

# Tuning Into Fluency in the Advanced Spanish Classroom

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Research Question: Does interaction with social media in Spanish have a significant impact upon the oral fluency of the advanced Spanish student?

### OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to examine the impact of the integration of a social medium such as Sound Cloud has upon the development of oral proficiency in Spanish as well as the students' motivation to study the language. It was my hope that the creative aspect of this project would enhance students' excitement and motivation to seek out new vocabulary and topics not included in the traditional class structure.

### Project Context

This research project was conducted in conjunction with SPAN 300-Advanced Spanish Language. The central learning goal was to enhance students' oral and grammatical precision and motivation to further their studies in Spanish as a result of their interaction with Sound Cloud and Radioambulante. SoundCloud is an online audio distribution platform based in that enables its users to upload, record, promote, and share their originally-created sounds. Radioambulante is Spanish-language program telling uniquely Latin American stories.

### Methods

This was accomplished by the integration of "SoundCloud," a social medium component to the course structure, which allowed the students to apply their knowledge and creativity to create pieces in Spanish on a variety of topics. Over the course of the semester the students prepared three different pieces which varied from a Mexican restaurant commercial, virtual visits of Machu Picchu and Duluth to a piece on the controversial tradition of bullfighting in Spain. After crafting their projects, the students then posted them on SoundCloud.

### Quotes from Students

\*"It was nice to develop my own script and learn words that pertained to an interesting subject of my choosing."

\* "I think it helped for we were forced to speak Spanish outside the classroom"

\*"I do feel more confident in my speaking skills but I still have room for improvement. I am able to speak it better than the beginning of the semester."

\*"I do, and I think it's because I truly want to get better at oral Spanish, and so I will repeat the sentences until it sounds right, forcing me to try harder to pronounce things correctly."



### Challenges and Surprises

Despite the fact that SoundCloud is quite user-friendly, a few students demonstrated apprehension in regards to learning to use a new technology. The students relished this freedom to tap into their creative side, while others required more guidance. Many of the students created projects based upon their own personal experiences which imbued the projects with newfound meaning. Others created fun and dynamic pieces that added a touch of liveliness and humor to the classroom environment. One unexpected benefit of this project was that it allowed me to hone in on each student and pin point their weak points in oral language production, both oral and written. Having a recorded example of each student's work allowed me to listen more than once to each piece. Thus I was able to aid each student further than I would normally be able to listen in on their piece and provide them feedback both in class and individually. The students expressed that this project did not motivate them to study Spanish more, for they began the project with a robust interest in the language and a strong desire to study abroad in a Spanish speaking country.

#### Bibliography

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- Bedjou, Atanane. "Using Radio Programs in the EFL Classroom. *English Teaching Forum*. 44.1 (2006) 28-31.
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### Conclusion

Overall the students found that the project to be stimulating and beneficial to their oral development in Spanish for it encouraged them to practice speaking Spanish out loud outside of the classroom. Although the students acknowledged the importance of the Radio Ambulante programs, they found them to be quite challenging. Soundcloud provided the students with a mirror in which to listen to and deduce their strong and weak points of language production. Despite the positive impact of this project, the students still expressed a preference for conversation circles as the most effective method to build fluency. Despite this, I believe that working with SoundCloud allowed the students to become more aware of their accent, pronunciation and grammatical accuracy. The process of creating their projects provided them with time to reflect autocorrect themselves which is more challenging to achieve during an active conversation. Although I did not note a drastic change in their oral Spanish as a result of this project, at the end of the course