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Principles and Practices of the *Standards* in College Foreign Language Education

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Chapter 9

Incorporating the *Standards* into a 3R Model of Literary and Cultural Analysis¹

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Introduction

The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (1999, 2006) have significantly shaped the discourse of foreign language teaching by emphasizing the interdisciplinary nature of foreign language learning and providing a cohesiveness for language programs as a whole. The advances in foreign language teacher preparation at the K-12 level have been many, as graduates are expected to guide their teaching through standards-based methodologies and adhere to national and state standards documents. Following the initial development of national standards in the 1990s, initiatives were widened to include teaching standards for languages other than English designed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), standards for new language teachers developed by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and new standards for foreign language teacher education programs established by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Indeed, this professionwide interest in standards-based teacher training has led to increased continuity across linguistic, curricular, and geographic boundaries.

However, the cohesiveness offered by the *Standards* does not seem to transfer across program levels; that is, it appears limited to K-12 language programs. The 1996 publication of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century* resulted in many workshops, conferences, and meetings of academic associations to create awareness on the part of college faculty. Scholarly journals published numerous articles outlining specific projects for incorporating standards into a college curriculum, such as the *ADFL Bulletin's* two-part series in 1999 and 2000 in which 18 university professors evaluated the *Standards* document in relation to their own foreign language programs.² The 2006 edition of the *Standards* was expanded to include levels 13–16, with language-specific Progress Indicators for grade 16, to engage postsecondary language instructors in this national discussion. Though their goals of interdisciplinary connections, communication strategies, critical thinking, cultural knowledge, and linguistic understanding are clearly appropriate for college-level work, the *Standards* have yet to be fully embraced by postsecondary language professionals. The lack of communication between high schools and colleges regarding their individual curriculum and what their students know and can do at the end of their programs, often coupled with a certain disregard on the part of college language teachers for

their colleagues in the high schools, has led many at the university level to ignore or superficially glance at the *Standards* without much application to their own teaching. In a 1998 ACTFL white paper, Welles argues:

College faculty members need to be reminded that the production of the Standards represents the work of a range of foreign language professionals from elementary, secondary, and college levels and from several languages; that the usefulness of the Standards has been recognized by many in the field; and that the Standards are voluntary. Further, since the Standards are organized around the connections between language and culture, they provide a framework on which to build the competencies and accomplishments appropriate to college-level work in literature and other fields. (p. 9)

College professors ostensibly should become better informed about the *Standards* and recognize that they provide a foundation for curricular continuity that builds on what students have learned in high school, allowing for deeper levels of self-exploration and connections to other disciplines available on a university campus. Although valiant efforts have been made to apply the *Standards* to the college curriculum, a good number of language professionals in postsecondary education continue to ignore their value for progressive, process-based language learning.

Among reasons given for not considering the *Standards* when developing their curriculum, college-level faculty cite their lack of clarity concerning literature and grammar, typically the primary focuses of university foreign language programs. Rather than focus on form, as has been the case in traditional language instruction, the *Standards* (see this volume, p. xxii–xxiii) take a more holistic approach to communicative competence, including grammar as an understanding of how language works, “[s]tudents demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own” (*Standard 4.2*). Linguistic knowledge also appears within a cultural context, “[s]tudents acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures” (*Standard 3.2*), and as a productive function, “[s]tudents understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics” (*Standard 1.2*) and “[s]tudents use the language both within and beyond the school setting” (*Standard 5.1*). Indeed, the lack of precision here, the very flexibility of the *Standards* in regards to grammar, allows instructors to decide how they will teach grammar within this framework of cultural and communicative competence. As the document itself proclaims:

In the past, classroom instruction was often focused on the memorization of words and grammar rules. The standards for foreign language learning require a much broader definition of the content of the foreign language classroom. Students should be given ample opportunities to explore, develop, and use communication strategies, learning strategies, critical thinking skills, and skills in technology, as well as the appropriate elements of the language system and culture. The exact form and content of each of these elements is not prescribed in

the present document. Instead, the standards provide a background, a framework for the reflective teacher to use in weaving these rich curricular experiences into the fabric of language learning. (2006, p. 32)

Likewise, the inclusion of literature within the *Standards* has been left somewhat vague, permitting the same type of flexibility in curriculum development and instruction. Although the reading skill is specifically mentioned in *Standard 1.2*, “[s]tudents understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics,” the document does not specify what types of texts are appropriate. Rather, literature is relegated to the general category of cultural product, in that students are asked to “demonstrate an understanding between the products and the perspectives of the culture studied” (*Standard 2.2*). Welles (1998) bemoans this imprecision in the *Standards* by saying “While I believe that the study of foreign languages is not just for literature any more, I find it distressing that literary works are not more central to the Standards, at least as vehicles for teaching much of the culture and discourse underscored in the document” (p. 8). Only two of the sample learning scenarios, the readings of Diego Rivera and fairy tales, specifically refer to literature as the cultural product in question. Within the language-specific Sample Progress Indicators, literature is mentioned more frequently, such as for Arabic, grade 16, “[s]tudents share their reactions to literary texts and analyze them” (2006, p. 122), and can “read, analyze, and appreciate Arabic literature and poetry and discuss its role in expressing the beliefs and political views of their authors and the society or ideology they represent” (p. 131); for French, grade 12, “[s]tudents analyze the plots, characters, and themes in francophone literary works” (p. 244), postsecondary “[s]tudents read and analyze French-language literary works, such as poems, short stories, and novels” (p. 255); and for German, grade 12, “[s]tudents share their analyses and personal reactions to expository and literary texts (news articles, poems, and plays) with peers and/or speakers of German” (p. 298), and can “analyze the main plot, subplot, characters, their descriptions, roles, and significance in authentic texts” (p. 300). This brief list of examples demonstrates the inconsistencies among the various languages regarding the treatment of literature, as well as the lack of precision in the types of analyses required at each stage. As Holly Tucker (2000) pointed out in her analysis of the lack of literature within the *Standards*, “[t]he Standards project must find adequate ways to address specifically the needs and concerns of literature instructors. Otherwise, there is little hope for its integration into grades 13–16” (p. 55).

With this goal in mind I developed a method for analyzing literature and culture that addresses the needs of the *Standards*, while responding to the call by postsecondary language instructors for greater precision in linguistic and literary analysis in standards-based instruction. Designed to teach literature, language, and culture simultaneously at all levels of foreign language learning, this 3R Model acknowledges the interdisciplinary and process-building nature of the *Standards* while providing a flexible and specific set of strategies for foreign language instructors to use literature as a “vehicle” for teaching culture (Welles, 1998, p. 8). At the same time, my 3R Model recognizes the intrinsic value of literature in itself, helping students appreciate the literary techniques, the unique practices that point to a particular cultural perspective within a cultural product. Focusing on teaching

the *process* of literary and cultural analysis—rather than the product—this 3R Model incorporates these practices and perspectives in a cyclical exploration of the literature of the target culture.

Using the *Standards* as a general framework, the 3R Model also relies on research in reading comprehension strategies to fill the gap left by the *Standards* regarding literary analysis techniques. Reader response theories, where “meaning is not in the written or spoken text, but in the dialogue between the learner and the text” (Kramsch, 1993, p. 177), allow for the flexibility and diversity of interpretation that underlie the *Standards* while creating a student-centered learning environment where the student can explore his or her own interest in the text. Furthermore, the burden of cultural expertise is transferred from the teacher to the student, creating unique interdisciplinary connections based on the students’ own background knowledge. For example, a student with expertise in dance might have a different interpretation of a particular poem than a student majoring in history or anthropology. Indeed, “reading is a complex process that involves many variables, including the interaction between the reader (where the old information is stored) and the text (the new information). The reader not only deciphers new words but also thinks about how the text relates to what the reader already knows” (Brantmeier, 2001, p. 326).

Schema theory, introduced originally in 1932 by Sir Frederick Bartlett in his book *Remembering*, has evolved in second language acquisition research to emphasize the role of background knowledge in the relationship between reader and text. Schema theorists posit that the text does not contain meaning in itself, but its meaning is derived from an interactive process between the reader’s background knowledge and the cultural clues in the text, that signal the reader to activate certain slots of information in their brains. Schemata, or “active organization of past reactions, or past experiences” (Bartlett, 1932, p. 201), have particular significance for foreign language learners because readers must not only activate the appropriate background knowledge when interpreting a text, but they must also determine what cultural information is lacking for an adequate understanding of the text. As explained by Carrell (1988),

Not only is the reader’s prior linguistic knowledge (“linguistic” schemata) important and level of proficiency in the second language important, but the reader’s prior background knowledge of the content area of the text (“content” schemata) as well as of the rhetorical structure of the text (“formal” schemata) are also important. (p. 4)

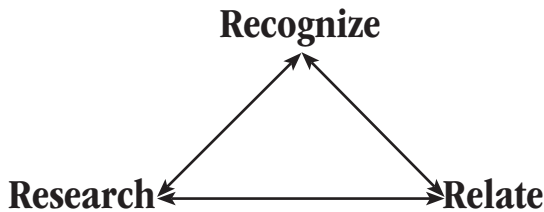
Therefore, methods must be devised to help foreign language students recognize what type of information they are missing, acquire that knowledge, and interpret the text in light of those new findings.

3R Model: Recognize-Research-Relate

My 3R Model follows this research in reading comprehension by helping students uncover their prior linguistic, content, and formal schemata while providing strategies for filling in the necessary gaps that will allow them to understand the relationship

between the practices and perspectives of a literary text. Divided into three stages—Recognize, Research, Relate—the 3R Model focuses on helping the students recognize textual clues and trigger their previously existing background knowledge, research new and relevant information, and relate the new and prior knowledge back to the text. As presented in Figure 1, this method can be best envisioned in a triangular format, each stage simultaneously informing and expanding upon the others in a cyclical analysis of literature, language, and culture.

Figure 1
The 3R model



In the first stage, *Recognize*, students are asked to identify linguistic and literary elements in a text, such as particular words, images, metaphors, expressions, rhythmic patterns, and geographic references, that might reflect the target culture. This stage will essentially guide the students' analyses of the text, because it reveals any prior knowledge that the students might have about linguistic and literary practices of this culture, while also uncovering any stereotypes that need further investigation throughout the analysis. For lower-level students, language may pose the greatest difficulty for interpreting the text; therefore, instructors might want to begin by generating a list of unfamiliar words with the students, leading to a discussion of which words might be specific to that target culture. In an upper-level class, students may have fewer questions about particular words in the text, yet a similar discussion might follow in which the students discuss those words that seem to reflect the cultural context of the author. Following this exploration of vocabulary, instructors might ask students to consider literary elements of the text, teaching the students literary analysis techniques while permitting flexibility in the students' responses. In essence, the 3R Model asks that the instructor be solely responsible for teaching the students general literary analysis skills, providing a framework that the students can explore on their own in the following stages. It is the students' individual interpretations that allow for a rich understanding of each text, based on the unique schemata and personal interests each student brings to the analysis.

After having identified the linguistic and literary practices/elements of the text, the students then progress to the *Research* stage in which they explore the underlying cultural perspectives of the text, investigating the visible and invisible culture that might lead to the linguistic and literary choices made by the author. Based on the lists generated in the *Research* stage, students choose a topic of interest to explore further, either in groups or individually. Once again, the instructor

serves as a guide in this process, suggesting specific resources and research techniques that will help the students become independent, lifelong learners. This stage teaches students not to become complacent learners, not to be satisfied with one answer or viewpoint, but to use multiple sources and arrive at their own informed interpretation of the subject in question. Resources might include databases of literary and cultural articles (such as the *Modern Language Association Bibliography* and JSTOR), region-specific dictionaries (e.g., the *Lexique du français au Sénégal* for Senegalese texts, Québécois-Anglais dictionaries for Québécois authors), videos (possibly videos of West African dance, musical ceremonies, or informational videos about daily life in the particular cultural region), Internet sites, and native informants (keypals from the target culture, in-class guest speakers). The multitude of resources on a college campus provides opportunities to develop many interdisciplinary connections, relying on colleagues in dance, history, music, anthropology, and film departments, for example, to assist the students in their explorations. These interdisciplinary connections can be quite valuable in a small college, where foreign language departments often struggle for funding or recognition of the many of roles they play. In larger universities, such relationships might set the foundation for a Languages Across the Curriculum program. Depending upon the amount of time devoted to each text, students research their topic for a week or two, meet with their groups periodically to discuss their findings and then present their information back to the class at the end of that time. In this way, the students can share the knowledge they have acquired to approach the text with similar schemata, while maintaining a specific expertise in their analyses.

In essence, the *Research* stage targets several standards, namely Communication, Connections, and Communities. In particular, the students practice the Communication standards in that they “provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions” (*Standard 1.1*), as well as “understand written and spoken language on a variety of topics” (*Standard 1.2*) if using resources in the target language. The Connections standards are met through the interdisciplinary research the students conduct, helping them to “reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign languages” (*Standard 3.1*) and “acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures” (*Standard 3.2*). Finally, the Communities standard directs the students to “use the language both within and beyond the school setting” (*Standard 5.1*), an objective they gain by incorporating Web resources, keypals or e-mail correspondents, and their group discussions of their findings outside of class. To ensure that the groups use the target language in these discussions, instructors might have students e-mail their conversations in a chat-room or discussion board format using Blackboard or WebCT. These research strategies will hopefully engage the students and help them become lifelong learners by “learning to use the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment” (*Standard 5.2*).

Once the students have completed their *Research* stage, they will return to the text in the final *Relate* stage, in which they make links between the literary and linguistic elements identified in Stage 1 with the newly acquired schemata

from Stage 2. At this point, students might reconsider their lists to see if any elements should be removed or added based on what they have learned about the target culture, thus demonstrating the triangular nature of the 3R Model. By rereading the text, students might note new literary elements that reflect the realities of the culture they have researched. Following this somewhat superficial reading, students then conduct a close analysis of the text, reexamining the language, images, rhythm, expressions, and so forth that they recognized previously in light of the new cultural knowledge they have acquired. Deviations from the cultural norms are of particular interest here, in that such variations allow the students to understand the importance of the individual in understanding culture, specifically the manner in which each writer chooses to follow or disregard established literary or linguistic practices. For example, a folktale from West Africa (consider Bernard Dadié's "Le pagné noir") may begin with "Il était une fois" (Once upon a time), a standard opening line for French folktales, thereby portraying an author's acceptance of and adherence to European cultural standards.

In the *Relate* stage, students analyze the "relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied" (*Standard 2.1*) in the text at hand, as well as consider this text in relation to other texts they may have read from that culture. In effect, the 3R Model can be used throughout an entire semester, comparing and contrasting texts and authors within one culture, as well as across different cultures, to understand the "distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures" (*Standard 3.2*). Students may research the same topic throughout the semester, allowing for comparisons of how different authors vary their treatment of this cultural element, or they may choose to select new research topics with each text, thereby expanding their content schemata in diverse arenas. The *Relate* stage also includes a reflective investigation of the students' own culture, helping them to understand their own distinct viewpoints "through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own" (*Standard 4.2*).

When designing a course or unit with the 3R Model, one must begin by establishing the goals to determine the number of texts and length of time to devote to each text.

Goal 1: Cultural Comparisons

If one hopes to allow cultural comparisons within one culture as well as across cultures, one needs to include several texts from a single target culture. For a 15-week semester course, 3 weeks per text should be sufficient: 1 week for the Recognize phase and preliminary research of a topic, another 2 weeks for Research and the final analysis in the Relate phase. Otherwise, if time is limited within the semester, the instructor may want to choose a broad theme (such as colonization) and select one text from various cultures that treat that subject. The instructor can decide at that point how many weeks to devote to each text, keeping in mind that it requires at least 2 weeks for a solid textual and cultural analysis using this 3R Model. One may also decide to vary the students' literary experiences and choose texts with various cultural elements from a diverse range of cultures.

Goal 2: Variety of Genres

The instructor may decide that students should learn to recognize different genres within and across cultures, thereby comparing how different cultures approach, for example, the writing of folktales. Therefore, text format needs to be considered, as well as how many texts of that particular genre from each culture. Again, depending on how many texts one chooses to treat, one may use this 3R Model over an entire 15-week semester or as a 6-week unit on genres of Francophone literature—covering three texts of three different genres—within a larger framework of literary analysis.

Goal 3: Depth of Research

Instructors need to decide the length of time to give students to research each text (usually 1 or 2 weeks is sufficient), as well as whether the students should alter their subjects with each text or continue the same topic throughout the unit or course.

Goal 4: Linguistic Competence

The choice of texts is crucial, because students need to be able to grasp the basic meaning of the text, while challenging their linguistic skills to allow for language learning along with literary analysis skills. Short texts, such as poems and folktales, are effective for lower-level classes (e.g., François Sengat-Kuo's poem "Ils sont venus" or Birago Diop's folktale "Les mamelles"). Novels and texts with complicated formal structures may be useful in upper-level classes to develop the students' linguistic competency while expanding their formal schemata in complex texts.

Overall, these goals target the development of the students' linguistic, content, and formal schemata while meeting the goals of the *Standards*, as has been demonstrated in the presentation of the 3R Model. However, the 3R Model can be best understood through application to a specific text, Léopold Senghor's (1964) "Femme noire" (Black woman), a poem with relatively simple language and structural elements for lower-level students, as well as complexity of meaning that will challenge upper-level students (see [http://www.franceweb.fr/poesie/senghor1.htm](http://www.franceweb.fr/ poesie/senghor1.htm) for the full version of this poem).

Analysis of "Femme noire"

Recognize

At first glance, "Femme noire" does not appear much different than any traditional poem from French or European literature; that is, the poem is divided into stanzas and based on established rules of versification, including rhyme and line structure. In fact, the poem bears a slight resemblance to the European sonnet by its organization into three stanzas followed by a short *renvoi* at the end. Educated in French schools while growing up in colonized Senegal and later attending high school and university in France, Senghor was undoubtedly exposed to the rigid rules of European classical verse. Indeed, Senghor admits to having imitated many poets from French literary history, yet for the most part found his influences in

the poetry of African writers: "Je confesserai même ... que j'ai beaucoup lu, des troubadours à Paul Claudel. ... La vérité est que j'ai surtout lu, plus exactement écouté, transcrit et commenté des poèmes négro-africains" (I will even confess ... that I read a lot, from the troubadours to Paul Claudel. ... The truth is that I especially read, more precisely listened, transcribed, and commented on negro-african poems) (1964, p. 157).³ Therefore, in the *Recognize* stage, when students are asked to find any structural elements in the text that seem reflective of a sub-Saharan African cultural perspective, they may point out the repetitions of "Femme nue" (nude woman), "Femme noire" (black woman), and "Femme obscure" (dark woman), given that these repetitions seem essential to the poem's rhythm. Sophisticated readers would notice the poem's resemblance to French poetry and may want to pursue that idea further in their research, perhaps investigating the European influence on Senghor's (or Senegalese) literary and linguistic practices.

The first area in which an African difference seems significant to this poem pertains to the language. The linguistic elements of "Femme noire" reflect an African cultural reality due primarily to Senghor's use of French terms specific to an African context. Mona Mikhail (1971) describes Senghor's use of language in this way: "His use of such expressions as 'sombres extases du vin noir,' 'femme obscure,' 'tamtam sculpté,' 'peau qui se moire,' revolutionizes the French language by the addition of the African context and ennobles Black beauty" (p. 69). For this reason, Senghor's poem is quite effective for students approaching sub-Saharan African poetry for the first time, given that the language is somewhat familiar while the underlying meaning requires further analysis of the culture. Terms such as "savane" (savanna), "Vent d'Est" (East wind), "princes du Mali" (princes of Mali), and "gazelle" denote elements particular to an African culture, while words such as "femme noire," "vin noir" (black wine), "la nuit de ta peau" (the night of your skin), "ta peau qui se moire" (your skin that shimmers), and "cendres" (ash) are terms from standard French to allude to the darkness of African skin. Senghor's use of the word "tam-tam" refers to a specifically African instrument for which a French translation "tambour" would not suffice in conveying the cultural significance of the term. André Kapanga (1992) refers to this practice as lexical transfer, in which "lexical items from the source language are transferred into the language of the discourse" (p. 330). According to Kapanga, African writers employ both deliberate and nondeliberate strategies to enrich standard French into an African variety that more accurately represents their cultural reality:

Given that the language in which they have chosen to express themselves cannot properly impart many social, cultural, political, geographical, and psychological realities of their world, these writers have no other choice but to innovate their medium of communication by using processes such as borrowing, calqueing, foregrounding, and outright coining of lexical items or expressions. Thus, these linguistic processes are in fact used to convey the beliefs, affiliations, customs, and cultural allegiances that typify the various communities to which the writers belong, a reflection of the Africanness of the French language and contextual realities of Africa. (p. 76)

Indeed, for students of French, this poem—and others from Francophone sub-Saharan Africa—offer a rich opportunity to explore the distinct viewpoints of a particular variety of French, thereby developing their understanding of how linguistic practices uniquely reflect the cultural perspective of the author.

Beyond language, “Femme noire” contains distinguishing rhythmic qualities that may indicate an African cultural context. Most notably is the repetition of the words “Femme nue, femme noire” or “Femme nue, femme obscure” at the beginning of each stanza. Presented as a type of refrain, these verses are the shortest in the text and serve to structure the poem in a cyclical pattern: “Femme nue, femme noire” begins the first and last stanzas, whereas “Femme nue/noire, femme obscure” represents the first line of the two middle stanzas. The repetition of these brief lines sounds like a recurring beat and alludes to a certain oral or musical quality in African literary traditions. The significance of these repeated lines is further emphasized by the fact that these are the only lines that contain a balanced rhythmic structure; the remaining 14 lines vary in length from 17 to 30 syllables. Hence, the return to “Femme nue, femme noire/obscure” at the start of each stanza presents a leitmotif of words, imagery, and sounds that provides a structure to the poem that is otherwise lacking in formal versification.

The images of the African woman woven within this rhythmic framework reinforce the structure of the poem by following a cyclical progression of metaphors pertaining to birth, death, and rebirth. In the first stanza, Senghor focuses on beauty and life-giving qualities of the woman as mother: “Femme nue, femme noire / Vêtue de ta couleur qui est vie, de ta forme qui est beauté! / J’ai grandi à ton ombre; la douceur de tes mains bandait mes yeux” (Nude woman, black woman / Clothed in your color which is life, your form which is beauty! / I grew in your shadow; the sweetness of your hands bandaged my eyes). Students might remark in these lines that Senghor evokes the universal image of the woman as mother, yet with a characteristic difference: it is her color—her blackness—that provides life and protection for the poet. The images alter somewhat in the second and third stanzas where the woman becomes “obscure,” no longer the protective mother but a lover whose body is compared to the “sombres extases du vin noir” (somber ecstasies of black wine), the “Savane aux horizons purs / savane qui frémis aux caresses ferventes du Vent d’Est” (Savanna of pure horizons / savanna trembling under the fervent caresses of the East wind), “Huile que ne ride nul souffle, huile calme aux flancs de l’athlète, aux flancs des princes du Mali” (Oil unwrinkled by winds, oil smooth on athletes’ thighs, on the thighs of the princes of Mali), and a “Gazelle aux attaches célestes” (Gazelle with celestial attachments). Following a common trope of comparing women to nature, the metaphors in Senghor’s poem pertain particularly to an African context. The references to the “savane,” the “Vent d’Est,” Mali, and a gazelle with celestial attachments would certainly trigger the students’ curiosity regarding the African nature of these descriptions. Moreover, the celestial connection with the African woman seems reinforced by references to her such as the “chant spirituel de l’Aimée” (spiritual song of the lover) and her skin described as “les perles sont étoiles sur la nuit de ta peau” (pearls are stars on the night of your skin). Students may also notice the striking image of “vin noir,” placing even greater emphasis on the woman’s blackness because of

this uncommon combination. Furthermore, the African woman is a “bouche qui fai[t] lyrique ma bouche” (mouth that makes my mouth sing), a familiar theme in Western literature of the woman as muse for the poet, while surrounded by other more African images. However, she is also a “Tam-tam sculpté, tam-tam tendu qui gronde sous les doigts du vainqueur” (Carved tam-tam, tense tam-tam, grumbling under the fingers of the conqueror). This conspicuous African image might raise insightful questions to explore in the *Research* stage regarding the tam-tam, its role in social contexts, who the “vainqueur” might be, and so forth. Such interplay of cultural references may be useful for students in understanding how Franco-phone literature often contains a *mélange* of literary traditions—both Western and non-Western—that the author chooses to include or alter into his or her own perspective.

In the final stanza, the images of the black woman evolve in concurrence with the end of her life. She becomes a “beauté qui passe” (passing beauty), yet a “forme que je fixe dans l’Eternel” (form that I fix in eternity) due to the poet’s description of her. The theme of the flight of time and the poet’s ability to render his subject immortal is certainly not unique to Senghor or African literature, yet Senghor conceives of a new manner in which to present this common theme. He tells his “femme noire” that he must act quickly to sing her beauty “avant que le Destin jaloux ne te réduises en cendres pour nourrir les racines de la vie” (before a jealous fate reduces you to ashes to nourish the roots of life). For Western poets, death usually represents the end of a linear conception of life; whereas in Senghor’s text, death becomes an opportunity to renew life, hinting at a circular conception of life that students may want to research in the following stage of analysis.

Research

Using the lists of language, rhythm, and images that the students recognize as perhaps reflective of a Senegalese cultural context, the instructor or students may then establish groupings or categories of ideas to research. For this poem, several themes seem to emerge: (a) the insistence on blackness or *Négritude* ideals, (b) African music, (c) the link between the African woman and nature, and (d) the link between the African woman and the spiritual world. Clearly, the initial evocation of “noir” in the title, along with the constant reiteration of blackness throughout the poem, underlines the *Négritude* movement of the 1930s in Paris, of which Senghor, Léon Damas, and Aimé Césaire were the forerunners. Students researching the *Négritude* movement would discover that these writers essentially defined a new “prise de conscience” (coming to awareness) concerning the suppression of African cultural values. Senghor himself defines *Négritude* as “the awareness, defence, and development of African cultural values” (1965a, p. 97). Indeed, the *Négritude* writers sought to establish a literature purely based in African traditions through a “retour aux sources” (return to the source), an Africa free of Western influences. With this knowledge in hand, the students can better understand Senghor’s insistence on the blackness of the woman’s skin as a new vision of beauty from African eyes.

The *Négritude* movement also placed renewed emphasis on the cultural elements that Senghor portrays in his poem, such as African music as illustrated

through the metaphor of the tam-tam. Research into the role of the tam-tam in African cultures might reveal how it is traditionally used in almost all aspects of daily life: to communicate messages throughout the village, to accompany ceremonial events such as entry into adulthood and marriages, to assist workers in accomplishing their tasks through rhythm and song, and to provide harmony for dancers and storytellers. However, with the arrival of the European colonizer, the tam-tam was forsaken as many of these African rituals were replaced by Western practices of religion, work, and social relations. Thus, Senghor's return to the tam-tam as a cultural metaphor in "Femme noire" reinforces the ideals of the Négritude movement by reestablishing the origins of his culture from beneath the forced assimilation of European cultural practices.

Moreover, students researching African music might discover that Senghor himself insists that the role of music in African cultures goes beyond simple accompaniment or pleasure to represent the heart of the African spirit, an inescapable rhythm that guides the African writer in composing his or her text. In Senghor's words, "Les poètes nègres ... sont, avant tout, des 'auditifs', des *chantres*. Ils sont soumis tyranniquement à la 'musique intérieure', et d'abord au rythme" (Black poets ... are, above all, auditory, bards. They submit tyrannically to an interior music, and first of all to rhythm) (1964, p. 161). Without rhythm, the image in any African literary text is incomplete, for "l'image ne produit pas son effet chez le Nègro-africain si elle n'est pas rythmée" (the image doesn't produce its effect for a Negro-African if it isn't rhythmic) (Senghor, 1965b, p. 60). According to Mikhail (1971), Senghor's depiction of feminine beauty is indeed much more active than the portraits found in French literature:

In French surrealist tradition, feminine beauty is most often defined by abstraction of forms and their harmony. The woman is pictured as a rested posture, fixed as a work of art. With Senghor, she is rhythm, sound and smell. She is the "tam-tam sculpté," a drum that vibrates under "les doigts du vainqueur." (p. 66)

Therefore, the repetitions and rhythmic structure of "Femme noire" directly underscore this link between rhythm and image, this return to an image of African beauty both as a portrait of femininity and as a renewed literary tradition that both rejects and retains European influences.

Further renewing these African literary practices, the link between the woman and nature, particularly within an African context, clearly distinguishes this poem from French literary traditions. Indeed, the relationship between the African woman and the Earth is not unique to Senghor but a common theme throughout African literature, "the woman as guardian of traditions, the strong Earth-Mother who stands for security and stability" (Rushing, 1979, p. 19). Since traditional sub-Saharan African communities were primarily agricultural, many African societies linked the fertility of women with the fertility of the earth, nurturing a type of "sacred cult" of women in African cultures (Mikhail, 1971, p. 63). Thus, in many sub-Saharan African cultures, a woman must bear children to gain social status in the community. In her study of women in Dakar, Solange Faladé (1963) concluded that for an African woman, "to be a mother not only ensures the stability

of her marriage, but also confers respect upon her as a woman” (p. 224). The bond between mother and child in African societies is traditionally very strong, as the child accompanies his or her mother in all of her daily tasks from the moment he or she is born until the age 6 or 7. Carried on her back, the child experiences the rhythms of the mother’s movements in unison with her, reinforcing the fundamental rhythm that underlies the African spirit. Thus the mother as life-giver, protector, and link to nature as seen in Senghor’s “Femme noire” is encompassed by the African perspective of her role as mother.

The African woman’s role as mother also relates to the belief in the link between women and the spiritual world in sub-Saharan cultures. Students investigating the religious belief systems of sub-Saharan Africa might discover that the woman is traditionally considered the intermediary between the earthly and celestial worlds. According to traditional African religious beliefs, each newborn child receives the spirit of his or her ancestors to continue the family lineage. The woman, the source of this new life, thereby has a direct connection to the ancestors as the receptacle for the spirit sent by the ancestors. Moreover, upon death, one’s life does not end but is transformed and carried into the spiritual world of the ancestors. As A. Raphaël Ndiaye (1986) explains this belief in the cycle of life, “Mourir n’est pas s’évanouir dans la ténèbre d’un abîme sans fond, mais devenir ‘souffle d’ancêtre’, présence profonde et légère à laquelle on officie, ou qui intègre parfois le corps d’une femme féconde pour pouvoir renaître” (To die is not to fade into the darkness of a bottomless abyss, but to become the “ancestor’s breath,” a profound and light presence where one presides, or that sometimes integrates into the body of a fertile woman in order to be reborn) (p. 135–136). Therefore, the dying “Femme noire,” the incarnation of traditional African values, returns to the ancestors and the celestial world from which she came, but her spirit will continue to live and nourish the new Africa to come.

Although the resources and information presented here are primarily literary references, other types of resources would allow for a more multisensory and interdisciplinary perspective on the themes chosen for this poem. As stated earlier, a university campus would provide additional dimensions by consulting with colleagues in women studies, dance, music, and history departments, for example, to provide lectures for the students on their fields of expertise. For “Femme noire,” an interactive African drumming demonstration might be effective as well, showing the students how the tam-tam not only accompanies the woman in her movements but also guides her, as the rhythm of the poem creates and is created by the image of the African woman. Another possibility might be a specialist in African art who could show the students portraits that correspond to the image Senghor describes, providing a visual representation to complete the mental illustration his metaphors present. In sum, the primary goal of the *Research* stage is to acquire background knowledge about the target culture by connecting with other disciplines, thereby arriving at a multifaceted perspective with which to approach the text in the final stage.

Relate

In the *Relate* stage, the students apply their collective and individual background knowledge back to the text, creating a unique interpretation that relies on the

particular schemata they choose to incorporate into their analyses of the poem. Thus, each class might arrive at new interpretations due to the subjects of research that they develop and the literary and linguistic practices they elicit from the text. For example, knowledge of the Négritude movement would allow the students to understand Senghor's use of vocabulary that focuses on the blackness of the woman's skin. The protection afforded by the "ombre" (shadow) and blackness of the mother's skin, the emphasis on black being life ("ta couleur qui est vie"), the sensual qualities of the black woman and her intoxicating qualities as a "vin noir"—all these elements have a more profound meaning as a reinforcement and glorification of the African cultures. The fact that she is naked, the pure essence of beauty, rings of the "retour aux sources" proclaimed by the Négritude movement. The poet sings of her beauty and fixes her for eternity so as to render the African culture that she represents immortal, unable to be effaced once again by the European colonizer. The musical references, such as the tam-tam, "ta voix grave de contralto" (your low contralto voice), "le chant spirituel" (the spiritual song), and "Je chante ta beauté qui passe" (I sing your passing beauty), emphasize Senghor's belief in the inextricable link between rhythm and images. Furthermore, the association between the African woman and the tam-tam—"tam-tam qui gronde sous les doigts du vainqueur"—underscores Senghor's perspective of her as the incarnation of African cultural values, the communicator who portrays these messages to the rest of the world as does the tam-tam within African villages. Perhaps the "vainqueur" is Senghor himself, who fashions his "Femme noire" into the rhythmic image he would like to portray in his message of Négritude. Knowledge of the important link between the woman and the Earth in her life-giving role as mother, combined with her relationship with the celestial world as a connection to the ancestral spirits, would allow the students to understand more fully the images that abound in the poem relating to both earth and sky. Expressions such as "Terre promise" (promised land), "fruit mûr" (ripe fruit), and "savane" in the first half of the poem transform into metaphors that link her to the celestial world in the second half, such as "gazelle aux attaches célestes," "la nuit de ta peau," and the "soleils prochains de tes yeux" (nearby suns of your eyes). Aware that sub-Saharan African cultures view the woman as the intermediary between these two worlds, students might better comprehend the transformation that occurs quite subtly within the poem and perhaps point out other expressions and images that relate to this cultural perspective. At the end of the poem, she returns to the Earth to nourish "les racines de la vie"—a renewal that reflects not only the traditional African viewpoint of the cycle of death and rebirth but also suggests Senghor's perspective of the rebirth of African literary traditions through his portrayal of the "femme noire." As summarized by Rushing (1979), "What is being hymned is woman's closeness to the earth (the repository of the spirits of the ancestors), her biological connections to the rhythms of birth, growth, and death, and her proximity to traditional African culture in a world increasingly besieged by Western mores" (p. 21). Hence, before these Western influences can reduce her to "cendres," Senghor creates a poem lauding the beauty of the African woman that links sub-Saharan African cultural literary practices and perspectives, providing a model for the Négritude writers to follow.

Although this illustration of the 3R Model focuses on a Francophone sub-Saharan text, its openness and flexibility clearly allow its application to literature from any language and any level. The lack of precision within the *Standards* in fact prescribes such a methodology, and the 3R Model thereby follows that example by providing a framework of analysis that can be adapted to each instructor and group of students. Furthermore, the student-centered nature of the 3R Model removes the burden of expertise from the teacher to the students, making this model extremely useful for beginning language instructors and their supervisors by providing continuity within language programs.

Conclusion

At a time when colleges and universities are increasingly under scrutiny to provide evidence of the effectiveness of their foreign language programs through assessable goals and outcomes, it is becoming ever more important for post-secondary educators to familiarize themselves with the national standards and the ways they can be used for curricular innovation and reform. In essence, the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* provide the necessary program goals that can be adapted to each language program while establishing common outcomes within often disparate foreign language departments. A new generation of *Standards*-educated students is arriving on college campuses and it is time to calibrate the goals—particularly those of cross-cultural understanding, linguistic accuracy, and literary analysis—to meet these students' expectations and build on their experiences. As Dorothy James (1998) recommends, “[i]nstead of worrying about whether *Standards*-based students will be adequately prepared to take our college-level courses, we would be better advised for our own sakes to worry about how to prepare ourselves to teach *Standards*-educated students” (p. 5). It is not a matter of lowering our expectations, as James goes on to say, but rather of taking the skills and knowledge of the *Standards* seriously. The 3R Model presented here demonstrates strategies to strengthen the rigorousness of the *Standards* to match a college-level curriculum, with close analyses of literary texts combined with interdisciplinary cultural acquisition. Hopefully such a model, combined with other *Standards*-based approaches that are sure to emerge in the next few years, will convince postsecondary foreign language educators that they must adapt their curriculum to incorporate and build upon the capabilities students acquired through K-12 *Standards*-based programs. Indeed, the survival of college foreign language programs may be determined by their ability to attract and retain students with the kinds of competencies outlined in the *Standards*.

Notes

1. Portions of this article are derived from my doctoral dissertation, “Through western eyes: A model of literary and cultural analysis for teaching francophone Sub-Saharan African literature” (UW-Madison, 2002), under the direction of Sally Sieloff Magnan and Aliko Songolo.

2. See *ADFL Bulletin* 31(1), 70–87 and *ADFL Bulletin* 31(2), 59–79.
3. All translations are my own.

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