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Poster Presentation

**Do they speak Austrian in Austria?
Teaching Austrian Culture in the Real World**

How do you discuss current events in the FL classroom when students don't know the basic governmental structure or history? This presentation will examine the concept of cultural literacy as it relates to the teaching of a second language and culture. In his book, *Cultural Literacy: What every American needs to know*, E.D. Hirsch argues that there is a basic set of knowledge common to most literate and educated Americans. Unfortunately, the reality is that many textbooks continue to present material about the target culture which relies on background knowledge students lack. Furthermore, Austrian and Swiss culture is often neglected entirely or treated as an aside in cultural capsules on Mozart or Vienna. In my German language and culture courses, I have improved class discussions by instituting a "keyword approach" —a list of cultural terms and ideas to learn each week. Such an approach could also be beneficial in the beginning language classroom, since the earlier we begin to address this deficiency, the more productive all subsequent courses will be.

This poster will present a working list of "What every student should know about Austria" as well as suggestions for addressing cultural illiteracy at all levels of German instruction. However, breaking down culture into names and dates is far from simply a transmission model of education in which success is measured by memorizing small concrete bits of information. Students are not given the answers, but rather must research the necessary information on their own and decide themselves what is important about a given topic. As such, students gain exposure to the target culture as well as valuable research skills. Teaching Austrian culture to beginning language students presents many unique issues. While one struggles with presenting Austria as a separate and distinct culture with its own history and linguistic particularities, one must also help students to realize that learning the German language also means learning the language and culture wherever German is spoken—particularly in Austria.