

Teaching for Cultural Understanding

- Developed for the NRCAL Professional Development Seminar (April 14-16, 2015) by James Hussar, Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, CSUF



Session Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- **Describe** the different components of “culture.”
- **List** and **explain** strategies for incorporating cultural instruction in their lessons.
- **Locate** and **adapt** authentic materials for use in class.



Culture and culture

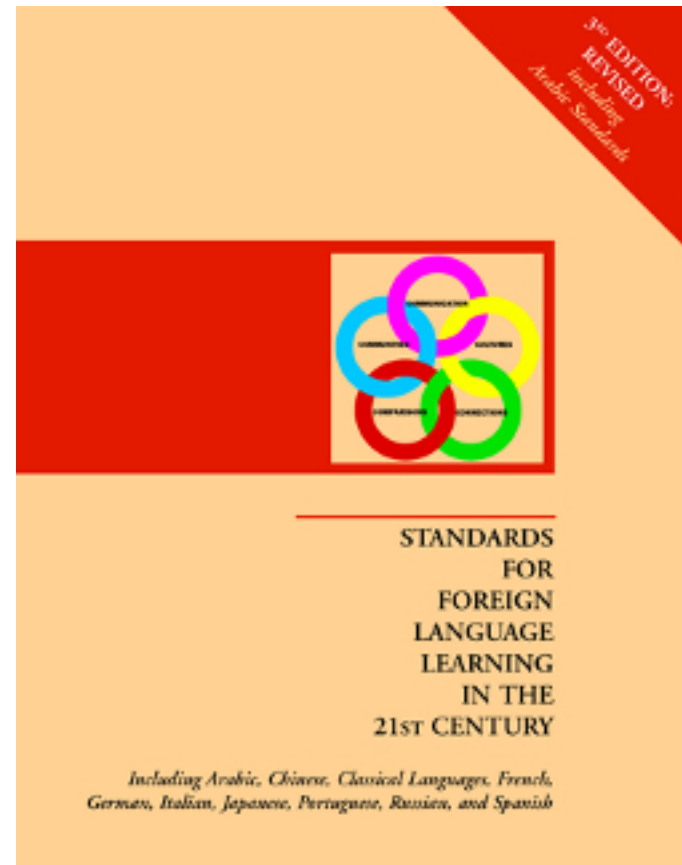


What is culture?

- **little “c” culture**: everything in human life. Also known as “Hearthstone culture” or “culture BBV” (beliefs, behavior, and values)
- **Big “C” Culture**: the *best* of everything in human life. Also known as “Olympian culture” or “culture MLA” (musical, literary, and artistic masterpieces)

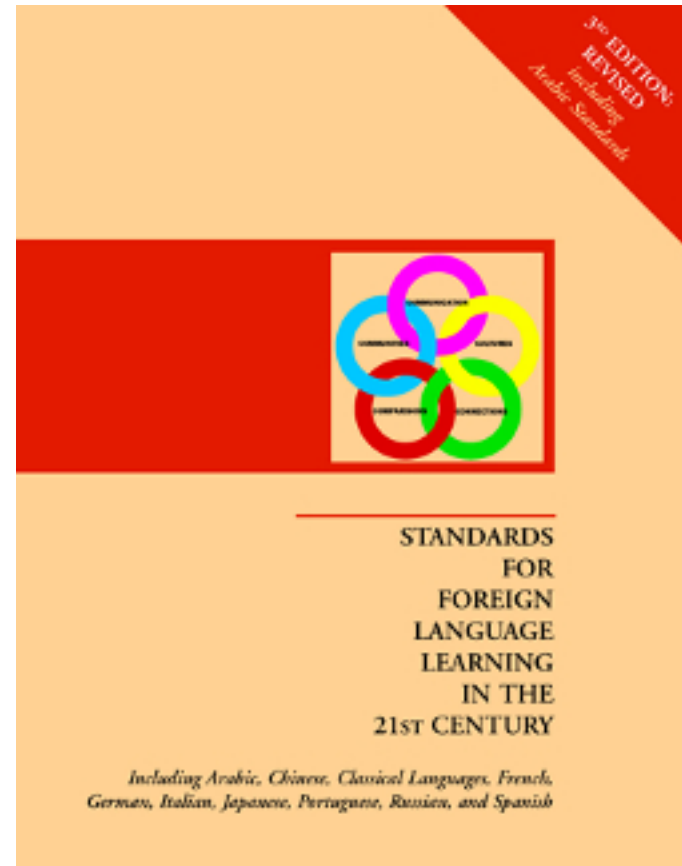
According to the *Standards*...

- “the philosophical perspectives, the behavioral practices, and the products—both tangible and intangible—of a society.”



According to the *Standards*...

- **Perspectives:** meanings, attitudes, values, and ideas
- **Practices:** patterns of social interactions (“what to do when and where”)
- **Products:** books, tools, foods, laws, music, games, etc.



Best Practices for Incorporating Cultural Instruction in Your Lessons

- For Novice and Intermediate students, emphasize the “**patterns for living**” component of culture.
- **Incorporate** cultural instruction in your vocabulary and grammar lessons, rather than teaching culture in isolated, trivial tidbits.
- Deliberately “**place**” or “**locate**” lessons (geographically, philosophically) in the target culture.

More “Best Practices”

- Design cultural instruction that allows students to practice **speaking, listening, reading, and writing** in the target language.
- Have students use **their own cultures** as a point of comparison or frame of reference.
- Use **realia**, or authentic materials.
- **Assess** cultural understanding as carefully as language is assessed.

Some examples of *realia* (authentic materials)

- Magazine and television ads
- Newspaper and magazine articles
- Children's books
- Television shows and movie clips
- Songs and music videos
- Conversations between native speakers
- Schedules
- Websites
- Labels

Resources and examples

- Instructor samples (PDF)
- [Merlot.org](#)
- [Video clips of simple conversations](#)

Now it's your turn!

- In small groups, locate an authentic material and develop an activity for use in class.

