

### Unit 2 Study and Learning: developing cultural awareness

**Objective:** to provide further practice of this soft skill within the area of **Study and Learning** (identifying cultural differences between learning English in Japan, Italy and their own country).

The three-step strategy for developing this soft skill is:

- Step 1** Identify different characteristics that form the culture of a country. (**Ex. A**)
- Step 2** Recognise cultural stereotypes. Identify areas in which these characteristics are expressed. (**Ex. B, Ex. C**)
- Step 3** Separate real cultural characteristics from stereotypes. Identify expressions of your own culture. (**Ex. C, Ex. D, Ex. E**)

You may decide to highlight this strategy at the beginning of the lesson, at the end, or as you go through the exercises in the section. However, if you prefer to teach this lesson without discussing the underlying soft skill, this is also possible. The lesson is designed to be engaging and successful either way.

For more information about teaching life skills and ideas for highlighting the soft skill, please refer to pp. 20–21 of the *Pre-intermediate Teacher's Book*.

#### MATERIALS:

- board and markers
- A3-sized pieces of paper (one for each group of students)

#### Lead-in

To set the context for this lesson, write the following questions on the board:

*Do you have experience of studying abroad? If so, where did you study? What was different about studying there compared to your own country?*

Put the students into small groups and give them around five minutes to discuss the questions. Monitor and help with vocabulary as needed. Elicit some ideas from the class, focusing on any differences the students found. If none or very few of the students have studied abroad, you could ask them if they have experience of studying English with students from different countries and how they found this experience.

If you wish, ask the students to recall the lesson from the *Pre-intermediate Student's Book*, pp. 28–29 and to say what they learnt (e.g. *that it's important to be able to recognise stereotypes; that being culturally aware is important in different areas of life etc.*).

#### A

- Erase the board and write in the centre: *learning a foreign language*, as the starting point for a word web.
- Tell the students that they are going to focus on cultural differences in learning a foreign language. Ask them to recall what *being culturally aware* means (*understanding differences between cultures and the reason for those differences*).
- Ask them to work in pairs to brainstorm different areas in which there are cultural differences when learning a foreign language. If necessary, elicit or give an example to get them started, e.g. *differences in the acceptable way to address people* (some languages have formal and informal styles, while others have just one form).
- Allow three minutes for this, then elicit ideas as a class and complete the word web on the board.

#### Possible answers

teaching styles (e.g. some cultures prefer independent learning but other cultures prefer teacher-led learning)  
learning styles (e.g. some cultures prefer rote learning but other cultures prefer students to apply knowledge)  
differences in the language (e.g. Arabic has many words for *horse*, but other languages only have one or two)  
differences in what is acceptable when speaking (e.g. in some cultures it is very rude to talk when someone else is talking, but in other cultures it is not very rude)  
differences in what is acceptable when listening (e.g. in some cultures it is very rude not to listen when someone is speaking)

- Ask the students to stay in their pairs and to discuss their own culture in relation to the different areas in the word web. Demonstrate the following as an example before they start:

**Teacher:** *In our culture, when we learn a language, we focus a lot on speaking.*

**Student:** *Yes, when we discuss things, lots of people try to talk at the same time. If you want people to hear you, you have to speak in a loud voice.*

- Stop the discussion after about five minutes and listen to some ideas as a class.

## B

- Tell the students that you are going to read out emails (below) from two students who are studying a new language in different countries. Ask them to listen once and try to work out which country each person is in.
- Read each email aloud and elicit the country (*Japan* and *Italy*).
- Now tell the students you are going to read each email aloud again and that they should make notes about all the cultural differences that each person mentions. Read each email again (two or three times if necessary) and encourage the students to make notes in their notebooks.
- Put the students into pairs to compare their ideas.
- Elicit ideas from the class and write them on the board in two columns.

### Email 1

Hi!

How are you? I've been in \_\_\_\_\_ for a week now. I love it but it's so different to home. Everyone eats sushi – that's raw fish – all the time! Unfortunately I don't really like it. People are really polite here. I've heard that personal space is really important so I try not to stand too close to anyone, but it's difficult on the trains as they are usually really crowded!

The lessons are fine but a bit strange. Nobody really speaks except the teacher and we have to copy down lots of things from the board. We don't do much group work and when we do, I find that I'm the only person speaking. It's a bit embarrassing really. But I'm still having a great time!

love Ingrid

### Email 2

Hi!

I love it here in \_\_\_\_\_! It's so much fun!

It's also quite crazy here – everyone drives really fast and nobody pays much attention to the traffic rules, so it's quite dangerous.

Everyone eats pizza and pasta all the time, which is great as they're my favourite foods! I'm enjoying the class but it isn't very organised; also the other students don't arrive on time, so we always start late. We do lots of speaking, but to be honest, I'd like to do more grammar. And everyone tries to talk at the same time. People don't listen – they just talk in a loud voice! I find it very hard to understand what they are saying. But everyone is very friendly and kind.

love Nadim

### Possible answers

**Email 1:** everyone eats sushi; everyone is polite; personal space is an issue; only the teacher speaks; they have to copy down things from the board; there's not much group work and nobody speaks

**Email 2:** everyone eats pizza and pasta; everyone drives fast and nobody pays attention to traffic rules; the class isn't organised; other students don't arrive on time; there's lots of speaking and not much grammar; everyone tries to talk at the same time and doesn't listen

## C

- Ask the students to stay in their pairs. Tell them they are now going to look at their lists and decide which of the items on the lists are probably stereotypes. Ask the students to recall that stereotypes are an expectation of what someone or something is like, which is not always true. If necessary, give an example by asking the students to recall from the *Pre-intermediate Student's Book* that *All Scottish people wear kilts* is an example of a stereotype.
- Allow the students about five minutes to separate the stereotypes from the true characteristics. After five minutes, put each pair with another pair to compare their ideas. Elicit ideas from the class.

**Possible answers**

**Japanese stereotypes:** everyone eats sushi all the time (not everyone eats sushi and certainly not all the time); personal space is very important (personal space is not necessarily such an issue as illustrated by the fact that trains are often crowded)

**Italian stereotypes:** everyone always eats pizza and pasta (not true, although they are popular foods); everyone drives dangerously and ignores the traffic rules (again, not true for many Italians)

**D** 

- Ask the students to stay in their groups of four from the end of **Ex. C**. Tell them they are now going to make a poster of advice on how to be culturally aware in a mixed-culture classroom.
- Encourage them to think of cultural differences between learning English in their own culture, in Japan and in Italy. Ask them to write a list of advice for students who are learning English alongside students of the other countries.
- Allow around 10 to 15 minutes for this.

**E** 

- Display the posters on the classroom wall. Then ask the students to circulate and read the different posters.
- Ask the students to vote on the best poster at the end.

 **Reflect**

- Write the following question on the board:  
*Why is it important to be aware of cultural differences when learning English?*
- Give the students time to think about the question, then elicit ideas from the class (e.g. *English is now the universal language of communication so students will need to be able to speak to people from different countries in English*).

**EXTRA: HOMEWORK**

Ask the students to research some of the cultural differences in learning a language in a different country of their choice. Ask them to write a list of the main differences to bring to the next class.