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# Culturally Speaking

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CULTURALLY SPEAKING. 2nd Edition. Rhona B. Genzel and Martha Graves Cummings. Boston, Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle, 1994, 195 pp. \$14.00 text, \$15.00 cassette.

As its title suggests, this text is designed for communication, with a particular cultural focus to each chapter. The second edition, like the original, is designed primarily for upper-intermediate to advanced university level ESL students in the U.S. and Canada, but is easily adaptable for use in overseas classrooms. It contains nine chapters, each focusing on a particular area of culture, ranging in scope from getting along with people, to building friendships, participating in social events, and going to the doctor. One of the primary strengths of both editions is the topics the book covers which most books often overlook. Considerations such as what to say to someone at a wedding or a funeral, gestures in North America, and an explanation of coupons and how to use them all fortify the value of this text.

Each chapter contains a variety of activities including those found in most textbooks such as dialogues and discussion questions. Yet other activities such as the *Quick Customs Quiz*, multiple choice questions that ask the student what he or she would do in a particular situation in North America, foster a greater understanding of potentially difficult situations. Instead of a standard vocabulary list containing a variety of unrelated or semi-related words, many chapters contain a list of idioms or expressions of a common theme. For example, one list offers idioms related to gestures (to give someone a hand, to twiddle your thumbs, etc.), another is a list of different types of doctors that a student might need to see.

The text comes with an accompanying cassette, but can easily be used without. Although the text does not specify, teachers who go through chapters quickly should be capable of covering the text in one semester. With a fair amount of supplementary materials it can be used over the course of a year.

There are several changes to this edition that make it a superior text to the original. To enhance the practical use of the text as well as to strengthen awareness of other cultures, the new edition replaces the terms of U.S. and American with the more neutral terms North America and North American to refer to the U.S. and Canada and its citizens throughout the activities. This becomes most apparent in the chapter containing holidays in which all major holidays of both countries are included. The vocabulary lists have also been updated to reflect current idioms and

expressions that have come into fashion. Many of the chapters have been expanded and now include an exercise called "Speaking Out," in which students have the opportunity to openly express their opinions on a variety of somewhat controversial topics such as AIDS, credit card overuse, and the regulation of music lyrics. A wonderfully colorful cover with the many faces of the world helps to reinforce the cultural sensitivity of this text and to draw students into it.

The only fault appearing in the text is that the new text has gone to a smaller font and appears at times to cram too much text onto each page. This could make the learners feel that there is a burden in front of them. However, picking and choosing from the variety of exercises (rather than doing all) can easily alleviate this problem.

The first edition of this text was excellent. Overall, the second is even better. The topics covered are important to allow students the appropriate cultural background to successfully fit into life in North America. Teachers interested in a text with a lot of potential topics for conversation and which broadens the cultural awareness of students should definitely take a look at this text.

### **About the Reviewer**

*Shawn M. Clankie has just completed a two-year visiting lectureship at Kansai Gaidai University in Osaka, Japan. He is now in the graduate linguistics program at the University of Cambridge.*