

Voices from Beyond: Modern Coursebook of Cultural Studies for Philologists,

with the focus on (e)migration
as a political, ethic, linguistic and cultural phenomenon
in the era of globalization

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Voices from Beyond: Modern Coursebook of Cultural Studies for Philologists

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Introduction

Studying Cultural Studies in the era of migration, Americanization and, above all, globalization requires mastering many more skills and competences than were sufficient prior to the 1990s, a pre-turbulent era in many of the Eastern-Bloc countries in Europe.

After the 1990s, those countries that were originally quite ethnically, religiously and socially homogenous (such as Slovakia) gradually turned heterogeneous. Distinctions in class, race, religion and even sexual orientation are present as a fact of everyday life. Moreover, due to modern technologies, people are exposed to a wide range of information and first-hand views of countries and events that, prior to the 1990s would have most remained likely unrecognized.

Changing times, but also modern research in the field, challenges traditional concepts of Cultural Studies (understood as a presentation of “facts” about target countries and recognizes more comparative and global from Culture Specific, e.g. learning about specific culture(s) of Great Britain or the USA, to Culture General, meaning a broader cultural context of various countries, presented in a comparative way which is also the path we plan to follow in this course book.

The central focus of the course book is Cultural Studies of the English-speaking world (Europe and North America, i.e., the USA and Canada, for linguists studying English for their future professions, and for future teachers, translators and interpreters. However, we attempt to put all the information within the framework of a wide spectrum of the English world with a special comparative focus on the USA, the EU and Slovakia, and within the global context of migration, world history and culture. Thus, the course book is usable for a range of courses oriented to Cultural Studies of English-speaking countries such as Intercultural Studies and many others.

In this, we hope to provide the reader and student with the most up-to-date information and their explanatory contexts. Moreover, we attempted to provide a modern approach to Cultural Studies focusing mostly on interactivity, the use of modern media, such as the internet, student-oriented tasks and heuristic methodology in order to activate already gained knowledge and put it into the context with new information. In this, we hope to stimulate the readers’ critical thinking and analytical abilities.

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For all the authors,
Jana Javorčíková.

PART V

Pedagogical Contexts: Approaches to Teaching Culture for the Academic World

(Anna Zelenková)

5.1 Pedagogical Contexts: Approaches to Teaching Culture for Academic World

Objectives: After completing this chapter, the reader should be able to:

- Understand the gist of culture learning and teaching.
- Understand the term “language awareness”.
- Understand the interdisciplinary nature of the subject Cultural Studies.

The main aim of the teaching of culture is to **raise cultural awareness** of students and **develop their intercultural competence**. In Part I we have defined the cultural content (focusing on culture as a social group’s practices around values and beliefs) to be included in culture studies. The main distinction between the approaches, techniques and strategies (the

methodologies) to the **teaching of culture** lie in the **focus on the domains** which we want to develop in the intercultural education, for example:

- **Cognitive**
- **Affirmative**
- **Motivational**
- **Behavioural.**

Another divide lies between the areas and **purposes** where culture is integrated into studies:

- teaching culture within the **study of foreign languages (English)**
- teaching culture in other areas – **for specific purposes** – such as international business, diplomacy, international education and science or for nursing purposes.

This is to be taken into account when deciding **what culture** and **which culture** to teach.

Foreign Language Teaching Pedagogy

Foreign language teaching pedagogy responds to the needs for intercultural and global skills by integrating culture into the foreign language teaching process. Some authors argue (Ries – Kollárová, 2004, p. 37) that the teaching of foreign languages takes a culturological direction (based on the presumption that any communication today is the communication between cultures, or that English becomes a medium of the communication between cultures (Morgado, 2016). We also take a standpoint that studying a foreign language should be not the aim but the means to achieve intercultural understanding.

As mentioned before, to be able to master the communication in the intercultural context it is necessary for students to know some **facts about the cultural community** where the **language is used**, to know **how to react** adequately and appropriately in the **real life communicative situations** and also understand the **non-verbal communication** means. They should be able to understand the differences between various cultures as a pre-requisite for a successful communication. They should realize that many times it is not the low **level of English proficiency** that leads to misunderstanding, but the low level of cultural awareness, poor

understanding or ignoring such aspects as non-verbal communication or language nuances resulting from different cultural backgrounds of the speakers. It is obvious that for a successful communication in a culturally diverse world the students need to develop new communication competence.

Teaching Culture as Facts – Information Acquisition

Teaching culture by providing information and facts means mediating the “cultural knowledge that consists of information about the characteristics of our own and other people’s cultures” (Tomlinson – Masuhara, 2004, p. 6). This approach is what in Slovak schools used to be and still is known and practised as teaching *realia*, i.e. facts about the target country (or English speaking countries) and also Slovakia. Traditionally, the culture involved in the teaching of foreign language has encompassed the transfer of information about the country in focus, such as **history, geography, political system, arts and customs and traditions**. Such an information block was, of course necessary, and was looked upon as an integral part of the curricula. Nowadays we assume that this “culture as information” or “facts only” approach (Omaggio Hadley, 1993, pp. 361-362) does not meet the needs of present world. In this view it is ineffective for several reasons:

1. Facts are in constant state of flux, especially when they relate to current life style.
2. Specific data may not hold true across time, location and social strata.
3. Facts-only approach to culture may rather strengthen stereotypes than diminish them.
4. Mastering the facts does not necessarily help students when they face cultural situations not previously studied.

The “facts only” approach will not refine students’ understanding of and attitudes towards members of other cultures. Teachers should help students attain the skills that are necessary to make sense out of the facts they themselves discover in their study or real life.

Teaching Culture as Process – Development of Intercultural Competence

What students need today is a set of tools – skills and attitudes – for processing new phenomena in a way that will facilitate understanding. Cognitive knowledge alone seems to have little effect on an individual ability to cope with different patterns of behaviour. (Byram, 1997). Today's intercultural communication competence represents much more than linguistic proficiency and the knowledge of some facts about the target country. This approach to integrating culture into a language course is heavily advocated by Tomlinson and Masuhara (ibid.), Byram (1998), Kramsh (2004). In their view cultural awareness involves perceptions and an understanding of our own and other people's cultures, a positive interest in how cultures both connect and differ.

If culture is understood a way of life, patterns of behaviour, a set of values that determine the behaviour connected with the language in its most authentic use and typical body language, then we assume the cultural component will differ from the traditional cultural course content which was based solely on information about the target culture. In this situation the didactic approaches should focus on providing experiences from which learners can develop cultural awareness and acquire necessary skills and attitudes. Simply said, the differences between these two approaches are in terms of learning goals: culture as information (acquiring knowledge of a set of identifiable facts) and culture as process (engaging in different types of performance behaviour).

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

Culture is learned behaviour and as such it can be taught in a classroom setting. There are many **techniques, strategies** and **methods** to be used. The techniques include integrating language items with cultural content, for example negotiating in English – which language items (phrases, vocabulary, linguistic moves – opening, interrupting, developing discussion, closing discussion) when, what to observe (cultural features of participants, body language, taboos). Today, these techniques and strategies are already

integrated in all good textbooks on foreign language teaching and learning. Nevertheless, we can introduce some of them.

All the techniques, strategies and sets of pedagogical methods represent what we call **teaching methodology**.

According to Ramírez (1995), the most frequented **strategies for integrating culture in the language classroom include:**

Culture Capsule

This strategy is designed to explain a specific cultural difference between one's own and a target-culture custom. It includes a variety of visuals, pictures and other *realia* (real texts) and these are contrasted with the related foreign customs. The presentation by teacher is followed by appropriate student activities, questions and tasks around that topic.

Culture Cluster

This strategy consists of series (cluster) of related culture capsules, used to develop a central theme, such as eating in a restaurant. The capsules may include taking a taxi, reading a menu, ordering meals and drinks and talking during dinner (with your business partner). The strategy may include, presented information, role plays or dramatization

Culture Assimilator

Culture assimilator consists of three basic parts: a) brief episode or critical incident in a narrative form involving a misunderstanding; b) possible interpretations (usually four) of the incident; for students to discuss and justify the decision; c) teacher's feedback as to the appropriate interpretation.

Cultural Minidrama

Cultural minidrama consists of three to five brief cases (episodes) each of which contains some cultural misunderstanding or miscommunication. Information is provided to students at the end of each episode but may not be sufficient to make the miscommunication obvious until the last scene. Students are led into an open-ended discussion through which they are produce their own interpretation of what happened in the case, to

examination of cultural assumptions. Cultural sensitivity is developed through this strategy.

Artefacts study

Artefacts from other cultures are presented and students are led to discuss their cultural significance (what is it, how made, to what purpose it serves, why, which role it plays in society, etc.).

Besides these strategies the **culture-teaching methodology** on all levels of the **educational system** (elementary, secondary, higher education) and **training system** (training adults-teachers, managers, business people, staff in multicultural companies and expatriates) includes another set of pedagogical **methods**. Before the use of any of these methods it is necessary to consider for which purpose they should be used, for example:

- a) which **components of the intercultural competence** should be developed
- b) which **learning outcomes** are expected.

To enable the teachers to state the learning outcomes for their teaching of culture it may be advisable to use, for example, the **Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives** or the revised Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, p.113)

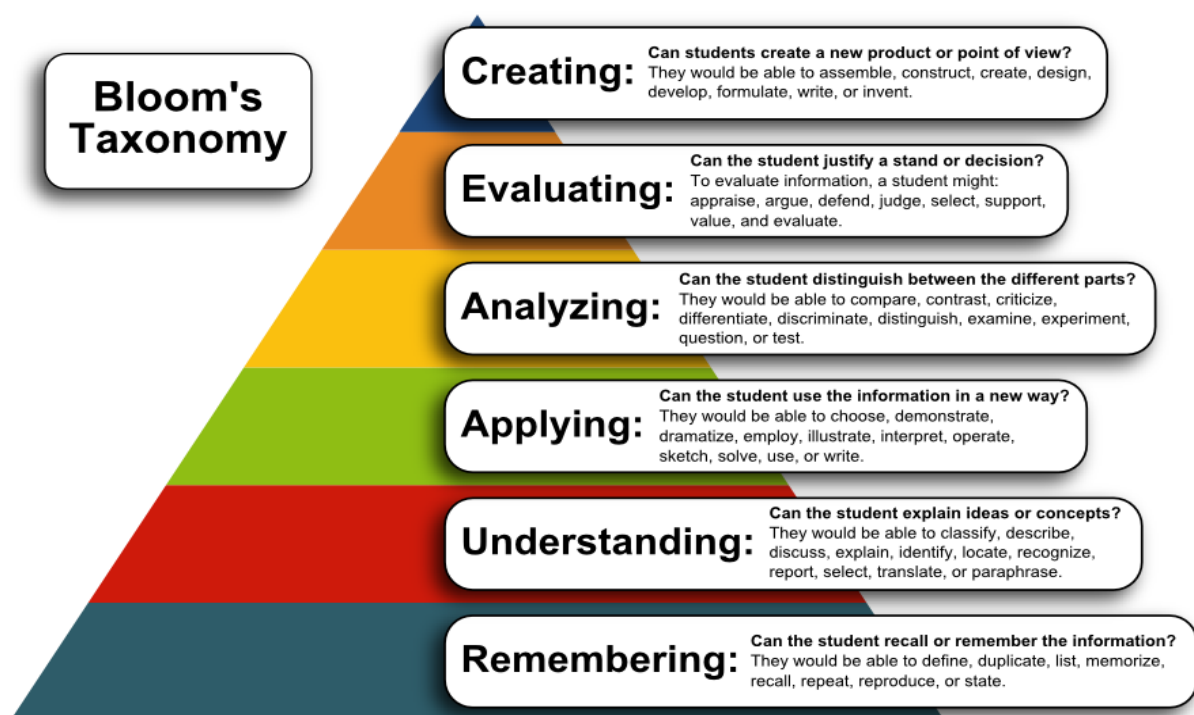
The authors of the **revised taxonomy** (Anderson – Krathwohl et al., 2001) underscore the dynamism of the learning process, using verbs (to do something) and gerunds (doing something) to label their categories and subcategories (rather than the nouns of the original taxonomy). These "**action words**" describe the cognitive processes by which thinkers encounter and work with knowledge. A **statement of a learning objective**

¹¹³A revised taxonomy was provided by Anderson, L.W. (Ed.), Krathwohl, D.R. (Ed.), Airasian, P.W., Cruikshank, K.A., Mayer, R.E., Pintrich, P.R., Rath, J., & Wittrock, M.C. in 2001 in the book *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Complete edition). New York : Longman.

contains a verb (an action) **and an object** (usually a noun), e.g., to solve problems, to express politeness, to interpret somebody's behavior, to apply the newly gained knowledge, etc. "The verb generally refers to [actions associated with] the intended cognitive process. The object generally describes the knowledge students are expected to acquire or construct". (Anderson – Krathwohl, pp. 4–5). The Revised Bloom's taxonomy consists of six hierarchical levels of learning. The teachers should strive for students to reach the highest levels of learning at the top of the pyramid. All levels of learning depend on a solid foundation of those that come below.

The following figure shows the levels of cognitive learning.

Figure 7: Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives in cognitive domain (revised). Source: A. Z., byn <https://ugs.utah.edu/learning-outcomes-assessment/blooms-taxonomy.php>.



Source: <https://courses.dcs.wisc.edu/design-teaching/Wordpress%20files/modules/Engagement%20Tools/quizlet/quizlet.html>, adapted by A. Z.

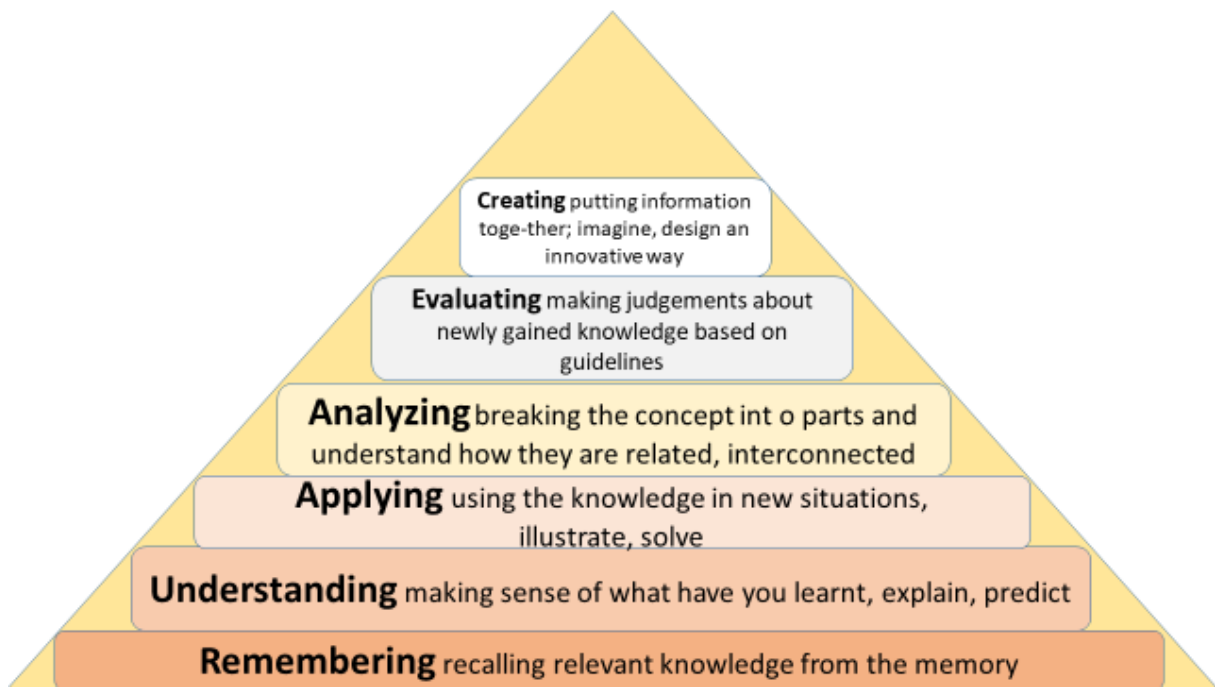


Figure 8: Bloom's taxonomy revised for cultural studies. Source: Adopted by A. Z.

Task 1:

Think of appropriate learning objectives for each of the levels of cognitive domain.

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES IN THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN

Complete the sentences for your personal teaching situation:

a) What should the student remember?

Students should remember the basic facts about the country's geography, history, etc.

b) What should students understand?

The relation between language and culture, some cultural differences, why they happen, etc.

c) What should students be able to apply?

The newly gained knowledge to explain a cultural situation, to explain the cultural behaviour, the culture shock, why it happens, to prepare for a culturally influenced communication act, etc.

d) What should students be able to analyze?

The situation, misunderstanding, the behaviour of communication actors, etc.

e) What should students be able to evaluate?

The newly gained knowledge, think of its pros and cons, judge, evaluate the contribution of own culture to the global culture, to evaluate the appropriate behaviour, to evaluate the proper reaction, etc.

f) What should students be able to create?

New framework, new worldview, create a new concept, formulate their own conclusions (e.g. future teachers: how to approach the study of culture, teaching of culture).

Task 2:

Think of appropriate learning objectives for AFFIRMATIVE (emotions, opinions, acceptance, tolerance, respect) and BEHAVIOURAL (skills, communication skills, behaviour towards foreigners, displaying accompanying emotions) domains.

To help you with tasks 1 and 2, try to complete the following sentences (expressing some of the possible learning objectives in culture studies), for example: the teaching of culture should enable the students to solve intercultural misunderstandings.

Teaching of culture should enable the students:

- to understand
- to recognize
- to identify
- to explain
- to explore
- to be curious about
- to interpret
- to solve.....
- to react
- to behave
- to transfer
- to analyse
- to use the knowledge
- to evaluate critically
- to respect
- to display the understanding.....
- to accept
- to tolerate
- to acquire
- to behave/act appropriately.....
- to be aware of
- to be sensitive towards
- to examine
- to value

Pedagogical Methods Used in Higher Education¹¹⁴

Besides all of the above mentioned teaching strategies that are applied in foreign language instruction, the following methods are effective in the teaching of culture in higher education (at philological or non-philological faculties).

Lectures

Lecture is one of the most common methods of education in higher education in Slovak schools. Bennett argues that it is one of the “most commonly used and misused teaching methods” (Bennett In Landis, Bennett – Bennett, 2004, p. 208). “Misused” means that teachers very often rely on the facts presented repeatedly every year and use this method also in place where more interaction of students would be required. It can be, of course, applied to present the proven facts, theories, basic introduction to the study content where presentation, explanation or illustration of abstract concepts is needed. These may include culture theories by various disciplines, cultural typologies, theories of multiculturalism, concept of cultural values, etc. What is necessary, is to make a monological, one-sided lecture/presentation more interactive, i. e.

- using visuals (videos, films, internet, you tube);
- giving out handouts to students;
- interrupting the lecture to allow for discussion or get feedback from students.

The reason for this lies in the aim of preparation on intercultural interaction and communication, which should be also reflected in the teaching methodology. Engaging and involving students in their own knowledge acquisition (according to constructivist theories, Zelenková, 2014) contributes to better and more effective learning.

¹¹⁴ Teaching methodology is adapted from Zelenková, 2014.

Case studies

Case studies are a form of problem-based learning. In a case study students are presented a real situation from existing multinational companies, schools, teams. The aim is to learn from the situation and suggest the possible solution of the problem. The students are given details about the situation. During the work on the case, particular attention is given to such skills as quickly gathering and interpreting data from variety of sources (the main source is the reading passage and other company documents or activities), thinking critically about the information presented and then developing assessment of the situation leading to a well-thought-out solution. Case studies put students into the shoes of real executives or workers in international companies and involve them in learning from and solving most typical situations that happened to those companies.

Critical incidents

Critical incidents are another method based on problem solving. They help students understand human opinions, attitudes, behaviours and interactions which may be critical to their effectiveness in roles they are already performing or preparing for (in the workplace, educational setting, or in society at large). Critical incidents present a brief description of situations in which a misunderstanding, a problem, or conflict arises as a result of cultural differences. The situation describes briefly what happened and manifests the feelings and reactions of the participants of the incident. It does not explain the cultural differences that people bring into the situation. Students are led to apply their prior knowledge of culture or cultural values and real-life experience, to discuss and guess why the incident happened. Discovering or revealing cultural differences is meant to be the cultural learning process. The main task is to find the possible answer to the questions: *Why did the incident happen? What caused the incident?*

Simulations and Role Plays

Simulations belong to the most interactive methods used in teaching or training for intercultural understanding. A simulation can be defined as a simplified performance of a certain situation (fragment of reality) used for didactic purposes. Today they are used worldwide to train managers (future managers) and staff for work in multinational companies. Simulations and

role plays help put students into somebody else's shoes and evoke in them **feelings and emotions** (fear, alienation, helplessness, strangeness). In Culture studies this method provides an opportunity for students to experience in the school setting

- a situation of cross-cultural encounters
- a new cultural environment
- culture shock
- other situations in intercultural relations (in business, education, management).

According to the research done by Zelenková (2010), simulations are only effective if the didactic process includes a thorough debriefing of the situation simulated, discussion and reflection on what the learning point was.

Project Method

Projects as a teaching method may be used in many ways, such as:

1. individual project
2. group project
3. team project
4. class
5. school project.

Project is mostly a group work based on the principles of co-operative learning and constructivist theories. It is a learner-centered method as it activates students for the attainment of a common learning goal and thus leads them to active acquisition of the knowledge. For teachers it is necessary to think of a proper cultural content and focus, such as:

- exploring a cultural topic
- organizing a culture event
- attending a culture/country specific event with assigned roles.

The project requires a thorough procedure (from planning and structuring, stating aims, assigning roles, collecting data, ongoing checking of partial results, revising, correcting and finally, presenting and evaluating in groups).

The duration of the project may be short-term (from one week to another, from one lesson to another) or short-term (a few weeks to whole semester) and depends on the aim set by the teacher or learners) for intercultural competence development.

Exploration Methods

This method is similar to the project method but may be used with the aim to develop the topic to be studied behind the necessary (required by syllabus) content. Students may be assigned the roles to extend the topic related to the syllabus of the course. They are encouraged to study extra materials from the library, online databases, internet resources, or interview people to get the necessary answers. Exploration methods present learner-centered, task-based and interactive learning. They contribute to the development of students' autonomy, encourage their self-study, motivation, curiosity and interest in the studies of culture (Zelenková, 2014, p. 149).

Comparing and contrasting

This method allows students to compare cultural characteristics of foreign (target) cultures with students' own culture (behaviour, politeness, values). Through comparisons of opposing characteristics students develop better understanding of their own culture, are able to look at their own culture from somebody else's perspective (Byram, 1997), which is one of the aims of cultural competence.

Discussion(s)

Discussion is a common teaching method used in the university seminars. Discussion means exchange of ideas, information, opinions or, own experiences. It should have a clear aim stated by the teacher. Most effective discussions are **based on the assigned reading** before the lesson in which the discussion takes place. Student should operate with the facts taken from the reading passages or other sources available. It can be used with any topic, in any seminar. The most common exchange takes the form of *teacher-student(s)-teacher-student(s)*, but the most effective discussion is the **interaction between students** (*student-student* exchange) (Maňák – Švec, 2003). There are many **types of discussions** which can be used in culture studies, such as:

- **debate** – this is a more formal, serious and thorough analysis of a given topic (contribution of Slovak culture to the European culture, etc.). It usually needs/involves a moderator who should be well prepared;
- **discussion to go with the lecture** – before (to raise interest, motivation, warm-up) or after the lecture (checking understanding, getting feedback, checking the acquisition of new knowledge);
- **panel discussion** – four or five students form a panel, one student is a moderator. Students of the panel individually present their comments/reports/information on the topic. After that other students are involved with the questions;
- **chain discussion** – the teacher starts with expressing his/her opinion, other students follow; the discussion has a form of a follow-up sequence of speaking turns;

Socratic seminar – is the “highest” type of an academic group discussion; the aim is to help each other **(to facilitate) deeper understanding of a given topic**, issue, value or problem based on the text, film or video. Students should not use the discussion to express their opinions, they should rather **practice listening** to each other and strive towards **finding common ground** while participating in the discussion. It should be used with more serious and controversial topics/texts and students are encouraged to **refer to the evidence in the text** when supporting their ideas. A moderator or teacher asks questions, such as: Where is the evidence of it in the text? Can you say, explain it again? Where does that idea come from in the text? This method needs a thorough preparation both from the teacher’s and students’ side.

Out-of-school activities: Field trips

Under field trip we understand a teaching/learning method used outside a normal school environment. It is usually a group visit to a certain area where students can get hands-on experience of other (or their own) culture. These may include cultural institutions (museums, galleries, libraries, foreign businesses and companies, British Council, Goethe Institute, Confucius Institute) and the cultural events (festivals of a country’s music, food and drinks, writers’/authors’ readings, lectures by an invited experts). Real group trips and excursions to foreign countries may also be used as teaching/learning method in culture studies.

Use of audiovisuals: Film and Video

Film and video can bring new experience (hence experiential learning), ideas and strong emotions and therefore they are suitable teaching materials. To make their use effective, the work with them should follow certain pedagogic steps (similar to simulations or role plays):

- Introduction to the topic (lead-in)
- Brief introduction to the scenario (pre-viewing)
- Film/video watching (viewing)
- Analysis of the situation viewed (debriefing)
- Tasks to solve and make conclusions
- Transfer of the newly gained knowledge (for personal development).

The experience that students gained through watching a film or video should lead to their better understanding of a cultural phenomenon and their personal growth as intercultural personalities.

Besides these interactive methods based usually on group work, there are other methods which can be based on individual learning. **Individual projects** such as reports based on exploring a topic or **student-learning journals** (Zelenková, 2010) are examples of teaching/learning methods.

Task 4

Think of particular topics in cultural studies and make suggestions of pedagogical approach to the topic: How would you teach them? Which methods would be suitable for each of them? How would you proceed? Which strategy would you choose?

Think of the aims (cognitive, emotional, behavioural, motivational) that you would plan to achieve with the method and the topic. For example:

- a) Canadian history
- b) Canadian multiculturalism
- c) Doing business in Canada and Argentina
- d) Multicultural society: How do immigrants feel at the beginning of their life in a new country
- e) Visiting a foreign country: What to know before
- f) Cultural values
- g) Slovak vs. Canadian values.

Further readings:

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Lucy Maud Montgomery: *The Joy of Little Things*. Pôžitok z drobností. (poem; translated from English to Slovak language).

Lucy Maud Montgomery: *To My Enemy*. Drahý nepriateľu. (poem; translated from English to Slovak language).

Susanna Moodie: *Oh, Canada! Thy Gloomy Woods*. Ach, kanadské temné lesy. (poem; translated from English to Slovak language).

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