

Intercultural Resource Pack

Intercultural communication resources for language teachers

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Aims

- To collect as many ideas as possible on the many different components of culture.
- To show how the concept of culture, and its components, can be interpreted differently by different individuals or groups.

Procedure

- 1 If your students are not familiar with mind maps, spend a few minutes developing a simple mind map on the board or overhead projector. Choose a subject you know well, based on the mind map in this activity. For example:

Central topic: media; branching topics: television, radio, newspapers, magazines. Extend if necessary (for example, newspapers can be morning or evening, national or local). Make sure they understand that the idea of a mind map is to loosely link together different ideas and thoughts around a central theme.

Introduce the concept of culture by asking questions like:

- What is culture for you?
- What does it involve?
- What shapes culture?

Invite the students to express their ideas as freely as possible, without too much discussion at this stage.

- 2 Ask the students to look at the mind map, and check that the words are understood and the links clear. Explain that the elements given are not intended to be a complete list, but simply a selection. If necessary, go through a branch such as 'Social life', showing the links through to the final column. Ask individuals for examples of how such aspects as 'gender' (the differing social and work roles of male and female) are viewed in their own cultures.
- 3 Form pairs or groups to do task 1: find suitable words to fit in the spaces numbered 1 to 6. The words should be relatively easy to find, but allow time for discussion, and accept anything which students can explain satisfactorily. Compare and discuss results.
- 4 Do the same for task 2, either in groups as before, or in an open session, asking for ideas on ways of continuing some of the lines outwards. For example, the line Physical – body language – gestures could be continued with 'hands, body, feet', with students then giving examples of how gestures can differ from culture to culture.

Outcomes

Suggestions for the missing words are:

- 1 traffic 2 independence 3 spoken
4 work times 5 home 6 speed

Development

Continuation of the lines could be extensively developed by students who are particularly interested. Some may wish to restructure and add new elements to the mind map as well as extend it.

Many of the topics can lead to discussion of emotive or abstract topics such as driving habits ('traffic'), fashion ('dress'), bluntness ('directness of speech').

Discussion could also centre around the origin of the word 'culture'. It is based on the Latin word 'cultus', meaning growing or cultivating a crop or a plant. This illustrates one important aspect of culture, which is that it is something which has always and will always be changing and modifying itself in both large and small ways.

Encourage students to be open in their definition of culture. It is a very flexible concept, and they should be encouraged to be open and tolerant.

Although this mind map attempts to divide up culture into different parts, students will realise that there is a large amount of overlap, because of the complexity of the subject.

To begin with, students may suggest some obvious differences between cultures such as food, dress and language. Acknowledge that these are indeed differences, at the same time encouraging them to bring out less easily perceived differences such as attitudes to authority or family.

Linked activities

1.2, 1.3

Further reading

For examples of dividing up culture into seen and unseen, implicit and explicit, etc., see chapter 2 ('What is Culture?') of

The Silent Language, by E. T. Hall, 1997, New York: Anchor Books

as well as chapter 4 ('Hidden Culture') of the book *Beyond Culture*, by E.T. Hall, 1997, New York: Anchor Books.

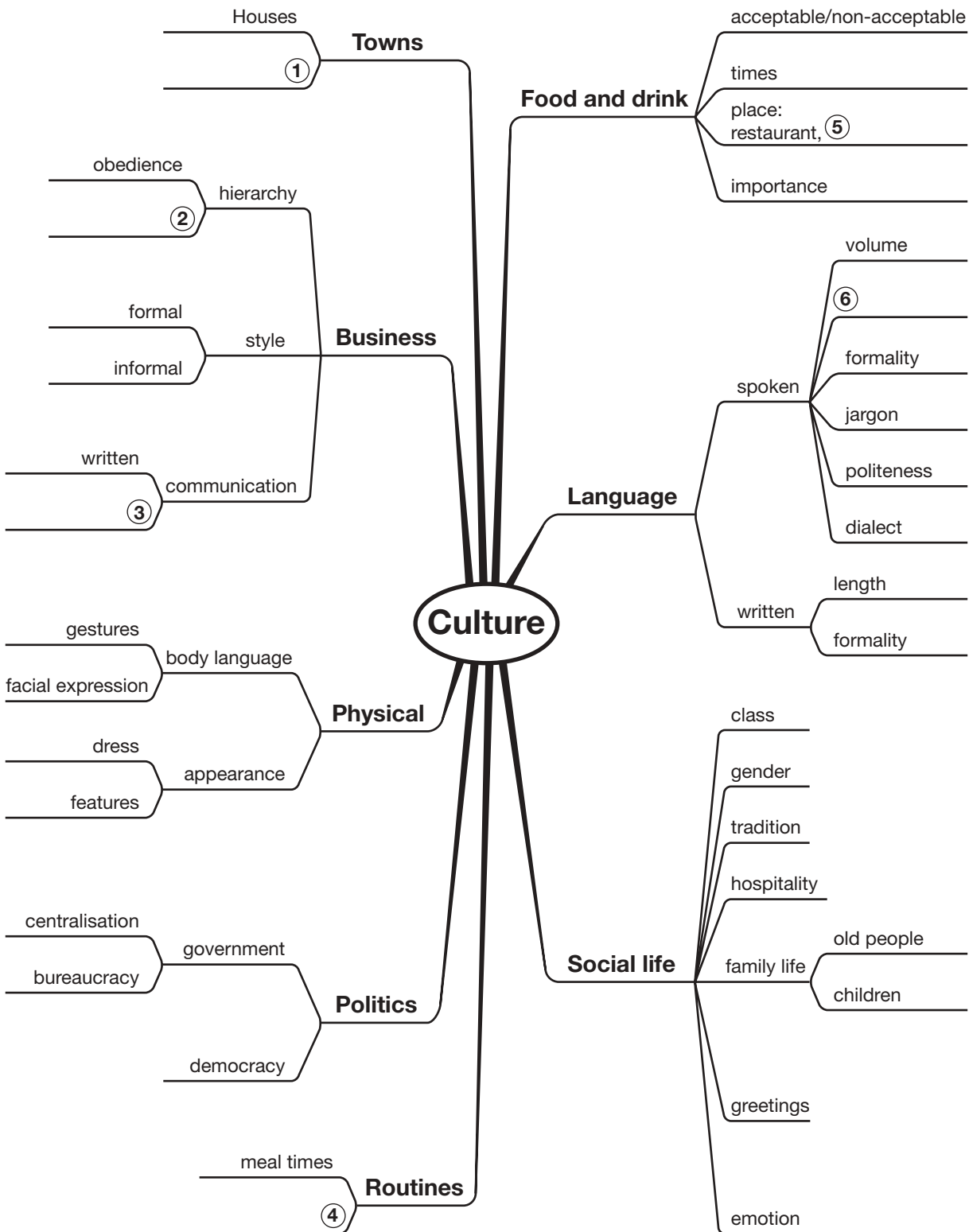
1.1

Brainstorming: What is culture for you?

What is 'culture' for you? The word has many meanings and is open to many interpretations.

The aim of this mind map is to try to identify as many of the components of culture as possible. Follow the lines out from the central word 'culture'.

- 1 Complete the spaces numbered 1 to 6 with a suitable word or phrase.
- 2 Continue the lines outwards with suitable ideas.



1 Why does culture matter?

Aims

- To explore the concept of culture.
- To develop ideas about the main components of culture.

This activity may be used as a shorter alternative to **1.1**, or as an addition to it.

Procedure

- 1 Ask the students if they can give a short definition of what culture is for them.
- 2 Read the introduction to the activity, to raise awareness of the factors listed in the three bullet points. Culture:
 - can be influenced by many factors such as geography, history and climate
 - can be shared not only by the members of a national culture such as the Japanese or the Brazilians, but also by people of one company, one region or one profession
 - can show itself in observable behaviour such as gestures, but also in non-observable phenomena such as attitudes and taboos.
- 3 Ask the students to look at the five definitions of culture. Check any unknown vocabulary and that they understand the ideas.
- 4 Working in pairs or small groups, students should work through tasks 1 to 3. Encourage them to use as a basis for discussion the three bulleted points at the beginning of the activity. Each of the definitions carries expressions relevant to these points, such as:
 - 'conditioned', 'programming' 'learned programmes', 'passed on'
 - 'group of people', 'you', 'the human mind', 'generation', 'a society'
 - 'beliefs, values and norms', 'think, feel, interpret and react', 'action', 'know and believe'.
- 5 Ask volunteers from each pair or group to present and comment on their group's choice with any comments, additions or even internal disagreements.
- 6 Encourage comparison and discussion of the different definitions. This should lead to a more open discussion of the concept and components of culture.

Outcomes

A search for their 'best' definition may be motivating, but the most important thing in this activity is to generate, compare and expand ideas. It will be useful to point out that each of the different definitions focuses on different features:

- A** abstract ideas such as beliefs and knowledge as well as the idea of a collective group
- B** reactions, conditioning and programming
- C** conditioning and programming
- D** actions, conditioning and programming
- E** abstract ideas such as beliefs and knowledge as well as society.

Development

Finding the 'perfect' definition will be difficult if not impossible. Use the definitions to help students become more aware of how cultures develop and how they manifest themselves. If the three concepts shown in the bullet points can be made clear, they will form a good basis for further understanding.

Linked activities

1.1, 1.3

Further reading

A thoroughgoing exercise in the definition of culture was undertaken in

Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions, by A.L. Kroeber, C. Kluckholm and W. Untereiner, 2001, New York: Greenwood Press.

For a more concise discussion with an emphasis on culture's inherent values, see chapter 1 ('Values and Culture') of

Culture's Consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations, by Geert Hofstede, 2001 2nd Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

1.2

Defining the word 'culture'

'Culture' can mean different things to different people.

Think about:

- how culture is created – by geography, climate, history, coincidence?
- what groups of people can be said to have a culture – races, countries, companies?
- in what ways you see, hear or experience it – by behaviour, attitudes, gestures?

Look at these five definitions of culture.

- 1 Select the one you think is closest to your own idea.
- 2 Identify any missing elements in each definition.
- 3 If not satisfied, produce your own, better definition.

A The sum total of all the beliefs, values and norms shared by a group of people.

B The way you have been conditioned in a society to think, feel, interpret and react.

C The collective programming of the human mind.

D A large pool of experience composed of learned programmes for action and passed on from generation to generation.

E All you need to know and believe in order to be accepted in a society.

My definition:

Aims

- To explore how features of cultures range from the easily recognisable to the almost imperceptible.
- To develop an awareness of this range.

Procedure

- 1 Ask students what they know about icebergs in order to elicit the fact that a large part (about seven eighths) is normally below water level. They may observe similar characteristics in, for example, people (some have well-hidden characteristics) or families.
- 2 Check that students understand the significance of the illustration and then present task 1, which deals with national culture in general, rather than one specific culture. Ask them to put each of the components from the list into one of the categories A, B and C. They should work in pairs or small groups to complete the task.
- 3 Take each section – A, B and C – separately, asking a spokesperson from each group to run through their list, and ask for comparisons and comments from other groups.
- 4 Now do task 2, which relates this topic to a specific culture. Form groups to examine one particular culture (the members may be from that culture or not, but should have some experience of it). They should list at least two components from each category which are important in that culture.
- 5 Ask a spokesperson from each group to briefly summarise what the group has discussed. Invite comment and discussion.
- 6 Brainstorm task 3, which will collect any elements identified in the discussions which do not appear in the list.

Outcomes

The categorisation of components should produce a certain amount of agreement, with plenty of scope for differing interpretations and consequent discussion.

This is one possible categorisation:

- A** artefacts, directness of speech in business, driving habits, greetings, emotion shown in public, physical gestures
- B** balance between work and home, corruption, family life, gender – roles of males and females, humour, organisation of companies, personal friendship, press and other media, punctuality in business, social life: public and private
- C** democracy, social organisation and class, treatment of outsiders/foreigners, values and beliefs.

Development

Tasks 2 and 3 give students the opportunity to think about the characteristics of different national cultures. This could lead to work on profiling different cultures (see Linked activities below).

They could also give rise to thinking about the difference between profiling your own culture as opposed to profiling cultures to which you do not belong, for which the Linked activities below will also be a useful follow-up.

Linked activities

1.4, 1.5, 3.3, 3.4

Further reading

Other models which help to visualise culture include Hofstede's pyramid, see pp. 14–17 in

Culture's Consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations, by Geert Hofstede, 2001 2nd Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

and the onion diagram in

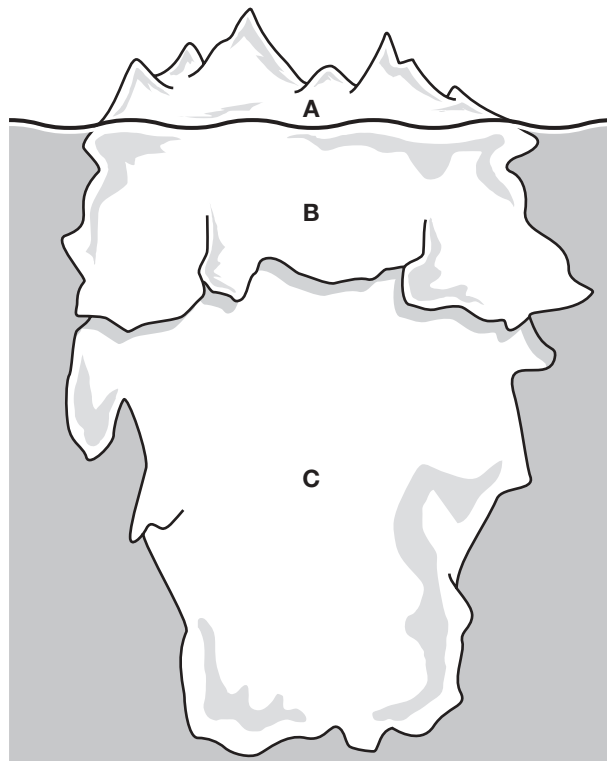
Culturally Speaking: Managing Rapport in Talk Across Cultures, by Helen Spenser-Oatey, 2001, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

1.3

The culture iceberg

When you observe people from a certain culture, some characteristics – such as dress and the way people greet each other – are easy to see. Others are not so easy.

Culture is sometimes compared to an iceberg, some of which is visible, but much of which is difficult to see, or invisible.



1 Look at the list of components of national culture, and place each one in one of the three categories:

A things which you can recognise quite easily

B things which take some time to recognise

C things which you recognise only when you are very familiar with a culture.

Artefacts: art and architecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Humour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Balance between work and home	<input type="checkbox"/>	Organisation of companies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corruption	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal friendship	<input type="checkbox"/>
Democracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical gestures	<input type="checkbox"/>
Directness of speech in business	<input type="checkbox"/>	Press and other media	<input type="checkbox"/>
Driving habits	<input type="checkbox"/>	Punctuality in business	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emotion shown in public	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social life: public and private	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family life	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social organisation and class	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender – roles of males and females	<input type="checkbox"/>	Treatment of outsiders/foreigners	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	Values and beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 Are any of these more important than others in understanding a particular national culture with which you are familiar?

3 Add any other elements which you think are important in defining a national culture you know.

Aims

- To examine the usefulness of cultural briefing for people going to live, work or holiday abroad.
- To identify the most important elements in cultural briefing.

Procedure

- 1 Check students' understanding of the term 'cultural briefing'. If necessary, explain that it consists of finding out about a culture or country you are about to visit or have contact with. Ask for examples of when it might be necessary, such as a first business trip to China or Peru. Ask the students for some elements which they think would be included in a cultural briefing. Discuss these points briefly in pairs or small groups and compare results.
- 2 Present task 1 and briefly check that students understand the words in the list and what they have to do: at this point they are not expected to know the information, simply to think what it would be most useful for them to know, based on their previous conceptions of the target culture. Working in pairs or groups, students select the six most useful things they would like to know. For example, Western students with little knowledge of China may feel that the sheer size of the country will make regional differences important, or that the 'inscrutability' of the Chinese may make silence a useful attribute in some situations.
Ask a spokesperson from each group to present the results, allowing time for comment and discussion.
- 3 Present task 2. This time the target culture should be to some degree familiar, so the exercise should be similar to the previous one, but slightly quicker and easier. Students could work individually. Compare results, asking for explanations of why certain points were chosen. (For example, in culture X, visitors should be aware that pre-planning for meetings is very important.) Present and compare results.
- 4 Present task 3, which may be done for homework. The presentation, by an individual or a group, should take the form of a cultural briefing as described above. If it is written, photocopy the students' work and distribute it to the others.

Outcomes

There is no 'correct' selection of components from the list, as it will depend on individual experience and taste. But make students aware of the fact that some items are practical, such as tipping in restaurants, while others are more abstract, such as respect for authority. Usually the former are easier to identify than the latter. It may be interesting to ask students to compare the balance between the two in the different selections.

Development

Cultural briefing is available in many types of book and document (see Further reading below), and on a growing number of websites. It has an important role in preparing people to cope with living in a new cultural environment. Encourage students to explore this area as much as they wish. However, make them aware that cultural briefing, without direct experience, may also encourage the formation of stereotypical views. Encourage them always to be cautious about views unconfirmed by their own experience.

Linked activities

1.5, 2.5, 2.7, 3.3, 3.4

Further reading

For the cross-cultural trainer it is always important to match the method of training to the kind and amount of information to be covered. For a useful discussion of the difference between briefing, orientation, training and education, see pp. 117–34 ('Modes of cross-cultural training: Conceptualizing cross-cultural training as education') in

International Journal of Intercultural Relations, Vol. 10, by Janet M. Bennett, 1986

and pp. 69–95, 'Intercultural Communication Education and Training Goals, Content and Method', in

International Journal of Intercultural Relations, Vol. 29, No. 1, by Virginia Milhouse, 1996.

1.4

Cultural briefing

Cultural briefing is the process of finding out about another culture, especially in preparation for a period of residence, a business trip or a holiday.

Some types of information can be learnt about beforehand, such as the organisation of the public transport system, and forms of address (Doctor, Mr, etc.), but it may be better to discover others through direct experience.

Look at the list below.

- 1 Choose a country whose culture you know little about, and from the list pick out the six things you would find it most useful to know before you visited the country on a business trip.
- 2 Choose a country whose culture you are familiar with, and do the same.
- 3 Prepare a short introduction (spoken or written) which would be useful for people about to make a business trip to that country.

Attitudes to alcohol

Attitudes to foreigners

Dealing with emergencies

Demography – population spread

Formality of dress in business

Geography

History

Hospitality

Housing standards

Local products

Meal times

Money – paying restaurant bills

Physical distance between people when they speak

Political system

Preparation for meetings

Public transport

Regions

Religion and its importance

Respect for authority

Shop opening times

Silence – its acceptability in conversation and meetings

Thinking – analytical or intuitive?

Tipping in restaurants

Titles – Mrs, Dr, etc., and their equivalents

1.5

Cultural briefing: The Swedes

Aims

To present the idea of cultural briefing and to evaluate its usefulness.

Procedure

- 1 If your students are not from Sweden, introduce this activity by asking them what they know about Sweden.
 - Where is Sweden?
 - What's the landscape like?
 - What about the weather?
 - What do you know about the people?
 - What do you know about Swedish culture?If students are from Sweden, ask them what they think people from other cultures know about Sweden and the Swedes.
- 2 Ask students to read the introduction and task 1. Check that they understand the sentences in the list and what they have to do. Make sure they understand that at this stage they are not being asked to discuss the relative truth of the statements, but simply to choose the six most useful ones for the visitor. It is not necessary to put the six things of most value in order of importance.
- 3 Working individually or in small groups, students should prepare their lists.

Each group should prepare their list on paper, whiteboard, flipchart or OHP transparency. Compare results and ask for justification of each choice.
- 4 If the class contains students with experience or knowledge of Swedish culture, move on to task 2. Invite them to give their views on the validity of the statements, and on how the information they contain can help guide the visitor in everyday life and business. Students do not necessarily have to agree with the statements (those referring to humour and the 'Swedish model' may easily be challenged), but discussion of the issues they raise should be seen as a useful awareness-raising exercise.

Outcomes

This activity should draw out the distinction between geographical and political facts on the one hand, and more subjective areas such as moral or social values on the other. It should show that it can be relatively easy to explain and discuss the former objectively, but the latter require more careful thought.

Suggestions for the two main categories of information:

More objective/practical: 1, 2, 3, 7, 13

More subjective: 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16

The activity should highlight the different degrees of importance attached by students to different types of information. This in turn should show how cultural briefing needs to cover a wide range of topics in order to meet a wide variety of needs.

Development

You may decide to extend this exercise to your students' own cultures. Ask them to create a list for people visiting their countries. Compare lists and see if many common features emerge, such as a majority of practical tips, revealing a pragmatic approach; or subjective ones, showing a more interpretive attitude. Raise the question:

Does the choice reflect on the culture itself, or more on the student choosing the topics?

Linked activities

1.4, 2.5, 2.7, 3.4

Further reading

Culture also influences our judgements as to which and what kind of information is important in any given situation. See

Perception and Identity in Intercultural Communication, by Marshall R. Singer, 1998, Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

For excellent monographs on various cultures, visit the website of the Intercultural Press at <http://interculturalpress.com>

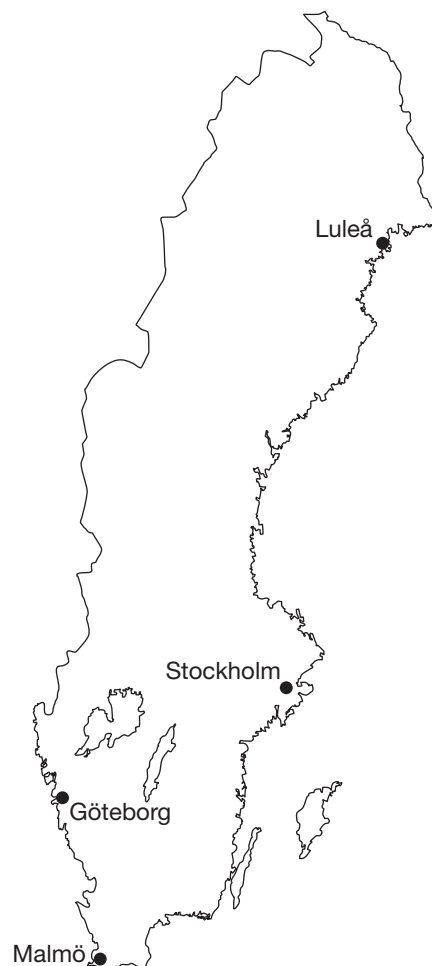
1.5

Cultural briefing: The Swedes

Look at the following information prepared for someone who is about to go on a business trip to Sweden, and who has little previous experience of the culture or the country.

1 Choose from the list below the six things you think they would find most useful, and the six least useful.

- 1 Sweden has almost nine million inhabitants with a low population density (about nine million people in about 450,000 square kilometres).
- 2 It is a kingdom with a constitutional monarch.
- 3 The prime minister and the cabinet are responsible to Parliament.
- 4 The 'Swedish model' or 'middle way' represents a mixture of caring socialism with individual capitalist entrepreneurialism.
- 5 Differences in income are less marked than in many other countries.
- 6 People tend to be shy, reserved and not very talkative.
- 7 Public and private sector services such as transport and restaurants tend to work efficiently.
- 8 Swedes tend to speak English well, and to be well travelled.
- 9 At school they learn to think logically and to behave in a restrained manner.
- 10 Teamwork is common and appreciated.
- 11 Gestures and physical contact are not generally approved of.
- 12 Swedes usually plan appointments well in advance.
- 13 Holidays are usually taken between late June and early August.
- 14 People feel attached to their local region.
- 15 Humour is less important than in some other cultures.
- 16 Sensitive subjects such as sex or religion are often avoided in conversation.



1 Why does culture matter?

2 If you know something about the Swedes, say whether you think the statements are valid or not.

1.6

The global dimension

Aims

- To consider the differences between the conflicting forces of global production and distribution on the one hand, and strong local marketing on the other.
- To show the impact of these forces on business cultures.

This activity may be more demanding than others, given its political dimensions, but it is accessible to younger students through their familiarity with multinational companies which target younger people, like McDonalds and Nokia.

Procedure

- 1 Begin by discussing the word 'globe' with the class. If you have a globe, use it as an aid to get this discussion started. Ask students for any expressions they know which use 'globe' or 'global' and for their meanings (see Outcomes).
- 2 Check that students understand the words used. Ask them to clarify the two main elements mentioned at the beginning – one based on logistics and material things, the other on marketing and people.
- 3 Introduce task 1. The three statements highlight the contrast between:
 - the ever increasing global scale of world commerce, and
 - the reaction against it – the commercial need to recognise the differences between local markets, and the reaction of people to what they consider to be the monolithic nature of multinational companies.

Ask students to work in small groups to study the statements and agree on a group response, if possible. Ask a spokesperson from one group to tell the class what they have decided, and invite others in the class to comment and discuss.
- 4 Introduce task 2 with a short discussion of the forces referred to in **a** and **b**. For example:
 - a** McDonalds, Nike, Nokia and Coca-Cola, who through their branding encourage local people to accept a product and therefore a lifestyle which will owe more to its origins (often, but not always, American) than to local preference.
 - b** the increase in local representation, growth of local craft work, the encouragement of minority languages and local dialects, and the popularity of local clubs and organisations for activities such as traditional dancing, local history and folklore.
- 5 Ask students to work in their small groups again for a few minutes and then return to a whole class discussion. Draw up a list on the board or overhead projector, and use it to speculate about the world in 20 years' time or more.

Outcomes

Terms mentioned in Procedure 1 may include:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| global competition | global view |
| global corporation | global village |
| global demand | global warming |
| global economy | globalisation |
| global market | glocalisation |
| global marketing | go global |
| | operate globally |

Development

For students particularly interested in this subject, further discussion could be encouraged by highlighting its paradox.

To minimise costs, large companies need standardised production methods and uniform products, and to achieve large sales they need as big a market as possible. But they also need to appeal to a wide variety of different markets. You can raise the question of 'branding', whereby certain products (e.g. Pepsi-Cola and Adidas) are made to be instantly recognisable, and so can be sold in the same form worldwide. Global branding is bad for local cultures, although marketing strategies often have to allow for local variations.

Other issues which could interest students are:

- sport sponsorship by multinationals
- worldwide sports tournaments.

Linked activities

1.7, 1.10, 4.8, 4.9

Further reading

For a discussion on global strategy and culture, see pp. 3–14 in

International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior, by Nancy Adler, 2001, Cincinnati: South-Western College Publishing.

One way out of the dilemma of standardised production versus multiple markets has been offered in

Mass Customization: The New Frontier in Business Competition, by Joseph Pine, 1999, Harvard Business School Press.

1.6

The global dimension

One of the biggest challenges facing multinational companies in the 21st century is to 'think global, act local' – how to be on the one hand:

- a global supplier of quality goods and services using a closely coordinated supply chain and organisation

and, on the other

- a local company whose people speak the customer's language.

It is claimed that the first of these phenomena – the global organisation – is destroying local cultures by imposing one standard way of buying, thinking and acting. Or, at least, that cultures are becoming more similar to each other.

What do you think?

- 1 For each of the following statements on this subject, show how much you agree or disagree by putting the appropriate number in the box:
5 = Agree strongly 4 = Agree 3 = No opinion 2 = Disagree 1 = Disagree strongly
Compare and discuss your results.

1 The further the world shrinks, the greater the need for cultures to be different.

2 Modern civilisation requires that all human societies will become increasingly similar.

3 As economies get closer, cultures get further apart.

- 2 Give examples of how national cultures are:
- a becoming more and more like each other, for example, through the effects of worldwide publicity, franchises and sponsorships on the way people dress, eat and behave
 - b asserting their own identities, for example, in the way people speak, the traditional goods they produce and the local organisations they form.

Aims

- To examine the changes that have taken place in the world economy and society in the recent past.
- To explore the impact this has had on national cultures and on behaviour.

Procedure

- 1 Introduce the idea of how, for many people, contact with other nationalities and cultures has increased because of easier international travel and communication. Ask for examples, such as better telecommunications, satellite TV, the internet, cheaper and more frequent flights, more tourist facilities, and increased educational exchanges. Ask for ideas as to how this might change people's attitudes as well as their behaviour. Travel broadens the mind – or does it?
- 2 Introduce task 1. Ask students to read through the statements and make sure the meaning is clear. Most of them refer to the world of business, but there are also references to education (3), customer service (9), politics (12) and society in general (15). Form pairs or small groups and ask them to read and respond to the statements, trying to produce one set of answers for the group, but allowing individual differences if preferred.
- 3 Ask a spokesperson from each group to report back the results. Either ask each group to illustrate the results on the whiteboard, and then compare; or go through each statement one by one, comparing each group's results. Encourage discussion.
- 4 Introduce task 2. Each group should draw up a list after a brief discussion. Changes may have been observed in the students' own lifetime, or they may have heard parents or elderly people comparing life in their youth with life today. Try to bring in examples both from the world of work and from society in general.

Outcomes

In task 1, a wide range of opinions could be expressed by students, and discussion should be encouraged. Items like numbers 5 and 6 may be difficult to challenge, but some, like 4, 7, 8, 14 and 15, are more contentious.

In task 2, responses will vary from group to group, but encourage the comparison in attitudes (more informed, broad-minded, tolerant?) as well as appearance and behaviour (smarter, more informal, better communicators?).

Development

Students should be encouraged to challenge simplified views of 'glocalisation' (global activities with local marketing presence) and 'globalphobia' – the idea that individual cultures are all being swallowed up by one global culture. Also raise the question of whether increased contact between cultures actually leads to easier and better relations. Get students to give examples.

Focus on the implications of some of the phenomena mentioned here, and the effects on everyday life. This could lead to a discussion of which developments have been for the better and which for the worse.

Linked activities

1.6, 1.9, 1.10, 4.8

Further reading

The effects of globalisation on culture (and vice versa) are discussed in pp. 35–51, 'Communication in a Global Village', by Dean Barnlund, in

Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Selected Readings, edited by Milton J. Bennett, 1998, Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

1.7

The effects of global business

Technical, commercial and political developments over the last few years have affected society in general, and business in particular.

- 1 Look at the following statements which compare the state of business today with that of 25 years ago.
 - a Put the appropriate number in the box:
1 = True 2 = False 3 = Don't know
 - b For those that you think are true, explain how they affect and change people's attitudes and behaviour.

Compared with 25 years ago ...

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Manufacturing companies source their materials from a wider range of suppliers. <input type="checkbox"/> | 8 Company organisation has become simpler. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Branding of products is done more on a worldwide scale. <input type="checkbox"/> | 9 Customers expect to be treated more on their own terms. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Educational exchanges give people more experience of living in other countries. <input type="checkbox"/> | 10 Employees of large companies must expect to change their place of work more regularly. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Small companies have less hope of surviving. <input type="checkbox"/> | 11 Lifelong employment with one company is less likely. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 Improved telecommunications have made life easier for most companies. <input type="checkbox"/> | 12 Political barriers between east and west are less strong. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 Travel is easier and more accepted by business people. <input type="checkbox"/> | 13 Projects require people to work more harmoniously together. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 Computers have led to higher standards of performance at work. <input type="checkbox"/> | 14 Large companies resemble each other more and more. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | 15 Business people understand other cultures better. <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 2 Explain briefly the four things that have changed most in your own national culture in the last 25 years or so.

Aims

- To examine the expectations people have when meeting people from other cultures.
- To see how these expectations can affect the attitudes and behaviour of both sides.

Procedure

- 1 Ask the students to imagine that they are about to meet a person they have never seen before – a surprise visitor or a long-lost relative, for example, or a person they have often heard spoken of but never met. What expectations would they have, and what would they be based on? Also ask the students what they expected to see and experience when moving to a new school or a new company. What were their expectations of their future colleagues? Do we all form the same picture?

Draw out the fact that these ideas are usually very subjective, sometimes based on false information or emotion. Draw the parallel with our expectations of people from other cultures: our ideas of them are often based on scanty information or experience, but often affect the way we behave towards them.

- 2 Ask students to read task 1, and check that they understand the words and the task: they should select two different nationalities with which they are familiar and try to predict what preconceived ideas each of the two characters will have about the other. At this stage do not raise the question of where these ideas come from. Form pairs or groups to do the task, and ask a spokesperson to report back. Discuss and compare results.
- 3 Introduce task 2, which is simply a discussion of the usefulness or otherwise of expectations. Though they are a useful and natural way of preparing for an unknown situation, they carry the possible dangers of inaccuracy, prejudice and stereotyping. Some examples of both useful and potentially harmful expectations may well have come out in the preceding discussions.

Outcomes

Task 1 will not yield uniform results, but should illustrate the point made in task 2 that expectations can have both positive and negative effects.

Development

The discussions above should lead to a consideration of what we think about other nationalities and other cultures before we actually come into contact with them. It should raise the question of prejudice and stereotypes. Everybody makes assumptions about people or situations with which they are not familiar. These assumptions are a necessary part of preparation, and can contribute to a successful contact. They can also lead to the creation of stereotypes and prejudices which are forced onto the situation, and which may clash with the reality. A person who sees ready-formed attitudes in another may well find them offensive, particularly if, as can often be the case with stereotypes, those views are negative.

Linked activities

1.4, 1.5, 2.5, 2.8, 6.4

Further reading

The crucial role that expectations play in our experience of other cultures is explained in *The Art of Crossing Cultures* (2nd Edition), by Craig Storti, 2001, Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

See also:

Understanding Culture's Influence on Behavior, by Richard Brislin, 1999, Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

1.8

Expectations

Before meeting someone from another culture, people often form ideas of what to expect. These may be founded on fact, on hearsay or on imagination.

These expectations could be a useful form of preparation, or they could lead to stereotyped ideas which get in the way of successful communication.

- 1 Think of two different nationalities. Imagine what qualities people from each of those countries would expect to find in the other before they met. Choose from the list below, but add any others you think likely.

communication in short sentences	little direct eye contact
direct style of communication	lots of talk about food
displays of emotion	lots of gesticulation
emotional volatility	loud speech
emphasis on entertainment	periods of silence
extrovert behaviour	quiet speech
extreme politeness	reserved behaviour
rapid speech	slowness to speak
indirect style of communication	talkativeness
limited body language	

- 2 Do you think that expectations that you have before you meet someone from a different culture are generally helpful or unhelpful?

Aims

- To examine an example of a situation in which two different cultures have to work together.
- To think about how to make such a situation work.

Procedure

- 1 Ideally, students should read the case study before coming to the lesson. Explain the aim of this activity, which is based on a real business case.
- 2 Check that students understand the text and the list of possible actions. In task 1, it is worth noting that the suggestions fall into two broad categories: steps to modify Dave's behaviour, and steps to modify that of the local company.
- 3 Divide the class into pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the pros and cons of each of the possible actions listed, prioritise them and make any additions they feel necessary. Each group should appoint one person to take brief notes.
- 4 Ask the spokesperson from each group to present their group's ideas by summarising the main points. Allow time for questions and comments.
- 5 Encourage comparisons and discussion of each group's ideas.

Outcomes

It should be possible for students to arrive at a realistic list of actions which should include opportunities for development for both the Canadian and the Taiwanese groups. It might be stressful for everybody involved in the project to include all the options.

Discussion of possible actions that Dave could take should lead to an awareness of the way in which normal business management problems can become more complicated where there is a strong cultural element – in this case the clear contrast between Canadian and Taiwanese styles. This activity also provides scope for experiencing a real decision-making situation.

Development

Students should work in the same groups to prepare a short action plan for Dave and his company. The form and length of the report should be adapted to the experience of the group. Each group should prepare its action plan on paper, whiteboard, flipchart, or OHP transparency. Written reports can be distributed between the groups for comparison.

Linked activities

1.7, 1.10, 6.11

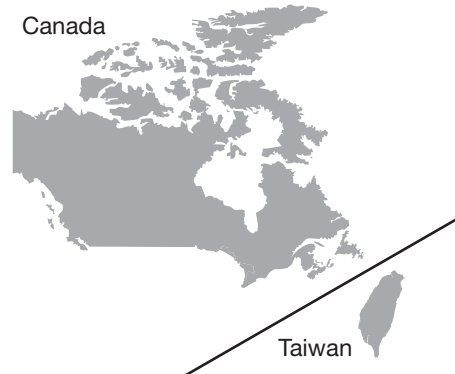
Further reading

For further exercises and case studies see *Intercultural Business Communication*, by Robert Gibson, 2002, Oxford: Oxford University Press and also pp. 207–214, 'Case Study: Salman Rushdie and The Satanic Verses', by Janet M. Bennett in *Intercultural Sourcebook: Cross-Cultural Training Methods* (Volume 1), by Sandra M. Fowler and Monica G. Mumford, 1995, Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

1.9

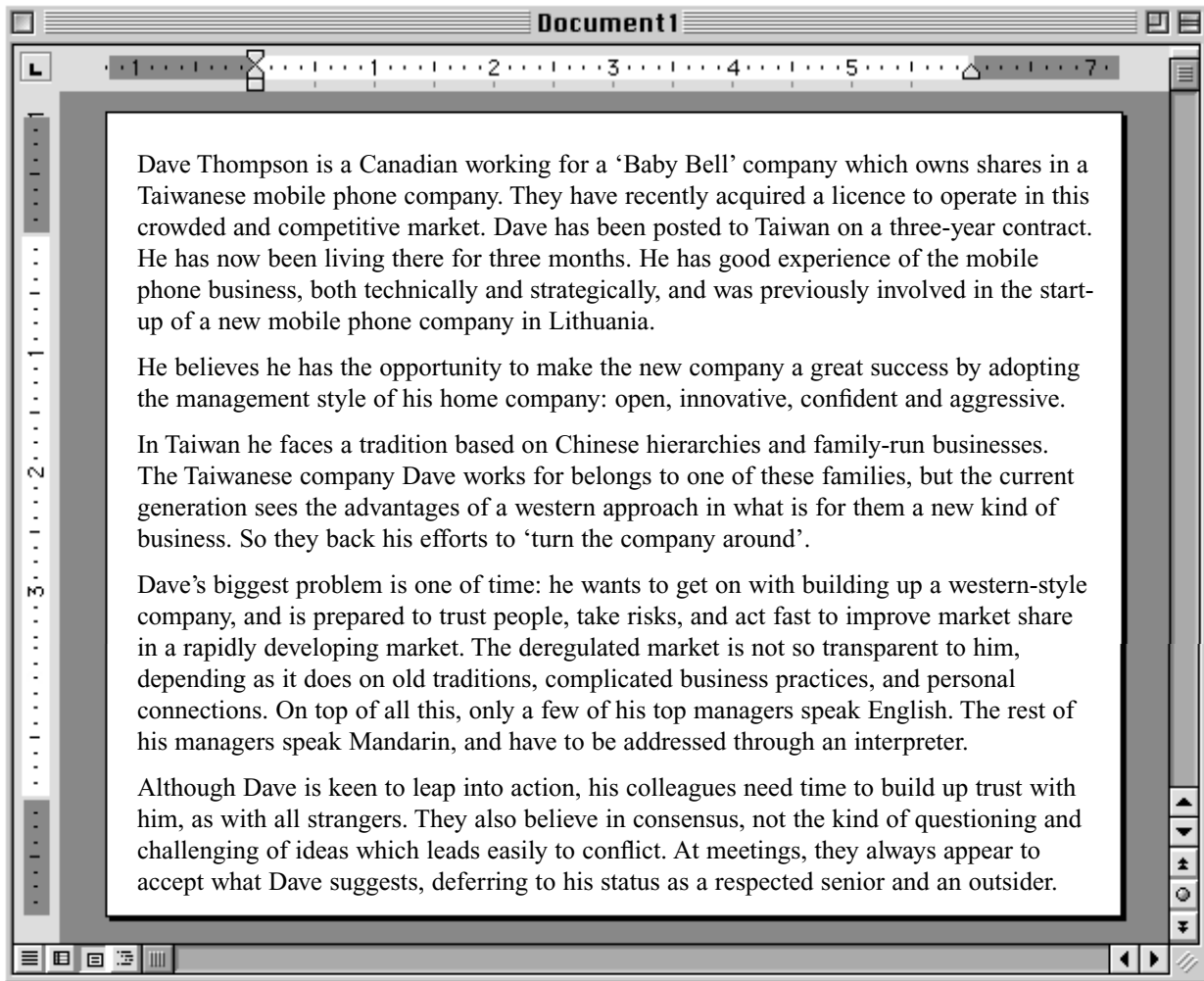
Case study: One person's experience

This case study exemplifies a contrast between two working cultures: Canadian and Taiwanese.



Read the text and the list of possible actions. Then make recommendations as to what the Canadian should do.

- 1 Choose from the list below those activities you think he should carry out.
- 2 Rank them in order of priority.
- 3 Add any other actions you think necessary.



Dave decides he must do something. He draws up the following list of possible actions:

- learn Mandarin
- bring in more Western managers
- organise lectures for his employees on Western business practices
- learn more about Taiwan
- slow down his approach
- send some of his managers to work in North America
- organise a one-day seminar on business cultures
- organise a meeting at which all the cultural problems are discussed
- bring in a local management consultant

1 Why does culture matter?

1.10 Case study: Combining global and local

Aims

- To show how companies need both a global and a local approach to business.
- To analyse measures helping a company to meet the challenges of global business.

Procedure

- 1 Students could read the case study and fill in the boxes before coming to the lesson. Check that students understand the words and what they have to do.
- 2 Form pairs or small groups to fill in or check the contents of the boxes.
Ask a spokesperson from one group to read out their replies, and invite comments and discussion.
- 3 With an experienced group, ask students to look at task 2, spending as much time as their experience allows on prioritising and adding to the list. The results could be summarised in a short presentation.

Outcomes

Some of the actions contain elements of both objectives, but a possible classification is:

1 A 2 B 3 A 4 A 5 B 6 B 7 A 8 A 9 B
10 B 11 B 12 B

But disagreement is likely and will fuel discussion.

Development

Where students have considerable experience of international business, it could be useful to compare the relative value of practical issues, such as cheap sourcing and efficient production and logistics, with the more long-term issues of investing time and resources in developing positive attitudes in people.

Linked activities

1.6, 1.7, 1.9, 4.2, 4.8

Further reading

See 1.9.

1.10

Case study: Combining global and local

Two large vehicle manufacturers – one from Sweden, the other from the USA – have set up a joint venture to produce trucks worldwide.

In a very competitive, low-margin market, they have two objectives:

- A** to minimise costs and maximise efficiency
- B** to develop strong sales and a positive image in a wide range of developed and developing markets.

They decide on a number of steps to achieve these objectives.

- 1 Read the actions 1–12 below, and write A or B in each box, depending on which of the above objectives is being followed.
- 2 Add any further actions you consider useful, and rank the final list in order of priority.

1	Encourage managers to speak at least two languages, and to understand at least one more.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Run briefing sessions to make managers aware of the diversity of the market and of the workforce.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Standardise and share logistical systems with their parent companies.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Source and purchase materials and components together, using the resources of the parent companies.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Encourage innovative products for each market.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Have a strong local marketing force which identifies national and local needs and preferences, and adapts the standard products to them.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Manufacture standard platforms as a basis for all their vehicles.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Mass produce all components which are not seen by the customer.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Set up a number of focus groups to examine customer requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Organise seminars on customer-focused business.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Make sure that top and middle management all work for some time in countries other than their own.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Organise seminars for middle management to examine the challenge of working with colleagues and customers from a wide range of cultural backgrounds.	<input type="checkbox"/>