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THE PLACE OF FRENCH AND FRANCOPHONE CULTURES  
IN FRENCH-AS-A-FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS  
in  
FRENCH

Portland State University  
2004

As seen in the above table, the ACTFL guidelines divided cultural learning (as well as other language skills) into six stages from the Novice stage to the Native Competence stage depending on the student's knowledge of and exposure to the target culture. Following is a description of each stage.

#### **A. Novice**

The very first stage is the Novice stage. The novice stage refers to students who would be considered true beginners, students who would have been exposed to neither target language nor culture in the past. Such students would not be able to understand either the language or the basic cultural patterns. They have very little or no knowledge of the target culture. Their knowledge is not broad enough to survive in the target country. They rely on nonverbal communication such as gestures. If they were to go to the target country, they would encounter a considerable number of problems and misunderstandings due to their lack of cultural and linguistic knowledge.

#### **B. Intermediate**

The second level is the Intermediate stage. Students at this stage have had little exposure to the language and target culture. They have learned how to greet people and have acquired basic survival knowledge of the target culture. Therefore, they can go to the target country and communicate with people only in a simple way. They have acquired enough knowledge of the target culture to greet people

appropriately, ask simple questions related to what they need or want, or directions, and fulfill their survival needs by buy food and using public transportation. They also understand simple answers to their questions. However, their discourse and behavior may carry many mistakes leading to many misunderstandings and miscommunication problems. Such students would struggle considerably in the target country due to their lack of knowledge in the target culture and language.

### **C. Advanced**

The third and middle stage of this framework is the Advanced stage. Students in the Advanced stage have had significant exposure to French culture prior to the instruction in the foreign language. They are able to communicate more than simple greetings and basic survival French. They are successful handling daily routines. They are familiar with some aspects of the target culture although their culture prevails. They are familiar with some cultural patterns but are not familiar with most of them. They can interact with people in less demanding contexts (introductions, invitations), are familiar with the politeness system, but misunderstandings still occur frequently in their speech. They know how to behave in casual situations such as basic conversation, but they cannot handle formal situations very well.

#### **D. Superior**

The Superior stage is the next stage. Students at this stage have experienced the target culture to such an extent that they are comfortable dealing with routine and social interactions as well as with situations that are more formal. The learners start handling unexpected situations and dealing with humor in the foreign language. In fact, they are able to understand the target culture so well that they can use humor and cultural references and expressions. They can also understand nonverbal responses such as body language. These students have become so comfortable with the language and culture that they can handle most informal situations, however, they still need to work on dealing with abstraction, because they cannot express abstract ideas and therefore deal with formal situations.

#### **F. Near-Native Competence**

After the Superior stage, comes the Near-Native Competence. Students with Near-Native Competence are able to react appropriately in most situations in the target culture either formal or informal. They have internalized the target culture in such a way that they pay attention to the appropriateness of their words and actions. They are conscious of the differences that exist between the two cultures, which enables them to discuss several aspects of these differences. The only difference that keeps them from being native-like is their lack of experience in some very specifically related cultural topics. These students have not had enough experience in the target culture to deal with such topics because they have spent less time in the

target country than native speakers. This does not prevent them from being able to integrate the target culture.

### **G. Native Competence**

The very last stage of this framework is Native Competence. Students at this stage have the same amount of cultural knowledge as native speakers. They are able to discuss any topics in the target language, understand all humor-related discussions, can handle appropriately both formal and informal situations and understand all nonverbal language the way a native speaker would. They have become acquainted with the target culture so well that their competence is comparable to a native speaker's.

In conclusion, the ACTFL defined six specific stages in the acquisition of cultural knowledge in the language classroom. Each stage is described in terms of communicative competence related to the students' knowledge of the target culture they should have acquired at specific times in the process of language learning. Each stage represents a particular level of cultural acquisition. The descriptions of the stages include lists of behaviors, attitudes, and ways of thinking that learners should have assimilated at the end of each stage of the framework. It is important to note that the ACTFL culture guidelines highly focus on the learners' communicative competence related to their knowledge of the target culture and language.

#### **IV. Stages of Cross-Cultural Competence for Students of French**

The Stages of Cross-Cultural Competence for Students of French were put together by Nostrand in collaboration with other researchers among whom we find Koop and Carrs who designed the Stages for French Culture in 1996. These stages were developed to complement the ACTFL Culture Guidelines in terms of culture. In contrast to the two previous sets of standards, this framework was specifically created to assess cultural competence in French foreign language classrooms. Like the National Standards, this framework was based on the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. It differs from the National Standards for foreign languages and the ACTFL guidelines in two significant ways. First, this framework was not created to assess other language skills (i.e. speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Second, it is not generalized to all cultures but it was created exclusively for the French classroom.

##### **A. Background Information**

The framework specific to French culture was developed in 1996 by Koop and Carrs to define cultural standards for French language learners. The National Standards for Culture were originally developed to complement the ACTFL Guidelines, as the final document did not include culture guidelines (although the Provisional Guidelines did include the cultural component). This framework is to be used in the French classroom. It considers both French culture and the various Francophone cultures around the world. A list of cultural knowledge was developed

for five major French-speaking areas: France, North America, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and North Africa. This framework implies that cultural competence is related to the knowledge of specific aspects of a culture. In other words, a language learner would need to know facts concerning the target culture to be able to pass to the next stage of cultural competence.

### **B. Description of the Format of the Framework**

The framework defines four stages of cultural awareness according to the learner's knowledge of French or Francophone cultures. The lowest level is Stage 1 and the highest stage learners can reach is Stage 4. A list of indicators of knowledge and competence is identified and organized into seven cultural categories: "Communication in Cultural Context," "The Value System," "Social Patterns and Conventions," "Social Institutions," "Geography and the Environment," "History," and "Literature and the Arts." The first category ("Communication in Cultural Context") refers to the learner's ability to produce the target language and use it appropriately in different the cultural situations. All aspects of communication are considered: verbal and non-verbal, appropriateness, and styles. The second category ("The Value System") incorporates the most common French values, including thought patterns and assumptions. The "Social Patterns and Conventions" and "Social Institutions" categories consider the place of people in the society. The last categories are self-explanatory. Each of the seven categories contains a list of

objectives that the learners in each level should be able to attain. Separate lists were created for all five major Francophone regions.

### **C. Example**

We will now propose a few concrete examples from this framework by considering a selected portion of stage 2. Only the portion of the stage that was related to “little-c” culture was chosen due to the interest of this study that is based on “little-c” culture. The respective goals dealing with “little-c” culture are “Communication in Cultural Context,” “The Value System,” and “Social Patterns and Conventions.” Additionally, stage 2 corresponds to an intermediate level of students of French, which is the level for which a mini-cultural curriculum was designed in chapter 4. The choice of these specific goals of stage 2 was made for these two reasons. The following excerpt of the framework is also found on page 19 (Nostrand, 1996).



Goals	Competencies
<b>Communication in Cultural Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- uses appropriate titles of address and formulas in survival-level situations</li> <li>- can use familiar and polite forms of address</li> <li>- demonstrates knowledge of some common formulas used in communication</li> <li>- is aware of the difference in conversational distance in the U.S.A. and in France</li> </ul>
<b>The Value System</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- can identify at least three of the highest common values and two mental habits in the value context</li> <li>- can recognize some manifestations of the above</li> <li>- is able to give at least one example of the differences between French and American values</li> </ul>
<b>Social Patterns and Conventions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- can describe principal differences in table manners in France and in the USA</li> <li>- knows the importance of handshake in greeting and leave-taking</li> <li>- can describe several social conventions of the youth culture</li> <li>- knows the importance of the evening meal as a family tradition</li> <li>- can identify the chief regional subcultures in France</li> <li>- can identify the ethnic origins of the most prominent groups of recent immigrants</li> </ul>

**Table 4: The First Three Goals of Stage 2 of the Four Stages of Competence**

In terms of “Communication in Cultural Context,” at this level, learners of French can greet people in the target culture using appropriate forms of address. They understand that “*Salut!*” is strictly reserved to friends of the same age or younger people, when “*Bonjour, Monsieur*” is a mark of respect that is used in settings that are more formal such as a classroom setting, or while talking to people that are older and from a different family such as a friend’s parent. They can make the distinction between various forms of politeness. They understand that “*tu*” is used in casual settings with people closely related only such as parents and children or friends, and “*vous*” is used with strangers, older people, or people with a higher social status. They know how to use common phrases such as “*Merci*” and “*Au*

*revoir.*” They understand that there is a difference in conversational distance in the two countries.

If we consider the “Value System” goal, we can see that learners at this stage can recognize three common French values such as French people are family-oriented, they rely on a hierarchical system, and they regard the appearance of people. Learners of this stage can also identify examples of these values. For instance, they are able to tell that French people are family-oriented because most families consider lunch and dinner as social times for the family to share stories. Learners of French can also tell one example of a cultural difference between Americans and French people, such an example would be “American dress more casually than French people.”

In terms of “Conventions and Social Patterns,” learners can talk about the differences in table manners between American and French people and understand the importance of meals for French people. They can also identify some characteristics of specific groups in France, such as young people, French subcultures (i.e. the Parisians), and immigrant cultures in France.

The examples given in the above sections are only a few examples of goals that learners of a specific stage are expected to achieve at a certain time in their language and culture learning.

In conclusion, Nostrand was able to develop a framework that assesses specific-culture awareness among the learners of French. This particular framework was developed using the provisional culture guidelines defined by ACTFL. It is

divided into various geographic Francophone zones, among which the zone of France studied in specific in the previous section, a framework that was developed by Koop and Carrs in 1996. Each framework defines a very detailed set of objectives for learners to reach gradually in their target language and culture learning process.

## **V. Using Standards to Teach Culture in the Language Classroom**

After having looked at three different kinds of foreign language standards, it is important to try to understand how they could be used successfully in the context of a foreign language course. In fact, from the instructor and curriculum developer's perspectives, standards can be used as guidelines to design curricula, to plan lessons, and to assess language learners. From the students' perspective, they can be used by the teachers to develop a list of learning objectives for their students. The standards are models for both teachers and learners.

In the following section, we will first discuss how a French teacher uses the National Standards in her class and proposes activities for other teachers. Then we will take the example of greetings in French culture and look at how the three sets of standards could help define culture goals and objectives, and create lesson plans and activities. In the final part of the section, we will consider the problems that one can face while using the standards in foreign language courses. The emphasis of this research being based on "little-c" culture (Brook, 1968), it is important to note again

that we will strictly focus on the goals of each set of standards that are relevant to the discussion.

#### **A. Suggestions from a French Teacher**

D. Blaz who teaches high school French in the United States studied the National Standards for Foreign Languages with a teacher's perspective. In her book, *Bringing the Standards for Foreign Language Learning to Life*, Blaz starts her chapters by describing each standard. She looks at the interdependence of the standards and finds ways to relate standards from different goals. She suggests a list of teaching goals and proposes numerous activities for several languages and levels. This section concentrates on the activities proposed by Blaz for Standard 2: Cultures.

Among the list of cultural goals that she developed for Standard 2.1 Practices and Perspectives, we find "identification and use of appropriate oral expressions," "identification and use of culturally appropriate gestures and facial expressions," "appropriate manner of dress," "typical occupations," "popular sports," "educational system," or "family roles and relationships" (Blaz, 55-6). She suggests activities for young children with songs and poems through which students could learn some practices. She also proposes weights and measures activities over the Internet for students to become familiar with different units of measure. "News in depth" will help students become acquainted with the national news of foreign countries. Finally, she recommends crafts activities such as decorating eggs, which is a Spanish tradition.

To describe Standard 2.2, Blaz starts by giving a definition of a Product. For her, there are several types of Products in a culture. Products can be written, artistic, social, technological, historical, or gender-oriented. Blaz gives a list of common classroom events that fall under the teaching of Products. Among these activities, we find “identifying and describing a variety of objects,” “identifying and interpreting cultural message,” “making examples of crafts,” “viewing or creating maps that illustrate the products of a country,” “examining and creating realia scrapbooks,” and “creating and wearing traditional dress.”

As we have seen in the above section, Blaz was able to come up with goals and activities that aimed at the realization of National Standards for Language Teaching. The goals that she proposes are applicable to various language classes. In addition, the activities that suggests are varied. Most of Blaz’ activities rely on the use of the Internet that is a significant resource in culture teaching today.

### **B. Combining the Sets of Standards to Fit in a Language Course**

Although culture learning presents significant challenges, standards give us tools for defining concrete objectives and goals for our classrooms. In fact, standards if used properly can become useful tools to define foreign language curricula. Standards related to the acquisition of the target culture can help define culture goals and objectives for the course, create activities, and design lesson plans for language classes. Some of the standards discussed in the above sections can be

used to plan culture teaching. Let us take the example of beginning university-level French students and consider the teaching of greetings. By combining the three sets of standards studied in this chapter, we will be able to create a list of objectives and assessment techniques to be used in the French classroom.

According to the ACTFL culture guidelines, intermediate students can use greetings and leave-taking. If we consider the Four Stages for Cultural Competence, we can see that beginners of French can use greetings appropriately. We have already seen how greetings fit into the National Standards focus on practices, products, and perspectives. Therefore, using greetings in a real life situation is an appropriate class objective in culture for beginners according to all guidelines.

Taking the National Standards into account, we know that students need to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between practices and perspectives, that is to say in this case between greetings and the way French people value greetings. Many strategies could be used to enable students to first understand and assimilate the relationship between a Practice and a Perspective and show their ability to use this knowledge. Writing short essays about greetings and the reasons why there are various ways to greet people in France is an activity that helps students reflect on their knowledge of French culture. After having understood the concept, students can demonstrate their knowledge of French culture many ways. Role-playing a situation in which the students have to use appropriate greetings will show the students' abilities to apply their knowledge of French culture.

As seen previously, two of the frameworks describe what learners are able to do at the different levels of their learning experience, while the National Standards use a broader approach by not defining any stages or levels. Using the three types of standards for greetings in French culture, we have defined an objective for our beginning university-level course. With this objective in mind, it becomes easier to construct lesson plans that will aim at this objective and invite students to acquire specific knowledge. We are also able to design tests that will assess the students' knowledge.

### **C. Problems in Using the Standards**

As we saw in the previous discussion, there is not a unique and definite set of foreign language standards for teachers to follow. Three sets of standards were developed in the past two decades among which one was abandoned before entering the final document. Moreover, standards need to be interpreted in the first place before they can be implemented and used in foreign language courses. In fact, foreign language standards are not lists of classroom objectives but rather guidelines that will help the instructors and lead them in a particular direction.

Furthermore, we are aware of the issues linked to culture teaching that prevent culture from entering some curricula and therefore from reaching language learners. In fact, teaching a culture is more complex than teaching other language skills. Culture is not a science; it is not fixed, but changes all the time. In addition, a language can be related to more than one culture and subcultures. Some teachers

lack confidence to teach culture from not having had enough experience themselves in the culture or from not having had any training in teaching culture in the classroom. Others wonder which aspects of the culture they should and/or can teach in class, what is important to teach, or what can be taught. Others lack cultural materials because of the distance to the target country or a limited budget. These factors stop language teachers from introducing culture to their students.

Finally, another important issue to consider is the lack of research in culture assessment. How can we assess what we teach in class? In fact, teaching in a classroom setting implies assessment. What is taught in class must be assessed. However, the literature does not show many assessment techniques of cultural knowledge.

In addition to defining cultural goals and objectives for each course, gathering cultural materials, creating cultural activities, and lesson plans, teachers should create their own assessment techniques. It is not hard to understand why for many foreign language teachers, teaching about a culture may seem more troublesome than it is worth. As a consequence, teaching culture often remains one of the teachers' last priorities in language teaching.



## **VI. Introducing the Standards in a Second-Year French Curriculum**

### **A. Background Information about the Course**

These objectives are developed for a term-long class and are aimed at second-year university students of French in the United States. This course is a summer course with approximately 20 students of diverse social backgrounds and ages. The course has been taught for the past four years using a textbook entitled *Personnages* (Oates and Dubois). To develop a set of objectives for this course, the main themes introduced in the textbook were retained and other themes were added.

Second-year French university students can be expected to have passed the beginner's stage. For this reason, we will consider that the students, on average, would be in the intermediate to advanced levels of the ACTFL scale, and Stage 2 of the four stages of cultural competence framework, although we know that some students' level may be lower and others' may be higher.

### **B. Defining Course Objectives**

Among the themes used for this research, we find the following four themes: 1) the use of "tu" and "vous;" 2) the family; 3) the role of men and women in the society; 4) the children at home and at school. The following table lists possible objectives for this particular class that match the selected themes for the class and incorporate standards from the three frameworks. In fact, the format of the following table shows the correspondence between the products, practices, and perspectives

from the National Standards. Some of the perspectives match values from the Four Stages of Cross-Cultural Competence framework, and some practices are based on the ACTFL guidelines.

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Products</b>	<b>Practices</b>	<b>Perspectives</b>
- “Tu” vs. “vous” - using the correct conjugation for “tu” and “vous”.	- Kiss on the cheeks to greet - Letters - Emails	- Use “tu” and “vous” accordingly. - Acknowledge the various ways to address people depending on their social status or age for instance	- Levels of formality - Society of hierarchy
- Proper behavior according to the situation e.g. meals	- Family pictures	- Know how to behave informally at home - Understand the role of family members	- Family relationships - Informality - Love
- Chores - Dating	- Women’s role in the French society	- Understand and recognize the role of men and women in the society	- Relationships between males and females
- Grades - Homework	- Educational system - Magazines for students	- Study hard in school	- Role of the education

**Table 5: Examples of French Cultural Themes, Products, Practices, and Perspectives**

These objectives could be used in the second year French class. Learning activities could be created so that the students assimilate cultural knowledge. Accordingly, some assessment techniques could be designed to assess the students’ knowledge and their ability to use their knowledge of the target culture.

In short, in this chapter, we have discussed three potential sets of standards (The National Standards, the ACTFL culture guidelines, and the four stages of cross-cultural competence) that could be used in designing curricula for French language courses. We have seen that each of them emphasize various aspects of language learning. They all have specific orientations that are more or less oriented toward

cultural learning. We have discussed the flaws that currently exist in foreign language curriculum designing in terms of integrating culture in the classroom. And we have seen some potential reasons of these flaws. Finally, we discussed the possibility of using some standards to design foreign language curricula, so that culture learning becomes more efficient and valuable in the future.

### CHAPTER 3: CULTURE AND TEXTBOOK

While Chapter 2 looked at how three sets of standards could be used in foreign language classes, Chapter 3 focuses on the content of language textbooks. In fact, for various reasons, many language teachers do not use the language standards, but most of them use textbooks. Where the majority of beginning and intermediate language classes use textbooks as their main class material, it is important to be familiar with the materials presented in textbooks. Some teachers may use the chosen text to establish their syllabus guidelines and to prepare their daily lessons; others may rely on other sources of materials or combine various types of materials. In fact, “teachers use the textbook as their syllabus guidelines in the day-to-day planning of lessons” (Byram, 1991, 173). All textbooks contain a variety of materials. Some materials are specifically used to teach one language skill such as grammar exercises. Others are used to teach more than one foreign language skill, for example, audio-taped conversations can teach listening and speaking skills. Let us keep in mind that the purpose of this study is to evaluate cultural learning in French courses. Therefore, if we consider cultural materials in textbook, we will see that they are often used to teach other skills. Because most teachers use textbooks in their first- and second-year classes, a textbook will often determine how much exposure the learners will have to the target culture. In fact, for some students, their textbooks is the only connection they have to the target language and culture. “One of the most important influences on pupils’ views of France is their French textbook.

Pupils refer to it explicitly or implicitly when talking in interviews about French life” (Byram, 1991, 173). Therefore, it is important to look at what textbooks have to offer in terms of cultural materials.

Since the present study focuses on the acquisition of a target culture in a specific second-year French class (FR 201) in the United States where cultural materials were developed to supplement the course, this chapter examines how the textbook, *Personnages*, (Oates & Dubois, 1999) used for this particular class presents the target culture. Oates and Dubois present their textbook in the instructor’s guide as such: “*Personnages* combines linguistics functions and structures with culture through an integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities” (Oates & Dubois, 1999, 9).

The first part of this chapter considers the cultural image *Personnages* transmits about the three Francophone areas studied in the first three chapters taught in FR 201 by describing the cultural statements that are made throughout the chapters and the cultural themes that are studied. Then, the second looks more in depth at *Personnages* and how culture is introduced and shared with the learners in terms of Performance and Knowledge, what learners can do versus what they know. The following part of the chapter focuses on the Products, Practices, and Perspectives presented in the chapters. Finally, the last section evaluates the chapters of *Personnages* according to Standard 2: Cultures of the National Standard that was developed by D. Blaz (2002).

## **I. Image of the Francophone Regions through *Personnages***

We will study the image of each Francophone region as it is shown in *Personnages* by first looking at cultural statements and then considering the various cultural themes introduced in the text.

### **A. Cultural Statements**

In this section, we look at the image of each Francophone areas studied in the Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of *Personnages*. The table on the following page displays a detailed list of what Byram (1991) called the “truths” (Byram, 1991, 175) about the cultures presented in the first chapters of the textbook. It is a list of cultural statements that are drawn from the chapters from the readings and other exercises.

In Chapter 1, France is shown as a country visited by millions of people each year. The tourists are attracted to France’s past that is rich in history, where they enjoy visiting old monuments and museums. Paris is depicted as an international city, where people never get bored. France is also looked at as a traditional country where people like to go to small shops and bakeries to buy their bread, and hang out at cafes to gossip.

Chapter 2 talks about the province of Quebec as a mix of old and new culture. It gives a historical view with the creation of the two most important cities on the East of Canada. While Montreal is pictured as a big modern city, Quebec is older. Quebec people are described as friendly and warm people, and very proud of their French heritage. They also like arts and parties.

In Chapter 3, we see Tahiti as a beautiful tropical place comprised of many islands, where North Americans like to go. Most of the economy is based in the capital city Papeete, where people go to find jobs. The economy mainly relies on tourism. People are perceived as casual and traditional.

Chapter	Cultural Statements
Chapter 1 Paris	<p>France is also called <i>L'Hexagone</i>            Millions of tourists go to France each year            France is an old country with a rich past            Monuments and Statues are historical symbols            The Eiffel tower is the symbol of Paris            The Eiffel tower has not always been a popular monument among the Parisians            There are many museums in Paris            The World Cup took place in <i>Stade de France</i>            We can find many international students in the Latin Quarter that came to study in <i>La Sorbonne</i>            People cannot get bored in Paris            People like to pass time at the terrace of cafes and watch people            Paris is the most visited city in the world            The fastest and cheapest way to travel in Paris is by subway            French people eat dinner after 7pm.            French people use “tu” with friends, family members, children, and animals.            There are many little shops and bakeries in Paris.</p>
Chapter 2 Quebec	<p>Quebec is a vast land            Quebec people are friendly and like to party            They are proud of their heritage            Montreal is the second city where we find the most Francophone people            Fashion and gastronomy are famous in Montreal            There are many festivals in Montreal            People can play winter sports in Montreal and outside the city            Quebec is an old city            Quebec is restoring its old neighborhoods            There are many artists            French and Canadian French are different</p>
Chapter 3 Tahiti	<p>There are 150 islands in Tahiti            Tahiti is tropical            Papeete is its capital city            Tahitians look for jobs in Papeete            80% of Tahitians live on tourism            Many Americans and Canadians go visit Tahiti            Tahiti is still authentic            France counts four overseas departments and other territories            Gauguin lived in Tahiti            Women wear “pareu” at weddings            They have their dress custom-made            Heiva Taupiti is a big festival in Tahiti where people compete</p>

Table 6: Cultural Statements about Paris, Quebec, and Tahiti

In summary, the textbook gives a positive image of all three Francophone regions. We learn about interesting places to visit and appealing things to do. However, the image purveyed is extremely touristy. Learners do not learn about the daily routine of Francophone people but rather how Americans view the various places and people. It provides the learners with an overly optimistic and exciting view of each place. The textbook gives the feeling of traveling in the various regions. The given perspective is the one of a traveler. The culture presented in *Personnage* lacks realism. “Given this view of language teaching, a textbook needs to do more than encourage positive attitudes through presentation of a harmonious image of the other culture. It needs to present that culture as it is lived and talked about by people who are credible and recognizable as real human being. The textbook needs to be realistic (Byram, 1991, 180).”

## **B. Cultural Themes**

In this section, we will take a look at the way five themes are presented in the textbook. Byram (1991) also studied these particular themes when reviewing the textbook named *Action Graded French* by Michael Buckby (Byram, 1991, 178-9). These cultural themes are: 1) Geographical and Historical Information, 2) People and Human Relationships, 3) Food and Meals, 4) Communications and Public, and 5) Leisure. The tables below present the themes in each of the three chapters.



Themes	Examples	Image
<b>1) Geographical and Historical Information</b>	Monuments and Statues Maps (city and country) Pictures	Paris is a touristic city with a past rich in history.
<b>2) People and Human Relationships</b>	Three American students come to study in Paris: Julie Spears, Christine Hayes and David Carter A receptionist Two French students André and Caroline Rogeon Famous people (Jeanne d'Arc, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette, Napoléon, and Charles de Gaulle)	People are nice and friendly. They are happy to help. They are polite and use "tu" and "vous" when necessary.
<b>3) Food and Meals</b>	Mc Donald's Bakeries Nice restaurant	People eat after 7. People eat croissants for breakfast.
<b>4) Communications and Public</b>	Subway Taxi	The subway is the fastest and cheapest way to travel in Paris.
<b>5) Leisure</b>	Café Museums Monuments	People like to hang out at cafes. We can visit many museums and monuments.

**Table 7: Cultural Themes in Chapter 1 Paris**

According to *Personnages*, France and more precisely Paris are places that tourists like to visit because of its old monuments and museums. Paris is a city that is easy to access thanks to its subway system. Chapter 1 gives us a positive image about French people who are friendly and are happy to help foreigners. They are also pictured as relaxed people who like to hang out at cafes. The society remains hierarchical. French people eat dinner after 7 unlike Americans who tend to eat earlier.

As the following table shows, Quebec is a large Canadian province that is modern and old at the same time. Winters are cold, but Quebec people are warm and friendly, they enjoy having a good time and partying. There is a lot to do in both Montreal and Quebec.

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Image</b>
<b>1) Geographical and Historical Information</b>	Vast province Cold in the winter Quebec is an old city Montreal is more modern Maps	Quebec is modern and old at the same time, a mix between Europe and America. The winters are cold.
<b>2) People and Human Relationships</b>	Famous people : Samuel de Champlain, Gabrielle Roy Two Canadian students : Céline Robitaille and Hervé Boulanger A writer : Marie Lévêque	People are extremely friendly and caring.
<b>3) Food and Meals</b>	Cuisine française au château de Frontenac	French food is popular.
<b>4) Communications and Public</b>	Trip by bus	People travel by bus.
<b>5) Leisure</b>	Going on a trip Going out and dating Shopping Visiting art galleries	Quebec is a place that is exciting and where people can have a good time.

**Table 3: Cultural Themes in Chapter 2 Quebec**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Image</b>
<b>1) Geographical and Historical Information</b>	Tropical islands 150 islands	Tahiti is an ideally beautiful place where many people go on vacation.
<b>2) People and Human Relationships</b>	Famous people : Gauguin Tahitian People : Marete Pêa and her family French: Anne Dufour	Tahitians are very traditional people. They enjoy spending time with their families.
<b>3) Food and Meals</b>	Traditional foods	People eat traditional foods for their wedding.
<b>4) Communications and Public</b>		
<b>5) Leisure</b>	Festival Beach	People like to play water sports.

**Table 4: Cultural Themes in Chapter 3 Tahiti**

In *Personnages*, Tahiti is described as an ideal place to go visit during vacation. The weather is tropical. People are casual and friendly but remain very traditional unlike in Hawaii.

In the three tables above, we see how the three chapters of *Personnages* are constructed in a cultural perspective. Once again, it is important to notice that the image that is given through the chapters is nearly perfect: the places are beautiful, the people are nice and always friendly, they like to eat traditional food in nice restaurants, and the transportation system is good. Moreover, we see that the given perspective is shown through the eyes of only a few people: the characters introduced at the beginning of each chapter. The picture of the cultures could be idealistic and not represent accurately the population of the place.

## **II. Knowledge versus Performance**

### **A. Definitions**

It is important to start this discussion by providing a few definitions on the subject area. As we analyze the textbook later on, we will make a distinction between two terms: knowledge versus performance. Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991) referred to these two concepts as “know that” and “know how.”

If we consider culture learning, “Know that” is what someone theoretically knows about the target culture, what they have learned in class from their teacher or textbook for example. “Know that” are facts and generalities about a topic. Let us look at some examples: French people go to the bakery to buy their bread; French

people spend a lot of time in coffee shops; Normandy is where Americans landed during World War II; shops are closed on Sundays and Mondays; French students have to pass the *Baccalauréat* in order to enter university. These examples are facts about a country or a culture. Language learners may learn these by reading history books, newspaper articles or their textbook. However, they may not be able to use this knowledge in the target culture.

“Know how” corresponds to what the person is actually able to do in the target culture. It is related to the learner’s behavior and attitude when confronted to cultural situations. For instance, American people working in France would not go out for lunch at 11 in the morning because lunch time starts at 12; they would close their office doors whether they are in or out of the office; they would not greet people they do not know on the street or talk to strangers on the bus.

In sum, competence could be considered as the first stage of cultural learning, whereas performance would be the second level. In fact, one needs to know about a culture before being able to act appropriately in a culture. It takes time and practice before one is able to perform in a different culture.

## **B. Knowledge and Performance in *Personnages***

*Personnages* is a comprehensive textbook that can be used in a university intermediate French program. It is mainly focused on the linguistic aspect of language learning also incorporating some cultural elements. *Personnages* is about the Francophone world. Each chapter is about a different part of the Francophone

world introducing new native characters each time. The learners will become acquainted with the new characters and learn about their lives and stories.

Let us take a closer look at the structure of the chapters. Each chapter is organized in the same manner. They count three main parts: *Interactions*, *Structure*, and *A la Découverte*. *Interaction* is the first section of the chapters in which the learners will learn about the setting and the characters of the story. Each chapter starts with a cultural quiz that invites students to recall their knowledge of the Francophone world. The ten questions of the quiz are multiple choice questions related to the geography, history or literature of the Francophone region of the chapter. Then, the Francophone region is presented in a two-page introduction written by the authors of the book themselves. The themes of the introduction are similar to the topics used in the previous cultural quiz. The introduction serves to introduce new vocabulary words and the setting where the action of the oral comprehension exercise, *Interactions*, will take place. An exercise called *Tête-à-tête* offers some activities aimed at teaching how to practice using some *Expressions Utiles* that will help students memorize how to do such things as asking for directions and retelling a past story for example. Two reading exercises follow. These exercises can be found in various forms (letters, programs, maps, schedules) and are followed by discussion questions to guide the students understand the text more easily. After the *Interaction* section, we can find the *Structure* section that focuses on grammatical structures. Grammar explanations are given in English with examples in French. Each grammar point is also covered in the workbook, where we

can find matching exercises. Finally, the *A la Découverte* section concentrates on literature. Two or three pieces of literature are exposed in this section. The themes of *A la Découverte* are not necessarily linked to the chapter's themes. In other words, each chapter is divided in three distinct sections.

Let us take a look at the first three chapters of the book *Personnages*, which are the chapters covered during the first term of second-year French. Because this study focuses on the “little-c” culture, the following section of the chapter is an analysis of the first section of the book entitled *Interaction* that more specifically deals with cultural learning than the two other parts of the chapters.

The tables below display the cultural items found in the *Interactions* sections of the three first chapters of the book. The items were categorized and organized in two columns: “Know what” and “Know how” according to the type of activities offered in the book and the kind of cultural element.

The first chapter is about Paris. It introduces three American students, who come to live and study in Paris for an extended period of time. It is their first time in Paris and they arrive at the airport, settle in their dormitory and look for a place to eat dinner.

The information that we can find about Paris in the first part of the *Interactions* section mostly deals with the geography, history, city layout, arts, sports, and tourism. These cultural elements are part of the “Big-C” culture. The second part of the section (*A l'écoute* and *Echange*) introduces some “little-c” culture, such as daily life issues, transportations, and eating.

Chapter 1: Paris	“Know what”	“Know how”
Quiz culturel	Layout of the city Art and museums Geography Sport History	
Introduction	Geography Tourism in the city Monuments and History	
A l’Ecouté	Student life Transportation Phone call Going out to eat	Looking for prices in a brochure
Tête-à-tête		Asking for information
Echanges	Subway system	

Table 5: “Know What” and “Know How” in Chapter 1

Similarly, the type of culture introduced in the first part of the *Interactions* section on Québec in chapter 2 are also related to the geography, history, city layout, arts, sports, and tourism in the Canadian Province. The second part of the section (*A l’écoute* and *Echange*) also introduces some “little-c” culture, such as dating, the school system, and traveling.

Chapter 2: Québec	“Know what”	“Know how”
Quiz culturel	Layout of the city Art and museums Geography Sport History	
Introduction	Geography Tourism in the city Monuments and History	
A l’Ecouté	Dating Writing a book	
Tête-à-tête		Asking questions
Echanges	School system Traveling	

Table 6: “Know What” and “Know How” in Chapter 2

Chapter 3 on Tahiti is very similar to the first two chapters in terms of the organization and layout of cultural information. The first section displays “Big-C”

Culture information about the geography, history, arts, sports, and tourism in the Tahitian islands. The second part of the section (*A l'écoute* and *Echange*) introduces some “little-c” culture, such as getting married, and some Tahitian customs.

Chapter 3: Tahiti	“Know what”	“Know how”
<b>Quiz culturel</b>	Layout of the islands Art and museums Geography Sport History	
<b>Introduction</b>	Geography Tourism History	
<b>A l'Ecoute</b>	Art Getting married	
<b>Tête-à-tête</b>		Talking on the phone
<b>Echanges</b>	Traveling Customs Sports	

Table 7: “Know How” and “Know How” in Chapter 3

The above description of the *Interaction* sections of the three chapters gave an idea of how the book is organized and how culture is introduced. In fact, most cultural elements are general pieces of information about the Francophone region that is introduced in the chapter. These types of cultural information are part of the “Big-C” Culture. Later in the section, we can find some “little-c” culture items in some *A l'Ecoute* and *Echange* exercises.

Now, if we look at the number of cultural elements found in each column ‘Know what’ and ‘Know how’, we can clearly see that most categories are found in the ‘Know what’ column. In other words, this textbook teaches learners about facts and generalities about Francophone cultures, such as the geography, history, tourism,



art and sports of the countries. These facts and generalities are introduced in the form of texts, recorded messages, drawings, or pictures especially designed for the textbook. Most activities that incorporate some cultural learning are reading or listening activities. These types of activities allow learners to acquire some knowledge about the target culture, but not use the knowledge they acquire. Writing and speaking activities could help students use the acquired knowledge. In *Personnages*, few activities invite students to practice and use the cultural information learned in the other parts of the section. *Tête-à-tête* is one of the activities that encourages students to produce their own language in given situations by first reading an existing dialog and then creating their own dialog using a list of commonly used expressions.

In summary, *Personnages* proposes few activities that lead to the teaching of cultural performance and competence. The number of activities is limited and it is also important to note that the great majority of the materials used to illustrate the book is adapted from other sources. Unfortunately, there are too few pieces of authentic materials found in the textbook to strongly promote cultural learning.

## **II. Products, Practices, and Perspectives**

The previous section described and analyzed the main categories of culture represented in the first chapters of the textbook. The following section looks more closely at each activity in terms of Products, Practices and Perspectives. It describes the 3Ps also found in the table below that shows the Products, Practices, and

Perspectives found in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, in order to understand how culture learning is depicted in the textbook. The table below displays the Products, Practices and Perspectives as found in the three chapters.

	<b>Chapter 1 Paris</b>	<b>Chapter 2 Québec</b>	<b>Chapter 3 Tahiti</b>
<b>Products</b>	1 map of France 2 stamps 3 maps of Paris 1 menu 1 hotel price list 1 transportation price list 1 subway map 2 photographs of Paris	2 maps of Quebec 2 stamps 3 photos of Quebec 1 ad for Le Monde 1 ad for a restaurant 1 travel program	1 map of the islands 3 stamps 4 photos
<b>Practices</b>	Dinner Times Going to university in France Using public transportation	Going out for dinner Writing a letter Dating	Talking on the phone with a friend Getting married
<b>Perspectives</b>	Levels of Formality	Difference between Canadian French and French	Friendship Francophone cultures and different customs

**Table 8: Products, Practices and Perspectives in Chapters 1, 2, and 3**

In the three chapters, we find some similar Products like maps, stamps, price lists, and photographs. It is important to mention at this point that this edition of *Personnages* was published in black and white. Therefore, all Products presented in the chapters are also in black and white. Pictures of the Products are inserted to the text and rarely carry legends. Most of the time, these pictures are there to illustrate the text but they are not always used in language learning activities. For example, in Chapter 1, a photograph of the *Louvre* Museum, two stamps and a simplified map of Paris illustrate the introductory discussion about the city. These Products are not used in any learning activities. However, later in the chapter, we find three airport

information boards and another simplified map of the city that are used in grammar activities.

The Practices as they are listed in the above table are also the main topics of the learning activities found in the first section of each chapter. The Practices are often implied and used in activities. They are not often the topic of the main activities presented in the chapters. For instance, Chapter 1 introduces the difference between the times for dinner in the United States and France. Learners do not necessarily discuss this concept in class. They hear it in a conversation between American and French students for the *A l'écoute* activity. In addition, in Chapter 2, students learn about dating in Quebec by listening to a conversation between two young persons who met during a trip. They also learn about the French school system by reading a letter. In Chapter 3, students will find out about wedding traditions in Tahiti by reading a letter between two friends.

The Perspectives are also implied in the chapters. In Chapter 1, we learn about the various levels of formality in France in the *A l'écoute* exercise, in which we hear two young people talking about the difference between “*tu*” and “*vous*.” The Perspectives may also be the subject of further explanations in the textbook or footnotes, such as the difference between “*tu*” and “*vous*” that is described on page 17 in a section called *Notes Culturelles*. In Chapter 2, students learn about the difference between French and Canadian French. This difference is presented in the *Notes Culturelles* and in an exercise where students have to match French and

Canadian words. In Chapter 3, students learn implicitly about friendship in the Francophone region of Tahiti.

In conclusion, each chapter counts on average ten Products that are used or not in learning activities. It introduces directly or indirectly Practices and Perspectives by incorporating them into activities or giving explanations to describe them. The textbook does not seem to teach toward cultural learning in depth. It introduces cultural topics and shows cultural elements. However, it does not offer many cultural activities that will help students become more competent in the target culture.

#### **IV. Textbook Evaluation Based upon the National Standards**

Blaz (2002) designed a textbook evaluation based upon the five Cs of the National Standards. Although she created evaluations for every goal of the National Standards, we will focus on the two evaluations that she proposed to assess Standard 2: Cultures. To use her evaluations more efficiently, she recommends the use of a four-point rating scale as shown in the figure below.

<b>Book Questions Rating Scales (Blaz, 2002, 139)</b>			
4	3	2	1
Very Much	Adequate	Less than I'd like	Almost None

**Figure 2: Blaz Book Questions Rating Scales (2002)**

Blaz's two evaluations are aimed at assessing the three Ps (Products, Practices, and Perspectives) in foreign language courses. They will be used to evaluate the way French culture is presented in *Personnages* with the rating scale that Blaz proposed. In the following section, the researcher will evaluate the textbook herself. This section shows the researcher's personal impressions about the approach *Personnages* used in terms of culture only. In fact, the other language skills will not be evaluated.

The evaluations are considered one by one. First, we'll find the grading in the tables. Then, the grading is further justified below each table. It is important to note that *Personnages* was evaluated for no other reason than being the selected textbook for the class that she taught. In addition, the choice of this textbook was not hers.

Are the visuals:	<i>Personnages</i> , Oates & Dubois (1999)
1. Attractive and inviting?	2
2. Current?	2
3. Authentic?	1
4. Age-appropriate to stimulate interest?	3
5. Depictions of both "big-C" and "little-c" culture?	2
6. Depictions of a variety of peoples and cultures that speak the target language?	4
7. Well integrated with the theme or text of the section?	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18/28</b>

**Table 9: Culture Questions for Visual Materials Blaz, 2002, 139**

In the first evaluation on visual materials, *Personnages* scored 18 out of 28. It received two high scores on questions 6 and 7. In fact, it is true that the textbook tries to depict a wide variety of Francophone peoples and cultures by introducing a

different Francophone region in each chapter. The authors claim that, “Some of the main features of *Personnages* are case studies of French-speaking people from the Francophone world for student interest” (Oates & Dubois, 1999, 9). The cultural visual materials are also well integrated with the theme and the sections. They illustrate readings, and supplement learning activities. It scored a little lower on the question “are visuals are age-appropriate to stimulate interest?” While most visuals are age appropriate, others seem too young. Most pictures, stamps, menus, and advertisements are age-appropriate. However, some drawings found in all chapters would seem more appropriate for younger learners. We also find overly simplified maps. On the questions dealing with the attractiveness of the materials, how current they were, and the depictions of both “little-c” and “big-C” culture, *Personnages* scored 2 out of 4 for various reasons. First, the textbook is in black and white, which does not make the textbook very attractive at first sight. The materials are not current, for example the currency used in the book is Franc, when in France we are now using the Euro. Moreover, *Personnages* focuses more on “big-C” culture than “little-c” culture, by introducing pieces of literature and arts. On the last question dealing with the authenticity of the materials, *Personnages* only scored 1. In fact, the great majority of the materials aimed at teaching “little-c” culture is not authentic: the readings, audio-taped conversations, and other cultural materials were written or designed by the authors themselves.

In summary, *Personnages* does a wonderful job trying to present numerous Francophone cultures and peoples; however, it lacks authenticity and attractiveness.

<b>Do these selections:</b>	<b><i>Personnages</i>, Oates &amp; Dubois (1999)</b>
1. Depict culture that is significant?	2
2. Depict culture that is current?	3
3. Depict culture in an accurate manner?	2
4. Depict culture that is age-appropriate to stimulate interest?	3
5. Depict a variety of peoples and cultures that speak the target language?	4
6. Include practices such as games, songs, celebrations, stories, sports, and entertainment representative of target language culture(s)?	1
7. Identify products: toys, dress, foods, art, songs, and literature?	1
8. Include information on how students can discuss or produce these products themselves?	1
9. Include sources written for native speakers?	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18/36</b>

**Table 11: Questions about Content of Culture Sections (Blaz, 2002, 140)**

Once again, *Personnages* scored high on question 5, because it really tries to introduce a wide variety of cultures. It scored 3 on how the culture depicted was current and age-appropriate for the same reasons already mentioned above during the analysis of the previous table. The culture is not extremely current and some pieces of culture are not age-appropriate. It scored 2 out of 4 on the questions on how accurate and significant the sections depict culture, because *Personnages* mostly focuses on “big-C” culture and does not provide the learners with much information about people’s daily routines. Finally, on the last four questions, it only scored 1. In fact, the presentation of products and practices in the textbook are extremely limited, and besides the pieces of literature presented at the end of each chapter, no sources were written by native speakers of French.

The aim of this chapter was not to compare textbooks and how each of them present culture, but rather to take a look at one specific university level textbook and

see how culture was presented in that book to understand better how the learners perceive the target culture. In fact, comparing textbooks would be a difficult task to do since most books have different approaches to culture. Like in every foreign language textbooks, there are pros and cons about *Personnages*. Among the advantages found in *Personnages*, it is important to note that the authors' intention was to present the Francophone world by introducing a new culture and new people in each chapter, so that the learners would become acquainted with various Francophone regions, the people and their culture. However, we know how complex culture teaching is. By attempting to present so many cultures, *Personnages* omits some important parts of culture learning. Learning a target culture takes a considerable amount of time. Learners need to understand the culture, assimilate it, and finally be able to behave appropriately in the target culture. The materials and visuals presented in the book give a first taste of each culture but do not attempt to teach more than what tourists need to know. The main inconvenient about the book is that materials are not always current and do not allow learners to absorb the culture.



## **CHAPTER 4: SUPPLEMENTING THE EXISTING CURRICULUM OF A SECOND-YEAR FRENCH COURSE WITH ADVERTISEMENTS**

Having studied the three sets of foreign language standards dealing with cultural learning (the National Standards, the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and the Stages of Cross-Cultural Competence) available in the literature in Chapter 2 and having analyzed a second-year French textbook in terms of cultural teaching in Chapter 3 focusing on the amount and type of culture found in that textbook, Chapter 4 considers introducing authentic cultural materials into a second-year French course to supplement the existing curriculum that uses *Personnages* (Oates & Dubois). After having noticed a gap between the cultural standards and the amount and quality of the cultural materials presented in the textbook, this chapter looks at the use of authentic cultural materials in the classroom as a potential way to fill this gap. To do so, this chapter first justifies the choice of the selected type of cultural materials implemented in the course to provide students with a greater number of products, practices and perspectives: advertising. Then, it looks at the pros and cons of using advertising in the classroom and analyzes concrete classroom examples. Finally, it discusses the process of creating and implementing new cultural materials into an existing course.

## **I. Advertising as Authentic Cultural Materials in the Classroom**

Over the past decades, while researchers were discussing the place of culture in language courses, language teachers tried to present culture in their classes in their own ways. Some teachers had their students study pieces of literature, others viewed and analyzed movies, and others sampled traditional foods. Some teachers brought artifacts to their class, and others relied on realia such as magazines, newspapers, or CDs. These are only few of the techniques that can be used in language classes to present and study the target culture. All of them have pros and cons. But all of them have the advantage of teaching some aspects of the target culture by incorporating products, practices and/or perspectives to the course. According to the literature, advertisements were not frequently used as cultural materials in foreign language classes and this is one of the reasons why they were chosen to supplement this particular curriculum. The following sections discuss the meaning of advertising and explore how it can be used successfully in language courses.

### **A. Defining Advertising**

Before discussing the place of advertising in the foreign language classroom, it is important to define it. Advertising is a medium that is used in many societies to share information about a product or a service with the population in order to attract a certain number of potential customers that will need and buy the product or service in the advertisement. Advertising may take various physical forms. Nowadays, many kinds of advertising are available, such as television commercials, radio ads,

magazine ads, poster boards, coupons, and flyers to mention only a few. Although these forms are varied and may seem very different from one another, the purpose of an advertisement remains the same: attracting the most possible number of customers, therefore sharing a lot of information about the country's practices and perspectives.

Is advertising the same all around the world? This could be argued. In fact, in today's world, societies have become global. Therefore, we find numerous global companies everywhere, such as Coca Cola, Toyota Motors, Michelin, and Nestlé. These companies all started in different countries around the world where their headquarters are, and grew to such an extent that they can now be found everywhere. Let us now consider their advertising strategies. Companies use different advertising techniques. Some rely on international advertising and others decide to adapt their advertisements to each country where they intend to sell their products. This decision is made according to the product and the target country. In fact, it might be preferable to sell some products with an international advertisement than other types of products depending on the content of the advertisement (slogan, humor, picture) and the product itself due to certain countries' regulations or the people's needs. In any case, a company that intends to sell its products outside its borders is required to research the new market to find out whether international advertising would be an option in the country or advertisements should be specifically designed for that country and to learn about the practices and perspectives of the country.

Let us now consider a concrete example to illustrate situations where international advertising can cause problems. There are specific regulations concerning advertising in all countries. In France, companies cannot advertise « Tobacco, alcohol, margarine, or diet products. Tourism outside the country cannot be promoted. Children may be used only in ads for children's products » (Shimp, 2003, 244). In other words, Marlboro or Jack Daniels, which are American companies, cannot hope to reach the French market using advertising. Toys r us will not face any problems if they decide to use children in their French ads. Moreover, foreign travel agencies will not be able to reach the French market by advertising their country in France. Some countries have stricter regulations than others. But, companies need to keep them in mind. These regulations also tell about the country's perspectives.

Furthermore, companies have to be flexible and understand certain rules before hoping to reach a new market. Prior to entering a foreign market, they have to comprehend not only the specific regulations that apply to advertising as we saw above, but also the people's needs, their expectations toward a product or a service, and people's understanding of advertising. In fact, culture plays a significant role in the media. As Simon (1980) said, « *Ceux qui s'imaginent que la presse joue le même rôle en Amérique et en Russie, ou en France et en Chine, n'ont pas vraiment compris ce médium* » (Simon, 1980, 1). Simon acknowledged the fact that people who believed that media played the same role in all countries have not yet

understood the concept. The following examples show that culture plays an important role in the success of an advertisement.

Duncan (2000) talks about cultural mistakes in advertising and gives us examples of failures among well-known companies. Duncan tells us about Listerine whose advertisement in Thailand was a failure because it showed two young people being affectionate in public, which is culturally inappropriate in Thailand. In this case, the advertisement did not respect the people's values. It did not reflect the country's practices and perspectives and failed. Colgate presented a new product named Cue in France, where the word Cue sounded similar to an obscene word in French. Pepsi Cola's slogan "Come alive" in Germany was translated "Come out of the grave." By not being aware of the meaning of the words, Colgate and Pepsi did not consider the people's language. These few examples show how important it is to consider not only the product but also the practices and perspectives of a country prior to creating an advertisement for a product.

As a conclusion, international or national advertisements all reveal a people's culture. In fact, advertising needs to understand the people and their culture in order to be successful in a country. In other words, advertisers have to consider some aspects of the target culture: the people's needs in terms of the products or services, their expectations in terms of advertising (what people like to see, what works), the country's advertising regulations, the people's language, lifestyles, values, norms and customs, ethics and moral standards, and taboos. Simon explained, « *La publicité établit un climat culturel, un conditionnement propice à la consommation,*

*et le jeu entre l'image et le texte se veut représentation d'un absolu culturel »* (Simon, 1980, 17). In other words, advertising establishes a cultural climate whose image and words represent culture. Advertising a product or a service not only presents products as introduced in the National Standards, but also demonstrates the practices and perspectives of the target culture. Indeed, an advertisement shows the product that is for sale along with an image or picture that often reveals other cultural aspects of the country, such as its values and beliefs.

### **B. Advantages of Using Ads in the Language Classroom**

Advertisements are great cultural learning tools to be used in foreign language classes. The previous section showed that advertisements reveal a great deal about the target people's cultures. They represent a product and its image, and reveal the practices of the country (i.e. appropriateness and politeness) and the perspectives.

Moreover, "Advertisements are contemporary authentic documents, easily accessible, provide excellent linguistic and cultural insight, and facilitate achieving the language goals of a proficiency-based classroom" (Doering, 1993, 420). As authentic materials, contemporary advertisements are current representations of the target culture unlike novels for instance. In fact, recent advertisements show the target people's needs at a specific time: what they would like and need to buy, or the product of a country. An advertisement is also a tool that can be used to learn the practices and perspectives of the target country by viewing snapshots of the target

people's lives and routines that enables language learners to gain some direct cultural insight. By watching TV commercials, learners will naturally and implicitly absorb the target culture. As representations of the target culture, advertisements share the practices and perspectives of a culture. In fact, a *Ricoré* commercial selling some breakfast drinks by showing a family at breakfast time teaches language learners about table practices in France. Another commercial about *BN* snacks showing children at school share information concerning the perspectives of French people in terms of schooling and their views on the education system.

Advertisements are also learning instruments that will allow teachers to teach other language skills in context: vocabulary building, grammar, listening and speaking. Ads “can serve a variety of pedagogical purposes: vocabulary enrichment, conversation incentives, effective examples of rhetorical figures, listening exercises, thematic or historic studies of French advertising, a moment of humor or a springboard of cultural insight” (Doering, 1993, 424).

In the past, some teachers have used advertisements in their classes. According to Marie Christine Koop (1991), French advertising is the fourth most frequently used authentic document in the foreign language classroom with a frequency rate of 40%. It comes after French newspapers and magazines (67%), slides (58%), and records and audiotapes (42%). However, “The efficiency of this vitality has not convinced enough teachers to incorporate examples of French advertisements, supplementary to those found in their textbooks, into their lesson plans. [...] The task is challenging” (Doering, 1993, 423).

In summary, advertisements are useful language learning tools that can be used to teach about the products, practices and perspectives of a culture.

Unfortunately, their use is not widely spread among teachers. According to Simon, people hate it or love it, but they rarely study advertising. « *Même en Amérique, les gens cultivés ont de la difficulté à comprendre les variétés iconographiques du monde de la publicité. On dédaigne la publicité ou on la méprise, on la savoure et on l'étudie rarement* » (Simon, 1980, 1).

### **C. Pedagogical Approaches and Strategies for Using Ads in the Foreign Language Classroom**

The following section considers what teachers have done in their classrooms with advertisements. While some instructors used them to reinforce their students' listening and speaking skills, others used them as vocabulary building tools. Let us examine some examples.

Gerling (1994) shares his experience with Mexican advertisements. The Galveston-Houston school districts use a language learning technique in their Spanish classes based on videotaped clips of public announcements easily recordable in the Sunbelt region of the United States. Using this mean, the learners practice their listening and speaking skills by working on oral comprehension exercises and dramatization in class.

Lawrence (1987) considers various uses of advertisements in the language classrooms. At all levels (beginners to advance), advertisements can be used to work



on specific language features, such as morphology and phonology. They can also be used to study the “symbolic reading of the product advertised and the emotive qualities it elicits in a specific cultural and semiotic environment” (Lawrence, 1987, 836). She also considers specific activities according to the learner’s levels. In beginners’ classes, advertisements can be used to work on role-playing. In more advanced classes, they can be used to originate discussions and debates.

Scanlan (1978) reviews the use of a particular type of advertising, national mail-order catalogues. Scanlan believes that through the use of mail-order catalogues, students can learn about what people of the target culture use in their daily lives and build up their vocabulary. They can also study the difference between Canadian words and French words by comparing Canadian catalogues and French catalogues. They will also learn some cultural concepts such as space (how close or far people stand from one another to interact). Finally, studying catalogues is also used to originate discussions about various cultural topics.

Scanlan (1986) also considered using the Parisian yellow pages in class to teach culture. He finds that the yellow pages are “in fact loaded with material that is invaluable in helping us increase our own comprehension of France and its language and thus prepare us to teach our students with greater authenticity and accuracy about modern France” (Scanlan, 1986, 355). Studying the yellow pages will help learners memorize important daily life vocabulary related to phone calls, and become familiar with the telecommunication system in France (rates, zones, and phone numbers). As learners get acquainted with the yellow pages, they will become

familiar with various daily life issues (i.e. going to the bank). The yellow pages are “a vast network of cultural traits and linguistic or historical fact with which the French consumer can be expected to be familiar” (Scanlan, 1986, 382)

These few examples give us an idea of what the benefits of using advertising are. Teachers can use them in class to allow their students not only to learn about the target culture in a creative way but also to improve other language learning skills. Advertisements are contemporary examples of the target culture that can be used to teach not only products, practices and perspectives of the target culture, but also all foreign language skills in a cultural context.

## **II. A Cultural Mini-Curriculum**

Choosing to use authentic cultural materials in a curriculum has many advantages. Richards (2001) listed six advantages. First, “they have a positive effect on learner motivation” (252) because they are unique and interesting to the learners. As we saw in the previous chapters, “They provide authentic cultural information about the target culture,” therefore teaching about the practices and perspectives of the target country. In addition, “they provide exposure to real language”. In fact, learners can see the language being used in real situations. “They relate more closely to learners’ needs.” Finally, “they support a more creative approach to teaching” (253) in the sense that teachers have more flexibility when they use authentic materials than created materials. The following sections discuss

the various steps that were taken to incorporate culture using authentic materials in a second-year French classroom.

#### **A. Reasons for Learning “Little-c” Culture in the Classroom**

The choice of introducing “little-c” culture in a second-year French class was based on the belief that presenting the target culture’s values and beliefs in class help learners acquire basic cultural knowledge about the target culture before they explore the culture on their own. Although experiencing the target culture directly in the target country remains the best way to understand and gain cultural competence, learners need to be fully prepared for the experience. We cannot deny the fact that culture shock is common even among people who are aware of cultural differences. Culture shock refers to the feeling of foreignness felt abroad. There are three stages of culture shock: loving the foreign culture, hating it and adjusting to it. By introducing “little-c” culture in the classroom, language instructors are hoping to teach some values and beliefs of the target country and therefore to reduce the chance of culture shock. The main goal of this study was not to teach specific cultural aspects of French culture, but to raise the learners’ cultural awareness by using French advertisements.

Television commercials and magazine advertisements were selected for various reasons. First, not a lot of research had been done on cultural learning using advertising in the past. In the previous section, only four examples dealing with the use of advertisements in the classroom were found in the literature. Second,

advertising is a useful culture-learning tool that reveals the products, practices and perspectives of the target country. Third, there are some practical advantages to using TV commercials and magazine advertisements in intermediate language classrooms that cannot be neglected. In fact, TV commercials are short and can be viewed many times without wasting a lot of class time. Moreover, TV commercials and magazine advertisements contain many pictures that will help learners understand the content and meaning of the advertisement, although they do not understand the meaning of the words used in the advertisements. They may understand a practice without understanding the words. Finally, TV commercials and printed advertisements share information about the products of the target culture. In addition, they show the practices and perspectives of the target culture through the eyes of the characters present in the commercials (their attitude or behavior) or through the eyes of the potential buyer (what the viewer is expected to think while watching the commercial).

### **B. Selecting Advertisements**

The decision of using advertisements in the classroom was made six months before the class was taught. Therefore, the search for advertisements and TV commercials started in the winter term. The materials were collected by the researcher herself and relatives who live in France. It was possible to gather French magazines in America; however, recording TV commercials was more challenging

and had to be done in France. After having gathered a large amount of magazines and recorded 2 hours of TV commercials, the materials had to be selected.

The magazine advertisements were cut out and first organized in a binder according to the product or service offered in the ad. This organization did not prove to be useful after all, but was helpful at first. On the other hand, the TV commercials had to be converted into the American video system. Once converted, they were viewed many times and they were organized on paper by product or services as well as the magazine advertisements.

A question arose as the selection of the advertisements was being done. As already mentioned, some companies use international advertising. Several advertisements were international advertisements. However, viewing international advertisements in this particular class would not have been useful and would not fulfill the cultural learning goals established for this research. As a result, these ads were automatically eliminated although they are part of French culture and may be used in more advanced classes. The purpose of the selection became clearer. The ads had to show some specific aspects of French culture.

A list of six themes was done based on the topics studied in the three first chapters of *Personnages*: 1) “*tu*” versus “*vous*” in the French language, 2) family in French society, 3) the role of men, 4) children, 5) education, 6) women. After having defined these themes, it was easier to locate ads that would match the themes. A mix of TV commercials and printed advertisements were collected for each theme and reorganized, before in-class and homework activities were created. In other

words, the advertisements were no longer organized by product, but by practice or perspective.

### **C. Creating Cultural Activities with Ads**

The purpose of the activities that were created with the ads for this specific course was not to teach specific cultural aspects of French culture but to raise the learners' awareness. Many learners of French in the United States are not well aware of the cultural differences between America and France. They know that the two countries are different, but they tend to think that their cultures are very similar, especially because of the fact that people look alike and their economic and social backgrounds are comparable. Although it is true there are some similarities between the two cultures, there are important hidden differences as well. Using advertisements in this class was an opportunity to raise their cultural awareness, teach them the products, practices and perspectives of the target culture, and help them reflect on these differences on their own. From the first day of class, students started learning about advertising. They learned to understand the different components of an advertisement and to describe it in specific terms using teacher-originated questions (Appendix A). Although the ad activities were all cultural activities, all activities that were dealing with advertising did not only aim at raising the students' cultural awareness but also at practicing other language skills. This section describes some of the activities that were used in class and others that had to be done at home.

## 1. Warm-up Activities

Advertisements are language and culture learning tools that can be used for various activities in class and outside of class. First of all, they can be used to plan warm-up activities. Let us now consider one of the themes chosen for this particular study: the role of men in French society. The day the theme was first introduced a series of three TV commercials was presented to the students at the beginning of class as a warm-up activity.

The three TV commercials showed adult men in settings students may not have expected to find them. The first commercial showed a man and his two-year-old son hiking together next to waterfalls. The commercial reveals the close relationship and the complicity between a man and his son. As they attain the bottom of the falls, the man reaches for his son and carries him up in the air. Finally, they are seen drinking *Evian*. The second commercial showed a man coming back from the grocery store on his bike his groceries in a basket. He arrives home where his wife and daughter are waiting for him. He is proud to bring them some unsweetened yogurt with a new extraordinary taste. His daughter first complains, tries it, and loves it. The third commercial showed a group of businessmen enjoying their meal in a casual restaurant. As they are finishing their meals, it is time for dessert. One of the men comes back from the kitchen with a platter of cream of yogurt. Some friends are disappointed, others happy. Some argue that this new type of yogurt is cream, others that it is yogurt. In the end, everyone loves it. All three

commercials share information about products, practices, and perspectives.

These three TV commercials were watched at the beginning of the class to introduce the theme. After having viewed them a first time, the students were asked to describe the general theme of the commercials. The commercials were viewed one after the other and described by the students using the past tenses they knew. The goal of this activity was to introduce a new topic, review the past tenses, and initiate a discussion on non-traditional families.

## **2. Vocabulary Building**

Other activities were designed to build the students vocabulary on a specific topic. Let us now choose an activity that was aimed at enhancing the learners' vocabulary on traveling.

The classroom was turned into a picture gallery that displayed around twenty magazine advertisements with a common theme: traveling (a practice). Not all advertisements sold travel products, but all were related to traveling. The "gallery" consisted in travel agency ads, insurance ads, retirement ads, mobile phone ads, and credit cards ads, which were for the most part services and not products showing the practices of the country. They exposed common places where French people like to go on vacations, such as the Mediterranean coast in the summer, the Alps in the winter, abroad and destinations like Cuba, Senegal, or Thailand, and revealed the perspectives on traveling.



For this specific activity, the students were asked to walk around the classroom and take notes on the advertisements they saw. They also had to fill out a spreadsheet by filling in the blanks using words they could find on the advertisements themselves. The aim of this activity was to enhance the students' vocabulary and initiate a discussion on traveling.

### **3. Listening and Speaking Activities**

Commercials and advertisements can also be used to practice listening and speaking skills. Some activities were primarily designed to generate discussions and develop the students' ears to French phonetics.

A listening and speaking activity was designed on the topic dealing with the relationship between parents and children. The commercial used for this activity showed two children waking up on a Sunday morning and deciding to surprise their parents by setting the table for breakfast, which is also a French practice. The children are seen preparing breakfast. Their parents arrive. They have breakfast together before they decide to go play tennis.

This activity consisted in viewing the commercial several times and filling out a spreadsheet with the script of the commercial. Having filled out the spreadsheet, the students viewed the commercial once more before starting discussing the topic.

#### **4. Take Home Project**

The three previous activities are examples of in-class activities; however, advertisements can also be used in homework or group projects. Learners were also asked to work with advertisements at home. At the beginning of the summer session, the students were given an individual term project, which consisted in a small research, the writing of a final paper, and a presentation in groups of three.

They had to look for an American and a French advertisement that advertised the same or a similar type of product or service in a bookstore or online. French magazines are available in several bookstores downtown Portland, OR. They were not allowed to choose international advertisements. Once they had found two ads, they were asked to study the differences and similarities between the two in a two-page essay. Finally, they presented their findings in front of one or two other students during their final oral exams.

Doing this little field research would first allow them to get acquainted with the places where we find French magazines and other materials in town, and to become familiar with French advertising and products as well. Then, they were given the opportunity to reflect personally on the differences between the two advertisements, including the differences between the practices and perspectives between American and French culture. A complete description of the project is available in Appendix D.

In summary, the students had many opportunities in class and outside the classroom to learn about French advertising and French culture, and to become acquainted with the products displayed in the commercials and advertisements, but also the practices shown in the actions of the characters, and the perspectives that were implied in the commercials. The activities proposed in class were designed to raise the learner's cultural awareness but also to help them use the language they had learned in class in various and creative ways through listening, speaking, writing, reading and grammar activities. In other words, advertising was the main instrument used in this course to develop the learner's awareness of cultural differences between America and France and to activate other language learning skills.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

### I. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to explore culture in the foreign language classroom by first looking at the importance of culture in language teaching and its evolution. In chapter 1, we found out that although culture is still not one of the most important priorities in language teaching, the place of culture in foreign language teaching has evolved considerably. Teachers are considering the use of cultural materials in their classroom, while researchers are still looking for better ways to incorporate culture in curricula and to assess cultural knowledge. Today, there are still no standard assessment techniques to assess specific cultural knowledge, but teachers may refer to foreign language standards to create their own cultural and testing materials. As the testing materials remain meager, the decision of teaching culture strongly depends on the teachers, their willingness, and their abilities to teach it.

In Chapter 2, we discussed the place of cultural learning in three sets of foreign language standards: The National Standards for Foreign Languages, the ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines for Culture, and the Four Stages of Cultural Competence. Because the ACTFL Culture Guidelines are not part of the ACTFL final document, only two sets of standards are official. However, all of them can become useful tools to the teachers when they design their curriculum. In fact, these three sets of standards are not classroom objectives or goals but they provide

teachers with guidelines that can be used to define classroom objectives and goals, and help design foreign language curricula, syllabi and tests dealing with culture learning.

After looking at the standards for teaching culture in language courses, Chapter 3 considered the approach of a second-year French textbook toward culture teaching and learning. The chosen textbook was the one the researcher was using at the time of the research. Chapter 3 looked closely at the types of cultural materials present in the textbook (maps, pictures, drawings, and other materials), and studied its approach in terms of cultural competence versus cultural performance, what students learn about the target culture versus what they learn to do in the target culture. After looking at competence and performance, it also looked at the cultural materials in terms of Products, Practices and Perspectives, the terms that are used in the National Standards to define culture. Finally, the textbook was assessed using two evaluation forms for culture that were created after the National Standards.

After examining the cultural content of the textbook, Chapter 4 looked at how one specific second-year French course became more culture teaching oriented by adding a series of authentic cultural materials that came to supplement the existing curriculum and materials and themes. Advertising was chosen to supplement the cultural content of the course for various reasons. Advertising in the language classroom had not been widely studied. Advertisements were cultural authentic materials that represented Products, Practices, and Perspectives of the target culture. They are level-appropriate materials. And, the materials were accessible to the

researcher. The new materials were used on a daily-basis in class and at home to learn about the target culture but also practice other language skills (listening, speaking, writing, reading, and grammar).

## **II. Discussion**

Although culture has become a more important part of foreign language teaching over the past decades especially, this study revealed a certain lack of cultural teaching in language classes. Teaching culture in class remains the choice of each instructor. It is not an easy decision to make since many constraints follow this choice. As we saw in Chapter 3, the cultural content presented in some textbooks is still “big-C” culture oriented. For teachers to introduce “little-c” culture in their classrooms to teach their students about the values and beliefs of the target culture, it demands a considerable amount of individual work that not everyone is willing to dedicate or consider worth making. In fact, culture is not testable; therefore, it is not a mandatory part of language classes. If we want to teach culture in an academic setting and want our students to learn the target culture and become interested in learning it, there needs to be some specific guidelines and testing materials. Having to test cultural knowledge will encourage students to learn and teachers to teach it.

However, the complexity of teaching culture and the lack of testing materials in this area should not prevent teachers from introducing culture in their classes. This particular study revealed that teaching culture is rewarding to students and

teachers. Over the period of this study that only lasted three weeks in a summer session where students and teacher met on a daily basis, the new materials was introduced in the French class every day. Throughout the session, some students were excited about the new technique used in class, others were more skeptical, others became frustrated. However, the general atmosphere of the class was positive. Students tended to participate on their own. They were active and willing to try something new and learn from it. The class became very interactive. At the end of the session, most students were satisfied with what they had learned. They enjoyed working with ads, although some would have liked to have access to a more diverse set of cultural materials. Most of them admitted to have learned something about the target culture and/or advertising from the target culture.

In conclusion, the study showed positive outcomes from the teacher's perspective and the students'. The positive feedback from the students in terms of cultural learning but also enjoyment of a non-traditional language class should encourage teachers to pursue their teaching of the target culture in their classes. It is rewarding to witness students enjoying themselves learning the target language and culture and participating actively in class. It is also rewarding to consider the fact that if students participate more actively in class and enjoy what they are learning their language skills will improve accordingly.

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## **APPENDIX A: BASIC ADVERTISING KNOWLEDGE**

### **ANALYSER UNE PUBLICITE**

#### **A. Le cadre**

1. Quel est le produit?
2. Quelle est la marque?
3. Quel est le slogan?
4. Qui sont les consommateurs?

#### **B. La Technique**

1. Quelle est la fonction de l'image? Du slogan? Des personnages?
2. Est-ce que c'est une nouvelle technique pour vous?

#### **C. La structure**

1. Est-ce que vous voyez beaucoup d'informations? (message, slogan)
2. Quel type d'informations?
3. Quel type d'image est utilisé? (photo, dessin...)
4. Quelles sont les émotions présentes?

#### **D. Le contexte social**

1. Quelles sont les relations représentées dans cette publicité? (famille, amis, collègue)
2. La publicité transmet-elle certaines valeurs françaises? Lesquelles?

#### **Conclusion**

Avez-vous noté des différences entre une publicité française et américaine pour le même produit?

## **APPENDIX B: CULTURAL THEME ACTIVITY**

### **Activité Publicitaire: Les enfants**

#### **I. Description**

##### **A. La publicité**

1. Quel est le produit ?
2. Quelle est la marque ?
3. Quel est le slogan ?
4. Qui sont les consommateurs ?

##### **B. Les enfants**

1. Quelles sont les publicités où l'on voit des enfants ? Pourquoi?
2. Quelle est l'image de l'enfant dans la publicité?
3. Peut-on trouver une publicité américaine similaire (même produit + enfants) ?

#### **II. Interprétation et Evaluation**

1. Pour quel type de publicité utilise-t-on les enfants ? Pourquoi?
2. Est-ce que c'est différent aux États-Unis?
3. Quelles sont vos impressions sur les enfants?
4. Voyez-vous des valeurs françaises dans ces publicités?

#### **III. Remarques**

1. Avez-vous remarqué des choses différentes?
3. Des choses choquantes?
4. Avez-vous des questions?

## APPENDIX C: TV Commercial Activity

### Thème : Les enfants

#### Ricoré

- « Tu \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_ une surprise... »

(Chanson)

« Le soleil vient de \_\_\_\_\_, nous sommes \_\_\_\_\_ de retrouver, l'ami Ricoré.

L'ami \_\_\_\_\_, l'ami Ricoré

Il \_\_\_\_\_ au bon moment, avec ses \_\_\_\_\_ et ses \_\_\_\_\_,

L' \_\_\_\_\_ du petit déjeuner, l'ami Ricoré. »

#### Questions :

1. A quelle saison se passe cette pub ? Quelle période de l'année est-ce ? (année scolaire, vacances)
2. Qu'est-ce que font les enfants ? Pourquoi ?
3. Pensez-vous qu'ils font ça tous les jours ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

### Thème : L'éducation

#### Lafuma

Cet enfant \_\_\_\_\_ en avance \_\_\_\_\_, il a un Lafuma \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Questions :

1. Qu'est-ce que fait l'enfant ? Pourquoi ?
2. Qu'est-ce que le slogan encourage les enfants à faire ou être ?

#### BN

Allongée, Arrassée...

- « Maintenant que \_\_\_\_\_ que tu mènes, je te \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ plus tes BN »

Goûter BN.

#### Questions :

1. Que se passe t'il pendant la pub ?
2. Quelle est l'image de l'école primaire qui est donnée dans cette pub ?

#### 3617 Exam

#### Questions :

1. Qu'est-ce que ce numéro ?
2. Pourquoi est-ce que cette publicité apparaît sur une chaîne de télévision nationale ?

#### Sujets de Discussions

Qu'est-ce qui arrive aux enfants qui font des bêtises à l'école ?

L'école en France et aux USA ?

Les enfants, doivent-ils aider leurs parents ?

## APPENDIX D: Oral Exam

### Examen Oral Etudier une publicité

- Choisissez un thème parmi les 6 thèmes suivants :
    1. la famille,
    2. les enfants,
    3. l'éducation,
    4. les relations entre les hommes et les femmes,
    5. la nudité,
    6. la différence entre "tu" et "vous".
  
  - Sélectionnez une publicité que vous aimez et qui correspond au thème choisi.
- Où est-ce que vous pouvez trouver des pubs françaises?*
- ⇒ Vous pouvez aller à Powell's Bookstore: ils ont des magazines français comme *Géo, Le Nouvel Observateur, Paris Match, Marie Claire, Marie France, Maison Déco...*
  - ⇒ Vous pouvez visionner des pubs télévisées sur internet: <http://espacepubs.free.fr>
- Créez un poster pour présenter votre pub.
  
  - Trouvez une pub américaine pour le même produit.
  
  - Vous allez présenter votre publicité à deux partenaires (5 minutes par personne). Vous devez parler de 3 choses:
    - ⇒ La recherche de la pub:
      - Où avez trouvé la pub?
      - Est-ce que c'était facile / difficile de trouver une pub? ...
    - ⇒ Présentation de la pub:
      - Le thème
      - L'image
      - La marque
      - Le produit
      - Le slogan
      - Les consommateurs
    - ⇒ Aux Etats-Unis:
      - Comment est une publicité pour le même produit aux Etats-Unis ?
      - Quelles sont les différences ?

Fische

ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Séverine Grimaud for the Master of Arts in TESOL presented \_\_\_\_\_.

Title: The Place of French and Francophone Cultures in French-as-a-Foreign Language Classes.

This thesis project intends to consider the cultural content of the current curriculum of a second-year French program in the United States. To do so, the researcher analyzed the foreign language textbook used in a specific course, studied three sets of foreign language standards, and proposed to modify and supplement the curriculum using the studied foreign language standards so that the curriculum provided the students with a greater amount of cultural input.

The first chapter considers the evolution and research of culture teaching. It treats the reasons why it became popular, the ways researchers and teachers have tried to introduce culture in their classrooms over the past decades, and the difficulties and challenges encountered in teaching culture in a classroom setting. Finally, it elaborates on the use of realia and concludes on the place of culture in foreign language standards and textbooks. Chapter two is an analysis of three sets of foreign language standards: the National Standards, the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, and the Stages of Cross Cultural Competence. Chapter three is a study of one second-year French textbook. First, it analyzes the perceived images of the Francophone regions

introduced in the chapters. Then, it considers the cultural materials present in the textbook in terms of knowledge and performance, and products, perspectives and practices. It ends with an evaluation of the textbook. Chapter four focuses on the use of a specific type of authentic cultural materials: advertising. It defines advertising as a language-learning tool. Then, it presents the advantages of using advertising and pedagogical goals. Finally, it discusses the ways to introduce advertisements in a specific French class. Chapter five gives a summary of the study and a personal conclusion on teaching culture.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENT</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: EVOLUTION AND RESEARCH OF CULTURE TEACHING</b>	<b>_ 1</b>
I. DEFINING CULTURE	1
II. IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING CULTURE IN CLASS	5
III. CONSEQUENCES DUE TO A LACK OF CULTURAL LEARNING	7
IV. TEACHING CULTURE	9
V. INTEGRATING CULTURE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES	10
VI. EXAMPLES OF CULTURE TEACHING	12
VII. USING REALIA TO TEACH CULTURE	14
VIII. OBSTACLES TO CULTURE TEACHING	16
IX. CULTURE IN NATIONAL STANDARDS AND TEXTBOOKS	17
<b>CHAPTER 2: STANDARDS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING</b>	<b>____ 20</b>
I. LACK OF PLANNING IN CULTURE LEARNING	21
II. THE NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING	25
A. <i>Communication</i>	27
B. <i>Cultures</i>	28
C. <i>Connections</i>	31
D. <i>Comparisons</i>	33
E. <i>Communities</i>	34
F. <i>Culture Specific Standards</i>	36
III. THE PROVISIONAL ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES FOR CULTURE	40
A. <i>Novice</i>	42
B. <i>Intermediate</i>	42
C. <i>Advanced</i>	43
D. <i>Superior</i>	44
E. <i>Near-Native Competence</i>	44
F. <i>Native Competence</i>	45
IV. STAGES OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE FOR STUDENTS OF FRENCH	46
A. <i>Background Information</i>	46
B. <i>Description of the Format of the Framework</i>	47
C. <i>Example</i>	48
V. USING STANDARDS TO TEACH CULTURE IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM	51
A. <i>Suggestions from a French Teacher</i>	52
B. <i>Combining the Sets of Standards to Fit in a Language Course</i>	53
C. <i>Problems in Using the Standards</i>	55
VI. INTRODUCING THE STANDARDS IN A SECOND-YEAR FRENCH CURRICULUM	57



A. <i>Background Information about the Course</i>	57
B. <i>Defining Course Objectives</i>	57
<b>CHAPTER 3: CULTURE AND TEXTBOOK</b>	<b>60</b>
I. IMAGE OF THE FRANCOPHONE REGIONS THROUGH <i>PERSONNAGES</i>	62
A. <i>Cultural Statements</i>	62
B. <i>Cultural Themes</i>	64
II. KNOWLEDGE VERSUS PERFORMANCE	67
A. <i>Definitions</i>	67
B. <i>Knowledge and Performance in Personnages</i>	68
III. PRODUCTS, PRACTICES, AND PERSPECTIVES	73
IV. TEXTBOOK EVALUATION BASED UPON THE NATIONAL STANDARDS	76
<b>CHAPTER 4: SUPPLEMENTING THE EXISTING CURRICULUM OF A SECOND-YEAR FRENCH COURSE WITH ADVERTISEMENTS</b>	<b>81</b>
I. ADVERTISING AS AUTHENTIC CULTURAL MATERIALS IN THE CLASSROOM	82
A. <i>Defining Advertising</i>	82
B. <i>Advantages of Using Ads in the Language Classroom</i>	86
C. <i>Pedagogical Approaches and Strategies for Using Ads in the Foreign Language Classroom</i>	88
II. A CULTURAL MINI-CURRICULUM	90
A. <i>Reasons for Learning "Little-c" Culture in the Classroom</i>	91
B. <i>Selecting Advertisements</i>	92
C. <i>Creating Cultural Activities with Ads</i>	94
<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>100</b>
I. CONCLUSION	100
II. DISCUSSION	102
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>104</b>

#### APPENDICE

<b>A. BASIC ADVERTISING KNOWLEDGE</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>B. CULTURAL THEME ACTIVITY</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>C. TV Commercial Activity</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>D. ORAL EXAM</b>	<b>109</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

1. NATIONAL STANDARDS _____	26
2. CULTURE SPECIFIC NATIONAL STANDARDS _____	37
3. ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES FOR CULTURE 1986 _____	41
4. THE FIRST THREE GOALS OF STAGE 2 OF THE FOUR STAGES OF COMPETENCE _____	49
5. EXAMPLES OF FRENCH CULTURAL THEMES, PRODUCTS, PRACTICES, AND PERSPECTIVES _____	58
6. CULTURAL STATEMENTS ABOUT PARIS, QUEBEC, AND TAHITI _____	63
7. CULTURAL THEMES IN CHAPTER 1 PARIS _____	65

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. EVOLUTION OF LIFE LENGTH AND AGE CLASSES IN FRANCE BETWEEN 1676 AND 2000	32
2. BLAZ BOOK QUESTIONS RATING SCALES (2002)	76

## **CHAPTER 1: EVOLUTION AND RESEARCH OF CULTURE TEACHING**

The teaching of a foreign language in a classroom setting has evolved considerably. In a century, foreign language skills, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, were defined more precisely and were added progressively to foreign language curricula. In fact, when a century ago the traditional focus was on two skills (reading and writing), today, the four skills are incorporated to the teaching of foreign languages. In addition, over the past decades, teaching a foreign language has become more than the teaching of the traditional language skills mentioned above. As the idea arose that teaching a foreign language could not happen without teaching the target cultures, professionals started researching the relationship between culture and language, and defining the place of culture in language teaching. This chapter first looks at the notions of “culture” as they are found in the literature. Then, it examines the reasons why culture should be taught in foreign language classes. Later, it gives concrete examples of culture teaching in various foreign language classrooms. Finally, it determines the use of authentic cultural materials and realia in foreign language classes to teach the target cultures.

### **I. Defining Culture**

Although teachers may have taught the target cultures in their classes in the past and the concept of culture itself is not new from an anthropological point of view, teaching culture is a skill that was defined and considered as a foreign

language skill fairly recently as researchers tried to define the term of “culture,” which will be examined in this section.

It is important to note that “culture” is a broad concept that can be defined in many terms. In fact, when Hall tried to define culture himself, he admitted that, “Culture is a word that has so many meanings already that one more can do it no harm” (Hall, 1959, 43). In other words, culture has been defined and redefined over the past decades. Among the many researchers that have defined culture, Hall is a famous anthropologist who worked on the definition of culture because he thought that “it lacked specificity” (44) at the time. Hall thinks that most people stop learning culture around the age of 30, when they have achieved their main goals in life (school, work, and family). As they become older and stop learning their native culture, people are not conscious of the potential differences that may exist between cultures because they expect to have acquired that knowledge already, however, “Culture hides much more than it reveals” (Hall, 1959, 53). In other words, it is hard to define culture because it is invisible for the most part. And people are not well aware of their own cultures. When examining culture, Hall considered ten anthropological aspects of culture: interaction, association, subsistence, bisexuality, territoriality, temporality, learning, play, and defense. Culture is composed of these ten categories and “is not one thing but a complex series of activities interrelated in many ways” (Hall, 1959, 80). Hall also looks at culture as a combination of sets. Groups of people from a same culture divide their native culture in three kinds of sets (formal, informal, and technical). Because people from different cultures

perceive things differently, their cultural sets are different. In sum, Hall looks at culture as a complex notion due to the invisibility of most aspects of a culture that is composed of ten components.

On the other hand, Brooks (1960) considers the scientific meaning of culture. Culture is “the sum of the learned and shared elements that characterize a societal group” (Brooks, 1960, 80). In addition, “the one requirement for membership in any culture is to be born in it and to remain in it for the first twenty years of one’s life” (Brooks, 1960, 81). In other words, for him, people have to have spent their entire first twenty years in their native culture in order to acquire their cultural knowledge that they reach at their adulthood. Later, Brooks (1964) attempts to clarify the concept of culture by saying that culture is different from geography, history, folklore, sociology, literature, and civilization, because “in culture we never lose sight of the individual” (Brooks, in *Pathways to Culture*, 21) unlike it is the case in the other fields mentioned earlier. Therefore, Brooks separates the meanings of culture into five categories: biological growth, personal refinement, literature and the fine arts, patterns of living, and the sum total of a way of life. Similarly to Hall (1959), Brooks listed ten points relative to culture: symbolism, value, authority, order, ceremony, love, honor, humor, beauty, and spirit. In addition, in 1968, Brooks looked at culture from a different perspective. He divided the concept of culture into two major categories: “big-C” culture and “little-c” culture. “Big-C” culture is comprised of music, literature, and art, which correspond to the culture that is considered to be limited to the elite. On the other hand, “little-c” culture includes all

in human life such as beliefs, behaviors, and values, and usually refers to a people's daily life. Brooks approach was innovative in the sense that he was the first one to consider daily life as part of one's culture.

Seelye (1994) also gave his own definition of culture. For him, "Culture is seen to include everything people learn to do" (Seelye, 1994, 14). Similarly to Brooks' definition of culture, Seelye also defined culture from the point of view of an individual. For Seelye, a person's culture includes all they have learned in their lives that made them the people they have become.

In 2000, Brown defined culture as "the 'glue' that binds a group of people together" (Brown, 2000, 176). In contrast with the other researchers, Brown does not look at culture from the group's point of view or the individual's perspective. Brown sees culture as a whole combining individuals to their group. For him, culture is what keeps individuals together; it is what is between the individuals and their group. However, his definition does not specify what keeps individuals together and is open to interpretation.

Culture is perceived differently by researchers. Some see it as the similarities found among group members; for others, it is what made an individual who he is; finally, others see it as what brings a group together. Unless otherwise mentioned, the culture that we will refer to in this particular study is Brooks' "little-c" culture that incorporates all in people's daily lives. This choice was made because his definition of culture is very precise and more applicable to language teaching than other definitions.

## **II. Importance of Teaching Culture in Class**

As linguists started perceiving the relationship between languages and cultures, they started researching the topic of culture teaching and learning in foreign language courses. This section discusses the importance of culture teaching in class.

According to Hall's theory (1959), cultures are intertwined with languages. A culture is transmitted by a language and all languages therefore carry some aspects of the culture(s) they represent. Because of the intertwines between cultures and languages, teaching culture in the foreign language classroom should be one of the priorities of all foreign language teachers to provide their students with the language skills necessary for them to acquire the knowledge they need to survive in the international context.

Brooks said, "Language is the most typical, the most representative, and the most central element in any culture. Language and culture are not separable; it is better to see the special characteristics of a language as cultural entities and to recognize that language enters into the learning and use of nearly all other cultural elements" (Brooks, 1960, 82). In fact, a language defines its culture as well as a culture defines its language. The vocabulary of a language often defines its culture because it carries cultural information. For example, the word "education" in various languages may refer to different aspects of the concept used in different cultures. When in one culture, education may refer to the bringing up of children by their parents; it may also refer to schooling and other factors in another culture. On



the other hand, cultures also define languages. Some cultures have created specific words according to their needs. For instance, a culture located in a place where the weather is hot all year round may have more words to describe the hot weather than a language whose culture is located in a cold place. In other words, there is no clear line between language and culture.

Damen (1987) defined culture as the “fifth dimension of the language classroom” to show how important culture teaching had become in the field of language teaching. According to her and many other researchers, it became so important that it should be considered as a language skill of same value along with the four previously defined foreign language skills i.e. writing, reading, listening and speaking.

Some researchers have very strong opinions in terms of culture teaching. For instance, researchers such as Robinson (1997) do not believe that the study of language “gives to students the key to understanding people from another culture.” For her and many others, teaching writing, reading, listening and speaking, has become insufficient to satisfy the needs of our students in a global world.

Researchers recognize the importance of culture teaching, such as Seelye who said, “The most recent Northeast Conference report to focus on language and culture (Singerman, 1988) does deal directly with the integration of language and culture and does suggest that the language profession may have reached a critical point in integrating culture into the classroom” (Seelye, 1994, 15).

Culture has become more important in language teaching after researchers noticed a lack of cultural knowledge among foreign language students. This lack of knowledge had led to important consequences in their language learning. Students were able to express themselves and converse in the target language; however they were subject to important cultural misunderstandings. After having reached a certain level of knowledge and understanding of the target language, students have acquired habits and behaviors that may be culturally inappropriate. Such habits may become ingrained in their attitude and can be extremely hard to change. However, if culturally appropriate habits and behaviors are taught at the beginning of their language learning, students will have a better potential to express themselves and behave appropriately in various cultural situations.

### **III. Consequences due to a Lack of Cultural Learning**

Researchers and teachers started considering the use of culture in the language classroom about forty years ago. Culture, for some, reached the status of a language skill. However, we need to consider the reasons why culture reached this stage in language learning and understand why it is important to teach culture in the language classroom. In the following part, we will look at the consequences for not being acquainted with the target culture.

As we saw in the previous section, “Learning a second language implies some degree of learning a second culture” (Brown, 2000, 182). It is necessary to consider the consequences of learning a target language apart from its target cultures.

Bennett (1999) calls a person who knows a language but is not familiar with its culture as a “fluent fool.” “Fluent fools” may face various problems due to their lack of cultural knowledge. Researchers used various terms to identify the moment when two people from different cultures meet in one place and interact but also face communication or interaction issues. Carroll (1987) studied interactions of French and Americans in their private lives and defined the moments of miscommunication as “Cultural Misunderstandings.” Carroll (1987) gives many examples from the daily life of the people she interviewed and considers various aspects of their values and attitudes, such as their understanding of friendship or work. Platt (2001) also looked at the differences between French and American culture from the perspective of an American living in France with a French husband. Jiang (2001), who studied the Chinese-Americans’ interactions in a classroom setting, refers to the moments of misunderstanding as “Culture Bumps.” Seelye and Seelye-James (1995) also discussed this topic in the context of several real life examples of miscommunication between the managers of various foreign companies around the world interacting with one another.

By introducing culture in the language classroom, teachers hope to reduce the chance of students facing these kinds of situations in their future interactions with people from the target language. Students will be better prepared to understand the target culture from the perspective of a person in that culture.

#### **IV. Teaching Culture**

While the previous section looked at the consequences of not teaching the target cultures in the foreign language classroom, this section examines different methods used to teach culture in class, and discusses the aspects of culture that should be considered prior to teaching culture. “Since culture is learned, it also seemed clear that one should be able to teach it” (Hall, 1959, 61).

To understand how teachers can teach culture successfully, we need to understand how culture is acquired. For this reason, “Perhaps the best model of the combination of second language and second culture learning is found among students who learn a second language in a country where that language is spoken natively. In many countries thousand of foreign students are enrolled in institutions of higher education and must study the language of the country in order to pursue their academic objectives. Or one might simply consider the multitude of immigrants who enter the educational stream of their new country after having received their early schooling in their previous country. They bring with them the cultural mores and patterns of “good” behavior learned in their home culture, and tend to apply those expectations to their new situation” (Brown, 2000, 189). In fact, if we look at how people adjust themselves to a foreign culture in real life, we understand better how culture can be taught in a foreign language classroom. Observing immigrants and foreign students in the target environment could help defining culture goals and objectives for the language classroom. Brooks agrees by saying that, an “important concern is to see how language itself is studied and

learned in the target culture, and to imitate or make appropriate adaptations of such procedures in our American classrooms” (Brooks, in *Pathways to Culture*, 31).

Most language classes focus on literature. Is it possible to teach culture with literature? “Literary works become important as they develop themes of universal interest, but to understand a culture’s uniqueness, study also must be directed to the role of local idiosyncratic cultural patterns play in achieving universal needs” (Seelye, 1994, 17). In other words, one can learn culture by studying literature. In fact, “Even in situations where the legitimate objective of a course is the study of fine literature, a knowledge of culture is not an irrelevant digression” (Seelye, 1994, 17).

Consequently, instructors will teach culture better if they understand how a target culture is acquired by observing and studying real-life situations. At a time when most foreign language departments still focus on the study of literature, it is also important to note that the teaching of culture and the teaching of literature are not incompatible.

## **V. Integrating Culture in Foreign Language Classes**

As most textbooks are grammar-based, teachers need to make a special effort to present culture to their students. To make the cultural learning meaningful to the students and the teacher, there is a certain number of steps to follow in the process of setting learning objectives, planning lessons, and testing the knowledge acquired in class.

According to Seelye (1994), there are six organizing goals to consider in order to facilitate the selection of cultural materials. First, the culture goals need to be identified: 1) What are the students' interests, 2) Who are the students, 3) What will the learning focus on, 4) Where and when will culture be taught, 5) Why do the students need to learn culture, and 6) How can they explore the target culture. Once the goals are defined, we need to select cultural topics.

Teachers usually rely on the chosen textbook to plan their lessons. One can find cultural materials in textbooks, such as photographs or other pieces of cultural materials like price lists or menus. Seelye said, "The adaptation of course content already in the curriculum is the most easily implementable way to achieve multicultural objectives" (Seelye, 1994, 271). In fact, cultural materials that are used to illustrate a reading such as a photograph can be used toward a cultural objective as well.

Culture needs to be tested. "Cultural components must be tested as seriously as their language counterparts" (Lafayette, in *Pathways to Culture*, 128). If teachers plan to teach culture in their classes, they should also assess the students' knowledge. One of the reasons it should be tested is that the content of a class in the American school system needs to be tested. But also, if teachers do not test their students' knowledge in culture while teaching culture in class, the students will not study culture as seriously as they would study grammar for example, because they will not consider it as important as the rest of the course.

Setting cultural objectives and goals, planning lessons around cultural objectives, and testing cultural knowledge are three important factors of culture teaching that will lead toward successful culture learning. Although little has been written about the testing of culture, some materials are available as guidelines to plan culture teaching, such as the ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines about Culture (1986), the National Standards for Foreign Languages (1998) and the Stages of Cross-Cultural Competence for Students of French (1996). These three sets of standards will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

## **VI. Examples of Culture Teaching**

Teaching culture can be done in various ways. This section considers various options and suggestions from language teachers and linguists. Using cultural materials, such as books, newspapers, songs, foods, or other artifacts, in the language classroom has become more and more popular among teachers.

Raby (1995) used the example of cinematic doublets to show how culture can be studied through movies. He thinks that teachers need to be bi-culturally sensitive to be able to culturally analyze materials such as movies and teach culture successfully. He believes that cultural behaviors can be learned and acquired using films.

Scanlan (1986) looked at the use of the Parisian yellow pages, and the kinds of cultural content that could be taught in the French classroom. He gives us examples of how to use some of the advertisements that can be found in the yellow

pages. In another article, he considered French mail-order catalogues (Scanlan, 1978) to teach culture using the pictures to discuss everyday life activities and habits among the French in class.

Simon (1980) proposes using print advertisements as a means to teach culture considering the fact that an advertisement is aimed at the target culture and therefore reveals a great deal about the culture.

Lafayette (1975) suggests integrating culture and the teaching of vocabulary that should be grouped in categories according to the culture. One could study descriptive adjectives by describing pictures of people, monuments, or work of arts from the culture. Cultural items should be culturally accurate. Culture can also be integrated to the teaching of grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the same way it is done with vocabulary. Lafayette proposes to rely on cultural materials to teach other language skills.

Arries (1994) suggests using a culture interest inventory at the beginning of the course to assess the students' interests in the target culture. Then, he proposes interviews with native informants for his students to collect data about the target culture. And, he uses audio-motor units to evaluate the students' learning in culture. An audio-motor unit is an exercise during which learners are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of the culture by miming real life situations.

Wildner-Bassett (1990) suggests the use of commercials in German class to teach culture and actively involve beginning students in the cultures of German-speaking countries. She proposes to briefly introduce the medium, then to show the



commercial a first time and ask questions about the commercial, the product being advertised, and the people in the commercial. Her goals by using commercials in her class are that her students will be able to talk about the social situation, the population, and cultural patterns.

Failoni (1993) uses music to mediate culture in the classroom. She claims that, "Music can be incorporated into listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities in all languages, and adapted for all ages and levels" (Failoni, 1993, 397). Such activities as fill in the blanks exercises can be used to enhance their listening skill, or an activity that consists of crossing out the letters that are not pronounced can be used to teach phonetics for instance. Music is not only a means toward teaching language skills, but it is also a "mirror of culture" (Failoni, 1993, 400). Songs are great opportunities to introduce cultural content to language learners. And songs are a form a art that represent the culture of the time.

This section was an opportunity to look at what other teachers had done in culture teaching. These examples were only a few examples of what can be done. There are numerous and varied techniques and strategies to teach culture, such as using commercials, music, cultural informants, or other cultural materials.

## **VII. Using Realia to Teach Culture**

Using cultural materials in the classroom is one way to incorporate culture in the curriculum. Teachers can design their class goals and objectives and their lesson plans around one piece of cultural material. For example, a metro map could be used

to familiarize students with public transportation in Paris and discuss traffic issues and city life.

Realia as defined by Berwald (1987) is authentic material, whose primary purpose is use in real-life situations not in a classroom setting. However, it cannot be a copy of the material. Moreover, Berwald emphasizes the fact that “realia have been created for residents and consumers in authentic settings.” In other words, realia are great cultural tools. They are true marks of the target culture. Realia can take the form of newspapers, magazines, or movies, for instance. The metro map from our last example could be considered as realia since it is not made to be used in the foreign language classroom, but only if the students were to use original metro maps in class and not photocopies. Berwald thinks they can be used to reinforce the students’ existing skills, such as extending their vocabulary in a particular topic studied in a previous lesson or allowing students to practice their grammar structures. Using the metro map, students can ask for directions or give directions for example. They could practice asking questions and using vocabulary learned in previous lessons.

Since they were not originally designed to be used in a foreign language classroom, realia can be used to teach students about the target culture avoiding and dispelling stereotypes. Realia seem to be ideal cultural items. However, one has to be careful when preparing a class using realia. The fact that realia were not originally designed to be used in foreign language classes can cause problems in terms of the students’ level of language and understanding of the materials. Realia

can be confusing and hard to understand for non-native speakers. Therefore, careful class preparation is needed in order for the lesson to be a success.

### **VIII. Obstacles to Culture Teaching**

One way to introduce cultural content is to use authentic cultural material or realia in the classroom, such as newspapers, artifacts, or songs. However, before language teachers consider the use of cultural materials in their language classroom, they need to specify their class goals and objectives. In this respect, Guest (2002) considers the dangers of using culture in the language classroom questioning the overgeneralization of a culture and its people and stereotyping among his students, and discussing the consequences of understanding a new culture. In other words, if the cultural material is brought to the classroom with no prior preparation, students might not be ready to learn from them. Similarly, Morgan (1993) considers the teaching of culture from a more psychological perspective considering four aspects of the communicative process (the presenter, the environment, the message and the audience). Teaching about a culture is communicating new information to people. During the communication process in which the presenter and the audience are actively or not involved, a message is shared in a particular environment. All four aspects of the process need to be carefully evaluated so that the proper message is shared with the appropriate learners in the right environment. For her, a good combination of the four is essential for successful culture teaching and learning. To

teach the target culture with positive results on our students, it is important to consider the various aspects of cultural learning.

That is to say that teaching culture in the language classroom can be very problematic. No teacher desires to use cultural materials to strengthen the students' stereotypes about a specific culture or to deliver information to unprepared students, therefore it is important that teachers understand the difficulties inherent in teaching culture.

#### **IX. Culture in National Standards and Textbooks**

Along with the researchers and teachers' efforts in incorporating culture in the language classroom, we can find a similar will from textbook authors and from the US Department of Education which, in 1999, developed the "National Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

A panel of experts from the ACTFL came together to develop the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning and to define a set of cultural guidelines for language curricula to supplement the existing ACTFL guidelines whose final document did not include any culture guidelines. The National Standards are based on the five Cs Standards (Communication, Connection, Culture, Comparison and Communities). According to the Culture Standard, students are expected to "gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures."

Similarly, university textbooks approach the notion of culture in various ways depending on the author's beliefs and knowledge in culture learning and teaching.

Culture in foreign language textbooks can be displayed in many ways. Some textbooks use copies of authentic materials. Most of them use pictures to illustrate their lessons. Others may use dialogs among French people, have video tapes or web links for additional activities. However, Brooks noticed in 1960 that, "When we inspect the currently available textbooks that presume to review the culture of the people whose languages are most frequently studied in our schools and colleges, we are forced to the conclusion that both authors and publishers have operated without benefit of anthropologist's concept of the word" (Brooks, 1960, 85). Is it still true today? Culture in language textbooks is further examined in Chapter 3.

The use of culture guidelines and the choice of a textbook and additional material will play an important role in the students' acquisition of cultural knowledge.

In conclusion, an important part of our classes should focus on teaching culture and inviting our students to learn and acquire knowledge about the target culture. Depending on the materials available in the chosen textbook and the teachers' knowledge of the target culture and will to share it with their students, language students will absorb various amounts of cultural input. Consequently, they will acquire different levels of cultural awareness and live different experiences as language learners. Presumably, the students that have more cultural input will be more successful language learners, they will have a greater understanding of the use of the target language, finally, they will be more open to learning about the target

culture and people, and will approach cultural differences with a greater awareness and a more positive attitude. Being more comfortable with and in the target culture, it is expected that the learners will become more proficient in the target language.

The following chapter focuses on the culture guidelines found in the National Standards, it also discusses the 1986 provisional ACTFL guidelines for culture and another framework designed by a group of researchers that concentrates on the teaching of French culture in the foreign language class. Each framework is discussed in depth and analyzed to fit a possible French curriculum.

## CHAPTER 2: STANDARDS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Over the past decades, researchers and teachers have attempted to define standards in foreign language teaching. These standards are sets of criteria concerning foreign language learning that can be used in the language classroom by teachers and/or students. It is important to mention that they are not precise classroom objectives, but rather broad guidelines that can be discussed and modified to better suit individual classrooms and student populations. In the following pages, we will analyze three different kinds of standards: *The National Standards for Language Learning*, *the ACTFL guidelines*, and *Four Stages of Cross-Cultural Competence*. The first part of this chapter exposes the problems that language educators face as they try to incorporate culture in their courses. The three following parts consider the three above specific-mentioned frameworks in terms of cultural learning. Finally, parts V and VI offer suggestions on incorporating culture within a French curriculum. Prior to going any further, it is important to notice that the term “culture” as it is used in this study refers to Brook’s “little-c” culture (Brook, 1968). Again, little-c culture incorporates the values, beliefs, and behaviors of a people. Therefore, we will not discuss the introduction of “big-C” Culture (literature, art, and music) in the language classroom, since it is not the aim of this study.

## **I. Lack of Planning in Culture Learning**

Culture learning only started to be considered as part of language learning a little over thirty to forty years ago, whereas the other language learning skills - speaking, listening, reading and writing - had long been part of language instruction. In fact, although anthropologists and linguists have worked on defining the concept of culture for decades and at least a century, culture is a relatively new area in the field of language teaching. As is true most of the time, it is hard for new elements to be fully accepted in any field. Linguists and instructors have tried to use various techniques and strategies to teach culture in the foreign language classroom. Curriculum developers have tried to incorporate culture learning in curricula. However, the lack of planning for teaching culture is still obvious today. Curricula either neglect or poorly incorporate the teaching of culture; textbooks tend to illustrate only a few aspects of the cultures, and are primarily centered on the teaching of the four other language skills; and assessment of culture learning is almost nonexistent.

Nevertheless, we have to recognize that incorporating culture into curricula is no easy task. Many factors prevent teachers and curriculum designers from doing it.

The first issue that slows down the introduction of culture in the curricula comes from teachers themselves. In fact, there is no agreement on the culture that should be taught in class. If we take the example of a French language class in the United States, we have to wonder which culture would be the most appropriate to teach in this situation: Should we teach French culture (the culture of the country



where the language originated)? Should we teach the culture of Quebec (Quebec being the closest French-speaking area to the language learners living in Oregon, USA)?

As we are discussing these issues, another more basic question arises: What is culture? How can we define culture? Prior to discussing culture learning, we need to define what is understood by culture. Do we mean literature, music and arts, in other words, what Brooks (1068) called “big-C Culture,” or do we mean values, beliefs, traditions, and daily life, in other words what was defined as “little-c culture?”

Besides the lack of agreement on the culture that should be taught in language classes, teachers do not always feel comfortable teaching culture. Culture is not a science. Teaching culture would be considerably different from teaching grammar, in the sense that although grammar is also changing and evolving over time, grammar has rules that culture does not have. Culture is not stable but rather in constant movement. There is not only numerous cultures associated to one language, but one culture itself is moving with the new coming generations and the evolution of each society. In fact, what is acceptable in a culture today might not have been tolerable in the same culture fifty years ago. Language teachers are not necessarily native speakers of the language, nor are they always bicultural. Moreover, the teachers that are native speakers or bicultural, may lose touch with their native culture from living out of the country. In other words, some teachers do not feel they have enough knowledge of the culture themselves to teach it to their students.

Researching a foreign culture takes time and effort and the research may not seem worth the effort to some teachers, whose curriculum mainly focus on the teaching of other skills or whose students themselves have no interest in learning the culture as it is the case for some language learners who are only concerned about getting a specific degree.

Third, we may ask about our students' wants. Teaching is most of all satisfying the learners' needs. The learners' needs are usually dictated by curricula that define objectives and goals for the learner to achieve within a determined period. Each teaching objective and goal also corresponds to a need in language learning. Why do the learners study the foreign language? The reasons for studying a foreign language depends on the learners' backgrounds, ages, social statuses, the places where they live and study, races, religions, to mention a few possible answers. Which culture would they like to study? To this particular question, a similar answer to the first one could apply. In fact, depending on the place where a learner lives and studies, the reasons why she studies the language, a learner will have different needs in cultural learning. After all, in a single classroom, there may be twenty students with twenty different needs in terms of cultural learning.

Finally, if we consider culture learning as a language skill, it is essential to be able to assess our learners' knowledge the same way we assess their knowledge in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In fact, when something is taught in a classroom setting, the learners' knowledge needs to be assessed. However, when we inquire about the assessment of culture learning we find there is little research on

how to assess cultural knowledge in the classroom or outside. Researchers have tried to come up with assessment techniques that would allow cultural testing. Lafayette and Schulz (1975) suggest testing the learners' knowledge of the culture by distinguishing cultural patterns, their understanding of the culture by explaining some information, and their behavior by demonstrating culturally appropriate abilities. They also make a distinction between "active cultural knowledge" and "passive cultural knowledge" (p.583) admitting that learners of various levels are able to understand a certain amount of culture, and are able to produce a different amount of cultural behaviors. Valette (1977) proposes various activities to test different aspects of cultural knowledge, such as "cultural awareness," "command of etiquette," "understanding of outward cultural differences," "understanding of cultural values," and "analysis of the target culture." On the other hand, Moore (1994) regards using portfolio to evaluate culture knowledge. However, none of these researchers has proposed specific test formats to assess cultural knowledge. Should we assess our students' knowledge in French culture using multiple-choice questions on the great events of the history of the country? Should we try to determine if they would be able to interact in real life situations in the target culture? Should we assess their ability to recognize a culturally specific situation? Researchers made various suggestions. However, culture is a broad field, and prior to answering these questions on the format of culture testing, it would be necessary to define specific culture-learning goals. Appropriate testing techniques could be designed after the culture goals.

Overall, introducing culture to the language classroom poses a challenge for teachers, students, and curriculum designers. This is one of the reasons why we have not witnessed any significant changes in the instruction of foreign cultures in the language classrooms over the past decades.

## **II. The National Standards for Language Learning**

The National Standards for Language Learning are a set of criteria proposed by an eleven-member group organized by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) to be used in foreign language classrooms. It is important to note that the standards are not a curriculum guide (ERIC, 1998). As Vickie Lewelling and Jeanne Rennie discuss in their article from the ERIC Review, the National Standards “do not prescribe specific course content or a sequence of study (24).” The standards can be used in conjunction with other (e.g. state or local) standards and curriculum framework to create a foreign language curriculum. The standards are recommendations to guide language instructors in their teaching. Using the standards will help to define teaching goals and objectives.

Originally, they were piloted in three grade levels (grades 4, 8 and 12), but they can also be adapted and used in post-secondary classes. Revised in 1996, they now include five main goals: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. Each language-learning goal is defined and divided into two or more standards. Table 1 shows the basic National Standards.

Goals	Standards
<p><b>Communication</b> <i>Communicate in Languages Other than English</i></p>	<p>Standard 1.1 Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings, and emotions, and exchange opinions.</p> <p>Standard 1.2 Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.</p> <p>Standard 1.3 Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.</p>
<p><b>Cultures</b> <i>Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures</i></p>	<p>Standard 2.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.</p> <p>Standard 2.2 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.</p>
<p><b>Connections</b> <i>Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information</i></p>	<p>Standard 3.1 Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.</p> <p>Standard 3.2 Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.</p>
<p><b>Comparisons</b> <i>Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture</i></p>	<p>Standard 4.1 Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.</p> <p>Standard 4.2 Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.</p>
<p><b>Communities</b> <i>Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home and Around the World</i></p>	<p>Standard 5.1 Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.</p> <p>Standard 5.2 Students show evidence of becoming lifelong learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.</p>

**Table 1: National Standards**

The following section describes each goal from the National Standards in details. For each goal, we will look at the importance of the goal in language teaching, give concrete examples or techniques that are used in language classrooms, and consider what the goal means in terms of teacher's expectations for the students.

### **A. Communication**

The first goal is Communication. Communication is the main component of language learning. Learning a language always involves communication. Communication can take many forms, such as oral communication through face-to-face interactions in the form of dialogues or class presentations, written communication by letters or emails for instance, communication across time through the reading of older literature, or communication across cultures with the reading of various cultural pieces. In foreign language classrooms, students will be expected to learn how to communicate their ideas, emotions, and opinions about various themes in the target language, to express themselves in front of one or more persons, and to understand the language expressed by native speakers in printed or spoken words. To train our students for this standard, it is necessary to incorporate communicative activities into the curriculum.

## **B. Cultures**

The second area, Cultures, has become of greater importance in language teaching over time as researchers have discussed the correlation between the mastery of a target language and cultural knowledge. In contrast with Brooks' (1968) division of culture into "big-C" culture (literature, music and arts) and "little-c" culture (beliefs and values), the National Standards for Language Teaching define three categories: practices, products and perspectives. In terms of language learning, the Cultures goal considers the learners' abilities to understand the target culture over time. The learners will become acquainted with such practices, as social behaviors, holidays and rites of a target culture. For instance, they will learn how to greet people properly in the target culture (hand shakes versus kiss on the cheeks depending on the level of formality in France), they will know about traditional holidays (Bastille Day is celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July in France where people gather to watch fireworks and go dancing in outdoors balls), and about rites (weddings, baptisms).

Practices correspond to what people in the target culture do every day, on special occasions, or in various situations. In fact, daily routines are Practices. Now, we will consider some French daily routines. In France, most people go to work at 8 o'clock in the morning. They have lunch after 12 but usually before 1. In towns and villages, people usually go back home for lunch. Children start school between 8 and 9 in the morning and finish school between 4.30 and 5.30 in the afternoon.

These were common examples or daily routines in France. What people do on special occasions is also practices. For instance, French people visit their ancestors' graves on November 1<sup>st</sup>. French people exchange bouquets of lilies of the valley on May 1<sup>st</sup> as a symbol of luck. French people have a big celebration of their eighteenth birthday, which is considered as the passage from childhood to adulthood. These were examples of what people do on special occasions in France. How people respond to various situations is also Practices. It is more difficult to give examples of such situations because it may vary depending on many aspects of the situation such as the personality of people, the context or who is interacting. To give a few examples, this type of practices may refer to the way people handle specific situations such as arguments. The way people express themselves when they are happy or sad is another example of such situations.

Besides learning the Practices of the target culture, foreign language students will be able to recognize and understand the use of Products. The Products of a culture are "big-C" elements (i.e. literature, music and art), but also "little-c" elements. In other words, Products are what people in the target culture have, own, and use. That is to say students will be able to identify common French pieces of artwork or period such as the Renaissance style. They will be able to recognize names of famous French writers such as *Victor Hugo*. But they will also be able to identify items that are used on an everyday basis in France. For example, French people drink their morning coffee or hot chocolate in big bowls. They do not wear



sneakers but leather black shoes to go to school or to work. Students carry pencil cases to school.

The last element of Cultures is Perspectives. Perspectives refer to a people's values, assumptions, attitudes and ways of thinking. Perspectives describe the reasons why people do what they do, and have what they have. Language learners will become acquainted with these Perspectives in language classes. We will consider a few situations to give examples of Perspectives from France. In France, although culture is constantly changing, one French value that still remains a big part of the culture is that people are family oriented. For this reason, it is not uncommon to meet families who have lunch together at home everyday. In fact, the parents come back from work and the children come back from school and everybody meets for lunch. Another concrete example deals with the school system. In France, teachers tend to be strict and very demanding because of the fact that France has a national school system that demands that all students reach the same level at the end of each school year. The strictness of the teachers also implies that teacher-student relationships are strictly professional. Therefore, in a French classroom, we will frequently see a teacher lecturing and students taking notes silently. We will also notice the use of the "vous" form between teachers and students as a mark of respect. These are two examples of French Perspectives.

Over time in foreign language classes, learners will become acquainted with Products, Practices and Perspectives of the foreign culture, but they will also understand the relationships between the three categories of the Cultures goal.

### **C. Connections**

The third goal is Connections. By making connections between the language studied and other areas and creating a web of knowledge, language educators will allow their students to acquire the target language more easily. Moreover, language educators need to create links between their discipline and other disciplines such as math or social science to connect foreign language teaching to other areas and make the learning more relevant and meaningful to foreign language students. By learning a foreign language, language students will not only acquire knowledge in foreign language but also in other areas, such as geography, history, politics, or sports. Language is the tool that will be used to learn other things.

Let us consider a concrete example that can be used in an Intermediate or Advanced French class. In beginning classes, students have to memorize numbers in the foreign language. Numbers are difficult to learn in a foreign language because it requires the use of the two hemispheres of one's brain. For this reason, it is important to have plenty of practice at all levels (beginning, intermediate or advances). While teaching numbers in French class, teachers can create activities that will allow their students to practice using numbers in specific context. The analysis of charts can be done as an in-class activity for example. The two charts seen in Figure one below were found on the Internet. The top one shows the evolution of the life length in France between 1676 and 2000. The bottom one shows the evolution of age classes in the French society over time. Having students analyzing these two charts in class or at home will first help them retain numbers in

French because they will have to use their knowledge to complete the task. It will also enable them to use other skills acquired outside of French class, or teach them new analytic skills that can be used in other classes such as geography classes. They will also learn about French culture and French history.

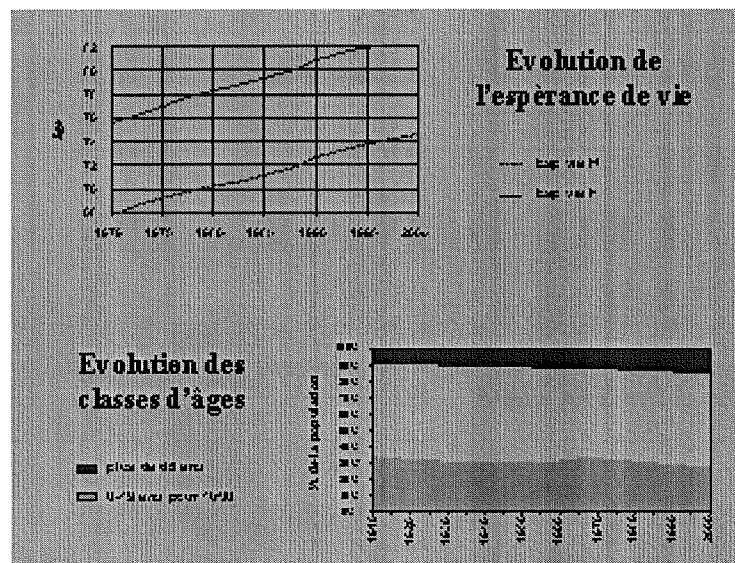


Figure 1: Evolution of Life Length and Age Classes in France between 1676 and 2000

As we have seen in the previous example, Connections enable students not only to learn the language and its cultures but also to acquire other skills by learning about other disciplines. Connections will broaden their existing knowledge in language and other areas. By learning various aspects in language classes, students will also learn to identify and understand other ways of thinking.

#### **D. Comparisons**

The fourth goal of the National Standards is Comparisons. This goal consists of giving language students the opportunity to compare the target language and their native language as well as the target culture and their own.

Language learners tend to compare the target language and culture to their own language and culture naturally, but these unguided comparisons may lead to wrong interpretations of the target language and culture. Let us now look at a few examples that will help understand what is meant by Comparisons in language classes. We can consider the acquisition of vocabulary in French for native speakers of English. Although many words look the same, it is important for the students to understand that the meaning of these cognates does not always correspond to the meaning in their native language. In French, we call these words that look the same but do not carry the same meaning "*faux-amis*" (false friends). Let us consider the word "*rendez-vous*." In French, this word refers to any kind of appointment between two people or more (with a friend, doctor, dentist, a boss or boyfriend/girlfriend), unlike in the English language where the word refers only to a romantic date. Language learners of French need to understand that their knowledge of French words through the frequent use of French in their native language does not always transfer into French. Although this example shows a variation of the use of one piece of vocabulary in the two languages, sometimes the meaning of a word will be completely different and will lead to misunderstandings or miscommunication. If we look at the translation of the word "there" in French, in a dictionary we will find

*là.*” Although the meaning of this translation is “there” in English, French people do not refer to it as “there” the way English speakers understand it. In fact, when French people use *là,*” most of the time they actually mean “here.” French people do not make any difference between these two concepts. Using pictures to compare the meaning of words is useful for language learners to grasp certain concepts with which they are not familiar. In this section, we looked at comparing vocabulary in two languages, however it is important to mention that the goal, Comparisons, does not only refer to vocabulary building. Other aspects of the languages and cultures can be compared in class.

By comparing the target language and culture to their own, students will also analyze the differences and similarities that exist between the two. This is how they will gain broader insight into both the target language and culture and their own. They will understand the target language and culture by reconsidering their own.

### **E. Communities**

The last goal of the National Language Standards is Communities. This goal refers to the use of the learners’ communities as a place where they can practice and use the language learned in class. Educators teach their students how to use their language skills not only inside but also outside the classroom.

This goal is more or less difficult to achieve depending on the language taught in class and the place where it is taught. In fact, if one teaches Spanish in an American city, it is most likely that the students will have numerous opportunities to

use their language skills in their communities, where a high percentage of the population is Hispanic. However, using French in American communities may seem more difficult to achieve but not impossible. If we consider the city of Portland, Oregon, we will discover some ways and places where students of French of all ages will be able to use their skills outside of their classroom. The Northwest International Film Festival is hosted in Portland, Oregon, every year. This is a place where students can listen to the French language and become familiar with some aspects of the culture by viewing several French movies. There are French clubs around the city, where Francophiles like to meet and speak French. There are two French American schools which become partners with which French teachers could plan projects.

Teachers create some activities that will help their students learn about the opportunities that exist in their communities to use the language that they are learning in class. This way, teachers can guide their students to expend their language and cultural skills beyond the classroom. Learning a foreign language will open the students to a larger world. By acquiring the knowledge of a foreign language in a classroom setting, students will develop personal and durable skills, which they will be able to use inside and outside the classroom.

In summary, if all National Standards are used to design a classroom curriculum, foreign language students will acquire communication skills in a target language and use their acquired knowledge to understand the language and its

cultures. They will be able to connect their knowledge to other areas of study and disciplines and thereby to broaden their existing knowledge in various fields. To understand the target language and cultures better, the students will learn to compare them to their own and relate them to their personal experience. Finally, they will be able to use their skills inside but also outside the classroom.

#### **F. Culture Specific Standards**

Among the five National Standards, we find different focuses. Though the standards are interrelated, three of them are more closely associated to culture learning than the others. The following discussion will focus on three specific standards found in two different goals: Cultures and Comparisons. These particular standards require that foreign language students gain a better understanding of the target culture from an analytical point of view. They need to comprehend the various Practices, Perspectives and Products of the target culture and make a connection between these Practices and Products and the target culture Perspectives. The three standards that are related to the acquisition of culture-specific knowledge are exposed in the table below.

<p><b>Connections</b>  <i>Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information</i></p>	<p>Standard 3.1  Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.</p> <p>Standard 3.2  Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.</p>
<p><b>Comparisons</b>  <i>Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture</i></p>	<p>Standard 4.2  Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.</p>

**Table 2: Culture Specific National Standards**

Let us consider the first two standards that deal with the understanding of Products, Practices, and Perspectives of a culture. Before reflecting on a concrete example, it is essential to review the meaning of Products, Practices, and Perspectives, as they are understood in this discussion. A Practice refers to what the target culture people do in specific situations and contexts. Practices are behaviors adopted by the people of a culture that accepted and considered proper by everyone within the cultural group. On the other hand, a Product is a thing or a concept that can take many forms, and is used by the people of a culture, and whose presence is justified or required. Finally, a Perspective is a generalized value or belief accepted by the target culture people that compels them to do their Practices and/or use their Products.

Let us now take the example of greetings in French culture to illustrate the culture-related National Standards. This example is greetings in French culture, a Practice that is taught at the very beginning of a French language course. When



learning about greetings in France, American students of French will learn a French Practice. They will learn that, in France, people who have a close relationship, such as brothers and sisters, parents and children, or friends, will kiss on the cheeks (once to four times depending on the region they live in and their relationship) when greeting each other. On the other hand, people that do not have close relationships (people at a business meeting, for instance) will shake hands. The Perspective or concept that lies behind this Practice is social hierarchy that remains one important aspect of French culture and the importance of the level of formality in the culture. Students of French will have to understand this concept and relate it to the Practice.

Let us keep the example of greetings in France and consider a Product. Various Products may be related to greetings, but we will look at one possible Product. When invited to a friend's house for dinner for instance, people would greet each other a little differently than when they meet on the street. Being invited at somebody's house for dinner is considered as privilege almost and shows the level of people's relationships. In fact, strangers are rarely invited for dinner in people's homes. In France, homes are considered like private spaces that not everyone can enter. When invited for dinner, people would bring the hosts something that will show them their gratitude. It is common for French people to bring a bouquet of flowers or a bottle of wine for example. The bouquet of flowers and the bottle of wine are Products. The Practice that must be understood in this case is that people rarely come empty-handed when invited for dinner at someone's house. Students

will have to comprehend that a bouquet of flowers is a mark of appreciation and a Product in French culture.

These examples demonstrated how important it is for language learners to understand Products, Practices, and Perspectives to function well in the target culture. Students will learn to think of the target culture from the point of view of the people in the target culture by acquiring their Products, Practices, and Perspectives, making connections between the three of them and understanding them.

The third national standard that explicitly mentions the learning of culture is standard 4.2 (under the “Comparisons” goal heading). In their learning process, foreign language students are expected to compare their native culture and the target culture to understand various elements from the target culture better. They will learn about the products, practices and perspectives of the target culture, and analyze them in terms of differences with and similarities to their own culture. Consequently, students will first consider their own culture and understand it, and then try to comprehend the differences between their culture and the target culture before fully understanding the target culture. In the end, they can draw conclusions and understand the cultural system better.

In sum, in a foreign language classroom where culture is taught according to the National Standards, the students will learn to relate the products, practices, and perspectives of the target culture to one another, and to compare their native culture

to the target culture to understand the differences and to better understand both the target culture and their own.

### **III. The Provisional ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Culture**

Nearly two decades ago, before the new National Standards had been re-defined, the ACTFL had defined guidelines to evaluate foreign language students' proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and cultural knowledge. While the reading, writing, listening, and speaking guidelines remained in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and have been widely used among language teachers, the culture guidelines were not included into the final document; it was left as a provisionary guideline for various reasons. Although the ACTFL culture guidelines were abandoned in 1986, it is instructive to consider them to understand the stages that were created by the ACTFL fifteen years ago. The table below shows the competence stages for culture for students of French as defined by the ACTFL.

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
<b>Novice</b>	Limited interaction. Behaves with considerateness. Is resourceful in nonverbal communication, but is unreliable in interpretation of nonverbal cues. Is limited in language, as indicated under the listening and speaking skills. Lacks generally the knowledge of culture patterns requisite for survival situations.
<b>Intermediate</b>	Survival competence. Can deal with familiar survival situations and interact with a culture bearer accustomed to foreigners. Uses behavior acquired for the purpose of greeting and leave-taking, expressing wants, asking directions, buying food, using transportation, tipping. Comprehends the response. Makes errors as the result of misunderstanding; miscommunicates, and misapplies assumptions about the culture.
<b>Advanced</b>	Limited social competence. Handles routine social situations successfully with a culture bearer accustomed to foreigners. Shows comprehension of common rules of etiquette, taboos, and sensitivities, though home culture predominates. Can make polite requests, accept and refuse invitations, offer and receive gifts, apologize, make introductions, telephone, purchase, and bargain, do routine banking. Can discuss a few aspects of the home and foreign country, such as general current events and policies, as well as a field of personal interest. Does not offend the culture bearer, but some important misunderstandings and miscommunications occur, in interaction with one unaccustomed to foreigners. Is not competent to take part in a formal meeting or in a group situation where several persons are speaking informally at the same time.
<b>Superior</b>	Working social and professional competence. Can participate in almost all social situations and those within one vocation. Handles unfamiliar types of situations with ease and sensitivity, including some involving common taboos, or other emotionally charged subjects. Comprehends most nonverbal responses. Laughs at some culture-related humor. In productive skills, neither culture predominates; nevertheless, makes appropriate use of cultural references and expressions. Generally distinguishes between a formal and informal register. Discusses abstract ideas relating the foreign to the native culture. Is generally limited, however in handling abstractions. Minor inaccuracies occur in perception of meaning and in the expression of the intended representation, but do not result in serious misunderstanding, even by a culture bearer unaccustomed to foreigners.
<b>Near-Native Competence</b>	Full social and professional competence. Fits behavior to audience, and the culture of the target language dominates almost entirely. Has internalized the concept that culture is relative and is always on the look out to do the appropriate thing. Can counsel, persuade, negotiate, represent a point of view, interpret for dignitaries, describe, and compare features of the two cultures. In such comparisons, can discuss geography, history, institutions, customs and behavior patterns, current events, and national policies. Perceives almost all un verbalized responses, and recognizes almost all allusions, including historical and literary common places. Laughs at most culture-related humor. Controls a formal and informal register of behavior. Is inferior to the culture bearer only in background information related to the culture such as childhood experiences, detailed regional geography, and past events of significance.
<b>Native Competence</b>	Examinee is indistinguishable from a person brought up and educated in the culture.

**Table 3: ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Culture 1986**