



# Culturally Immersive Teaching Strategies and Their Impact on Student Engagement in Spanish Language Learning at a Caribbean University

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## Abstract

Foreign language learning is frequently centered on grammar and vocabulary instruction; yet, meaningful language learning is intrinsically linked to cultural awareness. This paper analyzes the impact of culturally relevant and experiential teaching methods on student engagement and motivation in Spanish language acquisition at a Caribbean university. The research is based on reflective classroom practices and utilizes the recurrent application of culturally integrated teaching methodologies in undergraduate Spanish courses at the University of Guyana. Cultural exposure is deliberately integrated at the outset of the course through guided conversations and listening activities centered on Spanish music, traditions, clothing, food, and historical settings, facilitating an early cultural connection to the target language. Students are required to undertake independent study and present on various Spanish-speaking countries, fostering cultural understanding and learner autonomy. A key element of the methodology is an annual cultural performance event in which students engage in singing, dancing, and poetry in Spanish. These performance-oriented activities aim to foster active language use within a nurturing and innovative educational setting. Initial classroom observations and student feedback indicate that these culturally immersive practices enhance enthusiasm, increase involvement, and facilitate the development of confidence in oral communication. Students exhibit persistent enthusiasm for learning Spanish and regularly express eagerness for cultural events. This paper enhances the discourse on culturally responsive language instruction by emphasizing the significance of cultural exposure, student research, and performance-based learning in fostering meaningful engagement. It provides pragmatic insights for foreign language instructors aiming to augment motivation and engagement, especially in higher education settings where full immersion opportunities are constrained.

**Keywords:** Culturally responsive teaching; Foreign language acquisition; Student engagement; Experiential learning; Spanish language education; Caribbean higher education