

ProTalk

Discussion Files

C2. Intercultural communication

Afaq Language Center

Language Center

www. afaq-lc.com 021-5148 afaq.lc

Goals

- Can read and understand a text about cultural misunderstandings.
- Can explain how to adapt my language to be more culturally.



What do you think?

In our **globalised world**, we can **communicate** with people from different **cultures** every day.

Ensuring that we get our **message** across **clearly** and **politely** is key.

What is culture?

Look at the definitions of culture below. Do you agree with them? What might you add to them?

> Culture is our way of life. It is a reflection of our history and affects how we express ideas and creativity.

> Culture is a set of social norms for any given group, touching on religion, food, language, social habits and the arts.



Things affected by culture

Complete the brainstorm with things which are affected by culture.

Culture affects...

sense of humour

greetings

attitudes to authority

respect

attitudes to criticism





Greetings

Read through the dialogue of people comparing greetings in their countries.



In France we often kiss each other on the cheeks when we greet people.



That wouldn't go down well at all in Japan – people here prefer to bow.



A handshake is used in Poland, but you should always address the oldest or most senior person first and use a proper title for them.

Comparing cultures

Think about the topics on your brainstorm and the dialogue on the previous page. Then talk to your teacher or classmates about the cultural norms in your country.

punctuality





eating times

building trust





dress codes

Read the text and summarize it.

Intercultural communication

It may seem obvious that culture affects the clothes we wear and the products we buy, but the effect this has on global companies is not something many of us think about. Products have to be **adapted** to suit specific **markets**; while one country might be used to very sweet chocolate, another prefers a creamier taste. So too do companies have to change brand names, **slogans** and other forms of advertising to **appeal** to different markets. Product **localisation**, when done in the right way, can be very **lucrative** for companies, but ignoring the need to adapt can have the opposite effect.

Read the text and summarize it.

Intercultural communication

In the world of business, it is becoming increasingly important to learn about different cultures as companies become more **globalised**. It is impossible to **conduct business** in the same way all around the world, and there are many **instances** of conflicts and misunderstandings **arising** in business due to a **clash of cultures**. It is **imperative** to learn the norms and taboos of a society with which you plan to interact in order to ensure **smooth cooperation**.



Localisation

Do you think that companies can sell their products in the same way all over the world?



Localisation

Do all products need to be localised?





Which products need to take into account cultural elements when being localised?

Food

Some global food companies have a range of **country-specific products** to cater to the tastes of the **local market**.

Have you ever eaten something different from a **global company** when travelling abroad?



Speaking

Answer the questions below with your teacher or classmates.



1. Do you know of any non-food products that have been localised in different countries?

2. Can you think of any products you've seen abroad that wouldn't sell well in your country?

3. Can you think of any examples when localisation has gone wrong or not been taken into account?

Intercultural working

Do you work with people from other cultures?
Have you ever had any misunderstandings?



Lingua franca



Is **English** the **lingua franca** in your industry?

Have you worked with anyone whose English wasn't quite as **good** as yours?

How did you deal with that?

Discuss the following questions



Have you ever felt embarrassed about not understanding something at work?

Has a costly mistake ever been made in your company due to an intercultural misunderstanding ?

Active listening

How do you show that you are listening in your country?
How would you react to someone doing the things mentioned below when they were listening?





leaning forward and sitting close to you





interrupting and asking questions

Intercultural communication

Read though the tips below on how to ensure smooth intercultural communication.

1. **Use paraverbal communication**: this means thinking about the pace and pitch of your speech and paying attention to where you put emphasis or pauses in sentences.
2. **Use nonverbal communication**: use appropriate hand gestures and body language to help people understand.
3. **Avoid specific cultural references**: for example, don't talk about a childhood snack that was only available in your country.
4. **Use the *loop technique***: if you suspect that someone has misunderstood, ask them to repeat your idea back to you in their own words. You can then either confirm or correct them.



Which of these tips have you used or would you use in the future?

Tips for intercultural communication

Can you add some tips to the ones on the previous page?

Discuss with your teacher or classmates.



Dialogue

Read through the dialogue below. Which method of solving an intercultural communication problem do they use?



I'm sorry, I'm not sure I understood what you just said.

Perhaps you could tell me what you did understand and we'll see if we're in agreement?





OK, sure. What I thought you meant was...

Intercultural misunderstandings

What has gone wrong in the situations below? How would you fix them?



I'm sorry, you're speaking too quickly and I don't think I understand.



It's like Ross and Rachel... from *Friends*? No? No one knows that series?



Oh dear, we don't kiss each other on the cheeks here.

Speaking

Read the comment below and decide whether you agree with it or not. Is it true in some cases but not in others?

> Native speakers speak the worst English and are the hardest people to understand.



Complete the sentences

Complete the sentences with reference to what you talked about in the lesson.

1. To me, culture means…

2. An example of good localisation of a brand is…

3. An example of bad localisation by a brand is…

4. When I don’t understand someone from another country I feel…

Presentation

Tips for intercultural communication
Prepare a two-minute presentation about the best tips that you came up with for avoiding problems with intercultural communication. Give examples to support your ideas.
Give your presentation to the class. Answer questions and get feedback.

