LANGUAGE-AND-CULTURE

I had crossed the line, and René let me know immediately. "Attention!" he cautioned, wagging his finger playfully at me, but seriously, I could tell. We were in the courtyard behind the house, in the middle of a game of boules. I had just congratulated him on a fine play he had made, knocking my boule away from le cochonnet. My mistake? In my words of praise to him, Tu as bien joué, I had used the tu form instead of vous (the informal "you" instead of the formal "you"). Even though I had known René for well over 15 years at that time, he insisted that I use the vous form with him, while he used the tu form with me. After all, he explained, I was the son-in-law, he was the father-in-law. It was the right thing to say.

This lesson on the use of tu and vous in French is one among many that I've learned over the years. Like all French students, I learned the linguistic forms early on, with all the appropriate verb endings for tu and for vous, but the lessons on appropriate use, or culture, started with my first encounters with French speakers and have continued to this day. Some may say that this is a relatively obvious example of the intersection of language and culture, but in my experience with French and French speakers, learning the appropriate use of tu/vous has been an ongoing challenge of figuring out social relationships in the culture and my place within them. The formulas of formality/informality, politeness/intimacy that I first learned, although useful, have proved too simplistic.

Once, at a dinner party in France with a gathering that included a few French high school teachers, I told them of the difficulty I had in teaching the "rules" of tu/vous to students in the United States, since there is no equivalent in English. I asked them all the question, "How do you use tu/vous with the students in your classes?" Naively, I expected them to answer with one voice, providing a simple formula that I could pass on to my students. In fact, there was great variation. One said, "I use vous with the students, and they use vous with me." Another said, "I use tu with them, and they use vous with me." A third said, "I use tu with the students, and they use tu with me." All three teachers worked in the same school. When I asked them to explain their answers, all talked about how they wanted to present themselves to students and how they wanted the students to perceive them and their role in the classroom. Each had a different view of these roles and relationships. "So much for the teacher-student formality theory," I thought to myself.

Ironically, during the course of this very dinner party, we had been using vous with one another, those of us who had met for the first time. As time passed and as we talked, the ambiance became warmer and more relaxed among us. At some
point, I don’t remember exactly when, I noticed that everyone had begun using *tu* with one another and with me. I joined in, assuming that we had all now reached the kind of friendlier relationship that called for *tu*. We continued this way right through to the late hour when we all said our goodbyes. By chance, the next morning on my way to buy a newspaper in town, I met one of these people in the street. I greeted her, using the *tu* form. Coolly, she responded with *vous*. The color rushed to my face; I had made another mistake. Obviously, the “now-we-know-each-other-so-we-can-use-*tu* theory” did not apply here.

In this chapter, I examine two dimensions of language and culture: language in the culture, and language in the classroom. I present language from two viewpoints: (1) language as an integral part of the five dimensions of culture; and (2) language to learn culture. In the first, I will show how language cannot be separated from the products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons of the culture. In the second, I propose that language must be separated from culture in order to learn culture, using the stages of the experiential learning cycle and the cultural knowings as a pedagogical guide.

**LANGUAGE-AND-CULTURE**

In the culture, the language is literally everywhere. Anyone immersed in the culture sees and hears the language all around. In this context, language and culture are clearly fused; one reflects the other. Recently, language educators have attempted to coin new words to reflect this fusion: linguaculture (Kramsch, 1989; Fantini, 1995), languaculture (Agar 1994), or language-and-culture (Byram and Morgan, 1993). The latter is the term I will use. Language-and-culture conveys both unification and separation. It acknowledges that we can deal with each separately and with both together.

To state the obvious, language embodies the products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons of a culture. To fully reveal the culture, we must examine the language. Language is a product of the culture, as any other, but it also plays a distinct role. Members of the culture have created the language to carry out all their cultural practices; to identify and organize all their cultural products, and to name the underlying cultural perspectives in all the various communities that comprise their culture. The words of the language, its expressions, structures, sounds, and scripts reflect the culture, just as the cultural products and practices reflect the language. Language, therefore, is a window to the culture. The fact that *tu* and *vous* exist in French, for example, tells us that French speakers need this distinction in their culture. They need it in order to establish roles and maintain relationships with other French speakers, which is crucial to enacting their cultural practices.

To practice the culture, we also need language. We need to be able to express ourselves and to communicate with members of the culture as we engage with them in the myriad practices and products that make up their way of life. Moreover, we need to do this appropriately, using the right language in the right way, according to the expectations of the members of the culture. This is the language of self-expression, communication, and social interaction. It is based on direct experience in the culture and interactions with members of the culture, in all the complexity this entails. For instance, the use of *tu* and *vous*, in terms of
practicing a French-speaking culture, quickly becomes more than an interesting fact about French language and culture. Meeting and interacting with French speakers immediately calls for using either tu or vous, namely, establishing an interpersonal relationship with them. Nothing could be more daunting, especially if there is ambiguity about this relationship.

The following table summarizes how language-and-culture appears in the five dimensions of culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Dimension</th>
<th>The Nature of Language-and-Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Products</td>
<td>The language used to describe and manipulate cultural products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>The language used to participate in cultural practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives</td>
<td>The language used to identify, explain, and justify cultural perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities</td>
<td>The language used to participate appropriately in specific cultural communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>The language individuals use to express their unique identity within the culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language and Cultural Products

The products of a culture range from isolated objects, artifacts, or tools to places, complex social institutions, and other constructions, like art, literature, architecture, and music. To manipulate or use these varied products, members of the culture use language. As a matter of fact, many cultural products—literature, tax codes, telephone directories, operating instructions, passports—consist entirely of language (and the paper they are printed on).

Consider again the products of a drive-through restaurant, where operating a car or handling money do not necessarily require spoken language to enact. Language, nonetheless, plays a critical role. Even though people may drive a car or manipulate currency in silence, we can assume that they learned the use of these products through language. More important, if asked about these products, people are able to describe them and their use through language. They can also describe the history of these products, how they originated and changed over the years. They can make comparisons with other products, as well as relate any particularities of note, even explain their significance in the culture. Moreover, should something unexpected occur with the operation of the car or with the exchange of currency, people rely on language to resolve the matter. And if asked about the role of drive-through restaurants in their lives, people use language to express their experiences, opinions, feelings, concerns, or questions about this cultural phenomenon.

Remember, too, that language is a cultural product in and of itself. Words, expressions, and structures are continually added or discarded. When spoken and written, language takes on tangible and perceptible forms. We can see written language, and we hear language when spoken. These tangible forms, as with any cultural product, can be described through language. Linguists and grammarians
have articulated a whole range of terminology to describe language and how it works. Linguistic terms such as noun, verb, complement, alphabet, phoneme, syllable, determiner, relative clause stand alongside linguistic processes such as question formation, subject-verb agreement, pluralization, inflections, and the like. As language teachers, describing language using such terms is our stock-in-trade. We constantly employ metalanguage—the language used to discuss language itself.

Language and Cultural Practices
Perhaps the most obvious use of language in culture occurs in cultural practices. When people come together and engage in cultural practices, they talk. Cultural practices almost always require language, the language of participation. The actions and interactions between and among members of the culture demand speaking and listening and, in literate cultures, reading or writing. The social circumstances, the people involved, the topic, and a number of other factors influence the nature of the language used. The language can be simple or quite complicated, depending on the nature of the practice in question. Say, for example, the social situation is a marriage ceremony, where numerous practices are required, from writing and sending invitations, through welcoming guests, giving and receiving gifts, participating in the ceremony, eating, making conversation, giving public speeches, to leave-takings—to name only a few. To participate appropriately, one needs to say the right words in the right way at the right time.

Language and Cultural Perspectives
Language also reflects and embodies perspectives. We use language to name and understand the perceptions, values, attitudes, and beliefs that govern our way of life. Through language, we make tacit perspectives explicit. We talk and write about perspectives. We read about them. We hear them in exchanges with members of the culture. Words, phrases, idioms, expressions—when we examine what they mean—reveal values, attitudes, and beliefs intrinsic to the culture. American English words (liberty, competition, teamwork, blues), if examined, lead to cultural perspectives, as do expressions (the buck stops here, time is money, one-stop shopping), and constructions (She, Ms.) or statements (“Call me by my first name,” “I stole home and won the game”).

In fact, through disciplines in the field of social science, there is an extensive vocabulary of cultural inquiry and explanation that explores the nature of cultural perspectives, resulting in terminology such as cultural patterns, kinship, proxemics, collectivism, and the like.

Wendy Wen, a Taiwanese ESOL teacher, did an in-depth study of a common U.S. cultural artifact that embodies perspectives: the bumper sticker.

As an English teacher, when I first came across this cultural phenomenon, I was quite amazed at the efficiency with which bumper stickers convey their various messages in such minimal space and economy of language....Some bumper stickers are straightforward, thus they are easy to interpret. Others can be quite difficult to understand for those who are not familiar with the American cultural context. A few straightforward, easily understood ones read as follows: “Honor Teachers.” One can assume that, unlike in
some Asian countries, where teachers are highly regarded, in America the teacher's status is relatively low, so this encourages people to honor and respect them. The following is less obvious to the foreign observer: "I am a college student." There is a comically conspicuous grammatical error in the sentence: the verb form should be "am," not "is." But what has poor grammar to do with a college student? Does this suggest the poor quality of a college education or the falling standards of education generally?

The perspectives are indeed embodied in words, phrases, and sentences, but the perspectives are not always immediately obvious, especially to outsiders.

Language and Cultural Communities
When we situate language in specific communities or groups, we see variations in forms, meanings, and use according to these social settings and circumstances. Communities develop distinct language to describe and carry out the particular practices and products associated with their group and its activities. For example, consider all the specialized vocabulary and interactional language used in occupations or professions. Plumbers, veterinarians, carpenters, politicians, farmers, lawyers, and computer technicians all have specialized language that describes the work they do and fits the interactions they have with others in this work.

When combined with cultural practices, communities also define norms for language use. Within groups, roles, relationships, and other social factors influence who speaks, what they say, and how they say it. Appropriate use of language becomes essential. The language forms we use in one set of social circumstances with certain communities are not necessarily the ones we use in others, even though we may be conveying a similar message.

Language and Persons
Finally, language, like culture, is not only collective but also personal. We share it with others in our culture, yet each of us uses language in an idiosyncratic manner, based upon our background, experiences, social groups, our personal outlook, and our identity. Each of us has a unique manner of self-expression in the language—a tone of voice, a certain pitch, a way of pronouncing, an accent, a writing voice, a communicative style, a preference for certain words, expressions, and idioms. We use our own version of language to describe, understand, and respond to our experiences and ourselves.

To summarize at this point, in the culture itself, language-and-culture is embedded in cultural products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons. One reflects the other, and they are best seen as joined. In the language classroom, however, the circumstances are different.

Language to Learn Culture
Language is the central means of learning culture in the language classroom. In the language classroom, as in the culture at large, the language is also everywhere. You find it in textbooks, audiotapes, videos, books, newspapers, magazines, and in the words exchanged between and among students and teachers. The culture is also present in many of these same materials, especially if they are authentic language material, used by members of the culture.
In the classroom context, however, language and culture tend to be distinct and treated separately. While this perhaps has the disadvantage of providing an incomplete portrait of language-and-culture, the separation also has an undeniable advantage. Language and culture can be separated for pedagogical reasons. First of all, learners do benefit by concentrating only on mastery of linguistic forms; including the cultural dimension could add unnecessary complexity. Second, and most relevant to culture, we use language to learn culture, a separation that helps language learners. The language we use to learn culture is specialized. It is the language of the classroom, where culture is the topic and language the means to comprehend, analyze, and respond to it.

To achieve this, four language functions are needed: language to **participate in the culture**, language to **describe the culture**, language to **interpret the culture**, and language to **respond to the culture**. These four functions mirror the stages of the cultural experience cycle: participation, description, interpretation, response—knowing how, knowing about, knowing why, and knowing oneself. In order to learn culture through experience, therefore, we need to use certain kinds of language at each step along the way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage / Knowing</th>
<th>The Nature of Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation: Knowing how</td>
<td>The language used to participate in the cultural experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description: Knowing about</td>
<td>The language used to describe the cultural experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation: Knowing why</td>
<td>The language used to identify, explain, and justify cultural perspectives and to compare and contrast these with perspectives from the individual's own culture and other cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response: Knowing oneself</td>
<td>The language individuals use to express their thoughts, feelings, questions, decisions, strategies, and plans regarding the cultural experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A Functional View of Language**

The language to learn culture is based on a functional view of language, that is, its communicative and expressive purposes. H.H. Stern (1983, p. 224) provides a clear and cogent summary of different categories of language functions proposed by five linguists. Carol Orwig (1999) offers useful lists of communicative functions in five topic areas: survival functions, social functions, self-expressive functions, cognitive functions, functions for managing conversations. Her lists are intended for self-directed learners of any language but they are also useful for language teachers looking for lists of functions. The foreign language profession in the United States (NSFLEP, 1999) proposes three central language functions, or communicative modes: interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive. Other useful sources for lists of basic English language-specific functions are Wilkins (1976) and Van Ek and Alexander (1975).
LANGUAGE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CULTURAL EXPERIENCE
This language derives from the five dimensions of the culture and is represented in the classroom through the cultural experience. The cultural experience, you will recall, can consist of any representation of the culture in which learners engage through listening, speaking, reading, writing, observing, or doing. The culture presented can be products, practices, perspectives, communities, or persons. I will use the term cultural text to define any representation of the culture that is presented in the language classroom, be it a reading passage, watching a film, preparing or eating food, participating in a role-play, writing in a language journal, performing a folk dance, singing songs, or listening to a guest speaker or a teacher’s anecdotes about the culture.
Consider practices as a cultural text. This features the language-and-culture needed to participate in cultural practices, where people need to express themselves, communicate, and carry out the affairs of their shared way of life. In the language classroom, the language of participation is removed from the cultural context in which it occurs. There are exceptions, of course, but for the most part the language to participate is modified to fit the classroom. It is tailored according to the curriculum, students’ background and knowledge, their level of proficiency, and other factors. This language-and-culture is condensed, simplified, excerpted, or otherwise modified so that learners can manage it.
This modification is accomplished through activities that replicate social interactions in the culture—dialogues, role-plays, simulations, interviews, games, or other activities that feature communication in the manner of members of the culture. In addition, other kinds of classroom-based activities incorporate the language of participation. These include activities in which the language is used for self-expression or communication, such as asking questions, giving answers, or discussing what happened on the weekend. Regardless of the activity, in order to master the language of participation, learners need practice in manipulating linguistic forms. This is often best achieved by separating language from culture, especially at lower levels of proficiency.
Again, this aspect of language is commonly referred to as functions—language functions or communicative functions. Functions emphasize the purposes that language serves for people of the culture, such as greeting, complimenting, storytelling, or thanking. The specific language that we use to carry out functions depends, of course, on the social situation, the people involved, the topics at hand, and other factors. Knowing and choosing the appropriate language is essential to functions. Keep in mind that verbal language is just one of many means of communication that people use in these situations. Gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, touching, physical distance, silence, and other factors all play an important role in functions, but for the moment, let us concentrate on written and spoken language.
Practices, the social interactions and transactions of the culture, are simply too numerous to list. People are involved in all sorts of activities that require language functions to complete. And as culture changes, new practices are established and others discarded. Linguists have categorized functions using various classification systems, and those related to social interactions of one kind or another apply most to participating in the culture.
Carol Orwig (1999) has developed a list of “social functions” that is particularly useful in mapping the language to participate in the culture. The following chart illustrates her categories, along with some of the functions she lists for each one.

Table 4.3: The Language of Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Sample Language Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation: Knowing how</td>
<td>Socializing—greeting/addressing people; taking leave; introducing/meeting people; etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishing/Maintaining Relationships—getting to know each other by sharing; etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influencing People—requesting that others perform actions; requesting/giving permission; etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giving and Responding to Feedback—expressing and acknowledging compliments; etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arguing—agreeing/disagreeing/disputing; persuading/convincing; threatening; negotiating; etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoiding Trouble—denying guilt or responsibility; explaining; making excuses; etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Orwig (1999)

The above list is far from comprehensive, but it does suggest the range of communicative functions or acts involved in the language of participation in the culture.

4.1 Teaching Culture: Identifying Language-and-Culture

The purpose here is to explore and identify language-and-culture. Use the picture below as the focus for a language lesson. Using your native language, imagine yourself as one of the characters in this social situation. Identify one or more functions needed to carry out the communication called for in this situation. Write a brief dialogue with appropriate statements, questions, answers, or expressions.

Figure 4.1: Congratulating

1. [Image of two people shaking hands and one saying something]

2. [Image of the same two people with the one saying something]

Moran (1990)
Change the social circumstances of this interaction, the new baby scenario, and write new dialogues that are appropriate to these circumstances. For example:

- a husband and wife celebrating the adoption of their child, being congratulated by the grandfather
- a doctor and a nurse holding the baby they just delivered, being congratulated by a colleague
- three childhood friends holding the newborn sibling of one of them
- three family members, each outwardly expressing happiness, but also conveying messages of self-importance, envy, bitterness

Then set these same scenarios within different organized religions. Identify the exchanges that would occur.

What do you notice about the language of participation?

As mentioned earlier, I draw a distinction between language used to participate in the culture and language used to learn the culture. Strictly speaking, participating in the culture does involve using language to learn the culture. Simply by interacting with members of the culture, we learn language and culture. However, the distinction applies when we consider the use of language in the cultural experience and the experiential learning cycle. Participation in this case involves the experience of culture in the classroom, not in the culture itself. From participation in this classroom cultural experience, the subsequent steps of description, interpretation, and response involve an examination of that experience. Because of their differences, each of these steps emphasizes a particular use of language.

**Bloom’s Taxonomy**

Since this examination involves distinct cognitive activities, Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives is a useful guide. Bloom et al. (1956) list six areas of cognitive learning: knowledge (recall of information), comprehension (interpretation of knowledge), application, analysis (breaking knowledge down into parts), synthesis (bringing together parts of knowledge into a whole), and evaluation (judgments based on a set of criteria). They proposed that these areas be sequenced in increasing levels of abstraction or complexity of thinking. To demonstrate learning in each of these areas, students carry out distinct learning behaviors, which are stated in the form of actions, or, in language teachers’ terms, verbs. These verbs can be construed as language functions. Even though the stages of the experiential cycle do not explicitly match Bloom’s sequence, the overall direction is similar.

**Language to Describe Cultural Phenomena**

Following the participation phase of the cultural experience cycle, the next stage is to reflect upon that experience and describe the cultural phenomenon. This calls for the language of description. The language of description involves functions that elicit or provide information about cultural phenomena. This can be
information about products, practices, perspectives, communities, or people. The essential feature is describing what is observed, either witnessed directly or through texts. The functions range from formal reporting in speech or writing to answering factual questions about a cultural text.

It is important to distinguish the language of description from the language of interpretation. This discipline of separating description from interpretation is a fundamental competence in culture learning, and the language needs to reflect this separation. A useful schema for categorizing the language of description can be found in Bloom's categories of "knowledge" and "comprehension." Also, Orwig (1999) has a category called "cognitive functions" that features the language of description.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 4.4: The Language of Description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> Knowing about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.2 **Learning Culture: Describing**

*Study the picture of the new baby scenario on page 41. Describe this situation, both as portrayed in the drawing and from your own experiences and general cultural knowledge. As you go through this exercise, consciously avoid any tendency to interpret or explain the underlying cultural perspectives. Also resist any temptation to offer your personal opinions or feelings about this cultural practice. Stay with description.*

- What's happening in this scenario?
- What happened beforehand?
- What will happen afterwards?
- Where might this scenario take place?

A: Describe this practice in general terms as it is carried out in your native culture. Expand your description to include reference to specific communities in your culture, along with specific products, perspectives, and also how individual persons whom you know respond to this practice.

B: Tell a story about a personal experience you have had with this scenario. Tell it as if it were a journalistic account—just the facts.

What do you notice about the language of description?
LANGUAGE TO INTERPRET CULTURAL PHENOMENA

Functions for this stage of the cultural experience cycle consist of the language used to develop and substantiate cultural interpretations. These interpretations are based on cultural information elicited or presented during the description stage. At this juncture, the topics shift from the concrete of description to the abstract of interpretation, from visible culture to invisible culture, from products and practices to perspectives. These functions thus involve inference, hypotheses, substantiation, justification, comparison and contrast, and other forms of language that link concrete to abstract.

Table 4.5: The Language of Interpretation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Sample Language Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation: Knowing Why</td>
<td>Rational Inquiry and Exposition (Wilkins, 1976)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>implying; deducing; supposing; conjecturing; assuming; proposing; hypothesizing; generalizing; etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis (Bloom, 1956)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>analyzing; categorizing; inferring; distinguishing; etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cognitive Functions (Orwig, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>comparing and contrasting; drawing conclusions; making predictions; discussing possibilities and probabilities; etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 LEARNING CULTURE: INTERPRETING

Return to the picture of the new baby scenario (Fig. 4.1, p.41). Interpret this cultural practice, both as portrayed in the drawing and from your own experiences and general cultural knowledge. Begin with these questions, and add your own.

- What cultural attitudes, values, beliefs, or perceptions are explicitly portrayed in this scene?
- What cultural attitudes, values, beliefs, or perceptions are implicit or suggested in this scene?
- How might participants in this scene differ in their perceptions of this event?
- How do distinct communities within the culture differ in their perspectives on death, burial, mourning, bereavement, or loss?
- How do these attitudes, values, beliefs, or perceptions contrast with those of other cultures that you know? Provide information about these other cultures to substantiate your comparisons.

What do you notice about the language of interpretation?

Jaimie Scanlon, an ESOL teacher in Japan, describes how she approaches the language needed for this stage and the next.
Knowing why and knowing oneself are the most challenging stages to reach for several reasons. First, students' ability to communicate what they feel and to hypothesize in the language greatly depends on their proficiency level. My students were around ACTFL Intermediate–Low. They needed more language in the beginning to produce the kinds of statements necessary for a good discussion of the topics. My first couple of attempts at in-class discussions failed because of the students' inability to communicate their thoughts in English. Following that, I presented language for guessing, hypothesizing, and expressing opinions, such as, "It might be...", "Maybe it's because..." "I guess...", "I think/believe/agree/disagree...". This helped a little. After one class, I decided to ask students to finish their thoughts in writing and gave them some guiding questions. The results prompted me to stick to that method of reaching these knowings. Students were much better able to express their thoughts in writing.

**LANGUAGE TO RESPOND TO CULTURAL PHENOMENA**

The language functions involved at this stage all serve to help learners express their responses to the cultural phenomenon at hand. In keeping with the emphasis of this stage, the topic of discussion shifts from the culture to the learner. The learner's world becomes the subject matter. Learners' responses include feelings, opinions, values, beliefs, questions, concerns, or awarenesses, as well as intentions, strategies, decisions, or other plans the learners may formulate as they anticipate further involvement in the cultural phenomenon. Essentially, these functions entail learners' self-expression. The focus is knowing oneself, self-awareness.

**Table 4.6: The Language of Response**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Sample Language Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Response: Knowing oneself** | **Evaluation** (Bloom, 1966)  
appraising; judging; criticizing; defending; valuing; evaluating; supporting; validating; attacking; etc.  
Expressing Emotions (Orwig, 1999)  
expressing likes or dislikes; pleasure or displeasure; satisfaction or dissatisfaction; disappointment; fear or worry; surprise; hope; gratitude; sympathy; want or desire; etc.  
Expressing/Inquiring about  
intentions; plans; strategies; beliefs; opinions; questions; concerns; values; decisions; etc. |

4.4 **LEARNING CULTURE: RESPONDING**

*Study the picture of the baby scenario on p. 41 once again. Offer your personal views on this scenario, both as portrayed in the drawing and from your own experiences and general knowledge.*
• What thoughts, feelings, or opinions do you have about this cultural phenomenon?
• Describe any personal experiences you have had with this cultural phenomenon.
• Do you share the cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, or perceptions of this cultural phenomenon?
• What more would you like to know or do in regard to this phenomenon?

What do you notice about the language of response?

The language of response also involves the language used to illuminate the process of crossing cultures, whether this be naming and managing cultural stereotypes, contrasting cultural values, or examining the applicability of models of cultural adaptation to learners’ experiences. This can be an academic intellectual exercise or, if learners’ beliefs and values are engaged, an exploration of emotions.

In an ESOL course that she taught in the United States, Friederike Weiss (1997) included the acculturation process (Brown, 1994) as a specific component of her curriculum, which meant teaching the necessary language.

Language skills are part of the culture learning process, so we need to aim for the integration of language and culture learning. Teaching and learning about acculturation involves teaching and learning the language and terms that come with it. Students can expand their vocabulary to learn terms that could help them express their feelings. In order for students to do this, we need to give them the necessary linguistic tools. Therefore, one of the first lessons should be how to express feeling in English. I consider learning to express one’s feelings a crucial first step in any classroom, for it signals to students that such expressions are encouraged and welcomed. One way to do this is to brainstorm and elicit adjectives and to create cards with “I feel + adjective” statements, which students can then match with a situation (on cards), e.g., “I feel happy when I talk to my parents on the phone.” The cards can be posted in the classroom; whenever the students encounter more adjectives or need to find more ways of expressing feelings, more cards can be added. I found that students responded very positively when I gave them these tools, which again showed me their need and willingness to describe their emotions.

These four functions of language—participation, description, interpretation, response—not only point to cultural content areas (products, practices, perspectives, communities, persons), they indicate language content areas, as well. Specifically, the language of participation requires communicative exchanges and expressions involved in social interactions of participants in the practices in question. The language of description calls for specific vocabulary and expressions related to literal and figurative description. The language of interpretation encompasses the vocabulary and expressions associated with critical thinking or rigorous inquiry into perceptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes. The language of response involves the words and expressions needed to voice one’s opinions,
feelings, intentions, and other responses to the cultural phenomena under study.

To summarize, language, as a product of culture, is infused with culture. Language-and-culture are two sides of the same coin, especially—and always—when we immerse ourselves in the culture. Each mirrors the other, and one is inseparable from the other—when we are in the culture. Members of the culture use their language to portray their culture, to put their cultural perspectives into practice, to carry out their way of life. Language thus unites products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons. On the other hand, when we, as language teachers, bring language-and-culture into the second language classroom, it changes. To help learners, we tailor the language-and-culture to be more accessible. This necessarily involves separating language from culture and working separately on the language to learn culture. While there are many ways to do this, the experiential cycle is particularly effective.

Suggested Readings

The National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (NSFLEP, 1999) proposes a framework of three communicative modes—interpersonal, interpretive, presentational—the language functions that learners need to learn language and culture and to communicate. The book contains lesson plans in Chinese, classical languages, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish that show applications of these three modes. One of the most comprehensive and practical resources for teaching and learning language-and-culture that I have found is the Summer Institute of Linguistics (http://www.sla.org). Most of their material is designed for self-study of language and culture but is easily adapted to the classroom.