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Sektion V: Der Klassenraum als dritter Ort: sozio-kulturelle und ästhetische Zugänge im Spanischunterricht (DSV)

The classroom as third place

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The metaphor of third place (or space) has too often been used to characterize the status of Spanish-speaking immigrants who cross the border into the United States and have to find their place as Latinos in a predominantly English-speaking U.S. (e.g., Gutierrez et al 1999, Moje 2004). However, as I have shown (e.g., Kramsch 1999, 2009a), the notion of thirdness is much richer than that. Within an ecological theory of second language acquisition, it indexes various layers of remembered, perceived and projected worlds that enable learners to escape the ready-made beliefs of their familiar environment and start making meaning in new and exciting ways. While they are learning someone else's linguistic code, learners imbue the new forms with unexpected subjective meanings and discover aspects of themselves in the process. This paper draws on testimonies of language learners (Kramsch 2009b) and language instructors (Kramsch & Zhang, in press) to explore the transformative potential of the classroom as a "third place".

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