

2.2.2 Large and small cultures in ELT

Activities

Activity 1: Associations with 'culture'

This Activity aims at helping you explore the topics which you, as a user and teacher of English and as a person in general, associate with the concept of culture, especially as regards English Language Teaching (ELT). There are two questions in this Activity, inviting you to share your own views and insights.

Question 1

Based on your own knowledge and experience as a user and a teacher of English, as well as your knowledge and experience as a person in general, what topics related to culture could English Language Teaching (ELT) activities revolve around?

Write your views in the text box below. Try to identify at least three topics related to culture which ELT activities could revolve around.

When you finish, proceed with the second question of this introductory Activity.

Question 2

What follows is a list of possible topics related to culture which ELT activities could revolve around.

How important is each of them to you? Put a tick in five topics, those which are most important to you.

- ☐ 1. Upbringing and family background
- ☐ 2. National traditions and customs
- ☐ 3. Works of art (e.g. architecture) and literature (e.g. poetry)
- ☐ 4. Civilization (e.g. Western, Asian) and national history
- ☐ 5. Personal identity (i.e. the sense of oneself as a person)
- ☐ 6. The culture(s) of people as reflected in communication
- ☐ 7. One's own personality and character
- ☐ 8. Social manners and norms (e.g. about politeness)
- ☐ 9. Personal life style and manners
- ☐ 10. Leisure (e.g. sport, travels)
- ☐ 11. Ethnic values and beliefs (e.g. about religion)
- ☐ 12. The culture created by specific groups of people (e.g. colleagues)
- ☐ 13. Personal attitudes (e.g. open-mindedness)
- ☐ 14. Education (e.g. personal educational background)
- ☐ 15. Personal values and beliefs (e.g. about honesty)

Activity 2: European Cultural Heritage

This Activity aims at helping you explore the concept and value of European Cultural Heritage, in the light of issues discussed in the video entitled “Large and small cultures in ELT”. There are three Questions in this Activity. Before carrying them out, click [here](#) to visit the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 website of the European Union.

Question 1

In this Question you are invited to think about the various tangible and intangible forms that European Cultural Heritage (ECH) may include and see if they relate to the ‘material’, ‘social’ or ‘subjective’ aspects of culture of the broad European social group. As discussed in the video “Large and small cultures in ELT”:

- ‘Material culture’ includes physical objects and resources that the members of a social group create and commonly employ.
- ‘Social culture’ includes social institutions, means and resources that the members of the social group share.
- ‘Subjective culture’ includes common values, beliefs, attitudes, collective memories and practices of the members of the social group.

Read the following statements and match them with ‘Material culture’, ‘Social culture’ and ‘Subjective culture’.

1. This aspect of ECH may refer to how individuals themselves perceive and experience culture and may include principles related, for instance, to democracy, equality and freedom of speech, as well as attitudes and practices related, for instance, to politeness, integrity and tolerance to diversity, as valued in specific social groups and communities within or across Europe.

Material culture

2. This aspect of ECH may include languages and dialects, oral traditions, customs, legends, dances, music, memories of common events (e.g. wars), as experiences in specific social groups and communities within or across Europe.

Social culture

3. This aspect of ECH may include archaeological sites, monuments, artwork, buildings, temples, religious images, utensils and clothing, as found in specific social groups and communities within or across Europe.

Subjective culture

Question 2

In this Question, you are invited to look at three sample ELT activities revolving around the European Cultural Heritage.

Based on your experience as a teacher and the information provided at the video “Large and small cultures in ELT”, which aspects of culture does each ELT activity focus on?

Circle “Material culture”, “Social culture” or “Subjective culture”.

Sample ELT activity 1



Material culture

Social culture

Subjective culture

Sample ELT activity 2

PROJECT TIME



Create a poster about a European country!

- ~ What **language(s)** do people speak there?
In your country, do you use any words or phrases originating from the language(s) spoken there?
- ~ What **customs** do people have there?
In your country, do you have any similar customs?

Material culture

Social culture

Subjective culture

Sample ELT activity 3

What does Europe mean to you?
How do you understand 'living all together in diversity'?
What makes us all unique? What connects us all together?



Living all together in diversity

Material culture

Social culture

Subjective culture

Question 3

Complete the blank spaces with the words in the box.

equality	communication	tangible	stereotyping
familiarity	diversity	belonging	understanding
relate	intangible		

Employing ELT activities which revolve around the cultural heritage of the European and other major social groups and, generally, employing ELT activities which focus on cultural aspects is highly significant in terms of helping the learners raise their awareness of the value and challenges of linguistic and cultural 1. _____ nowadays. This is especially true as regards multilingual and multicultural classrooms, that is, classrooms with learners who have more than one language at their disposal and various cultural affiliations.

For instance, activities which involve the learners in discussing 2. _____ manifestations of their own and other cultures, such as archaeological and historic sites, monuments and artwork, may help them deepen their 3. _____ of the factors which over the years have shaped the cultural landscape in their own and other countries. Accordingly, activities which involve the learners in reflecting upon 4. _____ aspects of their own and other cultures, such as shared principles and values, may help them strengthen their social and cultural identity, gain a sense of 5. _____ to the broader social group and develop an awareness of the ways in which their own culture may 6. _____ to other cultures. Moreover, activities which focus specifically on the role of culture in 7. _____, may help the learners notice how culture may be expressed through the language(s) someone uses, as well as how 8. _____ with other cultures may influence the effectiveness of a social interaction.

Such ELT activities in fact may also help the learners avoid over-generalising and 9. _____ (for instance, judging people based on commonly held beliefs which may not be true). This way, ELT may not only promote multilingualism and multiculturalism but also contribute to social 10. _____.

Activity 3: Evaluation and improvement of ELT activities

This Activity aims at helping you see how you could evaluate and, if necessary, improve ELT activities that focus on cultural issues and, even, develop your own ELF-aware activities that are relevant to your own context.

In what follows, you will see three sample ELT activities (Sample ELT Activity 5, Sample ELT Activity 6 and Sample ELT Activity 7). Based on your own knowledge and experience as a teacher, as well as on the information provided in the video entitled “Large and small cultures in ELT”:

- How would you describe or evaluate each of them?
- How would you improve them, if necessary, by integrating a small-culture ELF-aware perspective to make them more relevant to your own context?

Write your views in the text boxes below.

Sample ELT activity 5

SPEAKING

Look at the people in the photos and discuss with your classmates.

a) Where do they come from?
b) Where are they?
c) What are they doing?



Sample ELT activity 6

READING

Read what Hana is writing about her life and her country.
What aspects of her culture is she talking about?



Hello everyone! I'm Hana and I'm from Japan. I live in Tokyo, the capital city. It is a big city, with lots of gardens and parks. There are also numerous very tall buildings, such as the Tokyo Tower and the Tokyo Skytree, which is the tallest tower in Japan and the second tallest structure in the world, after Burj Khalifa in Dubai.

The customs of Japan are a bit different from those of the countries in the West. For instance, we eat on the floor, sitting on mats, and we use chopsticks. We also bow when we greet someone and we take off our shoes when we enter the house. Moreover, we often use body language to express our thoughts. For example, when we want to say 'no', we shake our hand from side to side. If you ever visit Japan, keep in mind as well that we don't like touching, or standing too close to each other!

As far as I am concerned, I like judo and kendo, which are very popular in Japan. I also have lots of friends around the world! Lucy from Manchester, Pablo from Malaga and Michelle from Paris are some of my best 'international' friends. We often chat on the Internet and play games together!

How about you? What different customs do you have in your country? Do you also have any 'international' friends?

Are the following statements True (T) or False (F)?

- a) Japanese people use special sticks instead of forks. ____
- b) Japanese people don't really like physical contact. ____
- c) Hana is not very keen on sports. ____
- d) Hana frequently spends time online. ____

Sample ELT activity 7

Video time!



You are going to watch a video where a reporter from the Eurovision Song Contest Malta web community interviews Sakis Rouvas, a Greek singer, before his participation in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2009.

➡ Before watching the video, discuss these questions with your classmates.

- 1) The interview takes place in **English**. **Why** do you think is that?
- 2) What **topics** do you think they may talk about? **Why**?
- 3) Based on your experience, what **features** do you think the language that the reporter and Rouvas use might have? **Why**?



➡ Watch the video and, in pairs, take notes on the following. Then, discuss your views with your classmates.



- 1) To what extent have your expectations been confirmed about the **topics** which they talk about and the **language** they use?
- 2) In what ways are their respective **cultures** expressed in the way they **communicate** with each other?
- 3) In general, how would you **evaluate** the interaction between the reporter from Malta and the Greek singer? **Why**?
- 4) In what ways could your observations be **useful** to you as regards **your own interactions** in English? **Why**?

Activity 4: Your views about large and small cultures

Think about the discussion provided at the video entitled “Large and small cultures in ELT” and your own knowledge and experience as a teacher of English.

1. What do you think about the large- and small-culture perspectives in ELF-aware teaching and in ELT in general? To what extent do you agree or disagree with the discussion in this video? Why?
2. To what extent are the large- and small-culture perspectives illustrated in your textbook or other materials you use in your classroom(s)? Discuss an ELT activity as an example. How would you improve or enrich it?

Write your views in the text box below.



Answers

Activity 2

Question 1

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Material culture | 2. Social culture | 3. Subjective culture |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|

Question 2

ELT activity 1: Material culture

ELT activity 2: Social culture

ELT activity 3: Subjective culture

Question 3

- | | | |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. diversity | 5. belonging | 9. stereotyping |
| 2. tangible | 6. relate | 10. equality |
| 3. understanding | 7. communication | |
| 4. intangible | 8. familiarity | |