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Raising Cultural Awareness in the English Language Classroom

It could be argued that an integral part of learning a foreign language is acquiring some familiarity with the culture associated with it. For teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL), the question is, "How can we incorporate cultural knowledge and understanding within the context of our English language classes?" Simply having an acquaintance with the grammar, syntax, phonetics, and some of the social conventions associated with English will not give learners real insights into the nuances of the daily lives of the people whose language they hope to speak. Increasingly, language teachers are recognizing the need to incorporate sociocultural factors into their classrooms (Palmer and Sharifian 2007); however, there is a lack of consensus on how to introduce cultural elements into the lessons.

One challenge a teacher faces is what approach to take. Many EFL teachers have had no formal training in incorporating cultural elements, and there is no universally accepted set of criteria that instructors can use as a guide (Byrnes 2008). One approach, though, would be to adapt Michael Paige's (in Cohen et al. 2003, 53) dimensions of culture learning model. Paige groups culture learning into categories:

- the self as cultural
- the elements of culture
- intercultural phenomena (culture-general learning)
- particular cultures (culture-specific learning)
- acquiring strategies for culture learning

By exploring these dimensions, teachers can help students connect to the target culture, raise their awareness of cultural differences, and improve their "intercultural communicative competence" (Byram 1997).

The self as cultural

All people are members of at least one culture. Whether or not we realize it, the culture we belong to affects how we think, interact, communicate, and transmit knowledge from one generation to another. The ability to ask and answer questions based on our own culture facilitates the process of making connections across cultures. English teachers

can help students activate their "cultural antennas" by making them aware of important elements of their own culture and helping them understand how their culture has shaped them (Byram 1997; NSFLEP 1999, 9). Kramsch (1993) calls this learning process establishing a "sphere of interculturality."

When people think of culture, they often think of artifacts such as food, clothing, music, art, or literature. Others may associate culture with conventions such as social interaction patterns, values, ideas, and attitudes. Certainly many definitions of culture exist, and teachers need to define what culture is before students can engage in interactive cultural discussions. Anthropologist John H. Bodley (1994, 22) describes culture simply as "what people think, make, and do." Bodley sees culture as a socially transmitted set of common beliefs that include symbolic, mental, behavioral, and material aspects patterned to provide a model for behavior and create a common framework for human society. Teachers can guide students to think about what people "think, make, and do" in their own cultures by asking them to consider questions like these:

- What behaviors reflect our culture, and how are they learned and shared?
- What important factors (social, religious, and economic) influence our culture?
- What are some important traditions that are unique to our country?
- What ideals and values bind our culture together?
- How does culture in our country function as a way for humans to live with one another?
- What symbols are prevalent in our culture?

Classroom discussions based on these considerations can foster an atmosphere that encourages EFL students to think about their own culture and make connections across cultures while studying English. To create a "sphere of interculturality" in our classrooms, we can encourage students to construct their own notions of culture instead of simply feeding them preformed information about these topics.

The elements of culture

Elements of culture refer to things like the beliefs, values, customs, products, and the communication styles of a given culture or society (Cohen et al. 2003). The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (NSFLEP 1999) provides a framework for students to integrate "the philosophical perspectives, the behavioral practices, and the products—both tangible and intangible—of a society" (47). This has become known as the 3P model of culture:

- **Perspectives** (what members of a culture think, feel, and value)
- **Practices** (how members communicate and interact with one another)
- **Products** (technology, music, art, food, literature, etc.; the things members of a group create, share, and transmit to the next generation)

While *products* may be easy to identify because we can often see, touch, taste, or hear them, *perspectives* and *practices* are not as easily recognized because they tend to be ingrained in a society. Brooks (1968, 1997) makes a distinction between "formal culture" (literature, fine arts, history, etc.) and "deep culture" (patterns of social interactions, values, attitudes, etc.). Like products in the 3P model, the elements of formal culture are easily observable across cultures. However, as the label suggests, elements of deep culture are often difficult to identify, as they tend to be value-based and deeply rooted in the psyches of individuals who make up a specific culture.

A tool that can help EFL students conceptualize elements of culture is Edward T. Hall's (1976) "cultural iceberg" analogy. Hall developed the analogy to illustrate differences between what we readily see when we enter a new culture (the tip of the iceberg) and the imbedded aspects of the culture not readily visible (the submerged part of the iceberg). The products of a culture would be examples of things we can readily see—the surface culture—while cultural practices and social perspectives—the deep culture—that underlie the behavior of a specific culture are difficult to observe.

Using the iceberg analogy can be a fun way for students to think about elements of culture and make distinctions between those that are visible and those that may be so ingrained that members of a culture are not aware of them. Teachers can pass out blank iceberg templates (see the Appendix), or draw one on the board for students to copy, and ask students to work in groups or individually to

list elements of culture that may be found in each of the three levels: surface culture, sub-surface culture, and deep culture.

Examples of *surface culture* elements include food, national costumes, traditional music and dance, literature, and specific holidays. In the *sub-surface culture* section, students could list notions of courtesy, body language, gestures, touching, eye contact, personal space, facial expressions, conversational patterns, and the concept of time. These are the behavior-based, unspoken rules of social interaction present in all cultures but perhaps not often thought about. Such rules vary widely across cultures. Teachers can give specific examples from English-speaking cultures and contrast them with elements from the students' own culture. For instance, a teacher in Japan may explain that while Americans value eye contact with interlocutors, it doesn't mean that they lock eyes and stare during an entire interaction. The teacher may also remind students that if an American guest tries to enter their house while wearing shoes, the guest is not necessarily rude, but simply unaware of an important unspoken rule in Japanese society.

Unconscious values and attitudes—the *deep culture*—may be the most difficult elements for students to identify. These can be so far ingrained that people feel these are simply the "right" and "normal" way of doing things. While it might seem odd for American parents to share their bed with their children, many cultures around the world view this as a normal practice. Other examples of unconscious values and attitudes relate to the nature of friendships, concepts of food, notions of modesty, concepts of cleanliness, gender roles, preferences for competition and cooperation, and so on. Again, the idea is to raise awareness of cultural elements in order to uncover the unique values and beliefs that explain why people behave differently.

These examples, while representing only a fraction of the elements of culture that would appear at each level, provide a starting point for students to think of their own ideas. After students have identified elements of culture from each level, they can brainstorm examples from their own culture. Teachers can refer to this exercise to contrast elements of the students' native culture and elements of English-speaking cultures.

Teachers who have spent little or no time outside their own countries might have difficulty understanding the diversity and complexity of English-speaking cultures. Fortunately, the Internet is a great source of information. Conducting searches with specific questions or phrases like "Why do Americans do the things they do?" or "the culture of English-speaking countries," along with creative key word searches related to the target culture (e.g., *symbols, values, social organization*), will yield data that teachers can use to educate both themselves and their students. Books (including titles cited in this article) are also starting points for teachers who wish to build libraries to enhance their cultural expertise. And even without buying books, teachers can visit booksellers online and often find excerpts or online reviews of books relating to these themes. It is increasingly important for EFL teachers to be cultural informants as well as language experts. Teachers' professional development plans should include active, ongoing familiarization with the cultures associated with English speakers through individual research and collaboration with peers.

Intercultural phenomena

Intercultural phenomena include culture shock, cultural adaptation, cultural adjustment, and the fact that people from other cultures may interpret similar situations differently (Cohen et al. 2003). When we teach EFL, part of our job should be to prepare students for challenges they may meet when they travel or move to a country where English is spoken. The process of adapting to a new culture is called "acculturation." Acculturation, according to Brown (1994), has four stages: (1) excitement (about being in a new country), (2) culture shock (feelings of frustration and hostility), (3) recovery (adjustment and emergent comfort in the new culture), and (4) adaption (bridging cultural barriers and accepting the new culture).

Stage One can be much like the "honeymoon" phase of a relationship. All cultures have good and bad aspects. However, in a new environment, we tend to overlook the negative and see only the new, fresh, and exciting. Once the novelty fades, individuals move into Stage Two, culture shock. People may start to make unfair comparisons between their host culture and the culture of their own country. The ten-

sion of being in an unfamiliar culture can take its toll, and people may want to withdraw.

Stage Two is perhaps the most difficult stage of the acculturation process. Teachers preparing students for work, travel, or exchange programs abroad may wish to raise their students' awareness of this phenomenon and emphasize that these stages are real; everybody who enters a new culture will encounter at least some challenges. An awareness of these stages can prepare travelers to understand that feelings of frustration and hostility they may experience during Stage Two are due to difficulties they are having adjusting, not deficiencies related to the host culture.

As individuals become more familiar with their new environments, they gradually move into Stage Three. They make friends, feel more comfortable using the target language, and appreciate the differences between their own culture and the new one. Ultimately, in Stage Four, the newcomer will adapt and accept the new culture.

The activities presented in this article can develop self-awareness of the impact our personal perspectives have on how we view other cultures and perhaps lead to less stress in the acculturation process. If students understand and anticipate the stages of acculturation, they may be able to reduce the time they spend in the less desirable stages.

Particular cultures

When we define specific cultural communities, we focus on the elements of a particular culture. These elements can include history, geography, and political systems, but more importantly, an understanding of the particular characteristics of a society (Cohen et al. 2003). Again we can look to Hall (1976) when we try to characterize ways that members of differing cultures perceive reality. The key factor is Hall's notion of "context." This refers to the cultural background in which communication takes place. When people from different backgrounds interact, communication can break down if they do not share similar cultural contexts. Hall's theory of high- and low-context cultures helps us understand how characteristics of a given culture affect communication.

In high-context cultures, people tend to emphasize interpersonal relationships and prefer group harmony and consensus over individual achievement. Words are less important than a speaker's intent. People from high-context cultures generally share a high degree of commonality of knowledge and viewpoints. There is little need to spell things out, and meanings tend to be implicit or can be communicated in indirect ways. High-context cultures are typified by long-lasting social relationships, spoken agreements, and mutual trust (Guffey and Loewy 2009).

On the other hand, low-context cultures tend to be individualistic and goal-oriented; people from low-context cultures tend to value directness with discussions resulting in actions. Interlocutors from low-context cultures are expected to be straightforward and concise, while those from high-context cultures depend less on language precision and may come across as ambiguous to people from low-context cultures. Because of these differences, interactions between members of high- and low-context cultures can cause problems. In certain situations, someone from a high-context culture may find someone from a low-context culture to be overly blunt. At the same time, people from low-context cultures may feel that high-context people are secretive or unforthcoming. Communication breakdowns can occur because people from different types of cultures may have an assumption of shared knowledge that is not there.

Most native English-speaking countries are typically classified as low-context cultures, while many Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American cultures are classified as high-context cultures (Copeland and Griggs 1985). Elashmawi and Harris (1993) describe ways that low-context American culture differs from high-context Japanese culture. While Americans tend to value independence, self-reliance, and equality, Japanese often prefer group harmony, collectiveness, and cooperation. In addition, Americans tend to be open and direct, while Japanese pay more attention to the context in which the communication is taking place than to the explicit message. Japanese speakers anticipate others' needs through facial expressions, behavior, and gestures rather than verbal messages. Japanese students of English wishing to live, study, or do business in the United States would be well served by understanding not only the language spoken by Americans but also the cul-

tural characteristics associated with that country. For example, a Japanese speaker using his or her own cultural framework may tell an American what he or she thinks that person "wants" to hear when answering a question as opposed to a direct answer. In contrast, when an American answers a question with a "yes," it may indicate understanding but not necessarily agreement.

People from different cultures might not only communicate in different ways but also experience a situation differently. By contrasting cultural values, we can examine how to successfully negotiate these differences and consider how people from different cultural backgrounds might respond in certain situations. An interesting activity is to have students reflect on Hall's classifications to determine whether theirs is a high- or low-context culture. Students can be challenged individually or through group work to identify aspects from high- and low-context cultures that align with their own culture and provide support for their reasoning. One way to determine whether a student's native culture resembles a high- or low-context culture is through the following quiz.

Are You from a High-Context or Low-Context Culture?

Answer "Yes" or "No" to the following questions.

1. In your culture, is it okay to call your teacher or boss by his or her first name?
2. Do you feel frustrated when people do not answer your questions directly?
3. Is it important to you that many people know about your personal accomplishments?
4. Do you feel comfortable with short-term casual friendships?
5. Do you rely more on words than nonverbal means to express yourself?
6. Do you seek rational solutions to problems or personal ones?
7. Do you prefer an individual approach over group decision-making processes for learning and problem solving?
8. Are results just as important as personal relationships in terms of achieving goals?
9. Is your identity strongly defined *outside* of group associations (family, work, culture)?
10. Do you feel conflict is a necessary part of human relations and should not be avoided?

If students answer "yes" to six or more questions, odds are they are from a low-context culture. After taking the quiz, students can use their knowledge of high- and low-context cultures to reflect on how these questions differentiate between the two and develop quizzes of their own. With their new grasp of high- and low-context cultures, students can think of scenarios where communication might break down based on cultural differences. Students can also develop presentations on how misunderstanding stemming from different cultural contexts could cause problems. In their presentations, students can include strategies to avoid potential conflict; some suggestions are given in the next section.

Acquiring strategies for culture learning

The final dimension in Paige's (in Cohen et al. 2003) cultural learning model deals with specific strategies for becoming more culturally competent. Strategies include having students learn about a culture from native informants, develop their cultural observation skills, and learn about the culture through authentic materials associated with that culture. Teachers need to provide students opportunities to explore and recognize cultural differences. That means raising their awareness not only of the target culture but of their own as well.

Byram (1997) suggests that people who are "interculturally competent" have a solid understanding of their own culture and how it has shaped them, and make connections between how cultural elements manifest in behaviors across cultures. According to Byram, intercultural competence includes these features:

- a curiosity and openness to other cultures
- an understanding of social practices and products in both one's own culture and the target culture
- the ability to relate something from another culture and make it comprehensible to members of one's own
- the ability to use new knowledge of a culture in authentic situations
- the ability to critically evaluate the cultural practices and products of one's own culture and that of other countries

English teachers hoping to help their students become interculturally competent can

build a "culturally friendly" classroom. Strategies for doing that are described below.

Cultural collections

One way to foster curiosity and openness to English-speaking cultures is to establish a "collection" of cultural information in a variety of formats. These could include popular movies, music, literature, online sites, and everyday items like stamps, currency, toys, musical instruments, menus, travel brochures, magazines, and newspapers from English-speaking countries—or from a specific country, depending on student needs and course goals. By offering students the chance to smell, touch, see, use, and listen to "real" things from a different culture, we can connect concepts beyond ideas and help students understand the realities of life in that culture. It is one thing to tell students how Halloween is celebrated in the United States—but just imagine how excited they will be to dress up in ghoulish costumes while bobbing for apples and carving jack-o-lanterns.

Authentic materials are rich sources for a wide range of assignments and activities that heighten awareness of the target culture. Students can research the target culture and report to the class on specific elements or characteristics. They can ask questions and compare insights to identify cultural patterns and expand the entire class's general understanding of the English-speaking culture. For a descriptive writing assignment, students can describe items from the collection. Or they can classify items by use, function, or criteria of their own choosing. To encourage higher-order thinking, teachers can ask students how the artifacts fit into the levels of the "cultural iceberg" described earlier. Meanwhile, teachers can raise students' awareness of their own culture by asking them to bring authentic materials to class, and then, using English, describe the items and explain how they "represent" the students' culture. It is important to remember, however, that teachers need to identify specific goals they hope to achieve when incorporating culture into their lessons and use artifacts from their "collections" to create specific lesson plans to achieve their objectives.

Web quests

For classrooms with reliable Internet connection and access to computers, a web quest is a great way to promote cultural awareness. EFL teachers can create their own cultural awareness web quest by following these instructions:

1. Decide which aspects of culture you would like your students to explore. Take an in-class survey of your students, or give them directed assignments that might include these topics:
    - etiquette and manners
    - food and cuisine
    - religion
    - music
    - customs and traditions
    - clothing and costumes
    - games and pastimes

    The point is not simply to gather information and make reports, but to think and make connections about how this information can lead to a solid understanding of the culture under study: Why do people do the things they do?
2. As the facilitator, you will need to conduct research on the sites available for the topics you choose. Remember, not all sites on the Internet are appropriate. If you assign links, be sure they are active.
3. Familiarize yourself with how to navigate the sites you choose and identify the types of information you hope your students will find.
4. Design questions that will direct your students to various websites. You may also want to have students design their own questions. Example questions include:
    - What traditional dishes are served in the United States on Thanksgiving, and what is the history behind them?
    - What are the popular sports of Australia, and how do they reflect the culture of that country?
    - How is the government structured in England?
    - What is the typical school day like for a student in Canada, and how is it different from yours?

    a. Have your students work in pairs or small groups to collect information.

b. Students present their findings to the class. While a simple oral report can be informative, students can also:

- create a skit incorporating the costumes, music, and food of the culture they are demonstrating
- use PowerPoint or other formats that contain pictures or video clips (from YouTube or another source) to demonstrate aspects of the culture they feel are important
- make posters or collages demonstrating aspects of the target culture
- brainstorm their own ideas on the types of presentations they would like to give and consult with you for approval

These tasks develop students' cultural observation skills by tying concepts to real-world materials. Aside from the cultural awareness value, the assignments provide plenty of opportunities for students to develop English skills. They can focus on vocabulary building, for example, or work on specific skills like skimming, scanning, note-taking, and summarizing.

Cultural "informants"

Another strategy is to invite native speakers or proficient non-native speakers of English to come to class and speak on a specific aspect of their own culture. These "informants" can be a resource to confirm (or disconfirm) ideas, impressions, or textbook information that students have learned. Students should prepare questions in advance of their visitor's arrival. While it may be interesting to know if a foreigner in their country likes a local dish or sports team, more profitable questions would revolve around how behavior may vary across cultures: Is it okay in your country to _____? Why do people in your country _____? This is also an opportunity for students to teach the guest about their culture or answer questions about it.

Ideally there would be a variety of informants to avoid getting the viewpoints of just one social class, ethnic group, or gender. It is also important that speakers be able to distinguish between their personal experience and what is true of their culture in general. In some countries, it may be difficult to find these informants, but creative teachers can use Internet sources to find news or interviews that provide students with insight into the cultures they are studying. Students can also find pen pals or key pals from different countries; not only can students make friends with people from another culture and learn about them, they can also reflect on and teach others about their own culture, lifestyle, and traditions.

Role plays

One goal in developing cultural observation skills is to help students continually consider what constitutes culture. We want our students to be able to describe how the concept of culture relates to their own experience:

- What is important to human beings?
- Why are some things in a particular culture the same as ours, while others are different?
- Why don't all people think and act the same way?
- Why do we have rules, and how are they learned?
- What factors shape how we see the world and other people?

A strategy to encourage students to explore these questions and use new knowledge of a culture to simulate authentic situations is the use of role plays. Role plays get students involved interactively in a lesson to allow them to empathize with members of other cultures and practice making "mistakes" without serious consequences. Students can act out instances of breakdowns that result from misunderstandings of cultural differences. For example, students can think of ways communication may fail between people from high- and low-context cultures and invent scenarios to illustrate how problems arise. Other students in the class can observe these role plays and point out why the miscommunication took place. The class can discuss how these situations can be avoided, and students can generate solutions in a follow-up role play.

Teachers should take careful steps to prepare to examine issues that may arise in cross-cultural role plays so that students gain the desired perspectives:

- Make a clear outline of the issues you want your students to explore (possibilities include cultural behavior pat-

terns, social and economic influences, important traditions, values that bind a culture together, etc.). Keep it simple but define the specific situation and motivations.
- Try to involve all your students in the process. Give as many students as possible the opportunity to play a variety of parts. Even if you can't give roles to everyone, make sure everyone is involved in pre- and post-role-play activities, asks questions, and gives feedback.
- Ask your students to "freeze" when they say or do something that you or other students find interesting and would like to give advice on or discuss.
- Get *relevant* feedback. Don't allow your students to criticize their classmates. You want their constructive thoughts on the situation being played out.
- Design a short checklist that encourages observers to look for key cultural elements in the role play to use in follow-up discussions. Observers must be as attentive as those involved in the role play.

The following directions and scenarios can be used in a role play to explore problems that may occur when high- and low-context cultures collide.

Directions:

- Choose a partner. Partner A reads Scenario A, and Partner B reads Scenario B.
- Anticipate what you might say or do and how you can respond to your partner.
- Predict what you think your partner might say or do and how you can respond.
- Plan ways to support and defend your point of view.
- Think of what language (vocabulary and phrases) you may need for the conversation.
- Use your knowledge of high- and low-context cultures as you plan for and play your role.

Scenario 1A: Your daughter/son has a boyfriend/girlfriend from a low-context culture. She/he wants to get married and move to the country the boyfriend/girlfriend is from. Tell your daughter/son why you think she/he should find a husband/wife from your high-context country instead.

Scenario 1B: You want to marry your girlfriend/boyfriend from a low-context culture and move away with her/him, but your parents want you to marry someone from your high-context country. Explain to your mother/father why you should be permitted to marry your low-context-culture girlfriend/boyfriend.

Scenario 2A: You are from a high-context culture, and you just moved to a low-context country. You meet your new neighbor, who tells you to "drop by" anytime. You don't have many friends yet, so you decide to accept the invitation, and you show up at his/her door unannounced. Your neighbor, who seemed so friendly before, seems surprised to see you and tells you he/she is busy now and doesn't invite you in. How do you react?

Scenario 2B: You live in a low-context culture and have a new neighbor who just moved in from a high-context culture. You met her/him once, and to be friendly you told her/him to "drop by" anytime. Much to your surprise, she/he comes to your house unannounced with the expectation of spending some time with you. You had plans to relax today and enjoy your privacy. What do you do?

Again, teachers can tell the role players to "freeze" if communication breaks down or they say or do something particularly interesting and worth discussing. Teachers might even divide students into low- and high-context teams that can substitute players during the "freeze" or give their teammates advice on what to say or do. The role play may or may not come to a natural conclusion. As the facilitator, the teacher can judge when to conclude the role play and put students in groups to discuss their impressions. What went well? What didn't? Were there any surprises? Did the role play elicit examples of potential cross-cultural conflict? Can these conflicts be resolved, and if so, how? After discussing the role plays, students can create their own scenarios for their classmates to act out.

From an English teaching perspective, teachers can also introduce strategies for effective communication such as turn taking, giving opinions, keeping a conversation going, disagreeing politely, persuading, and so on. These elements of communication can vary cross-culturally, and teachers can use scenarios

such as these to introduce pragmatic conventions of English-speaking cultures.

Cultural observations

To help students critically evaluate the cultural practices and products of their own culture and those of another country, teachers can gather books, poetry, newspapers, magazines, radio clips, television shows, movies, video clips, or music—or have students gather them. Students can describe the behaviors and products they read about, see, or hear, then discuss differences and similarities between their own culture and the culture they are observing.

Students can consider these questions when watching television shows, movies, or video clips:

- How and where do people live?
- How do people spend their time?
- How do people dress?
- What and how do people eat?
- What side of the road do people drive on? Do people seem to follow traffic rules?
- What gestures or superstitions did you notice?
- How do people greet one another? Do they hug? Shake hands?
- What is the polite thing to do in certain situations?

When using resources like the Internet, newspapers, magazines, and books, students can find answers to questions like these:

- What are some important family traditions?
- What issues are important to the people in this culture?
- What influences and shapes the way the people think and act?
- Is the educational system similar to that of your country?
- What roles do different genders and generations play in society?
- What is the health care system like?
- How and why do people celebrate certain holidays?

Teachers can ask students to work in groups to discuss elements of culture they observed and how people relate to each other in different societal roles. A follow-up step is to have students select a photo or video clip from their own culture, describe it, and explain what it shows about their culture. Students can also compare and contrast images or objects from their own culture and from the English-speaking culture and make presentations to the class on the cultural significance of both.

Culture journals

Keeping a "culture journal" allows students to reflect on what they experience and discuss in class. A journal can be a way for teachers and students to communicate privately, or it can be something for students to share with classmates. In the journal, students—writing in English—reflect on their cultural learning experiences and on their feelings as they become more aware of their own culture and the one being studied. Teachers should give students class time (perhaps five to ten minutes at the end of class) to reflect after they complete culturally related activities. Students can be assigned to reflect on specific classroom activities or write about out-of-class cultural insights they might have had. Over time the journal becomes a record of the students' deepening cultural awareness and the changes in how they view themselves and other cultures. These journals need not be masterpieces of literature. The journal is meant to be a recording of thoughts, emotions, and reactions to the activities in the classroom and serve as a record of experiences that can help students reflect on their growth toward becoming interculturally competent.

The strategies outlined above are by no means an exhaustive list. They are simply suggestions that teachers can adapt and expand upon to raise students' awareness and understanding of the culture "used" in English and to help students become interculturally competent. Teachers can use these examples and similar activities to make explicit the cultural features associated with English.

Conclusion

Cultural learning can be difficult to address in the English language classroom. Simple mastery of the linguistic forms of a language is not enough for learners to be considered competent in the target language (Krasner 1999). Students cannot be considered to have mastered a foreign language until they understand the cultural contexts in which the

target language is spoken (NSFLEP 1996, 27). While the idea of teaching culture in the EFL classroom is not new, teachers need to go beyond introducing traditional holidays, food, and folk songs of the target culture and incorporate a framework that enables students to understand the social aspects of the culture as well. Culture study must be fully integrated into what Kramsch (1993) calls the "third culture" of the classroom. Opportunities must be created for teachers and students to examine and reflect on the target culture and that of their own country. It is hoped that the aspects of culture explored in this article will provide a starting point for teachers to create "third cultures" in their own classrooms. And it should be remembered that the concepts discussed here can be generalized to all cultures—opportunities for students to speak English may come not only with native speakers of the language but with non-native speakers of English from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Students who may never travel outside their country or even meet an English language speaker might question why they need to study culture. However, as the world becomes more interconnected, we must help our students understand that it is more important than ever for them to be able to activate their "cultural antennas" to understand not only other cultures, but their own as well. In doing so, they will be better prepared to participate more fully in the global community—of which their local community is a part. We must also stress that culture is just one of the many aspects of human behavior. We all differ from one another in a number of ways. Because of our gender, age, personality, or abilities, all human beings are unique individuals. We must be careful not to make generalizations like "He's an American, so that's why … "; even if students in a particular class share a culture, they can easily identify individual differences among themselves. Certainly cultural groups share common characteristics, but we need to remind students that within each group there is a wide range of individual differences. Incorporating the activities discussed in this article is a strong start to helping our students become more culturally aware.

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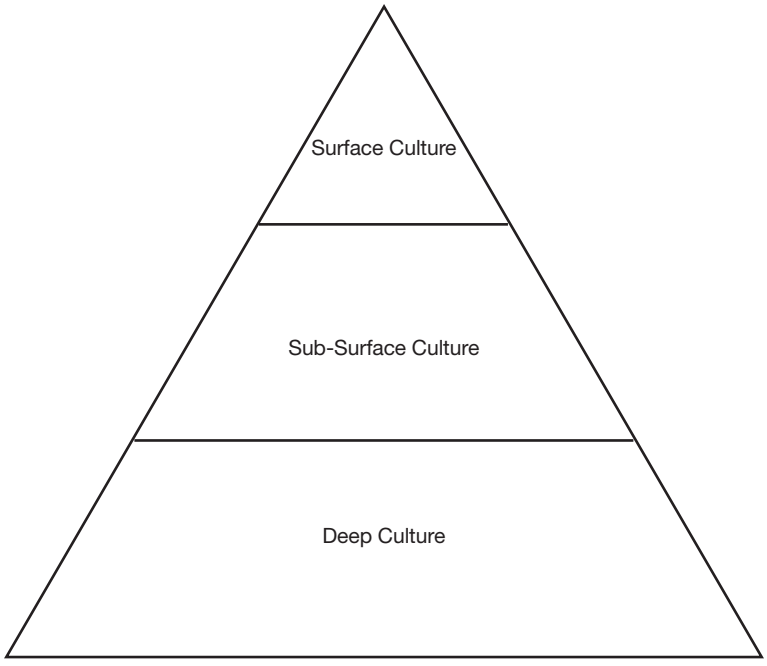
Appendix The Cultural Iceberg Template *(continued from page 11)*



Directions: Have students think about the iceberg analogy of culture and list elements of culture that might appear at each level.

- What things from a culture can we readily observe (surface culture)?
- What are some unspoken rules of social interaction (sub-surface culture) that we tend to take for granted?
- What are our unconscious values and attitudes (deep culture) that are so ingrained in us that we simply judge them to be "right" or "wrong"?

Have students work individually or in groups to list as many elements from each level as they can. Students should be encouraged to think of specific examples from their own culture to support their answers and be challenged to think about how elements of culture may differ cross-culturally.