and organized this newly acquired information on Pinterest. To do so, once students received an invitation from the instructor at the beginning of the course, they created a Pinterest account, added a profile picture, and changed the settings to “Spanish,” so that all language on the site was in the TL (see Appendix B for project instructions). Students then created six “boards” that were based on the six major units of the course, which were based on the chapters in the textbook *Sueña: Español sin barreras* (Blanco & Tocaimaza-Hatch, 2011).³ All class members used identical titles for these boards so that fellow students and the instructor could easily identify them. For each of the six units, students had to find three original online artifacts— “pins”— that related to one of the many topics of the particular unit. Subsequently, they were responsible for “pinning” the website and writing one sentence in the TL to describe the pin’s relevance. Students also stated if the pin’s content consisted of a FL cultural practice, product, and/or perspective. Once the units’ pins were completed, each student then had to locate another classmate’s pin to “repin” to his or her board and write a brief commentary about the peer’s selection. Figure 2 displays one student’s completed board for the unit on “City Living,” including er original pins and one repin.



Figure 2. Example of one student’s board with three pins and one repin

This project was incorporated into many other dimensions of the intermediate Spanish class. First, immediately after each unit, students shared the cultural information they had learned with their peers as part of an in-class communicative pair exercise

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in the TL (Appendix C). Secondly, students employed the newly acquired cultural knowledge gleaned from their research in six brief compositions that corresponded to each of the six units (Appendix D). These “mini-compositions,” which were 100- to 150-word essays written as homework, based on prompts provided by the teacher, recycled vocabulary and grammatical teachings of each unit, as well as incorporated relevant FL cultural information that students researched individually. The assessment of students’ pins was included as one of the elements of the rubric for evaluating the mini-compositions; the instructor distributed this rubric (see Appendix E) to students at the beginning of the semester so they could be familiar with the grading criteria before the project began. Finally, students had to demonstrate their new cultural knowledge on exams by describing in detail what they had researched and learned, whether it related to a product, practice, and/or perspective, and any comparisons they could make between their native culture and FL cultures (Appendix F).

Analysis of Survey Data

Along with the aforementioned activities, all participants completed a pre-project survey (Appendix A) at the beginning of semester in order to assess their prior experience with Spanish as an FL and to ascertain their familiarity level with Pinterest. Regarding the latter question, students used a 7-point Likert scale to report their level of familiarity with the technology, with 1 corresponding to “not familiar [with Pinterest] at all” and 7 to “extremely familiar [with Pinterest].” After the Pinterest project had concluded, the 44 students answered questions on a post-project survey (Appendix G) that evaluated their attitudes about the Pinterest project, the Pinterest technology itself, and the learning of personalized material relating to Hispanic cultures. This survey instrument contained 11 Likert scale questions—ranging from 1 (“completely disagree”) to 5 (“completely agree”)—and 1 Likert scale question with a range of 1 (“not familiar [with Pinterest] at all”) to 7 (“extremely familiar [with Pinterest]”), that enabled comparisons to answers on the pre-project survey. The post-project survey also asked students to respond to 6 open-ended questions related to the semester-long Pinterest project, so they could provide more in-depth information regarding their opinions of the technology.

Both pre- and post-project survey data were analyzed quantitatively with SPSS; the means from identical pre- and post-project survey questions pertaining to students’ familiarity level with Pinterest were compared via paired t-tests, which tested for statistically significant differences. Pearson correlations were utilized to ascertain if students’ familiarity with the Pinterest program corresponded to their ratings on the post-project survey of specific aspects of the endeavor. In addition to these analyses, independent t-tests were performed to compare female versus male data from the post-project survey, as we observed noteworthy differences of opinions between female and male students upon reviewing the data. Therefore, independent t-tests served to uncover if there were statistically significant differences between these groups’ responses, as well as their overall perceptions of Pinterest and personalized investigation of FL cultures in a formal Spanish course.

The data obtained from the open-ended responses on both the pre- and post-project surveys that complemented the quantitative data were analyzed via thematic

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analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis allows researchers to “encod[e] qualitative information” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. vii) and it is a method “for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). To do so, we examined the open-ended responses according to the 6 phases of thematic analysis per Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) becoming familiar with the data, (2) creating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) incorporating these themes in the report. The students’ open-ended answers regarding the benefits and drawbacks of the Pinterest project provided considerable insights for the posited RQs. Quantification of this type of data is not typically carried out in thematic analysis; however, we chose to do so, in order to offer a clearer picture of how many times students voluntarily expressed different opinions.

Results

Table 1 below reports students’ average ratings of the 11 statements on the post-project survey. These data have been divided into three categories of mean scores: overall (i.e., all students together), females, and males. In the following subsections, the three research questions will be addressed in relation to the findings reported in Table 1 along with students’ responses to the open-ended survey questions and emergent themes and subthemes in Table 2.

Table 1. Mean Scores for Post-Project Survey Results: Overall, Females, and Males

	Question	Overall	Females	Males
1	Using Pinterest this semester allowed me to explore cultural topics that interested me.	3.88	4.38*	3.43
2	Using Pinterest to learn about Hispanic cultures was motivating to me.	3.39	3.90*	2.91
3	Looking at classmates’ pins and boards on Pinterest helped me learn.	3.27	3.52	3.04
4	I enjoyed looking at classmates’ pins and boards on Pinterest.	3.27	3.47	3.09
5	I preferred learning cultural material presented in the book rather than looking on Pinterest for cultural information that interested me.	3.07	3.00	3.14
6	I remember the cultural information that I researched and pinned on Pinterest better in comparison to the cultural information presented in the textbook.	3.60	4.05*	3.18
7	I enjoyed using Pinterest this semester to learn about cultural topics.	3.57	4.00*	3.17
8	As a result of this project, I now spend more time on the Internet using or reading Spanish.	2.95	3.19	2.74

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9	I know more about Hispanic cultures now than I did at the start of the semester.	4.59	4.81	4.39
10	I would recommend using Pinterest in future Spanish classes to learn about Hispanic cultures.	3.66	4.00	3.34
11	I will continue to use Pinterest after the semester ends.	2.66	4.08*	1.39

* Indicates a statistically significant difference between male and female averages at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 2. Comprehensive List of Emergent Themes and Sub-Themes of Students' Open-Ended Responses regarding the Benefits and Drawbacks of Using Pinterest to Explore FL Cultures, Post-Project Survey

Benefits of the Pinterest Project	Drawbacks of the Pinterest Project
<p>1. Exploring FL cultural information (n = 32). Students indicated that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinterest was an effective way to explore FL cultural information in general. (13) • using Pinterest made exploring FL cultures more interesting and fun. (11) • they investigated FL cultural information that was of personal interest to them. (8) 	<p>1. The Pinterest project (n = 16). Students felt that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the project was tedious and time consuming. (8) • they were lost and did not know what FL cultural topics to search for. (5) • the directions were confusing at times. (2) • the Pinterest project did not contribute to learning more about Spanish. (1)
<p>2. Technology (n = 13). Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enjoyed using social media for personal use and in class. (7) • found the technology easy to use. (3) • liked the organizational feature of Pinterest to keep track of their information. (2) • enjoyed using technology in class in general. (1) 	<p>2. Technology (n = 11). Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not know how to create a pin for a website that did not have images. (4) • did not like the Pinterest technology or site. (3) • did not use Pinterest outside of class and were unfamiliar with the program. (2) • did not like to use technology in general. (1) • indicated that males do not use Pinterest, only females. (1)
<p>3. Connecting with other aspects of Intermediate Spanish I (n = 6). Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • were able to practice FL language skills (i.e., reading and writing). (3) • learned from the FL cultural information shared by their peers. (3) 	

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate how many times themes and subthemes appeared in the data.

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Research Question 1: Students' Attitudes toward Personalized Cultural Information

To respond to RQ1—What are students' attitudes toward learning personalized cultural information through Pinterest?—the results of Questions 5 and 6 of the post-project survey were considered (Table 1). Question 5 directly related to students' preference for learning FL cultural information provided in the textbook (i.e., preselected FL cultural material not based on their individual interests) or through the Pinterest activity (i.e., FL cultural content that they personally found more interesting). This survey question was negatively worded, meaning that the lower the rating on the 5-point Likert scale, the higher students valued personalized FL cultural information. The researchers hypothesized that students would be inclined to give higher evaluations to personalized FL cultural content, as opposed to prescribed cultural lessons, as previous research has shown that the more students can relate to and are interested in the material, the more invested they are in the particular topic (e.g., Anand & Ross, 1987). An initial reading of the results for Question 5 of the post-project survey indicated that, overall, students felt ambivalent about the researching of personalized FL cultural information ($M = 3.07, SD = 1.44$). The difference between female and male averages for Question 5 was not significant. However, upon examining the distribution of the ratings given for Question 5, we did not find student ambivalence toward researching personalized FL cultural material. Rather, as seen in Figure 3, students took a stance on this topic: 19/43 (44.1%)⁴ students rated this question as “completely disagree” or “disagree,” which indicates that they preferred researching their own interests, while 20/43 (46.5%) students gave a rating of “completely agree” or “agree,” which suggests they preferred learning the material that was presented in their textbook. Only 4/43 (9.3%) participants gave a “neutral” rating for this statement.

Students' open-ended responses provide more insight into the numeric findings for Question 5 (Figure 3). Without prompting, eight students voluntarily indicated that they enjoyed using Pinterest as a way of investigating FL cultural

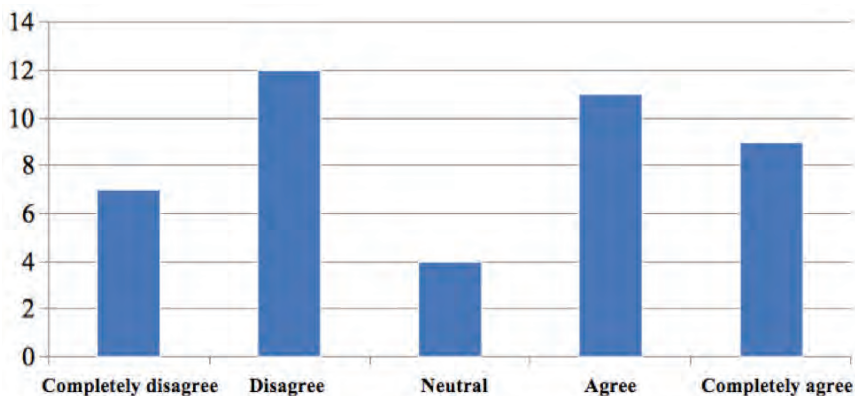


Figure 3. Students' responses to Question 5: “I preferred learning cultural material presented in the book rather than looking on Pinterest for cultural information that interested me.”

topics that were of particular interest to them. These affirmations support the researchers' hypothesis and previous scholarship on personalization. However, five students conveyed frustration in researching personalized information, as they could not "think of something specific to search for" or had trouble finding a topic that was "understandable and relatable" to the course's content.

Question 6 likewise corresponds to the first research question, as it reflects students' assessment of their ability to retain the FL cultural knowledge they researched themselves, compared to the knowledge presented in their textbook or by the teacher. We expected students to report that they could better remember the FL cultural information they had researched themselves. Overall, it appears that students perceived they were slightly more successful in retaining the FL cultural material that was of interest to them ($M = 3.60, SD = 1.07$). We expected this average to be higher, which would be more in line with the previous research on personalization in education. It should be noted that females and males perceived this retention differently: there was a statistically significant difference between female ($M = 4.05, SD = 0.97$) and male averages ($M = 3.18, SD = 1.01$), $t(41) = -2.87, p = .007$, and this difference represented a large-sized effect, $d = 0.88$.

The open-ended responses also show that students believed they successfully retained FL cultural information gained through Pinterest (Table 2). Thirteen students responded, with no prompting, that by participating in the Pinterest project they now knew more about Hispanic cultures than previously. Only one student out of the 44 commented that the Pinterest project did not contribute to his learning or retention of knowledge about the target culture.

Research Question 2: Students' Attitudes toward the Pinterest Technology

To assess RQ2—What are students' attitudes toward the technology available through Pinterest?—results from Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, and 11 in Table 1, a comparison of pre- and post-project familiarity with the technological tool in Tables 3 and 4, and students' open-ended responses shown in Table 2 were taken into consideration. Overall, the results suggest that students enjoyed the Pinterest technology; yet, students' gender and their familiarity with the technology prior to the project had a large impact on their opinions of the SNS and the related assignments.

Survey questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, and 11, presented in Table 1, all targeted some aspect of the Pinterest platform. Question 1 required students to rate whether Pinterest gave them the ability to explore cultural topics of interest to them. Most agreed ($M = 3.88, SD = 1.02$); however, a statistically significant difference was found between female ($M = 4.38, SD = 0.86$) and male mean scores ($M = 3.43, SD = 0.95$), $t(42) = -3.45, p = .001$, and this difference represented a large-sized effect, $d = 1.05$. Question 2 evaluated students' opinions on whether or not using Pinterest increased their motivation to explore FL cultural information, and most students seemed to agree with this statement ($M = 3.39, SD = 1.06$). Again, there was a statistically significant difference between females ($M = 3.90, SD = 1.00$) and males ($M = 2.91, SD = 0.90$), $t(42) = -3.47, p = .001$, with a large-sized effect, $d = 1.04$.

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Questions 3 and 4 addressed the social nature of the Pinterest technology. On these items students rated if they felt they had learned from their peers' research on FL culture and if they enjoyed reading the content that their peers selected and posted online. The mean scores for Questions 3 and 4—($M = 3.27, SD = 1.21$) and ($M = 3.27, SD = 1.13$), respectively—indicate that students felt fairly neutral about both of these areas, and there was not a statistically significant difference between female and male scores on either question. Question 7 evaluated students' enjoyment of using the Pinterest technology itself. Overall, students reported that they slightly agreed with this statement ($M = 3.57, SD = 1.26$); yet, female ($M = 4.00, SD = 1.14$) and male ($M = 3.17, SD = 1.27$) mean scores differed significantly, $t(42) = -2.27, p = .029$, with a medium-sized effect, $d = 0.73$.

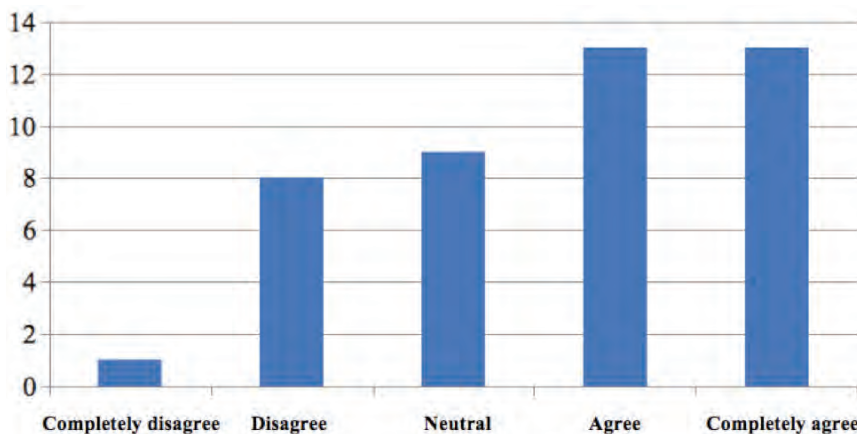


Figure 4. Students' responses to Question 10: "I would recommend using Pinterest in future Spanish classes to learn about Hispanic cultures."

Question 10 targeted students' recommendations of the role of Pinterest in future iterations of Intermediate Spanish I. The results suggest that students mostly supported the inclusion of the Pinterest project in subsequent Spanish classes of this level ($M = 3.66, SD = 1.16$). Looking at the distribution of the responses to Question 10 (Figure 4), over half of the participants (26/44, 59.1%) gave a rating of "agree" or "completely agree," 9/44 (20.5%) rated the statement as "neutral," and 9/44 (20.5%) disagreed or completely disagreed with Question 10. Yet, even though these participants appeared supportive to some degree of utilizing Pinterest in other Spanish classes, the results of Question 11 revealed that students would not continue to access and utilize the SNS of their own volition once the semester had concluded ($M = 2.65, SD = 1.57$). Probing further into the data, females and males displayed a strong difference of opinion for Question 11. A statistically significant difference was found between female ($M = 4.04, SD = 0.97$) and male ($M = 1.39, SD = 0.66$) mean scores, $t(42) = -10.70, p = .000$, with a notably large-sized effect, $d = 3.20$.

Students identified both positive and negative aspects of the Pinterest technology in the open-ended response portion of the post-project survey (Table 2). In terms of the benefits of the platform, 11 participants voluntarily expressed that the technology as an interesting and fun way to explore FL culture, and seven participants indicated that they enjoyed interacting on social media for class. Three participants also commented that Pinterest itself was easy to use. Still, some students emphasized the challenges of the online tool. Participants expressed that Pinterest became a distraction at times, it was difficult to understand the program's features, and some did not like the SNS, even if they understood how to use it. One male student commented that men did not use Pinterest as a social media outlet, and that it was a program strictly for females. Another participant stated that he did not like using technology in general.

Regarding students' familiarity level with Pinterest, Table 3 displays the students' overall averages, as well as those for females and males. On a 7-point Likert scale, students rated how well they could use the Pinterest website before the project began and upon its conclusion. One can see that the students' overall familiarity average increased from the beginning to the end of the project; this difference was significant at the $p = .001$ level, and had a medium effect size of $d = 0.48$. This finding confirmed the researchers' observation that students were able to quickly adapt to the SNS's platform and could handle the available tools with a fair amount of ease, despite the fact that a few participants cited some difficulty using the program. As with the other analyses presented thus far, it is also crucial to highlight the difference in the mean scores of female and male familiarity levels. Females reported higher ratings of being familiar with Pinterest in both pre- and post-project surveys (Table 3). Even though females' post-project familiarity increased from the beginning of the term, the difference in means was not found to be significant. However, the difference between male students' levels of familiarity was found to be significant, and had a medium-sized effect, $d = 0.54$.

Table 3. Results of Paired t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Students' Familiarity with Pinterest, Pre- and Post-Project Averages

	Pre-project		Post-project		95% CI for Mean Difference				
	M	SD	M	SD	n		d	t	df
Familiarity with Pinterest									
Overall	3.30	2.01	4.20	1.69	44	-1.42, -0.41	0.48	-3.62*	43
Males	2.04	1.26	3.13	1.25	23	-1.83, -0.34	0.54	-3.02**	22
Females	4.67	1.77	5.38	1.28	21	-1.45, 0.02	0.56	-2.02***	20

* $p = 0.001$

** $p = 0.006$

*** $p = 0.056$

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To further understand students' attitudes toward the Pinterest technology, addressed in RQ2, correlation analyses between students' pre-project familiarity with Pinterest and their survey ratings were conducted. It was found that the students who had rated themselves as being more familiar with the SNS prior to the project gave higher scores on survey Questions 1, 2, 6, and 11 (Table 4). It seems that student with higher ratings of familiarity with Pinterest found the semester-long project more worthwhile and beneficial. In addition, these results indicate that those participants who were already using Pinterest before the project begun were those who would continue to use the SNS after the semester concluded (Question 11, Table 4). In other words, even though it appears that students became competent users of the SNS for the purposes of the class project, the sustained exposure to Pinterest in this educational setting did not make students more willing to continue their use of the SNS after their obligation to do so had concluded.

Table 4. Pearson Correlations between Survey Questions and Pre-Project Familiarity Scores, Statistically Significant Results

	Survey Question	R	R ²
1	Using Pinterest this semester allowed me to explore cultural topics that interested me.	.31*	.10
2	Using Pinterest to learn about Hispanic cultures was motivating to me.	.34*	.11
6	I remember the cultural information that I researched and pinned on Pinterest better in comparison to the cultural information presented in the textbook.	.34*	.12
11	I will continue to use Pinterest after the semester ends.	.74**	.55

*Correlation significant at $p < .05$ level

**Correlation significant at $p < .001$ level

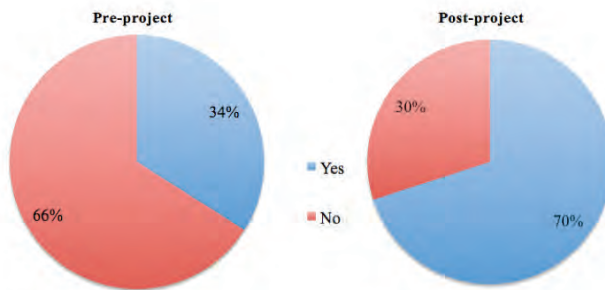
Research Question 3: Benefits and Drawbacks of the Pinterest Project

The third RQ—What benefits and drawbacks do students report following the implementation of the semester-long Pinterest project?—was answered by comparing students' pre- and post-project confidence levels of FL cultural knowledge (Figure 5), analyzing the results of Question 9 (Table 1) and using the open-ended survey responses and the themes that emerged from them (Table 2). Many of these themes and subthemes as reported in Table 2 have been incorporated in the results of RQ1 and RQ2, as the analyses of each of the RQs are not mutually exclusive. However, in this section these findings and trends will be discussed at length in order to fully respond to RQ3.

When comparing students' pre- and post-project confidence levels of their knowledge of Hispanic cultures, there is a drastic shift in this perceived confidence as displayed in Figure 5. Prior to the Pinterest cultural project, the majority of students did not feel secure in the FL cultural knowledge they possessed (29/44, 66%) even though they had studied Spanish for an average of almost 3 years

beforehand, and many of these students had traveled to a Spanish-speaking country. However, after the project concluded, 70% of students (31/40) affirmed that they left the class confident that they now knew more about Hispanic cultures. This increase in confidence in one semester regarding their knowledge about target cultures is a noteworthy positive outcome for both teachers and students alike. Furthermore, the results of Question 9 of the post-project survey (Table 1) corroborate this increased confidence in FL cultural knowledge, as seen in Figure 5. The question required students to rate the statement “I know more about Hispanic cultures now than I did at the start of the semester.” The mean score of Question 9 was the highest of all of the 11 survey questions and had the lowest standard deviation of all combined averages ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.82$). Thus, students strongly believed that the project had a great impact on their acquisition of FL cultural knowledge.

Figure 5. Students’ pre- and post-project responses to the statement: “I feel confident in my knowledge of Hispanic cultures.”



In terms of the benefits of the semester-long activity that students mentioned in the open-ended questions on the post-project survey (Questions 2 and 7 under “Technology”), three overall themes became apparent in the data: the Pinterest project was an effective means to explore and learn about FL cultural material, the Pinterest technological interface brought some advantages, and the tasks involved in the Pinterest project effectively corresponded to other skills required in the Spanish course (see Table 2). Regarding the first and most prominent theme, numerous students highlighted different advantages of using Pinterest to explore FL cultural content. Most comments were general in nature, as in “[Pinterest] helped expose me to cultural information,” and only made reference to using Pinterest to develop their understanding of FL cultures as a positive experience. Other students, however, specifically cited that the Pinterest project gave them the means to explore beyond what the textbook presented and that they were able to “research [FL culture material] on their own” that was of “personal interest” to them. Furthermore, several participants utilized the adjectives “fun,” “interesting,” and “innovative” to describe the project.

Secondly, even though students expressed a variety of opinions, most students found the Pinterest technology to be enjoyable and easy to operate. It also appears that most participants welcomed the use of technology in general. Many students

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commented that the social and collaborative nature of Pinterest made them more invested in the project itself, as they were able to “see what others found interesting in [Hispanic] culture[s].” One student even commented that the technology “[h]elped to bring together what students like[d] most. Who would have known social networks could help [us] better understand certain things I [could not learn] in a classroom?” Some participants stated that the Pinterest project allowed them to “connect with others outside of class” and that they were interested in and learned from the FL cultural content their peers were posting online. Furthermore, the structured feature of the thematic boards was “a good way to organize interesting [cultural pins]” and allowed students to “keep track [of the] many facts about Hispanic countries.”

Finally, students believed that the Pinterest project was helpful in that many skills and tasks corresponded to other dimensions of the Intermediate Spanish I class. First, because students were required to read cultural content on the Internet, write about this information, and discuss it in class, many participants highlighted in the open-ended survey responses that one advantage of the project was the ability to practice both the receptive and productive skills that they developed throughout the course.

Although there were compelling benefits in support of the Pinterest project, a number of drawbacks were likewise pointed out by participants (Table 2). The two themes that emerged focused on (1) the structure of the Pinterest project itself and (2) the use of technology in the FL classroom. Regarding the former theme, a few students stated that the assignments involving Pinterest were time-consuming, tedious, and confusing at times. Some participants also indicated that they did not feel that these tasks connected with other aspects of the Intermediate Spanish I class. Conversely, as mentioned above, other students affirmed that the Pinterest activity allowed them to practice other skills related to the course. In terms of the technological obstacles that students cited, some participants claimed that Pinterest was not pleasant to use in Spanish class. One respondent underscored that Pinterest was “just for females” and others indicated that they felt uncomfortable using the SNS, due to their unfamiliarity with the technology. Finally, four commenters noted that it was difficult to pin websites that did not have an image, which caused them frustration at times. Even though participants specified drawbacks of the Pinterest project and the SNS itself, these types of comments were much fewer in number and depth than the benefits highlighted above.

Discussion

Students' Impressions of the Pinterest Project

The results, as a whole, suggest that the Pinterest project to explore FL culture in Intermediate Spanish I was an engaging and mostly enjoyable way to explore FL culture for learners. Students' confidence levels in their knowledge of FL culture increased substantially from the beginning of the course, and many participants supported the inclusion of the project in future classes of Intermediate Spanish I. Several students appreciated the flexibility the personalized aspect of the project

granted them. With that said, however, some participants cited that they did not know how to go about finding appropriate cultural material in the TL on the Internet, and this caused them frustration. This dissatisfaction might explain why the scores for Question 5 on the post-project survey were not as high as expected. Perhaps this frustration was due to the fact that intermediate-level learners of Spanish were not accustomed to this type of autonomy as they studied FL culture. In addition, as “the increasing amount of information [available on the Web] generally makes learners confused while they try to reach specific information” (Aydin, 2000, p. 2), the use of the Internet can be counterproductive if students are not guided along the way. Thus, in order to assist students in finding appropriate sites or topics on FL culture, one modification of the project could include a brainstorming session at the beginning of the course on how to search for websites in the TL that have appropriate cultural content. Moreover, FL teachers could take this opportunity to train students on how to assume more responsibility of their learning of the FL in general. Perhaps with this type of direction, students’ opinions on the personalized aspect of the project would be more positive. Despite the fact that some participants of this study did not know how to fully embrace the personalized nature of the project designed for them to explore their individual interests, the authors still contend that learner agency and autonomy in a personalized academic environment can bolster creative thinking and motivation in the learning of languages and target cultures and should be incorporated in to FL classes at all levels.

In terms of students’ attitudes toward Pinterest, our results indicate that even though a few participants were not necessarily motivated by what the SNS offered, most students found Pinterest useful to investigate and especially to organize web pages pertaining to FL cultural topics. The bookmarking site not only served as a type of portfolio that housed a semester’s worth of research on FL cultures, but also it allowed students to communicate in the TL and to connect with one another outside of class. With participants’ comments ranging from “[Pinterest] gave us an opportunity to utilize technology to practice the language” to “I’m not a huge fan of computers,” one notices that, while we live in a society where a strong dependence on technology is pervasive, it is still possible to encounter some resistance to its use, and we should not assume that all students are “digital natives” by default. Likewise, it is possible that many of our students do not have easy access to technological tools. Nonetheless, the participants of this study offered more positive comments than negative ones about Pinterest and technology in general, and it does appear that this SNS provided them an effective platform to study FL culture.

Another factor that greatly influenced students’ opinions of the Pinterest project was gender, with females rating the use of Pinterest much more favorably than males. This finding should not be a complete surprise in light of the demographic data of Pinterest members presented previously in this article. Nevertheless, because other instructors are currently utilizing Pinterest in different areas of post-secondary education, and because the participants included in this study were of the same age group that most commonly utilizes the SNS, we did not anticipate that males and females would offer significantly different evaluations of the project; we were

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also unaware prior to the study that, in general, SNS use is often differentiated by gender (BI Intelligence, 2015). Therefore, it is vital to consider the balance of males and females in a class when selecting a particular SNS.

Considerations for Educators

In looking at the benefits from an FL educator's perspective, the Pinterest endeavor integrated many of the necessary skills that teachers should incorporate in their classrooms. Most importantly, the project enables learners to build their own understanding of TL cultures, which has been shown to increase student motivation. Likewise, this approach lessens the pressure on teachers to be experts on TL cultures as students are responsible for finding and learning about the topics they find most intriguing. Through self-directed exploration and collection of cultural digital artifacts, as well as the formulation of responses to them, the Pinterest endeavor allowed students to address three cultural "knowings": knowing about, knowing why, and knowing oneself (Moran, 2001). Furthermore, students explored culture in the TL, a key stipulation emphasized by Warford and White (2012), who affirmed that "if language instructors want students to really interpret the target culture from the inside, then the L1 has no place in instructor discourse" (p. 411).

Additionally, the Pinterest assignments naturally incorporated many abilities as listed on the 21st Century World Language Map Skills (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2011), such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, technology literacy, initiative and self-direction, and productivity and accountability. With adjustments to the project to incorporate the purpose, audience, and evaluation of sources, the skills of information and media literacy could also be addressed. Due to its diverse nature, the project involved several of the W-RSLL (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015) and all of the five goal areas to some degree. Two participant quotes are particularly helpful in illustrating that the Pinterest endeavor was effective in addressing the W-RSLL. One student affirmed that "[t]hrough my Pinterest activities, I learned there seem to be a lot more similarities between American [sic] and Hispanic countries than I had initially thought" (W-RSLL 2.1, 2.2, 4.2). Another participant remarked that "[a]s a whole, I think the Hispanic culture is much more alive than any I am used to and I'm dying to visit and immerse myself someday" (W-RSLL 5.1, 5.2). While the initial purpose of the Pinterest project was for learners to "use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the [products, practices,] and perspectives of the cultures studied" (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015), students made noteworthy strides in the other goal areas that are so crucial in promoting the use of the FL beyond the confines of a formal academic context. Finally, the Pinterest project incorporated best practices in FL education through the use of authentic materials; Shrum and Glisan (2010) affirmed that "[b]ecause these texts are prepared for native speakers, they reflect the details of everyday life in a culture as well as its societal values" (p. 85).

With respect to the use of technology, it is not only important to consider students' attitudes, but also FL teachers' comfort levels with incorporating SNSs into their classrooms. As discussed previously, K-16 teachers reported that they do not utilize social media as an educational tool because of the various problems that could arise due to their use, such as privacy and plagiarism. These concerns are legitimate, and these issues must be factored in when adopting an SNS for pedagogical purposes. Yet, because previous research and the present investigation support the inclusion of SNSs in FL education, we recommend that FL teachers at all levels consider implementing the use of social media in their classes. A few strategies could help offset some of the potential difficulties that these sites present. First, FL educators should proactively seek out training and professional development opportunities on how to incorporate social media tools at local and national conferences, during in-service training days, and via webinars. Familiarity with the technology will enable teachers to design engaging activities and avoid possible pitfalls. It is also advisable to incorporate SNSs very gradually into class activities and, once both the teacher and students are comfortable with the sites' features, SNSs can be integrated more robustly in subsequent tasks in and outside the classroom. Finally, FL instructors should poll students on which SNSs they prefer and with which they are most familiar and, subsequently, dedicate class time to train students on how to use the chosen SNS for class assignments. This could result in increased student investment in the tasks and a manageable learning curve with regard to the navigation of the sites, as the findings of the present study clearly show that students' familiarity with and perceptions of the technology before beginning the assignments were decisive factors in shaping their overall attitudes toward the project.

Recommendations and Limitations

Following the authors' reflection on the implementation of the Pinterest project, it seems important to highlight a few more recommendations for instructors who wish to implement a similar endeavor in their classrooms and for future research. With regard to the former, both modeling and monitoring are crucial steps in adapting this project to an individual class. Students need to know exactly what is expected of them and "[when using SNSs] learning outcomes for each activity need to be clearly defined" (McDermott, 2013, para. 49); the teacher can demonstrate appropriate interactions with his or her own Pinterest account, which the students follow. Sufficient feedback should be given, especially at the beginning of the term or the project, in order to let students know whether they are in fact meeting the teacher's expectations. This can be done particularly well with a detailed rubric for pins, a tool that the project described here did not incorporate (but see Appendix H for an example), and which future research could evaluate. In this manner, the pins could be assessed separately from other related assignments. These other related class components (e.g., Appendices B - F) are highly recommended, as they provide ways for students to integrate what they have learned and, ideally, to hold them accountable for describing in detail their newly acquired knowledge. These tasks should be both student-centered and communicative in nature. Finally, in

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the spirit of personalized learning, we would like to restate the recommendation to allow the class to choose their own social media tool—from a list of vetted SNSs—because, again, prior familiarity with SNSs can greatly influence students' level of motivation and enthusiasm for the project. Possible SNSs that could be utilized in lieu of or in conjunction with Pinterest are Edmodo, Facebook, Ning, Classroom 2.0, and Twiducate, among others (see Teach Thought Staff, 2014, for more suggestions). Clearly, after taking in account student input, the teacher must ultimately determine the best SNSs for his or her students; here we have shown that Pinterest is a viable option among the many SNSs that can be used in a FL course.

It is important to note the limitations of the present study. One dimension that was not included in the scope of the present investigation—but one that would shed a great deal of light on the effectiveness of implementing a project that requires students to explore personalized FL cultural information—is an analysis of the quality, depth, and accuracy of what students took away about the target culture after the project has concluded. Here, the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Pinterest project is based primarily on student ratings and their opinions of the activities and tools. However, in order to be able to fully endorse this type of endeavor as a “best practice” in the FL classroom to facilitate the acquisition of cultural knowledge, an assessment of the quality of learning is warranted.⁵ While it is important that learners leave the class “more confident” in their knowledge of FL cultures, as we found in the present analysis, if this knowledge reinforces preconceived stereotypes or is superficial at best, the strategy must be adjusted to ensure that students are progressing in an appropriate fashion.

Conclusion

To conclude, we uphold our recommendation of the implementation of social media tools to explore target cultures, and Pinterest is one possible SNS that FL educators could incorporate to facilitate the acquisition of this knowledge. With that said, FL instructors should be aware that males might not respond as well as females to the Pinterest technology, and those who are current users of Pinterest might feel more favorably about the project than those who are not. Thus, it is critical that instructors poll students about their familiarity of and opinions about different SNSs before including them in class assignments. In general, we agree that CALL and social media tools are especially useful to FL educators, especially because culture is a dynamic construct (e.g., Witte & Harden, 2011). Textbook culture sections—whether dedicated sections or simple sidebars on the page—do not adequately address this aspect of FL learning; thus, we contend that the use of the Internet, including SNSs, is particularly appropriate for teaching content that is ever-changing. Furthermore, the proposed Pinterest project featured students themselves exploring and curating the cultural information and artifacts they found relevant and engaging. Therefore, students assume greater agency in their own learning in carrying out projects such as this one. We encourage

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FL instructors to implement other social media tools in order to facilitate the acquisition of cultural knowledge, and future action research will be particularly beneficial in investigating the effectiveness, popularity, and assessment of such efforts.

Notes

1. This particular institution does not offer minors in FLs.
2. “SS” is the abbreviation for “Spanish-speaking.”
3. The chapter titles in *Sueña* are as follows: *Sentir y vivir* (Feeling and Living), *Vivir en la ciudad* (Living in the City), *La influencia de los medios* (The Influence of the Media), *Generaciones en movimiento* (Generations in Movement), *Las riquezas naturales* (Natural Riches), and *El valor de las ideas* (The Value of Ideas).
4. There were only 43 responses, as one participant omitted her rating for this question.
5. The researchers have conducted a preliminary analysis of the cultural information reported by students during this project. Although beyond the scope of the present article, it appears that there was a range of quality, depth, and accuracy displayed in participants’ responses on exams and on the mini-compositions, from superficial to deeper understandings. It is imperative that instructors inform students about the expectations of the cultural information and intervene when they are falling short of these guidelines.

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Appendix A: Pre-Project Survey

General information

Current age: _____

Major(s): _____

Interdisciplinary Minor: _____

Years at Institution:

_____ Freshman (0-1 year)

_____ Senior (4 years)

_____ Sophomore (2 years)

_____ 5th year +

_____ Junior (3 years)

Formal education in Spanish

1. Why did you start taking Spanish? Check all that apply.

_____ To fulfill a curriculum requirement.

_____ The Spanish language interests me.

_____ The cultures of Spanish-speaking countries interest me.

_____ Knowing how to speak Spanish will help me in my future career.

_____ I want to get to know the Hispanic community where I live.

_____ I want to travel to a Spanish-speaking country and be able to speak the language.

_____ I want to live in a Spanish-speaking country one day.

_____ Other: _____

2. Have you traveled to a Spanish-speaking country? List each country, for how long you were there, when you were there, and the reason for your visit (i.e., vacation, mission trip, study abroad, etc.).

3. Did you take Spanish in Elementary School? Circle: Yes No
For how many years? _____

4. Did you take Spanish in Middle School? Circle: Yes No
For how many years? _____

5. Did you take Spanish in High School? Circle: Yes No
For how many years? _____

Please list the title of classes and the grades you earned.

1. Title: _____ Grade: _____

2. Title: _____ Grade: _____

3. Title: _____ Grade: _____

4. Title: _____ Grade: _____

6. Years of Spanish in college:

For how many semesters? _____

Please list the title of classes and the grades you earned.

1. Title: _____ Grade: _____

2. Title: _____ Grade: _____

3. Title: _____ Grade: _____

“Products (Both tangible and intangible): Items required or justified by the underlying beliefs and values of that cultures. Examples: books, arts and crafts, tools, food, dress, music, dances, sports, and games.

Practices (What to do when and where): Patterns of social interactions or behaviors accepted by a society, such as rites of passage (i.e., *quinceañera*, *bodas*, *bautizos*, *comuni6n*, etc.), conversation forms (i.e., origins of colloquial forms like *che* and *tío*, Internet lingo in Spanish), social ‘pecking order,’ and use of space.

Perspectives: Representing that culture’s view of the world including meaning, attitudes, values, and ideas.” (p. 33, <http://tinyurl.com/a7kalvg>)

GETTING SET UP

If you are unfamiliar with Pinterest, please watch the following tutorial found at: <http://pinterest4education.wikispaces.com/Tutorials>. You could also read “Pinning 101” at <http://pinterest.com/about/help/>. This page explains everything you need to know about how to use the service, including how to install the “Pin It” button in your browser that will allow you to grab images. Please read about Pin Etiquette: <http://pinterest.com/about/etiquette/>

Please create your account on Pinterest after receiving my invitation (open a new account if you don’t want to use your personal one). Once you have accepted my invitation, go to settings using the drop-down menu under your name in the upper right-hand corner and edit your profile (include a photo). Reconfigure to your account **Spanish (America or Spain)** under **language**.

Make sure to request to follow me (*buscar amigos*, then *seguir todo*). This way everyone in our classes will be connected via my account.

CREATING A BOARD (CREAR UN TABLERO)

Go to **añadir +** in the upper right-hand corner and choose **crear un tablero** from the options. Add the title of the board under *nombre de tablero* and select **educaci6n** as the category from the drop-down menu. Press **crear tablero** and your board will be created!

Create 6 boards to organize pins according to each *Lecci6n* (see example on my site):

- Lecci6n 1: Sentir y vivir*
- Lecci6n 2: Vivir en la ciudad*
- Lecci6n 3: La influencia de los medios*
- Lecci6n 4: Generaciones en movimiento*
- Lecci6n 5: Las riquezas naturales*
- Lecci6n 6: El valor de las ideas*

ADDING ‘PINS’ (AÑADIR PINES)

For each *Lecci6n*, you must ‘pin’ at least **3 NEW pins and 1 repin** related to cultural content, but of interest to **YOU**. You can find this material via Google searches, my website of Helpful Links, or other recommendations. The websites you use can be in English or Spanish, but must contain information on Hispanic cultures.

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To add a new pin:

1. Find a website containing cultural information of interest relating to the *Lección* and press **control + C** to copy the website address.
2. On your Pinterest page, find and choose **añadir +** in the upper right corner.
3. Choose the option on the left **añadir un pin**
4. Press **control + V** to paste the website address and press **buscar imágenes**.
5. Choose the image you want to use, the board to which you want to 'pin' the website, and write one sentence in Spanish about the **product** or **practice** (define it as such), and give brief information on the culture's **perspective**.
6. Push **pinear** once you have finished writing your brief post.

REPINING 'PINS' (REPINEAR PINES)

You must repin another classmate's pin (at least 1) and comment on it in Spanish each *Lección*

To repin:

1. Go to a classmate's account and read their pins on the corresponding board of the *Lección*.
2. Choose a pin that you want to repin onto your same board and press **repinear**.
3. Label it as a **REPIN** and write a brief comment in Spanish on why this pin interests you.

Appendix C: Sample In-Class Discussion Prompts

1. SPANISH: *En grupos, hablen de lo que aprendieron a través de investigar los pines en Pinterest en esta lección. ¿Cómo se conecta con el material del libro?*

ENGLISH: In groups, discuss what you have learned through your own personal investigation on Pinterest. How does this connect with the material we've learned in the book?

2. SPANISH: *En parejas, comparen y contrasten algún aspecto de la cultura hispana que aprendieron este capítulo a través de la actividad de Pinterest. ¿Es un producto, práctica, o perspectiva, o una combinación? ¿Cómo es igual a su cultura nativa? ¿Cómo es diferente?*

ENGLISH: In pairs, compare and contrast an aspect of Hispanic culture that you all learned this chapter via the Pinterest activity. Is it a product, practice, or perspective, or a combination? How is it the same to your native culture? How is it different?

3. SPANISH: *¿Aprendieron algo esta lección a través de Pinterest que no esperaban aprender? ¿Algún producto, práctica, o perspectiva interesante para Uds.? ¿Cuál(es)?*

ENGLISH: Did you all learn something this unit through Pinterest that you were not expecting to learn? An interesting product, practice, and/or perspective? What ones?

Appendix D: Description of the Mini-Composition Assignment

We will write mini-compositions based on some of the information you find on Pinterest as connected to the chapter's topics. You will need to incorporate information on your pins (or someone else's) in your answer. Each mini-composition should be between 100-150 words in length (~6-8 sentences) in Spanish. You will cite the website from one of your pins in the composition, but this is not a part of the 100-150 word-length. Once I grade the first version and turn it back to you, you make the corrections (see correction code) and turn in a final version (along with the original) on the specified due date given in class.

Sample mini-composition prompts:

Lección 1: Sentir y vivir

SPANISH: *Usando el vocabulario y las estructuras de este capítulo, y con la información cultural que encontraste en los pines en Pinterest, escribe 100-150 palabras del siguiente tema: ¿Cómo te describes? ¿Qué haces en tu tiempo libre? Compárate y contrástate con una personalidad latina famosa que vive en los EE.UU. o con las actividades populares que se hacen en países hispanohablantes. No te olvides de incluir el sitio web de tu pin en la composición.*

ENGLISH: Using the vocabulary and structures from this chapter, and with the cultural information that you have found on Pinterest, write 100-150 words about the following topics: How do you describe yourself? What do you do in your free time? Compare and contrast yourself with a famous Latino celebrity that lives in the US or with certain popular activities that are done in Spanish-speaking countries. Don't forget to include the website you used in your composition.

Lección 2: Vivir en la ciudad

SPANISH: *Usando el vocabulario y las estructuras de este capítulo, y con la información que encontraste en los pines en Pinterest, escribe 100-150 palabras del siguiente tema: Describe el pueblo/la ciudad donde vivías cuando eras niño/a. ¿Qué hacías allí y por qué (no) te gustaba vivir allí? Después de investigar en Internet, compara y contrasta esta ciudad con un pueblo o una ciudad en Latinoamérica. ¿Te gustaría vivir allí? ¿Por qué (no)? No te olvides de incluir el sitio web de tu pin en la composición.*

ENGLISH: Using the vocabulary and structures from this chapter, and with the cultural information that you have found on Pinterest, write 100-150 words about the following topics: Describe the town or city where you used to live when you were a child. What did you used to do? Why did you like to live there? After researching on the Internet, compare and contrast this town with one in Latin America. Would you like to live there? Why or why not? Don't forget to include the website you used in your composition.

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Appendix E: Rubric for Mini-Compositions

	Criterion	Excellent	Very Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
First version = 80% of grade	Content and organization	The mini-composition was 100-150 words. The content was highly relevant to the chapter's topics as well as original. The composition was logically organized. The writer cited a website from a pin in the composition.	The mini-composition was 100-150 words. The content was relevant to the chapter's topics and somewhat original. The composition was fairly organized. The writer cited a website from a pin in the composition.	The mini-composition was 100-150 words. The content was relevant to the chapter's topics; however, there was a lack of originality with the content. At times the composition was hard to follow. The writer cited a website from a pin in the composition.	The mini-composition was less than 100-150 words. The content was not relevant to the chapter's topics and unoriginal. There was no original investigation incorporated. The writer did not cite a website from a pin in the composition.
	Structures	The grammatical structures included were appropriate and the composition was free of errors.	The grammatical structures included were appropriate and the composition was mostly free of errors.	The grammatical structures included were appropriate and the composition had occasional errors.	The grammatical structures included were inappropriate and the composition was latent with grammatical errors.
	Vocabulary	The writer included several vocabulary words of the chapter in an appropriate and innovative manner.	The writer included some vocabulary words from the chapter in an appropriate manner.	The writer included only a few vocabulary words from the chapter in an appropriate manner.	The writer did not include any words from the chapter and/or did not use them in an appropriate manner.
	Pins and repins	Three pins and one repin were completed and pinned to the appropriate board on time.	NA	NA	The three pins and one repin were not appropriate and/or were not completed on time.
Final version = 20% of grade	Revisions	Carefully and thoroughly made corrections for content, structures, vocabulary, and organization.	Completed all editing steps, shows considerable improvement.	Some editing completed, but overall quality of composition is similar to first draft.	No revisions or only minor changes were made.

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<p style="text-align: center;">Repin</p>	<p>The student included a classmate's pin (i.e., a repin) on his/her board for the unit and provided a reflective comment in the target language about this repin.</p>	<p>The student included a classmate's pin (i.e., a repin) on his/her board for the unit and provided a comment in the target language about this repin.</p>	<p>The student did not include a classmate's pin (i.e., a repin) on his/her board for the unit or did not provide a comment.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Timeliness</p>	<p>All pins and repins were posted on time.</p>	<p>All pins and repins were posted on time.</p>	<p>None or some of the pins or repins were not posted on time.</p>