

# **Mirrors and windows**

An intercultural communication textbook

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and  
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**European Centre for Modern Languages**

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*To the memory of John Strange*

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## Table of contents

Foreword .....	5
Looking at cultures .....	7
How to use this book .....	9
1. Rock around the clock .....	11
2. You are what you eat? .....	19
3. Conversation and ... silence .....	29
4. Men and women, girls and boys – Gendered identities .....	39
5. All you need is love (?) .....	49
6. Bringing up baby .....	59
7. Up in the morning and off to school ... ..	69
Teachers' notes .....	81
Annotated bibliography .....	101



## Foreword

This intercultural communication textbook is the result of the research and development work carried out by one of the networks in Project 1.2.3 of the medium-term programme of activities supported by the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, Austria. The main aim of the project as a whole has been to incorporate intercultural communication training into teacher education in Europe. The main objective of this textbook is to assist trainers and teachers in achieving this aim by providing teaching materials that focus on intercultural learning. (For the results of the research conducted by the other networks in the project see the research articles and sample testing materials published in *Incorporating intercultural communicative competence in language teacher education*, ECML, 2003.)

The authors of this textbook all work in teacher education in their respective countries (Austria, Hungary and the Netherlands). As teacher educators we have encountered many trainee teachers and language learners who were highly inexperienced intercultural travellers. Although their grammatical and lexical competence in the foreign language may have been outstanding, they did not know how to handle cultural difference. Intercultural experiences pose inevitable challenges to one's personal identity and communication skills. One has to learn how to deal with unexpectedness, ambiguity and otherness as well as the resulting culture bumps or culture shock. The knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for successful intercultural communication have to be observed, discussed and practised. This textbook wishes to help the trainer, the teacher and the learner in this process by encouraging culture-general discussions about culture with a small "c" and by using a reflective approach.

We believe that it is of great importance to increase intercultural understanding in the world, and incorporating intercultural communicative competence in teacher training programmes should be one of the first steps in this process. Making intercultural communication training an integral part of teacher education is probably one of the biggest challenges of our times, but if successful, it would have a beneficial multiplier effect in the field of education and beyond.

Ildikó Lázár



## Looking at cultures

We all belong to and are moulded by a series of interlocking cultures, which influence the way we view the world, make decisions and interact with others. The aim of this book is to help you reflect on your own and others' cultures and the relationships between them; that is, you should first look in the mirror at your own culture, and out of the window at other cultures you are interested in or want to interact with.

It is easy to imagine that cultural differences all change at national frontiers. In the past, the nation-state was much more influential than it is today. Maps and atlases emphasised that your country and your continent were central, and the rest of the world was peripheral. Only thirty years ago, the apparent and obvious differences between European national cultures were enormous. People dressed, ate and shopped in instantly recognisable and totally different styles. You should be aware, though, that cultures change, sometimes quite quickly, especially as they come into contact with other cultures, which they do more quickly and frequently today than ever.

Nowadays, the inside of one McDonald's is much the same anywhere; the customers dress the same, listen to much the same music, use the same computers and access the same Internet sites, and watch the same TV programmes (though they speak different languages, of course). But the similarities are not very relevant. Deeper cultural differences are just as strong and influential as they always were, in particular with respect to people's attitudes, beliefs and behaviour. Europe is clearly developing its own "international" culture in some areas, though fortunately cultures retain their distinctiveness. People still queue, order, argue, complain and make friends quite differently in those fast-food restaurants that look the same on the surface all over the world. The stories, tasks and exercises in this book are designed to illustrate and explore this phenomenon.

Throughout most of the world, cultural norms vary widely according to perceived social position or level of wealth and income. But these differences are often rather trivial, and people who worry about what to wear to a wedding or which knife and fork to use are concerning themselves with rather superficial matters. Similarly, it is not tremendously important if a Dutch friend of the opposite sex kisses you three times or a French friend twice. These things are superficial but have their function as a means of differentiation between groups. Even a school, a family, a business or a club can all have internal cultural norms and values which influence members' behaviour and reactions, both within and outside these groups.

National cultures have a huge influence on people's values, attitudes and behaviours and most of the following exercises can be approached on this level. Nowadays, people

from different cultures have to negotiate, interact with, understand and accept the behaviour and reactions of people from quite different cultures. Thus it is very important that there is an awareness of cultural differences since multicultural groupings are becoming more common in professional settings and elsewhere around the globe. This book, for example, was written by people from very different cultures who share a common academic background and a common goal.

In making statements about cultures, you have to generalise, of course. No discussion is possible otherwise. You have to – initially – rely on stereotypes to learn about the world, but it is important to keep asking questions and accepting information which might contradict the stereotype. The authors of this book strongly believe that there are absolutely no “right” or “wrong” values or norms, provided, that is, that human rights are respected. All the exercises below encourage you to think about cultural differences in preparation for intercultural encounters. Each of these encounters will be quite different and whether you adapt to the cultural norms of the person you are negotiating with or to the norms of a third culture, or whether you compromise, all depend on your personality and experience, and those of your negotiating partner. What matters most is that you are aware of cultural differences and are prepared to deal with them in a non-judgmental way. It is natural to feel more comfortable with your own culture. Realising that other people might also feel the same, you should not dismiss the cultures of others.

It is quite certain that you will not be able to answer all of the questions in this book. Do not be discouraged, they are meant to help you to discover and reflect on aspects of your own and other cultures that perhaps you have not been aware of. The goal is not to have all the answers but to enjoy the fascinating views you might catch from your mirror and the many windows into the world.

## **How to use this book**

### **Who is it for?**

This textbook has been prepared with language teachers and intercultural communication trainers in mind, but it can be used by teacher trainers, teacher trainees, secondary school teachers of any subject ... indeed by almost anyone. It is in English, which is now widely used as a means of intercultural communication and negotiation, but the ideas and principles can apply to any intercultural situation and the activities can be used by learners and speakers of other languages too.

### **Where can it be used?**

It can be used in teacher education as a practical coursebook on intercultural communication, or as supplementary material in language development and methodology courses. It can also be applied in upper-intermediate and advanced language classes, in the traditional way, but most activities can be adapted to lower levels as well. It is also suitable for individual self-study and as the basis for project work. The bibliography gives references for further reading, including articles and books on the theory of intercultural communication, which is beyond the scope of this volume.

### **Learning objectives**

The main aim of the textbook is to help develop intercultural communicative competence. Regardless of the topic, each unit in the book has the following learning objectives:

- to reflect on the students' own culturally determined values, behaviour and ways of thinking;
- to raise awareness of intercultural differences in values, behaviour and ways of thinking;
- to raise awareness of culturally determined aspects of language use;
- to practise observation and interpretation skills as well as critical thinking;
- to develop and adopt multiple perspectives;
- to negotiate common ground;
- to develop empathy, open-mindedness and respect for otherness.

### **How is it organised?**

There are seven units, each dealing with a different topic. The units are independent of each other (though there are a number of cross-references) and can be used in any order. Related topics dealt with in language lessons could determine the choice of unit

for examination and discussion. The units can also be related to the themes suggested by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001, pp. 48-49).

Each unit is organised in this way:

Introduction	gives general information about the topic of the unit.
Reflecting on your own culture	contains pictures, tasks and questions to help students reflect on their own values, customs, behaviour and attitudes.
Discovering other cultures	contains reading passages about other cultures as well as ethnographic tasks and project ideas to foster independent learning and openness towards other cultures.
Language work	consists of activities where students can learn more about language through culture.

### **Teachers' (or trainers') notes**

There is also some extra information in the form of notes for the teacher or trainer on each unit at the end of the book. These notes contain additional information on the topic of the unit, helpful hints for organising awareness-raising discussions and activities, and extra ideas for role-playing, critical incidents and the like for those who want to spend more time on exploring the topic of a unit. If you are using the book for self-study or project work, then you should also consult this chapter. The abbreviation TN at the end of a reading passage or activity means that you should consult the teachers' notes for more information on that section.

# 1. Rock around the clock

It is interesting how, in English, the words associated with **time** are very much the same as the words associated with **money**. That is, you can “spend”, “waste”, “invest”, “save”, etc., both of them. English even has a proverb: “Time is money”.

In most English-speaking cultures, the idea of wasting time is seen as very regrettable. It is not that there is any harm in simply doing nothing, but it is, for example, regarded as unacceptable to make others waste time by being late. This applies to public transport timetables, and all appointments in business, health care, education and so on. Here, you are expected to keep appointments “to the minute”. However, there are cultures where it is acceptable to keep appointments to the nearest hour or even day. There is no shame involved in being a couple of hours late.

Time and delay are clearly used in many cultures to demonstrate power and authority. If you keep people waiting, you demonstrate that you have power over them. It becomes almost obligatory and expected. On the other hand, in much of Europe, it is considered bad manners.



## Reflecting on your own culture

English-language invitations to social events are sometimes formulated as “7.30 for 8 p.m.”, for example for a formal dinner party. This means you are expected to arrive between 7.30 and 8 p.m., when the party or dinner will start. Arriving outside these times would be impolite.

1. At what time would your culture find it acceptable to arrive at a dinner party where the starting time was given as 8 p.m.? At a business appointment arranged for 10 a.m.? At a private language lesson arranged for 3 p.m.?
2. What happens if secondary school pupils arrive fifteen minutes late at school in the morning? Are any disciplinary measures taken?
3. How precisely does public transport follow timetables in your culture? Do timetables give exact times of departure or do they just tell you at what intervals buses should be expected to come?
4. Where would you place your culture on the “punctuality” scale? Is preciseness expected? TN 1.1

## Discovering other cultures

### Waiting for trains and planes

It has been said that a German speaker’s whole world and value system is disturbed if trains are delayed. These are cultures which place a lot of importance on punctuality to the minute in public transport and professional settings. The same approach in Britain or the Netherlands is simply unimaginable. And in these latter cultures, the best description of passengers’ attitudes to delays is “resigned”.

In the United States, the phrase “time is money” seems to be even more valid than elsewhere. When you miss a connection due to delays or overbooking, American airlines tend to offer generous compensation, for example free tickets, for your loss of time.



- How does your culture and other cultures you know compare to the ones described opposite when it comes to delays in public transportation?
- What is the attitude of passengers if trains and buses and planes are late? Angry? Resigned? Accepting?

### **Late arrivals**

An Italian student on a postgraduate course at a British university never once, in a whole year, turned up for lectures and seminars on time. She was always, without exception, about 10 minutes late. It became a standing joke, and some lecturers simply started 10 minutes late to allow for her late arrival. Of course, other Italian students were quite punctual, but the point is that the student seemed not to notice. Apparently 11 a.m. seemed to mean 11.10 a.m. to her.

- Do you think she had a responsibility to be punctual?
- Should lecturers delay the start of their classes?
- What would you say to the student about this?
- Would it be fair to assume that Italians are late in general?
- What do you think of the Italian student's lack of punctuality?

### **Starting times**

In Austrian university course booklets beginning times of courses used to be marked "s.t." (sine tempore) or "c.t." (cum tempore), meaning that a lecture given at 10 c.t. would start at 10.15 a.m. ("academic quarter"), s.t. or no marking meaning it would start at the exact given time (provided the lecturer him/herself was that punctual). More recently, however, it seems that most courses now start at exact given times, but the "academic quarter" is still referred to as an excuse when someone is late. Note, however, that this is a purely academic convention and, in general, does not apply to any other settings.

- Is there a similar code in your culture?

### **Going round the bend in Greece (TN 1.2)**

On a bright, sunny Thursday afternoon Elizabeth, a South African lady married to a Greek, reported at George's Driving School in Makriyianni Avenue at 2 p.m. as requested. She was faced by a shocked Mr George. "What are you doing here so early?" he asked, unable to believe that a candidate for the driving test had already arrived. Elizabeth replied, "But, you left a message stating that I should be here at 2 p.m." "Ah," said Mr George, raising his bushy, grey eyebrows. "These foreigners

and their punctuality! I said 2 p.m. as everybody usually arrives half an hour or so late, which means that we'll still get to Brahami in time for your test at 4 p.m.," replied the baffled driving school owner. "Why don't you have a look round the shops and come back at 3 p.m.?" he suggested kindly.

Mr George had never had a student arrive early in the thirty odd years in which he owned the school. In the background, his plump wife was busy preparing his lunch and the enticing aroma wafted through the office making his mouth water, while simultaneously provoking waves of nausea in the anxious Elizabeth.

All this came as quite a surprise to Elizabeth, who was in no mood to go window-shopping. She had butterflies in her stomach, and felt light headed from nerves. All she wanted was to get the test over and done with. After all, it was no joke having to re-sit the test more than twenty years after she had first obtained her licence in another country, another continent – almost light years away.

by Joseph Chryshochoos  
(See Unit 7 for the second part of the story.)

- How much time would you expect to spend on a driving test in your culture?
- Would you go window-shopping if you unexpectedly had to wait for two hours? If not, what would you do while you had to wait?

#### **What does “tomorrow” mean to you?**

In much of the Arabic-speaking world, “tomorrow” is a polite way of saying, “I don't know” or “never” in answer to such questions as: “When will you have the spare part so you can repair my car?” (In fact, this is not strictly connected with time, but more a polite response, and all Arabic speakers understand what it means.)

The Spanish word “mañana” seems to carry a similar meaning in South American cultures.

- Would a similar use of this word cause misunderstandings in your culture?
- How do you think such misunderstandings could be avoided?
- Are there similar time-related responses in your language that could be easily misinterpreted?



### **Staying overnight**

Do you know what an “Armenian visitor” is? Greek speakers do. It is one of those that stays and stays, when you just want to go to bed. But conversely, if you visit an Armenian family for a social visit, you are expected to stay all night, leaving only in the morning. Polish weddings are a bit like this, too. That is, an invitation means, for most people, a couple of days out of their lives.

- Is it common in your culture to have guests overnight?
- If you are invited for dinner at 7 p.m., what time do you expect to leave?
- How long does a traditional wedding last in your culture?

### **Rites of passage**

Many societies and cultures have “rites of passage” which are largely time-determined. In some countries, young women and men are expected to undergo “initiation” through ordeals at the age of about 13. In Europe we send children to school or church which perform a similar function, though it takes much longer than hunting down a leopard or spending the night unprotected in the jungle.

The Jewish bar mitzvah and the Christian confirmation are religious rites of passage, while social/political “thresholds” are marked by laws, for example the right to buy and consume alcohol, the right to drive a car or the right to vote. A social “rite of passage” in Austria might still be the first official “ball” you can attend after having passed through dancing school (usually 16 for girls, 17 for boys). This is still referred to as young people’s official society debut. However, this latter rite is very much class-dependent!

- Are there similar social or religious rites of passage in the cultures you know?

### Activities and projects

1. Interview a few people from another culture about their usage of time using some of the questions below:
  - How long do you take for breakfast on a normal weekday?
  - How long does a “coffee break” last for you? A “cigarette”?
  - How much time do you spend on lunch?
  - How much time do you spend studying/working every day?
  - How much time is reserved for your family/friends/living companions?
  - When does “evening” start for you?
2. Rank yourself on a “punctuality scale” from 1-5 (1 = very punctual, 5 = hardly ever punctual). Then rank the majority of people in your culture on this scale! Give examples.
3. Look at the list of words in the box below and select three which you personally associate with time. Explain your choice in a short paragraph with a concrete example.

organisation – relaxation – stress – money – holidays – family – cigarette – work – future – motivation – competition – food – calendar – watch – movement – past – obligation

4. For the next week or so watch what people from your culture (or another culture you are interested in) do while they wait for the bus, the doctor, the teacher or their date. Take notes and if possible, ask these people how upset they were if they were made to wait a long time? TN 1.3

### Language work

1. Exact times are a source of certainty and reliability for a lot of people. As we have seen above, cultures vary widely in their approach to these phenomena. In native-speaker English, “vague language” usually plays a very important role, mainly in spoken informal language.

Look at these phrases:

- “Hang on a minute.”

- “Give me a couple of minutes.”

The word “minute” does not mean 60 seconds on your watch. Does vague language like this correlate with a relaxed attitude to punctuality?

2. Do your language and others you know have different greetings for different times of the day? Do they differ in their sub-divisions, for example when does morning end? Can you wish people a “happy month, week, day ...”? You can in Greek. TN 1.4
3. The fable of the tortoise and the hare is quite well known in Europe, and is reflected in a number of sayings:
  - “Chi va piano va lontano.” (Italian: “He who goes slowly, goes far.”)
  - “Lassan járj, tovább érsz.” (Hungarian: “Go slowly and you’ll get further.”)
  - “Eile mit Weile.” (German: “Don’t rush.”)
  - “Haste makes waste.”
  - “More haste, less speed.”

Also consider some other time-related proverbs where the message is a bit different, but again the point is that you have to use your time well. TN 1.5

- “The early bird catches the worm.”
  - “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.”
4. Collect more idioms like the ones above and discuss their meaning. Then write them individually on small cards, have two partners draw them and create little dialogues illustrating the phrases. Read or act them out and have the rest of the group guess which idioms were the starting-points.
  5. In many cultures, it is expected that people meeting to negotiate should spend some time – in some cases as much as an hour – talking about other matters before the negotiation begins. It is unthinkable in an Arabic-speaking culture that the health, well-being and life plans of all immediate family members are not discussed at some length before the real business begins. Even English speakers will remark on the weather and inquire about the health of the interlocutor. Mutual acquaintances are briefly discussed. Often, meals are eaten together as a prelude to business. On the other hand, Dutch and Hungarian people as well as American businessmen, for example, tend to want to get straight down to business. This can be misinterpreted as rudeness by people from other cultures. TN 1.6

Have you ever experienced long delays before people get down to business? How do you react to it?

Is your culture similar in this respect to any of the examples described above?

6. Many people in the world live “life in the fast lane”, in all senses. They want things to happen “at the drop of a hat” or “in a flash”; that is, “in no time”. They scorn people who “drag their feet” or go about “at a snail’s pace”. In the industrialised world, people are obsessed with “multitasking” – doing several things at once. For instance, they drive, make phone calls and have a snack at the same time. It is also interesting that the postal system, since the introduction of email, is often termed “snail mail”.

These are all telling indications of the way life has changed in the last hundred years or so. Are those in the highly “time-conscious” cultures missing out on important things? Does the tortoise know something we do not?

## 2. You are what you eat?

Of all human activities, after making sure you have shelter, the next priority is getting enough to eat and drink. Unfortunately, there have been countless cases in human history of people living with and dying of starvation, and, shamefully, these continue even today. Shamefully, because the earth *can* produce enough food to support all its inhabitants, and it is only political and economic imbalances which mean that some starve while others suffer from all the ills of over-eating. So please read and think about all that follows in this light.

When travelling in other cultures, the differences in food and eating habits are readily apparent and for many people these are an important and enjoyable part of the experience. Others are hesitant about “foreign” foods, and some refuse to try them at all. Different foods, of course, reflect differences in natural conditions and resources – climate, soils, proximity to the sea and so on – but sometimes also cultural or religious norms. For instance, Muslims do not eat pork. Like most traditions, this one also has a historical reason: pork could carry dangerous diseases at the time when Islam was founded and developed.

Many cultural rituals centre around the preparation and serving of food. What you eat, when and how, and whether you leave any on your plate or eat everything can all be important issues.

### Reflecting on your own culture

One specific type of food which is known to most European cultures is bread.

#### Task

Close your eyes and concentrate on the mental image you get when you hear the word “bread”. Now draw it and show someone else, or describe it to them. What differences are there in your drawings and descriptions? TN 2.1

Bread, in most European cultures, is a “staple” food. It can be prepared with flour made from wheat, but rye and other grains are also often used. Its use varies a lot from culture to culture. A French person thinks nothing of buying fresh white bread three or four times a day, while in the Netherlands people buy wholemeal bread once a week, and store it in the deep freeze. In Britain, factory-produced, sliced and wrapped white bread – with very little taste or texture – is still widely consumed, though all sorts of other types are easily available. These are regarded as special or “foreign”. In eastern

European villages, people still bake their own bread at least on special occasions. In quite a few urban regions, some people have also rediscovered baking their own bread to avoid additives and preservatives in commercially produced types of bread.

1. How much bread do people eat in your culture? Do you eat it with every meal? How often do most people buy (or make) bread where you come from? Where do you or your living companions get your bread from: the local baker, shop, supermarket, etc.?
2. What sort of bread do you eat? Is it made with white flour, wholemeal flour or any other kind of flour? Which particular types of bread are eaten with particular meals or at particular times? In what ways do you combine bread with other foods (in sandwiches, etc.) or cook it (toasted, fried bread, etc.)? TN 2.2
3. In your opinion, do most people in your culture tend to eat to keep going or do they place a lot of emphasis on enjoying good dishes on social occasions? Are eating habits in your culture related to social class?
4. Have the eating habits of your culture changed over the last fifty years? Would your grandparents have answered these questions in the same way?
5. How are meals named in your culture? If you had guests from another culture, how would you describe the meals to them? How would you react if they could not conform and eat the same sorts of meals at the times you propose? Are there any types of food that in your culture you can only eat at certain times, at particular meals?

(As an example, many Dutch people find it literally incomprehensible – not distasteful, but incomprehensible – that British people can eat “baked beans”<sup>1</sup> at breakfast, while the British have exactly the same reaction to the Dutch eating grated chocolate on bread in the morning.)

## Discovering other cultures

### What time is lunch?

A British man went to Poland to run a workshop about teaching and learning English as a second language. He arrived, after a long and complicated journey, at the teacher training centre in the mountains in Upper Silesia at 2.30 in the afternoon, feeling, he had to admit, rather hungry. He was told that “lunch” was to

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1. White beans in tomato sauce, from a can.

be served in half an hour, and at 3 p.m. he sat all alone in the dining-room and was served vegetable soup, roast chicken and boiled potatoes and a “salad” (this, however, was a bit of a disappointment. It consisted of finely grated vegetables: carrots, cabbage and cucumber, which had been marinated for some time in vinegar). There was also a glass of stewed plums in syrup, but no water.

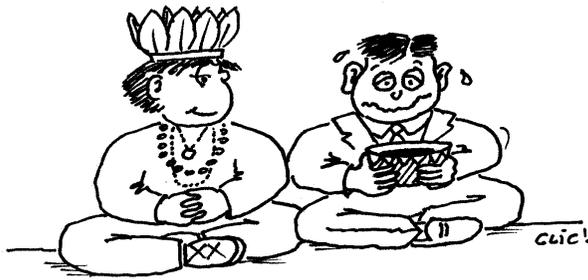
Apparently, most of the food was locally produced, and was absolutely delicious. He ate his fill. However, his body was completely unused to eating anything at all at this time of the day. He normally had a simple breakfast of bread and jam, or muesli, had a snack at midday (a sandwich or roll) and ate his main meal at about 7 p.m.

At 6 p.m., when most of the workshop participants had arrived, the “evening meal” was served. This consisted of a selection of ham and sausage, bread, butter and sliced tomato. Having eaten so much only three hours before, he was still full and could only eat the tomato. Fortunately, nobody noticed.

He wondered what would have happened had he refused or only partly eaten the “lunch”. Would people in the kitchen have been offended? Probably. And by 10 p.m. he was a bit hungry again.



As we have seen, eating and drinking habits are very culturally determined. Take a culture you are interested in and find out what people really eat and drink and at what times of the day. As an example, see the comparisons above. TN 2.3



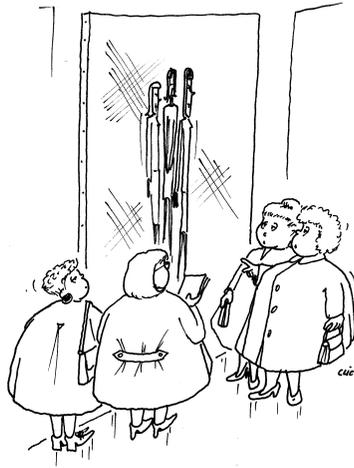
### **Body weight**

In cities like New York and London, it is possible to find very overweight people and malnourished people living within a few metres of each other. The reasons for this are mainly political and sociological, but culture plays a part too. The habit of over-eating, particularly of “junk food”, is widespread, and encouraged by advertising. It is estimated that 60% of the population of the United States is overweight, in the sense that this means that health problems are likely for these individuals.

In cultures like these, dieting in many forms has become a very common phenomenon. Many people lack will-power and need patterns and reassurance, so all sorts of strange diets have arisen, and clubs and gyms have been founded and dedicated to weight loss.

There is a very serious side-effect here, largely culturally determined. A considerable number of young women, but also young men, suffer from anorexia nervosa. This seems always to have a psychological component, but results in an inability to eat enough to be fully healthy.

- Does anything similar exist in your culture? How is it dealt with?
- What role does the image of a slim figure play in different cultures?
- Is body weight linked to concepts of beauty and sexual attractiveness? Has this changed over time? Compare a woman painted by Rubens and a picture of Naomi Campbell. TN 2.4



### **Agro-business**

Carrots are grown in the south of Britain to be sold to a supermarket chain. If you buy a pack of carrots in, say, Southampton, they will have been grown about 10 km away and then travelled over 1 800 km because they have been cleaned and packaged in Glasgow. This is an extreme but common case indicating the power of large-scale marketing, which results in such an absurd waste of resources.

Most people are unaware of such things, and are interested in cheap food. And in fact, cleaning and packaging (or not cleaning and packaging) the carrots on the farm of origin actually does work out to be more expensive.

- Are there ways in which the system of transporting carrots around Britain is actually more expensive?
- Do you know of any cultures where people try to counteract such waste?
- Do you know of cultures where everybody grows their own food?
- Is cheap food a part of your cultural expectations?

### **Organically grown food and different diets**

There are several efforts to encourage the production and marketing of local food, and these usually go hand in hand with growing organic food, which is produced without the aid of chemicals and artificial fertilisers. Some people only eat organically grown vegetables, while others avoid eating meat or dairy products altogether. Vegetarians refuse to eat meat, fish and fowl, while vegans stay away from all types of food derived from animal life.

- Is organically grown food highly valued in your culture?
- What attitudes have you come across towards people who adopt different diets, such as vegetarians, vegans and so on?
- Are processed foods marked as being suitable for vegetarians or marked as “kosher” for Jews? (In many countries, all menus and processed foods are clearly marked.)
- In what ways do religions or belief systems determine aspects of diet? How would you explain and justify these to people of a different background?

### **Drinks**

In most of industrialised Europe, clean drinking water has been available to most people only since the rich and powerful became concerned about the spread of diseases like cholera and dysentery in the overcrowded cities, and ordered the building of sewage and water systems. And in much of the world today, people still have to live with polluted and unsafe water.

Before this time, ways had to be found to make drinking water safe. There were two main approaches: you could boil it, or you could turn it into an alcoholic drink. Cultures which boiled their water tended to develop tea and coffee drinking. Those that turned it into alcohol favoured beer and/or wine.

- Look at the history of your own culture and other cultures you are familiar with. Are there rituals and beliefs connected with tea and coffee drinking?
- What role does alcohol play? How is it used in social interaction?

### **Alcoholism**

If you have been brought up in western Europe, you probably have the impression that the British have a problem with the over-consumption of alcohol. This derives from a number of factors, but particularly from the custom of young people ostentatiously drinking in bars to the accompaniment of much shouting and even violence. The British licensing laws, by which public houses have to close at 11 p.m., play their part in this. But in fact, the consumption per person of alcohol in Britain is lower than that in France, Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands.

Interestingly, it is estimated that much more cannabis is consumed in Britain than in most other European countries, in spite of the seemingly very strict laws attempting to suppress this. But here things are changing fast too.

- Are there any special rituals connected to drinking alcoholic drinks in cultures you are interested in? (For example, in Austria, when you and an acquaintance decide

to start using first names and the informal terms of address, you link each other's arms and clink glasses to mark the occasion.)

- What laws regulate the selling and/or consumption of alcohol? Do you approve of them?
- Is drunken driving a problem in your culture or other cultures you know?

### Activities and projects

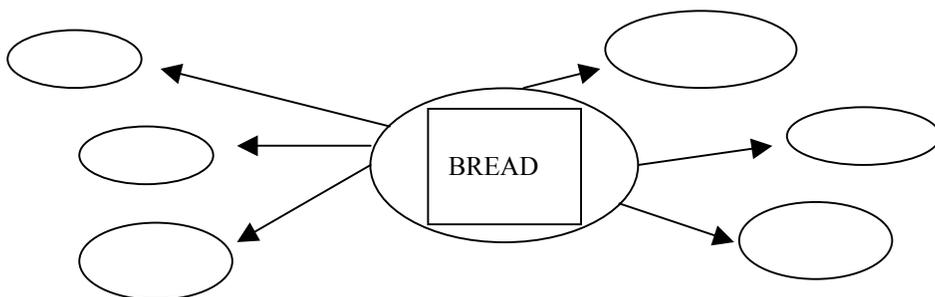
1. Here is a list of words. Ask five people from other cultures what they associate with these expressions. TN 2.5

“breakfast” – “beer” – “setting the table” – “food shopping” – “dinner” – “utensils”

2. Go to an ethnic restaurant in your neighbourhood with a friend and make notes about different eating habits you might be able to observe. Report your findings in class. TN 2.6
3. Exchange recipes of foreign specialities and organise a cooking project, if possible. TN 2.7
4. Write the script and then act out the conversation of five people from five different cultures at a dinner table together. The people could be students at an international summer camp or teachers at a reception before a workshop. See TN 2.8 for helpful questions and TN 2.9 for a role-play idea.

### Language work

1. Bread can also mean “food in general”, as in the English idiom “breadwinner”. Think of phrases that your language or other languages you know associate with the word “bread”. Make a cluster or a mind-map. TN 2.10



## 2. Expressions

It may be significant that English-language cultures do not have an equivalent of “bon appetit”, wishing your eating companions “good appetite”. Perhaps these cultures feel that bodily functions are private!

Note: some waiters will say: “Enjoy your meal”, but in principle, you say nothing at the start or end of a meal in an English-language culture. However there are still many people who say a prayer before eating. For example, “For what we are about to receive we are truly thankful, Amen.”

Are there obligatory comments or wishes in your culture before or after a meal in company?

Are there rules governing when to start eating or who to wait for before starting?

Similarly, some phrases might have unexpected connotations for someone from another culture:

### **Do you drink?**

A German exchange student attending an informal party in the United States was confused by being asked the question, “Do you drink?” So at first she asked, “Drink what?”, unaware that the phrase was meant to inquire whether she would in principle drink alcoholic beverages. When this was explained to her, however, she felt that answering the question with “yes” would have been equivalent to confessing a drinking problem because in German the phrase “Sie/er trinkt” (she/he drinks) would mean just that.

Can you think of similar phrases which might lead to misunderstandings in any languages you know?

## 3. Idioms, etc.

Food and drink are fundamental to existence, so idioms, metaphors and sayings involving food and drink abound in English (and in all languages).

The phrases below are in a table, and have no context. If they were provided with a full context, each one would take a page of background information. If you want to learn them and be able to recall them easily, then it is important that you put some cognitive effort into the process. This is usually a question of contextualising. Take this one:

- “The argument left a bad taste in my mouth.”

There is no indication of what the argument was about, who was involved or the identity of the speaker/writer. If you supply some or all of these features, from your imagination, the phrase will be much easier to recall when you need it. If you then write out these contexts, or say them out loud, the process will be even more effective. If you then repeat the process two or three times, the phrase will be yours for ever. It is worth a try. TN 2.11

(a) Take these (English) idioms, metaphors and sayings and compare them to usages in other languages you know. In general, it is not a good idea to translate these directly, but very often you can find equivalents and parallels. Some of the answers have been filled in to make the process easier for you.

<b>Idiom</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>L1 translation</b>
“His excuse was hard to swallow.”	It was difficult to accept.	
“Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.”		
“It’s no use crying over spilt milk.”	Do not cry/complain when it is too late to fix the problem.	
“He brings home the bacon.”	He brings home the money.	
“She’s bitten off more than she can chew.”	She has taken on more than she can manage.	
“I have a bone to pick with you.”		
“He looks as if butter wouldn’t melt in his mouth.”		
“If I butter her up, she’ll probably agree.”		
“It’s a piece of cake.”	It is easy to do.	

“You can’t have your cake and eat it.”		
“They’re selling like hot cakes.”	They are very popular.	
“The party was the icing on the cake.”		

(b) If you are interested in learning more food-related idioms in English, look at the list below. Try to guess the meaning of the phrases, look them up to confirm your guesses and then put them in a context to learn them more easily. It would also be interesting to compare them with “eating and drinking idioms” in other languages. TN 2.12

- “They’re as different as chalk and cheese.”
- “I could eat a horse.”
- “He was as cool as a cucumber.”
- “Our ideas finally bore fruit.”
- “Half a loaf is better than none.”
- “His idea was a red herring.”<sup>1</sup>
- “He can stew in his own juice.”
- “The world’s your oyster.”
- “He’s eating out of the palm of my hand.”
- “I’d take that idea with a pinch of salt.”
- “This issue is a hot potato.”
- “She is the salt of the earth.”

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1. That is, a smoked herring, with a very strong smell, very common in Britain, where it is known as a “kipper”. The smell is very relevant to the metaphor. A red herring is an unimportant or irrelevant matter which is introduced into a discussion to divert attention from the main subject.

### **3. Conversation and ... silence**

The conventions surrounding conversation are the source of much intercultural misunderstanding. In many cultures, people who are known to each other but not related and who are in the same room or space together expect that conversation will take place. Silence is seen as awkward and embarrassing.

In some cultures, even total strangers – people in the same railway carriage compartment, for example – would expect to engage in conversation with the others in the same space. Conversely, in other cultures, it would be regarded as unacceptable to attempt conversation with strangers, apart perhaps from short, bland comments on the weather or other value-free topics. Again, gender and age play important roles here.

Even where conversation is sanctioned or expected, there are very strict rules governing the choice of topics, and also about who is allowed or expected to initiate a conversation. But these vary widely from culture to culture, and it is sometimes very difficult to know what is and what is not permitted. It is useful to learn some conversation strategies for successful intercultural communication, for example, when in doubt, ask questions for clarification about meaning, usage and connotations. Be careful if you are not quite sure that what you want to say is acceptable.

### **Reflecting on your culture**

#### **Conversation topics**

Go through the following topics/ideas and decide if they are acceptable for introduction into a conversation with a person of the same age whom you meet for the first time at a fairly informal social event like a party in your culture. Add any conditions you think are necessary. TN 3.1

- Age: could you ask someone's age?
- Family relationships: could you talk about problems and conflicts in your family? Could you ask if someone is married?
- Relationships: could you talk about your private life?
- Health: could you talk about any health problems?
- National (party) politics: could you criticise or praise government or opposition policies or politicians?
- International politics: could you talk about international relations?
- Jokes: could you tell a joke? What topics would be taboo?
- Professions: could you ask what others' professions are? Could you talk about your own?
- Money: could you ask what something has cost or what somebody earns?



### **Silence and turn-taking**

There are cultures where close friends and relatives – or even business partners – can sit together in silence, simply enjoying each others' company. This situation can be very unnerving for someone from a "conversation culture". Next time you are having a conversation with friends or colleagues, try to observe the role of silence on the basis of the questions below.

- What is the attitude towards silence?
- Is it acceptable for people in your culture to sit together silently?
- Is it a natural part of conversation, or is it regarded as awkward and uncomfortable?
- How long can the silence last?
- Who breaks the silence?
- Is silence used as a weapon in disagreements?
- Does turn-taking have any special rules in your language?
- Do age, social position and gender play a role, for example?

### **Non-verbal communication**

- Do you recognise, or can you give meaning to, any of the gestures in the cartoon opposite?



## Discovering other cultures

### Conversation topics

#### **What's your religion?**

A European student visiting friends in Utah was taken to a health club in Salt Lake City. When entering the sauna with her friend, a couple of men who had been in there for a while started a friendly conversation with the student and one of the first questions was "What's your religion?" The student was very surprised and taken aback since it would be unthinkable in her home culture to ask a stranger about his/her religious affiliation which is regarded as an absolutely private matter.

Try to find an open-minded conversation partner from another culture you are interested in and inquire about differences in permitted conversation topics. Are there any differences in who is allowed or expected to initiate the conversation? Are there any differences in status or gender in approach to conversation? TN 3.2

### Volume

#### **Can you hear me?**

Some cultures seem not to mind at all if people sitting very close to each other in public spaces talk in very loud voices. An Englishman was once on a plane and the Dutch person in the seat behind was telling another passenger (who he had never met before) about his work as a secondary school teacher.

The other passenger was interested, and listened to the long monologue (with occasional sounds of agreement – see below) until the plane landed. The

Englishman was astonished to find that the Dutchman had been sitting five rows back!

Conversely, after spending some time in a Mediterranean country, you can get the impression on returning to northern Europe that people are in mourning and only allowed to speak in low voices.

There are exceptions. The difference in volume (and body language – see below) between Spanish and Portuguese people is very striking indeed. Which do you think tend to speak loudly, and which quietly?

- How loud do you think people in your culture are compared to other cultures?
- Are people who speak very loudly tolerated, ignored or considered irritating in the cultures you are familiar with?
- What do you think the reasons for loudness could be in some cultures (for example, cheerfulness, self-confidence, spending a lot of time outdoors)?



### **Non-verbal communication**

Of course, another feature of conversation which is largely absent from other text-types is the simple fact that you can see, and even touch, each other. So body language, facial expression, eye contact, proximity and movement all come into play and add to your verbal message. Cultural differences abound here, too. Just standing too close to someone can make them feel uncomfortable. As can standing too far away.

### **Shaking hands**

A German student at a party in England found it surprising that only the men wanted to shake hands with her when she was introduced. Women in the company tended to just wave and back away. In her culture, women also shake hands when they first meet.

- What gestures do people use in cultures you know when they meet?
- Do you keep eye contact when you have a conversation with someone you have just met? TN 3.3
- In terms of body language, eye contact, personal space and physical contact, what exactly is considered offensive in your culture and the cultures you are familiar with?

### **Men touching**

A central European technician working in Saudi Arabia for a few months seemed rather concerned about the way he perceived Arab men touching each other. In a letter home he reported that “they were standing very close to each other in buses, touching each other’s backs, shoulders, necks and even hips, embracing and even walking in the streets with their hands on each other’s hips. “Are they all gay?” he asked and felt rather disturbed.

In most European cultures, it seems, it is much more common and acceptable for women to touch each other in friendly ways than for men, and socialisation for this behaviour starts at a very young age. Kindergarten-age girls can frequently be seen hugging and kissing whereas boys of the same age tend to “touch violently” if at all.

- What are the respective attitudes to this type of behaviour in your culture and any other cultures you are familiar with?

### **Personal space**

People from different cultures are often seen “chasing” each other around the room during a friendly conversation. One of them keeps stepping forward to get closer to the other person, and the other keeps stepping back to allow for a little more space between them. This happens because the two people involved need different sized protective bubbles around themselves. In other words, the space around them that they consider “their own” differs in size.

The concepts of “personal” and “public space” are also largely culturally determined.

They not only refer to the “personal space” a person sees as the area they need around themselves for comfortable social interaction, but also extend to questions of housing and urban development.

Compare which rooms of an apartment/house would be considered “public”(open to visitors at all times) and which are considered “private” (bedrooms, but also rooms like pantries, attics, basements, etc.) in your culture or any other cultures you are interested in.

## **Directness**

### **Complaining and criticising**

A Hungarian chemical engineer in her late 30s, working for a multinational company, was fluent in English, French and German. She had been using these languages in day-to-day professional communication both formally and informally for over a decade. Yet, it took her several years to discover that the reason why she was experiencing some difficulty in personal communication with her native speaker partners was that she seemed too blunt and straightforward to them especially with her complaints and criticism. When she shared her feelings with her partners they realised that this had actually been the case, but as they had not learnt or used foreign languages, they could not understand why someone who was fluent in her language use was not “fluent in her attitudes”. Her partners had interpreted this as contradictory and put it down to a disagreeable personality. The story had a happy ending but it has several lessons for second and foreign language teachers and learners.

(Based on Holló and Lázár, 2000a)

- Does your culture tend to be more direct or more indirect when giving opinions?
- Can you be straightforward when you want to tell a colleague that you do not agree or do not like their outfit?
- Could you tell a friend you did not like her new hairstyle? And if so, how would you go about it?
- Have you ever become embarrassed because you (or someone in your company) were more direct in conversation than expected?

## **Activities and projects**

1. Watch people carefully next time you are in a lift, on a train or in another public space. Try to observe cultural, age and gender differences in the way people start conversations with strangers. If you can understand the language, make a mental note of what was said and the topic. Report your findings in class.

2. Specifically, what advice would you give a middle-aged English person who sits in a train reading an English newspaper? Other people in the compartment address him (in English) and ask him a series of questions about the reasons for his visit, his background, British geography and so on. They seem unaware that the English man feels very uncomfortable, even embarrassed, and simply wants to get on with his paper.

Is it common for strangers to start a conversation with you on, for example, a long train journey? Obviously, age and gender play roles here, but if this is not common in your culture, how would you react?

Consider the situation above and stage a little role-play, placing it in your culture or another culture you are familiar with. Try to give precise directions about how far apart people would sit, how long a silence would last after entering the train compartment, who would start the conversation and how? Who would end it and how?

3. Take the story about complaining and criticising above and try to explain what may have happened. What do you think the “happy ending” was and how do you think it was arrived at?
4. Interview some people about non-verbal communication in their culture. TN 3.4
5. Non-verbal communication includes people’s use of space. Spatial arrangements also reflect issues of power and dominance. Think of the palaces which rulers (worldly or clerical) built for themselves to demonstrate their power and how little space there is often reserved for children in urban housing and public spaces!

Pay attention to how much personal space is allotted to employees in an office. Are employers’ offices and desks much bigger than everybody else’s?

How far do you stand from your boss when you are asking for a raise or complaining about working conditions?

Alternatively, compare typical classrooms/lecture halls: how is the space meant for the teacher marked? How big is it in comparison to that of the individual pupil/student?

Also note the freedom of the person in authority in making or not making use of the space allotted to them. The teacher can sit at their desk, wander around or even sit on a pupil’s desk – none of which the students are allowed to do.

## Language work

### 1. Informal spoken language

It is important as a second language learner to realise that conversation is a very different sort of language from all others. It is a text created by two or more speakers, and it has very different rules and conventions from other types of text. Can you think of any differences before reading on?

Features of informal conversation:

1. It has a different grammar. Some examples:
  - “Me, I like a hot bath in the morning. Can’t do without it, can I? Know what I mean? Showers I hate.”
2. Stress and intonation play a crucial role in making the meaning and the speaker’s attitude clear. Compare:
  - “*I thought* he said he was going to drive to town.”
  - “I thought he said he was going to *drive* to town.”
  - “I thought he said he was going to drive to *town*.”
3. Fillers like “well”, “you know” and “sort of” are common.
4. Vague language like “lots of”, “about” and “... or so” are common.
5. Hyperbole is common:
  - “There were millions of people at the party.”
  - “I was absolutely devastated when he didn’t turn up.”
6. “Asking for agreement”, with question tags, rising intonation and phrases like “right?”, “know what I mean?” are common.
7. At any time, non-speakers are expected to show they are listening, by nodding, or making noises like “Mmm”, “Yeah”, etc.
8. Incompleteness is quite acceptable:
  - “So what did he ...”
  - “He ... you know, he sort of looked ...”
  - “Oh, I know. That’s him all over.”

This is only a short summary of some conversational features of English. None of these normally occur in texts like lectures, news broadcasts and formal interviews. Most of them do not occur in representations of conversation in soap operas, plays, films and English language coursebooks.

Which of these features are common in any other cultures and languages you know?

## **2. Proverbs and sayings**

Here are some English proverbs and sayings about talk. They seem mostly based on the assumption that people talk too much, or that people that talk a lot are not so wise or clever. Is this really true? Do other cultures make the same judgment? Are there equivalents in other languages and cultures?

- “Talk is cheap.”
- “Actions speak louder than words.”
- “Silence is golden.”
- “We have one mouth and two ears.”
- “Still waters run deep.”
- “Empty vessels make the most noise.”
- “Easier said than done.”

(But ... “Money talks.”)

## **3. How a language changes**

The language of conversation changes very quickly. Fashions come and go. Using the latest expressions confirms your membership of a particular group. Here are a few current English expressions. By the time you read this, they may have disappeared, but they are typical.

- “Whatever.” (That kind of thing)
- “Tell me about it.” (I have had the same experience and I know how you feel.)
- “Don’t go there.” (I think it is too difficult a subject to discuss.)
- “I know.” (I agree.)

Of course, these sorts of expressions are introduced by young people and older speakers may not even be aware of them. Do other cultures or languages you know about have similar phenomena?



## 4. Men and women, girls and boys – Gendered identities

In many cultures there has been a fundamental change in the roles and images of women and men over the last fifty years. In particular, women have realised that they have in general been discriminated against and their talents have been undervalued. And they have fought back. As an example, there are now far more women members of parliament and company directors in Britain than there used to be. However, women still remain a minority in leading positions of society, even if a substantial one, and women still generally earn less than men in the same position even if equally qualified.

There are countless differences in the way the roles of men and women are regarded in different cultures even within Europe. Sometimes these differences are so subtle that they are very hard to notice. In addition, some of these issues are often considered either taboo or at least awkward to discuss. As you go through this unit, try to reflect on how your own culture tends to regard gender roles and then discover some of the intercultural differences in this area with the help of the readings and activities.

### Reflecting on your own culture

Here are some statements about gender differences:

“If women had as much influence in the world as men now do, it would be a much more peaceful and more pleasant place.”

“A woman’s place is in the home, where her contribution to bringing up and nurturing children is indispensable. It’s impossible for a woman to have a successful career and bring up children satisfactorily.”

“A woman’s talents are wasted if she remains just a housewife and mother.”

“Women should earn the same as men for the same work.”

“Behind every successful man there’s a supportive woman.”

“A woman has to look like a girl, talk like a lady and work like a horse.”

“Men and women are genetically programmed for their different roles. Men do the modern equivalent of hunting and defending their territory. Women gather food and care for the children.”

“Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult.” (Charlotte Whitton)

- Which of the above statements have an element of truth in your opinion?
- Can you explain why?
- What is the general attitude to these issues in your culture? TN 4.1



## Discovering other cultures

### Differences in handling gender differences

Gender differences are clearly so fundamental to human existence, and yet the way this question is treated and reacted to seems to vary very widely from culture to culture. On perhaps a rather trivial but highly symbolic level, a British man was seen as rather ill-mannered because of walking through a door in front of a Polish woman, while receiving a slightly sarcastic comment from one of his Dutch female students for holding the door open for her, “I can manage that myself, thank you!” Quite what would be expected in an internationally mixed group remained unclear to him.

On a much less trivial level, many Muslim women and men are happy to have their marriages arranged for them. This is impossible to accept by many “Western” oriented people. It is a good case, though, where acceptance is necessary. If women are bought and sold, however, or kept at home and forbidden to go out, then this is a violation of human rights, and beyond acceptance. Also, when women are repressed for economic or religious reasons (usually connected) then women’s potential is not

realised. The core question is what society gains or loses if women are not allowed equal rights and opportunities in it.

- Who has to walk through a door first in your culture and other cultures you know? (In Austria and Hungary, for example, it is always the woman who has to enter first except in restaurants or bars where gentlemanly courtesy requires that the man enter first in order to protect the woman from flying knives and other annoying experiences.)



- Which other fundamental rules of politeness in male-female relationships in other cultures have you heard of or experienced?
- What would you do if someone from another culture broke your rules of politeness?
- Where would you draw the line between oppressing women and tolerating cultural traditions?

### **Gender roles in Hungary**

Although men and women are equal by law in eastern Europe, there are countless problems from wage differentials to sexual harassment at work, and from the unfair division of labour at home to domestic violence. There are women's organisations to help solve these problems, but "feminist" is still an ugly word. Feminists are seen as a bunch of militant man-hating masculine women who fight for something that

most Hungarian women think they already have: equality. The new values imposed upon the traditional division of labour by the communist regimes in eastern Europe meant that women kept their traditional roles, but were suddenly expected to also work eight hours a day outside the home. Thus were the problems of “emancipation” solved in Hungary in the 1950s. Meanwhile, women were made to believe that driving tractors meant that they had achieved equality with the stronger sex.

As fathers are still not expected to stay at home with their children as primary caregivers, women’s careers suffer. Women still do all the housework in most homes, thereby teaching children traditional roles. Although with the women’s movements this has started to change, old values still surface, such as sexist jibes, gentlemanly courtesy, odd looks if a woman enters a bar alone, and macho attitudes at home, at work and in the street.

In Hungary, gentlemanly courtesy means that opening doors for women, carrying their heavy bags and giving up your seat on the bus are regarded as obligatory. On the other hand, sexist remarks about women’s looks are almost expected at work and in the street.

- Is gentlemanly courtesy only superficial?
- Do you notice a contradiction in Hungarian (and British, Italian, etc.) men’s behaviour?
- What do you think of sexist jibes or comments on a woman’s appearance?
- Would you advise women to make the same sorts of remarks in return?
- How should they react – to both sexism and “gentlemanly courtesy”? TN 4.2

### **Sexual harassment**

The impression is that in Britain, cases of sexual harassment at work or in education which are brought to law are quite common. In Britain, women have even complained formally about “pin-ups” in men’s lockers and work places in factories. In the Netherlands, these cases are relatively rare. In Hungary, they are practically non-existent because, except for rape, sexual harassment is usually not regarded as an offence.

NB: Sexual harassment works both ways! In England, a young man who was working in an office in a bank with three women recently brought legal action against them and against his employers, and won.

- What penalties are imposed in cases of serious sexual harassment in the workplace in your culture? (See also Activities and projects below.)

### **Physical display**

There is a profound difference between cultures when it comes to showing bodies – both male and female, but particularly the latter. In hot weather in many parts of Europe now, you can see women totally covered apart from their eyes and others wearing the minimum to maintain decency – in public, everyday situations, that is. These women may be colleagues or fellow students, working happily together.

The two extremes are clearly conforming to culturally determined forms of behaviour, at a very deep level. This raises some questions, to which there are no easy answers.

- Do you think women who feel obliged to cover themselves are conforming to a repressive culture?
- Do you feel that women who show lots of their bodies are exploiting sexuality to attract attention or to gain an advantage?

### **The glass ceiling and household chores**

The phrase “glass ceiling” is used to describe the phenomenon that even if women in managerial work are sometimes formally accorded opportunities and salaries equal to men’s, they often seem unable to reach the very top. They can see the top, but it is unattainable. They bump into a glass ceiling that prevents them from going higher. The existence of this glass ceiling is regularly confirmed by surveys.

Similarly, research regularly shows that, on average, women do much more of the household chores in most families. Cleaning, shopping and cooking are routinely done by women, while men often reserve their skills in this area for “special occasions”. The image of the man of the house in an apron, running the barbecue for a happy crowd is stereotypical, but none the less real for that. Preparing the two or three ordinary meals on an ordinary day to sustain a family is usually still the domain of the women.

- Is there a glass ceiling in your culture and other cultures you are familiar with?
- Who typically does the dishes, the cleaning and all the other chores in a family in your culture?
- Is there a difference between the division of labour in young and old couples’ homes?

### **Female soldiers**

Recently, a woman in the infantry of the British army gained all the qualifications which entitled her to serve in the front line: that is, to engage in hand-to-hand fighting and kill people (or be killed). She applied for transfer to a fighting unit, but was turned down on the grounds that her fellow soldiers' emotions would not allow her unit to function effectively, and that she would probably not be able to cope with the noise, carnage and violence of real battle. The army suggested that the only way to find out about this would be to try an experiment in real battle, but this would obviously be too risky.

Conversely, about 10% of the crew on most Royal Navy ships has consisted for the last fifteen years of women, and officers are convinced they have a "civilising" (a curious word choice) effect on the men, and "raise the levels of discipline". There are a number of women pilots in the Royal Air Force, some of whom fly the latest fighter-bombers. They are regarded as men's equals in their skills.

However telling the effect of women's participation in such traditionally masculine roles is, they remain a tiny minority.

- Even though we do not exactly know in which positions the women mentioned above were serving in the Navy (soldiers or cooks, cleaners and maids), do you think the percentage of women in traditionally masculine professions will grow, or remain fairly small in your culture in the future?
- Do you think it is a good idea for women to drive tractors or fly fighter-bombers?

### **Activities and projects**

1. Interview people from as many different cultures as you can find about their ideas on sexual harassment and on dress codes. TN 4.3
2. Watch films, TV programmes or particularly soap operas from different cultures. To what extent are men and women shown as independent, decision-making, initiative-taking beings? Or are they stereotypically fulfilling traditional gender roles with all the qualities associated with those? For instance, are women shown as submissive, even non-thinking objects? Are there cases where men are shown as being unwittingly manipulated and exploited by women (a common theme in soap opera)? Could you find differences between soap operas made in different countries in this respect? TN 4.4
3. Research the law and regulations concerning sexual harassment in cultures you are interested in or know. What conclusions can you draw from your findings?

4. Make a survey amongst your friends and/or family to find out how household chores are shared in their homes. TN 4.5
5. Interview older people about changes in gender relations in their lifetimes. You will probably be quite surprised at the extent of these.

## Language work

### 1. Mr, Mrs, Miss and Ms

- When do you change from a “girl” to a “woman”? (Or “young lady”?) From a “boy” to a “man”?
- In what situations do you use these words or “lady” and “gentleman”?
- In what situations do you use “Sir” and “Madam” as forms of address?

Look for evidence in literature and non-fiction and discuss it with your group!

This is very different in most forms of English from the custom in other languages. Be careful. The phrase “Excuse me!” is very often a completely acceptable alternative to what in many other languages is realised as the equivalent of “Sir” or “Madam”. There is no “intermediate” level of formality: using first names, such as “Mr John”, “Mrs Martina” in English would sound very odd. “Mister” or “Miss” by themselves sound either vulgar or aggressive. “Ms” is a relatively new addition indicating that women do not necessarily want to let the world know whether they are married or not just as “Mr” does not reveal this information.

- How do you address girls and boys, men and women in your culture and other cultures you are familiar with?
- Do forms of address or titles reveal whether a person is married or not in the languages you speak?

### 2. Slang and informal terms

This is a very significant phenomenon. English (unlike Polish, for example) has literally no positive slang terms for women, while men do much better, as the table shows. It is probably significant that many of the negative slang terms for women have to do with prostitution. In Polish, the most common – and very powerful – general term for disapproval is the equivalent of “prostitute”, and in English, slang terms for intercourse and sexual parts are the most powerful.

It is absolutely not certain that people using such terms mean to be “sexist”. They (mostly men) use them without thinking of the concepts referred to as if these were

idioms or linking words. But the fact remains that they are indicative of people’s views on gender differences and power relations.

	Male	Female
Formal, standard	“man”, “gentleman”, “boy”	“woman”, “lady”, “girl”
Slang, negative	“bastard”, “son of a bitch” (!)	“bitch”, “slut”, “scrubber”, “cow”, “slag”, “whore”, “tart”, ...
Slang, positive	“fellow”, “chap”, “guy”, “geezer”, “lad”, “mate”	?

- Would this table be similarly one-sided in your language? (Be careful how and when you use these negative slang terms if you use them at all. They are very vulgar and can be extremely offensive.)

### 3. Labelling

In the languages you know, is gender generally marked with terms like “actor/actress”, French “étudiant/étudiante”, or German “Wirt/Wirtin”? Is there any tendency to use neutral terms like “chairperson”? Is this important? Why (not)? Would you prefer all terms like “man” and “woman” to be replaced by “person”?

It might sound odd in English if words like “actress”, “nun”, and “ballerina” were replaced by “female actor”, “female member of a religious order”, and “female ballet dancer”. But large numbers of words like “driver”, “manager”, or “teacher” are unmarked. (Though it is not so long since “manageress” and “(bus-) conductress” was common and “chairman” was used for both genders: even “Madam Chairman”, can you believe?)

Collect more examples of marked and unmarked terms in English and in any other languages you know and see if the mental image of an unmarked term is male or female. TN 4.6

### 4. Feminine and masculine qualities, or just simple sexism?

Here is how English uses the terms “man”, “woman”, “father” and “mother” in some idiomatic phrases:

- “A man of his word.”
- “A man of property.”

- “Mankind.”
- “As one man, they cheered.”
- “To the last man, they cheered.”
- “Who’s going to man the office while I’m away?”

In virtually no case can “man” be replaced with “person” or any other neutral term, though “humankind” is used, if rather awkwardly. Collect similar phrases in your language or any other languages you know.

Are there differences between the languages you know in what gender different things in nature are allotted? For example, “mother earth” and “father time” in English. But “la luna” (feminine) versus “der Mond” (masculine) – the moon in Italian and German respectively.



## 5. All you need is love (?)

Consider that romantic love (in this case between men and women) is an invention, a socio-cultural construct. In some ways it is a “second-hand emotion”. It was developed in the early Middle Ages, and was accompanied by notions like chivalry and knightly honour. It was only open to the lordly ruling classes. It is therefore a profoundly cultural phenomenon. During the Renaissance it became more widely available, but it was only in the last century, with the spread of mass media, that everyone felt entitled to and had access to it, and the concept of romantic love is fairly rare in many cultures even today.

So what is love?

“Love is a universal migraine,  
A bright stain on the vision  
Blotting out reason.”

*Robert Graves*



“What’s love got to do with it?  
What’s love but a second-hand emotion?”

*Tina Turner*



“Would you believe in a love at first sight?  
Yes, I’m certain that it happens all the time.”

*Lennon and McCartney*



“Oh, when I was in love with you,  
Then I was clean and brave,  
And miles around the wonder grew  
How well did I behave.

And now the fancy passes by,  
And nothing will remain,  
And miles around they’ll say that I  
Am quite myself again.”

*A.E. Housman*

“It is better to have loved and lost  
Than never to have loved at all.”

*Proverb*



“Love is the state in which man sees things most decidedly as they are not.”

*Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche*



“Love, in present-day society, is just the exchange of two momentary desires and the contact of two skins.”

*Nicolas Chamfort*



“Love is the word used to label the sexual excitement of the young, the habituation of the middle-aged, and the mutual dependence of the old.”

*John Ciardi*



“Boy meets girl, so what?”

*Bertold Brecht*

## **Reflecting on your own culture**

1. Pick one of the quotations above or cite another one about love you know and explain why you agree or disagree with the view on love it expresses (orally or in writing).
2. How is romantic love seen in your culture? Think of famous pieces of art in your culture that might have had an influence on public opinion and discourse about love (paintings, novels, dramas, songs, movies, etc.).
3. What attitudes can you observe about the way other people make judgments about relationships in your culture? Do you feel free to be with anybody, anywhere, at any time? Or are there restrictions? Is there anything you would like to change in this area? TN 5.1
4. Who, in your opinion, has rights to give young people advice or even to make decisions about their personal relationships? Y = yes, N = no, NS = not sure

	Give advice			Make decision		
	Y	N	NS	Y	N	NS
Parents						
Siblings						
Close friends						
Relatives (grandparents, etc.)						
Colleagues						
Superiors						
Teachers						
Priests						

Compare your results with your partner or in a small group, or, preferably, with someone from another culture.

- Sex education is given in schools to pupils from the age of about 11 upwards in many European countries. There seems to be an assumption that parents will not approach the matter satisfactorily with their children. What are the assumptions in your culture? Who told you “the facts of life”? Was there any embarrassment? On whose part? If you received no information from your parents or caregivers, why do you think this was? TN 5.2



6. How do young couples behave when they are in love in your culture? Is it made public? Do people hold hands and kiss quite openly? In a mixed group, would it be easy to find out who is forming a romantic couple or would the clues be hard to notice for an outsider?

Within western Europe there are very significant differences here. In Britain, it seems to be necessary to make your feelings for each other public (for heterosexual couples, that is), while in the Netherlands public displays of affection are generally regarded as somewhat embarrassing. In Hungary, they say, there is a kissing couple at every corner.

7. The same differences apply to homosexual couples, but there seems to be more tolerance shown to these in some countries than in others. What is your own culture's attitude to gay love? What reaction do you have if you see gay couples expressing physical attraction to each other? Are these issues usually openly discussed in your culture or are they difficult to talk about?
8. A 1950s' song:

“Love and marriage  
Go together like a horse and carriage.”

What value does your culture place on marriage? Are marriages arranged for economic and/or social reasons? What do you think of this institution?

What reasons for marrying are acceptable in you culture? (For example, romantic love, becoming independent from your parents, providing your child with another parent after a separation or the death of the child's other parent, etc.)

## Discovering other cultures

### What is romance about?

In many highly industrialised parts of the world, images of romance and sexuality come flooding in huge amounts, through the media and through advertising. It would be very difficult not to be influenced. Sex sells, as they say.

All this is thought to be strongly supported by biology. Many people believe that men are genetically programmed to mate with as many partners as possible, while women want to hang on to a good provider and defender as partner. Thus the culturally determined conviction that love is “eternal”, and that men have a duty to stick with and provide for one partner and her children. This has become

institutionalised by many states and cultures, of course, and it is not difficult to see why, for example, the Christian Church and modern capitalism encourage not exactly love as such, but monogamy and the family. Societies where women are permitted to have many partners – though they do exist – are quite rare compared with the opposite. There is a very striking statistic here: British (married) men and women were asked if they would marry the same partner again: 60% of men said yes, but only 35% of women did so. At first sight this might appear contradictory, but on the other hand, men – married or not – are known to be much more promiscuous than women. Maybe they simply know when they are well off!

Of course, things are changing fast here. Humans seem to be the one of the few species for whom sex is fun, and who for the last forty years have generally been able to manage not to reproduce as a result of it in the industrialised parts of the world. Marriage is getting steadily less popular, and living together – much easier to end – is becoming more widespread.

All the above is very northern and western-culture oriented. You may well have very different ideas.

- Do you also think men are genetically programmed to mate with a lot of partners and women prefer to hang on to a good provider, a (potential) father? Why? Or why not?
- Is it also common in your culture to sell a wide variety of products with the help of pictures of (half-)naked women?
- Is divorce legal in your culture? Do you know what the divorce rate is?

### **Dislocated polygamy**

In a persiflage of historical expedition documentaries, it was ironically stated by “African researchers” on tour in the wilderness of Upper Austria that they had found “dislocated polygamy” in the officially monogamous country. They discovered that a lot of men seemed to live with a wife and children in one house, but visit their “second wife” living in another house regularly.

*(Das Fest des Huhnes – Austrian TV production  
by Walter Wippersberg; ORF, Vienna, 1996)*

- Is there “unofficial polygamy” in your country?

### **Intercultural relationships**

The parents of a 19-year-old student refuse to let her back into her home when they discover that she has started a relationship with a man from the dominant culture

they live in. The girl's family are immigrants, and they are disappointed because they had hoped she would eventually marry a man with their own cultural background and customs. The student is left on the street, with nothing but the clothes she is wearing. Fortunately, she has friends in the main community and from her own culture, and the social services are able to help her.

However, she is emotionally deeply disturbed. She has lost her cultural roots, and a family she loved. The situation also puts great strains on her relationship. She is not sure she can always trust her new partner for emotional support, though he is very sympathetic.

1. What is your reaction to the (authentic) conflict described above? Who is more right and who is more wrong? Just as an exercise, put yourself in the position of the parents. What would you like to say to describe and justify your reaction?
2. In pairs or small groups, try to collect arguments for each party in the conflict. Then have two or three people act out the role-play. What solution did they arrive at? TN 5.3
3. How do people make friends and develop romantic and/or sexual relationships in cultures you are familiar with? What are popular places to meet people of the opposite sex for different age-groups? Is there a specific sequence of "steps" to be taken when getting to know one another? TN 5.4

### **Activities and projects**

1. Find out the following by conducting short interviews among friends or acquaintances:
  - Do most of them believe in "love at first sight"? Or do they rather think that love will grow steadily out of a good friendship?
2. Look at the lyrics of some popular (English-language) love songs: if you translate them to your first language, would they still be meaningful/bearable? What clues about the attitudes and values concerning love can you discover in the lyrics?
3. You could also take a closer look at folk songs. They often transmit a lot of cultural information about values, behaviour and traditional courting customs.

Consider the following lines from a Hungarian Gypsy folk song:

“Mama’s daughter is getting married,  
But she cannot bake bread.  
It is better in our house  
Than in yours.

He took me from my mother  
As fast as he claps his hands,  
He threw me out the window  
As fast as he strikes the table.”

What are the underlying assumptions about relationships transmitted here?

4. Do you know some bilingual and bicultural couples and families? If yes, can you ask them about cultural differences in their relationships? Perhaps you think you cannot because it is taboo, but people living in intercultural marriages are often more aware of cultural differences than others and mind less talking about them.

## Language work

### 1. Terminology

Does your language have similar words to these terms?

- “friend”
- “boyfriend”
- “girlfriend”
- “lady friend”
- “gentleman friend”
- “lover”
- “partner”
- “fiancé(e)”
- “wife”
- “husband”
- “spouse”

Some languages (Dutch and German, for example) make no surface distinction between “friend” and “girlfriend” or “boyfriend”. You have to judge from the context which is meant. English insists on the distinction. “Partner” is becoming more popular in English, and is fast displacing “wife”, “husband” and even “spouse” as people simply live together without marrying. People used, ironically, to talk about “my significant other” until “partner” became accepted in this context.

- What is the terminology like in other languages you know? TN 5.5

## 2. Idioms

Is there a famous couple or love story in your culture like Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* or Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*? What is their story? Are they still quoted as examples of true love? Do you know of any idioms or sayings that might have derived from those symbolic figures? (For example, in German it is possible to ask "Is ... your Romeo?")

## 3. Metaphors and similes<sup>1</sup>

- "My love's like a red, red rose." (Robert Burns)

Since love is a somewhat difficult thing to describe (as you know if you have ever been in love!), so writers often resort to metaphor or simile. That is, using an apparently unconnected concept as a "vehicle" to express ideas.

Here are the lyrics from a well-known love song from the 1950s,<sup>2</sup> and a poem by W.B. Yeats. Try to find the metaphors and similes used and if possible, discuss them with others.

### **Love is a Many Splendored Thing**

Love is a many splendored thing  
It is the April rose, that only grows  
In the early spring.  
Love is nature's way of giving  
A reason to be living,  
A golden crown that makes a man a king.

Once, on a high and windy hill  
In the morning mist, two lovers kissed  
And the world stood still.  
Then your fingers touched my silent heart  
And taught it how to sing.  
Yes, true love's a many splendored thing.

Fain/Webster

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1. Metaphor: an imaginative way of describing something by referring to something else which has the qualities that you are trying to express. Simile: a figure of speech that expresses the resemblance of one thing to another.

2. Title song by Paul Fain and Sammy Webster of a 1955 Hollywood movie of the same name.

### **He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven**

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and half-light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet:  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

W.B. Yeats

#### **4. Writing**

Writing a love story: create the beginning and invite others to continue.

You could start the story like this:

- “On a sunny Saturday afternoon, Romeo was sitting in a street café on a very busy street when ...” TN 5.6



## 6. Bringing up baby

This section is mainly about small children between the ages of, say, 3 and 10, though older children are mentioned too. There are significant cultural differences in the way cultures regard and treat them. To mention just a few aspects, adults' attitudes to the noisiness and mess children can make, to the rights they have and the rewards and punishments they get can vary widely from culture to culture.

Also, demographic statistics show a widespread tendency towards a dramatic decline of birth-rates in many parts of Europe. Are children on their way to becoming a somewhat rare species, an exotic minority in many societies?

“Hickory, dickory, dock,  
The mouse ran up the clock.  
The clock struck one,  
The mouse ran down,  
Hickory, dickory, dock.”

Traditional nursery rhyme

### Reflecting on your own culture

#### Allowed or not allowed

1. Look at the list below: Do some of these “childhood tribulations” remind you of your own experiences?
  - forced naps;
  - waiting in the car;
  - hidden chocolates;
  - waiting for the cartoons to come on;
  - floating goldfish;
  - carrots instead of cookies;
  - being left behind by older siblings;
  - being hosed off by mum;
  - having to mind your younger brother/sister;
  - enduring kisses from old aunts and uncles;
  - having to go to bed when company arrives.

If so, relate a little story or anecdote and describe how your family reacted.

2. Answer the questions below about how children are viewed and treated by adults in your culture and by society in general. Try to think of a specific context, or recall some childhood memories. Pick a few issues and discuss them in a group.  
TN 6.1

- In your culture, do young children (age 6-9) mix freely with adults or do they tend to be told to play elsewhere?
- Are children of this age allowed to stay up late during adult socialising?
- Are 5-year-olds taken seriously if they complain about treatment in kindergarten?
- If children make a noise or a mess, in what kind of situations would they be told off, or when would this just be accepted?
- Are children of this age generally punished for breaking rules? How? Are they smacked? Can this be done in public?
- How much room is allotted to children in public spaces (for example, children’s seats in trams and play areas in trains or shops)?
- Do adults with children receive preferential treatment in public places, such as being served first in restaurants or shops?
- Do groups with children get reductions for admission to institutions like pools, zoos or exhibitions?
- What does your community in general offer to children in terms of education, recreation, entertainment, public space (parks and playgrounds), legal, social and psychological support in difficult times or circumstances (abuse at home), etc.?

**Decision-making**

- What kind of decisions did you have a say in when you were brought up? Put a tick in the appropriate box.

Age-group	3-6			7-10		
	Yes	Sometimes	No	Yes	Sometimes	No
What time you went to bed						
The kinds of toys you got						
The kinds of clothes you wore						
Who you played with						
What food you ate/did not eat						

Age-group	3-6			7-10		
	Yes	Sometimes	No	Yes	Sometimes	No
What family activities took place when there was free time						
What kinds of activities/ sports/hobbies you took part in						
Where the family went on holidays						
How to decorate your own room						
Whether the family should move to another house/apartment/city						
Which school you attended						

- Compare and discuss your answers to the grid with a partner. Do you think the majority of people in your culture would give similar answers?
- Is there a difference between the younger and older generations?
- What may be the reasons for similarities and differences?
- What might be the underlying values and rules which lead to the differences? TN 6.2

### Authority (in the family)

Here is a continuum about the style of education/interaction in a family: very authoritarian to very democratic

	Very authoritarian	Moderately authoritarian	Sometimes authoritarian /sometimes democratic	Rather democratic	Very democratic
You as a child					
You as a (future) parent					

In the first row mark how you were (in general) brought up by your parents or caregivers. Also, think of (a) concrete example(s) showing how your parents/caregivers fitted into that category.

In the second row mark how you imagine yourself as a future parent/caregiver. If you are already a parent/caregiver, would you like to move in any direction, or do you think you might be obliged to, and why?



## Discovering other cultures

### Hungarian families

Most Hungarian families are still fairly traditional in their approach to child rearing. You do not see too many parents with small children in restaurants, or other “grown-up” places in Hungary, because children are supposed to stay at home with their mothers (practically never with their fathers) until they learn how to behave like little adults. But do not be surprised if people, especially elderly ladies, stop to praise your children and pat them on the head in the street. Or ... to criticise their behaviour publicly and quite bluntly.

These traditional attitudes are also reflected in practical arrangements: there are often no high chairs in restaurants and only the narrowest of push-chairs can get through the doors of buses and trams. Access can also be a problem when shopping, and also in public institutions like town halls and tax offices. These are often located in old multi-storey buildings without lifts. Some countries have applied laws which require easy access for people in wheelchairs, and people with push-chair-aged children benefit from this, but they are in general not specifically regarded as a group which should be helped.



- How would you react if someone in the street stopped to stroke your child or to give them sweets?
- Do families with young children often go to restaurants or other “grown-up” places in cultures you are familiar with?

### **Baby hotels**

In western Europe, the tourism industry has discovered families with young children as a profitable target group: there are “baby-friendly” hotels, child-proof farmhouses and “nappy skiing courses”. High chairs, play corners and children’s menus have become the norm in most of the better restaurants.

- Are children expected to behave like little adults in your culture or are their specific needs acknowledged and taken into account?

### **Children as part of religious services**

A practising Jewish lady explains that in Judaism children are accorded exceptional value which is not only reflected in the strong familiar bonds and the particular emphasis on education, but also in the way children are made an integral part of religious services. The Rabbi will always try to keep children’s attention by relating stories and there are even games built into some rituals, for instance at Passover. In general, children are allowed to move and play freely in the synagogue.

- What role do children play in services or rituals in your religion? How are they expected to behave?

### **Cultural differences in raising children**

There are great differences in the way children are regarded and treated in Europe. Some view children as their most precious assets and children are naturally included in the family's plans and activities, as in most Mediterranean countries. There you can see children of all ages playing in restaurants up till about midnight, and nobody seems concerned. Greek, Italian and Turkish families often allow their children to stay up as long as they have company, and they do not have to be quiet when the adults are talking.

On the other hand, the style of education in these cultures seems much more "authoritarian" than the more "democratic" approach commonly found in northern Europe, where children have more say in most decisions. But here there seems to be a wider gap between children's and adults' spheres of life. Activities, like swimming classes and even play sessions, are organised with parents and caregivers preferring to leave their children with instructors to teach them skills like swimming and singing.

- Do families you know plan special activities for their children (for example, a trip to the zoo or the fun park on Saturday)?
- Who teaches children swimming or singing in your culture?

### **Physical punishment**

Cultures vary widely in their approaches to rewards and punishments for children. It is still widely accepted that smacking (even beating) children is an acceptable practice, though it is in fact illegal in quite a few countries.

Children are loved and cherished, of course. So why is it then that it is common to see them being smacked and verbally abused in public places? Where does this idea that it is "good for them" to be "disciplined" in this way come from? If another adult intervenes, then the response is likely to be along the lines of: "It is none of your business how I deal with my children."

This implies a view of children as property, to be treated according to the owner's wishes. Is it not better to see them as small people, with their own rights, one of which is the right not to be physically or verbally abused?

In Britain, social class is a factor. People from the professional classes would probably not smack children in public – though what goes on behind closed doors is another matter.

- What is the common attitude to physical punishment in your culture and in other cultures you know of? (There may well be wide class distinctions here.) What other forms of punishment are there? TN 6.3

**Maternity and paternity leave, and working parents**

It is also common (and becoming more common) in many societies for mothers to return to work in only a short time – sometimes just a few weeks – after giving birth. Fathers sometimes have no right to paid paternity leave. Of course, this implies that there is much less contact between parents and children, who are under others’ care for long periods. It is interesting that in middle and upper-class families in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in northern Europe, it was usual for families to employ “nannies” to look after children, and though mothers seldom worked, parents sometimes only saw their children for a few minutes a day, just before bedtime. Even less than modern working parents.

- Who else beside your immediate parents/caregivers was important in your upbringing and was/is in children’s upbringing in your culture, and in what ways? (Grandparents, neighbours, relatives, teachers, nannies, babysitters ...?)
- How long do mothers or fathers stay at home on maternity/paternity leave with their children in your own and other cultures? What effects do you think the different patterns of work and childcare have?

**Activities and projects**

1. Interview people from as many different cultures and languages as you can about words used for “child”, about adjectives they would use with these words and ask them the sorts of things they would say about a child or children, using the words. Record their comments. Analyse your results into positive/neutral/negative.

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>
Noun	“bundle of joy”, ...	“toddler”, “rascal” (?), ...	“Flegel” (German), ...
Adjective	“cute”, ...	“curious”, ...	“ungehobelt”, “frech”, (German), ...

2. Find out more about attitudes to rewarding and punishing children in as many different cultures as you can by interviewing people. Define the ages of the children concerned. What rewards and punishments are used?

You can use these scenarios:

- a good/bad school report;
  - helping in the house, garden;
  - coming home too late;
  - making a mess in the living room;
  - eating from the fridge between meals;
  - bullying;
  - fighting;
  - looking after younger siblings.
3. The public playground in your neighbourhood is in poor condition and your children (aged 6-10) complain about broken and boring play equipment. One day you and your neighbour, also a parent, decide to take action. What will you do? Write a paragraph describing your plans. Read your plans to the group and discuss them. TN 6.4
  4. Collect examples of children’s songs, poems or nursery rhymes from the languages you and your classmates (or others in the community) speak. What values do they transmit? TN 6.5
  5. See if you can find intercultural episodes involving children in books, novels, stories, poems, films, TV series, etc.! TN 6.6

## Language work

1. Is there a difference in your language and other languages you know between “childish” and “child-like”?
2. What distinctions does your language make for different age-groups? In the grid there are expressions describing children in German. As far as you can, fill in the grid for English, your first language, and any other languages you know. Do the words fit very easily?

German	English	Your L1	...
“Säugling” (0-6 months)			
“Baby” (0-1 year)			

<b>German</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Your L1</b>	<b>...</b>
“Kleinkind” (1-3 years)			
“Kindergartenkind” (3-6 years)			
“Schulkind” (6-12 years)			
“Teenager/Jugendlicher” (13-18 years)			

- List all the terms for “child” you know in any language. Are they mainly positive or negative?
- The English saying “Children should be seen and not heard” presumably dates from the nineteenth century when nannies took care of children. Is there a similar saying in your culture or in other cultures you know of? Can you collect some more proverbs and sayings about children? Some examples:

German:

- “Was Hänschen nicht lernt, lernt Hans nimmermehr.” (“What you do not learn when you’re young, you’ll never learn.”)
- “Der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Stamm.” (“The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree”, meaning that children resemble their parents.)

Polish:

- “Dziecko, pijany i głupi zawsze powie prawdę.” (“Children, drunks and fools speak the truth.”)

Dutch:

- “Jong geleerd, oud gedaan.” (“Learned young, done old.”)

English:

- “Spare the rod and spoil the child.” (If you are not strict with your children, they will become spoiled. A rod in this context is a stick for beating children.)





- |    |  |                                |
|----|--|--------------------------------|
| 4. | <u>learning for content knowledge</u>  | <u>learning to learn</u>       |
|    | Learning the dates of battles or how to solve equations as opposed to learning study skills (namely, how to skim and scan a text, how to take notes, where to look things up, etc.). |                                |
| 5. | <u>rote learning</u>   | <u>critical thinking</u>       |
|    | Memorising testable facts as opposed to emphasising the importance of learning how to think, question, doubt and discover.   |                                |
| 6. | <u>teacher as controller</u>   | <u>teacher as facilitator</u>  |
|    | Teachers can take up different roles along the continuum from controlling everything that goes on in the classroom to just facilitating the process of learning.                     |                                |
| 7. | <u>graded proficiency tests</u>  | <u>progress reports</u>        |
|    | Testable facts can easily be converted into marks or rank orders of learners, as required by many systems. It is also possible to regard effort and progress as assessment criteria. |                                |
| 8. | <u>categorisation of subjects</u>  | <u>integration of subjects</u> |
|    | Traditionally, in most systems there are “subjects”, like Maths and Geography. New trends promote integrating subjects and encourage a holistic approach.                            |                                |

In any one educational culture you will probably find all of these features, but some will have a weighting towards one or the other end of the continuum. In some places, there is a serious conflict between the expectations of parents and the philosophy of the educational system. Look at your own secondary education and give each category above a mark from 1 to 10 (far left = 1; far right = 10) according to the emphasis you think the system placed on these features.



- Does your system favour any particular type of person, or any particular range of talents?
- Would you have preferred it if there had been different emphases in your own education?
- Would the younger/older generation have the same priorities? Has there been a lot of change in this respect in your culture?
- Which approach to education do you think is more advantageous to the student, and why?

## Discovering other cultures

Many of you will have been a pupil or student, or even a visitor, in a school or college in another culture. What differences (from the scheme above, or from your experiences) are there, compared with the system you are in now? What do the differences imply? Think about what the primary goals of education are in each culture you discuss (for example, is it about learning social skills to facilitate entrance into independent adult life? Or is it about selecting academically oriented students from professionally oriented ones? Is it something completely different?). TN 7.2

### Different approaches to education

The left side of the above scheme is probably prevalent in most educational systems. In the Netherlands, attempts have been made over the last fifteen years to introduce principles based on the right side, but these have failed, largely because of resistance by classroom teachers. In Britain, the National Curriculum has clearly moved things to the left, but factors from the right still play an important role. In Austria, primary education has largely moved to the right side of the continuum above. However, secondary and tertiary schools remained rather traditional.

- What is the situation in your country or culture, and what is your opinion about it?
- In what way would a move in one direction or the other improve things?

### Hungarian school teachers

People working in education have not been well paid at all in Hungary. Teachers in the lower grades of primary schools earn less than secretaries, semi-skilled workers or taxi drivers. On the other hand, they are usually in charge of about thirty children's educational and personal development for several years. These teachers teach about twenty-two lessons a week, substitute for other teachers quite frequently, are on corridor duty from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. at least once a week, do a lot of administrative tasks and take their classes to educational places like the zoo, a

museum, or a theatre performance in their free time. You really have to love children and be devoted to your profession to be a teacher in primary school. Or you have to be rich, and then you can afford this expensive hobby.

In Hungary, there is a mixture of educational philosophies in most schools and probably in most teachers. The traditional teacher-centred, discipline and grade-oriented classroom is probably still more frequent than the opposite. Although there are a lot of new “alternative” schools these days where teachers believe that learning to learn in a friendly atmosphere is more beneficial for children and for the learning process, you can still find teachers who make learning seem like torture by criticising the students and their performance all the time, by giving them bad grades despite the students’ efforts, by using old-fashioned and senseless punishments, and in general by acting as dictators and abusing their power.



- What is it like to be a teacher in your culture?
- What tasks does a teacher in primary or secondary school have to fulfil?
- Are teachers appreciated financially and otherwise?
- Do students and/or parents complain if they do not agree with the teaching methods?

### **American schools**

The educational system of the United States is much more decentralised than that of any other country. Although certain federal regulations apply, the curriculum and funding are largely determined at the state level. Funding is partly local (the local

school district, which is usually a town or city) and partly state (for example, California, New Jersey) with only a small percentage of funds coming from the federal government.

Approximately 70% of American teachers are female. Teachers' conditions and salaries vary widely, and are also locally determined. Many teachers are unionised, although a few of the southern states do not have teachers' unions. In New Jersey, for example, all the teachers belong to a union, and their contracts are arrived at through collective bargaining.

American schools are free and compulsory, and 90% of American children attend public (that is, state) schools. The remaining 10% attend religious private schools. Most American students do not wear a school uniform, nor do they pay for their own textbooks. (That cost is borne by the school district.)

In several states, such as California, Texas and New York, a large number of students are not native speakers of English. In that case, the school districts are required by law to provide either bilingual education or ESL courses.

- Where does funding come from in the educational systems of the countries you know?
- Are the majority of teachers female?
- Do children wear a uniform?
- Do all students have the right to study in their mother tongue?

### **Taking a test in Hungary**

According to American teachers working in Budapest, the majority of Hungarian students cheat like rug-dealers every time they take a test. The same American teachers claim that this is because Hungarian teachers do not impose sanctions on students when they are caught. On the contrary, Hungarian teachers often seem not to notice this dishonest behaviour on purpose. And if students get away with cheating, they will continue to use the easier way of taking tests.

- What is the attitude to cheating in school in your culture? TN 7.3
- What would you do if you saw a fellow student cheat?
- Do rug-dealers cheat? Or is this another negative stereotype?

### **Taking a driving test in Greece (continued from page 14)**

Elizabeth, a South African lady permanently living in Greece had to take a driving test to get a licence that would entitle her to drive around in Greece. She had taken the

test once before, albeit a long time ago, and now drove with the confidence which only accompanies experience. But nothing could prepare her for what was to happen.

Mr George, the owner of the driving school, told Elizabeth to park. For the life of her, she could not understand why they had to stop outside a local café in a suburban neighbourhood. “Where is the traffic department?” she queried silently ... but the sight of other driving school cars made her hold her tongue. “Well, we’re very lucky indeed,” Mr George pronounced self-righteously! “You see, we seem to be the last car here. That means that you’ll take the test after everyone else. So you’ll have ample opportunity to observe the other candidates and avoid repeating their mistakes.” So, off they went to the café to have refreshments and settle the nerves.

The examiner had quite a reputation among the driving school owners and Mr George felt obliged to inform his student of her evil temper, sabre-like tongue and reluctance to pass candidates. Her marital status was also a source of much debate amongst the driving school owners. Surely she was an old maid, for which man in his right mind would be married to her?

In the meantime, the convoy set off: with the first candidate at the wheel, the driving instructor on the right and the two examiners in the rear. Round and round they went; turning left, turning right, reverse parking, stopping by the kerb. After some ten minutes or so the first candidate, a young man, emerged from the car. Immediately, the second candidate took his place while he entered the next car in the convoy.

After the succession of several other candidates it was Elizabeth’s turn at last. Upon entering the car she handed over her existing driver’s licence and explained the reasons for retaking the test so many years after initially passing it. All this was tantamount to speaking to a brick wall. “We’ll see,” the examiner remarked coldly. And so, off they went. Eventually, even Elizabeth began to realise that they had gone round the neighbourhood several times whereas other candidates only completed the route once. Surely this was a bad sign.

Then, at last, they approached the café and Elizabeth’s reverie was broken by the abrupt barking of the examiner. “Out!” was all she said. The kind Mr George gestured to his dazzled candidate that she had better leave and not talk at all.

By now the sun had set. Elizabeth paced up and down the pavement. Some time later, a sombre looking Mr George emerged and quickly gave her the thumbs-up sign before the examiner emerged with a blank expression and marched off to her car without so much as a “Good evening”. Thus the marathon-like driving exam ended anti-climatically. Elizabeth obtained her Greek driver’s licence and off she drove into the sunset.

by Joseph E. Chryshochoos

- Is obtaining a driving licence an important part of someone's education in the cultures you are familiar with?
- Would taking a driving test be a similar experience in your culture?
- Can instructors/teachers talk to students like the examiner in the story above in your culture or any others you know? TN 7.4

### **Activities and projects**

1. Write about some aspect of an education system you are familiar with, explaining it to someone with a different cultural background. TN 7.5
2. Write a leaflet giving advice to someone from another culture who is coming to study in your college or school. You may find this is very useful in reality, and if you go to study in another culture, it will help you to ask the right questions. Here are some areas which you might like to think about:
  - beginning and end of school year;
  - subjects and what they cover;
  - daily routine;
  - relations with teachers;
  - deadlines and punctuality;
  - attendance requirements;
  - study skills and approach: help and advice;
  - facilities;
  - student advisers.
3. Start an email partnership with a class/group in a school similar to yours in another country. You can first inquire about their school (subjects, assignments, daily routine and so on), then you can perhaps even write a newsletter together or create a website with a discussion forum. TN 7.6
4. If possible, organise a study trip or an exchange visit with students from a school like yours. When visiting the school in another culture, you may want to make a video documentary about the hosts and their institution for other students in your own culture. TN 7.7

### **Language work**

1. Here are some English words connected with education. They are mostly internationally applicable, but they may well have very different connotations and

meanings in the different systems. Since they are mostly cultural constructs, they should be approached and used with great care.

What exactly do the following expressions cover in your educational system? (If you are not sure what exactly these terms mean, look them up in a dictionary or ask native speakers of English to explain them to you before you try to find an equivalent in your language.)

Teacher education	
Homework	
Assignment	
Test	
Extracurricular activity	
Marks, grades	
Student participation	
Head teacher	
School uniforms	
Parents' evening	
Assembly	
Ball	
Graduation	

2. Collect pictures or drawings of schools and classrooms. Make sure you can name all of the things in the pictures and all of the things that happen in them. Compare with schools in other cultures.
3. Make a list of education-related concepts from any cultures you are familiar with which would need explaining at some length to someone from a different system, or which would perhaps be inexplicable without an extensive understanding of the system.

An example in the Netherlands is “HBO” (Hoger Beroepsonderwijs; literal translation: Higher Vocational Education). This is for post-secondary school students, and you have nearly the same status as a university student. You end up

after four years with a “diploma” which entitles you to work for example as a journalist, nurse, dietician, dental hygienist or teacher in the less academic secondary school streams, and so on. This diploma is not a university degree, and may have no equivalent in other systems.

4. In English, for example, people say “Excuse my French” when they swear. They “Take a French leave”, when they leave quickly and without a word. And as we all know “One Englishman can beat three Frenchmen.” It is interesting to note that the French, as well as Hungarians and Poles, will say “Filer à l’anglaise” (“Take an English leave”) in the same situation. Note, however, that there are expressions carrying positive value judgments about the same culture(s) in the same or other languages.

Look at the following collection of idioms from a variety of languages. It is interesting to observe how languages are full of preconceptions about people from other cultures. These stereotypes that are present in our mother tongue are sometimes funny, sometimes ironic, but obviously, some of them carry a negative judgment about a people, which helps spread prejudices very early in our childhood. We actually grow up and internalise these idioms often without ever questioning their meaning.

Some examples from other languages:

Estonian:

- “Rootsi kardinad” – Swedish curtains, meaning prison;
- “Korras nagu Norras” – in order as in Norway, meaning in perfect order;
- “Hiina viisakus” – Chinese politeness, meaning great politeness;
- “Hädas nagu mustlane mädas” – in trouble like a Gypsy in a swamp, meaning being in great trouble;
- “Igavene juut” – eternal Jew, meaning a homeless wanderer;
- “Vene kirvest ujuma” – to swim like a Russian axe, meaning to be a poor swimmer;
- “Vene värk” – Russian stuff, meaning a lousy thing.

French:

- “Etre soûl comme un Polonais” – to be drunk as a Pole, meaning to be very drunk;
- “Boire à la russe” – to drink up and throw away your glass;
- “C’est du chinois/de l’hébreu.” – this is Chinese/Hebrew, meaning this is incomprehensible;

Hungarian:

- “Cigány útra ment” – it went down the Gypsy road, meaning a piece of food going down the wrong way and making you cough;
- “Még akkor is, ha cigány gyerekek potyognak az égből” – even if Gypsy kids fall from the sky, meaning despite the greatest difficulties;
- “Csehül állunk” – we stand like Czechs, meaning we do not have much money left.

Polish:

- “Polak, gdy głodny, to zły.” – a Pole, when hungry, is angry;
- “Mądry Polak po szkodzie.” – a Pole is wise after damage has been done;
- “Austriackie gadanie” – Austrian talk (gab), meaning old wives’ tales;
- “Udawać Greka” – to pretend to be Greek, meaning to pretend that one does not know what is going on;
- “Siedzieć jak na tureckim kazaniu” – to sit as if one were attending a Turkish sermon, meaning not to understand what is going on.

Romanian:

- “Nu fă pe turcu!” – do not act as a Turk, meaning do not act as if you did not understand;
- “Este turc, nu te poti intelege cu el!” – he is Turkish, we cannot get along;
- “Minte de evreu!” – Jewish intelligence, meaning very intelligent.

Russian:

- “Незванный гость хуже татарина.” – uninvited guests are worse than Tatars;
- “вечный жид” – circling, travelling Jew;
- “китайская грамота” – a Chinese book, meaning it is incomprehensible;
- “китайские церемонии” – Chinese ceremonies, meaning superfluous compliments.

Slovenian:

- “Biti španska vas” – that is a Spanish village to me, meaning you are completely ignorant about something;
- “Narediti se Francoza” – to act as a Frenchman, meaning you intentionally act as if you did not know something.

See if you can find similar idioms in the languages you speak, but make sure you do not use expressions that could hurt someone's feelings. If you can, try to look up the historical roots of these expressions. The origin of these idioms sometimes reveals interesting information about the relationship between two cultures.



## Teachers' notes

### 1. Rock around the clock

**TN 1.1** If the questions seem to be too difficult to answer without concrete examples, you may wish to try the following role-plays to get students started on the topic.

How do people react in your culture when they have to wait? Make your students write and/or act out dialogues between the following pairs of people:

- boyfriend arriving late on a date to meet girlfriend outside a café in a busy street;
- student arriving late for a seminar at the university, teacher has to interrupt introduction to a debate;
- plumber coming twenty minutes late, owner of house ankle deep in water in the living room.

Even if you have a monolingual/monocultural group, there may be differences between people's attitudes to making someone waste their time. The input about other cultures and their attitude to time in general will have to come from you in this case or perhaps from some of the students' personal experiences in foreign cultures. You may also be able to find appropriate scenes in soap operas or situational comedies on TV. Another good source for awareness-raising in this area could be literature (see the bibliography for some good examples).

**TN 1.2** If you are working with intermediate level students, make sure they get help with the vocabulary. If their command of English is better, however, you may want to make them read the second part of the story in the Unit 7 right after the first part. Another approach could be to make them guess the end of the story on the basis of what they read in the first part.

**TN 1.3** This task may seem strange at first, so you may want to give your students some examples: people who have to wait for something or someone may pace up and down, chew on a pencil, look at their wristwatch every half a minute, or read their paper patiently, have a nice chat with other people around, or have a drink and enjoy people watching. To a certain extent, people's reactions are personal, but when it comes to waiting for twenty minutes or more their behaviour is also largely determined by their cultural background.

**TN 1.4** In order to make the comparison easier, you could use a chart like the one overleaf:

	English	French	German	...	...
1					
2					
3					
4	↓	↓	↓		
5	“Good morning”	“Bonjour”	“Guten Morgen”		
6					
7	↓	↓	↓		
8					
9					
10			“Guten Tag”		
11	↓	↓	↓		
12					
13	“Good afternoon”				
14					
15	↓	↓	↓		
16					
17					
18	↓	↓	↓		
19	“Good evening”	“Bonsoir”	“Guten Abend”		
20	↓	↓	↓		
21					
22	“Good night”	“Bonne nuit”	“Gute Nacht”		
23	↓	↓	↓		
24					

**TN 1.5** Some additional time-related quotes and idioms that you could analyse and compare to examples from more languages:

- “Time is a storm in which we are all lost.” (William Carlos Williams);
- “Life is one long process of getting tired.” (Samuel Butler);
- “Czas ucieka, wieczność czeka.” (Polish: “Time flies, eternity waits.”) This one is a translation from Latin “Tempus fugit, aeternitas manet”, and is used in other languages, but they mostly seem to have forgotten about eternity;
- “Mida Juku ei opi, seda Juhan ei tea.” (Estonian: “What Juku doesn’t learn, Juhan won’t know.”) Juku is a diminutive of Juhan. What you do not learn when you are young, you will not know when you are old;
- English idioms in connection with speed and efficiency: “shake a leg”, “quick as a wink”, “get the ball rolling”, “in nothing flat”.

**TN 1.6** Can you give examples of the minimum “obligatory” phrases before getting “down to business”, of widely used “closing sentences” and elegant transitions from personal to professional spheres?

For example, in German a greeting appropriate to the time of the day (“Guten Morgen!”), some introductory phrase to express pleasure to meet (“Schön, dass es heute geklappt hat!” (“Glad it worked out today!”) “Sind Sie gut angekommen?” (“Have you arrived without any problems?”) “Haben Sie uns gleich gefunden?” (“Have you found us easily?”) would be expected as a minimum before getting down to business. Inquiring about a person’s well-being would be included if the partners had met before “Wie geht’s Ihnen so?” “Können wir uns jetzt ... zuwenden?” (“Can we turn to ... now?”) or more casually in Austria “Gemmas an?” (“Shall we start?”) would mark the transition from personal introductory talk to business conversation.

Can you give examples from your language or other languages you speak?

## **2. You are what you eat?**

**TN 2.1** This is a good way to start reflecting about cultural differences in perceptions of food and eating. However, if you teach a monolingual, monocultural group, you will probably have to modify the activity because your students may come up with very similar drawings of bread. It may be a good idea to bring in pictures or drawings of types of bread common in other cultures for comparison. You could also ask the students whether they have seen and eaten unusual types of bread abroad.

**TN 2.2** Show drawings or pictures of bread and sandwiches. You could also make the students write the descriptions or “recipes” of sandwiches or fried bread, for example, for a real or imaginary foreign student visiting their school or college.

**TN 2.3** More on the comparison of British and Polish eating habits: use the text below as additional reading for homework or as a conversation starter.

Variation: a guided writing exercise. Make your students replace the words Poland and Britain in the text below with the name of their own country and another one they are interested in, and ask them to modify the whole text accordingly. If this is too much work for their level or for the given time limits, you could just give them some sentence starters to help them write a comparison. For example:

- “In my culture breakfast is usually ....”
- “The main meal is served at ....”
- “In schools, you ....”

- “The evening meal is often ....”
- “Dinner usually consists of ....”
- “In ... [the culture I am interested in] people often ....”
- “Breakfast/lunch is usually substantial enough to ....”
- “At midday ....”
- “The rituals of eating together ....”
- “Snacking ....”

The conventions in Poland of the naming, serving and eating of the three main meals are very strictly observed, and it is very unusual for anybody to diverge from them. The main meal is served at around 1 p.m., and consists of soup, a main (meat or fish) course with potatoes or pasta and vegetables, and stewed fruit in a sugared liquid, served in a glass. The soup is usually substantial enough to be a meal in itself. Breakfast is bread and ham, etc., and is largely indistinguishable from the evening meal, with some exceptions. The latter is served at about 6 p.m.

Poland is a country where many people still work in agriculture or heavy industry (though this is changing fast). People go to bed early and work long hours at hard physical tasks, starting very early in the morning. The meal system outlined above is very suitable for this.

It is interesting to compare the system in this respect with Britain. The “English breakfast” is famous, of course – everything fried: bacon, sausages, eggs, mushrooms, bread, tomatoes, etc. But virtually nobody actually eats this sort of thing in a service-industry society. With one exception: away from home, people still do. That is, in hotels and motorway service stations, the “English breakfast” is still served.

At midday things diverge. You can be confronted with “dinner” or “lunch”. If it is the former, then you are likely to get a cooked meal. You are also likely to be in the north of Britain and among working-class people. If the latter, then it will be in the south and you will not get hot food. In schools, the language shows the transition: “school dinners” is still the usual phrase, but “school lunches” is slowly taking over. Again, though, it will be something cooked in a kitchen dedicated for the purpose.

The (early) evening meal is often the centre of the family day in many cultures, and you are expected to attend it if you can. But of course, some Americans, and more and more British people, simply do not bother with formal meals, and eat whatever they fancy when they feel like it: “snacking”. This even extends to “grazing”: the habit of eating at the supermarket while shopping, handing over the packaging at the check-out for scanning and payment. So the ritual aspects of eating together and confirming family or group solidarity in this way may be disappearing in some cultures.

**TN 2.4** The readings on pages 22 - 24 cover important social issues including passages about health consciousness, waste of resources and addictions. On top of the educational aspects of treating such topics in class, it is important to note and discuss the socio-cultural differences in people's attitudes to both the issues and the people affected by them.

**TN 2.5** If you work with a multicultural class, this activity can be best done with your own students at first. Then you could ask them to go and interview some more people. In case you have a monolingual/monocultural class and if your students would have difficulties finding interviewees from other cultures, you may suggest cyberspace interviews instead. Young students will especially enjoy an assignment that has to be done with the help of the Internet.

**TN 2.6** If your students have not done such observation tasks yet, you could help them by giving them a grid with things to look out for. It may be even better though to prepare that grid or observation tool together in class. An example:

- What may be unusual on the menu for someone from your own culture?
- What spices are typical of this cuisine?
- In what order do people eat the dishes (salad first/last/with the main course, an alcoholic drink before/with/after the meal, dishes served one after the other or all at the same time, etc.)?
- What kind of bread is served with the meal if any?
- What eating utensils are used (knife and fork/chopsticks/hands)?
- How does the waiting staff talk to the customers (very (in)formally)?

**TN 2.7** If cooking together is out of the question, then at least have your students tell one another about foreign specialities they have already eaten or heard of. As usual, this may work best if you start the story-telling.

**TN 2.8** Possible questions to consider in writing the script for the dinner party: What are suitable conversation starters? Who would order what in which sequence (for example, soups, salads, meat and sweets)? Would you have to agree on something everybody would have to order and eat or drink? (Bread, rice, tea, coffee, wine ...?) Would everybody order different drinks (alcoholic/non-alcoholic, hot, cold ...)? Would the party wait until everybody had been served or would everyone start eating as soon as they got their plate? Would someone make a toast? Who would that be and what status would they have? What would be said for a toast?

**TN 2.9** The following role-play is an excellent way to raise your students' awareness of the importance of differences in non-verbal communication. It may even help students

experience culture shock for a few minutes. Therefore, it is probably best used with a monolingual/monocultural group who have little or no experience of meeting people from other cultures.

### **Role-play: intercultural encounters<sup>1</sup>**

#### *Preparation*

Role-cards, colour ribbons, copies of the set of questions for discussion

#### *Procedure*

1. Explain that students will arrive from three different countries according to their roles to participate at a reception (or a party for first-year undergraduates, a business meeting or a ball depending on your students' interests and age).
2. All they have to do is get to know one another a little by talking briefly to as many people as possible.
3. Students without role cards should be asked to observe the players closely so they can even eavesdrop on some of the conversations. (You can prepare role-cards for the observers, too.)
4. Distribute role-cards and matching ribbons and let students stand up, walk around and get to know one other. (The red, blue and white ribbons worn as ties or necklaces help students identify who is from which country during and after the game.)
5. After about eight to twelve minutes of partying (less if you have a small number of students), they should be asked to sit down in groups of four or five, preferably so that there are people from Blue-land, White-land and Red-land in each group as well as one or two observers.
6. Distribute the set of questions (see below) for the discussion and let them answer the questions and discuss the issues in their groups.
7. Bring the whole class together and elicit some of their answers and final conclusions so you can evaluate the experience of cultural encounters together. This is probably a good time to ask your students if they have ever had intercultural misunderstandings with people from other cultures or tell them about

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1. A variation on a role-play game from Holló, D. and Lázár, I. (2000), "The Neglected Element: Teaching Culture in the EFL Classroom", *NovELTy*, Vol. 7, No.1, pp. 76-84.

your own similar experiences. You could also ask them whether they have ever been excluded from anywhere and how that felt. Another, perhaps more difficult, issue that can be discussed here is whether your students avoid or exclude any group of people on any basis.

### *Comments*

If your students are not used to role-play or if you feel they will not be “brave” enough to play these roles, you could introduce the whole game with a mini-presentation on (and perhaps a demonstration of) different greeting customs in the world. Of course, as with any role-play, some students will act out their roles better than others, but both the role-play and the follow-up discussion will be entertaining and informative even if some students feel incapable of acting according to the roles allocated to them. In fact, this could provide another interesting issue for discussion: why is it so strange and difficult for us to avoid eye contact or pull earlobes when we talk to people? This can then lead to an awareness raising discussion on the different meanings of the same behaviour in different cultures.

Aside from its obvious language development merits, this role-play also helps to recognise and observe features of other cultures. By playing set roles in unfamiliar social and cultural situations, students have a chance to experience different behaviours and recognise different values behind them. This is especially useful, because as long as students are never exposed to foreign social customs and cultural values, they will not know how to react in intercultural settings, so they may easily fabricate judgmental opinions about other people simply because they have never seen anything different from their own culture’s norms and standards.

### *Variations*

(a) Depending on your students’ level of English, age and interest as well as your language teaching focus, you may want to change the character description on each role-card. You could also list conversation topics there (“Try talking about the weather/shopping/sports”) or you could also leave it up to the students what they want to talk about at a party or reception. They could then compare and evaluate the conversation starters they used for effectiveness and appropriateness afterwards.

Steps 6 and 7 can be done together as a whole class activity if you think that the whole discussion should be controlled or if the group is too small to split up.

(b) You can also start the debriefing session by asking the students to sit according to their assigned groups and not to talk to each other directly for the time being (the point is they should not exchange their role-cards or give away the instructions they got).

Then Redlanders describe Bluelanders and list the adjectives on the board. Bluelanders are not allowed to react at this stage. (This is also to make them realise how difficult it is to be exposed to prejudices and not be able to correct them.) You then ask the Whitelanders to describe the Redlanders and so on. Afterwards you can ask them to guess what the cause of the difficulties/differences could be and ask them to try and formulate the rules the other group had. Only after this should they present their original role-cards to the other group and discuss what effects the differences in rules had. (It might also be worthwhile to ask whether forming a distinct group united by specific behaviours had emotional benefits for the individuals.)

*Sample role-cards*

<p>You come from Redland. You like to meet foreigners, but you really dislike being touched by strangers. In your country you rarely look into each other's eyes, and you always avoid eye contact when you first meet someone. You eat with a spoon.</p>	<p>You are from Blue-land. In your country, people gently, but consistently touch each other's arms when they talk. You eat with your hands. You like to meet foreigners, but you avoid people from Whiteland.</p>	<p>You come from Whiteland. You love to meet people and express your enthusiasm with a lot of gestures. When you meet someone, you touch your earlobes and bow a little to say "hello" politely. You eat with chopsticks.</p>
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*Follow-up questions*

- What did we learn about the three different cultures?
- What is the role of physical contact?
- What caused (or could have caused) conflicts?
- How did participants avoid/solve conflicts?
- Are there any similarities between your culture and any of these three cultures?
- What are some of the differences?
- Which culture did you find the strangest of all?
- What else would you like to learn about these cultures?
- How did you feel while you were participating in the game?
- What did you notice when you were observing the role-play?

**TN 2.10** Mind-maps: there are two kinds of association exercises commonly used in language work: "clusters" (collections of words freely associated around a keyword with the aim of focusing on central concepts) and "mind-maps", which in the process of collection also introduce orders, ranks and relationships between associated terms. You can try either with the word "bread" and the bubbles provided in the exercise.

**TN 2.11** The question of contextualisation is essential to vocabulary development. With computer analysis of very large collections of text, useful contexts can be found for words and phrases. It is much more helpful for the language learner to look first at the word or phrase in context – nowadays given in most dictionaries for L2 learners – than to look at the “definition”, when using a dictionary. And, to repeat, learners should always be made to think of more contexts of their own.

**TN 2.12** Some more English idioms that could be compared to phrases in the students’ own language and then contextualised:

- “Tourism is this country’s bread and butter.” (Some languages reverse the order, but English always has “bread” first.)
- “The Midwest is the USA’s breadbasket.”
- “We lived on the breadline to get our son through college.”
- “When you say things like that you’re rubbing salt in the wounds.”
- “I want my slice of the cake.”

### **3. Conversation and ... silence**

**TN 3.1** To explore this issue you could also ask some pairs of students to prepare and act out short introductory dialogues and have the audience judge whether they conformed to the right kind of rules in that particular culture. (For multicultural groups you would have to define the sub-culture first, or give more background information about the whole setting.)

**TN 3.2** An activity to learn to observe conversational topics, speech and behaviour patterns appropriate to another culture:

#### **Strange dialogues<sup>1</sup>**

This activity is best done in a monolingual group, although with some modifications it could be adapted for use in a multicultural group.

##### *Procedure*

1. Have two students read out a typical dialogue (see example below) in their mother tongue.
2. Ask the class if they could imagine the same conversation in English (or any other foreign language). They will probably say yes. (If they say no, go to step 5.)

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1. Based on an activity in Holló, D. and Lázár, I. (2000), “The Neglected Element: Teaching Culture in the EFL Classroom”, *NovELTy*, Vol. 7, No.1, pp. 76-84.

3. Go through the text and try to translate it together orally. Accept several versions if they are good grammatically and lexically.
4. Tell your students that what you have just translated or read together would still sound strange to a native speaker of the foreign language. Ask them if they have any ideas why.
5. Help your students notice some of the cultural traits in the way the speakers talk in the dialogue below: directness, even bluntness, a more negative attitude, complaining, criticising, etc., versus English speakers' indirectness, politeness and more positive attitude. In fact, regardless of the linguistic quality of the translation, this dialogue cannot sound acceptable English.
6. With a multicultural group or if you do not speak the students' first language, you can use a dialogue that has already been translated into English. This again gives an opportunity to discuss the differences between "typical" English or American and "typical" first language conversations between friends, students and teachers and colleagues.

#### *Comments*

It is essential that you do not introduce and treat the activity as a conventional translation task. The students would be frustrated if they had to work alone, writing down the sentences in English only to find out that there is no really good solution to the task. Nevertheless, it is a very useful exercise both linguistically and culturally. Discussing how polite phone conversations go in English and learning how to choose conversational topics, speech and behaviour patterns in general are all very important for language learners.

#### *Variation*

As an alternative approach to the problem, you could translate a dialogue yourself and then ask your students what is wrong with it. This way you can still discuss other possible translations of the sentences in the text, but you may have more time for the discussion on differences in conversational topics and behaviour patterns.

#### *Sample dialogue (originally in Hungarian)*

A Hungarian university student talks to her teacher on the phone:

- Ann: "Good morning, Mrs Brown. This is Ann White speaking. I'd like you to help me."  
 Mrs Brown: "Good morning. What's it about?"

- Ann: "I couldn't finish my assignment for today, because I had a bad headache yesterday. I think I'll be ill."
- Mrs Brown: "But you'd the whole week to finish it and the deadline is today."
- Ann: "Yes, but my little brother broke his arm yesterday and my mum was busy, so I had to take him to the hospital."
- Mrs Brown: "Well then, let me have that assignment by Monday at the latest."
- Ann: "Could it be Wednesday instead of Monday? I could bring in the draft on Monday and then you could take a look to see if it's good enough. And then I could write it by Wednesday."
- Mrs Brown: "Alright then. Come and see me on Monday during my office hour."

**TN 3.3** If this question is very difficult to answer, have students conduct a little experiment trying out how long they keep eye contact during an informal conversation and report their feelings.

**TN 3.4** If your students need help in designing an interview about non-verbal communication, brainstorm possible topics together. The interviews can then be conducted with people from other cultures. Since non-verbal behaviour is difficult to describe on paper, students could be encouraged to borrow a video-camera and record the interviews if possible, and/or have someone act out the situations described.

Again if your students would find it hard to meet and interview several people from other cultures, they could be encouraged to conduct cyberspace interviews by hooking up with students in other countries on the Internet. Another possibility is to analyse a movie, advertisements or soap operas for non-verbal clues.

Here are some ideas for questions that they could include in the interview or the observation sheet:

- What non-verbal cues indicate that someone is proud/embarrassed/bored in your culture?
- How do men/women communicate anger non-verbally in your culture?
- What non-verbal cues indicate that someone has high/low status in your culture?
- What non-verbal behaviour is funny/offensive/taboo in your culture?
- How do men/women indicate non-verbally that they are offended in your culture?
- How does a man indicate that he is interested in a woman in your culture?
- How does a woman indicate that she is interested in a man in your culture?

With all questions, always think of eye contact, gestures, touching, proximity, posture, volume, tone of voice and clothes.

## 4. Men and women, girls and boys – Gendered identities

### TN 4.1

(a) Pair work: two students choose a particular statement from the list and collect arguments/evidence to support or dismiss the contents of the statement (“pro/con” list). They can then either write a few paragraphs about it or present their views to the group and discuss them.

(b) Make your students recall (or collect) similar proverbs, sayings or quotations from their own culture. If you work with a multicultural group, a comparison of the values behind these would be highly interesting.

### TN 4.2 Three suggestions:

(a) Have students compare representations of female politicians in the media from different cultures/countries. There can mostly be found references to their looks or family lives which are usually missing with men. Are there also cultural differences noticeable in the way the media deal with celebrities in general?

(b) An interesting experiment with a group experienced in drama techniques – or in cooperation with a colleague teaching drama at your school – could be working at a piece where roles are cast with members of the opposite sex, namely the female parts played by boys, the male roles by women. This would necessitate intensive work at non-verbal and verbal aspects of behaviour and might work as an eye-opener to many subconscious patterns of behaviour and expectations in interaction between the sexes. It might be also very rewarding to have students keep personal journals about their feelings throughout the process.

(c) A simpler version of the above: act out an everyday scene as described above, for example a woman walking down the street and a man whistling at her or commenting on her looks. Ask the protagonists to report their feelings in the situation. Then repeat the scene but reverse the roles, namely the woman now whistles at the man. How do the protagonists – and the audience – perceive the situation now?

**TN 4.3** If your students need help constructing an interview schedule, you could brainstorm the possible questions together and agree on a final format before they actually start interviewing people.

Also, tell the students to watch out for the attitude that “It is all just a bit of fun and if you don’t approve you’re just boring/a prude/etc.” You may also find deep-rooted hypocrisy in those who profess “puritanical” standards. While doing the interview it is probably better not to let their own feelings show.

**TN 4.4** With a group of trainee teachers it could also be interesting to look at textbooks and the way they portray men and women – can you find cultural differences there or will you find similar pictures everywhere? How stereotypical are the illustrations of men and women?

**TN 4.5** With a class of trainee teachers, it will probably be enough to brainstorm possible questions and draft a simple questionnaire for such a survey. With secondary school students, you may have to spend more time designing the questionnaire. The session on the division of labour in the home can be very well introduced with Judy Syfer's "Why I Want a Wife" published in *Notes from the Third Year*, 1971, or Patricia Maniardi's "The Politics of Housework" published in *Ms. Magazine* in May/June 1992.

Possible entries in the questionnaire:

Who does the following jobs in your house:

- making breakfast;
- cooking lunch or dinner;
- doing the dishes;
- mopping the floor;
- vacuuming;
- dusting;
- picking up after everybody;
- fixing things;
- doing the shopping;
- washing/ironing clothes;
- washing the car;
- mowing the lawn.

Does everybody have their own responsibilities around the house?

See also TN 3.5 in Conversation and ... silence for interview questions on gender differences in non-verbal communication.

**TN 4.6** "Marked and unmarked" terms: to further look into this issue read the riddle below constructed by linguists Eakins and Eakins (1978):

"A man and his young son were apprehended in a robbery. The father was shot during the struggle and the son, in handcuffs, was rushed to the police station. As the police pulled the struggling boy into the station, the mayor, who had been called to the scene, looked up and said, 'My God, it is my son!'"

How is this possible?

Usually very few people find the solution that the mayor must have been the boy's mother. This riddle was used to prove that the commonly heard argument that unmarked terms are "gender free" and "neutral" does not really hold true because of the habitual association with male mental images these evoke.

For further reading: if you read Norwegian or German, you might find the book *Die Töchter Egalia*<sup>1</sup> (The daughters of Egalia) by Norwegian author Gerd Brantenberg entertaining and revealing reading since the author did not only create a world ruled by women, but also changed all forms of language (normally defended as being "neutral" and "inclusive of women") to feminine forms. For example, German "Mensch" to "Wibsche", "man" to "wib", etc. The effects on the readers are highly interesting!

## 5. All you need is love (?)

**TN 5.1** Think about how your family/friends would react if you were dating someone from another culture/race/religion/ or of the same sex!

Also compare the "letter to the agony columnist" from a women's magazine below:

### **"Why cannot people be more tolerant of mixed marriages?"**

My mother has been nagging at me for five years. My father gave up when he decided it was better to keep his only child than to drive her away. My mother continues to prophesy all manner of wicked ends for me, and my father continues to let me live my own life, but looks at me with sadness in his eyes. My sin? I fell in love with a man of a different race and religion.

It does not matter that I have found a faith I can follow and live by, that I believe in something in a world that believes in very little these days. It does not matter that I have never, and never will, become involved with drugs, or that I do not drink alcohol or smoke (neither does my future husband). It matters even less that I am treated as a queen, and protected and loved in a manner most women can only dream of. The things that do matter are my fiancé's race and religion.

These two words have revealed astonishing and frightening prejudices in people. On hearing of my change of religion, my family confronted me. They

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1. Brantenberg, G. (1989), *Die Töchter Egalia. Ein Roman über den Kampf der Geschlechter*, Munich: Verlag Frauenoffensive.

impressed upon me just how religious and true to our faith we, as a family, had been. (I confess I had not noticed.) They say I shall be damned in varying degrees, that I shall be an outcast, and that my children will be pointed out and remarked upon, and vary in colour from yellow to black! Never will I be invited to 'nice' homes and have the 'right' sort of friends.

**If only they would give us their blessing**

I have been bribed to leave him and I have been begged to leave him. I am accused of selfishness because of my love for him, and I am accused of insanity because I cannot see what others wish me to see.

But I know I am lucky. I have a wonderful man who has stood by me through these years of waiting in the hope that my parents, whom I love dearly, would relent and give us their blessing. Perhaps they never will, but at least we have the knowledge that we tried. Can someone please explain to me why, in this modern age, there is still so much fear of other ways of life? Heaven help others who love people who are different from their own kind: I know better than most the heartbreak they suffer.”

(Name withheld at writer’s request, “Woman’s Own”, in Morris, S. (1980), *Love. A Reader for Students of English*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 104 *et seq.*)

How would you answer the question this woman asks?

**TN 5.2** Sex education might well be a taboo topic in a lot of cultures – or difficult to talk about even for students in a class where there is relatively open public discourse about these sorts of things. It is probably not a good idea to force students to discuss these issues if they are not up to it.

**TN 5.3** After the role-play, students may well feel that there is no solution to this conflict which is satisfactory for both sides. The main purpose of the exercise is to sensitise them to the fact that very difficult personal decisions have sometimes to be taken when transcending cultural boundaries. These might entail a great deal of emotional disturbance – whatever the final decision. Second or third generation immigrant children often have to create a “third culture” to find their personal position between the values and attitudes of their parents’ original culture and the culture they are living in.

**TN 5.4** An additional activity about different courting and dining customs. (For an excellent source of similar critical incidents see Cushner and Brislin (1996).)

## **Courting – A critical incident**

A young American man had been dating a Hungarian girl for six months when he was invited to his girlfriend's house for dinner. It was a first visit at the girl's parents' house and the young man felt somewhat nervous about it. To be on the safe side, he dressed up a bit and brought along what seemed to him a nice bottle of wine for his future father-in-law as well as a pretty bouquet of flowers for his future mother-in-law. The conversation went smoothly and the food was delicious except for the fried fish that he found too greasy. However, throughout the whole evening he noticed that the girl's mother was very reserved, almost unfriendly with him. The day after he was wondering what he had done wrong to deserve such cold treatment.

1. The wine was from a region that does not produce good quality wine, so bringing a bottle like that was offensive.
2. The fact that he did not eat too much of the fried fish was an insult to the mother who had spent long hours shopping for it and preparing a traditional Hungarian dish out of it.
3. The flowers were chrysanthemums which are considered as cemetery flowers in Hungary. Receiving a bouquet of them spoiled the mother's mood even if she knew the young man came from a different culture.
4. The young man was wearing blue jeans with a decent blue shirt and a sweater. This was definitely not formal enough for the parents for such an occasion.

### *Answers*

1. Not bringing the right kind of wine to a dinner party would not be offensive from a foreigner. Find another answer.
2. It is considered impolite not to taste what is offered or to criticise a dish someone prepared for you. Just nibbling at such a dish is indirect criticism, too. Hungarians tend to put a lot of emphasis on feeding their guests well, so not eating too much of the fish might have hurt the hostess' feelings. This is one of the right answers.
3. Although the American was probably not aware of the cultural connotations of such a bouquet, he badly offended the Hungarian mother by giving her flowers that Hungarians only put on graves. People, like the girl's mother in this case, tend to believe that such symbols have the same meaning all over the world. This is the best answer.

4. You do not have to dress up too much if you go to someone's house for dinner in Hungary. If you do not wear torn pants and a dirty sweatshirt, you will be alright. Find another answer.

**TN 5.5 Terminology:** when collecting terms be careful also to research connotations and collocations. For example, some words might only be used when talking about a person, not directly to him or her or in a formal context. As a case in point, you would hardly introduce a person to your boss calling him/her your "lover", or would you?

**TN 5.6 Writing a love story:** this can be done collectively in the classroom by passing round a sheet of paper (or even several ones) with a beginning and each student (or each pair of students) adding a sentence or paragraph to it. Alternatively, it can be done individually for homework.

If working alone, you could also try putting the initial paragraph of a love story on the Internet and inviting others to continue it.

## **6. Bringing up baby**

**TN 6.1** Some of these questions are difficult to answer and students probably need some time to recall childhood memories or to think of families with small children. If you do this discussion session with trainee teachers, you may want to tell them to bring in photos or you can also display a collection of photos of children and ask what difficulties they would foresee if they had to teach a class consisting of so many different kids. This could be a lead in to a discussion about classroom dynamics, too. The same applies to the next exercises on decision-making and authority in the family.

**TN 6.2** An example of underlying values could be "obedience" versus "self-reliance".

**TN 6.3** Research what the law says with regard to physical punishment of children in different public institutions (kindergarten, school, day-care centres, youth centres, etc.) and in the home? What measures can be taken in the case of physical abuse? Are there institutions/organisations in your community where abused children can find help?

**TN 6.4** The playground: when the students have finished reading out their plans to one another, ask them the two questions below. Their answers could lead to a discussion about cultural differences in attitudes to children's opinions.

- How many of you thought about asking the children about their preferences?
- Did you ask the local authorities to take the children's wishes into account?

**TN 6.5** Some examples of nursery rhymes in which the lessons taught are questionable:

“Three blind mice, see how they run!  
They all ran after the farmer’s wife  
Who cut off their tails with a carving knife,  
Did you ever see such a thing in your life  
As three blind mice?”  
(Traditional English nursery rhyme)

“Ladybird, fly away,  
The Turks are coming,  
They’ll put you into salted water,

And they’ll take you out  
They’ll put you under a wheel,  
And they’ll take you out,  
Here come the Turks who will shoot you,  
Ladybird, fly away.”  
(Translated from a traditional Hungarian nursery rhyme)

**TN 6.6** Some excellent examples are Salman Rushdie’s novel *Midnight’s Children*, Ewa Hoffman’s memoir entitled *Lost in Translation: Life in a New Language* and Ernest Hemingway’s short story *A Day’s Wait*.

## **7. Up in the morning and off to school ...**

**TN 7.1** This section is most suitable for discussion with pre or in-service language teachers. If you are a teacher trainer in methodology, you have probably discussed these issues already with your trainees. This could then be dealt with as a revision exercise, this time looking for culturally established differences, rather than embarking on an analysis of educational philosophy.

**TN 7.2** Questions: a comparison of different timetables from different schools is a good starting-point. It is interesting to see what subjects students have and how many of them a week in other cultures. You can also compare extracurricular activities and the length of breaks if they are listed. This is especially useful for a class before an exchange trip.

**TN 7.3** Taking tests: there is a lot to talk about here from the different ways of assessing knowledge and skills to authoritarian behaviour on the teacher’s or examiner’s side to cheating or not cheating. All this can be discussed with any group at

any level from primary school to university, because everybody who has gone to school for a while will have experience and probably strong opinions about these issues.

### **Role-play: cheating**

A student taking his final exams at secondary school is caught cheating by copying from a textbook. The teacher who caught him is threatening to report the incident to the examination board, which would mean automatic failure for the candidate. Group A: list the excuses the student would make to explain his conduct. Group B: list the reproaches the teacher would make to the student. Choose one group representative each and act out the dialogue. Finally, ask the teacher how they would eventually decide.

**TN 7.4** This is part two of a story about a foreigner taking a driving test in Greece. (See Unit 1 for part one.) Learning to drive and taking a driving test is practically compulsory in someone's education in Europe these days. The story is included here to show how different such an experience can be in different cultures.

**TN 7.5** This could be in the form of a letter to a pen-pal consisting of one paragraph about a school carnival. Or an essay on several controversial issues in connection with a particular school or the education system in general. A good warm-up before this writing activity could be the following role-play:

### **Role-play: schooling age**

A Dutch school teacher tries to explain to a Turkish immigrant mother that it is in her child's best interest to start school at 4. The mother is aware of the law, but is very reluctant to "give away" her child at that age. Explain the situation to your students or give out role-cards. Make your students find a partner. They should write a list of five arguments for each point of view, and select the best ones. Then act out the discussion with their partner. For homework, they could sum up the arguments of both sides in a paragraph each.

**TN 7.6** If you do not know any school teachers abroad who could help you get hooked up with the right teachers/students, then look up addresses on the Internet. It is actually quite easy to find partners for email correspondence.

**TN 7.7** An exchange visit is of course one of the best ways to raise awareness of differences in values, beliefs, customs and attitudes and to promote openness and tolerance towards other cultures. If the trip is properly prepared and well thought over,

it can give students first-hand experience in a lot of the areas discussed in this book. If your school has not yet been involved in anything like that, then it is probably difficult to start from scratch. It is worth a try though.

## Annotated bibliography

(Compiled by Ildikó Lázár and Nancy Tumposky)

This section provides you with a variety of materials which you may want to consult for further reading on the subject of intercultural communication and awareness. Some of these, marked with an asterisk are works of fiction. Others are essays, memoirs or scholarly works. We provide a brief description to help you judge the scope and style of each work.

\*Alvarez, J. (1991), *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents*, New York: Algonquin. Some fifteen interrelated stories to recount the experiences of the four Garcia sisters, both before and after their family's exile from the Dominican Republic. The book begins during the late 1960s, with the siblings already Americanised, then rolls back to the difficult period of assimilation and closes with the girls' childhood in the Dominican Republic.

Ashton-Warner, S. (1963), *Teacher*, New York: Simon & Schuster. A first-person account of a British teacher working in New Zealand in the 1920s with aboriginal (Maori) children.

Beneke, J. (2000), "Intercultural Competence", in Bliesener, U. (ed.), *Training the Trainers*, International Business Communication, Vol. 5, Carl Duisberg Verlag, pp. 107-125.

An excellent summary of what culture is and what competences the teacher has to have to teach intercultural communication.

Bennett, M.J. (1997), "How Not to Be a Fluent Fool", in Fantini, A. (ed.), *New Ways in Teaching Culture*, Alexandria, Virginia: TESOL, pp. 16-21.

Explains, through examples, why it is not enough to be grammatically and lexically competent, and discusses implications of aspects of teaching culture in the classroom.

Bowers, G. (1992), "Memories, Metaphors, Maxims, and Myths: Language Learning and Cultural Awareness", *ELTJ*, Vol. 46/1, pp. 29-38.

A very good article with lots of practical ideas on how the four Ms in the title show deeply ingrained cultural values in any language.

\*Boyle, T.C. (1995), *The Tortilla Curtain*. New York: Viking.

A fictionalised exploration of conflict between white suburban culture and that of illegal Latino immigrants in Los Angeles.

\*Brantenberg, G. (1989), *Die Töchter Egalías. Ein Roman über den Kampf der Geschlechter*, Munich: Verlag Frauenoffensive.

An entertaining novel in which gender roles are consequently reversed and language changed accordingly.

Brown, H.D. (2000), *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, 4th edition, White Plains, New York: Longman.

Contains a description of different stages of acculturation and explains some of the ways in which learning a second language is like learning a second culture.

Byram, M. (1997), *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*, London: Multilingual Matters.

The authoritative source on teaching communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Contains a comprehensive model for intercultural communicative competence as well as objectives for its assessment.

Byram, M. and Fleming, M. (eds.) (1998), *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective: Approaches Through Drama and Ethnography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A collection of excellent articles about the role of ethnography and drama in learning language and culture, including descriptions of experiments and case studies.

Byram, M. and Morgan, C. (1994), *Teaching-and-Learning Language-and-Culture*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Defines the role of culture in language learning, compares different methods of teaching language-and-culture, describes a model of teacher education, and illustrates the above with nine case studies.

\*Carey, P. (1989), *Oscar and Lucinda*, London: Faber and Faber.

An Australian historical novel with many cultural conflicts between the aborigines and the settlers.

\*Cisneros, S. (1983), *The House on Mango Street*, New York: Vintage Books.

Some forty-four vignettes centred around the bilingual, bicultural experiences of a Latina girl growing up in Chicago.

Council for Cultural Co-operation (Council of Europe) (1996), *Modern Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. A Common European Framework of Reference*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Council of Europe (1996), *All Different – All Equal, Education Pack*, 2nd edition, Strasbourg: European Youth Centre.

A wide range of activities, very useful for language teachers interested in adding a cultural dimension to their teaching. The focus is on cultural awareness, starting with the students' own culture, as well as on issues of racism and intolerance.

Cushner, K. and Brislin, R. (1996), *Intercultural Interactions: A Practical Guide*, 2nd edition, London: Sage.

Contains a large collection of intercultural incidents which can be used in language classrooms.

Doyé, P. (1999), *The Intercultural Dimension: Foreign Language Education in the Primary School*, Berlin: Verlag.

A brief overview of recommendations for early language learning in Europe, with a focus on cultural and intercultural education. In the appendix there is a summary of the report of the Council of Europe, *Language Learning for European Citizenship*.

Eakins, B. and Eakins, G. (1978), *Sex Differences in Human Communication*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, cited in Smith, P. (1985), *Language, the Sexes and Society*, *Language in Society*, 8, (general ed. Peter Trudgill), Oxford, New York: Basil Blackwell, p. 45.

Fantini, A. (ed) (1997), *New Ways in Teaching Culture*, Alexandria Virginia: TESOL.

An anthology of suggested lesson ideas for integrating language and culture.

Fenner, A. and Newby, D. (2000), *Approaches to Material Design in European Textbooks: Implementing Principles of Authenticity, Learner Autonomy, Cultural Awareness*, Graz: European Centre for Modern Languages.

Introductory articles as well as examples and activities in connection with authenticity, learner autonomy and cultural awareness.

\*Garcia, C. (1992), *Dreaming in Cuban*, New York: Knopf.

A novel looking at three generations of a Cuban family divided by Castro's 1959 revolution.

Hinkel, E. (ed.) (1999), *Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A collection of articles which explore the influence of culture on interaction and learning, how culture influences the teaching and learning of writing, and a discussion of the pedagogical aspects of interactional competence.

Hoffman, E. (1989), *Lost in Translation: Life in a New Language*, New York: E.P. Dutton.

A moving memoir of a young girl's transition from the culture and language of her childhood (Poland) to a new country (Canada).

Hofstede, G. (1986), "Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10, pp. 301-320.

Relates Hofstede's model of four dimensions of cultural differences to the dynamics of intercultural learning situations.

Hofstede, G. (1994), *Cultures and Organizations – Software of the Mind*, London: Harper Collins Publishers.

The theory of four dimensions of national cultural differences with implications for education.

Holló, D. and Lázár, I. (2000a), "Taking the Bull in the China Shop by the Horns – Teaching Culture Through Language", *Folio*, Vol. 6/1, pp. 4-8.

Definitions of the components of culture and how they could be incorporated in language teaching.

Holló, D. and Lázár, I. (2000b), "The Neglected Element: Teaching Culture in the EFL Classroom", *NovELTy*, Vol. 7, No.1, pp. 76-84.

Three intercultural awareness-raising activities and their application in language teaching.

Huber, J., Huber-Kriegler, M. and Heindler, D. (eds.) (1995), *Sprachen und kulturelle Bildung. Beiträge zum Modell: Sprach-& Kulturerziehung*, Zentrum für Schulentwicklung, BMUKA, Bereich III, Graz: BMUKA.

A collection of twenty-seven essays by a group of experts in the field of education in response to the editors preliminary concept of language and culture education .

Huber, J., Huber-Kriegler, M. and Heindler, D. (eds.) (1996), *Sprach-& Kulturerziehung: Element eines neuen Schulsprachenkonzepts*, Zentrum für Schulentwicklung, BMUKA, Bereich III, Graz: BMUKA.

The documentation and evaluation of a conference on language and culture education and the implications of this concept for a new curricular focus in the Austrian school system.

\*Keneally, T., *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*.

An Australian novel about an aborigine who is stuck between two cultures.

\*Kipling, R., *Kim*.

A nineteenth-century novel about a little boy growing up in India and living on the borderline of two cultures, not knowing where he really belongs.

Kramsch, C. (1994), *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The theory behind the notion of the intercultural speaker. Focuses on the interaction between language and culture and describes “the third place” where learners construct their own meaning.

Kramsch, C. (1998), *Language and Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Investigates the relationship of language and culture, explaining key concepts and using insights from linguistics, sociology and anthropology.

Landis, D. and Bhagat, R. (eds) (1996), *Handbook of Intercultural Training*, London: Sage.

A collection of articles analysing regions of the world where intercultural issues have been important recently. Includes sections on theoretical and methodological issues of intercultural training.

Levine, D.R., Baxter, J. and McNulty, P. (1987), *The Culture Puzzle*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Although intended as an ESL text, this book may also serve as a useful resource for teachers of foreign languages who seek interactive ways of sensitising their students to intercultural differences.

Limon, D. and Sabec, N. (2001), *Across Cultures: Slovenian-British-American Intercultural Communication*, Maribor: Zabožba Obzorja.

A practical book that covers such topics as greetings, compliments, complaints, apologies, conversational strategies and non-verbal communication as well as concepts like time, relationships and food.

Nemetz-Robinson, G.L. (1985), *Cross-Cultural Understanding, Processes and Approaches for Foreign Language and Bilingual Educators*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

An accessible and enlightening book that focuses on the classroom aspects of the language-culture connection.

\*Parks, T. (1995), *An Italian Education*, New York: Avon Books.

A series of first-person essays describing the experience of marrying into another culture, living as an expatriate, and raising children bilingually and bi-culturally.

Pinker, S. (1994), *The Language Instinct*, New York: William Morrow.

A comprehensive overview of contemporary theories of language.

Rodriguez, R. (1982), *The Hunger of Memory*, New York: Bantam Books.  
A well-known memoir about growing up bilingual in California in the 1950s.

\*Salzman, M. (1986), *Iron and Silk*, New York: Random House.  
The author, an American, recounts his two years in China as an English teacher and student of martial arts.

Seelye, H.N. (1993), *Teaching Culture – Strategies for Intercultural Communication*, Lincolnwood, Illinois: National Textbook Company.  
Theory and practice interwoven in an accessible way.

Storti, C. (1990), *The Art of Crossing Cultures*, Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press  
A look at the basic psychological processes involved in encountering other cultures.

\*Tan, A. (1989), *The Joy Luck Club*, New York: Putnam.  
Some sixteen interconnected stories told by four Chinese immigrant women and their four American-born daughters

Tannen, D. (1986), *That's Not What I Meant!*, New York: William Morrow.  
An exploration of the concept of conversational style and how it varies according to social factors, such as gender, class and ethnicity. A humorous and accessible introduction to the subject.

Tomalin, B. and Stempleski, S. (1993), *Cultural Awareness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
An excellent collection of classroom activities developing the skill of understanding oneself as a composite of multiple cultural components, and the skill to approach others as similarly complex creatures. A particularly useful introduction gives the rationale.

Valdes, J.M. (ed) (1986), *Culture Bound: Bridging the Cultural Gap*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
A collection of essays concerned with ways of integrating the learning of culture and the learning of language.

Wippersberg, W. (1996), *Das Fest des Huhnes. Das unberührte und rätselhafte Oberösterreich*, TV production of the ORF (Austrian broadcasting corporation).  
This Austrian TV production is a persiflage of historical expedition films with “reversed roles”: an expedition team from the renowned University of Kinshasa, Zaire, arrives in the “wilderness of Upper Austria” and makes interesting observations about the natives. Their ethnological findings culminate in the discovery of a new religious symbol – the chicken. Hence the title – “The festival of the chicken”.



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