

# DELTA Teaching Tip

## Idiomatic Language

### Setting up

- Ask students to discuss this question with a partner.  
“Why do people move to another country to live?”
- Elicit students’ ideas.
- As a class, discuss some of the effects of culture shock. If suggestions are mainly negative, ask students to think of any positive effects.

### Reading

Now ask the students to read the following article:

#### ***Could culture shock be beneficial?***

Travelling abroad can cause what is often called “culture shock”. It is especially acute for people who have very fixed routines at home. Most of us want to travel and experience different ways of life, but are deterred because we fear being outside of our comfort zone. People have described their feelings of culture shock in different ways. Some feel overanxious when they encounter situations which are very different from their own culture. They feel like a fish out of water because, for the first time in their lives, they may have to think on their feet rather than doing everything automatically. These feelings are also the result of being away from home, family and friends. So, a key feature of culture shock is homesickness, especially when travellers first arrive in an unfamiliar environment. While it is true that many people regard culture shock as frightening or negative at first, once their initial feelings of shock have been overcome, they can find new experiences, sights, sounds and customs exhilarating and stimulating. In retrospect, many people even say that feeling culture shock has taught them things about themselves and given them new insights into their own way of life.

Now elicit students’ answers:

*Culture shock jolts people out of their comfort zone.*

*Teaches people to think on their feet.*

*Teaches people things about themselves.*

## ***Discussion***

Ask students to discuss in pairs whether the article persuades them that culture shock can be a good thing.

Ask your students to look at the underlined idiom: a fish out of water. Ask them if they can work out what it means.

## ***Exercise***

Now show them the list below and ask them to find the meanings and put them in context in sentences.

- ❖ *cut corners*
- ❖ *a pain in the neck*
- ❖ *up in arms*
- ❖ *spill the beans*
- ❖ *sit on the fence*
- ❖ *break the ice*
- ❖ *draw the line (at)*
- ❖ *twist someone's arm*
- ❖ *see eye to eye*

## ***Discuss with colleagues***

Many teachers enjoy teaching idioms because most of them involve colourful and interesting uses of language, but is it really worth spending time in this way when there are so many other more important aspects of language for students to learn?

Do your students like learning idioms? How easy do they find it to actually use the idioms they have learnt?