

Examining the impact of human-centered design in the language curriculum: A new framework for medical Spanish

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Introduction

The authors note that “LSP courses can indeed be a tool for addressing enrollment pressures” while also arguing that such courses can promote “social justice, language justice, immigrant justice, and health justice” (Sánchez-Gilbert et al., 2025, pp. 800–801).

In your experience, how can language programs balance enrollment-driven goals (e.g., career relevance, attracting students) with broader social and humanistic goals such as equity, justice, and community engagement?

HCD as a Framework for Language Learning

HCD “can serve as a powerful framework for developing both linguistic and intercultural competencies, equipping students with the skills necessary to navigate an increasingly interconnected world” (Sánchez-Gilbert et al., 2025, p. 803).

How do you currently help students develop intercultural competence alongside language proficiency? What role, if any, could problem-solving or community-centered projects play in helping students connect language learning to real-world contexts?

Theme 1: Culturally Informed Perspective Beyond Linguistic Knowledge

Students recognized that “simply knowing and understanding the words and grammar of a specific language is not enough” and that learners should be “culturally, historically, politically, and socially aware” to better relate to communities (Sánchez-Gilbert et al., 2025, p. 809).

What kinds of activities or experiences seem most effective for developing deeper cultural and social understanding?

The instructional toolkit encouraged students to reflect on “their positionality and their own experiences,” including experiences in healthcare settings and interpreting for family members (Sánchez-Gilbert et al., 2025, p. 812).

What role do students’ personal experiences and identities play in your classroom?

Discussion

The authors argue that language programs can engage in “interdisciplinary teaching without losing our own disciplinary strengths of translinguistic and transcultural learning” and encourage

educators to view language requirements as “more than a matter related to proficiency and linguistic acquisition” (Sánchez-Gilbert et al., 2025, p. 814).

To what extent should language courses prioritize cultural understanding, self-reflection, or social issues alongside linguistic proficiency?

“The framework of HCD is reproducible and adaptable, and it can be scaled and adjusted to a wide range of courses, implemented up and down in a language curriculum” (Sánchez-Gilbert et al., 2025, p. 815).

What kinds of language courses or teaching contexts do you think could benefit most from a human-centered design approach? How might HCD look different in novice-level, advanced, K–12, or university language classrooms?