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The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm: A Means to Discernment of Faith and Values in a Spanish Language and Literature Curriculum

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Abstract

The language classroom may not commonly be considered a site for inquiry into faith and values, but a pedagogy that combines foreign language study and values inquiry can offer students effective language acquisition and a step along the path toward individual moral formation. This article examines an approach to teaching language and literature that is framed by the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm, a learning method drawn from the Jesuit approach to education. Professors from a Christian liberal arts university describe how they use the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm in a two-semester, third-year Spanish language curriculum as a framework to guide the encounter between a foreign language text and students' values and cultural context. The five steps of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm—context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation—encourage students to place their experiences into dialogue with the values of a literary text, while building fluency by engaging in higher levels of complex language usage.

In his article titled “Language as a Liberal Art,” Professor David L. Weeks asks the question: “Does language study shape the moral character of students?”¹ Our answer is a resounding yes! As two professors teaching in a Christian university, our passion for faith and learning continuously energizes and guides our teaching in the language classroom. As Weeks states, “[l]anguage is a stepping-stone to being fully human, for we use it to know truth, teach values, enhance virtue, develop character, and mold good citizens.”²

The task of how to effectively integrate faith and learning affects all of us who teach and work in Christian colleges and universities. As language teachers, we are fortunate to have embedded in our subject matter plenty of opportunities to touch upon issues of cultural relevance, opening up discussions of justice, identity, morality, and values. If done intentionally, the integration of faith and language study can become a means of shaping students' moral foundation.

As an example of this intentional integration, we created a third-year Spanish curriculum that

combines the study of literature with issues related to students' worldview. Our curriculum is designed as a two-semester sequence of third-year Spanish, in which the study of language is supported through the reading and study of literary primary text selections. This sequence acts as a stepping-stone into the Spanish major and bridges the formal study of language to the applied study of literature and culture found in upper division courses. Along with language study and literary analysis, our curriculum encourages students to discern how their own faith and values relate to the characters and themes portrayed in literature. Bringing students' personal values into the learning process invites them to experience cultures of the Spanish-speaking world in a personally contextualized way that brings meaning to their study beyond the acquisition of language skills. To bring students' individual values and the values portrayed in literature into conversation, we use the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm. This is a framework that purposefully guides students through a series of learning steps drawn from Jesuit spiritual formation, which underlies Jesuit educational philosophy. These steps take students

beyond a basic understanding of stories and the usual literary analysis to engage on a personal level with the literature. In these steps, students are encouraged to explore their own faith and values in light of those of the cultures they learn about in the class.

Inquiry into students' values as a part of the language classroom foregrounds the students themselves and their role as learners and individuals, in a way that is not commonly explored in language research. David Smith summarizes the common themes for research on faith, spirituality, and language learning:

- studies that deal directly with spiritual aspects of teacher or learner identity
- studies that focus on classroom interactions
- studies that focus on institutional context
- studies that consider the wider ideological context of teaching and learning within broad social settings as it relates to the construction of pedagogical approaches, and
- studies that investigate the relationship of religion and language education to encounters between cultures³

These themes tend to feature the role of the teacher or the institution more prominently than the role of the learner. But in a study describing the benefits of the Personal Narrative Journal in the Christian foreign language classroom, Galen Yorba-Gray states that students' personal stories "can be tapped as a source or used as receptive structures for directed input."⁴ In other words, when personal stories are drawn out in connection to literature, a new space is created in which to explore topics related to faith and value systems. Philip Hauptman, writing about language learning, describes the notion of *schema theory* as a way of looking at the role of the student in the learning process:

Schema theory is essentially a theory that explains the role of past experiences, or background knowledge, in comprehension. According to schema theory, this knowledge (or experience) is organized in cognitive

structures or *schemata* and stored in our brains at all levels of abstraction.⁵

Based on schema theory, the incorporation of the individual learner and the learner's background and experience is crucial to the learning process and affects students' ability to take part in abstract discussions. To do this, students begin to pull from their knowledge of increasingly complex grammatical structures and vocabulary in order to formulate opinions, discuss prior experiences, and engage in hypothetical discussions that generate new ideas. As students progress through the concrete and formulaic use of language and begin to use language for critical and abstract communicative purposes, fluency increases. To tap into this opportunity for increased fluency, we have intentionally adapted our 300-level curriculum to include activities that bring students' backgrounds and experiences into the learning environment. These activities prompt students to use their imagination to connect directly with the characters. David Fleming tells us Ignatian spirituality makes "liberal use of the imagination."⁶ According to Fleming, Ignatius of Loyola encouraged us to place ourselves "fully within a story from the Gospels," by using our senses to feel, smell, see, and hear as participants in the story.⁷ As we encourage students to use their imagination to enter the context of the characters, the opportunity for a personal encounter with the literature increases.

In this paper, we describe how we have applied the framework of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm to the study of literature as part of a 300-level undergraduate Spanish curriculum at a Christian liberal arts university. We detail each of the five steps of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm in the context of our 300-level Spanish curriculum. For each step, we describe the methodology that facilitates this type of learning and the benefits that the integration of faith and learning bring to our students and to the overall liberal arts curriculum.

Understanding the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm and Its Context

The classroom tool we use to engage the values in literary texts and put them in conversation with students' personal values and experiences is the

Ignatian pedagogical paradigm, which is a technique that emerges from Jesuit educational and spiritual formation. To give context to the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm and the way we use it in our classroom, it is necessary to begin with an overview of the central themes that permeate an education in the Jesuit tradition. Jesuit educational philosophy is grounded in the desire to educate the whole person. To accomplish such a holistic and personal education, several factors must be present in the educational environment. One factor is the acknowledgment that God is the Author of all reality; in this acknowledgement, Jesuit education strives to “create a sense of wonder and mystery in learning about God’s creation.”⁸ Another factor is the pursuit of the total formation of each individual within his or her community. This formation, a holistic process that encompasses spiritual and moral, as well as educational and social dimensions, involves fostering to the fullest extent possible the development of one’s God-given talents within the context of membership in and service to the human community. Jesuit education must also include a religious dimension that permeates all aspects of the learning process, acknowledging that every discipline can provide a means to discover God. As Elizabeth Murray Morelli explains, “[t]he Jesuit ideal of critical engagement with the secular culture reflected the basic premise of the Renaissance humanist tradition that religious and moral inspiration could be found in secular subjects, even in the works of pagan authors.”⁹ Jesuit education requires a care and concern for the individual through *cura personalis*, which Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., describes as “a genuine love and personal care for each of our students.”¹⁰ Other elements include dialog between faith and culture and the need for the learner to be actively engaged in the learning process.

In the broader context of Jesuit education, the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm is the method of Jesuit pedagogy. It is designed to promote growth and learning within a moral context. The paradigm focuses on five steps of the learning process: context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation. Initially, one might think that this paradigm is not very different from Bloom’s taxonomy, which emphasizes knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis,

and evaluation. However, Bloom’s taxonomy is a set of self-contained steps that does not engage values or explore a Christian context as it moves the learner from lower to higher order thinking skills.¹¹ In contrast, the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm is infused with the notion of becoming the best learner one can be for the purpose of working toward the *magis*, or the more: “It is not sufficient to do well; one must strive to do better.”¹² The premise of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm is to take students through this series of steps to facilitate the learning process while, at the same time, working for the greater good. These steps lead the learner from concrete, context-based learning to the integration of knowledge and personal experiences.

With this background on the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm, we now turn to its application in the language classroom as a framework to guide the encounter between a foreign language text and students’ own values and cultural context. In the next five sections, corresponding to the five steps of the paradigm, we describe how we as professors facilitate this encounter, creating an environment that invites student reflection on issues of values and faith in the context of their lives and in the world of the text.

To demonstrate the progression of the paradigm as it applies to the study of literature in our 300-level curriculum, we incorporate examples from Ana Maria Matute’s *La rama seca* for each step.¹³ Briefly, in this story, Matute tells of a small child left at home while her mother and brother tend to the fields. The little girl is told to call the neighbor, Doña Clementina, if she needs anything. While alone, the child plays with Pipa, her only toy, made from a dry branch covered with a crude piece of old cloth. When Pipa goes missing, the little girl becomes ill and eventually dies. Months later, Doña Clementina finds the faded doll buried under the melting snow in the orchard. It is a sad story about loneliness, social status, and the gap between reality and imagination.

Context: Exploring the Setting

The first step of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm is to provide *context* to facilitate the learning experience. In a second language classroom, context can begin with the communicative approach, a method of

language teaching that emphasizes speaking and interaction in a highly contextual environment. In a setting of communicative language teaching, students find themselves in a world where they must depend on the context for comprehension. Students are exposed to exercises that include new words and concepts used in combination with vocabulary and grammar structures they have already internalized.

Beyond the setting and environment of language usage, more contextual ties can be made by drawing on students' past and present experiences and values. But the question immediately arises: do faith and values or students' life experiences belong in the methodology of a language and literature course? As Smith explains, "discussions of appropriate methodology have been central to our field [of foreign languages], and methodology has also been the area most permeated by the ideal of scientifically verified technique, of an objectively correct way of doing things not dependent on particular beliefs or convictions."¹⁴

Despite the influence of objective, scientific perspectives in language teaching, the field has increasingly recognized the importance of dimensions of language learning that are individualized, subjective, and personal. Smith goes on to say, "[r]ecent years... have seen the growth of critical, socio-cultural, and ecological approaches to language pedagogy, approaches that encourage attention to wider realities that frame and structure skill acquisition, such as identity, voice, power, ideology, difference, and social and institutional setting."¹⁵ The focus on students' life experiences, learning styles, and learning environments helps create a context in which students can experience what they are learning in the classroom in a personalized way, rather than simply acquiring information. Through consideration of the context of students' lives, the instructor creates an environment where students connect their pasts, their individual identities, their worldview, and their interests to the course materials. Consequently, students take the next step to assimilate new information in a way that allows them to have an authentic encounter with the new ideas. The Ignatian pedagogical paradigm suggests that focusing the methodology of the course on students' context connects learners to the material in a meaningful way that allows them to assimilate the information by way of an experience, rather than through the academic mastery of facts. These new ideas then become additions to students' own

contexts. To facilitate this process when we teach *Larama seca*, we ask students to respond to questions such as: What types of relationships do you see between the characters in this story? Who do you consider to be the main character, Clementina or the girl? Why? Or, what values do you see represented by the different characters in the story? How do they demonstrate these values? Questions such as these prompt students to pull from their own experiences and relationships. Students then contrast their own relationships with those they identify within the story. This process brings the student's personal context and experiences into the discussion and analysis of the story. University students, in particular, tend to filter their learning through guiding questions that are prevalent during this stage of their lives, such as: "Who am I?", "What is my purpose in life?", "What do I want to be?", or "What do I believe?" Providing a context in which students can explore questions of personal meaning and discover how they intersect with classroom learning offers a method by which guided inquiry into issues of faith and worldview opens the way to new connections between language learning and personal context.

Learning styles also provide important context for learning. To construct a context in which a diverse group of students can find their own personal fit, we as professors must address the many distinct ways that students experience the world around them. Students' varied learning styles prompt us to diversify our methods to account for visual, aural, verbal, and kinesthetic learners so students can access the information in a way that fits them best. We use partner and large group conversations, guided prompts, and varied reading strategies to provide a variety of ways for students to encounter the material. Much pedagogy, particularly in the teaching of second languages, underscores the simple fact that a variety of approaches are necessary if we are to teach the material effectively and completely. Pedagogical discussions often recognize that the highest levels of retention involve some sort of experiential learning, such as discussion, practical experience, and teaching. To guide students into a personal experience of learning, professors must create opportunities for students to identify with the context in which the material is being presented.

In our curriculum, we take special interest in the selection of the stories included in the course

reader, the *cura personalis* of the student, and the approach by which students examine the stories and other materials such as lexicons. We have intentionally picked the selections in the reader to incorporate a variety of themes relevant in the lives of the students. For example, the reader includes stories that deal with generation gaps, childhood and youth, imagination, pain and loss, injustice, family issues, spiritual faith, and more. As these themes are encountered in the stories and then explored in both literary and personal analysis, students are naturally drawn to ask questions related to their own life experiences, which invariably include their faith and values because, “relevance is a matter of significance to one’s own concerns.”¹⁶ As a result, a context for learning develops because the student recognizes that the themes are relevant and worthy of study. Students’ personal investment in their learning is often accompanied by a greater commitment to the language, mostly because students’ interest in the material spurs them to desire stronger language skills, but also because they are interacting more deeply with the material, thus supporting increased levels of retention.

The *cura personalis* of the student is also an important part of creating the context. *Cura personalis* means that we make a sincere effort to meet the needs of the individual student. In our course, for example, we approach the stories by reading them together in class—either in small groups or as a large group—and students are also expected to read the stories on their own outside of class. In a student survey conducted in this course, one student commented, “[w]hen we work through the stories together before I have worked through them on my own, I feel I don’t learn as much, but if I have read and tried to understand the material first, I feel I learn more.” Conversely, another student in the same class shared that she prefers to read at least the beginning of a new story together in class so that she can then read on her own with a sense of direction, which builds her confidence and affects her language acquisition. Taking into account students’ perceptions of their own learning not only promotes *cura personalis*, but it also facilitates the acquisition of context. Although these are two contrasting examples, they provide a reminder for us to ensure balance in our approach to the reading, in a way that accommodates students’

varied learning styles. Finally, we have created a series of questions intended to lead students from general information gathering to more in-depth topics within the literature. These questions guide students through an examination of the material in an ordered way as they examine their own lives, values, beliefs, and perspectives within the context of the stories. Our task is to promote student engagement throughout the process.

Experience: Connecting Ideas to Yourself

The second step of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm focuses on *experience*. The purpose of this step is to provide opportunities for the student to experience what they are learning, thus engaging the whole individual at a personal level in the learning process. To engage students at the level of experience, we require that students provide input of their own in small- or whole-group discussions. Ultimately, their participation builds confidence and encourages greater classroom involvement. In terms of acquiring a second language, their participation leads to increased vocabulary and fluency as students integrate their own opinions and beliefs for real communication purposes. Ultimately, this empowers students as they begin to understand the value of their own contributions.

Given that Jesuit education strives to engage the whole person, we ask: What are the facts, feelings, values, and intuitions that the learner uses as a foundation for new learning? How does the teacher guide the learner through new material, facilitating the assimilation of new information? The role of the teacher, in this case, is to provide the learner with opportunities to relate new material to what is individually known. As facilitators, we guide students through the assimilation of new information into their knowledge base. For this to occur, students must engage in higher level thinking by way of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. These processes are an important piece in raising students’ awareness of the moral positions they already hold. Murray Morelli affirms Scheler in stating that “the heart responds to values and disvalues before the mind articulates reasons.”¹⁷ The affective realm of the learner’s past experience is thus manifested through opinions and the existence or inexistence of value judgments.

One way we incorporate the past experiences of our students into new material is through guided questioning that connects the individual to the literature. In keeping with the *magis*, our questions ask students to describe and explore relationships among the characters, identify and analyze values represented by the characters, or imagine themselves as one of the characters—all in light of the common good. What could the characters have done differently? What can we learn from their actions? What do the characters' experiences tell us about human nature? This line of questioning encourages the learner to explore his or her own views in regards to the themes presented in the stories. Questions of this type for *La rama seca* include: What are the main themes in the story? How do you see them represented? How does each character develop throughout the story? How are they changed? As you read the story, how did you feel? Overall, how do you experience the divine in this story? Once students have analyzed the story in light of their own opinions and judgments, they may be asked to act out particular situations from the perspective of different characters. These dramatizations provide an opportunity for students to examine, compare and contrast, and perhaps reconcile the values portrayed by the character with their own, as they work to carry out an honest interpretation of the character.

Another activity we use to engage students at the level of experience is having our students create their own Pipa doll out of small branches, pieces of fabric, and yarn. Students create their own dolls in class and are asked to carry their dolls everywhere for the duration of the lesson. Toward the end of the unit, we ask students to write a reflection on their week with Pipa. The reflection asks students to describe the extent of their involvement with their doll through the past week and what they learned from the experience. In her reflection, one student commented, “[t]he days I spent with Luisita [the name the student gave her doll] have helped me understand the relationship between Pipa and the girl in the story. Before, I didn’t understand why the girl would reject the beautiful dolls that Doña Clementina would offer her. But having developed care and concern for my own Luisita during this past week, I understand completely.” Another student expressed, “[t]his activity reminded me of God. He is always with us, we are never alone. If I feel sad or depressed, I can speak to Him. And He, unlike my doll, can answer.”

Experience includes the whole person, past and present. As the bridge between context and reflection, this step of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm seeks to include the whole person in the acquisition of new learning. Through purposefully sequenced questioning, students are continuously comparing and contrasting the lives of the characters with their own experiences, thus forcing them to reflect on their own values and suppositions.

Reflection: Drawing Out the Meaning

Reflection, as described in the Oxford American Dictionary, is the exercise of “deep thought,” the reminding of past events—something more than the simple exercise of thought and memory.¹⁸ Students are asked to reflect on their learning, leading them to draw meanings from their experiences. In the language classroom, reflection involves moving from concrete language provided through context to abstract vocabulary that can describe assumptions and implicit meanings. For example, our 300-level series requires students to read short stories written by Spanish or Latin American authors. The discussions that follow the readings not only require students to derive meanings from the context of the readings, but students must also use all of their prior knowledge of the language and culture to discuss major themes at a more abstract level. At this stage, students often get involved with the literature on a personal level as they seek to discover the truth behind the characters and events in the stories and to justify their opinions and conclusions in classroom discussions.

As we describe it here, reflection involves the critical engagement of the learner with the material. It is an integral part of the learning process and, as such, the exercise of reflection must be guided and nurtured. To do so, the role of the teacher requires, “creativity, insight, and an ongoing interchange between reflection and practice, which involves listening to our students, as well as to our principles.”¹⁹ This approach opens up a wide range of possibilities within the study of literature. For example, a profound analysis of a particular character may lead the learner to examine questions of the human condition, such as values and moral character. In the overall scheme of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm, this is a crucial piece if students are to grow in awareness.

As students include themselves in their analysis of the story, they come to appreciate the social and cultural implications embedded in the material. In the context of a liberal arts education, this process provides an opportunity to teach and promote moral character. Weeks writes that when we teach language as a key component of a liberal arts education, we “show students how other cultures, using other languages, shed light on the human condition.”²⁰ Comparing the self with the values of a piece of literature encourages the learner to explore and gain awareness of the moral positions he or she has already formed. In the spirit of a Jesuit education, educating the whole person includes “the appropriation of the students’ own intelligence and rationality, an introduction to or a heightening of historical consciousness, and the fostering of appropriate attitudes regarding their own present achievements and capabilities.”²¹ Reflection thus establishes the connection between what is known and what is learned, and facilitates the incorporation of new knowledge into that which is known. Through guided and nurtured reflection, the learner draws meaning and value from the experience.

In our curriculum, we promote reflection through a series of questions designed to move the students from literary analysis to explicit connections with their own lives and everyday surroundings. Examples from *La rama seca* include: If you were Doña Clementina, would you have done the same thing? What would you have done differently? Are there aspects of this story that you can connect with personally? How? If you found this story in the Bible in the form of a parable, what would be its moral teaching? After a thorough exploration of the story through discussion in class, we ask the students to carry out a deeper reflection through an assigned essay. At the completion of two stories, students write an essay in which they compare, contrast, analyze, and reflect on common themes from two stories. In their essays, students are required to include a section that describes how their own opinions of the stories connect to their spiritual perspective or worldview. Again, students are encouraged to provide examples of how their own faith or worldview intersects with what they have learned. As they answer this question, students must examine their own actions in light of their understanding of spirituality and moral behavior.

Action: Internal and External Transformation

Action is the fourth step in the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm. In this step, students are encouraged to understand their own transformation as individuals as they reflect on their growth. Even as this element of the paradigm focuses primarily on the interior values of the students that compel them to activity, choice, and commitment to the greater good, the step of action does have two parts: (1) the internalization of students’ choices and commitments, and (2) the externalization of their choices and commitments. Students need experiential and service opportunities to discern how best to apply their learning to their own lives and the lives of others. “Religious Education” describes this as “the student’s attitudes, priorities, commitments, habits, values, ideals, internal human growth flowing out into actions for others.”²²

In the first part of this learning process, action involves an intentional and conscientious effort on the part of the learner, as well as the teacher, to seek ways to identify points of relevance based upon context, experience, and reflection. In other words, the process is designed to invite students to consider what more is required of them. As students begin to see the learning that takes place and the impact it has on them, they begin to recognize that they are growing as human beings. The learning process helps students discern faith and values within a curriculum, allowing them to find relevance in what, how, and why they are learning.

For students to feel compelled to take external action on what they have learned, they must first recognize their own internal growth in regards to faith and values, as well as in regards to their language acquisition. Students must then examine how that growth translates into choices and commitments. Continuing with examples from our study of *La rama seca*, students begin by internalizing their encounters with isolation, abandonment, identity, and the need for love within a family. They allow these themes to formulate questions and reflections inside themselves and in relation to their own lives. Many of the questions in the *Más a fondo* (“Digging Deeper”) section of the reader help students move

purposefully toward a deeper exploration of the themes in relationship to themselves, and to do so in a more sophisticated manner in their use of the language. For example, students are asked whether they would have acted or reacted the same way as a certain character whose actions bring up questions of moral significance. This way, students are able to “act,” in a hypothetical way, upon their newly found ideas and experiences by formulating new, refined, or reaffirmed value statements. Insofar as language acquisition is concerned, students encounter the need for mastery of difficult uses of the subjunctive mood to express opinions, desires, and make value statements. Additionally, students have cause to expand their vocabulary through the study of the lexicons found in the story, which expands their personal vocabulary and refines their ability to use language for specific purposes.

The first externalization that occurs for students is manifested in their willingness to share personal perspectives and insights with peers in the context of the classroom activities. This idea is affirmed by Smith, who identifies the work of Johnson, asserting that “classroom interactions are fundamentally moral in nature.”²³ Likewise, students are asked to incorporate their own faith, values, and worldview in their essays.

The second externalization involves students’ movement toward taking action in the world, for others, and toward the greater good. In our class discussions many students express the desire to act upon the convictions they have articulated, or to put their perspectives into action; they are not satisfied with simply discussing and writing about their choices and commitments. Their discernment of their own faith and values drives them to externalize these principles through service and real-life application. In her reflection, one student commented: “The stories that deal with poverty and oppression are a reminder of the change that needs to happen, and they give me better insight to the situations so that I can know how to be part of that needed change.” Another student said: “The themes of the stories support personal responsibility to others and the rest of the world. They remind me that I have responsibilities to help and care for others.” Some students expressed a desire to seek out opportunities either immediately in our local

community or to pursue service or ministry experiences abroad. Several of our Spanish education majors focused on their intentions to use what they have learned from the story of the little girl in *La rama seca* to be better teachers who can identify and reach out to children in difficult familial circumstances. Other students have reported becoming more aware of their peers on campus; they feel they are better able to understand and identify with roommates and classmates who come from backgrounds much more difficult than their own, and how this awareness has enriched their relationships with people.

Evaluation: Assessing Growth and Learning

The final step of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm is *evaluation*. It involves a comprehensive assessment of the students’ growth and learning. Students in our program are often required to evaluate themselves, allowing them to take a critical look at their efforts and progress, thereby internalizing it and making it their own. As the study of a particular concept or story comes to a close, students are guided to evaluate what they have learned and the significance it holds for them personally. Students are asked to explore how or if their values, choices, and personal faith or worldview, has been impacted or changed as a result of the learning process. Evaluation is also a time for the teacher to provide valuable feedback to the students in regards to the depth of students’ engagement with the material. Most importantly, it is a time to provide support, encouragement, and affirmation of students’ personal and moral growth. Also, it is an opportunity for us, as professors, to continue to engage in *cura personalis*. In this regard, the role of the teacher is of extreme importance. As a facilitator, the teacher provides students with a systematic approach by which they may step back and recognize what they have learned and how they have grown. We assess students’ growth and learning, both in terms of language acquisition and the assimilation of new ideas and concepts, and provide support when students initiate discussions of faith and values.

After going through the previous four steps of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm, students are then asked to think about what the next steps might be towards furthering their language proficiency and the continued exploration of their faith and values. Evaluation includes additional discussion in the

classroom, although in this step students are primarily expressing their new knowledge and perspectives in writing through reflective and analytical essays, and through essay questions on exams. Students also complete a self-evaluation based on their participation at the end of each unit. In this 300-level curriculum, we ask students to incorporate their values and faith or worldview into their essays about the stories. This element is part of the criteria that appears in the grading rubric used to evaluate the essays. It is important to clarify that we do not assess *what* they state in regards to their own perspectives, but rather *how* they express their faith or worldview in connection to the stories. This type of exercise in writing is crucial to solidify learning and for students to gain awareness of their ongoing self-discovery and discernment. A similar aspect of evaluation occurs during exams, which include an essay question that asks students to comment on a particular aspect of the story and how these ideas have impacted them personally. This is another opportunity for the teacher to provide feedback to the students in regards to their engagement with the material and to provide encouraging or affirming comments related to their personal reactions.

To provide an example of how this looks in our courses, we will share two distinct student responses to an essay question on the exam for *La rama seca*. The exam question asks students to briefly explore any two themes in the story and comment on how the story affected them personally. One student described having gained an increased sensitivity toward the needs of neglected children and how he plans to seek out opportunities in the community to become a mentor for children in difficult familial situations. This student was able to name and discuss the themes that he found significant in the story, and identified a personal connection to these themes and how they may play out in the choices and commitments he intends to make. In this type of assessment, this student was able to demonstrate how well he had learned the material, as well as provide evidence of reflection. Another student wrote: “Morality is a common theme in these stories. I often see injustices which go against my personal values, and the questions usually prompt me to figure out which of my values has been challenged.” This statement demonstrates the

student’s awareness of how the ethics portrayed in the stories have prompted critical reflection on personal values.

For those of us that teach in Christian institutions of higher education, these responses reflect a reality of our general student population. Nevertheless, we also know that not all students are willing to engage in these types of discussions and shy away from activities that require them to share personal perspectives or worldviews. As teachers, we must ensure that these students feel just as valued as those who feel right at home discussing issues of personal faith and growth. We must recognize that all students come to us at differing stages of personal growth or faith development and nurture these students through *cura personalis*.

Conclusion

The five steps of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm described here—context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation—have given us the framework on which to build our 300-level curriculum in light of our interest in the integration of faith and learning. The language and literature classroom is the ideal place in which to pursue faith and learning. We introduce the literature to the students through the steps of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm and prompt them to think about their own faith or worldview. In the process, students must work to improve their ability to communicate beliefs and opinions in the language, while engaging in moral reflection. In the spirit of Jesuit education, which seeks to prepare students for lives of active engagement within communities, students must become aware of their role as members of the human family. As educators that represent a variety of faith perspectives, and teach in a wide range of disciplines, there is much to be gained from the incorporation of issues of faith into the learning process. As we foster the learning of our students we must remember that they are the future community members, leaders, and policy makers. What we do now bears an impact on the way they carry themselves, the strength of their faith, and, consequently, the way they will work towards the *magis*. What we strive to do in our courses via the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm is what Murray Morelli refers to as “developing awareness of the

divine undercurrent of the everyday.”²⁴ As educators, we must tap into this “divine undercurrent,” draw from it, and engage our students with questions of faith, values, and justice. HJE

Notes

¹ D. L. Weeks, “Language as a Liberal Art,” *Journal of Christianity and Foreign Languages* 5 (2004): 18.

² *Ibid.*, 16.

³ David Smith and Terry A. Osborn, “Spirituality and Language Pedagogy: A Survey of Recent Developments,” in *Spirituality, Social Justice, and Language Learning* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub., 2007): 17.

⁴ G. Yorba-Gray, “The Personal Narrative Journal in the Christian Foreign Language Classroom,” *Journal of Christianity and Foreign Languages* 7 (2006): 48.

⁵ Philip C. Hauptman, “Some Hypotheses on the Nature of Difficulty and Ease in Second Language Reading: An Application of Schema Theory,” *Foreign Language Annals* 33, no. 6 (2000): 623, doi:10.1111/j.1944-9720.2000.tb00931.x.

⁶ David L. Fleming S.J., *What Is Ignatian Spirituality?* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 68.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁸ International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (ICAJE), *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* 1986), sec. 4, The Jesuit Institute, accessed May 26, 2017, <http://jesuitinstitute.org/Pages/CharacteristicsJesuitEducation.htm>.

⁹ E. Murray Morelli, “An Ignatian Approach to Teaching Philosophy,” in *Teaching as an Act of Faith: Theory and Practice in Church-related Higher Education*, ed. Arlin C. Migliazzo (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 234.

¹⁰ International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (ICAJE), *Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach* (1993), sec. 139f, accessed December 10, 2017, https://www.rockhurst.edu/media/filer_private/uploads/ignatian_pedagogy_a_practical_approach.pdf.

¹¹ Benjamin S. Bloom, ed., *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals Handbook I* (London: Longmans, 1956), 18.

¹² Murray Morelli, “An Ignatian Approach to Teaching Philosophy,” 234.

¹³ Ana María Matute, *Historias de la Artamila* (Madrid: Ediciones Destino, 1969), 80-89.

¹⁴ D. I. Smith, “Faith and Method in Foreign Language Pedagogy,” *Journal of Christianity and Foreign Languages* 1, (2000): 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁷ Murray Morelli, “An Ignatian Approach to Teaching Philosophy,” 248.

¹⁸ *Oxford American Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), s.v. “reflection.”

¹⁹ Smith, “Faith and Method,” 17.

²⁰ Weeks, “Language as a Liberal Art,” 19.

²¹ Murray Morelli, “An Ignatian Approach to Teaching Philosophy,” 244.

²² “Religious Education,” Belvedere College S.J., Ireland, accessed December 10, 2017, <http://www.belvederecollege.ie/teaching-learning/pastoral-care-religious-education/>.

²³ B. Johnson, *Values in English Language Teaching* (Erlbaum: Mahwah, NJ, 2003); Smith, “Faith and Method,” 19.

²⁴ Murray Morelli, “An Ignatian Approach to Teaching Philosophy,” 251.