

Cultural Mindfulness - Intermediate High

Positive Psychology Learning Outcomes: Students will be exposed to cultures different from their own and practice awareness and responsiveness when discussing others' cultures. Language Learning Outcomes: Students will understand the speaker's point of view; adequately support ideas and opinions with facts, examples, and reasons; and connect content to background knowledge.

Lesson Information

Positive Psychology Learning Outcomes

Students will...

1. be exposed to cultures different from their own.
2. practice awareness and responsiveness when discussing others' cultures.

Language Learning Outcomes

Students will...

1. understand the speaker's point of view.
2. adequately supports ideas and opinions with facts, examples, and reasons.
3. connects content to background knowledge.

Materials Needed

- [How Mindfulness Empowers Us: An Animation Narrated by Sharon Salzberg](#)
- [Dining Customs Around the World](#)
- [Cultural Misunderstanding](#)
- [Funny, But True: Cultural Differences](#)
- [Greetings From Around the World | Travel Channel](#)

Overview

At the ELC, we have students from all over the world. Even though you may be from the same country as some students, your cultural backgrounds may be very different. The place you grew up in and received education in and the different groups you belong to have shaped you into a unique person. Every one of us has a different cultural background.

While we are surrounded by people from different cultures, it is important for us to know how similar or different we are. Understanding your own culture can help you feel more centered or grounded. The same is true when we understand more about our friends' cultures. Therefore, this lesson's focus is connecting mindfully to your own culture and keeping an open and compassionate mindset while learning about other cultures.

Activate Background Knowledge

Have students discuss the following questions:

- What are the differences between your culture and the culture you live in now? Is there ever a conflict between your culture and this culture? How do you deal with it?
 - *Ex. Americans do not take off their shoes in their houses. I still cannot accept this habit, so whenever people visit my house, I ask them to remove their shoes. Since I am living in student housing, I was very mad when the maintenance refused to take off their shoes. I immediately vacuumed and cleaned the whole apartment after they left.*
- What do you do differently because you are in a different culture?
 - *Ex. I am still taking off my shoes when I visit others' houses, but I understand why they don't take off their shoes. I just smile and clean it up afterward. Even though I still don't understand this culture, I am respecting it.*
- Why is it important to learn about the culture of the place you live in?
 - *Ex. As I learn about the culture, I know how I can be part of them. I don't just want to be a traveler but someone who has integrated into that culture.*

Explain to students that learning about other cultures shows people respect. As you learn about the culture of the place you live in, you will be able to adapt to living there faster and make friends easier. There will also be fewer misunderstandings and conflicts in the community.

Activity 1: Meditation & Listening/Speaking

Have the students watch this video.

Mindfulness Activity

Before watching the video, ask them to talk about the following questions with a partner.

- What cultural differences are you aware of?
- What was your reaction when you first learned about those cultures?
- Who is the decision maker who determines which cultural practice is right or wrong?
- How should we respond to cultural differences?

Remind them to be respectful of all cultures while watching the video.

Listening/Speaking Activity

Before watching, ask them to talk about differences in dining customs that they know of.

Ex. In Japan, the noisier you are while eating noodles, the most respectful you are. However, in European cultures, making loud sounds while eating is an appropriate act.

Ask them to choose two dining customs that most surprised them from the video and think about how they differed from the dining customs in their countries.

[Dining Customs Around the World](#)

<https://youtu.be/OldYxMyZZm4>

Discuss the following questions with a partner:

- Which two dining customs most surprised you? How are they different from the dining customs in your country?
- What surprised you about the different customs?
 - *Ex. I am surprised that Indians eat with their right hands!*
- What are some dining customs in your country?
 - *Ex. In China, it is very disrespectful to put chopsticks in our rice.*
- How are your dining customs different from the US?
 - *Ex. Americans tend to have dinner a lot earlier than Chinese. We don't usually have dinner until 8 pm, but in America, people usually have dinner at 6 pm!*

Activity 2: Reflection & Listening/Speaking

Have each student find a partner and interview him or her on different aspects of their partner's culture. Write the answers to

Reflection Activity

Explain to students that there are differences even within one culture. We have the advantage of getting to know about other cultures at the ELC. In groups of three, brainstorm some ways to show respect to one another when discussing others' cultures. Write those ways on the board and discuss them as a class.

Listening/Speaking Activity

One way to learn about other cultures is by talking to people from other countries.

Fluency Circle: Half of the class will form an inner circle facing the outside while half of the class is the outer circle facing a partner. Inner circle students will start interviewing their partners on different aspects of their partner's culture for two minutes. They need to take notes on a piece of paper.

Include the following questions on the slides or a handout. Ask students to write their partners' answers on a piece of paper.

- What is the official language of your country?
 - *Ex. Chinese*
- Describe your flag to me. What does it look like?
 - *Ex. Our flag is red and has five golden stars. The stars represent the unity of the Chinese people under the leadership of the government.*
- What are some major holiday celebrations that your country has?
 - *Ex. Chinese New Year is the major holiday we celebrate.*
- What other symbols does your culture have? (Animals, plants, etc)
 - *Ex. Dragons mean good luck and strength.*
- What are other aspects of your culture that are important to you? (Music, sports, etc.)
 - *Ex. The color red means luck. At the beginning of the new year, we wear red and give presents that are red to others.*
- What is one thing that surprised you about American culture when you first arrived?
 - *Ex. People don't usually bring presents when they visit someone's house. Back home, we always bring a gift whenever we visit someone.*
- School? Greetings?

After the inner circle students are done, it is the outer circle students' turn to interview for two minutes.

After that, ask the outer circle students to take a step in the right direction and talk to a different partner. Have the inner circle students tell their new partners (two minutes) about their old partner's culture using the interview information that they recorded before. Afterward, have the outer circle students do the same thing.

Activity 3: Listening/Speaking

Explain to the students that since we all grew up in different environments, we often have assumptions about things. Therefore, we need to talk to others to learn about their points of view. Communication is the key to understanding other cultures.

Have students watch a video. Include the following questions on a slide. While watching the video, pay attention to the following questions:

- What were the misunderstandings in the video?
- How is culture like an iceberg?
- What misunderstandings have you experienced?
- Is there preschool (usually three to five years old), two years before a child starts kindergarten, in your culture? Did you go?
- Is the education system in the United States different from schools in your country?

[Looking at the world with other glasses: how to understand cultural misunderstanding](#)

<https://edtechbooks.org/-LKqQ>

Discuss the questions with a partner or as a class.

If time allows, have students watch another video on cultural differences.

[Funny, But True: Cultural Differences](#)

https://youtu.be/2xJ_hbD4TQA

Activity 4: Listening/Speaking

[Greetings From Around the World | Travel Channel](#)

<https://youtu.be/nANhSfCGAs4>

Explain to students that so far we have learned about the dining customs and education system in different countries. There are still many things included in cultures. We are going to learn about greetings from around the world. Have students watch this video with traditional greeting gestures from different countries. Then have students share with a partner their answers to the following questions.

- What gestures were used in other countries?
- What gestures do you use in your culture? Are there any that you know mean something else in a different culture? (Have students demonstrate to the class.)
- Were there any gestures that surprised or confused you when you first got to America?
- What gestures do you use to greet other people?

Activity 5: Speaking

Explain to students that although it is important to learn about other cultures, taking the initiative (being the first one) to share their cultures with others is also beneficial. Encourage them to not be afraid of talking about their cultures.

Complete the following task:

- Find a picture of one food that they feel represents their culture.
- Stand up and find a partner.
- Share about the food they chose with their partners.
- When they are done, switch partners and do it again.

Homework

Have students talk to someone from a different culture and find out something interesting that they didn't know before. Have them write down what they find to share with classmates on Thursday.

Follow-Up

Tuesday:

Discussion question: "The key to community is the acceptance, in fact, the celebration of our individual and cultural differences. It is also the key to world peace." –M. Scott Pack

Share thoughts about the following questions with a partner.

- What does this quote mean?
- How is it connected to today's topic– cultural mindfulness?
- Do you agree? Why or why not?

Wednesday:

Have students find a song they enjoy from their country, from the US, or from any country. Have them play part of their song to a partner, then switch and have them listen to their partner's song. Have them tell what country their song is from and what type of music it is. Also, have them share why they like that particular style of music. How does the music that you chose represent your culture?

Thursday:

Divide students into groups of 3-5. Have students share what they learned about another culture through the homework.



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