

7 Culture

Activities

Essay structure and organization: structuring paragraphs

1 Read this paragraph and answer the questions below.

Interpersonal space

People in a number of cultures prefer to stand close when conversing. Many Arabs, Asians and Pacific Islanders fall into this group. An interpersonal distance of only six inches is very disturbing to a Northern European or an American, who is accustomed to conversing at arm's length. Cross-cultural gatherings in the Middle East often involve an awkward dance as Arab hosts strive to get closer, while their American and European guests shuffle backwards around the room to maintain what they consider a proper social distance.

- 1 What is the main topic of the paragraph?
- 2 A topic sentence is not used here. How does the author indicate the main topic?
- 3 What examples or ideas are used to support this main idea?
- 4 Read the section in the Unit 7 text headed *Time* and find the author's conclusion. Try to write a similar suitable logical conclusion for the paragraph above.

2 The section titles in the Unit 7 text could easily be expanded to form full topic sentences.

Example: Interpersonal space → *The distance considered normal for interpersonal space varies, depending on culture.*

- a Read the text and find the section titles in bold.
 - b Read the ideas in the paragraphs that follow the section titles and decide how you could expand the title into a topic sentence in each case.
- 3 a Write a paragraph defining *individualism* using these guidelines.**
- Make sure there is a clear topic sentence.
 - Use ideas from the text to help you, but try to think of your own original examples.
 - Have a clear function in your final sentence, e.g. summarize, lead into the next paragraph, draw a logical conclusion.
- b Do the same again, but this time on the topic of *polychronic time*.**
- c If possible, exchange your paragraphs with another student and check the following.**
- Is there a clear topic sentence?
 - Has the topic been clearly explained and supported?
 - What is the function of the concluding sentence? Summarizing the main ideas? Leading into the next paragraph? Giving the reader something to think about? Or a combination of these?

Language focus: using synonyms and pronoun referents

4 What does the underlined word refer to in each of these sentences?

- 1 Polychronic cultures believe time is flexible; they do not rigidly follow the clock as monochronic cultures do.
- 2 An award ceremony that recognizes personal achievement is unlikely to be a comfortable environment for someone from a collectivist culture, as it would not be normal to separate the individual from the group in their culture.
- 3 Japanese is a situational language; it varies depending on the relationship between the speakers or the topic being spoken about.

5 Read the extract below and replace each of the words in bold with a synonym from the box to add greater variation to the text.

collisions feel individuals perception

People from polychronic cultures have a different view of time to the **view**¹ held by **people**² from monochronic cultures. They believe that time is flexible, whereas people from monochronic cultures **believe**³ time is like money. Such variations in methods of working can cause clashes between cultures, yet these **clashes**⁴ could easily be avoided if the parties involved adapted their beliefs about time.

Extension Write an essay answering this question. You can use information from the Unit 7 text, as well as any of the texts in Unit 7 of the Student's Book. Focus on paragraph structure and the linking of ideas.

There are no cultural rights or wrongs, just cultural differences. Discuss.