



1

Connections

Starting point

- 1 Can you think of some examples where cultural awareness is important in your work?
- 2 To what extent do you think company culture is influenced by the country the company is based in?

Working with words | Describing cross-cultural experiences

- 1 Do you agree with the following statements about working across cultures?
 - 1 Organizations generally have the same way of doing things.
 - 2 Non-verbal messages carry more weight than verbal ones.
 - 3 The concept of time is universal.
 - 4 Individual differences can always be attributed to cultural differences.
 - 5 Accepting and embracing ambiguity is essential when working internationally.
 - 6 Consciously developing your cultural skills leads to better business relations.
- 2 Kate Berardo, an intercultural consultant, set up culturocity.com in 2003 to help grow her clients' cultural awareness skills. She believes that the ability to work effectively across cultures is a prerequisite for success in business. Read the advice she gives and compare your answers in 1. Which piece of advice do you find most useful?

Working across cultures

Kate Berardo

1 Do your homework

- Essential for building relationships when dealing with businesses across cultures.
- Each organization will have its own culture, personality and way of doing things.

2 Keep your eyes open

- Your mind is processing a lot of information in new environments, so observation skills may be clouded or unfocused.
- Notice how people act, dress and treat each other. Look for non-verbal messages. Being able to read a situation will greatly improve your ability to have a successful meeting.

3 Take your time

- Appreciate the need for more time. Communication may be slower and logistics may be different. You may be working in a culture with a different concept of time.
- Also, give yourself more time to process all the information before making decisions.

4 Take individuals into account

- Individuals may vary greatly from the stereotype of their native culture. Values and behaviour are also influenced by background, experience and personality.
- Keep an open mind: be careful not to form an opinion too early or to attribute too much of what you see to a cultural difference.

5 Tolerate uncertainty

- This can be extremely difficult for people from some cultures where directness and precision are valued.
- Business is about managing unknowns. When working with a culture with a high tolerance for uncertainty, you may not get concrete answers. This, of course, can work both ways.

6 Build your intercultural skills

- When working with people from different cultures, you need a solid understanding of the norms of that culture.
- Greater cultural awareness will help you weigh up the pros and cons of your way of doing things and will give you a better insight into working across cultures.

3 Complete these phrases to form verb + noun collocations from the text in **2**.

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 _____ relationships | 7 _____ an opinion |
| 2 _____ your eyes open | 8 _____ unknowns |
| 3 _____ information | 9 _____ both ways |
| 4 _____ a situation | 10 _____ your skills |
| 5 _____ your time | 11 _____ the pros and cons |
| 6 _____ an open mind | 12 _____ you an insight |

4 Match the collocations from **3** to these definitions.

- a don't rush _____
 b stay alert _____
 c don't judge people/things too quickly _____
 d develop connections with people _____
 e understand what is going on _____
 f can have both positive and negative effects _____
 g consider the advantages and disadvantages _____
 h make a judgement _____
 i develop your ability in a certain area _____
 j think about and understand things that you find out _____
 k provide you with useful information to help you understand something _____
 l deal successfully with unfamiliar situations _____

5 What advice would you give people from other cultures/companies who come to work in your culture/company? Try to use the collocations from **3**.**6** ▶ **1.1** Listen to three people talking about their experience of working in other countries. Was each person's overall impression positive or negative?**7** ▶ **1.1** Are the following adjectives used to describe people (P), places (PL) or experiences (E)? Listen again and compare your answers.

- | Speaker 1 | Speaker 2 | Speaker 3 |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 open-minded _____ | 5 up-and-coming _____ | 9 down to earth _____ |
| 2 out-of-the-way _____ | 6 self-assured _____ | 10 easy-going _____ |
| 3 time-consuming _____ | 7 outspoken _____ | 11 low-key _____ |
| 4 tedious _____ | 8 run-of-the-mill _____ | 12 unexpected _____ |

8 Work with a partner. Match definitions a–f to six adjectives from **7**. Then write your own definitions for the other six adjectives.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a boring | d sensible/practical |
| b saying exactly what you think | e not intended to attract attention |
| c ordinary | f relaxed |

9 Use adjectives from **7** to describe:

- how you think you are viewed at work
- your workplace
- your experience of working at your present company

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 1** on page 102.

10 Work with a partner. Think about a situation where you have:

- been host to a business visitor
- worked in another country/city
- worked with a new colleague
- started a new job in a new company

Talk about your experiences with your partner and answer questions 1–4.

- How did you feel to begin with?
- Where did your first impressions come from?
- Did your impressions change with time?
- Were your first impressions right?



Context

Peter works for Johanna, who runs one of the offices for an international operation finding locations for clients. One client, a chain of hotels, has asked them to find a new site for a hotel in Poland to be used mainly as a business or conference centre. Peter has just returned from a fact-finding mission to Poland. On his return he meets Johanna over coffee to report back on his trip.

Business communication | Reporting back on research

- 1** Work with a partner. Read the *Context*. What type of information do you think Johanna will be expecting from Peter?



- 2** ▶ **1.2** Listen to Part 1 from the meeting between Johanna and Peter. Does Peter give Johanna any of the information you discussed in **1**? Listen and complete Johanna's notes below.

PREMIUM PREMISES

Poland – research

1 Probable location = _____

2 General impression = *up-and-coming place*

Peter's feedback

First site = *city centre*

Pros = **3** _____

4 *the area is being invested in for development*

Cons = **5** _____

Conclusions / action points

6 *Several interesting sites worth considering outside Krakow*

7 Action = _____

- 3** ▶ **1.2** Listen again.

- 1** Where does the information in **2** come from? Put points 1–7 into the correct column of the table and make a note of any expressions you hear which help you decide.

What Peter has seen	What someone else has told Peter/Johanna

- 2** Why is it important whether Johanna and Peter saw or heard something, or whether they were told? Work with a partner. Look at the expressions you made a note of and discuss their use in the context.

Example: '... they've told us that they definitely want the site to be somewhere in that area.'
(Johanna may want to emphasize that this is not her decision.)

Key expressions

Reporting a personal observation

It all sounds very promising.
I found it to be ...
From what I could see, ...
I found it to be more of a ...
than a ...
What's your impression of ...?

Reporting from another source

I understand you ...
According to ...
I gathered from ...

Expressing doubt

I have my doubts.
I can't help feeling that ...
I'm just not 100% convinced.
... which makes me a bit wary.
I'm a bit reluctant to ...

Avoiding commitment

It's hard to say.
I can't promise anything.
I wouldn't go so far as to say ...

Being persuasive

I've got / have to say (that) ...
We can't go wrong.
I'm (totally) convinced.
I'm sure you'll agree ...
I'm (fully) confident ...
The pros (definitely) outweigh the cons.

Avoiding being negative

To be fair, ...
I'm not saying ..., it's just that ...

- 4 ▶ **1.3–1.4** Listen to Parts 2 and 3 from the meeting between Johanna and Peter. Johanna makes some further notes about the pros and cons of each site. Complete the table below.

	1 Mountain site	2 City outskirts site
Pros		
Cons		
Concerns		

- 5 ▶ **1.5** How does Peter feel about the two sites? Listen to four extracts from Parts 2 and 3 of the meeting. In which extract (a–d) is he ...?

- 1 expressing doubts ____
- 2 being persuasive ____, ____
- 3 avoiding commitment ____

- 6 Work with a partner. Your company has come up with a potential new market, and you have been asked to conduct some initial research. **Student A**, read the newspaper extract below. **Student B**, turn to **page 143** and read the country briefing.

- 1 Report back to each other on your findings, using the *Key expressions*.
- 2 Discuss any differences in your information.

Although lots of new investment is coming into the local market, the airport is insufficient for the volume of traffic expected. This will have a serious impact on the local economy. If a solution is not found, business will go elsewhere.

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 1** on page 102.

- 7 Work with a partner. Choose one of the situations below and report back to your partner. When your partner is reporting to you, ask questions and decide how convinced you are.

- 1 You have just returned from a market research trip overseas. Report back to your team on:
 - what you learnt about the local market
 - how well the market is doing generally
 - how your new product line is being received
 - the presence of the competition
- 2 You are behind schedule on a project. Your boss has just called you into his/her office. Fill him/her in on:
 - the status quo (current situation)
 - the reasons for the delay
 - how you are going to catch up in the future
 - whose fault the delay is

- 8 Discuss the impression you got from your partner in 7. What did your partner do to ...?

- express doubt
- avoid commitment
- be persuasive
- avoid being negative

Language at work | Tenses review

1 Read sentences 1–7 and match them to meanings a–g.

- 1 I *had planned* to spend an extra day in Krakow itself. ____
- 2 It was made clear that I *should go* exploring. ____
- 3 It's *going to be* a bit more complicated than we anticipated. ____
- 4 The client *has told* us that the site is likely to be around the Krakow area. ____
- 5 They're *really pushing* the area for development. ____
- 6 I *had been looking* around Krakow for a couple of days. ____
- 7 I'll *be writing* everything up later this week. ____

- a something happening around the time of speaking
- b a recent event affecting the present
- c a recommendation
- d a prediction made with some certainty
- e something decided in the past, which did not happen
- f an activity in progress at a particular time in the future
- g an activity in progress up to a certain point in the past

2 Work with a partner. Compare the pairs of sentences in a–g below. Is the meaning different? If so, how?

- a The client **has been telling** us that the site is likely to be around the Krakow area.
The client **has told** us that the site is likely to be around the Krakow area.
- b They **have really been pushing** the area for development.
They're **really pushing** the area for development.
- c I **was looking around** Krakow for a couple of days.
I **had been looking around** Krakow for a couple of days.
- d I **planned** to spend an extra day in Krakow itself.
I **had planned** to spend an extra day in Krakow itself.
- e It was made clear that I **should have gone** exploring.
It was made clear that I **should go** exploring.
- f It **could be** a bit more complicated than we anticipated.
It's **going to be** a bit more complicated than we anticipated.
- g I'll **have written** everything up later this week.
I'll **be writing** everything up later this week.

» For more information, go to Unit 1 **Grammar reference** on page 126.

3 Read this email and correct any tense mistakes. Circle any verbs where you could use an alternative verb form. How would this change the tone?

✉

In response to your enquiry about the feasibility of bringing forward the completion date, I had been skimming through the initial proposal and was gathering from talking to members of the team that unfortunately it won't be as straightforward as we had hoped.

I should have pointed out that the suppliers are being expected to deliver the raw materials required by the end of next week, but so far we had heard nothing from them. We try to get in touch with them and have been insisting that we'll need to know by the end of the week. However, if we haven't heard by then, we need to take legal action to resolve the matter. I'll have got back to you at the beginning of next week – by then I know what will be happening.

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 1** on page 103.

4 Work with a partner. Talk about the following topics in relation to your work. What do you learn about each other? What do you have in common?

- an ongoing project
- your regrets and hopes
- a major change
- your predictions
- your responsibilities
- your career history

Key word | *point*

Match the use of *point* in 1–5 to definitions a–e.

- 1 To *get to the point*, we want to help out all the sites around the world.
 - 2 What's the *point* of me being here today?
 - 3 I'd like to *point out* that over the years, I have been continually improving procedures.
 - 4 There's *no point* me rambling on if you can't understand what I'm saying.
 - 5 The *point is*, we're finding it really tough to keep on top of demand.
- a make you aware of the fact that
b stop digressing
c what's important is
d it isn't worth
e what's the reason for

Practically speaking | Introducing yourself to a group

1 Work with a partner. Discuss questions 1–3.

- 1 In what situations do you have to introduce yourself to a group in your own language/in English? How do you feel?
- 2 How much information about yourself do you provide?
- 3 What impression do you think you give?



2 ▶ 1.6 A multinational company is holding a training session at its offices in Chicago. Listen to three participants introducing themselves. Would you have presented yourself in a similar way? What did they do well or badly?

3 The speakers include information about these topics. Put them in a logical order.

- aspirations
- role
- who they are
- reason for being there
- achievements/activities

4 ▶ 1.6 Listen again and complete phrases 1–13. Then match the phrases to the topics in 3.

- 1 Hi, _____ Holly Cheng. _____ the Singapore office ...
- 2 _____ everything that goes on in Production Planning.
- 3 ... _____ get on top of things and can see ways of ...
- 4 _____ local production ...
- 5 I guess _____ take on board anything I can about how to ...
- 6 Hello. For _____ Elke Seifried from Graz in Austria.
- 7 _____ optimizing the quality assurance procedures ...
- 8 _____ jettison any sub-standard products and _____ working out what went wrong.
- 9 _____ over the years, _____ procedures ...
- 10 ... _____ share some of my ideas with you here.
- 11 Hi, there. _____, I'm Harvey Benson from Atlanta.
- 12 _____ coordinate what happens between departments ...
- 13 ... _____ talking, mailing, getting on people's cases, and so on ...

» For extension and revision, go to **Useful phrases** on page 134.

5 Take turns to introduce yourself to the class. Compare styles / use of language.

Culture question

- What criteria do you use to judge somebody when they introduce themselves?
- In your culture, when introducing yourself, is it appropriate to use humour, to be formal or informal, to list your achievements, to downplay the importance of your work?
- What else is important? Do you know what is appropriate in other cultures?

TALKING POINT

Working in multinational teams

Multinational teams are an everyday reality for more and more companies. That's because there are so many advantages, such as improved collaboration with colleagues and clients across markets around the world, which contribute significantly to global success. On the downside though, there are frustrations. These are exacerbated by the fact that the teams in multinational companies are either all working remotely, or have a mixture of some colleagues in one location, while the rest are globally dispersed.

What can challenge us when we work in this way are the practical, operational issues. For example, different attitudes to participating in teleconferences, or when colleagues have different work and communication habits and expectations. Sometimes it's difficult to understand what the problem is in a chain of emails you think are crystal clear, but someone misinterprets what you've written, or doesn't reply at all. Misunderstandings at work can be down to a combination of culture and distance. What's important is to keep the communication channels open. Don't judge – talk about problems, and try and find a solution for next time.

There's so much that we take for granted in our own culture, such as using the right level of formality, balancing business and social life, or attitudes to time. Expectations about these kinds of things might be, and often are, different in other cultures. And when you can't see each other face-to-face, finding out what's going on can be that much harder.

1



Hi Namrata,

I'm getting my presentation ready for the Regional Conference next month. I need your department's figures by the end of next week. Can you do that for me?

Regards, Jack

2



Dear Jack

Did you have a nice weekend? How did your daughter's hockey competition go? You were telling me all about her preparations last time we spoke.

The Regional Conference will be very interesting. I'm looking forward to seeing you there.

Regarding the figures, I will ask Anni when she is back from vacation.

Have a great week.

Best regards, Namrata

3



Hi Namrata,

OK, when is Anni back from vacation?

Regards, Jack

4



Dear Jack,

Regarding Anni's vacation, I am not totally sure. She has gone to Bali, did you know? Her brother is getting married there. I'll check, though I think she is back on Wednesday next week.

5



OK, as long as I have those figures by Friday. It's really important.

6

'I am not going to answer that. Of course he will get his figures by next Friday. Does he think I'm stupid?'

Discussion

- 1 Have you experienced any issues that make working in a multinational or dispersed team challenging?
- 2 What might be the problem in the email exchange between Jack and Namrata? With your partner, decide what Jack and Namrata are thinking and what they expect to happen.
- 3 What could Jack and Namrata do to avoid problems when communicating in the future?

Task

- 1 Work with a partner. Look at these complaints about working in multinational teams. Discuss the problem and suggest solutions.

The complaint	The problem	Your solution
She keeps asking me for permission. Can't she just do the job and show me when she's finished?		
Everyone keeps wanting to go out together in the evening. I've got kids I need to feed and get to bed, and my partner travels a lot.		
All our meetings are so factual and logical. I sometimes just want to shake everyone and get them to talk about their feelings.		
I've done so much, but because I don't shout about it all the time no one seems to notice. And it doesn't seem to matter anyway, because promotions don't seem to be awarded based on merit.		
My boss keeps loading me with work from different projects. I seem to do a little bit of everything, and have the feeling I've done nothing by the end of the day.		
Whenever I say something she doesn't like, she starts shouting me down and telling me I'm wrong. It's not worth saying anything anymore.		

- 2 Think of examples from your own experience. What was the problem and what did you do about it?