

Lesson plan: Anticipating cultural differences

In an increasingly global world, students need to use the skill of anticipating differences between cultures to help them when preparing to work or study in an international setting. Try this sample lesson from *Open Mind Advanced (C1)* level*, which provides techniques for teaching this crucial life skill and recommends ways to work more successfully on projects involving international peers and colleagues. Download and circulate the accompanying [Students Book pages](#).

Level: Advanced / CEFR C1

Time: approx 60 minutes or longer depending on how the activities are used

How to use this lesson:

The lesson can be used for the whole class, who can work in pairs and small groups. Download and print out the Student's Book pages so each student has a copy.

* Can also be used with [masterMind 2nd edition](#) Level 2.

Step 1: Consider what information you need to know. (Ex. A)

Step 2: Consider possible difficulties caused by cultural differences. (Ex. B)

Step 3: Work out how and where to get the information you need. (Ex. C)

Lead-in

Write *breakfast* on the board. Ask students to shout out the first word or words that come to their mind, and write them under *breakfast*. Then write these words next to the students' list: *cereal, toast, tea, orange juice, coffee*. Tell the students this is what a typical British citizen might have said. How is their list different and similar? Read the target skill aloud and invite the students to tell you what they think anticipating *cultural differences* means.

Ask the students in which types of situations it would be appropriate to consider cultural differences. **Highlight** that this skill could apply not only to travelling abroad, but also to receiving foreign visitors in your own country and being sensitive to their cultural concerns. Ask students for examples of any awkward situations they know that were caused by cultural differences. Then **highlight** the three-step strategy to develop the skill of anticipating cultural differences.

Culture note

Cameroon is a country in Central Africa with a population of approximately 20 million people. Cameroon shares its borders with Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. A small area of the country borders the Atlantic Ocean. The official languages of Cameroon are French and English, but over 200 different ethnic/linguistic groups populate the country. The literacy rate is close to 70% although it is higher among boys than girls as many girls must leave school early due to local customs. Health conditions are poor and there are few doctors. Nearly 70% of the population are farmers. Cocoa and coffee are the leading agricultural exports.

A

- Direct the students' attention to the text and photo. Read the instructions to the class. Ask the students where Cameroon is (*in Africa*). Have a student find it on a world map or a globe. Ask the students to imagine what life is like there. What does the landscape look like? What about the people? Elicit some suggestions.
- Give the students time to read the information on the website and think about what other information they would like to find out.
- Direct the students' attention to the chart and the sample questions. Ask them to work individually to make a list of other questions they would have.

- When they finish, ask the students for examples of some of their questions.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Clothing: Are there any clothing restrictions or things I can't wear? *Food:* Is there any food not eaten, or not eaten on certain days? *Time:* What time do people normally start and finish work? *Gifts:* When is giftgiving appropriate? *Making friends:* What kind of social activities do people normally participate in? *Other:* What are some important religious customs and traditions? What are some polite language forms and gestures? etc.

B

- Explain that the students are going to read a blog entry written by a former intern. Direct their attention to the blog and the photo. Ask the students what they think the photo has to do with the text.
- Have the students read the text. Then put them in pairs to discuss the four questions.
- Check answers with the class.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

- 1 He expected his trip to begin at the stated time, without delays.
- 2 Not understanding Cameroonians' attitudes towards time and social relationships
- 3 Probably his culture values punctuality, and social relationships are expected to give way to demands of a set schedule.
- 4 He could have searched for information on common differences between Cameroon and his country; expected frustrations for people from his country and suggestions for overcoming them; he could have researched those points of his own culture that people from Cameroon would find most different. Reading about experiences from other people from his own country who had visited or lived or worked in Cameroon before could have shown him some of these points.

C

- Put the students in pairs and direct their attention to the instructions and the list of sources. Ask the students to think about what type of information they would get from each source on the list.
- Have the students refer back to the questions they wrote in Ex. A. Ask them which of the sources in this exercise would have answers to those questions. Ask the pairs to work together to discuss each question from Ex. A, and decide where to look for the answer on the list.
- Discuss the students' questions and their ideas as a class.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

- The website of the internship organisation: Factual information about the organisation and the internship requirements (such as dates, cost, transport, housing, food)
- A citizen of Cameroon: Personal opinions about what is special or important about the country.
- A former intern from your own country: Personal opinions on the challenges and benefits of working and living in Cameroon
- A guidebook: Factual information about the country (population, languages, size, weather), main cities, well-known customs and traditions
- A travel agency: Factual information about tourist sites, transport, weather, when to go, costs
- An online blog by a foreign tourist visiting Cameroon: Personal opinions about what to see and do, possible difficulties for foreign travellers
- A news article about current events in Cameroon: News about political, social and sporting events, and cultural exhibitions that involve Cameroon and neighbouring countries
- The Embassy of Cameroon in your own country: Factual information about the country (similar to a guidebook); information about visas and how to apply; necessary inoculations; and any necessary official information for travelling

D

- Put the students in groups and have them read the instructions. Ask the students to imagine that they are hosting a foreign visitor and to think about what information would be most useful for the visitor to know.
- Ask the students to discuss the questions as a group and be ready to share their answers with the class.
- Direct the students' attention to the examples in the **How to say it** box, and encourage them to use the expressions in their discussions. Circulate and help as needed during the group discussions.
- To conclude, encourage each group to share their answers.

REFLECT

- Ask the students to read the **Reflect** question.
- Give them time to think about different situations in the domains of **Work and Career** and **Self and Society** where the skill of anticipating *cultural differences* would be useful. Elicit answers and write them on the board (Work and Career: personal interactions with colleagues and bosses, travelling to foreign countries, hosting foreign business guests. Self and Society: religious customs, making new friends, voting/elections, teachers talking with parents, etc).

RESEARCH

- Explain the task and make sure the students understand what they have to do.
- Give the students time to choose a decision or event, and then ask them to write a list of questions and a list of research sources for finding answers to those questions. Check these before the students begin their research.
- Have them share their findings in class. Ask them to explain which questions were easiest to answer and why. Ask them if any of their sources did not have the information they were looking for, and if so, where they found the information instead.

Teacher's notes taken from Unit 4 of **Open Mind** Advanced (C1) and **masterMind** 2nd edition level 2.

Click on the links below to find out more and download samples from other levels.

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[Teaching American English?](http://www.macmillanmind.com) Find out more about the **Mind series** 2nd edition at www.macmillanmind.com