

7 Culture

Activities

Understanding the text: text organization 1 a You are going to read a text on cultural differences and adapting to a new culture. What problems do you think the following might cause?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 personal goals and group goals | 3 personal space |
| 2 perception of time | 4 language |

b Read the Unit 7 text and compare your ideas with those in the text.

2 Read the Unit 7 text again and answer these questions.

- 1 What things are important to someone from a collectivist culture?
- 2 Are all Americans individualistic? Explain your answer.
- 3 Who is more likely to be concerned about punctuality – someone from Northern Europe or someone from the Mediterranean?
- 4 What do people need to do regarding time when working in another culture?
- 5 How close do Northern European and American people stand to someone when talking to them?
- 6 Why does the author consider Japanese such a difficult language to learn?
- 7 For native English speakers, what are the easiest languages to learn?

Language focus 1: connected ideas 3 a Look at the Unit 7 text again and decide which of these structures it mainly follows.

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| a related ideas and examples | d cause/effect |
| b sequence | e problem/solution |
| c comparison/contrast | |

b Underline language in the text that helps you to identify this.

c What information is linked to the language you identified?

Example: 'Time' paragraph 2: 'In contrast' – links monochronic and polychronic time differences

Language focus 2: pronoun referents 4 Look at this extract from the Unit 7 text. What do the words in bold refer to?

For example, as the deadline for the completion of the 2004 Olympic facilities in Athens approached, monochronic Americans fretted about the Greeks moving too slowly and missing the August deadline. But Brett Heyl, a US kayaker who trained in Greece and became familiar with the local work habits, was not worried.

'You'll never see **them** working hard, but things seem to get done,' Heyl says. 'Don't ask me how.' In April, Heyl took note of a seemingly idle crew of road workers, near the Athens airport.

'You come back in a month, and you're driving on a new highway,' Heyl says 'It's just astounding how quickly **they** can get things done. When I was here in April, I saw a **city** that could not possibly be ready for the Olympics. Now I see **one** that will be ready on Friday.'

Sure enough, the Greeks pulled it off to rave reviews.

- 5 In this text, the language is very repetitive. Use synonyms or pronoun referents to make the text more varied.

The idea of cultural difference and cultural adaptation is a much-studied area and field. The extent of cultural difference that exists varies depending on the countries being compared. Furthermore, it is important to remember that cultural differences do not only exist between countries; cultural differences exist within the same country. It would be naïve to believe that numerous cultural differences exist in Europe but that a country the size of Russia has just one culture.

Critical thinking: Bias, expertise and neutrality

- 6 The extract in Exercise 4 is used to show the difference between polychronic and monochronic time. In what way does this method of support have weaknesses? Think about the following:
- bias
 - expertise
 - neutrality
- 7 a Why might bias and neutrality be a concern when discussing cultural differences? In particular, think about how different cultures may be treated in the following.
- newspapers
 - magazines
 - television
- b Do particular prejudices towards another country or culture exist in your country's media?
- 8 Look at this extract from the Unit 7 text and underline the verb that reports Hall's idea. Was Hall arguing a point of view or providing a definition?

Hall referred to time as a silent language of culture. He distinguished between monochronic and polychronic time.

- 9 Look at these ideas from the Unit 7 text (a–b) and the verbs in brackets that follow them, then answer the questions below (1–3).
- a People need to understand another culture before going to it. (*disputes/acknowledges*)
- b No one culture is superior to another. (*states/asserts*)
- 1 Which verb best demonstrates the author's view on each of these topics?
 - 2 Which verb would change the author's point of view?
 - 3 Which one would weaken the author's stance?