

Questions to Consider When Teaching About Culture

ACTFL standards require that students in a world languages classroom learn about other cultures and “interact with cultural competence and understanding.”

Students are expected to:

Use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the **practices** and **perspectives** of the cultures studied.

Use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the **products** and **perspectives** of the cultures studied.

Here are some questions to guide you and your students in effectively incorporating cultural practices, products, and perspectives into your lesson planning.

1 Am I focusing primarily on “exotic” or “different” aspects, or am I also highlighting universal human experiences and commonalities?

2 Whose voices and perspectives am I prioritizing? Am I including authentic voices from within the culture, or am I relying solely on external interpretations?

3 How can I promote an understanding of the diversity within a culture, rather than presenting the culture as a single, uniform entity?

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4

How am I addressing stereotypes and generalizations, both explicit and implicit, that I might hold?

5

Are cultural practices and beliefs presented within their historical and social contexts, or are we treating them as isolated phenomena?

6

Am I fostering a safe and inclusive classroom where students feel comfortable sharing their cultural backgrounds and asking questions respectfully?

7

How am I connecting the study of this foreign culture to students' own lives and experiences, promoting empathy and self-reflection?

8

Does my lesson encourage student inquiry and provide opportunities for students to pursue their own questions and interests related to the culture?

9

What resources am I using to teach about another culture, and are they accurate, respectful, and current? Am I vetting them for potential bias?



By considering these questions, you can move beyond superficial “cultural tourism” and guide students toward a more profound, respectful, and critically informed understanding of foreign cultures.

Looking to integrate culture into your Grades 6–12 Spanish classroom?

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