

CHAPTER 2

Culturally diverse societies

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This chapter aims to raise awareness of cultural diversity and, more specifically, to explore how migration has shaped today's multicultural societies in the EU.

After completing the chapter's activities, students will be able to:

- Define the concept of culture in their own words
- Explain in their own words how different cultures shape society
- Talk about concepts such as subculture, stereotypes and culture shock
- Reflect on how languages and cultures are intertwined

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Migration is not a new concept in our human story. Humans have always migrated; it is in our DNA. Since our ancient ancestors left Africa between 65,000 and 55,000 years ago, humankind has spread all across the globe. And migration is still at the heart of modern life.

But why do people decide to leave their homes and countries to migrate elsewhere? Why do individuals and groups cross lands and continents to relocate or settle somewhere new? They do so for a host of reasons: to escape from war and conflict, hunger and poverty, religious intolerance or political repression; to find new economic opportunities and employment, or to trade; or to travel to new places. Migration can thus be voluntary or involuntary, and temporary or permanent.

Europeans have tended to migrate to other countries in Europe or beyond for centuries. Since the end of the Second World War, however, Europe has become a pole of attraction for people from all over the planet. That has contributed to making Europe, and the European Union in particular, a hub of diversity and a melting pot of cultures and languages.



Migration presents individuals, communities and societies with both opportunities and challenges.

Children and young people are affected by migration in different ways: they may migrate with their parents; they may be left behind by their migrating parents; or they may migrate alone, without parents or an adult guardian. In any scenario, various opportunities and challenges await children in the country of settlement. They may experience marginalisation and discrimination, barriers to accessing social services, challenges to their rights to citizenship and identity, economic insecurity, and social and cultural dislocation. A negative outcome is not inevitable, however, as children can also greatly

benefit from migrating and contribute positively to their new communities. Moreover, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is the duty of every country to ensure that all children enjoy their rights, irrespective of their migration status or that of their parents.

When individuals and groups of people move to another country, they come into contact with different languages, beliefs, attitudes, customs, values and behaviours. One of the various unacknowledged aspects of migration relevant to children is child language brokering, i.e. children helping their family, friends and other people communicate in day-to-day formal and informal interactions with their new host society and its institutions. As will be explained in chapters 4 and 5, child language bro-

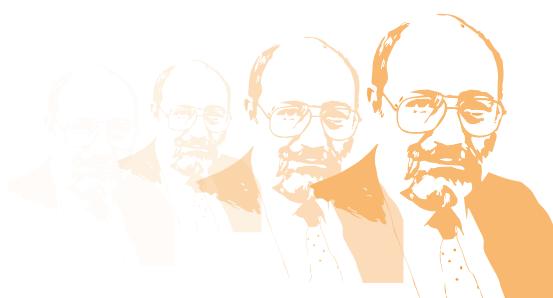
kerking is not an easy task: it involves developing and using a range of skills and coping with complex situations and tasks, all while learning a new language and getting used to a new culture. Why is learning about another culture so complex? Is learning the language not enough to adjust to life in a new country? Read on and you will see that culture is not only a slippery term but also a multifaceted and multi-layered concept!

2.2. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY CULTURE?

2.2.1 Definition of culture

Would you be able to give a definition of culture? When you think about it, culture is a very difficult thing to define. Each of us would probably answer the question '**What is culture?**' in a slightly different way. The term culture comes from the Latin 'culture', which means "cultivating, agriculture". The figurative meaning "care, culture, and honouring" derives from the past participle stem of 'colere', the meaning of which is "tend, guard, cultivate, till". Culture was first used with the attested meaning of "the intellectual side of civilisation" in 1805; it was not used with the meaning of "the collective customs and achievements of a people" until 1867.

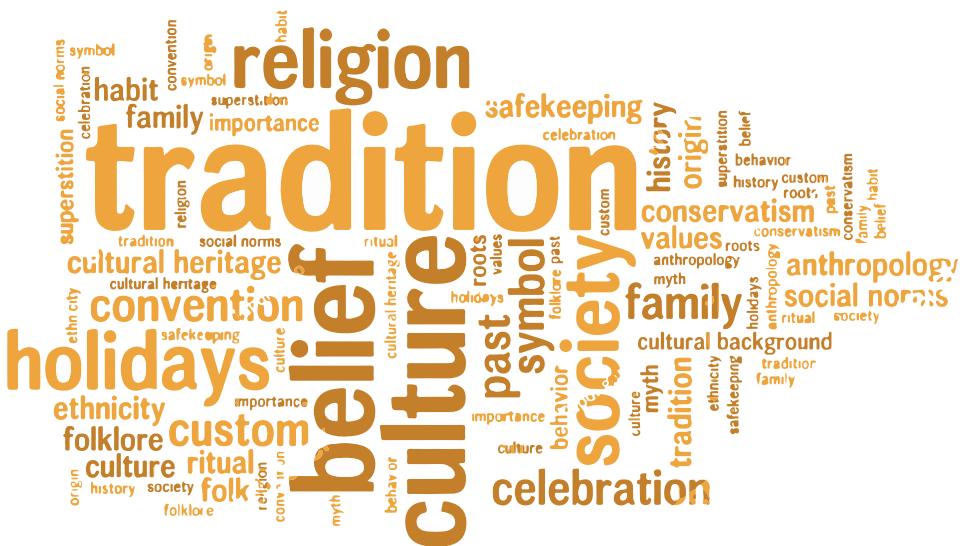
Since culture became an object of study, hundreds of definitions of the word have been put forward. That is a result of culture being studied from different perspectives, including, for instance, those of anthropology, history, geography, sociology, psychology, communication science, business studies, linguistics, translation and interpreting. What all those definitions tell us is that culture is an umbrella term for a set of shared spiritual, material, intellectu-



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

Umberto Eco once said that the language of Europe is translation?

That is certainly true, because the European Union now has three alphabets and 24 official languages. Moreover, 60 languages are currently spoken in particular regions or by specific groups within the EU. Immigration has brought numerous other languages to the EU, where, according to estimates, citizens of at least 175 nationalities now live. The European Day of Languages is celebrated on 26 September every year.



al and emotional features of a society or social group which is passed on from generation to generation. That set of **shared features** is expressed through art, music, religion, food and traditions, as well as what we wear and how we wear it, the language we speak and how we speak it, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones, how we grieve and a whole host of other things.

In short, in the words of Edward T. Hall (an American anthropologist who studied culture in all its aspects and dimensions), culture is the sum total of the way of life of a people. That is a nice definition because it includes all the things we have been talking about and, probably, everything else we might think of adding to them.

Hall also gave a very good reason for why we find it so difficult to say what culture is: the fact is that culture is invisible to us. That is because we are born into and grow up inside a culture, and it thus seems so normal that we are not even aware it is there... until we meet someone from another culture or move to another country. At that point, the cultural norms we unwittingly conform to, the assumptions we inadvertently make, and the behaviour patterns we unconsciously follow become visible to us and we become aware of our own culture and its differences and similarities with other cultures.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

Merriam-Webster dictionary declared 'culture' its word of the year for 2014? The dictionary company's decision was based on the year-over-year increase in look-ups for the word on its website and in its app. Other words of the year for 2014 were 'vape' (Oxford Dictionary) and 'photobomb' (Collins COBUILD).

The more distant a culture is from our own, the greater the clash and the shock we experience will be. **Activities 2A and 2B** in this chapter have been devised to help reflect on similarities and differences between cultures.

DID YOU KNOW...

five interesting culture facts?

1. Kissing someone on both cheeks is a common form of greeting in Spain?
2. Russians normally open their umbrellas indoors to dry?
3. Slurping food loudly is a sign of appreciation in some Asian countries?
4. Italians eat lentils on New Year's Eve because they are believed to bring good luck and prosperity?
5. In Japan it is considered very rude to blow your nose loudly?

2.2.2. Levels of culture

Another important thing to consider when talking about culture is that almost everyone belongs to a number of different groups and categories of people at the same time, and is therefore part of different **levels of culture**. The individual/personal level is represented by our personal convictions, ideas and aspirations. Then there are other levels, including that of our ethnic, linguistic, regional and religious affiliation; a national level (based on a person's country of origin or country of settlement); and also a gender level, a generation level and a social level. Moreover, individuals may also be affiliated to a variety of subcultures.

A **subculture** can be defined as a social group within society which has a lifestyle that is distinct from the culture of society as a whole. Members of subcultures may have characteristic ways of dressing or of expressing their dif-

ference in taste through music and make-up, etc. For example, if we play a sport, we belong to that specific subculture; the same applies to the music we listen to and the interests and hobbies we have.



WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?

- **Migration is not a recent phenomenon. It has been occurring since the dawn of humankind and has helped shape our cultures and societies.**
- **Learning a language means becoming acquainted with the culture and society in which it is spoken.**
- **Learning about culture is no easy task, because it is hard to define exactly what culture is. Over the years, scholars and researchers have put forward dozens of definitions, which include some common aspects and dimensions.**
- **Culture is a complex construct that can span many layers and dimensions, depending on our individual culture and the groups and subcultures to which we belong.**

2.3. HOW DO WE EXPERIENCE CULTURE AND MULTICULTURALISM?

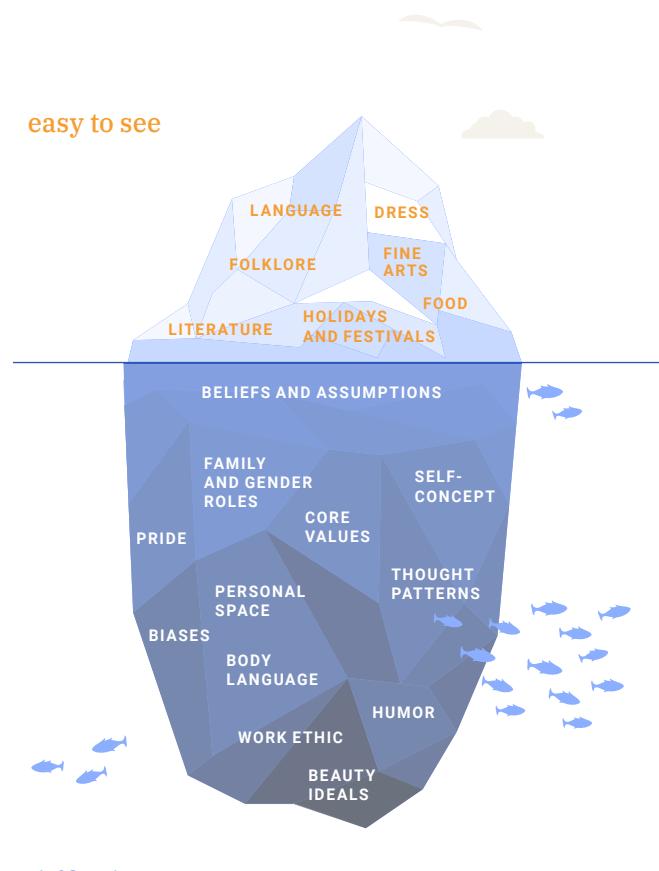
2.3.1 Culture and intercultural communication

As we have seen in sections 1 and 2, culture is a complex concept. But fear not! There are various analogies that can help us better understand how culture works and influences the way we make sense of our experiences.

Although there is no unanimously accepted definition of **culture** as yet, scholars all tend to agree that it comprises different layers, some of them more visible than others. The different layers of culture have often been explained using the iceberg or the onion analogy.

The iceberg analogy is based on the fact that the cultural aspects we are usually able to see are just a small fraction of what a culture actually entails. It is easy to observe differences in language, clothing, food, music or rituals, for example. Below the surface, however, lie many other cultural aspects that are more difficult to see, such as values, beliefs, expectations, attitudes, orientations and worldviews. Those other aspects, which we might not be able to perceive initially, underlie many of the behaviours, feelings or reactions that a person might have. And while it might be relatively easy to change some of the cultural aspects that lie above the surface (such as the way we dress or what we eat), it is normally more difficult to adapt our values, beliefs or expectations to those of a new culture.

Similarly, we can regard culture as an onion, with core values lying in its innermost and most hidden layer. The onion metaphor can also be understood in a different way, however. As we have seen, each person has their own individual culture, which, just like an onion, is composed of different layers, such as our cul-



difficult to see

tural identity, ethnic background, age, gender, social class, religion, education, language, etc. What the two analogies have in common is that they allow us to better understand the different components of culture, some of which are more visible than others.

Some other metaphors show how we experience the world through our own culture. One is that of cultural glasses or lenses. According to this analogy, we all see the world through our very own, unique pair of lenses, which are shaped by our cultural background, with all its different layers. Our cultural lenses influence how we make sense of the situations we experience and how we perceive the different cultures we encounter. Members of the same cultural group tend to perceive things in a similar way (e.g. what they consider usual or unusual, right or wrong). But, since we all have a unique pair of lenses, even members of the same cultural group can experience things (slightly) differently.

However, the truth is that we do not normally realise that we are experiencing life and judging situations through our own culture. We usually only become aware of the fact that we have a distinct culture when we meet people from other cultural groups or different cultural backgrounds. At such times, we might find ourselves having to explain values, ideas or expectations that we hold and thought were universal, evident and self explanatory – and learning that they are not! It may be the case that something we say or do is interpreted the wrong way. Think, for example, of what are considered to be good table manners in your own culture. Is slurping when you eat or burping afterwards good or bad manners? In Japan, for instance, slurping your soup is considered a sign of appreciation or a compliment to the chef, as is eructing after a nice meal in China. You should avoid burping in Japan or slurping in China, however, or you would be considered rude. Through an exploration of food from the perspective of different cultures, **activity 2A** in this chapter encourages reflection on how we are influenced by our own cultural background.

The term “**intercultural communication**” is used to refer to the interactions that occur when people from different cultures communicate with each other. Being aware of the fact that what you perceive as normal might be deemed anything but usual in other cultures is a good first step when you approach people from another cultural background.

Different cultures also have certain misconceptions and **stereotypes** about others. Although we might not like to admit it, we all have stereotypes and are influenced by them. Stereotypes can be defined as a social or cultural group’s beliefs or overgeneralisations about other groups and their members. Every cultural group has certain shared beliefs about what other groups are like or how they behave, attributing traits to them that can be regarded

as positive or negative. Think about the stereotypes generally held in your culture and society about people from other regions in your country or from different countries in Europe. Think too about the stereotypes that other cultural groups have about your own culture. For instance, people from such-and-such a region might be considered to be loud, funny, lazy, passionate, easy-going, stiff, uptight, shy, good at music, etc. You will probably be aware of the positive and negative traits generally associated with each group, even if you do not necessarily agree with them.

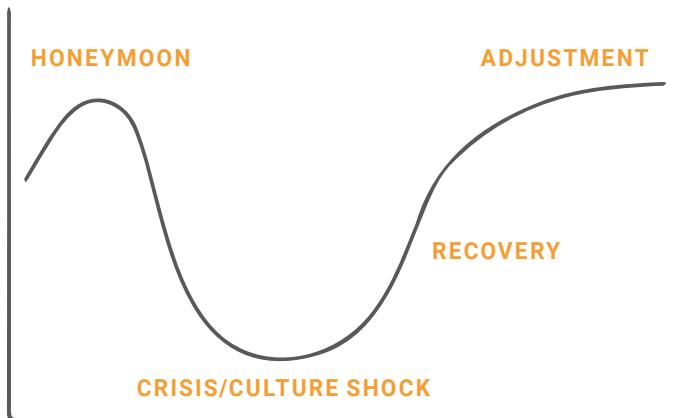
One of the functions of stereotypes is to provide us with easily available information about other groups, especially when we do not know much about them. That should let us know what to expect when we meet members of other groups. Such pieces of information are really not very useful when it comes to actual intercultural communication and interaction, however.



Some films about cultural stereotypes and culture shock*

- L'Auberge espagnole* (2002) [Rated 15]
- Lost in Translation* (2003) [Rated 15]
- Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis* (2008) [Rated 12A]
- Benvenuti al Sud* (2010)
- Ocho apellidos vascos* (2014)
- Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland* (2011)
- Perdiendo el Norte* (2015)
- Júlia ist* (2017)
- Get Out* (2017) [Rated 15]
- Blinded by the Light* (2019) [Rated 12A]

*UK ratings included if available



LYSGAARD'S (1955) U-CURVE MODEL OF CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Source: <https://www.dananelsoncounseling.com/blog/cultural-adjustment-cycle-expat-rollercoaster/>

If we allow ourselves to be led by our own misconceptions and stereotypes, we will not regard the person in front of us as an individual with their own unique characteristics, identity and personality, but rather make assumptions about them based on our preconceived ideas. Furthermore, if stereotypes develop into **prejudices**, i.e. negative ideas or preconceptions about a group, they are sure to have a negative impact on interaction and act as a communication barrier. That can be dangerous because it might lead to forms of discriminatory behaviour.

Although it might be impossible to fully rid ourselves of all our stereotypes and preconceptions about other groups, a good starting point is to be aware of our own biases and stereotypes and to avoid making assumptions about a person just because they come from another cultural background.

As individuals, the differences between our own and another culture are most noticeable to us when we visit or go to live somewhere new, as in the case of migrating to a new country or participating in any kind of (international) exchange. When we find ourselves in a new environment and are confronted with a society that has other social rules, customs, ways of living and languages, we might feel disoriented and confused; such a feeling has been called "**culture shock**". A culture shock can manifest

in many different ways, depending on the person. As early as the 1950s, several scholars, such as the Canadian anthropologist Kalervo Oberg and the Norwegian sociologist Sverre Lysgaard, tried to describe the "culture shock experience", and were able to identify its different phases, including the honeymoon phase, the crisis phase, the adjustment phase and, in some cases, the adaptation phase. Before explaining what each of those phases involves, it is worth pointing out that not everybody who moves or migrates to a new place will inevitably experience them. Whether or not a person recognises them might depend on why they and their family moved or migrated in the first place. Bearing that in mind, let's take a closer look at each of the phases described by Oberg!

- In the first stage, the "**honeymoon phase**", people tend to be very positive and curious about the new culture. Everything is new, exciting and fascinating to them and they enjoy observing the differences in food, architecture, habits, etc.
- The following phase is usually a crisis stage, the actual **culture shock**; the excitement of the first few weeks or months has disappeared and the differences between the new culture and the old one might become more patent and interfere with people's cultural beliefs and attitudes, possibly leading to feelings of anxiety, frustration and rejection of the new culture. Although you might have found the scramble to get on public transport really funny at first and you genuinely enjoyed eating those exotic dishes day after day, you may end up feeling overwhelmed after a while and find yourself thinking about the food back home and your friends and family. Language barriers play a key role here too. Since you might not be able to communicate as much as you would like, or even at all, making new friends can seem far more difficult than at home, which might leave you feeling even more lonely and homesick. Under those circumstances, migrants can experience what has been called "**migratory grief or loss**",

a grief-like feeling due to the loss of everything they have left behind (people, homeland, social status, identity, etc.). Also, when migrants are forced to move under extreme circumstances and/or experience severe levels of stress in the receiving country or society (owing to, for example, forced separation from their loved ones, the dangers of their migratory journey, social isolation, lack of opportunities, non-accomplishment of the goals they migrated to achieve, discrimination, etc.), they might develop what is known as "**Ulysses syndrome**". Ulysses syndrome refers to a feeling of severe emotional distress which can include symptoms such as irritability, nervousness, headache, migraine, insomnia, fear, and loss of appetite.

- The third phase is called the **adjustment or recovery phase**. After some time, people tend to get used to the new culture, develop their own routines and, in general, feel more comfortable with life in their new country or environment. They slowly start to learn what to expect in different situations, to cope with difficulties and to adapt to the new culture.
- Finally, there may be an **adaptation phase**. People who reach this phase are able to adapt to the new culture and participate in its society.
 - Those who fully embrace the new culture while losing their old one are said to undergo **cultural assimilation**; from a linguistic point of view, that could mean the eventual loss of their native language.
 - Other people integrate some aspects of the new culture into their identity while retaining certain aspects of their old culture. That is called **cultural integration**, and it usually entails them learning the new language while maintaining their native one.
 - Conversely, there are and always have been people who are unable or unwilling to adapt to the new culture. That can happen for many reasons, including the host country being hostile to foreigners; people expecting to leave the new country very soon and deeming the effort required to adapt too great; and people regarding some of

the host country's cultural values as totally unacceptable. In such cases, which are referred to as **cultural separation**, people tend to only interact with those who share their cultural and/or linguistic background or with others who are also foreign to the host country. They tend to use their own language or a **lingua franca**, such as English, while learning just enough very basic expressions in the host society's language to get by.

Interestingly, people can also suffer a culture shock when they return to their place of origin after having been abroad and/or in contact with a new culture. That is known as "**reverse culture shock**" or "**own culture shock**", and it usually happens when people have adopted some elements of the foreign culture, which they then miss when back at home. That too can make them feel confused or disoriented.

As we can see, culture is not something static; it evolves continuously over time – even if we do not move anywhere! That is true not only of the individual culture of a person but also of the social culture of a community. Think about how your beliefs, values, attitudes and priorities have changed over time, how they vary as you grow older and go through different stages of life. Similarly, many things that used to be culturally accepted in our societies are not any more. For example, in many European countries it was considered normal for young children to drink beer or wine until well into the 20th century, whereas society at large would now frown on a five-year-old sipping a glass of wine.

Cultures can evolve because of a change in the environment or because new ideas, tools or technologies emerge and become widespread, making new ways of living possible. Furthermore, cultures are normally not isolated from the outer world, but are and always have been influenced by each other, be it philosophically, scientifically, artistically, politically or even socially.

WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?

- Culture comprises different layers, some of them more visible than others. Everyone has their own individual culture, shaped by aspects or layers such as our cultural identity, ethnic background, age, gender, social class, religion, education, language, etc.
- We experience the world through our own culture, although we are usually unaware of it until we meet someone from a different culture.
- Every culture has misconceptions and stereotypes about other cultural groups. Although such stereotypes provide us with easily available information about other cultures, they are not very useful when it comes to real interaction with people from other cultural backgrounds.
- Cultural stereotypes can develop into prejudices (negative ideas or preconceptions about a group) and are potentially dangerous because they can lead to forms of discriminatory behaviour.
- When we arrive in a new cultural environment, it is normal to feel disoriented and lost. Migrants and others who have moved abroad might experience what has been called “culture shock”. Some authors have identified certain patterns and stages of culture shock, but how we experience it depends greatly on our individual circumstances and why we and our family moved in the first place.
- Culture is not static; it evolves continuously.

2.3.2 The link between language and culture

Many cultural products are closely linked to language; think about tales, myths, legends and any kind of (oral) literature, music, art, films, etc. Which languages and cultures would you spontaneously associate with tango or salsa, fado or bossa-nova, opera, rap, blues or heavy metal? Which would you associate with manga and anime?

We have seen how cultures shape the way we perceive the world, but have so far barely talked about the link between language and culture. Language and culture are intimately intertwined, and it is difficult to think of one without the other. As pointed out in **chapter 1**, language is much more than just a tool for getting a message across. The world's different languages have not emerged and evolved in a vacuum, but within different societies and cultures, and under the influence of their environ-



DID YOU KNOW...

many countries and regions have created their own institutions to promote their language and culture abroad? Interestingly, many of those countries and regions have traditionally named such institutions after some of their most famous writers, highlighting the relationship between language and culture. That is the case of Spain's Instituto Cervantes, Catalonia's Institut Ramon Llull, Italy's Società Dante Alighieri, Germany's Goethe Institut or Portugal's Instituto Camões.

我全然不懂!

IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME...

OR MAYBE CHINESE?

What might seem especially difficult or confusing in one language and culture may not be perceived that way in others.

The expression “It's all Greek to me” is used in English to refer to something that is difficult to understand. But what do people in Greece say? For them, things that are difficult to understand are not Greek, of course, but Chinese (“Αυτά μου φαίνονται κινέζικα”), as is the case in Spanish (“eso me suena a chino”) and many other languages.

ish you would say that it is not “santo de mi devoción”, literally “not the saint I pray to”, which reflects the importance religion has traditionally enjoyed in Spain. Try **activity 2C** in this chapter to explore how different aspects of culture are expressed through idiomatic expressions in different languages.

Because the loss of a language implies the death of a culture, the conservation of all languages goes hand in hand with the preservation of ethnic and cultural groups and is vital to maintaining biodiversity.

But if language is so closely connected with culture and the way we interpret reality, does the language we speak shape the way we think? That has been a bone of contention among linguists, anthropologists and psychologists over the last couple of centuries. The idea that language shapes thought was expressed by philosophers such as Wilhelm von Humboldt and Herder as long ago as in the 18th century, but it became more prominent in the first half of the 20th century thanks to what is known as the **“Sapir-Whorf hypothesis”**. It was postulated, under that line of thought, that the language we speak determines and limits the way we think, an argument illustrated using certain striking differences among languages, in vocabulary for example.

The most typical example given is the many words for the term “snow” that supposedly exist in the Inuit languages (which, it has been said, have separate words for “falling snow”, “snow on the ground”, “snow hard-packed like ice”, “slushy snow” and “wind-driven snow”) and have no direct translation in English or many other languages. The fact that areas of vocabulary can be so fine-grained in some languages and not in others would suggest different ways of organising the real world in our minds. That could also be illustrated by different perceptions of abstract concepts in different

ment. Since it is through language that we can share our traditions and cultural values with each other and the next generations, it is often said that language is culture and culture is language. **Activity 2B** in this chapter lets you explore how tales are embedded in the cultures in which they originated.

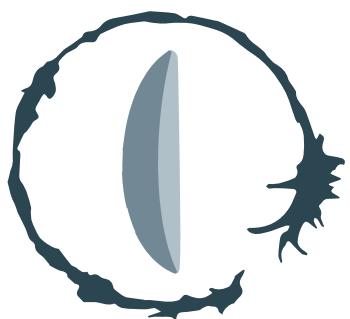
Many expressions used in the different languages are culturally motivated. That is best exemplified by idiomatic expressions, such as idioms, proverbs, sayings or metaphors. Idiomatic expressions condense beliefs and values that are generally held to be true by a cultural group or society – or at least were held to be true at some point, since culture, like language, is continuously evolving!

Idiomatic expressions are usually indicative of current or former life and environmental conditions. In German, for example, you would say that something is “Schnee von gestern”, literally “yesterday's snow”, to mean that it is in the past and therefore must be accepted or forgiven, equivalent to the English expression “water under the bridge”. And while in British English you would say that something is not “my cup of tea”, a clear reference to the predilection for the hot beverage in question in the UK, in Span-

languages, such as the concepts of time and duration, as well as by the number of colours or numerals that can be named in a particular language. The existence of “untranslatable” words, meanwhile, can be taken as evidence of the limits of the different language systems.

Nowadays, the strong version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is no longer believed to be true. Although different languages do classify vocabulary in different ways and have different perceptions of abstract concepts, the differences are not so great that understanding among peoples is impossible. After all, every concept can be translated, even if we might need to add information or reformulate to explain the specific meaning of a concept unique to a certain culture. That is one of the reasons for which the activities of translating and interpreting are not as straightforward and simple as they might appear to be from the outside (see **chapter 3** to learn more about what translating between languages and cultures entails).

Nevertheless, today most linguists agree on a weak version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Even if our own language does not determine the way we think, it does influence our thought and perception of the world – just consider the cultural lenses metaphor!



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

the science-fiction film *Arrival* (2016) (rated 12A), which revolves around the complexity of communicating with aliens, is based on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis?

“UNTRANSLATABLE” WORDS?



The language we speak also affects the way we interact with other members of society, since it dictates what it is appropriate to say and how it should be said. And those rules are not necessarily the same in every culture. A very good example of that is the way people of different social statuses are addressed in different languages and cultures. While in the UK it would probably be considered rude to address your teacher by their first name, for instance, in Spain it would generally be considered strange to do otherwise.

Language is also key to expressing our belonging to a particular cultural group, be it a linguistic community, a national or regional community, or a certain social group. Think about how you speak to your friends, and how the way you do so is different to the way your parents or your grandparents talk to their friends. **Activity 3E** (available in the [Resource Bank](#)) revolves around different ways of saying ‘thanks’.

In a migration context, bilingual children grow up being influenced by at least two different languages and cultures, and must negotiate the role to be played by each culture and language in their identity and feelings of belonging. As they grow up, they might feel that they belong to one language community or the other, to both of them or to neither of them. And, of course, such feelings of belonging might vary in strength and change over time.



Discover more "untranslatable" words in Ella Frances Sanders' *Lost in translation: an illustrated compendium of untranslatable words from around the world*. <https://ellafrancesanders.com/lost-in-translation>



WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?

- **Language and culture are intimately intertwined. It is through language that we can share our traditions and cultural values with each other and the next generations.**
- **Many expressions used in the world's different languages are culturally motivated; that is most evident in idiomatic expressions and proverbs.**
- **The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis stated that the language we speak shapes and determines the way we are able to perceive reality. That is no longer believed to be true, since the differences between languages are not so great that understanding among peoples is impossible. Most linguists, however, do agree with a weak version of the hypothesis, according to which language does not determine the way we think but does influence our thought and perception of the world.**
- **Language allows us to express our belonging to a particular cultural and social group.**
- **In migration contexts, bilingual children grow up being influenced by at least two different languages and cultures, and must negotiate the role to be played by each culture and language in their identity and feelings of belonging.**

2.4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have seen that culture is not an easy concept to discuss, and there are many reasons for that. It is a vast, multifaceted and multilayered topic, and condensing it into just a few pages is complicated: culture is the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the houses we live in, our traditions, our literature and our history, along with many other aspects of our ways of life. It consists of the shared, deeply ingrained assumptions and beliefs that control our thoughts and behaviours as individuals and groups. The culture we grow up in remains invisible to us until we meet someone from another culture or we read a foreign book or watch a foreign film, making us aware that there are people who eat different foods, wear different clothes, live in houses that are different from ours, and so on.

Finally, we live in a world and an era characterised by the massive movement of people, be their purpose migration, tourism or trade, as well as by global communication and media. As a result, we constantly encounter references to, representations of and stereotypes about other countries and cultures. When talking about culture, it is important to remember that what we consider normal in our culture is very likely to be perceived as different or even strange by people who do not belong to it. The activities in this chapter will allow your students to take a brief walk in the shoes of other 'cultures' and reflect on some of the aspects explained here.

TEACHER'S NOTES

ACTIVITY 2A. Let's eat

In this activity, students will...

- Reflect on food as an essential feature of every culture.
- Identify foods that are considered inedible or unappetising in their own culture.
- Become aware that what people do or do not like to eat is just one of the many differences that become evident when we meet people from another culture.

ESTIMATED TIME
 45 MIN

How to use this resource

STAGE 1 • Show images of foods/dishes from different countries. 5'

- Ask the class if they are familiar with them and if they can name any of the ingredients.

STAGE 2 • Ask your students to present their favourite traditional/family foods. 15'

- Ask the rest of the class if they have tried the foods in question.
- Organise your students into small groups. Ask them to list foods that they have never eaten and foods that they would refuse to eat, and to explain why. Ask them to think about foods that exist in all countries/cultures too (e.g. bread, milk, etc.). Have them use Google to research the foods they list and to find images of and recipes for them.

STAGE 3 • Ask the groups to tell the rest of the class about the results of their discussion. 7'

- Write the names of the foods/dishes mentioned on the board.

STAGE 4 • Discuss the fact that, in some cases and for different reasons, some foods are taboo/forbidden in some countries/cultures (e.g. pork, beef, insects, etc.). Your students could use Google to look up taboo foods and find explanations of why they have that status. 8'

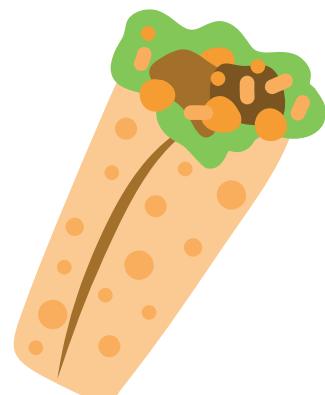
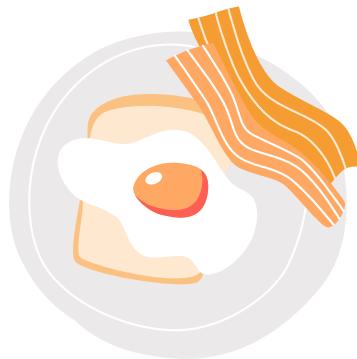
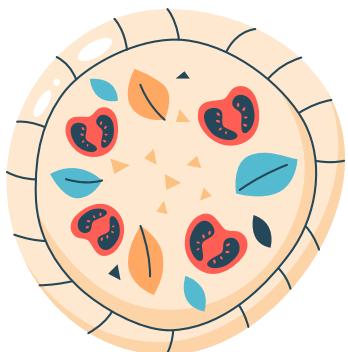
- Discuss what the foods in question are.

STAGE 5 • Have the class prepare a poster with names and images of typical foods/dishes. 10'

- Explain that when we get to know another culture, we need to understand that what is normal in one culture might not be in another, and that applies to food too.
- Would your students be able to adjust to different foods and eventually come to like them? Children who migrate to other countries often have to do that.

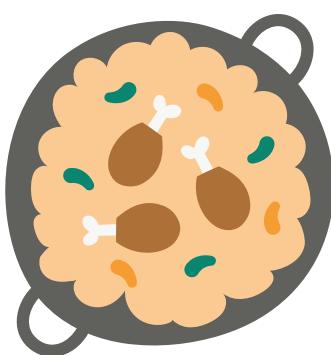
Prep time suggestions

- Prepare images of typical foods from different countries; alternatively, ask your students to provide names and pictures of foods.
- In preparation for this activity, have your students ask their parents/grandparents for a family/traditional recipe to bring to class.
- Complementary activity: ask your students to create a quiz.
- Read chapter 2 of the Teacher's Book *Inclusion, Diversity and Communication Across Cultures*, available online (<https://pages.uab.cat/eylbid/en/content/teachers-book>), for extra background information on the topic.

Let's eat

"We all eat, and we all have our favourite foods. However, what we think of as normal food might not be considered palatable elsewhere. Tell the class about **food or a dish** that is typical in your family or the place you are from."

"Would you like to try this?"



TEACHER'S NOTES

ACTIVITY 2B. Once upon a time in the world

In this activity, students will...

- Realise that every culture's tales have the same purpose: to teach a lesson.
- Identify the main characteristics of tales in different cultures.
- Discuss whether different tales can have the same meaning if told in different cultural contexts.

ESTIMATED
TIME

50 MIN

How to use this resource

STAGE 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start the activity by asking your students to share their favourite childhood folktale (a book, an animated film, an invented story, etc.) and show any materials they have brought to class around. List the tales they tell on the board. • Discuss the main characteristics of a folktale (characters, settings, plot, ending, etc.) with the class: what makes a fairy tale a fairy tale? Draw a concept chart connecting the main features on the board. 	10'
STAGE 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide your students into small groups and give each group a short, easy-to-read fairy tale (the tales should be from different countries). Have your students work together to record details of the characters, settings and typical plot elements they find in their fairy tales. 	15'
STAGE 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the groups to share the characteristics of the story they analysed. • Discuss similarities and differences. 	15'
STAGE 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your students to reflect, as a group, on the story they worked on. Would children from other cultures like it? Why? Why not? Are there similar stories in their own culture? 	10'

Prep time suggestions

- Prepare images of traditional folktales (e.g. Aesop, stories from other countries and in different languages).
- In preparation for this activity, ask your students to think about their favourite tale and, if possible, to bring the book or any relevant images to class.
- Read chapter 2 of the Teacher's Book *Inclusion, Diversity and Communication Across Cultures*, available online (<https://pages.uab.cat/eylbid/en/content/teachers-book>), for extra background information on the topic of multiculturalism.

C'era una volta...

ил-был...

مَا يَأْلَى نَمْ مَوْيِ يَفْ

Il était une fois...



“Everywhere in the world, children are told or read bedtime stories and traditional tales involving witches, wise people, brave children, evil characters, and talking animals. Share a story you were told or read as a child with us.”

昔々

Érase una vez...

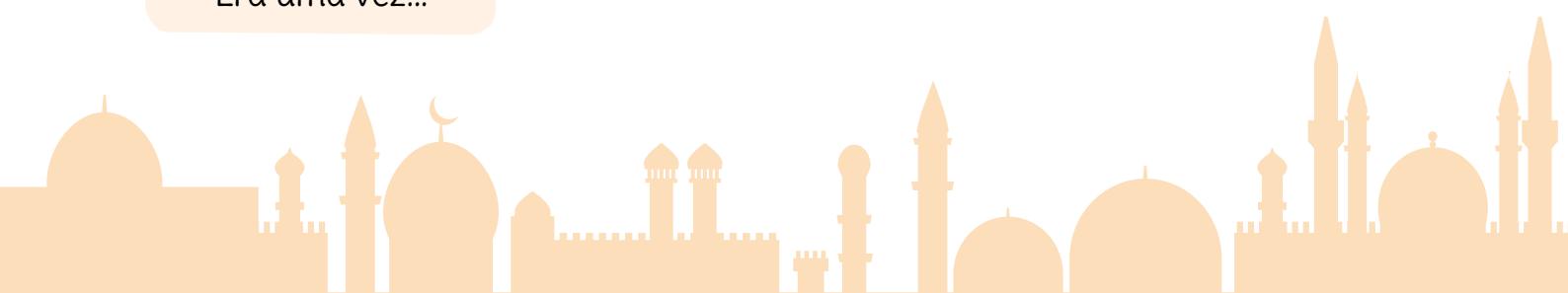
Hi havia una vegada...

Once upon a time...

एक समय की बाता है

Es war einmal...

Era uma vez...



TEACHER'S NOTES

ACTIVITY 2C. My favourite proverb, idiom or saying

In this activity, students will...

- Reflect on how languages and cultures are intertwined.
- Gain an insight into other cultures, languages and ways of thinking.
- Become aware of their own and others' multilingualism and multiculturalism.
- Become aware of linguistic diversity, including within a single language.

ESTIMATED
TIME
 45 MIN

How to use this resource

STAGE 1 · Explain to your students that language and culture are intertwined, something that is especially evident in proverbs, idioms and sayings. 10'

· Show your students the example provided or use your own favourite proverb, idiom or saying as an example.

· Tell your students to think about their favourite proverb, idiom or saying in any given language for the next session. Encourage them to talk to a family member (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) with whom they can think together about a proverb they especially like or use frequently. They can also think about proverbs they like in other (foreign) languages they speak. You can provide them with a card, on which they should write down the following information:

- The proverb, idiom or saying (if possible, in the original writing system and/or taking into account regional pronunciation; it is fine to just write it down as it is pronounced, especially if it is in a language with another writing system), its meaning, its origin (ask them to look this up on the internet), a word-for-word translation (if it is not in English), and a similar expression in English / other languages.

STAGE 2 · Option 1: put students whose proverbs are in the same language into a group to share them with each other. There should be a similar number of students in each group. In groups with proverbs in a language other than English, students can discuss and help each other with the translation of each proverb (since they probably have different language skills). 15'

· Option 2: if the class is too homogeneous or too heterogeneous, each group of students can have proverbs in different languages.

· Ask each group to choose two proverbs they would like to share with the whole class; if the groups are small, they can simply share all their proverbs.

STAGE 3 · Let the students pin the cards with the proverbs they would like to share with the class on the board (or similar). 20'

· Ask students to volunteer to choose a card and read aloud the proverb in its original language and, if applicable, its translation in English.

· Use this as a cue to start a discussion about the link between language and culture:

- Are there similar expressions in other languages?
- What does each proverb tell us about the culture in which it originated?

Prep time suggestions

- For stage 1:
 - Print out the instruction sheet with the example; you can add an example of your own if you like.
 - Bring cards (e.g. size A5) for your students; alternatively, you can ask them to write down their proverbs on a piece of paper.
- If the class is mainly monolingual, you could prepare cards with proverbs, idioms or sayings in different languages and ask your students to research their origins and translations, either at home or in class.
- Read chapter 2 of the Teacher's Book *Inclusion, Diversity and Communication Across Cultures*, available online (<https://pages.uab.cat/eylbid/en/content/teachers-book>), especially section 2.3.2, for extra background information on the link between language and culture and how it is most evident in idiomatic expressions, such as idioms, proverbs and sayings.

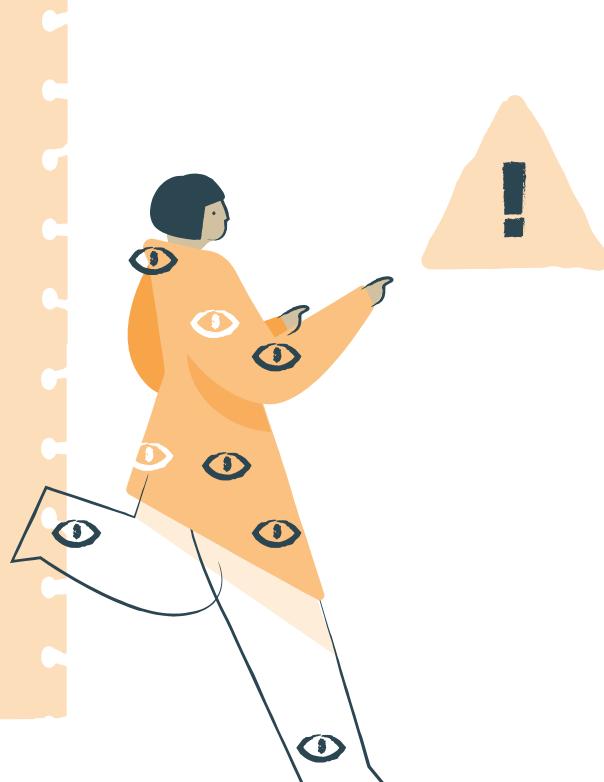
My favourite proverb, idiom or saying

Do you have a favourite proverb? We would love to hear it in our next session, when we will be learning about different proverbs from all around the world! You can ask a member of your family to suggest a proverb they like or use frequently.

You can write down any proverb in any language you like, be it your mother tongue or another language you can speak. If you choose a proverb in a language with a different writing system, you can either write it in Latin characters or in the language's original writing system.

You should also do a little research about the origin of the proverb you choose.

If you choose a proverb in a language other than English, think about whether your classmates will understand it. Could you translate it into English? Is there a proverb in English with a similar meaning? Take a look at the example for inspiration!



Example:

- Greek proverb: "Τα μάτια σου δεκατέσσερα"
- Meaning: Be careful / Stay alert / Keep your eyes open
- Origin: It seems to come from the Byzantine Empire; the Byzantines believed that some people had the gift of seeing not only with their eyes but also with other parts of their bodies.
- Word-for-word translation: (To have) your eyes fourteen / To have fourteen eyes
- Similar proverb, idiom or saying in English / another language: "Keep an eye out"