

SECTION 1: INTERCULTURAL THEORY

In intercultural encounters, it can be helpful to have some basic knowledge of culture dimensions and characteristics of different culture types and standards. This, however, does not necessarily mean a great deal of theoretical input, as in most cases the pragmatic use of language is of more immediate importance than the background to or the theory of intercultural communication i.e. the *what and how* rather than the *why*. For some learners the *why* is helpful, for others less so. The following worksheets make aspects of intercultural theory accessible to language learners without dealing with the subject too theoretically. Input is given, not in the form of lectures, but rather by using personal experiences and insights to disclose cultural standards and the differences between different cultures. It is useful to reflect upon the differences between what is taken for granted and what is new and possibly strange and to be prepared for these differences to have an effect on encounters with other cultures. The main aim of this section is to confront learners with the fact that these differences exist.

Page	Title	Aim	Communication / Language	Level
5	THE CULTURE ICEBERG	Visible / invisible aspects of culture	Asking for information, explaining, expressing an opinion, balancing reasons	1 & 2
7	HOW DO YOU SEE THE WORLD ?	Different ways of perceiving "reality". Transfer to culture-bound perception in general	Agreeing/disagreeing, expressing hesitation, reaching a consensus	1 & 2
9	GESTURES	Body language: Discretion in using and interpreting gestures and other signals of body language	Explaining, comparing	1 & 2
11	GREETINGS	Greeting conventions and their implications	Describing, giving reasons	1
13	CONVERSATION STYLES	Turn-taking in different cultures	Criticising, expressing feelings	1 & 2
15	WHAT TO DO IN INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS	Awareness of and familiarity with basic rules of intercultural communication	Agreeing, disagreeing, expressing opinions, giving reasons	2

SECTION 1: INTERCULTURAL THEORY

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THE CULTURE ICEBERG

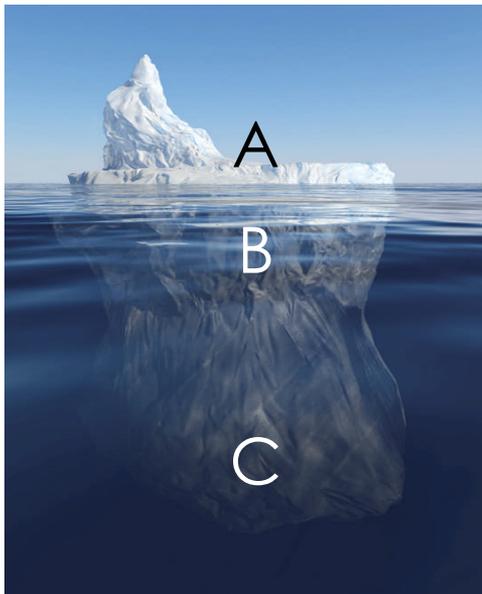


Photo: Shutterstock

What do you think is the most interesting thing about an iceberg?

For most people, it is that the largest part of the iceberg is invisible, i.e. that most of the iceberg is under the surface. What you can see is a very small and unimportant part of the whole. The part that really matters cannot immediately be recognised, but it is this enormous hidden part which makes all the difference – as the Captain of the Titanic found out to his cost.

The deeper you go in the water, the more essential — and potentially dangerous — the iceberg becomes.

1. How can culture be compared to an iceberg?
2. What do you think are the most important elements of a culture (your own or another)?
3. Where would you place the following aspects of culture on the iceberg — A, B or C?

EDUCATION		HUMOUR	
TABLE MANNERS		ORGANISATION OF COMPANIES	
DEMOCRACY		PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP	
DIRECTNESS OF SPEECH IN BUSINESS		PHYSICAL GESTURES	
ARCHITECTURE		AUTHORITY & RESPECT	
EMOTION SHOWN IN PUBLIC		ATTITUDE TO TIME / PUNCTUALITY	
FAMILY LIFE		SOCIAL LIFE: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE	
ROLES OF MALES AND FEMALES		TREATMENT OF OUTSIDERS/FOREIGNERS	
GREETINGS		VALUES AND BELIEFS	
RELIGION		NATIONAL ANTHEM	

4. Take notes.

5. Discuss your notes with your partner.

You may find these phrases useful:

EXPRESSING AN OPINION:

- I feel ...
- I think ...
- I believe ...

DISAGREEING:

- I see your point, but ...
- Maybe you're right, but ...

REPAIRING / COMPENSATING:

- What I'm trying to say is ...
- How do you say ... ?

AGREEING:

- You are absolutely right.
- I absolutely agree.
- That's correct.

SUGGESTING SOMETHING:

- Perhaps we should also consider ...

THE CULTURE ICEBERG

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ROLES OF MALES AND FEMALES	TREATMENT OF OUTSIDERS/FOREIGNERS
GREETINGS	VALUES AND BELIEFS
RELIGION	NATIONAL ANTHEM

a. Take notes of your answers.
b. Discuss your notes with your partner.

You may find these phrases useful:

<p>REPAIRING / COMPENSATING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What I'm trying to say is ... • How does one say ... ? <p>ACCORDING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are absolutely right. • I absolutely agree. • That's correct. <p>SUGGESTING SOMETHING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perhaps we should also consider ... 	<p>PRESSING AN OPINION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel ... • I think ... • I believe ... <p>DISAGREEING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I see your point, but ... • Maybe you're right, but ...
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AIM

To raise awareness of visible and hidden features of cultures and the crucial importance of hidden cultural features, as awareness or ignorance of these can make or break intercultural relationships. Therefore, they cannot be ignored.

LEAD-IN

Begin making a rough sketch of an iceberg on the board and ask learners to say what it is. Then ask what they know about icebergs. Elicit the main features (i.e. most of it is below the surface and the most dangerous) Ask what icebergs may have to do with culture. Then brainstorm what they consider to be the most important aspects of a culture (their own or a foreign culture) and write these on the board. Make sure all learners understand what these terms mean.

WORKSHEET

Give learners time to read the text. Then ask them to think individually about where they would place the different aspects on the iceberg and then discuss their ideas in pairs or groups. Point out that they should conduct the discussion using as many of the phrases on the sheet as possible. Give them enough time to discuss as many different aspects as they

want. Then collect the results of the group discussion. This can be done by drawing an iceberg on the board and asking someone from each group to write one aspect on it or by using cards and a pin board.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

- Ask learners to think of a culture they are familiar with and assign the features to particular, more tangible things. If the group consists of learners from different cultures, this can be particularly interesting. Learners can also be asked to do this outside the class.
- Ask different groups to choose one aspect (e.g. family life, national anthem) and ask them to relate them to levels A, B and C. They can then present their ideas to the whole group and discuss them.

BACKGROUND

This model of culture is becoming increasingly familiar to trainers, but it is still not well-known by many learners. Trainers should not make the mistake of assuming that learners will know about this and be bored by the activity as this is rarely the case if they have not done any work on intercultural theory. Certain features of culture have visible as well as invisible parts and could be placed at A, B or C on the iceberg. These include religion (churches are visible, practices less so and beliefs not at all) and roles of males and females (some rules and laws are easily accessible and behaviour may be visible, but its deeper meaning is largely concealed to outsiders). The difference between B (what cannot easily be seen) and C (what cannot be seen at all or only by someone who is very familiar with the culture) is not always entirely clear.

SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

EDUCATION	A, B	HUMOUR	A, B
TABLE MANNERS	A	ORGANISATION OF COMPANIES	A, B
DEMOCRACY	A, B	PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP	A, B
DIRECTNESS OF SPEECH IN BUSINESS	A, B	PHYSICAL GESTURES	A
ARCHITECTURE	A	AUTHORITY & RESPECT	A, B, C
EMOTION SHOWN IN PUBLIC	A, B	ATTITUDE TO TIME / PUNCTUALITY	A, B, C
FAMILY LIFE	A, B, C	SOCIAL LIFE: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE	A
ROLES OF MALES AND FEMALES	A, B, C	TREATMENT OF OUTSIDERS/FOREIGNERS	A, B
GREETINGS	A	VALUES AND BELIEFS	C
RELIGION	A, B, C	NATIONAL ANTHEM	A

attitudes and behaviour which are only recognisable on closer inspection, for instance different attitudes to time. C refers to the deeper meaning of these attitudes which is generally hidden; for instance, feelings about the past and present or feelings about authority and hierarchy.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE WORLD?



What do you see in these pictures?

- What do you think of when you look at these pictures?
- Why do different people sometimes see the same things differently?
- Does this apply to how we see the world in general?

Discuss this with your partner (s).

Use as many of the following phrases as possible.

Expressing an opinion	I feel .. / I think ... / I believe ...
Agreeing	You are absolutely right. I absolutely agree. That's correct.
Disagreeing	I see your point, but ... Sorry, I'm not sure I agree with you. Maybe you're right, but ... Could it also be that ... ?
Expressing hesitation	Perhaps we should also consider ...
Reaching a consensus	Do we (all) agree that ... ? So we (all) agree that ...

HOW DO YOU SEE THE WORLD?

TRAINER'S NOTES

HOW DO YOU SEE THE WORLD?



What do you see in these pictures?

- What ideas come to your mind when looking at these pictures?
- Why do different people see the same things sometimes differently?
- Does this apply to how we see the world in general?

Discuss this with your partner (s).
Use as many of the following phrases as possible.

Eine Meinung ausdrücken	I feel ... / I think ... / I believe ...
Zustimmen	You are absolutely right. I absolutely agree. That's correct.
Anderer Meinung sein, widersprechen	I see your point, but ... Sorry, I'm not sure I agree with you. Maybe you're right, but ... Could it also be that ...
Abwägen, zögern, sich nicht entscheiden wollen	Perhaps we should also consider ...
Sich einigen	Do we all agree that ... ? So we all agree that ...

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AIM

To raise awareness of how subjective and wide-ranging interpretations of meaning can be and to discuss different perceptions of seemingly objective things.

LEAD-IN

Write the words *breakfast*, *Christmas* and *animals* on the board and ask learners for their immediate associations. This can be done as group brainstorming or in pairs or groups. The associations may be quite different. Ask learners if these words could mean completely different things to others, for example to someone from China or India. Raise the question of what is "right" or "normal".

WORKSHEET

Ask learners to look at the pictures and write down their immediate associations. Then ask them to compare these with those of their partner. Make sure they use the phrases on the sheet and the conventions of polite discourse. Ask learners how the pictures make them feel. Then ask them to think about how the pictures might fit together. In groups they think of a connection between the pictures which makes sense to all the members of the group. In the discussion they should use the phrases given. Compare the different versions. Discuss in small

groups or with the whole class how the way the pictures are seen applies to how we see the world in general.

ANSWERS

- A lady's high-heeled shoe
- A computer keyboard with two small people on it
- A lemon in a clamp

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

- Ask learners to think of how someone from a completely different culture (China, India, Saudi Arabia) or from a culture they are familiar with might see the pictures.
- Ask learners to think of other familiar or seemingly banal things which can be seen differently and conduct a class survey on how the members of the class see these or what they associate with them.
- Ask learners to find other pictures which can be interpreted in different ways and bring them to class to discuss.

BACKGROUND

Each picture "means" something, even if the picture of the high-heeled shoe may not be recognised by everyone. However most people tend to want to define things (including pictures such as these) so that they make sense without necessarily being aware that this sense differs from person to person and culture to culture. These differences in perception apply to concepts, such as happiness or having pets, as well as objects, and it is often a subject of controversial discussion in connection with to which extent, for instance, EFL textbooks are culture-bound.