

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 253 091

FL 014 833

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TITLE Learning to Teach the Cultures of Developing Nations in the Foreign Language and Literature Classroom.
INSTITUTION Hampton Univ., VA.
SPONS AGENCY National Endowment for the Humanities (NEAH), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE [85]
NOTE 14p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *African Culture; Audiovisual Aids; *Black Culture; *Cultural Awareness; Cultural Education; Cultural Pluralism; *Developing Nations; French; Immigrants; Learning Modules; *Material Development; *Second Language Instruction; Slides; Spanish
IDENTIFIERS Caribbean Islands; French Africa; Latin America

ABSTRACT

Projects were undertaken at the Hampton Institute, with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, to develop and test French and Spanish second language instructional materials from Afro-French and Afro-Hispanic Third World countries. The project was based on the premise that such materials would help Black college students develop an affinity for cultural and linguistic linkages with peoples in the African diaspora, which would enhance the value and relevance of their foreign language study. This hypothesis is supported by research on cultural attitudes. A series of learning modules and accompanying slides on the cultures of Black French Africa, the French Caribbean, and areas of South and Central America where there are Spanish-speaking peoples of African descent were developed. It is suggested that such materials promote not only global understanding and appreciation but also appreciation of some recent immigrants to this country. (MSE)

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LEARNING TO TEACH THE CULTURES OF DEVELOPING NATIONS
IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE CLASSROOM

Beatrice Stith Clark

Since 1979, with financial support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Project AFCELL (African Cultural Elements in Language Learning), has been engaged in the development and class testing of curricular materials to be infused into beginning level college French and Spanish courses. These modules, or learning packets, are based on the cultures of Black French Africa, the French Caribbean and of South and Central America, where there are Spanish-speaking peoples of African descent.

In March 1983, Hampton Institute received an NEH grant award to develop non-print or visual materials for eight French and six Spanish modular units already developed. As Project Director, I, accompanied by photographers, traveled in three Francophone African countries, (Senegal, Ivory Coast and Togo); three countries in South America where there are sizeable Black populations (Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador); and in the French West Indies, (Guadeloupe and Martinique). This photographic research was conducted to produce slide programs to accompany the modules.

Two of the four NEH projects at Hampton have featured workshops for post-secondary teachers on Afro-French and Afro-Hispanic cultures. The AFCELL modules have been class-tested in 25 colleges and universities. Essentially, AFCELL is a collaborative project to which many professionals in foreign language education, literature, culture and language, have contributed.

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The original premise of the Hampton projects was that by developing materials based on the cultures of francophone Black Africa and the Caribbean and of hispanophone Latin America, where there are people of African heritage, Black collegians would develop an affinity for their cultural and linguistic linkages with peoples in the African diaspora. This appreciation, consequently, would enhance the value and relevance of their foreign language study. Evaluative studies have shown our hypothesis to be valid. We do not claim, however, super achievement in language study, but simply that a stronger motivation is present. Our objectives were on target, for, according to the Report of the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, this motivation is needed to encourage "ethnic and other minority-group members to enter linguistic and international studies, and to build on their existing linguistic resources so that they may contribute more to American education, diplomacy, and international business."

As the project developed, however, our perspectives broadened in response to a positive reception of the ethnic-oriented materials and the premise of their creation, by mainstream educators with an international world view.

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

The AFCEll modules offer teachers and students the opportunity to extend cultural perspectives far beyond the elitist eurocentric point of view which is often characteristic of foreign language

educational material. AFCELL has developed its own interpretive framework: sensitivity to the lifestyles and values of different cultures, avoidance of historical cliches and stereotypes and a concern for the elimination of cultural arrogance from our language and thought. We strive to reflect the historical realities of the societies represented in the cultural modules.

For a regrettably large number of U.S. citizens, Third World cultures or cultures of the developing nations, are marginal and without status. They are considered inferior and/or illegitimate. These attitudes are either implied or manifested in many facets of American life, often subtly, sometimes blatantly. Therefore it is not surprising to find that cultural biases, which often have acceptance by the larger society, are institutionalized where educational materials are prepared, taught, and learned.

I highly recommend an article by Professor Joel Walz, "Colonialistic Attitudes Toward the French-speaking World in American Textbooks," in Contemporary French Civilizations Fall, 1980. In this timely article, Walz notes that, although French-language textbooks now include a considerable amount of cultural material on French-speaking countries other than France, many books have serious shortcomings vis a vis the presentations of non-European francophone cultures: Black French Africa, Tahiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Haiti, and Canada. The author examined 100 textbooks published since 1970, mainly grammar books and readers on the elementary and intermediate college levels. Basing his analysis "on an ideal which includes an accurate portrayal of the

life style of a people written with a positive attitude in an attempt to create a realistic picture of that 'culture'," he concludes that there are three categories of weaknesses: misinformation, stereotypes, and cultural inferiority. Walz gives several positive examples found in textbooks, but there is an overwhelming number having glaring examples of cultural arrogance. Within the three named categories, Waltz asserts:

The deprecation of local languages and varieties of French, the stereotyped portrayal of peoples as "noble savages," the refusal to deal with them as complex adults, and the assumption that francophone nations are dependent on France for culture and education, demonstrate an attitude which is condescendingly and blatantly colonialistic. The most serious problem is that many references are so subtle that they would not be evaluated by teachers or students. Most are probably not intended by the authors. While mistakes of grammar which occasionally appear in textbooks are caught by teachers, a paternalistic attitude toward a culture is not so easily identified.

The author calls for future interpretations of francophone culture that "adopt the point of view of the people who live in those countries and not that of the occasional visitor."

In addition to the analysis made by Walz on prevalent attitudes toward francophone cultures in textbooks, I would like to present a few examples among marketed visual materials that exhibit a lack of sensitivity to the role of Third World cultures in contemporary society. Let us look at two advertisements that continue to appear in catalogs of audio-visual goods:

"La Vie du jeune African Mamadou, en Afrique noire de langue française":

The simple, charming, heart-warming audio-visual program about a young French-speaking black boy of Senegal - his life within his family and his work and sports activities. When his brother leaves the village to go to Dakar to the "Lycee Technique," young Mamadou resolves to go to Dakar also, and learn how to become a pilot. His new name "francisé" will then be Emmanuel. A sharp insight into everyday life of French-speaking Black Africa.

"Voyage Fraternel en Afrique noire de langue française":

Our reporter has just visited the heart of French-speaking black Africa this year - and discovered that friendship, courtesy and human warmth still exist in this world. We are introduced to a charming and wholesome synthesis of French culture with the kings, masks, songs and dances of traditional Africa. Above all, we see and hear relaxed and friendly faces - who actually say "merci" when photographed and smile with love. These are the people of French-speaking black Africa - rare, happy people in today's world.

Such a portrayal of Black Africa for consumption by the American student is misleading and paternalistic, revealing pathetic insensitivity on the part of the author and distributor. Much the same genre of cultural arrogance is displayed in scripts that accompany audio-visual programs designed for foreign language education. In a slide narrative on the Antilles, the difference in life styles (wealth vs. poverty) is accounted for by the reasoning, "La vie est chère." (The cost of living is high.) Josephine, Napoleon's wife, and Belain d'Esnaumbuc are cited as the noteworthy Martinicans. The AFCELL module on the French Antilles introduces the students to Aimé Césaire, statesman and poet, and to Frantz Fanon, whose fiery message of anti-colonialism inspired the Third World. These individuals and many others (writers, artists, political figures) have stature in the eyes of the Antillean people, and represent the realities of

their existence.

There is little reference in Spanish textbooks to Afro-Hispanic cultures. Students, nevertheless, should know that a significant number of Blacks live in regions, cities, towns and in countries in the so-called "backyard," of the United States. Yet, in cultural materials, these peoples are mentioned with diffidence, if at all, in proportion to the two other ethnic groups - Indian and white.

How can teachers be made aware of paternalistic, colonialistic attitudes when encountered in textbooks and visuals? We do not have pat answers for the complex process of raising the level of consciousness of foreign language professionals. We shall begin by sharing with you materials used in an AFCELL workshop by Dr. Beryle Banfield, Co-Director of C.A.I.R. (Creative Approaches to Instructional Resources). This information is applicable to any level of instruction, and is of value to academicians and non-academicians. It is about Africa, but its principles can enlighten views on the cultures of all so-called developing nations.

In 1968, UNESCO held a meeting for the specific purpose of considering ways of counteracting racial prejudice in education. A professor from the University of Ife in Nigeria made a statement which included findings that racial discrimination in textual materials developed between the 16th and 20th centuries and was largely due to trade and commerce, religion and colonialism. It was further stated that certain derogatory words used in textbooks, learned journals and academic studies had emerged from these historical events.

Those given were: tribe, native, savage, primitive, colored, pagan, kaffir,* bushmen, backward, race, underdeveloped, uncivilized, vernacular and Negro. As evidence of the way these words were used to promote racial prejudice, the professor cited definitions in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1959). A typical definition is that of the word "native": "Native: One born in a place, left in a natural state, untouched by art, unadorned, simple; in modern usage, especially with connotation of non-European origin".

A second C.A.I.R. Information Sheet entitled "Key Questions to be Considered in Evaluating the Treatment of Africa and Africans in Textbooks and Trade Books" offers a challenge to common perceptions of other cultures. It is quoted in its entirety:

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- . Is there a failure to discuss the societies and institutions developed by Africans prior to European contact or is the role of Africans in developing their societies adequately presented from their own perspectives?
- . Is the role of African women in developing their societies and institutions omitted or is there an adequate portrayal of their role in developing their societies and institutions?
- . Is there glorification of the colonial system as beneficial to Africans or is there discussion of the negative impact of this system upon African societies and the adaptations made by Africans?

2. CULTURE AND TRADITION

- . Are the culture, customs, and traditions of African peoples presented from an exotic point of view with the implication that they are in some way inferior or are they presented in a context which explains their functions in holding the societies together?

*Kaffir - A non-Moslem term of contempt used by Moslems (Author's Note.)

- . Are the customs and traditions of African peoples presented as exotica or is information provided which explains the values and belief systems which undergird these cultural traditions?

3. CHARACTERIZATION

- . Are Africans presented as childlike, backward, and "uncivilized?"
- . Are Africans presented as persons who are willing to reject everything in their own culture as inferior and who are anxious to accept everything European?
- . Are Africans depicted as persons incapable of making decisions about the critical issues which affect their lives without the guidance of a benevolent European?
- . Is there implied acceptance of only those Africans who become "Europeanized?"

4. LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

- . Is there use of terminology offensive to African peoples? For example, tribe, primitive, bushmen, kaffir, pagan, hut, jungle?
- . Is the speech of African peoples presented in such a manner as to degrade the individual being portrayed?

5. ILLUSTRATIONS

- . Are Africans depicted in a stereotypic manner (dress, occupation, relationship to Europeans)?
- . Is there use of drawings which distort features and characteristics of African peoples?*

THE AFCELL MODULES IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

"A nation's welfare depends in large measure on the intellectual and psychological strengths that are derived from perceptive visions of the world beyond its own boundaries." Again, I quote from the

*Creative Approaches to Instructional Resources. Beryl Banfield, Ed.D.; A. Faulkner Watts, Ph.D., 400 Central Park West, New York, N.Y. 10025

Report by the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies. If this statement can be interpreted in its ultimate truth, then we, as guardians of the educational welfare of our nation's youth, should assume some responsibility for nurturing these strengths, by guiding students in the development of "perspective awareness." This appropriate term is used by Torney-Purta in her article "Global Education: An Area for Fruitful Collaboration Between Foreign Language and Social Studies."*

She defines "perspective awareness" as "consciousness that not everyone in the world shares the same views as Americans."

Africa

Pierre Pradervand, a Swiss sociologist who spent close to eleven years in Africa, speaks to this issue in an interview with the Christian Science Monitor:

"One of the most urgent needs is to educate the West on Third World issues - and the immense richness and diversity of African culture are vital to this understanding."

In learning simple facts about the geography of Black French Africa, the average student and teacher raise their level of geographical literacy - which is, perhaps, the first step in global awareness. They may also learn to perceive Africa as a continent and not a country, when they learn that in Black French Africa alone, there are seventeen countries. With guidance by a culturally mature teacher, they will arrive at the understanding that these divisions are not rooted in the history of Africa, but in the

*Proceedings of the National Conference on Professional Priorities (ACTFL) November 1980, pp. 3538.

history of European colonialism.

There are four AFCELL modules on Africa: two on the political and physical geography of Black Francophone Africa; one on the African family, and another, an African short story.

Haiti

A module on Haitian painting provides teachers an opportunity to share with students the rich cultural traditions of this first Black Republic founded in 1804. The module text is the script for slides of colorful paintings through which Haitian artists have interpreted life in Haiti, past, present and future.

Those of us who teach this module attempt to bring about cross-cultural understanding by leading the student to understand that artistic and spiritual wealth are also a part of the Haitian heritage. For, typically, American tourists return from Haiti virtually offended by the physical poverty.

Another module, "Choucounne une meringue haïtienne", acquaints the student with a popular Haitian Creole song. The French text is a narration of a poignant love story and highlights several cultural traditions of Haiti.

The French West Indies

The two islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique have exotic appeal for the American tourist, but, as stated by a Latin-American news correspondent, "The Caribbean is clearly not the sunny paradise that the travel brochures proclaim. The area is teeming with turmoil as sweeping, sometimes violent political and social change is felt

throughout the whole Caribbean basin." (James Goodsell. Christian Science Monitor, March 26, 1980). The AFCELL print and non-print module on the French Antilles presents historical, cultural, demographic and socio-political aspects of these former French colonies. The Spanish-Speaking Caribbean, South and Central America

No one in this audience needs to be convinced of the relevance of the study of Spanish America for American students at all levels. We are all aware that social change is being manifested daily through political and social upheaval, which often results in civil strife. Most of us in the United States get our information about current events in Latin America from local and national media. In this democracy, it is our fortune to have access to varied sources of news. There are, however, hispanic cultures and peoples little known in this country, and seldom made visible in hispanophone America;; namely, the Spanish-speaking descendants of Africans from Black Africa.

The Spanish modules developed in the AFCELL program, deal with the demography, history, religion, music and literature of Hispanics of African heritage. There are black populations in Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Panama and Mexico.

New Perspective

In view of the AFCELL slides of some of the francophone and hispanophone communities where Blacks live, teachers and students are often embarrassed or react negatively to those scenes where housing does not meet American standards or where people are obviously survivors in a less sophisticated society. Pierre Pradervand's

response to a reporter's inquiry is significant in this respect:

Reporter:

"You made the comment once that there are no poor countries--only countries that are unknown or unloved."

Pradervand:

"I was quoting the French historian, Jacques Berque. "Poor country" is a concept we project on area. It's fundamentally a subjective evaluation--usually built on a great deal of ignorance and a few misleading statistics. But it really means that our thinking about that area is so poor or underdeveloped, or that we are too indifferent to care or too lazy to challenge what others have said. Worse, it is a static concept that freezes people's thinking--no matter whether they're called "poor" or "rich." If you want to, you can say they're battling against poverty--that is, poverty is external to them, something they can overcome. But when we call a country or a person "poor" we tend to attribute some mysterious essence to them. The difference is subtle but very important. Dealing with these mental attitudes is our biggest job.

In concluding this presentation, we recommend the use of curricular materials that promote understanding and appreciation of some of the most recent immigrants in this country: Haitians, South and Central Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans, particularly those who seek refuge from the politics of poverty.

We have found the module "Santeria" useful for this purpose since it deals with a syncretic religion, a fusion of the African Yoruba religion and Catholicism, that is a part of the cultural heritage of most Cubans living in Miami's "Little Havana." Similarly, the lesson on Haitian painting presents Vaudou as an element in the dual religious consciousness of the Haitian people. The Creole language, which is an integral part of French Caribbean culture, is

included in some modules. Thus, a respect for linguistic diversity and bilinguism can, perhaps, be encouraged among American Students.

Obviously, a teacher must be sensitized to deal with different cultural viewpoints so as to have the courage to combat the ignorance or misconceptions about other cultures. One possibility of fostering understanding between Americans and newcomers to this country, was brought to my attention by a professor at a university in Miami, Florida, who requested the Afro-Hispanic modules to teach Black collegians about the culture of Afro-Cubans. His goal is to lessen their resentment against the Cubans, competitors for jobs in the Miami area, by establishing cultural ties.

Finally, in making our presentation to this audience of professional educators, we are affirming our presence as an ethnic minority. Our work encompasses curriculum development, classroom teaching and learning, and the challenging task of helping all of us to understand and appreciate other cultural perspectives.