



## Materials Review

Seelye H. Ned. *Teaching Culture: Strategies for foreign language educators*. Skokie, Ill.: The National Textbook Company, 1974. Paper. 188 pp. \$6.95.

Seelye's book provides foreign language teachers specifically and educators in general a long awaited, timely and above all, *practical* answer to the everpresent question "How does foreign language fit into the total experience of the student? Drawing upon materials gathered from the efforts of experienced teachers and in workshops, the author has compiled strategies for use in and out of the classroom which may aid the educator in developing in each student a positive attitude toward learning about a second culture. The various activities, amply described throughout, include simulation, sensitivity training, culture capsules, semiotic approaches, and audio-visual aids; each consistently focuses on the *interaction* of the cognitive, psychomotor, and effective aspects of learning.

*Teaching culture* is divided into ten chapters, the first of which re-evaluates culture as "anything man has learned to do". Seelye notes that culture must necessarily be "described" as opposed to "re-defined" if one is to permit the student to understand "behavior", and categorizes it in terms of Brooks' five-part classification: "biological growth, personal refinement, literature and fine arts, patterns of living and the sum total of a way of life" (p. 12).

Chapter two examines the motivation behind behavior and the reasons it is affected by nationality. Seelye observes that people are *not* the same, that societies evolve in very different ways to satisfy basic physical and psychological needs. In analyzing any observed or reported behavior the first question which must be asked is "What is the universal need the individual is trying to satisfy?"

Assumptions and actions influence each other to the point that even individual aspirations which give direction to need arise from the basic values reflected in a culture.

Perhaps chapter three is the most important in *Teaching Culture* for it presents the seven goals for cultural instruction as adopted by Nostrand, which are the backbone of the strategies presented in subsequent divisions of the book. Instruction must be purposeful and Seelye advocates to be purposeful, classroom activities should relate in a reasonable way to one of the seven goals:

## **Materials Review**

1. The Sense of Functionality of Culturally Conditioned Behavior (i.e. the options allowed by society for fulfilling the basic needs).
2. Interaction of Language and Social Variables (such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence).
3. Conventional Behavior in Common Situations (all such behavior shares several characteristics).
  - a) It is cued by common social situations.
  - b) Verbal and kinetic responses are limited to a prescribed few.
  - c) The utterance of an expected response produces a mildly rewarding feeling while the absence of such a response produces considerable anxiety.
4. Cultural Connotations of Words and Phrases (this produces culturally conditioned images).
5. Evaluating Statements about a Society.
6. Researching Another Culture (i.e. learning how to learn).
7. Attitudes Toward Other Cultures (curiosity and empathy).

These seven guidelines are further delineated in terms of achievement in chapter four, where Seelye emphasized the importance of writing performance objectives that are goal-related. The purpose of such objectives is to spell out (for both teacher and the learner) exactly what a student should be able to do at the end of a course. Any performance objective which successfully describes terminal behaviors must necessarily provide answers to the following four questions:

1. Why teach a given aspect of the culture?
2. What should the student be able to do or say when he's learned the specific aspect?
3. What are the circumstances under which the student will be expected to do or say what he has learned?
4. How well does the student have to perform under the stated conditions?

Chapter five focuses on developing relevant activities that lead to a specific end, examples of which are organized under each of the seven goals for the various languages. The sixth chapter emphasizes two techniques for sensitizing students to possible miscommunication: 1) out-of-class reading of "empathetic" literature and 2) "mini" dramas. Chapter seven presents three very interesting strategies for teaching cultural concepts. They include:

1. Culture Assimilators: the student has to identify culturally appropriate explanations for the described situation (out-of-class).

2. Culture Capsules: an explanation of minimal cross-cultural differences presented in textual descriptions and accompanying multi-media (prepared by students for oral delivery during class).
3. Culture Clusters: approximately three related culutre capsules with one thirty minute simulation integrating the information.

Chapter eight illustrates various techniques for capitalizing on the learner's "off-beat" interest, for generating and refining student research techniques about the culture developing skill in searching for and collecting information and for interviewing native informants. Chapter nine discusses testing with special emphasis on goal-oriented multiple-choice examinations. Chapter ten provides the educator with an invaluable and extensive bibliography.

*Teaching Culture* is enlightening, informative, and practical; it is highly recommended reading for educators seriously concerned with student attitudes and the development of stimulating, creative "cultural experiences" for the learner.

*Julia A. Myers,*  
Purdue University