

Title: Teaching Cultural Symbols through Art
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If “culture is a complex, illusive constantly changing process” (Kramersch, 1993), what might be some pedagogical approaches that make the “illusive” both visible and teachable? How can language and culture teaching practices help students develop their own personal meanings and gradually form a “third place” (located between their native culture and the target culture; Kramersch, 1993) where meanings are negotiated and internalized? Based on culture learning as an ongoing process, the teaching practice presented in this paper underlines learners’ active engagement on the cognitive, behavioral, and affective levels.

Viewing culture as symbolic text/discourse, we introduce deep, culture-specific symbols such as *sud’ba*, *dusha*, *stradanie*, *smirenje*, and *toska* into the language classroom by means of original artworks which serve as visualizations that aid the understanding of these symbols. Based on observations from teaching practice (namely, advanced level conversational Russian), this paper presents a brief description of the syllabus and its constitutive elements (individual study pace, reflexive assignments, weekly blogging, art sessions). Incorporating art into the classroom has elicited the students’ creative and emotional engagement with the artworks and has lead them toward productive selfreflection on the coding and meaning of cultural symbols. The paper investigates the challenging “zones” in this approach for American undergraduates and provides quotes from students’ writings, which demonstrate the dynamic of creating personal meanings.

The outlined approach bears the potential for duplication in other classrooms with a possibility to emphasize parts of culture that could be meaningful to other learners (developing personal meanings is key in setting up a course). The provided case studies detail the possible approaches to present cultural symbols and discuss how the same approach can be used in different learning subcultures (classroom or institutional subcultures).

Kramersch, Claire, *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

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