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## **Applying the Country of Origin Effect in Teaching a German-Austrian Business Case**

**Abstract:** A merger of two airlines from Germany and Austria presents an opportunity for students to reflect on notions of cultures and business cultures, and then to begin to think critically about biases and stereotypes inherent in the country of origin effect (COE). While the country of origin is defined by where a consumer perceives a product to be from, regardless from where it may actually originate, the COE influences consumer purchases and perceptions. This influence, while seemingly coming from positive traits associated with the country, can also perpetuate stereotypes and false monolithic views of culture. This article presents a business case about the merger of Austrian Airlines and Lufthansa as part of a larger class unit consisting of six 50-minute course periods designed for the intermediate German post-secondary classroom. The case study presented here uses the concept of COE to examine how the nation and culturally driven goods and services may also uphold stereotypes as well as consumer and marketer biases. This current study looks at culture and language learning, cultural assessment standards and their suggested outcomes, and recent criticisms of these models in a global context. As part of the business case unit activities, students reflect on print and video advertising to develop written descriptions, to read an image, and to state an opinion—all with the goal of engaging critically with notions of culture used in travel industry marketing and branding. The purpose of this project is to embed critical readings for students of both a national culture and a monolithic German business culture early in the curriculum.

*Keywords:* Austria, business culture, case study, country of origin effect, German for Professional Purposes, Germany, intercultural learning, Language for Specific Purposes

### **Introduction**

Business culture has often been defined according to differences and similarities between national cultures (Halsall, 2008). Not surprisingly, then, monolithic notions of German and Austrian cultures have shaped the instruction of business language specifically—or Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) more generally—in German-speaking business culture classes. As language classrooms have begun to incorporate intercultural outcomes and new texts beyond the canon, so too must LSP instruction continue to expand to consider notions of both national cultures and business culture.

This article presents a unique perspective of how to engage with LSP topics using a business case study. The case study for the intermediate German classroom is designed to ask critical questions about cultures by examining companies who use the nation in its marketing. The case focuses on the merger of two airline companies (Lufthansa and Austrian Airlines) from two countries where German is spoken (Germany and Austria). The approach of the case study can be applied to other language contexts beyond German to examine the broader question on the complexity of cultures and the challenges involved in defining what makes up cultures. Drawing on Swaffar and Ahrens (2005), the development of the case study, which was incorporated into five class sessions, uses authentic texts, such as advertisements, that contain key cultural elements. The case study examines advertising that contains national cultural

stereotypes. Using a tool from business studies called the country of origin effect (COE), students study how the airline companies use the concept of the nation for branding and for sales. Students are guided to recognize and to critically reflect on the COE as they confront cultural biases.

The aim of this business case unit is to integrate LSP instruction into a post-secondary intermediate language course and to ask students to reflect on the problems of generalizing assumed characteristics of a perceived monolithic national culture. During the unit, students observe, describe, and present through written forms analyses of advertisements from the companies, focusing on how the ads depict national cultures. By engaging in such tasks during the early stages of language learning (i.e., the first 2–3 years of study), students are exposed to cultural analysis from the beginning of language and culture study. Since students may stop taking languages classes once a language requirement is completed, it is important that notions of culture be discussed early and not saved for upper division coursework alone.

This article begins with a review of the role of language and culture through a business language studies lens. Then, the current intercultural guidelines for language study are addressed and potential contributions in LSP are identified. Later, critiques of the promotion of the native speaker as the ideal model for learners, since that outcome is unattainable, are presented. After reviewing these standards, with special attention to the intermediate level for which the business case study described here is designed, the COE is examined as a useful tool to engage critically with cultural biases. The goal of this current study is to foster a critical reading of both a national culture and a monolithic German business culture early in the curriculum. In sum, this article addresses challenges to defining the concept of culture on national level through differences in the German-speaking countries. This work, thus, contributes to basic language instruction by critically engaging with the national approach to understanding cultures and how LSP work should also be expanded with an updated cultural approach.

### **Culture and Language**

As Swaffar and Ahrens (2005) suggest, the “contents and language in texts are linked in systematic ways, reflecting complex cultural literacies” (p. 161). This complexity of culture in language forms need not always be studied through traditional notions of literature. Swaffar and Ahrens are critical of language curricula whose approach to culture is defined by traditional form of high culture alone. They call on the field to rethink the teaching of culture: “the profession needs to align cultural studies and the study of literature in more complex ways” (p. 161). Moreover, Swaffar and Ahrens stress the complexity of cultural forms and the need to engage with that complexity “across all levels of a curriculum” (p. 161). While sometimes texts are defined as literature, non-literary texts “need not be equated with reading for purely practical goals” (p. 161). Swaffar and Ahrens address the need to critically study all kinds of texts, including LSP-focused ones. This call for critical engagement in the study of culture demonstrates this is not just the work of the LSP classroom but of all language classrooms. The study of cultures must include a variety of textual forms. While the scope of a text may be for language for practical purposes, this does not exclude such a text from offering an opportunity for rich critical cultural engagement.

Culture is a difficult term to define and there is no one “dimension,” as Swaffar and Ahrens (2005) phrase it, through which to define it (p. 162). Culture is, however, linked to concepts of identity and belonging and is often paired with artistic forms (such as music, stories,

painting) or to other areas (such as sports or food) that help define unique features of a group of people. At the same time, to be a member of a given culture does not mean all members favor or participate in these rituals or events: culture is complex. Just as Swaffar and Ahrens suggest that there is a need to read different textual forms to engage with the complexity of culture, it is also important to examine the role that an apparently dominant culture plays in language education and theory. The authors call for teaching texts of both dominant and marginalized groups so learners “progress from identifying the culturally familiar to identifying the unfamiliar in a variety of genres and media to help characterize a given communication community within a foreign culture” (p. 9). This call is also not just meant for advanced classrooms but language courses on all levels.

### **Cultural Standards and the Intermediate Level Class**

Engagement with rich and complex cultural topics of all groups, including marginalized voices, is important for all levels of language learning. There have been calls to reorganize the intermediate level courses to more content-based instruction for the language program’s overall cohesion (Hoecherl-Alden, 2000). While language campaigns, such as ACTFL’s online resource *Lead with Languages*, often promote LSP topics and LSP courses to aid enrollment, a major reason for LSP implementation, even in lower level courses, is the critical thinking such topics foster for non-classroom-based challenges: business practices, consumer habits, and complex cultural notions.

The NCSSFL-ACTFL (2017) proficiency benchmarks for the can-do statements define the Intermediate level, simply stated, as the ability to speak spontaneously on familiar topics (by asking and answering questions) and to identify the main idea. On the intercultural side, emphasis is on “functionall[ity]” and gaining perspectives through comparing “products and practices” (NCSSFL-ACTFL, 2017a, p. 2). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) framework does not include a direct cultural component, but it does stress engagement with native speakers as a model. CEFR suggests the intermediate speaker should “sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 76). McGregor (2020), citing Gramling’s 2019 presentation on monolingualism, calls this native speaker bias “a very marketable norm, i.e., the white, monolingual, native speaker” that language learners’ skills are “positioned against” (p. 163).

NCSSFL-ACTFL’s intercultural communication standards are ranked by Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished categories. Communication levels are also accompanied by markers for interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive forms of communication. The intercultural communication standards rank, by contrast to the other three forms of communication, on a different system labeled “investigate” and “interact” (NCSSFL-ACTFL, 2017a, p.1). The descriptors of the intercultural communication standards first stress identifying “products and practices” to foster understanding and “survival” for the novice and intermediate levels (NCSSFL-ACTFL, 2017b, p. 1). The advanced level is categorized by “explaining some diversity among products and practices” and being “competent” within the proper communication context, yet this description gives little indication of what competency means at this level. Superior level indicates a suspension in judgment for critical evaluation for a complex situation “to ensure a shared understanding of culture” (NCSSFL-ACTFL, 2017c, p. 1). On the highest level, distinguished, learners “objectively evaluate products and practices” with

an added notion of mediating “perspectives” (NCSSFL-ACTFL, 2017c, p. 2). This indicates their ability to navigate “pluricultural identities” and function as “mediator between and among cultures” (NCSSFL-ACTFL, 2017c, p. 1). It should be noted these guidelines are not LSP-specific. LSP researchers and pedagogues would need to address what these standards mean within the variety of subjects covered in LSP.

Thus, LSP fields must continue to redefine intercultural competencies and reflect more critically on NCSSFL-ACTFL’s (2017a) intercultural communication standards. LSP instruction offers the opportunity to challenge the false understanding of culture as a monolith. This theme was analyzed in a special edition of *die Unterrichtspraxis / Teaching German* titled, “Teaching German in a Global Context” (Kraemer & Schenker, 2019). On the topic of inclusion and the German classroom, Merritt (2020) describes “the (re-)definition of and reflection upon one’s own identity within one’s native culture” as absent from the NCSSFL-ACTFL intercultural communication standards (p. 185). Cultural identity involves an individual’s unique perspective and “identity negotiation” linked to multiple factors, including the experience of gender, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical ability, and more that shape the individual’s interaction within a situation (Merritt, 2020, p. 184). Furthermore, Merritt (2020) demonstrates how NCSSFL-ACTFL’s separate evaluative categories of communication, including verbal language, non-verbal communication, and cultural competence are problematic when they are divided from one another. The Distinguished proficiency level uses the term “objectively” that suggests to instructors and students that bias is something to be transcended rather than a process of constant awareness, learning, and reflection (NCSSFL-ACTFL, 2017c, p. 2).

One goal of meaningful business language instruction and of LSP courses in general is to thematize cultural aspects that are different and sometimes even competing. The earlier this is embedded into the curriculum, the more students come to expect and frame these types of questions as inherent in their learning of and daily interactions in any culture. Learning activities should be designed to raise questions about cultural complexity so students can both critically and culturally read and engage with websites, newspapers, or advertisements.

### **The Country of Origin Effect (COE)**

The discipline of business and its terminology offer effective tools to engage critically with notions of both culture and business culture through a variety of different textual forms. For example, the COE becomes a useful tool for students to grapple with the notion of the nation and culture. From the field of business studies and its connections to culture, Jaffe and Nebenzahl (2001) suggest objects have “images” which encode “beliefs, ideas and impressions” (p. 12). These images, when applied to a nation, result in nation branding, which may or may not be based on “true attributes,” as Jaffe and Nebenzahl (2001) phrase it (p. 13). Nation branding can be based on “mental images in the minds of consumers” (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2001, p. 13) rather than reality. Thus, these mental images can mean consumers hold biased and or even fabricated representations of the nation. Companies may choose to market their products and services through positive, though not always true, representations of their nation’s culture to sell items. The “country of origin,” from the perspective of business studies, is defined as the “country which a consumer associates with a certain product or brand as being its source, regardless of where the product is actually produced” (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2001, p. 27). In German-speaking countries, products like Mercedes and Swatch suggest a supposed “image of excellence in design” linked to their German and Swiss origins (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2001, p. 19). Indeed,

German automakers often link their products to a German quality of engineering seen in the following example in product advertising:

One of the rare occasions in which you will find the German language being used for marketing purposes outside of German-speaking nations is when cars are being advertised. “Vorsprung Durch Technik” (advancement through technology), “freude am fahren” (driving pleasure) and simply “Das Auto” (the car) have been used by Audi, BMW and Volkswagen for several years in their overseas marketing campaigns to emphasize the “German-ness” of their product. Evidently, the logic goes: if people know it’s German, they will want to buy it. (Deutsche Welle, 2018, para. 1 & 2; German errors in original text)

In addition, the German language is used, which suggests a link to the country of origin and has a significant potential impact on the consumer.

These advertising campaigns that utilize the concept of COE may perpetuate stereotypes or marginalize smaller groups by favoring a dominant one. As a result, culture becomes intertwined with the perception of a monolithic, monocultural nation state. In a transcribed conversation by Coleman and Guntersdorfer (2019), Coleman cautions the conflation of the concept of “culture” and the nation model:

the term “culture” tends to be used loosely, and many people, including our students, conflate culture with an idea of a unified national culture. They then come into our classes expecting to learn about the German culture. This equation of nation/country with culture essentializes and homogenizes groups of individuals, thereby overlooking regional variation and transnational connections as well as minorities and those who don’t quite fit these, then often stereotyped, patterns. There are certainly hegemonic narratives in national cultures, but these should not blur the fact that there are local, regional, and supranational influences and connections, and that traditionally marginalized voices are part of a country’s population as well. There is no singular “German” culture. (p. 138)

As Coleman suggests here, using a country to define culture is problematic. By suggesting there is a unified culture, underrepresented groups are marginalized and dominate structures are perpetuated.

However, it is not only the country aspect of COE that is challenging. Andéhn and L’Espoir Decosta (2016) note that defining the COE is difficult because the term “origin” rests with the consumer’s perception based on where the headquarters of the company is located or even where the product is manufactured. By questioning the term “origin,” Andéhn and L’Espoir Decosta demonstrate the complexity of defining where something comes from and define it instead from the consumer’s perspective. While these cultural notions can be positive and associated with quality or luxury for certain goods or services, they can also uphold stereotypes and notions consumers themselves have projected onto the culture. It is problematic to build associations on stereotypes as they perpetuate false notions of culture and may also not reveal the full supply chain in producing the good, which may be sourced, manufactured, packaged, and distributed in more than one country. Therefore, any meaningful work in the language classroom must assist students in becoming critical and aware consumers themselves by examining the COE. While cultural instruction may explore the nation-state approach, it must also question the stereotypes perpetuated by it. In reading advertisements, for example, students may not only find the meaning advertisers or companies intend to project onto them, but they may also learn to ask critical questions about the encoded messaging. Outcomes of such meaningful engagement with

culture must demonstrate an awareness of not only outwardly evaluating the cultural product as ACTFL suggests, but a turning inward towards the self to challenge perceptions of biases as a constant process with many levels of individual experience. In the next section, I explore the business case study's unique role in the language and culture classroom and how it allows students to reflect on notions of intercultural learning.

### **The Business Case as Context for Teaching Culture and Language**

The 2009 merger of Lufthansa and Austrian Airlines makes an interesting business case as it focuses on two countries where German is spoken and demonstrates the differences between business cultures despite the common language. It provides a context for teaching authentic information on the airline industry and on the reasons for this particular merger. The case presented in this article is designed to highlight the complexity of cultural practices in business between German speakers and to ask students to problematize notions of culture in marketing.

For the language classroom, the business case allows students to place themselves in the role of key decision makers at a challenging time, which can then be framed as a cultural question. The Center for International Business Education and Research at George Washington University (GW-CIBER) has expanded the number of business language cases through their Business Case Clearinghouse available on GW-CIBER's website (GW-CIBER, 2021). The GW-CIBER business languages program trains a new group of language instructors each year to develop, write, and implement peer-reviewed cases (GW-CIBER, 2021). The Austrian Airlines and Lufthansa case presented here was developed as part of this program. The entire unit can be found under the German section in the CIBER business case clearinghouse, labeled "The Country of Origin Effect and Airlines" (Sheffer, 2019). The GW-CIBER business case program, led by Margaret Gonglewski and Anna Helm, draws on the facilitators' experience setting up cases within the field of language studies and special considerations that set it apart from case studies in business. In their research, Gonglewski and Helm (2013) define a case study for languages, which must be addressed before defining further cultural components:

A business case is a text, often accompanied by video materials, that sets up a scenario, based on a real-life business situation, with a problem for students to solve. The typical business case requires students to figuratively step into the shoes of a business person or team, and then research, analyze, and debate relevant points to help solve the problem, and finally present and defend their solution publicly. (p. 203)

The focus on non-classroom applications as well as stepping into new perspectives and then making comparisons to suggest a solution make a business case an important device for not only language learning but also fostering cultural awareness. As students engage with the problem in the case, they must often reflect on contemporary challenges rich in cultural perspectives, such as fair consumer practices, protection of the environment, and the dignity of work. This engagement takes place through relevant data analysis, and through reflecting on political action, laws, the larger sociocultural context, and even the company culture itself. The unit with business case presented below represents one example of how such engagement can take place.

### **The Austrian Airlines and Lufthansa Business Case Unit**

The business case unit is designed to be for six 50-minute class periods at the intermediate level. The activities build towards a capstone project where students are tasked with

writing a report for their marketing company analyzing previous advertising campaigns in the German-speaking world for adaptability in the American market. The project comes directly from the story set out in the case itself. Students will need to build vocabulary, review grammatical structures, and learn methods for analyzing and engaging with culture, understanding the context, and developing critical analysis and thinking skills to complete this writing assignment. Table 1 gives an overview of the case study's daily approach. Each of these days will be explained in detail in the following section.

**Table 1***Business Case Unit Overview*

<b>Class</b>	<b>Focus Area</b>
Day 1	Activating Background Knowledge
Day 2	Country of Origin Effect
Day 3	Critically Reading Images & Advertisements
Day 4	Case Study
Day 5	Reading Newspapers & Introduction of the Project
Day 6	Writing Assignment

**Day 1: Activating Background Knowledge**

The first day focuses on activating prior knowledge that will be applied as part of the unit. Students interact with the Austrian Airlines website to draw meaning from the context and from visual aspects, such as the web layout, as well as to learn the company's history to review the grammatical past tense. The day begins with a list of three questions for discussion on the travel industry theme (see Appendix A). Only non-German speaking airlines are used in this activity (Air France, British Airways, American Airlines) since this allows students to reflect on the concept before engaging with what comes later in the unit. After students discuss their responses in small groups, the instructor collects some of their responses in the larger group to allow for comparisons across the class. This activity is important to bridge to future discussions and critical thinking embedded in the case study so students can reflect on culture. Thus, their expectations for engaging with the Austrian model expects some problematic or stereotypical portrayals of culture.

The second activity asks students to visit the German language version of the Austrian Airlines website. Students are also asked about where they would like to travel anywhere that Austrian Airlines flies on a specific budget to reflect on their own travel goals (see Appendix B). This becomes an interactive way to focus on vocabulary from context designed for use outside of the classroom. Drawing on students' travel goals, students are asked where they would travel given current deals and then have a task that places students into a specific role as they will do again in the business case. Due to the familiar layout to other airlines' websites, students can easily understand the website by deriving meaning from context.



As the final activity for the class period, students take turns reading aloud the company's history. This allows the instructor to check for understanding and define terms as needed, or encourage students to focus on form (e.g., students can locate the past tense [preterite] verbs in the history and identify the infinitives). Students are left with closing questions about the importance of Austria to Austrian Airlines and the notion of nation branding for companies that becomes that session's homework. This activity asks students to think of a company that uses the United States as part of its branding, to list elements that invoke "US American" images or themes, and then encourages them to reflect on if the themes apply to all people from the United States or if the themes are stereotypes. This critical engagement with the culture in which they live allows for discussions later that focus on how concepts of Austrian culture is portrayed in advertising.

## **Day 2: Country of Origin Effect**

The second day of instruction starts with review of the homework assignment described above. Since students have already reflected on this question, it is possible to immediately begin this discussion as a larger class. Students explore how images of the United States are used to market products with COE even when that image does not connect to all regions of the United States. This discussion should encourage students to challenge the false notion of one culture in the United States and mark it as more complex and varied. Students will draw on this discussion about US advertising in order to analyze the Austrian marketing—one that they now take in more critically after their reflection on the United States.

Students are then asked to analyze a historic travel poster from Austrian Airlines using a set of prepared questions (see Appendix C). An old travel poster is chosen to be able to read a still image before later moving to videos or sequenced images. The instructor presents simplified questions, such as "What do you see in the picture?", "What colors are used?", and "What contrasts do you see?" These questions build the important skill of describing an object or picture in German, a hallmark of the intermediate language level, but the description itself builds to analysis of how the company brands itself using the notion of Austria as a nation-state. This is the first reading of an advertisement in the unit beyond the initial exposure to the website that began to train students for critical engagement. After students have completed their descriptions, they can input their answers into a shared document where the results can be compared or corrected as needed.

Lastly, students analyze the Austrian Airlines social media page (@austrianairlines) on Instagram. (Students do not need an account to be able to view the company's page either from a web browser or app). Working with partners, students choose an image from the page. Using social media allows for the images to be constantly refreshed and up to date whenever the unit is being taught. In groups of two, students go through the reading questions and discuss how Austria could be thematized from the images (see Appendix D). This allows students to build vocabulary for describing images before they move next to videos and moving images in a sequence, which requires more critical thought in the series of images juxtaposed against each other with music. The questions in this activity bring together the first activity exploring US stereotypes, as students can then ponder what might represent an Austrian stereotype in the same critical fashion.

### Day 3: Critically Reading Images and Advertisements

On the third day of instruction, students move from engaging with a still image to analyzing videos. Students work predominantly with two video marketing campaigns titled “The Charming Way to Fly” and “Austrian ist auch European” [*Austrian is also European*] whose original title is in a mix of German and English. The video “The Charming Way to Fly” is first presented without any sound so students may process the images. The instructor asks students to define things they see as “Austrian” in the video and things they see as outside of “Austria” or external to the geographical borders. These two categories set up how the video is constructed to not only show Austria as a destination but also a departure point for those living in Austria to travel to new places for experiences, which heavily emphasize food and urban areas. Lastly, students guess what music could be playing in the background, which could match the “Instagram-feel,” where images are highly edited and filtered.

As students watch the video for a second time, they are asked to listen for certain words or phrases. Before the viewing the instructor reads these from a vocabulary bank which includes terms like “visiting the beach,” “to experience through travel,” and “to sleep in” (see Appendix E) and students discuss the meaning of the other German words. The words that do appear in the video’s narration stress travel as an experience and something beyond purchasing material goods. The waltz music that plays in the background suggests ties to Austrian culture. The Viennese Waltz is a fast-turning dance, which also links to the quickly rotating images on the screen. Students then state if they personally like the advertising.

In the second video, “Austrian ist auch European,” Austrian Airlines shows images of employees in different departments of the company holding different European passports and speaking in their native languages of their country of origin and the fact they are also European. This advertisement came out around the time of the elections for the European Union (EU) parliament and were designed to foster a sense of a European community given that airlines profit from more open borders between destinations. Students note where the employees come from linked to their position with the company. A pattern emerges that the German and Austrian German speakers tend to hold more white collar positions, including the German CEO, while those whose origin places them outside of Germany or Austria typically hold blue collar roles. This separation demonstrates a tendency by the company to place non-native speakers of German in certain fields but also the demands society has to seeing diversity at the workplace. From the selection in the video, it is evident that the diversity has not reached all levels of the company. Students then debate in small groups the merits of a company making a political statement in both what they intend but also what is not said.

### Day 4: Case Study

By the fourth day, students are ready to engage with the case study itself. The case study is a fictionalized account based on real data from the Austrian Airlines / Lufthansa merger. For students to place themselves more easily in the shoes of the protagonist, the main character, named Hannah, is a recent college graduate working from the United States. In the case, which takes place when the merger is seemingly imminent, Hannah recounts not only challenges to the airline industry in general but also specifically those faced by Austrian Airlines. The case starts in 2008, when the airline company was 50% owned by the Austrian government through different investments and shareholdings: The government shareholder ÖIAG (today renamed

ÖBAG: österreichische Beteiligungs AG / *Austria Holding PLC*) held 39.7% of the company. At the time, the airline industry faced rising costs due to many factors and those losses were being shouldered by the Austrian government and taxpayers.

The early 2000s saw many challenges for the airline industry: the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, the economic recession, the SARS outbreak in 2003, the on-going war in Iraq, as well as higher fuel prices. In addition to these challenges, Austrian Airlines had unique issues with an aging fleet of planes, outdated technologies, an expensive infrastructure, costly specialists, and competition from budget airline companies. By fall 2008, rumors were circulating that Lufthansa would purchase Austrian Airlines and privatize the company. Just in the first quarter of 2009 alone, Austrian Airlines had lost 88 million euros. But at the same time, it remained an attractive purchase due to its profitable routes to eastern Europe, the stock state dividends yielding 12%, and an advantageous price-cash flow. When Lufthansa's CEO, Austrian Wolfgang Mayrhofer proposed the takeover, he suggested both companies' culture, product, strategy, and vision fit well together (NZZ, 2008). Ultimately, the EU Commission approved the 382 million euro merger in 2009, and, along with the airline Swiss, Austrian Airlines became part of the Lufthansa Group.

For the intermediate classroom, this history is presented on a handout as bullet points to allow students to easily grasp this information at an early stage (see Appendix F). The question raised by this case study focuses on the complexity of many cultures: Hannah is a US American tasked with marketing Austria and Austrian Airlines to their German parent company. Culture must be taken in a complex form with the intersection of cultures and at the same time must address cultural elements students may see as reductive or stereotypes, whether negative or positive.

The main task requires students to present a marketing strategy. The number of cultural layers given the merger between Austrian Airlines and Lufthansa and then packaging this to a third culture gives students much to contemplate. A worksheet is provided with the brainstorming question to go back and analyze the previous video advertisements on a deeper level (see Appendix G). They re-watch the videos to see what they believe will market well to American consumers, realizing this can be based in both real and imagined notions of culture. At the same time, they must equally label what they think will have a negative response. Lastly, the instructor presents the final writing task that will take place on day six. This project is recommended as partner work but can also be assigned to individuals.

### **Day 5: Reading Newspapers and Introduction of the Project**

The fifth day of instruction uses the most sophisticated business German vocabulary and texts designed for the German-speaking context. Students are given three articles that discuss the airline company merger: one comes from the German press, one from the Austrian press and a third from a business trade journal that is not marketed to one nation per se. Students begin to work with these more difficult texts and are trained with the skills to be able to comprehend the most important information while they still may miss details as they read. Students focus on headlines, images, subtitles and also quickly skim the text for key words that stand out. Oftentimes these can be loanwords from English in business, familiar place names, or vocabulary used in the unit. With a partner, students search for terms related to the merger: For example, the Austrians refer to the "merger" (*Fusion*) while the Germans call it a "takeover" (*Übernahme*). In concluding this class period, students have a discussion about these cultural

elements about why the Germans and Austrian would use different terms whether they are cultural, political or business-related, and how this compares to the language in the business journal. This returns to a discussion about nation branding and how it might affect consumer purchases.

### **Day 6: Writing Assignment**

For the final day, students write a report for their fictitious advertising firm that requires them to use words, forms, and knowledge gained in the previous periods. Students provide a short company profile of Austrian Airlines complete with a brief history of the company, describe one of the advertising campaigns they view as a good model for the US market, explain the reason for this choice, but also outline what in the advertisement would not translate to the American market from their experience. They then propose a campaign for the United States and indicate on which media platforms this advertisement would be displayed.

Students come to class with their vocabulary lists with correct grammatical genders, plural forms of nouns, and verb forms. Students are thus prepared with useful language tools for what they want to write and reflects on key words for their approach (some from the unit and some they look up themselves). Students can then use the 50-minute class period just to focus on writing their German text and presenting the ideas in written form rather than use the time to develop ideas or search for words. The instructor can also be available to answer questions, which helps with more complicated structures for this level.

The unit begins in day one focusing on culture as a means to explore the COE and its ties to advertising and marketing. Students not only engage in critical readings of print and video advertisements as a means to increase awareness of the stereotypes embedded in them, they are then also tasked with being part of a marketing team as part of the case study. Thus to be able to write the assignment will require students to tackle these important cultural questions and display an awareness of how culture is shown to them. Assessment models for this project are included in the CIBER case clearinghouse (Sheffer, 2019).

### **Conclusion**

Case studies and the COE, both taken from business studies, afford language instructors and learners tools through which they can critically examine the idea that a nation represents one single, unified culture. In performing critical readings of advertising in both print and video form as part of the business case, students can learn interdisciplinary skills from media studies and business, but also apply their new language ability to analyze the text's encoded messages and cultural symbols. Within the field of language instruction, languages offer a unique space to "empower students to become readers, listeners, or viewers who are able to identify how cultural production in a foreign language is transacted and managed" (Swaffar & Ahrens, 2005, p. 5). In this way, formative language courses offer students a chance to engage with notions of culture critically and to show how culture is complex.

The intercultural guidelines that help to develop basic language instruction and outcomes should consider LSP work in defining and shaping what is possible for learners to achieve. It is challenging to present native fluency as the outcome for assessment. Language learners will, by definition, never be native speakers and creates unrealistic expectations as well as student frustration. Moreover, native speaker as the benchmark ignores the complexity in the culture

itself where both native and non-native speakers live and interact. The language may also be spoken in the German-speaking regions or also in a global context. Standards for assessment should reflect the complexity of where languages are spoken around the globe as well as the mix of speakers who make up daily life.

Ultimately, this critical engagement with culture and business culture allows students to examine biases and stereotypes, both positive and negative, about cultures both at home and abroad. It is imperative to examine the role LSP classrooms play in shaping intercultural standards through interdisciplinary learning from areas like business. At the same time, LSP scholars must reflect on the complexity of cultural learning inherent in LSP disciplines and texts and how we can fairly assess this for students.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

Besprechen Sie in Kleingruppen:

1. Reisen Sie gerne? Interessieren Sie sich für Reisen? Welche Stadt oder welches Land wollen Sie besuchen? Warum?
2. Wie möchten Sie am liebsten reisen: mit dem Auto, mit dem Fahrrad, mit dem Bus, mit dem Zug oder mit dem Flugzeug?
3. Haben Sie eine Lieblingsfluglinie? Warum ist sie besonders gut? Wofür ist die Fluglinie bekannt? z.B. Ist American Airlines irgendwie amerikanisch?

American Airlines ist die Fluglinie, die...

British Airways hat freundliche Mitarbeiter\*innen, die...

Air France hat eine gute Getränkeauswahl, die

## Appendix B

### eine Reise buchen

Mit einem Partner oder einer Partnerin gehen Sie zu dieser Webseite und beantworten Sie die folgenden Fragen:  
[https://www.austrian.com/?sc\\_lang=de&cc=AT](https://www.austrian.com/?sc_lang=de&cc=AT)

- 1) Welche "Top Angebote" gibt es heute? Wohin würden Sie fliegen, wenn Sie nur 75 € hätten? 100 €? 450 €?
  
- 2) Prosit Neujahr! Sie wollen Silvester im Ausland feiern. Sie wollen von Wien nach London fliegen. Sie müssen am 29. Dezember abfliegen und am 2. Jänner zurück. Wann können Sie fliegen und was kostet die Reise?

## Appendix C

### Wie liest man ein Bild?

- Wie heißt das Bild? Gibt es einen Titel?
- Wann, wo und von wem wurde das Foto gemacht?
- Welchen Ort zeigt das Bild?
- Was stellt das Bild offensichtlich dar (Motiv)?
- Was sieht man im Bild?
- Welche Farbe(n) hat das Bild / Foto?
- Gibt es Kontraste?
- Was bedeuten Licht und Schatten?
- Aus welcher Perspektive sehen wir das Bild?

## Appendix D

Öffnen Sie Ihre Instagram-App und gehen Sie zu @austrianairlines. Mit einem Partner oder einer Partnerin beantworten Sie die folgenden Frage.

1. Schauen Sie die letzten Bilder an. Wählen Sie ein interessantes Foto aus.
2. Lesen Sie das Bild mit den Fragen von oben:
3. Finden Sie, dass das Bild Österreich thematisiert? Inwiefern?
4. Was meinen Sie? Ist Ihr Konzept auch ein Stereotyp? Finden Sie es gut, dass Austrian Airlines Österreich als Teil ihres Brandings zeigt?

**Appendix E**

Was meinen Sie? Welche Konzepte würden Sie in den Textbeschreibung betonen (*stress*)? Kreuzen Sie an!

auf Reisen viel erleben	Strände besuchen	die Seele	unnötige Dinge kaufen
Zeit nehmen	ausschlafen	sich drehen	Sacher Torte
Walzer tanzen	Musik spielen	herzlich willkommen	landen
			1...2...3 einen

**Appendix F**

AUA wurde mehrmals in der Geschichte reorganisiert. Mehrmals wurde Mitarbeitern gekündigt (*laid off*). Es gab viele Probleme in der Industrie zwischen 2000-2009:

- die Terroranschläge am 11. September 2001
- die Rezession
- der SARS-Ausbruch
- die Ölpreise
- veraltete Technologie und Flugzeuge
- Konkurrenz der Billigfluggesellschaften (wie zum Beispiel Ryanair und easyJet)



**Appendix G****Business Meeting:**

Besprechen Sie in Ihrer Gruppe:

Welche Werbekampagne wird auch gut in den USA funktionieren? Warum?

Kampagnen:	Ja	Nein
The Charming Way to Fly		
Austrian ist auch European		
Waltz into the World		
??		

Für das nächste Meeting, müssen Sie die folgenden Infos haben:

1. die Kampagnen:

a) Welche Kampagne funktioniert als das beste Modell?

b) Was genau aus diesem Programm passt zu den USA?

- 
- 
- 
- 

2. Welche österreichischen Aspekte würden die Amerikaner•innen als positiv ansehen?

- 
- 
- 
- 

3. Was Sie in der Kampagne ändern würden, das nicht in den USA funktioniert:

- 
- 
- 
- 
-

