Integrating the Teaching of Culture into the Foreign Language Classroom*

Robert C. Lafayette

Introduction

A cursory examination of the foreign language education professional literature since 1970 as well as the programs of state, regional, and national meetings and conferences during that same period of time provides sufficient evidence of the high degree of importance accorded the teaching of culture.

Given the vast amount of ink and paper spent on the subject, one would think that by now the cultural component would have been strongly implanted into the foreign language curriculum. However, such is not the case. Among the three major components of the curriculum (language, literature, and culture), the greatest amount of time and energy is still devoted to the grammar and vocabulary aspects of language, even though the area of communication has advanced considerably during the last twenty years due to activities surrounding communicative competence, the functional-notional syllabus, and proficiency. Cul-

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ulture, however, remains the weakest component due to its uneven treatment in textbooks and to the lack of familiarity, among teachers, with the culture itself and with the techniques needed to teach it.

History tells us that for decades grammar and literature have been the main actors on the foreign language teaching stage. It is understandable, then, that methods and materials still reflect portions of this history. Moreover, the textbooks, which perpetuate teaching strategies, still constitute (after the teacher) the most important cog in the educational process. It is thus obvious that the textbook itself represents the most powerful agent for change in language teaching. What we fail to realize, however, is that the textbook primary purpose is to serve the foreign language profession, not to change it. Therefore, as long as the majority of foreign language teachers demand grammar, with communication and culture as secondary interests, that is exactly what most publishers will provide. If we wish to have serious impact on increasing the cultural component in language teaching, we must try not only to influence publishers, but, more importantly, to design teacher training programs that will provide teachers with both a knowledge of culture and the ability to convey it to their students. As Allen so aptly states:

Despite the talk of communication and culture, and the desire for their attainment, energies are devoted instead to grammar and vocabulary. And this is understandable, for grammar offers several advantages over culture: it is the concept around which most textbooks and materials are organized; it is finite and can be ordered in either a linear, sequential plan of study or else in a cyclical one; mastery of it can be easily tested and evaluated; and, finally, it is a subject matter the classroom teacher can teach him or herself, if necessary, using an advanced grammar text, and which, once mastered, is unlikely to change. Culture, by contrast, is diffuse; difficult to grasp, translate into instructional goals, test, evaluate, and order; prodigious in quantity; and ever-evolving.

Culture: Much Dialogue but Little Action

Both Allen and Omaggio spend considerable time tracing the history of the teaching of culture and summarizing the major ideas of Brooks, Nostrand, and Seelye. It would be redundant to repeat that exercise here, except for a brief comment on the revised ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines from which were deleted the guidelines for cultural understanding that appeared in the provisional 1983 version. Allen demonstrates appropriately that the culture guidelines were unsound, from a theoretical standpoint, because they attempted to follow the same function, content, and accuracy schema used to describe the proficiency guidelines in the four language skills. She then suggests replacing the function-content-accuracy schema with a different conceptual tripartite framework:

1. Information: information about the particular culture and the organization of this information into a coherent whole, broken down into successive stages;
2. Experience: a cognitive process by means of which the learner approaches and comes to know the particular culture;
3. Authenticity: the effect upon the learner in terms of socioeconomic behavior and attitude that results from increasing, deepening knowledge of the culture.

Allen subsequently reformulated the entire culture guidelines, but, unfortunately, in the interim ACTFL decided to omit culture from its revised proficiency guidelines. It might now be beneficial for the profession to reconsider the guidelines in light of Allen's suggestions.

The works evoked above represent important attempts by members of the profession to increase the role of culture in foreign language teaching. Unfortunately, most of the suggestions require such a significant change from what is currently taking place in the classroom that only the most courageous individuals will even consider attempting any of them. What the profession needs at the moment is a simple, direct approach to more culture in the classroom built upon content and practices which already exist. The remainder of this paper will explore the cre-
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ation and implementation of precisely such an approach. It includes:

1. A set of suggested cultural goals from which teachers may select those that fit their needs;

2. A discussion of the new Indiana “Guideto Proficiency-Based Instruction,” whose primary goal is the integration of language and culture;^6

3. A set of principles to help teachers and students develop a cultural mindset;

4. A series of practical classroom suggestions for integrating culture with the teaching of vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Suggested Goals for the Teaching of Culture

Due to the breadth and depth of culture, it is often difficult for teachers to select those aspects of it that should be included in the curriculum at various stages of instruction. The choices range from supplying students with clearly identifiable facts about a culture to bringing about subtle affective changes in their desire or ability to value people who think, dress, or act differently from themselves.

Although many experts criticize focusing on factual information, this author believes, along with Porcher, that there indeed exists a basic repertoire of information necessary for the comprehension of most cultural concepts.\(^6\) This includes very basic geographical and historical background that provides the necessary space and time dimensions, as well as basic institutional (administrative, political, etc.) and cultural (family, professions, etc.) information which is needed to understand and process more complex cultural phenomena.

The student-oriented goals listed below may be classified in several different categories. The first four reflect what is commonly referred to as “culture with a capital C,” while goals five through eight belong to the category of “everyday culture.” Goals five and six distinguish between “active” everyday culture, i.e., that knowledge needed to function as a visitor in the foreign environment, and “passive” everyday culture, knowledge that would enhance the understanding of a people but might not be necessary in functioning in their environment as a temporary guest. Goal nine represents the overarching affective objective sought by most foreign language programs but attained only by focusing on several of the other stated goals. Goals ten and eleven recognize the fact that several cultures may be linked to the same language, including ethnic populations within the continental United States, and encourages teachers to venture beyond the mother country in presenting culture. Finally, goals twelve and thirteen deal with the process of studying foreign cultures.

In considering these goals, it should be noted that each is important in and of itself and that priorities in selecting them can only be determined in relation to overall course and performance goals. In addition, several of them distinguish between the ability of students to recognize a cultural pattern and the more difficult task of explaining it. It is suggested that school foreign language departments rank these goals and compare the results with present and potential cultural activities in the classroom. The student will be able to:

1. Recognize/explain major geographical monuments.

2. Recognize/explain major historical events.

3. Recognize/explain major institutions (administrative, political, religious, educational, etc.).

4. Recognize/explain major “artistic” monuments (architecture, arts, literature).

5. Recognize/explain “active” everyday cultural patterns (eating, shopping, greeting people, etc.).

6. Recognize/explain “passive” everyday cultural patterns (social stratification, marriage, work, etc.).

7. Act appropriately in common everyday situations.

8. Use appropriate common gestures.

9. Value different peoples and societies.

10. Recognize/explain culture of target language-related ethnic groups in the United States.

11. Recognize/explain culture of non-European peoples speaking target language (Canada, Africa, South America, etc.).
12. Evaluate validity of statements about culture.
13. Develop skills needed to locate and organize information about culture.

The Indiana Guide to Proficiency-Based Instruction

In 1983, a committee of Indiana high school foreign language teachers under the direction of Lorraine A. Strasheim of Indiana University and Walter H. Bartz of the Indiana Department of Education began work on a set of proficiency-based guidelines for use in their schools. One of their primary goals was to develop a model for the integration of communicative, cultural, and linguistic learning in foreign language curricula and instruction. After three years of labor, they produced, in this writer’s opinion, one of the most enlightened curriculum guides in American education. The document includes a list of specific proficiency statements (goals) for each level of instruction, each statement being followed by “proficiency indicators,” which are descriptions of student performance and are used to indicate the extent to which each goal has been met. For example, one of the five Level Two proficiency statements says: “Write short compositions on familiar topics, structured letters, outlines and synopses, and fill out some of the forms encountered in the culture.” The accompanying proficiency indicators are:

1. Describe the school day.
2. Write a letter describing a day in the foreign culture.
3. Write a description of a special event in the foreign culture.
4. Identify specific places in the foreign culture(s) to be visited in order to experience a variety of opportunities.
5. Describe famous people of the foreign culture.
6. Write a letter describing meals in the foreign culture.
7. Plan and describe a day’s activities for a foreign visitor.
8. Write a letter describing his or her family.
9. List appropriate clothes to wear, based on weather reports.

The Indiana guide, however, goes much further in that it attempts to integrate culture and communication at every level of instruction. The major portion of this guide consists of more than one hundred culture-based learning goals spanning Levels One through Four. All goals are grouped under the nine following broad cultural contexts which the committee identified as reflecting the topics covered in most textbooks adopted in Indiana (the numbers that follow each context identify the levels at which it appears):

1. School and Education (1-2).
2. Leisure Time (1-2-3).
3. Family and Home (1-2-3).
5. The “World” of the Target Language (1-2-3-4).
6. Travel/Transportation (1-2-3-4).
7. World of Work (2-3).
8. History and Politics (3-4).

Each of these contexts is then broken down into “cultural situations” which represent a narrower topic (sports, living quarters, children’s literature, etc.) or situation (ordering a meal, shopping, etc.).

None of the levels of instruction include all nine cultural concepts. Six are covered in Level One, seven in Level Two, eight in Level Three, and four in Level Four. Level One content is focused primarily on personal, everyday cultural elements such as living quarters, daily schedule of activities, city travel, and shopping.
while Level Four content mainly consists of formal or capital “C” culture, such as history, literature and famous places. The only two cultural contexts to be treated at all four levels of instruction are the “World” of the Target Language and Travel/Transportation. Below are sample goals from these two contexts taken from each level of instruction. An examination of these goals will reveal a regular progression in the level of complexity of learning tasks. The goals first deal with the listing of items, then move on to identification and selection, followed by description and information gathering, and concluding with synthesis and conjecture.

The “World” of the Target language

Level One: Given a map of the world, the student will be able to locate and pronounce the names of ten countries (cities) in which the target language is spoken.

Level Two: The student will role-play a situation in which he/she has won a trip around the “world” to ten cities and/or countries that speak the target language, identifying the places he/she plans to go.

Level Three: Given a specific country speaking the target language, the student, acting as a travel agent, will “sell” a tourist (the teacher) on visiting this country, giving the following kinds of information:
   a. The climate during a certain season.
   b. Things of interest to see.
   c. Major cities.
   d. Foods and major occupations.
   e. Fun things to do there.

Level Four: After listening to three conversations, each of which contains vocabulary and/or cultural allusions associated with a specific region or country, the student will identify the location of each conversation, citing the vocabulary or cultural references that influence that choice.

Travel/Transportation

Level One: Given a map of a part of a city, the student will listen to a series of directions as to how to get to a specific place, indicating the directions by drawing arrows on the map.

Level Two: Given an authentic menu and an exact amount of money to spend, the student will, with the teacher serving as waiter or waitress, order a complete meal he/she can “afford.”

Level Three: Given a specific city, the student will identify three famous places to visit, describing each in a short paragraph.

Level Four: Given an opening statement such as “If I were a millionaire,” the student will describe his/her fantasy trip around the world, explaining choices made.

Some Basic Principles for Integrating Language and Culture

Although we would prefer foreign language courses to be built upon a culture-based as opposed to a grammar-based syllabus, there is little doubt that most textbooks and teachers will continue to favor the grammatical syllabus for years to come. This, however, does not prevent these individuals from integrating culture into their language-based courses. The principles that follow apply to them as well as to those who favor culture-based courses.

In courses where communicative goals are paramount, it is obvious that teachers must establish an atmosphere that demonstrates the importance, indeed the very existence of communication. They must use the target language to communicate and must demand that the students do likewise; they must plan communicative activities and test for communication; they must convince the students that the language taught exists above and beyond the front and back covers of the textbook. In short, teachers must create in both themselves and each student the conviction that the language is real and that it works. The same argument applies to integrating language and culture. Teachers must create their own positive cultural mindset, as well as that of their students. Culture will not become a reality in the foreign language
classroom until teachers become convinced that they are teaching more than form, that there is indeed a content to that which is being taught, a content that is not identified in terms of grammatical descriptors. The teacher can nurture the development and assure the predominance of this mindset by abiding by the principles outlined below.

**Cultural Objectives and Activities Must Be Planned as Carefully as Their Language Counterparts and Be Specifically Included in Lesson Plans**

Since the average foreign language textbook is based and sequenced according to grammar, teachers view their task as “covering” a pre-established number of grammatical items. Consequently, lesson plans typically consist of a series of grammar points accompanied by a variety of appropriate activities. This tends to assure that these points are introduced and practiced during a fixed period of time.

A similar system is necessary to assure the presence of culture in the curriculum. Each class should include at least one culture objective along with suggestions for introducing and practicing it. For example, if the grammar objective consists of the verb “to be” in its function of showing location, the culture objective might be to locate various cities or other geographical elements in the target country. At first glance, this may appear simplistic, but until the answer to the often-asked question “What am I teaching today?” includes a cultural element as well as a grammatical one, we cannot claim to be serious about the teaching of culture.

**Cultural Components Must Be Tested as Seriously as Their Language Counterparts**

Throughout most of American education, grades are based on test results, and since grades themselves carry such importance, students virtually always pay the greatest attention to that which is tested. It is therefore obvious that curricular elements not tested by the teacher carry much less value in the eyes of students, and indeed are often ignored. For example, one of the reasons that the majority of our beginning students have minimal oral communication skills is that we rarely or never formally test those skills in beginning level courses. The same is true for culture. Why should students concern themselves about culture if it is not tested and does not affect the course grade? Even good students are not usually idealistic enough to learn for the sake of learning.

Unfortunately, little has been written about testing culture, and only a handful of foreign language textbooks include culture items on the tests which accompany them. In an article entitled “Evaluating Cultural Learnings,” Lafayette and Schulz discuss and provide examples for three types of culture tests: (1) testing for knowledge, that is, the ability to recognize cultural information or patterns; (2) testing for understanding, that is, the ability to explain cultural information or patterns; (3) testing for behavior, that is, the ability to use cultural information or patterns.*

**Textbook Photographs and Illustrations Must Be Considered as Viable Teaching Content**

Every modern-day textbook includes an abundance of attractive photographs taken in the target countries as well as illustrations of a variety of realeia. There is often a higher incidence of culture in the photographs and realia than in the printed text and exercises found in the book. Unfortunately, these visuals are rarely mentioned in class and are almost never supported in the text by culturally related exercises and activities.

An excellent approach for fostering the increased integration of language and culture as well as nurturing the cultural mindset is to make use of a basic set of questions for each illustration. The questions suggested below are grouped in three categories of ascending difficulty. The first category, description, is at the simplest level and is meant for use in learning and/or reinforcing vocabulary and basic cultural information. Depending on the content of the photograph, the focus may be on nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc. The purpose of the second category of questions, information gathering, is not limited to the acquisition of new cultural information. A second purpose of these questions is to help students learn to gather information by observation, a
skill that will be of use to them in all other subject matter areas. The third level of questions, comparison, represents a higher level of cognitive processing, but it is still readily usable in the classroom. It should be noted that the ability of the students and the nature of the photographs or illustrations may not permit the use of all three levels of questioning. In addition, these questions are not meant to be all-inclusive. Individuals are encouraged to change or add to the set based on their particular classroom needs.

Sample Questions

Description
1. What do you see in this picture?
2. Can you describe some of the items?
3. What are people doing?
4. How are they dressed?

Information Gathering
1. Can you tell where or when this picture was taken?
2. Do some of the objects or places in this picture have historical significance?
3. Does the picture tell you anything special about life in that country?
4. Does the picture portray a certain segment of society in that country?
5. Is the picture of a general or specific nature?
6. Could a similar picture have been taken in other parts of this country?

Comparison
1. What makes this picture French, German, or Spanish, if anything?
2. Could a similar picture have been taken in the United States? Where? If not, why not?
3. Where would you go in the United States to take a picture of contrasting cultural habits?

In Order to Focus on Culture, Language Teaching Must Emphasize the Teaching of Content as Much as It Does the Teaching of Form

Linguists and language teachers are virtually the only individuals alive who consider language for its own sake. The rest of the world uses language for a purpose. They are usually more concerned with the content of an utterance than its form. In order to foster a more acute cultural mindset, language teachers must dramatically increase their attention to content. For example, it is not sufficient for a teacher to accept a student’s proper use of estar in locating a South American city; the teacher must also verify that the city has been correctly located. Similarly, there is a significant difference between asking a student to generate any ten articles of clothing and asking the same individual to identify five that might be appropriate attire at a funeral.

Increasing the focus on content presents the problem of selecting the type of content material. Should teachers continue with textbooks or materials that present cultural facts in a synthesized and/or summarized manner, or should they turn to raw, authentic materials as advocated by Beacco and Lieutaud? We are naturally attracted to the latter, not only because of their authenticity but also their attractiveness, since they are presented exactly as they appeared in their original form. They also lend themselves very well to process-oriented learning strategies. Upon closer examination, however, exclusive use of authentic materials may present serious comprehension problems. Most newspaper articles and radio and television news programs, for example, tend to assume prior knowledge of past events, along with total control of the language itself, thus making them very difficult for the average foreign language learner to comprehend.

The decision to use authentic or synthesized materials should of course depend on the background, abilities, and objectives of the students. Very often, the ideal situation is to use a combination of the two. The synthesized and edited materials provide the students with the background knowledge necessary for a better understanding of the authentic materials, while the authentic materials themselves supply real-life examples of generic cultural phenomena.
The Teaching of Culture Must Extend beyond Factual Learning and Include Community Resources, Experiential Learning, and Process Skills

Allen, Galloway, Kramsch, Crawford-Lange and Lange, Zarate, and many others all state that a "facts-only" approach to the teaching of culture is not only insufficient but may also be detrimental in that it may at times reinforce stereotypes rather than diminish them.10 Students need to be taught to understand culture on more than a cognitive level. In fact, they need to experience culture and learn how to process it.

Sadow states that the target culture should be approached from the outside-in." Students need to (1) engage in in-class activities and simulations that reflect the culture, (2) watch and examine people and artifacts from the target culture, (3) interact with one representative in a controlled way, (4) interact with a group of representatives, and (5) where possible, visit ethnic neighborhoods.

Not all classrooms, however, have the luxury of community resources at their disposal. Those who lack them need to make use of experiential devices such as imagery (fantasy trips), role-playing, and simulation. Hammers suggests numerous techniques for having individual students simulate the conditions in life which contribute to the development of unique personalities in every culture.12 They include:

- the physical conditions (the geography, climate, and objects in one’s life);
- the social environment (family, friends, and all those, past and present, who make their presence felt in one’s life);
- an orientation to time (including the history of one’s culture and how one’s life span relates to that history);
- the unique genetic heritage with which each one is born (including the physical and mental strengths and weaknesses of that heritage).

Curtain and Pesola complement the above suggestions very well by adding experiential activities, including fantasy trips, designed for use in elementary school foreign language courses, but easily adaptable to other levels of instruction.13

The Target Language Should Be the Primary Vehicle Used to Teach Culture

It is commonly believed that the use of English is necessary in the foreign language classroom especially when dealing with the
teaching of culture and grammar. In reality, all but the most limited use of the native language in the foreign language classroom should be not only discouraged but prohibited. In fact, the native language is never necessary in foreign language teaching; ample proof of this is provided by teachers of English as a second language, a great many of whom do not know the native language or languages spoken by the students enrolled in their ESL courses. Moreover, most success stories in foreign language learning and teaching involve some form of exclusive immersion in the target language.

Exclusive use of the target language, especially in the teaching of culture, obviously entails a lowering of the intellectual level of the discussion. In the end, however, the sacrifice is beneficial, since language and culture have been viewed from the beginning as partners, and since the students will have acquired more language with which to acquire more culture. Given a simple, well-marked map of the target country, it is even possible to conduct the entire first day of class in the target language and teach a considerable amount of geography.

Language is the first and most important representation of culture, and its place in the classroom should not be relinquished. Allen says it best:

Of all the elements of the target culture, the target language is the most typical, the most unique, the most challenging, and—almost ironically—the most readily available. Its authentic use in the classroom from the beginning of instruction is therefore the primary cultural objective.16

Suggested Activities for Integrating Language and Culture

The preceding discussion makes it eminently clear that one of the most basic issues in foreign language teaching is the degree to which language and culture are integrated. It would of course be preferable if language were to be integrated into a culture-based curriculum, but, as mentioned above, the reality is that textbooks will continue to be grammar-based for some time to come. The activities suggested below can be used in either a language- or culture-based curriculum. It is left to teachers to determine how they might best accommodate their program.

In addition to the numerous activities suggested here, the reader is also referred to Omaggio, who offers an abundance of suggestions organized around Seelye's seven goals of cultural instruction, and to Spinelli, who proposes several ways to integrate culture with the teaching of grammar and vocabulary through the use of contextualized activities.17

Integrating Culture and the Teaching of Vocabulary

Since vocabulary is best taught in context, it is relatively simple to make that context a cultural one. In fact, it is probably in the area of vocabulary that teachers can most easily develop the cultural mindset discussed above. Several suggestions come to mind:

- Vocabulary should be grouped in culture-related clusters. This provides opportunities to present and discuss cultural concepts or reinforce ones already presented. For example, instead of presenting food vocabulary via traditional food groups, it would be culturally advantageous to place the items into subgroups according to what people eat during different meals such as breakfast (cereal, eggs, toast, doughnuts, etc.), lunch (sandwich, Big Mac, hot dog, pizza, etc.), dinner (steak, potatoes, peas, stew, bread, etc.).

- Descriptive adjectives could be introduced and/or practiced by describing a famous person, monument, or work of art that is found in the target culture.

- Whenever visuals accompany the introduction of lexical items, it is important that they be culturally accurate. A photograph of a loaf of Wonder bread is not an accurate representation of the French word pain.

- Since students manifest varied interests, provision should be made for self-generated sets of lexical items that supplement basic sets of words dealing with a specific cultural concept. For example, basic leisure vocabulary might include such words as cinema, concert, stadium, and various
Integrating Culture and the Teaching of Grammar

When teaching grammar, the instructor is usually so intent on the linguistic element at hand that little thought is given to including possible cultural components in the exercises that precede or follow the grammar point. This need not be the case, however, since most grammar points easily lend themselves to a cultural context. Two examples are included below. For a complete treatment, readers should consult Allen (1985) who presents a culture-based syllabus for introductory-level French courses and includes therein the linkages between culture and grammar.18

- The partitive in French is commonly used with food vocabulary. The above activity that presents the types of foods eaten at different meals could just as easily be used to practice uses of the partitive, and in doing so, would have the added advantage of reinforcing cultural information.
- [Instead] of asking students what they did yesterday or last weekend, we might ask them what William the Conqueror did in 1066, what Christopher Columbus did in 1492, what happened in France in 1789, what the Allies did on June 6, 1944, etc.

Integrating Culture and the Teaching of Listening Comprehension

During the past two decades, considerable research has demonstrated the importance of listening in the acquisition and learning of foreign languages. In order not to neglect the importance of this skill in developing readiness for the other skills, teachers need to include listening activities in their lesson plans. Integrating the cultural element can easily be accomplished by having students listen to cultural content. For example:

- Students can be given maps of the target country, and using Total Physical Response, they can be asked to perform different tasks related to the location of various geographical elements. These might include circling ski resorts in red and seaside ones in blue, or tracing someone's trip as it is related orally by the teacher.
- A great deal of cultural information can be transmitted orally through the use of visuals, using what Krashen and Terrell call pre-speech activities. For example, the teacher might use a transparency of a supermarket ad to ask numerous questions requiring one-word answers, thus focusing on listening rather than speaking.
- Fantasy trips, mentioned above, are another excellent source of cultural listening activities. Students can cross the Alps, get ready for a picnic, climb the Eiffel Tower, etc.

Integrating Culture and the Teaching of Speaking

In designing communicative activities, it is important, first of all, that students have something to say. Students should be given numerous opportunities to describe and give opinions about both native- and target-language cultural concepts. In addition, they should be involved in simulations and role playing that reflect both cultures. These need not be complicated, as the following two examples demonstrate.

- You are a 16-year-old girl who has been given money to purchase a complete outfit. However, the clothing must be appropriate to attend Sunday mass in a small provincial village. Go to your teacher, who is playing the role of the owner of a boutique, and make your purchases.
- You wish to purchase a book, a record, stationery, and stamps for yourself. Your mother has asked you to pick up some bread and cold ham slices on your way home. There are several store signs on your teacher's desk. When you approach the desk, pick out the appropriate sign and purchase the necessary items. Repeat this procedure until you have acquired everything mentioned above.
Integrating Culture and the Teaching of Reading

Initially it appears that the simplest skill to integrate with culture is that of reading, since all that is seemingly required is to select reading texts with cultural content. Although this is partially true, the teacher must see that the texts are read first and foremost for their cultural content. Far too many cultural selections are read only for the purposes of pronunciation or soundsymbol association (reading aloud), grammar illustration, and/or translation. The primary purpose of reading a text is to learn from its content; it should be used only secondarily for the purposes mentioned above. The following suggestions will help maintain that focus:

- Every reading should be preceded by at least one culture-related prereading activity whose purpose is to set the scene and assure that the content of the reading will be understood and processed. One suggestion is to ask the students to reflect upon the cultural phenomena as seen in the native culture prior to reading about its implementation in the target culture.

- Similarly, postreading activities can require students to process the information just read and compare it to the information about the native culture gathered during the prereading activity. The examples that follow illustrate the above suggestions. The instructions and questions are in English here for the purpose of illustration; they would normally be in the target language.

Example #1

Step 1—Before reading the following text, answer the questions below:

1. Where do you eat most of your meals?
2. How many meals do you eat per day?
3. What are your favorite foods or dishes?
4. How many times per week do you eat in a fast-food restaurant? Which ones do you like best?
5. Can you cook? What are your specialties?

Step 2—Read the following article entitled “Food and the French/German/Spanish Student.”

Step 3—Use the questions in Step 1 to interview three students in your class and prepare an oral summary of the results.

Step 4—Write a one-page composition comparing the answers you got in Step 3 with the information in the reading about students in France, Germany, or Mexico.

Example #2

Step 1—Make three lists:

1. A list of nouns to identify eating and drinking items needed at a party.
2. A list of adjectives describing the mood you prefer at a party.
3. A list of verbs describing the main activities at a party.

Step 2—Read the following article describing a party in France, Germany, or Mexico.

Step 3—Make the same three lists, this time based on the information presented in the above text.

Step 4—Compare the list in Step 1 to that in Step 3 and discuss the similarities and differences.

- Consider designing activities which ask students to identify cultural concepts as reflected in selected passages. For example, students are given five short paragraphs to read. They must then match each paragraph with one-sentence descriptions of the concept illustrated in each paragraph. A more difficult task would be to withhold the concepts and ask the students to formulate them after having read the passage.

- Consider the use of several different cultural readings on a similar topic to serve the different levels of ability in your classroom more effectively. There are numerous supplementary readers on the market, and it is not terribly difficult to assemble several readings on the same topic. The same prereading activity could be done with all students, followed by the simultaneous silent reading of the different passages. The content of these passages could then be discussed in small groups by
the individuals who read the same passage, and finally, the content of the various passages could be compared among groups.

Integrating Culture and the Teaching of Writing

The writing skill offers an excellent opportunity for integrating language and culture because it can be controlled at various levels of difficulty. Two reservations are in order, however. First, teachers should be cautious about open-ended assignments such as “write a one-page composition describing eating habits in Spain” lest students get into the habit of completing such assignments by composing sophisticated essays in English that are then beyond their ability to translate. Second, integrated writing assignments should be evaluated for cultural as well as linguistic content, thereby encouraging adequate student attention to both components. The following suggested activities integrate culture and writing:

- Teach students to write personal and business letters, and have them write actual letters to individuals or companies in the foreign country. Letters to individuals could be structured by identifying the type of information sought on specific cultural topics such as class schedules, weekend leisure activities, family rules, etc. Letters soliciting information from hotels or travel agencies might first require planning a trip to a foreign country.

- Give the students one or more cultural generalizations and ask them to write sample statements illustrating the concept. For example:

  Generalization: In many Latin American countries, schedules are not interpreted as literally as in the United States.

Potential student answers: (1) An individual with a 10 A.M. business appointment in Mexico City should not expect to be seen precisely at that time; (2) a person in Puerto Rico arriving at 8 P.M. for a party scheduled at that time might find the hostess taking a bath.

  Generalization: The annual vacation is a sacred element in the life of the French.

- Prepare short, incomplete narratives describing the initial phases of a cultural episode. On the basis of the information presented and their own cultural knowledge, students complete the narrative.

  Teacher segment: It is a Monday night in Paris during the summer. Mike and Sally Jones, two Americans visiting Paris, are sitting at a café planning their next day’s visit to the Louvre. Having determined exactly how to get there by métro and which parts of the Louvre to visit, they return to their hotel near the Tour Montparnasse for a good night’s sleep. The following morning...

Potential student answer: The following morning Mike and Sally have a leisurely breakfast in their hotel room. At ten o’clock they go to the Montparnasse Subway Station and take the métro to the Louvre Station, changing once along the way. When they arrive at the museum, they are disappointed to learn that, like most museums in Paris, the Louvre is closed on Tuesdays. Therefore, they sit down in the nearby Jardin des Tuileries to discuss how they will now spend this unexpected free day.

- Assign guided compositions not only on target culture topics but also on American counterpart behavior. The latter improves awareness of one’s own culture and leads to a greater understanding and acceptance of the target culture.

  Sample: Write a brief composition that includes the following: What, when, and where a bank secretary might eat at lunchtime in a small provincial French town, in Paris, in a small American town, and in New York City or Los Angeles.

- Make use of simulation materials such as L’Immeuble, which includes some fifty mostly small-group activities originally designed to write a “group novel” dealing with the daily life
of thirty different apartment dwellers. This collection of oral and written activities lends itself to numerous communicative and cultural ends.

**Conclusion**

In the introduction it was mentioned that the teaching of culture has been one of the most discussed topics in the professional literature during the past twenty years but that its actual application in the classroom has lagged considerably. Several models for its integration in foreign language teaching have been proposed. Most, however, are still at the theoretical level or have been presented with only limited examples of implementation. Only the Indiana guide has developed a fully extended, four-level sequence—which nonetheless represents a significant beginning, considering that grammar has been the primary focus of foreign language teaching for decades, even centuries. Except for the importance granted literature, itself a cultural artifact, culture in the classroom is indeed a recent phenomenon. Perhaps we need to be somewhat more patient in our expectations. The Indiana model, the basic principles for creating a cultural mindset, and the numerous suggestions for integrating language and culture may well lead to yet greater emphasis on culture in the classroom. Simultaneously, it is hoped that universities will produce foreign language teachers who are better trained to focus on culture, and that publishers will begin to insist on a more systematic treatment of culture in textbooks. It is most important, however, that teachers begin to view themselves not simply as teachers of language but rather as teachers of both language and culture.

Robert C. Lafayette

**Endnotes**

7. Strasheim and Bartz, Guide to Proficiency-based Instruction.

Copies of A Guide to Proficiency-Based Instruction in Modern Foreign Languages for Indiana Schools may be obtained by writing to Dr. Walter H. Bartz, Center of School Improvement and Performance, Indiana Department of Education, Room 229, State House, Indianapolis, IN 46204. Also available from the same source are specific guides to proficiency-based instruction in French, German, and Spanish.
References


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### Constructing Culture Study Units: A Blueprint and Practical Tools

**Jonathan F. Arries**

For years the leading voices in foreign language education have spoken to the issue of how to incorporate culture study in the second language (L2) classroom. Theorists attribute the difficulty of teaching a second culture (C2) to a variety of factors, including teachers’ limited foreign experience, poor materials, lack of consensus about the definition of culture, a fear of controversy about teaching “values,” and a lack of time in a curriculum that prioritizes grammar.¹ There are essentially two different approaches to teaching culture that are advocated by researchers: these might be summarized as the “activity” and the “anthropology-process” schools. The former group suggests that teachers ought to include activities such as culture assimilators, mini-dramas, field trips, and visits by native speakers, and utilize authentic materials.²

Those who advocate the anthropology-process approach believe that an exclusive focus on materials and activities reflects a misconception about the nature of culture. Although appreciative of better classroom materials, they point out that cultural behaviors change constantly and that materials can easily become outdated. An exclusive focus on materials and activities can also lead us to regard language learning and culture learning as distinct components in the curriculum, a notion which can...