



Lesson 7. Culture

“When overseas, you learn more about your country than you do the place you are visiting”

– **Clint Borgen, American Activist**

- 1 A. What do you miss most about your own culture when you go abroad?
- B. What is cultural awareness important for business people? Give examples.
- C. What is culture? Choose the four factors that you think are the most important in creating a culture. Give your reasons.

climate	historical events	language
architecture	behavior and attitudes	institutions
religion	social customs and traditions	cuisine
geography	ceremonies and festivals	arts

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D. Do you think cultures are becoming more alike? Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Give reasons for your answer. Think about:

- ❖ improved communications
- ❖ global business
- ❖ Cheap foreign travel
- ❖ Trading groups (such as the EU, ASEAN, USAN)

E. How important are these things when doing business in your country? Are they important a) important b) not important c) best avoided?

- ❖ exchanging business cards
- ❖ shaking hands
- ❖ bowing
- ❖ Kissing
- ❖ socializing with contacts
- ❖ small talk before meetings
- ❖ accepting interruption
- ❖ being formal or informal
- ❖ punctuality
- ❖ humor
- ❖ eye contact
- ❖ giving presents
- ❖ being direct (saying actually what you think)
- ❖ using first names



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2. Cultural Differences – Quiz

Facts:

- You are doing practical training in London.
- Your mentor is Phil, a 40-year old Londoner.
- Phil doesn't speak German and has never met people from a German speaking country before.

What would you do in the following situations?

1) Small-talk – you want to break the ice. Which topic would you choose?

- a) family b) weather c) politics

2) There is a difference of opinion between you and Phil. How do you tell him that he is not right?

- a) You are not right.
b) b) I think this is not true.
c) c) I understand your point of view, but ...

3) Phil accidentally treads on your foot.

How do you react?

- a) Sorry. b) Never mind. c) Ouch!





7. 1 Listen to the first part of the interview with Jeff Toms, Marketing Director at the international briefing center at the Farmham Castle, Surrey. He talks about training courses which prepare people for doing business internationally. Complete the list of issues that he mentions.

Issues covered by the training Course

- (1) awareness.
- Political issues of (2) And (3) overseas.
- Dealing with, (4)
- Schooling; (5) care; international security
- How to negotiate(6)
- Communication
 - Telephone - e-email - the (7)
 - Presentation skills
 - the words you use
 - The (8) you use.
 - how to deal with (9) and answers
 - Managing your (10)





7. 2 Listen to the second part of the interview. Jeff talks about the personality traits that help in doing business internationally. Which three personality traits does he consider to be important?

7. 3 Listen to the third part of the interview. Which two cultural aspects does Jeff mention and what does he say about them.

- Entertaining
- Time
- Gift – giving
- Greetings
- Hierarchy
- Dress

3. Which country would you like to visit on business? What would you like to know about the culture of this country before visiting?

Think of some questions to ask. Use the topics listed above to help you. Add some others of your own.



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4. Choose the most appropriate word in the box to complete the idioms in the sentences below.

eye eye foot water water fire ice -end

1. I was *thrown in at the deep* _____ when my company sent me to run the German office. I was only given two days' notice to prepare.
2. We *don't see eye to* _____ about relocating our factory. The Director wants to move production to the Far East, but I want it to remain in Spain.
3. I *got into hot* _____ With my boss for wealthy casual clothes to the meeting with our Milanese customers.
4. Small talk is one way to *break the* _____ when meeting someone for the first time.
5. I really *put my* _____ *in it* when I met our Japanese partner. Because I was nervous, I said "Who are you?" rather than "How are you?"
6. I *get on like a house on* _____ with our Polish agent; we like the same things and have the same sense of humour.
7. When I visited China for the first time I was *like a fish out of* _____ . Everything was so different, and I couldn't read any of the signs.
8. My first meeting with our overseas clients was a *real* _____ -*opener*. I had not seen that style of negotiations before.

5. Consider the context of each idiom in Exercise A and write down those which have

- a) A positive meaning _____ b) a negative meaning _____

6. Match the idioms in Exercise A to the correct meaning a) to h)

- a) given a difficult job to do without preparation _____.
- b) quickly have a friendly relationship with someone _____.
- c) feel uncomfortable in an unfamiliar situation _____.
- d) say or do something without thinking carefully, so that you embarrass or upset someone _____.
- e) to disagree with someone _____.
- f) an experience where you learn something surprising or something you did not know before _____.
- g) make someone you have just met less nervous and more willing to talk _____.
- h) to get into trouble _____.

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7. Read the article again and answer as many of the following questions as you can.

Article A: Italy

Conversation

Lively conversation is common in Italy. Welcome topics of conversation include Italian architecture, art and films, sports (especially football), opera and praising the hospitality of the country! It is best to avoid criticising Italian culture, even if your Italian counterparts are doing so.

Gift-giving

Don't give a business gift until you receive one. Your gift should be a well-known brand name. Gifts of alcohol or crafts from your own country are often good choices. Other possible gifts are fine pens, a framed print or picture, silver key rings or calculators. Avoid giving gifts showing your company's logo.

Entertaining

Hospitality plays a key role in Italian business culture. Regardless of how you feel, refusing an invitation of any kind may give offence. The business breakfast is almost unheard of. Rare exceptions may be found in the major cities. Business dinners involve only a small, exclusive group. If you are the host, check with your Italian contact before making any invitations. Lunch is still the main meal of the day in most areas of the country. It is usually served after 12:30 p.m. and often has many courses.

Article B: United Arab Emirates

Conversation

The hosts usually set the subject of conversation. They will normally begin with polite enquiries (How are you? How are you enjoying your visit? etc.). If others arrived before you, your hosts will often tell you the subject of the previous conversation and invite you to contribute.

Gift-giving

Giving gifts in the UAE is more complex than in other countries. This is partly because of the mixture of nationalities: each nationality has different tastes and customs. Also, nearly everything can be purchased in the UAE less expensively than elsewhere in the world. As a gesture of respect, your host is likely to open and carefully examine your gift in your presence. It is important that your gift is the best you can afford to avoid embarrassment.

Entertaining

Sharing a meal is considered the best way for people to get to know one another. Locals often entertain at home but they will accept a foreigner's invitation to a hotel or restaurant. Hospitality in the UAE is very important but should not be interpreted as future commercial success. There are local customs to be aware of, for example, it is considered bad manners to either eat or offer something with the left hand.

Adapted from www.executive.com

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7A. In which countries or countries:

1. Do people talk in a lively way? _____?
2. Do people ask questions about your personal life? _____?
3. Does the host invite you to comment on a previous conversation?
_____?
4. Do the host like to hear praise about their country? _____?
5. Do people like gifts with your company logo? _____?
6. Is it more important to give a more expensive gift to the most senior
person _____?
7. Does your host open your gift immediately? _____?
8. Is it a mistake to offer an expensive gift? _____?
9. Is it a bad manners to refuse an invitation to a meal? _____?
10. Is it rude to refuse to sing when asked? _____?
11. is it important to be punctual for lunch or dinner? _____?
12. Is it important not to offer food with your left hand? _____?

**7B. What advice would you give a business visitor to your country?
You could mention conversation, gifts, entertainment,
appointments and business dress.**



7. 4 Listen to the conversation between two people who have recently met. What is wrong? How can it be improved?

8. In what business situations would you use the words and expressions below? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

Congratulations!

Cheers!

Make yourself at home.

Help yourself.

I don't mind.

Excuse me.

Sorry.

It's on me.

I'm afraid...

Please...

Could you...

This sounds good.

9. What would you say in the following situations?

1. You hear someone's name when you are introduced to them.
2. You have to refuse an invitation to dinner with a supplier.
3. You are offered food you hate.
4. You want to end the conversation in a diplomatic way.
5. You have to greet a visitor.
6. You have to introduce two people to each other.

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7. You offer to pay for a meal.
8. You have to propose for a toast.
9. Your colleague has been made redundant.
10. You arrive half an hour late for the meeting.

10. What can you say in the first five minutes of meeting someone? Choose the best answer a) to j) for each of the questions 1 to 10.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Is it your first visit to the Far East? | a) At the Peninsula hotel. |
| 2. Oh really. What do you do? | b) Nearly ten years. |
| 3. How long have you been there? | c) No, I come here quite often |
| 4. Have you been to Hongkong before? | d) No, this is my first trip. |
| 5. Business or pleasure? | e) I'm the marketing director for a small import - export company. |
| 6. How long have you been here? | f) Business, I'm afraid. |
| 7. How long are you staying? | g) Till tomorrow night. |
| 8. Where are you staying? | h) A week. |
| 9. What's the food like? | i) I really like it. There's so much to do. |
| 10. So, what do you think of Hongkong? | j) It's very good, but eating in the Peninsula can be quite expensive. |

11. In your opinion, which of these items of advice for successful conversation are useful and which are not?

1. Listen carefully
2. Give only yes or no answers
3. Interrupt a lot
4. Be polite
5. Ask questions
6. Stay silent
7. Keep eye contact
8. Be friendly

12. Read the notes on US business protocol. How does each piece of advice compare with the situation in your country?

Timing

- You must arrive at business meeting on time. Only a 15-minute delay because of traffic problems is allowed.

Greetings and Polite conversation

- You must shake hands during introduction
- You don't have to make a lot of small talk. Americans like to get down to business quickly.
- You mustn't ask about business woman's marital status. It is considered rude.

Business cards

- You don't have to change business cards unless there is a reason to get in touch later.

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Smoking

- You mustn't smoke in many public spaces. Most business, cabs, and many restaurants nowadays have a no-smoking policy.

Gift Giving

- Business gifts shouldn't be given until after the business negotiations are over.
- You mustn't give an expensive business gift. It may cause embarrassment.

Entertaining at home.

- You should write a short thank you note to your host and hostess if you are entertained at their home. You don't have to give a gift. But flowers or wine are appreciated.

Advice

- ❖ We can use *should or shouldn't* to give or ask for advice.
Ex. You **should** learn a song to sing before going to Korea.
- ❖ For strong advice we can use *must or mustn't*.
Ex. You **mustn't** refuse invitation to dinner in Italy. It may cause offense.

Obligation / Necessity

- ❖ We often use *must* when the obligation comes from the person speaking or writing.
Ex. We **must** buy a gift for our visitor.
- ❖ We use *mustn't* to say something is prohibited or is not allowed.
Ex. You **mustn't** use a mobile phone in an airplane.

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- ❖ We often use *have to* to show that the obligation comes from another person or institution. Not the speaker.
Ex. You **have to** get a visa to enter the country. (This is the law)

Lack Obligation / Lack Necessity

- ❖ *don't have to* and *mustn't* are very different:
don't have to – it is not necessary

13. Choose the most appropriate verb. There are some situations where both verbs are possible. Can you say why?

1. Visitors *must* / *should* carry an identity card at all times when travelling.
2. Passengers *mustn't* / *don't have to* smoke anywhere on the aircraft.
3. All personnel *should* / *must* wear their badge while in the building.
4. The visitors *don't have to* / *mustn't* enter the radioactive zones unless authorized.
5. I think you *should* / *must* learn how to negotiate in Chinese. It would be a good skill if you had the time to learn it.
6. My boss *doesn't have to* / *shouldn't* travel so much – he is looking ill.
7. When going to a new country to do business, you *should* / *must* do some research on the etiquette and taboos of the host country.
8. Monday is a public holiday. I *mustn't* / *don't have to* work.

- ▶ Study the following video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkUVe6KzAJU>

Individualist vs. Collectivist Cultures

*Reference:
Market Leader
new edition.*