Transcripts

Unit 1

1.1

Do you have an exam tomorrow?

Yes, I do.

When is our next English lesson?

1.2

Teacher You're doing really well. Did you all do the homework yesterday?

Lina No, miss. I didn't have time. I did it this morning before school but I didn't finish it.

Sam Don't worry, miss. We've been explaining the maths in the homework to Lina. She understands it now.

Teacher Wonderful! You've done a great job! So, have you all finished the sums in your workbook?

Khalil No, we haven't finished yet.

Teacher How many have you done?

Dana We've already finished two, but not the third one yet. Fractions are hard!

Sam I watched the fractions video four times last night. We've just been watching it together, but it still doesn't make sense.

Teacher How long have you been working on the fractions?

Lina About fifteen minutes.

Teacher OK, keep trying for five minutes. Then, we'll discuss the answers as a class, OK?

1.3

Head Hi Deema. Please have a seat. I wanted to ask you about the new maths teaching system you've been using this year. Has it been a success?

Deema Oh, yes, very much so. The students' marks in maths have all improved a lot. Even the weakest students' grades have gone up.

Head That's great. And why do you think that is?

Deema Well, clearly, interest in the subject has grown, and students like the idea that they can watch videos at home as many times as they need, and then work in groups in class. They prefer that to listening to me! The number of students completing their homework has increased.

Head I see. Have you been making your own videos in the maths department?

Deema Yes, we have, most of the time. We've shared the work between us. Each of us has made two videos this term.

Head But what happens if the student doesn't have internet at home. Has that ever happened?

Deema Oh, yes. But we've solved that issue. We give students the video on a USB stick or tell them to watch them in the library after school.

Head Well, I've got good news, too. Parents have been calling me recently and now say that their children's feelings about maths have changed completely! How about that? Have you written the students' reports yet?

Deema Not yet. I've been writing them for a week, but I still haven't finished.

Unit 2

2.1

Laura So, now that you're all about to enter the job market, networking is going to be a really important skill for you. I know lots of you hate the idea, but that's why we're having this seminar to help you. You can't get by in today's business world unless you are good at networking, I'm afraid. Anyway, I'd like to hear your ideas and your worries before I start. What tips have you read about for networking?

Faisal I think it's important to dress appropriately, and to have business cards, though that seems a bit pointless when you're not in business yet.

Laura Well, you're absolutely right about dress. You aren't going to impress anyone if you turn up in the outfit you wear for going to the gym. As far as business cards are concerned, yes, they're useful. It's easier for a potential business contact or employer than expecting them to write all your details down. Just list your name and your contact details – email, mobile phone number and web address if you've got one. What else?

Gina I've got a worry, a big one. I actually went to a networking event last summer and it was awful. I hung about for 15 minutes and nobody talked to me. In the end, I felt so embarrassed I just left.

Laura I'm sorry to hear that, Gina. We're going to discuss ways to deal with that problem soon, so I hope that will help you. But first, any other tips or ideas?

Mike I think you should put your mobile phone on silent. People will find it rude if you're talking to them and then you take a call.

Laura Yes, I agree entirely. Keep the phone on silent unless there is something serious going on, like a family health emergency.

Rachel I have read lots of pages online about networking, but the information is kind of vague. I think I need some specific tips about how to get into conversations with people you don't know. After that first step, I think I'd be OK, as I'm a pretty sociable person.

Laura Great. Well, that's what we're going to do now. How do you choose who to approach? And yes, you've got to take the first step; you can't just hang about waiting for people to come to you, as Gina found out. So, when you enter the room where the event is taking place, look around and notice how people are standing – alone, in pairs, in threes or in larger groups. Who do you approach?

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Gina I think I'd choose a woman on her own.
Laura OK, that's understandable, it's a safe choice as you're a female alone, too. And you may meet someone really nice, but you could end up stuck with each other throughout the event, and the point is to meet as many people as you can. Mike, what would you do?
Mike I think I'd choose a group of three. If you approach two people, they might be having a really important private conversation and you would not be popular for barging in.
Laura Good thinking, three is the right answer. But which three? It seems people quite often end up in threes at these events, so which group do you choose? Have a look at this slide.
Rachel I don't know. Maybe the ones on the left?
Laura OK, look at the body language. If they're standing close together in a triangle all facing in towards each other, that means they're having a good conversation and it won't be easy to break in. You need to find a group that is standing in a more open shape like a 'V'. That's a group that will be happy for other people to join it. Oh, and choose a group that has at least one woman in it. Research shows that, in groups, women are more welcoming to outsiders than men.
Rachel Wow, that really makes sense.
Faisal OK, but what do you say when you go up to them?
Laura It's simple. You just say 'Hi, I'm Laura. May I join you?'

2.2

Laura OK, so we have identified which group of people you are going to join. Now let's listen to two different people who join a group that has already formed at a networking event. I'll take your comments after we've heard both short dialogues. Here's the first one …

– It's certainly child-friendly with all those play areas and faster lanes through the security check.
– Well, I think they've catered too much for families travelling with children …
– And not enough for business people?
– Yes, exactly. After all, we travel more regularly and …
– Hi. May I join you?
– Certainly. We were just talking about the new terminal at the airport. Have you seen it?
– No, I'm afraid not, but I have heard mixed opinions about it. What do you think?
– Well, I was just saying that it has been designed more for people travelling with children than for business people.
– And I agree entirely.
– I see. So do you all travel a lot on business?

Laura And here's the second …

– It's certainly child-friendly with all those play areas and faster lanes through the security check.
– Well, I think they've catered too much for families travelling with children …
– And not enough for business people?
– Yes, exactly. After all, we travel more regularly and …
– Hi. May I join you?
– Certainly.
– Thanks. My name is Michelle Franks and I've just opened a catering business in town, right in the heart of the business district. We make sandwiches and salads and we can deliver straight to your office, or you can come to us and take food away. We also do catering for parties and special events. Here, let me give each of you one of my business cards.

2.3

Laura So, which do you think was better?
Rachel I liked the woman in the second example. She didn't waste time, and she was really clear about who she was and what she was selling.
Gina I disagree. I think she risked making everyone else angry. They were in the middle of a conversation about the airport and she just came in and dominated everything. She didn't even find out if those people worked in the business district.
Faisal I agree. I think she was rude. The young man was polite and interested in other people's opinions.
Rachel Yes, but he said nothing about himself.
Mike I don't think that's important. People think you're nice if you listen to what they're saying. And they may give you a job or buy your products if they like you.
Laura Well, I think this is a situation in which one's culture is very important. I can't speak with authority about other countries and cultures, but I do think that, in Britain, we appreciate people who show interest in other people. In other words, we tend to like and trust people who ask questions and listen to the answers before talking a lot about themselves. And, as Mike said, if you can get people to like and trust you, they may offer you a job later or want to buy whatever it is that you're selling.

2.4

Laura OK, so finally, what do you do if you've been talking to somebody at a networking event for a long time, and you want to end the conversation? I'm going to play you three different recordings. Here's the first.

– … but then we found that if we just adjusted the size of the packaging slightly, by that I mean 5 mm narrower on the top edge, and made it 8 mm longer from top to bottom, then it was possible to solve that problem.
– I see. Oh, excuse me, somebody seems to be calling me. My phone's in my pocket and I felt it vibrate. Let me see. Yes, this is a really important call, I've got to go … sorry!

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Laura This is the second.

– … but then we found that if we just adjusted the size of the packaging slightly, by that I mean 5 mm narrower on the top edge, and made it 8 mm longer from top to bottom, then it was possible to solve that problem.
– Well, I'm glad to hear you worked it out in the end. So, Tom, it was a pleasure to meet you. I need to talk to some other people, too, but I'd like to continue our conversation some other time. May I have your business card and I'll give you a call within the next couple of days?

Laura And the third.

– … but then we found that if we just adjusted the size of the packaging slightly, by that I mean 5 mm narrower on the top edge, and made it 8 mm longer from top to bottom, then it was possible to solve that problem.
– Well, I'm glad to hear you worked it out in the end. So, it's been a pleasure chatting to you, but I'm sure you want to meet some other people, and I need to mingle, too. I hope you enjoy the rest of the day.

2.5

So, Tom, it was a pleasure to meet you. I need to talk to some other people, too, but I'd like to continue our conversation some other time. May I have your business card and I'll give you a call within the next couple of days?

Well, I'm glad to hear you worked it out in the end. So, it's been a pleasure chatting to you, but I'm sure you want to meet some other people, and I need to mingle, too. I hope you enjoy the rest of the day.

2.6

a I think I'd be OK, …
b So, when you enter the room …
c OK, that's understandable, …
d OK, so we have identified which group …
e So, it's been a pleasure chatting to you …

2.7

Diego Hi Misaki, how did your interview for the internship go?
Misaki Not very well, I think. It didn't last very long – I was out of the interview room within 20 minutes.
Sarah That's strange. You are so well qualified for that position, I was sure you'd do well.
Misaki There were three people interviewing me. I hadn't expected that, and it made me feel very nervous. So maybe I didn't make a good first impression.
Diego You know, I was reading an article online a couple of days ago about first impressions. It said you've only got seven seconds to make a good impression when you first meet people at interviews or networking events.
Sarah Yeah, I read something similar, but it said three seconds. That's even worse.
Diego Whatever. Anyway, it's a very short time.
Misaki Did they give any tips for making a good first impression?
Sarah Let me think. Well, they said you should smile and shake hands with everyone.
Misaki I did that, I think. At least I remember shaking hands with them all. I don't know if I smiled or not, I was so nervous.
Diego The article I read said that smiling is really important, but I know it isn't easy in that situation.
Sarah True, and another thing I read was that you should make good eye contact with the person who is speaking to you. That makes you seem self-confident.
Misaki Oh dear, I definitely didn't do that! I tried not to look the interviewers in the eye at all, to show respect for them. In Japan, we generally avoid looking directly at people when we talk to them, especially bosses or interviewers.
Sarah Oh, no. For us Americans, not having eye contact looks like you're unreliable or not confident. I'm sorry Misaki, we should have told you this before. I never knew that. You usually make eye contact with me, maybe not as much as my American friends, but still …
Misaki Well, you're my friend and I've known you for a long time.
Diego OK, let's not get too upset about this. Maybe you did better than you think you did, Misaki. I mean, 20 minutes is not such a short time, and maybe they had lots of candidates to interview. Come on, let's go for a coffee before our next lecture.

Slideshow – Different class

If you were asked to imagine a school, what would you see? Perhaps something like this? A fairly ordinary, unremarkable building. Inside the school there may be several classrooms, with desks in neat rows. A teacher stands at the front and controls the class. But not all schools are like this. In fact, there are schools of all different shapes and sizes around the world. Often these schools have to be different due to their economic situation or the environment they're in. For example, look at these children playing basketball in their school playground. In 1984, due to a lack of money to build a conventional school, villagers in a remote area of China opened a school in the middle of a cave. It was popular with the local families, and at one time had 186 students. However, it was closed in 2011 by the Chinese government, which objected to the cave school and the image it projected of the country.

Another example of schools adapting to their environment comes from Bangladesh. Some areas of Bangladesh regularly suffer from flooding, and the local infrastructure is badly affected. As the waters rise, vital services like hospitals, transport and schools are shut down. Or at least they were, until someone had the clever idea of starting up a school on a boat! These days, there are dozens of these floating schools, so while everything else comes to a standstill during the floods, the local children can still receive an education.

Transcripts

And how about the Green School in the middle of the jungle on the island of Bali? It was described by the former secretary general of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, as 'the most impressive school I have ever visited'. It is made entirely from bamboo, local grass and mud, with perhaps the most impressive feature being a 22-metre bamboo bridge that crosses the Ayung River. The school's founder pointed out that as well as serving a useful physical function, this bridge acts as a symbol for something important – the bridge from an idea to reality. As you might have guessed from its name, the Green School places a strong emphasis on environmental education, with a particular focus on sustainability. The aim is to produce the 'green leaders' of the future – people who will grow up with the knowledge and skills to tackle the environmental problems the world faces. And because the school is immersed in the jungle, the students are able to explore their relationship with the environment every day. This encourages them to consider the effect of all their actions on the future of the planet.

The Green School may seem unusual, but it is far from being alone when it comes to teaching what some may call unconventional subjects.

In many schools in Japan, for instance, children learn admiration for nature. They are taken into the countryside and taught to appreciate and value the natural world outside the classroom, rather than their computers or smartphones. As with more traditional subjects, they are even graded on their ability to appreciate nature.

While the nature classes may sound fun, that's nothing compared to one of the subjects taught to children in Hawaii. That's right – these lucky children get to jump into the ocean for surfing lessons! Teenage World champion surfer and Hawaiian, Carissa Moore, believes it's good preparation for life, saying, 'Surfing and riding a wave is so much like life. You fall down over and over again, but you keep picking yourself back up until you ride one all the way to the beach.'

Another unusual outdoor class takes place in the Republic of Bashkortostan, and it's one that must have the children buzzing with excitement. Beekeeping! This might seem a strange choice of subject, but the rationale behind it is interesting. As well as teaching children how to harvest honey, educators argue that beekeeping requires patience, attentiveness and accuracy – all useful skills for later in life.

Finally, in the USA, it's common for children to study scientific discoveries in a very hands-on way. Students often spend a whole year researching and designing their own inventions. And at the end of the year, they present their inventions to the rest of the class. What skills do you think this course helps children to develop?

Looking at all of these unconventional subjects, as well as the more traditional ones like maths, English, biology and art, it makes you wonder what the purpose of education is. It's a question people have been asking for centuries, and not everyone can agree on the answer. In 1982, one expert – Mortimer Adler – suggested that education has three aims. First, there's development of citizenship – teaching children about their rights, decisions and responsibilities. Then, there's personal growth – which could be anything that helps children to develop as people. Non-academic subjects like art, music or drama might fit into this category. And finally, there is occupational preparation – in other words, preparing children for the job market, teaching them the skills they will need to get a job. Which of these things do you think is most important?

Let's finish by looking at another school with a difference. The Brooklyn Free School in New York takes a surprising approach to rules and curriculum … they don't have any! Instead, the children make the decisions, they choose what they want to study, and they don't even have to go to any classes if they don't feel like it! There are no tests, no compulsory homework and no grades. There aren't even teachers. Instead, there are adults who act as advisors, but it's the children who manage classes, lead discussions and call meetings. Although the school has been criticized for its lack of structure, it has also been praised for allowing children to find their own way and develop important skills needed in later life. And, unsurprisingly, the kids seem to love it!

Unit 3

3.1

artefact

customs

etiquette

tradition

transcend

value

3.2

a That's strange. I can't access the internet.
What's happened to my internet access?

b How are you going to celebrate your birthday this year?
What kind of celebration are you having for your birthday?

c Thanks to new media, shopping habits in different cultures are converging.
Shopping habits worldwide are showing a convergence thanks to new media.

d New technology has impacted on cultural values in this area.
New technology has had a big impact on cultural values in this area.

e He pioneered the study of cultural differences.
He was a pioneer in the field of cultural studies.

f What does this symbol signify?
What is the significance of this symbol?

g British people are often stereotyped as being polite, but cold.
The stereotype of British people is that they are polite, but cold.

h She surveyed 500 people to get data for her project.
She carried out a survey of 500 people to get data for the project.

Transcripts

3.3

Federico Hi, guys. I'm Federico. I'm a student in my third year, and I also work for the university radio station. You look like a bit of a mixed bunch. Oh, that sounded rude. I mean you look like you come from lots of different countries.

Maria Well, I'm from Italy. My name's Maria.

Federico Cool, me too! Ciao, Maria.

Maria Ciao, Federico. And this is Mei-Ling, my roommate. She's from Shanghai in China.

Federico Hi, Mei-Ling.

Omar I'm Omar. I'm from Dubai, and these are my classmates, Takis from Greece and Julia from Brazil.

Federico Great. So can I interview you all for my radio show?

Julia That depends. What do you want to ask us about?

Federico About cultural differences. What do you find strange or interesting about living in Britain? What is different from home?

Maria That sounds fun. Let me think …

Julia That's OK, I guess.

Omar One of the first things I noticed was the food. In Dubai, we use a lot of fresh spices in our food and we go to restaurants a lot more than you do here in the UK.

Maria Yes, that's true. It's really weird. When I go to the supermarket, I always see a lot of ready-made meals for one or two people. I think British people should eat more fresh food.

Omar And that's not good. Where I come from, families must eat together. I think that's important, because families should spend time together.

Julia That's OK, but in the UK a lot of women also work, and they do most of the cooking. Cooking as well as working can be very difficult. Men and women ought to share the cooking more!

Federico OK, guys, I'm recording now. Let's get back to the subject of the British for now, OK?

Takis I find something very strange. My parents own a restaurant in Greece. Often customers turn up quite late at night. My mum and dad don't have to keep the restaurant open, but business is business, so they prepare a meal for the customer, of course. But here, OK, it's not so bad in the city, but if you go to smaller places you can't get anything to eat except at the times the restaurant owner decides.

Mei-Ling I know, you're right! But I think it might not be the owner who decides; there could be laws about it. Once I was in a little village in England and went to a café at about two, wanting lunch. They said to me, 'We're sorry, but you have to wait until five and then we may serve you a meal.'

Maria Oh, yes, and the classic British 'I'm sorry'.

Julia I think they are hypocrites. They are always saying sorry, but they don't really mean it. It's like somebody says, 'I'm sorry, I didn't catch what you said', when really they just weren't paying attention.

Maria I think that's unfair, Julia. In fact, it's sometimes quite sweet when they say sorry. A guy accidentally kicked my suitcase at the train station the other day and he said 'I'm sorry' to it!

Omar You can't be serious! He apologized to a suitcase? He must be crazy.

Takis Either that, or he wanted an excuse to get talking to Maria.

3.4

This week's lecture is the first on a very broad topic – cultural differences and how to deal with them. Today I'll be giving you an overview of some of the key theories about cultural differences and intercultural communication. In subsequent lectures we shall examine these in more detail.

I looked at the class register earlier today and I can see that you are a pretty culturally diverse group, so I expect that you have already noticed differences in behaviour between people here, people in your own culture and your classmates from other countries.

This slide shows what is known as the 'Iceberg Model of Culture'. As you probably know, 90% of an iceberg is below the surface of the sea and so cannot be seen. This analogy is commonly used to describe culture because the majority of what constitutes culture is below the surface – in other words unseen, and often subconscious and taken for granted. The 10% that is visible is behaviour – the way that people dress, what and when they eat, their dances and literature and traditional celebrations, and so on. Below the surface, here at the bottom of the iceberg, are the core values of a culture – the things that are widely considered to be good or bad, right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable. These core cultural values have been shaped by the history, religion and political background of a specific country or culture, and are passed on by education, the family and the media. Slightly higher up the iceberg we have attitudes that grow out of these core values.

These could be attitudes to gender roles, care of the elderly, work versus family, punctuality, showing affection in public … a host of different things. For example, if a core value of your culture is respect for your elders, this could result in an attitude in which young people put the needs of older generations before their own. This in turn could result in behaviour such as giving up a career to care for an ageing relative at home, or following a career you do not really like in order to please a parent.

As I said before, this analogy is frequently used in the field of cross-cultural studies and is now so widely accepted that there is disagreement about when it was first formulated and who actually originated the model. The general consensus is that it was most probably Edward T. Hall, about whom you will hear more later in this lecture.

3.5

So, bearing in mind that what lies below the surface in the iceberg model is not only unseen but also often subconscious

and taken for granted, much of the research in cross-cultural issues is based on the idea that understanding your own and other people's unexpressed values and attitudes – the submerged section of the iceberg – will pave the way to better comprehension and, hence, to improved interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds.

The most prolific researcher in this field was the Dutch professor, Geert Hofstede, who carried out his first survey of cultural values while working for the multinational company IBM in the period 1967 to 1973. His data covered employees of IBM working in 70 different countries, though the original analysis he developed and published as *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-related Values* covered only the 40 largest of these countries. He carried out several other studies, the most recent being in 2013, and listing data for 76 different countries.

Hofstede's model originally covered four dimensions of culture as it manifests in the workplace, and the countries he surveyed were mapped onto these dimensions depending on how high or low they scored for each. He named the first of these dimensions power distance. Power distance refers to the degree to which the less powerful members of organizations within a country accept that power is not distributed equally. To put this in other words, in a country with a high power-distance score, people accept that everyone has a place in society and that there is a hierarchy. Subordinates expect their bosses to tell them what to do and centralization of power is normal. In contrast, countries that score low on this dimension put stress on equal opportunities for everybody and employees expect their bosses to consult with them before taking a decision. Saudi Arabia is an example of a country that scores very high on the power-distance dimension, while Denmark scores very low. Next, we have …

… Those were Hofstede's original dimensions; he later added two others, but we shall look at those next week.

I must point out that a number of criticisms have been voiced about his work. One of these is that it assumes that national borders and cultural borders are always the same, which is not, of course, the case. Another is that, being originally based on questionnaires completed mainly by male engineers, it is not representative of all groups in society. Nevertheless, his work was groundbreaking and many subsequent researchers have validated his original findings and expanded upon them.

3.6

… Another early researcher in the field was Edward T. Hall, an American anthropologist whose interest in cross-cultural issues began when he was hired to train American diplomats in the 1950s. Hall's approach differed from Hofstede's in that he didn't seek to analyze underlying values, but instead looked at differences in how cultures behaved and communicated, and the underlying attitudes that caused their behaviour. Hall pioneered the study of proxemics – that is, how the physical closeness of people is shaped by culture. He was also the originator of important theories of communication styles, which we shall look at next week.

Today, I shall briefly introduce Hall's theory of time, which he published in his 1983 book, *The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time*. Hall observed that cultures structured and perceived time differently and that this led to different behaviours. In monochronic societies, time is considered as a commodity that must be used well. To do this, monochronic societies assign tasks to specific times and like to complete one task before moving on to the next. Polychronic societies, in contrast, see time as flexible and unlimited. These societies are happy with a large number of tasks being carried out simultaneously. These fundamental differences in attitude result in behaviour that can irritate others – for example, a person from a monochronic culture will be upset by a polychronic person's lack of punctuality. A person from a polychronic society may be surprised or irritated by a monochronic person's insistence on taking their lunch break at a specific time because that is the time they always take their lunch.

As with Hofstede, the work of Hall has been extremely influential and has led to many practical applications in the area of communication skills training for people working in international business and diplomacy. His original theories have been confirmed by subsequent research and have been developed and adapted by other theorists, most notably Lewis, who …

3.7

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Unit 4

4.1

Hi, I'm Takis. Most of you know me by sight at least, as we're in the same class, but you may not all know that I come from

Nafplio, a small town in Greece. Now, Greece is a strongly polychronic culture and, as we have been learning, time in polychronic cultures is seen as something that is in infinite supply. In contrast, time in monochronic cultures is thought of as something that is in short supply. This difference impacts on the language that people use to talk about time. At home, in Greece, the main verb we use when talking about time is 'to pass your time', implying that time is infinite and sometimes the problem is to find things to do to fill it. In contrast, here in a monochronic culture, people are always worrying about wasting time, not having much time, arriving on time, spending time wisely, and so on.

So the cultural artefact I have chosen is a set of worry beads, known in Greek as a 'kombolói'. I have one here to show you, but it's rather small, so you can also see a photo of it here on this slide. As you can see, it consists of 19 beads on a cord, or string, that is joined at the top with a silver piece, which we call the shield. This kombolói also has an extra bead at the end for decoration, and a long tassel. This one is made with amber beads and the cord is silk, so this is quite an expensive set of worry beads, but it is also possible to get ones that have synthetic beads and metal chains, which are, of course, much cheaper. The number 19 is not a set number, but all Greek worry beads have an odd number of beads on the string – this makes them hang better when you hold them by the tassel, or by the single bead at the end.

The origins of the kombolói are a bit obscure. Some people say they are adapted from the ropes that Greek Orthodox monks used to wear round their waists. They tied knots in these rope belts as a way of helping them to remember all the prayers they had to say. Other people believe the kombolói was adapted from Muslim prayer beads some time during the long period when Greece was part of the Ottoman Empire. They believe the Greeks adapted those sets of beads, which are strung together tightly, by removing some of the beads so that they could move on the cord. Maybe both explanations are partly true.

Whatever the truth is, nowadays worry beads have no religious significance in Greece at all – they are used as a kind of toy to relieve stress and pass the time. There are different ways of playing with them – for example, you can run them slowly through your fingers, one at a time, or flick and turn them rapidly like this *[sound effect of worry beads clacking]*. If you have ever been to Greece and sat for any time in a village café, you will surely have seen and heard old men playing with their worry beads and making that clacking noise. It used to be considered inappropriate for women to use worry beads. These days, however, some women can be seen using them, and worry beads are also becoming more popular with young people than they used to be. This may be because the financial crisis has left 50% of young Greeks unemployed, so they have lots of time on their hands.

So, how do they fit in with polychronic culture? I said before that in such cultures, time is considered to be unlimited and so worry beads are one way to help you pass the time. The feel of the beads in your hand is soothing, the noise they make is satisfying, and you need to play with them for a long time to learn to be proficient. Another feature of polychronic people is their love of doing lots of things at the same time, and it is not unusual to see Greek people in cafés drinking coffee, chatting to friends, carrying on a conversation on the cellphone and playing with a kombolói all at the same time. And polychronic people are often late, so having a set of worry beads in your pocket is a good way to pass the time until your friend shows up.

So that was my cultural artefact, the Greek kombolói. Thanks for your attention.

Slideshow – Culture shock

Presenter In the 21st century, increasing numbers of us are spending time in foreign countries. This allows us to experience different cultures, obtain new perspectives and meet people we would never otherwise have met. But spending time in an unfamiliar culture can pose problems, too.

An expression you may have heard before is 'culture shock' – the experience of disorientation and confusion people often feel when they find themselves in an unfamiliar culture. On this week's *Top Chat* we're going to look at some examples of culture shock and hear from some people who have experienced it for themselves.

The way we dress is an obvious expression of culture. Although much of the world today has become more similar than it used to be, with young people from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe wearing jeans, T-shirts and trainers, there is still a huge variety in the way people present themselves. Being suddenly surrounded by people dressed very differently to what you are used to can seem strange.

The same is true for houses. While you may be used to the privacy of space between you and your neighbours, in many parts of the world it is traditional for people to live very close together.

One central part of any culture is food. The expression 'you are what you eat' can have more than one meaning, and cultures are often very proud of their cuisine, believing it represents part of their character.

But when you spend time in a different culture, it's not just what people eat that can surprise you, it's also how they eat. Here's Joe from England.

Joe Where I'm from everyone's in a hurry. During the week, people eat lunch at their desks. Or sometimes we just have a snack, as we're walking from one meeting to another. And for dinner, I often just collapse in front of the TV and eat a pizza. But when I spent a year studying in France, I couldn't believe how seriously they took their meals.

We would go to a café for lunch and spend an hour or even two hours eating and chatting. At first, I

found it really strange and thought, 'Can't we just grab a sandwich from the supermarket?' But then I started to appreciate the social aspect of it. How it wasn't just about filling your stomach, but it was a chance to have a proper conversation, something the French seem to value very highly.

Presenter Another of the most obvious ways in which cultures express themselves is through celebrations and rituals, like the colourful Holi festival in India. Sometimes these, too, can be surprising and confusing, like San Fermin in Pamplona, Spain. Every year, six bulls are released onto the narrow streets of the town and hundreds of people run in front of them. It can be very dangerous, and people are often hurt.

Some festivals can even be shocking for outsiders. Take, for example, the vegetarian festival in Phuket, Thailand. Here, people have sharp instruments put through their cheeks and other body parts. The participants are in a trance-like state and receive no anaesthetic, while doctors perform the procedure. As well as demonstrating their religious devotion, the trance is said to increase focus and concentration for several weeks after the festival.

Generally, it pays to find out more about a festival and the reason behind it. This can help to explain why people are doing what they are doing. Here's Monica from Mexico.

Monica Our biggest festival is El Dia de los Muertos – or, in English, The Day of the Dead. You've probably seen it in films. But people are often confused about El Dia de los Muertos. A lot of people think it's supposed to be frightening, because of the skeleton masks and everything, but that's completely wrong. We are not afraid of death here in Mexico. In fact, we laugh at it.

And that is something else that foreigners are sometimes shocked by. I had a friend visit from Europe, and he couldn't understand why people were dancing and laughing when we were talking about death. He thought we were being disrespectful, but he missed the point. When we're at the cemetery laughing and dancing, we're laughing because we're telling funny stories about our loved ones who have died, remembering funny things they used to say and do. We are celebrating their lives.

Presenter There are also obvious differences between how cultures behave on a day-to-day basis, the customs and unspoken rules of behaviour. What people do when they meet each other, for example – shake hands, kiss, embrace, or even high five!

Or the way in which people wait in shops or for a bus can vary from culture to culture. If you come from a culture that prizes orderly queues, it can be disorientating and annoying to have to deal with a very different system. And the same applies to driving, where rules can vary, and in some cases can seem like there aren't any rules at all!

Timekeeping is another potential problem. Some cultures believe punctuality is a sign of respect and professionalism, while others have a more fluid sense of time. And then there's money.

It's not just dealing with things in a different currency or knowing whether or not to haggle in markets that can cause problems. There is also the tricky issue of tipping. Here's Maciek from Poland.

Maciek I was in New York on a business trip last year and everything went really well, apart from in restaurants. When I walked in, the waitress would be so friendly. She'd smile as she took my order and brought me my food. I'd think, 'Wow, what nice people they have here.' But then, when I paid the bill and stood up to leave, their attitude would change completely!

They seemed so angry. In the end, a colleague told me that you should pay at least 15% of the bill extra, as a tip for the waiting staff. That's how they earn enough money to live! Once I started doing that, everything was fine, but I still think it's a crazy system. Why don't they just pay people enough in the first place?

Presenter Finally, there is the issue of communication. And it's not just the different language that can be confusing. There are also subtler differences in the way people communicate. Firstly, there is the question of what it is acceptable to discuss. Money? Politics? Religion? Some cultures encourage open conversation about most subjects, while others expect people to stick to less personal, less controversial topics. And then there is the question of directness. Here's Adrie from the Netherlands and Bijan from Iran.

Adrie People know us for our windmills and our bikes, but Dutch people are also famously direct. If we don't like something, we say so.

If you come into work with a really bad haircut, I'm going to tell you it looks awful.

Bijan That's interesting. We wouldn't do that in Iran. Forgive me, but it sounds a little bit … rude.

Adrie No, it's not rude. It's honest. We value sincerity very highly in the Netherlands, and we like people to be honest about their feelings and opinions. That way there are no misunderstandings.

You know, when I went to Iran I had some problems understanding what people meant. It was very confusing.

Bijan Ah, yes. It can be difficult for foreigners to understand. In Iran we have something called *Taarof*. It's a … a way of behaving that shows respect. For example, a shopkeeper may say something is worthless and you don't need to pay for it …

Adrie Yes! That's what happened to me!
Bijan But of course you should pay.
Adrie Oh.
Bijan He may even say it three times, that you can have this thing for free. But he expects you to pay. Everyone in Iran understands this. It's the same when someone you don't know very well invites you to their home for dinner.
Adrie Aha, yes! That happened to me, too.
Bijan But, of course, they don't really want you to go to their house.
Adrie Oh.
Bijan I know that in the west 'yes' means 'yes'. But in Iran 'yes' sometimes means 'yes', but it can also mean 'maybe'. And, often, it actually means 'no'.
Presenter How … awkward! So, while there is no definitive way to prevent culture shock, a good bit of advice is to get to know the ways of the new culture and understand it as much as possible. The better you understand a culture and the reasons why people behave in a certain way, the more easily you will be able to adjust to it.

Unit 5

5.1

a the engineer
b the seed
c the dog
d the answer
e the invention
f the plant

5.2

Eiji Nakatsu was one of the chief engineers for the Shinkansen rail network in Japan, the network of 'bullet' trains in Japan that connects Tokyo with other major cities. One of the challenges Nakatsu had to solve was a problem of noise caused by the high-speed train. When a train enters a tunnel, a cushion of air builds up in front of it. And when the train exits the tunnel, the air rapidly expands. The cushions of air created by the Shinkansen trains caused such a loud noise as they exited tunnels that they disturbed residents a quarter of a mile away.

While trying to find a solution to this problem, Nakatsu thought back to a lecture on birds he had been to some years previously, and in particular he remembered what he had learnt about kingfishers. When a kingfisher spots a fish, it leaves its perch and dives into the water at great speed. You might think that this sudden change in pressure would cause a loud splash and scare the fish away. But, a kingfisher's beak is pointed, wedge-shaped in fact, which allows it to enter the water with almost no splash. There is very little noise at all.

The science, Nakatsu realized, was very similar. It was all about the change in pressure. So, he designed the front of the Shinkansen trains in the shape of a kingfisher's beak. The front of the train is nearly 50 feet long. Consequently, the trains make a lot less noise.

My next example of biomimicry is also from Japan, where microengineers have created a minute needle just one millimetre long and with a diameter of 0.1 millimetre. Not only is the needle incredibly small, but it has been designed in a way which makes it painless. And how did these engineers come up with the design? They imitated the mouth of a mosquito. You may think that a mosquito bite is painful, but that is actually just the irritation caused by the mosquito's saliva which it injects into you. You don't actually feel anything as it pierces your skin. If you did, you would simply brush it off, or kill it. The mosquito is able to bite you without you noticing due to the intricate, serrated design of its mouthparts.

From the mosquito to a very different animal. Did you know that dolphins can communicate with each other up to distances of 25 kilometres? They do this by employing several frequencies to transmit signals to each other. A company called EvoLogics studied dolphin communication for eight years and developed a way to detect underwater earthquakes and transmit the information as part of a tsunami warning system. Small transmission devices called modems are now being used as an early warning system for tsunamis in the Indian Ocean.

And finally, from the Indian Ocean to an environment with very little water. Some of the poorest areas in the world also suffer from severe water shortage, and finding a way to provide water to the people of these countries is one of the world's biggest challenges today. One animal that has been forced to overcome a similar challenge is the Stenocara beetle, which lives in the Namib Desert in Southern Africa. This beetle copes in these very dry conditions thanks to the unique nature of its shell, which is covered in tiny bumps. These bumps collect humid air from the desert's morning fog which become droplets of water. These droplets then roll down the beetle's neck and into its mouth. This remarkable design has been copied by many companies hoping to solve the challenge of harvesting water in dry areas. One example is Warka Water, a company that has designed nine-metre-tall structures which collect fog and in ideal conditions can collect 100 litres of water overnight.

Unit 6

6.1

a
A What do you think of social media sites like Twitter and Facebook?
B I think it's great that people are able to comment on the news and give their opinions in real time. It's helped to bring a wider selection of voices, ideas and witness accounts to each story.
A And what do you see as the biggest problem with social media?

B Well, you could argue that young people are forced to use social media because they are frightened of missing out on things.

b A Are you going on holiday soon?
B Yes, next week.
A Have you booked a hotel yet?
B No. I don't know what to do. I hate using online hotel booking sites. Every time you leave the site the price goes up and the room you want to book disappears.
A You could just call the hotel?
B That's true.
A Have you started your packing?
B Not yet. I haven't got a suitcase. I was thinking of buying one online, but you risk buying something that's not actually very good, if you just follow online reviews.
A Yeah, but you've not got much time left.

c A Do teachers still use blackboards?
B Generally, no. These days, children prefer learning through digital technology rather than traditional methods.
A How about you?
B Well, my students expect me to use lots of multimedia in the classroom. I honestly prefer books and getting the students to write using a pen, so I do a bit of both.

d I'm a farmer here in Kenya and I use an app called iCow. It reminds me when to milk and helps me monitor my herd's health. A lot of farmers in the area do the same. They all have mobile phones like me. I think having mobile phone access encourages farmers to be more organized.

6.2

A So, today I'll be talking about automation with the chief designer for a well-known computer company. We'll be exploring what automation means for us in the future. So, John, perhaps you could first define automation for us and put it into a historical context.
B Certainly. By automation, we mean the automatically controlled operation of a machine or a process, particularly when it is in place of human labour.
A So, robots building cars in factories, that kind of thing?
B Yes, or more interestingly, computers designing the robots that build the cars.
A Right. And you say we are at a point in history when we should be talking seriously about automation. But it is not a new phenomenon, is it?
B Absolutely not. There are various claims to the first example of automation. For example, the waterwheel was invented thousands of years ago. Then there was the first industrial revolution in the 18th century, which completely changed the nature of manufacturing, introducing factories and mass production. Then, in the 19th century we have electricity and the start of the assembly line. And, since the 1970s, of course, we have had information technology and computers doing all sorts of jobs.
A So, there is a long history of automation and yet you are suggesting we have reached a crucial stage.
B That's right. In a few years' time, digital technology will have completely changed the job market.
A But hasn't automation always been an ongoing process?
B Yes, of course. And throughout history, people have worried about machines taking their jobs. But the sheer scale and speed at which automation is currently happening makes this like a new industrial revolution. I predict that by 2040, computers will have taken up to 80% of today's jobs and robots will be performing tasks we haven't even imagined.
A You're painting a rather bleak picture of the future! What can people do to protect themselves?
B Well, we just have to think carefully about which skills we should be focusing on. By this I mean we need to concentrate on developing skills and attributes which are distinctly human.

6.3

A Could you explain what you mean by 'distinctly human skills'?
B Perhaps I can answer that by talking about skills which are *not* distinctly human. If we go back to past stages of automation, before the first industrial revolution, strength and stamina were important. People did all the hard work like digging and cutting.
A Right.
B Then machines came along and these attributes became a lot less valuable. Machines did all the hard work.
A And how about skills like sewing or planting crops? Jobs that require more dexterity.
B As machines became more sophisticated, they started to take over these kinds of jobs as well. So people became machine operators rather than doing the work themselves.
A And how about basic mathematic skills. These were very important …
B Yes, before the calculator, anyone working in banking, for example, had to be able to do calculations without a machine.
A Of course nowadays, computers can calculate far quicker than any human.
B That's right. And spelling. A very important skill for a long time, and then along comes the word processor with spell checking, and suddenly good spelling wasn't so important.
A So, what does this mean for today's young people?
B Well, we don't really know what jobs robots will be doing in the future …
A So how can we prepare?
B Well, I'm saying it's not enough to learn a skill like driving a truck or designing a house and assume that this guarantees us a job. Because computers are learning these sort of skills at an incredible rate.

Transcripts

A We already have driverless cars!
B Exactly. So we don't know which of today's skills computers will have learnt. But there are some things that I believe they will never learn.
A For example?
B If I try and picture the world in 2030, or even 2040, I can confidently say that robots will not be solving complex problems.
A How can you be so sure?
B Because they won't have learnt how to think critically.
A Interesting. Are there any other skills you think are 'future proof'?
B Well, I'm pretty certain that by 2040 robots won't have acquired emotional intelligence. So they won't be managing people in the way that humans can.
A It sounds as if you're describing high-level cognitive skills.
B Exactly!
A And you're saying that these are skills that employers will be looking for in the future?
B Yes. Because they are the qualities that only humans can offer.
A I suppose that skills like decision-making and creativity would also be included in this.
B Ah! Well, decision-making probably not, actually. We can already see that computers are tremendously good at weighing up future possibilities and making good decisions.
A Oh.
B But creativity, creative thinking, yes, that is absolutely the sort of thing people should be focusing on.
A Well, it's a fascinating view, thank you. In the next part of the programme we'll be hearing from some listeners. They'll be telling us how they feel about the possibility of automation in their industries. But first …

6.4

1 Yes, I am a bit worried actually. I mean, I've just started a career in accountancy, but by the time I've done all my exams, the job will have changed a lot. Accountancy is fairly repetitive and it's all about numbers, so I expect computers will be doing most of the day-to-day tasks soon.
2 Listen, musicians have always adapted to new technology, whether it's electric guitars, drum machines or synthesizers. And I'm sure that in a few years' time, someone will have invented a machine that can write songs, but so what? These machines won't replace people because music is about heart and soul – it's a very human experience. Believe me, people won't be queuing up to watch robots perform on stage!
3 Let's be honest, this job won't be around for much longer. In 20 years' time, driverless cars will have become more common than cars with drivers. People will be using an app to call a cab, then getting in a driverless car fitted with a GPS that will take them to their destination. They'll pay by swiping a card and nobody will speak to anyone. It's a real pity, I think. Anyway, I'm going to change career, move into something more future-proof.
4 I don't really think about it too much. I'm certainly not complacent about the threat of automation. Teaching has already changed so much over the last few years, with online learning, and so on. And I expect teachers will be using digital technology more and more in the future. But schools won't have ceased to exist by 2040! So much of teaching is about making an emotional connection and adapting to the needs of each individual student. I don't think computers will ever be able to replicate that.

6.5

Petra I was just reading an article about the best apps out there at the moment.
Khaled Oh, I don't bother with apps anymore. Most of them are just a waste of time. Games and stuff. There are more important things in the world.
Petra Yeah, but some apps *are* about important things.
Khaled Really? Like what?
Petra Well, there's this 'Power To Give' app which uses your phone's spare computer power to help important research projects.
Khaled Is that an original idea?
Petra Yes, no one's tried it before. It's really innovative.
Khaled How much more power can a few phones generate?
Petra Well, that's the thing. The more people who use the app, the better the results. Potentially, if millions of people download it, the grid will have access to more power than a supercomputer. That's what the website says anyway.
Khaled OK, fair enough, but does this app actually do any good? I mean, I do want to help but not if it's supporting research into something bad or a waste of time like looking for extraterrestrials.
Petra Actually, extraterrestrial research is just one of the projects. You can choose which project you support. There's cancer research, climate change research …
Khaled Oh, I didn't realize that. That's good then. But is it reliable? I hate it when these things go wrong. It drives me mad!
Petra Well, I haven't downloaded it yet, but I've had a look at the reviews. There are a few people saying they've had problems.
Khaled Right, so it's not very reliable.
Petra Well, I don't know. Nothing's perfect, is it?
Khaled And is it safe?
Petra What do you mean?
Khaled Well, my phone's got all sorts of data on it – bank details, passwords, and this app connects my phone to some grid somewhere. Who's going to have access to it?
Petra Ah, no I checked that because I was a bit worried about it, too. Only HTC accesses the processing power, it doesn't touch any of your data.
Khaled OK. Well, it sounds pretty good I suppose. I'll have a look.

Transcripts

6.6

a For years, I resolved every January that that was the year I would exercise more. Every year until now I've failed. I realized that I was setting myself an unrealistic goal – to go from next to no exercise, to expecting to go to the gym three times a week. This year, I am doing things differently. I started out by deciding to do five minutes of exercise a day. That was easy, so I did that every day for two weeks. Then I made it ten minutes a day, and did that for three weeks. Now I am on 15 minutes a day. I feel fitter already and the change has been easy.

b I left school without any qualifications. It hasn't really been a problem so far, as I make good money, but I can see that at some point in the future I won't be able to progress any further. I would really like to become an engineer, but I'm not sure if I have the brains for that. So, at the moment, I'm taking distance learning classes in maths and physics at school-leaving level. If I succeed in those, I will find out what other subjects I need to study engineering. If I don't succeed, I'll try something else. Maybe I have a talent for languages, or art – who knows? I'm young, so I have time to try lots of things.

c I run our company's canteen. I noticed that the kitchen helpers were spending a lot of time cleaning up after every meal, so we all decided to look at ways of changing the process to save time. First of all, we installed a conveyor belt that carried trays with used plates and cutlery into the kitchen and we asked the staff to put their used trays on the belt, instead of leaving them on the tables. That improved things a lot. Then one of my workers suggested we could work even faster if the staff removed all the rubbish – napkins, plastic cups, sugar packets, and so on, from their trays before putting them on the conveyor belt. We have put rubbish bins next to the conveyor belt and are now monitoring to see how much difference that has made.