

Large and small cultures in ELT

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Contents

This section aims at helping you raise your awareness as regards:

- The concept and various aspects of **culture**
- The nature of '**large**' and '**small**' cultures in **ELT**
- The value of **European Cultural Heritage**
- The nature of **intercultural encounters** in **ELF**
- The place and role of culture in **your own** teaching context

ACTIVITY 1

If you haven't done so yet, click the **link** under the video to do **Activity 1**

1. What **topics** related to **culture** could ELT activities revolve around? — Try to identify **at least three topics**
2. Read a **list** of possible topics related to culture — **How important is each of them to you?**
Select **five topics** that, in your opinion, are those that are most important to include in ELT

What is 'culture'?

Key definition

- “The set of **distinctive** spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of **society** or a **social group**” — either ‘**large**’ or ‘**small**’
(UNESCO, 2002: 62)

Typical associations — ACTIVITY1

- Visual and performance arts
- Traditions, languages, customs
- Literature, poetry, playwriting

What is 'culture'?

Aspects of culture (Barrett et al, 2013: 5)

- **'Material culture'**: physical objects created and employed by the members of a social group
- **'Social culture'**: the shared social institutions, means and resources of a social group
- **'Subjective culture'**: beliefs, collective memories, attitudes, values, practices of a social group
(Barrett et al, 2013: 5)

ACTIVITY 2

European Cultural Heritage (ECH)

1. Visit the **European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018** website.
2. Click the **link** under the video to do **Activity 2**
 - a) What are the **material, social, subjective culture** aspects of ECH?
 - b) **Sample ELT Activities 1, 2, 3**: Do they focus on material, social and/or subjective aspects?
 - c) What is the **social** and **pedagogical value** of ECH?

Sample ELT Activity 1

WELCOME TO EUROPE

- a) Which of the buildings below can you recognise?
- b) In which country can you find each of them?
- c) What is/used to be the purpose of each building?



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?

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?



Engaging with cultural heritage

- **Social cohesion:** Strengthening **social identities** and developing the sense of **belonging**, without separation and 'othering'
- **Social equality:** Valuing **diversity**, without over-generalising and stereotyping
- **Social interaction:** Understanding how **culture** may be expressed in and influence **language** and **communication**

→ **Intercultural communication**

Intercultural communication

- **Intercultural encounter**: An interaction with a person (or group) with **different cultural affiliations**
 - **‘Large culture’**: any **broad** ethnic, national or international social grouping, e.g. ‘West’, ‘Europe’, ‘Great Britain’, ‘Greece’
 - **‘Small culture’**: any **cohesive** social grouping, no matter how small or temporary, e.g. a class, a work team, a group of friends

(Holliday, 1999)

Intercultural communication in ELF

- **Usually non-native speakers**—not necessarily with shared **communicative competences**
- **Different linguacultural backgrounds**—there is not always **familiarity** with each other's norms
- **Small culture**—development of a **microcosmic transient community**:
 - Need for **common ground**
 - **Negotiation**, not necessarily in accordance with NS cultural conventions
 - **Creativity; accommodation; reconciliation**

Intercultural Awareness (ICA)

- A **conscious understanding** of the **role** that **culturally based** forms and practices may have in **intercultural communication**
- The **ability** to put this understanding into **practice** in a **flexible** and **context-specific** way

(Baker, 2015)

Adopting a **large** or **small** culture perspective in ELT...

in practice

Large/Small cultures in ELT

Large culture

(as usually represented)

- The culture of **individual countries as a whole**
- **Pre-determined, over-generalised** features
- Focus on **cultural norms** and **national differences**
- **Stereotyping, othering, culturism**

Small culture

(as regards ELF)

- The '**temporary**' culture of **ELF interactions**
- **Emergent, interaction-specific** features
- Focus on the **interaction** & what makes it **work**
- Linking **culture** and **ELF communication**

Sample ELT Activity 4

A collage of London-themed illustrations including a red double-decker bus, a black cab, a Union Jack flag, a black umbrella, a red telephone booth, a black car, a white teapot, a black policeman, a Ferris wheel, the Tower Bridge, and Big Ben.

Travelling to London

London is a wonderful place to visit but to make the most of your vacation time in the city it pays to prepare, plan and research in advance.

London weather can be quite unpredictable. Londoners are known to regularly carry sunglasses and umbrellas throughout the year. But the weather is never so extreme as to detract from all the great things to do in the city. The city sees a large increase in visitors in July and August. The shoulder seasons can be a great time to visit if you want to avoid the crowds.

London's public transport is easy and safe to use. Between the Underground rail system and the bus routes, you can get almost anywhere you want fairly cheaply. Or if you've got a little more money, an iconic black taxi will take you there.

Londoners are generally polite and helpful, provided you don't infringe on their personal space and aren't loud and obnoxious. Obey the 'rules of the road', such as standing on the right on escalators, and use "please" and "thank you" constantly.

[Adapted from:
<https://www.tripsavvy.com/visiting-london-for-the-first-time-1583356>]

Read the text and do the following activities.

A. Which paragraph talks about:

- a) Transportation in London? _____
- b) Do's & don'ts in London? _____
- c) The weather in London? _____
- d) The author's opinion? _____

B. Which words or phrases in the text mean:

- a) A period with neither too many nor too few tourist arrivals? _____
- b) Extremely unpleasant? _____
- c) Act against something? _____
- d) Moving staircases? _____



Adding a small-culture perspective

- **Metalinguistic awareness:** **noticing** and **reflecting on** the interplay between **language** and **culture** in real-life **ELF discourse communities**; learning how to employ one's **plurilingual** and **pluricultural** repertoires in various **socio-cultural** contexts
- **Metacognitive awareness:** **reflecting on** one's **attitudes** and possibly **stereotypical** perceptions and on one's **experiences** in real-life **intercultural communication**

Enriching Sample ELT Activity 4



- Have **you** ever been / Would **you** ever go to London? **Why?** As an **English learner**, what do you **think** about London and the UK? **Why?**
- **How** are the British **presented** in the text? How is their **culture** presented? What do **you think** about it? **Why?** Do you think the information in the text applies to **all British people?** **Why?**
- Do people from **other** countries live in London? In what ways may their **culture relate** to the culture of the British people? In what ways could it **relate** to **your own culture?**

Enriching Sample ELT Activity 4



- What do you **think** about the **English** of **British** people? **Why**? How do you view the English **other people** use? How do you view the way **you use** English? **Why**? What is '**good English**' to you? **Why**?
- What kind of **English** did/would you use in London? **With whom**? **Why**? Were there/would there be any **obstacles**? **Why**? How did/would you **overcome** them? How did/would you make your interactions '**tick**'?
- Do you think a person's **culture** is/should be reflected in the way he/she **communicates**? **Why**? **How**? What do **you think** when it happens? **Why**?

ACTIVITY 3

Click the **link** under the video to do this **Activity** and share your views about **Sample ELT Activities 5, 6 and 7**

1. How would you **describe / evaluate** them as regards the integration of **culture** in them?
2. How would you **improve** them by integrating a **small-culture ELF-aware** perspective in a way that is relevant to **your own context**?

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 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**?

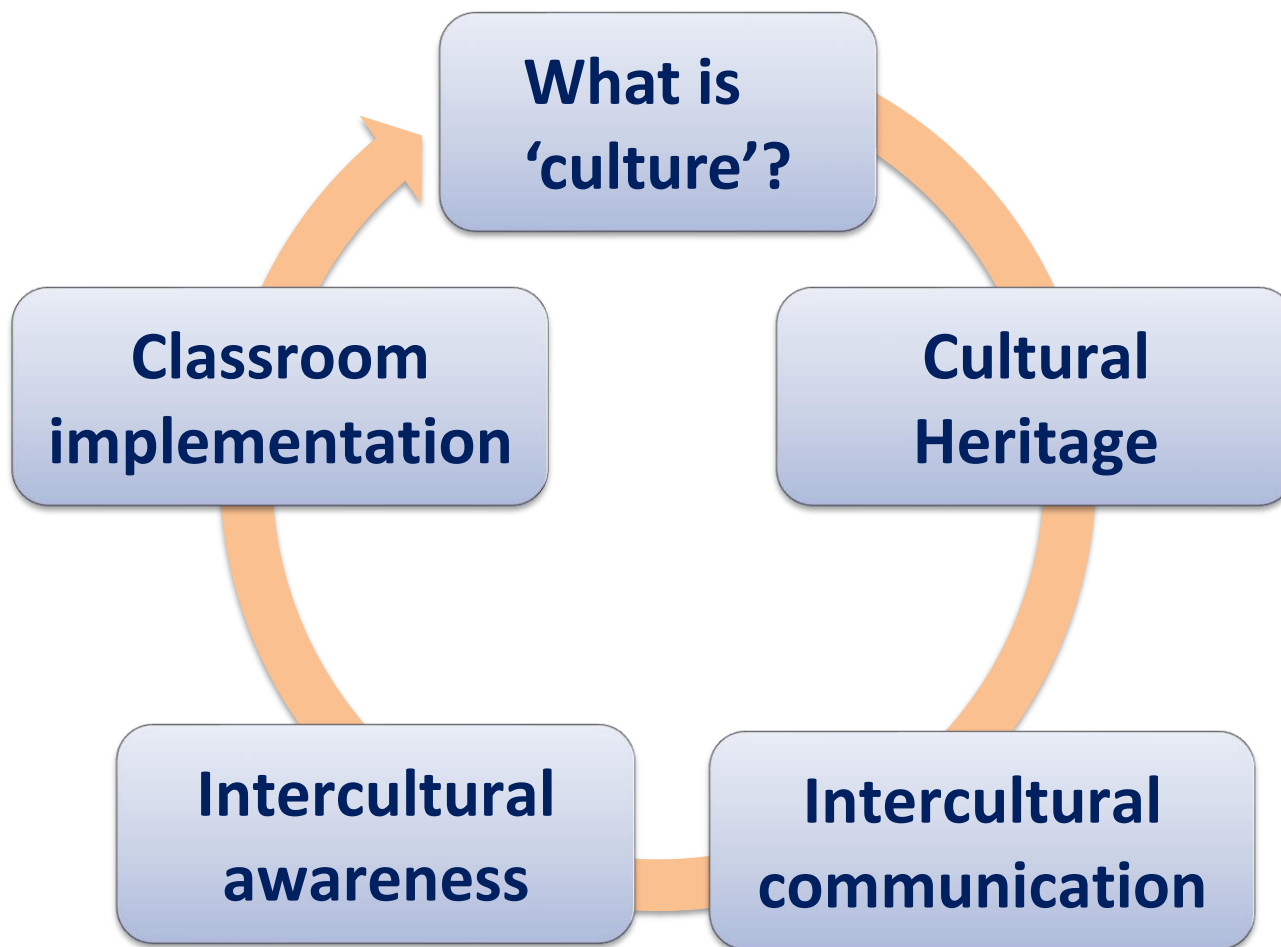


ACTIVITY 4

Click the **link** under the video to do this **Activity** and share your views at the **Forum** of this section

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? Discuss an **ELT activity** as an **example**. How would you **improve** or **enrich** it?

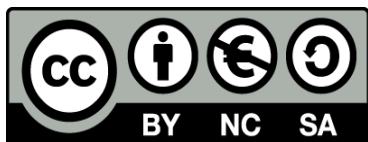
What we have discussed about large and small cultures



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