

Seminar 4 – Cultural Differences Part 2

SEMINAR DISCUSSIONS, QUESTION FORMS, OPINIONS

1 Which of the following learning situations are most effective for you?

- 1 being part of a large group and listening to a lecturer or teacher talking
- 2 being part of a smaller group and actively participating in the class
- 3 being in a one-to-one situation and discussing your work with your teacher

2 Which three of the following factors are most important for you in selecting a university for undergraduate or postgraduate study?

- 1 the location of the university
- 2 course fees and living costs
- 3 the influence of your parents
- 4 the reputation of the university
- 5 the age of the university
- 6 class sizes
- 7 facilities (technology, sports, etc.)
- 8 language of instruction
- 9 language support
- 10 the number of international students

3 Work in pairs and discuss your selections in 1 and 2, with reasons. Explain why you applied to the university you are attending or plan to attend. Include any other factors you think are important.

DISCUSSIONS AND DEBATES

Task 1 Evaluate your ability to take part in group discussions in English. Tick the appropriate column for each statement and think of examples.

Always Usually Sometimes Never

- 1 I can speak confidently in a group discussion.
- 2 I can think of something interesting to say.
- 3 I can find the right language to express my ideas.
- 4 I can use grammar accurately.
- 5 I prepare for a discussion by reading and thinking about ideas.
- 6 I speak clearly and people understand me.
- 7 I can respond intelligently to other people's ideas.

De Chazal, E. & McCarter, S.; Oxford EAP: A course in English for Academic Purposes, OUP, p. 23.

Task 2 Compare your answers and examples. Discuss how you can improve on your strengths and address your weaknesses.

DISCUSSION

Look at your notes from last week on the summary of a student who spent a year on Erasmus in the country where you would also like to go. Compare your expectations and their experience and discuss with a partner.

LISTENING

Task 3 Listen to Extract 1 from a group discussion between three students about the education systems in their countries and answer the questions.

- 1 Where are the students from?
- 2 What is the main point each student makes about their education system?

The speakers ask eight questions during the discussion, two of which are given below.

Task 4 Listen again and make a note of the other six questions.

- 1 So, you have two education systems?
- 2 So, these private schools – how are they different?
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

QUESTION FORMS (1) Information questions

• **To ask OPEN QUESTIONS (where any answer is possible), use the question words *what, where, why, when, who, which, how*. These are often followed by an auxiliary verb like *do, does, is, are* or some modal verbs like *can*.**

What are the main universities in your country?

How does the education system work?

• **To ask CLOSED QUESTIONS (where the answer is usually *yes* or *no*), use *do, does, is, are*.**

Do you have to pay to go to private schools? Is it expensive?

• **Introduce a question on a NEW TOPIC with *What about... ?***

What about the classes?

• **STATEMENTS (without question words) can sometimes be used as questions in informal spoken language, especially if you expect a positive answer.**

You have to pay to go to private schools?

Task 5 Complete the questions with *do, does, is, or are*.

Example: *What does 'independence' mean?*

- 1 Which _____ the best university in your country?
- 2 _____ you prefer studying individually or in groups?
- 3 Why _____ you planning to study in English?
- 4 How _____ the university application system work?

Task 6 Complete questions A-F with the following words: who, what, where, when, why, how, which.

- A _____ is responsible for student welfare?
 B _____ university system do you think is better, state-owned or private?
 C _____ do you hope to learn this academic year?
 D _____ do lectures normally start, and long are they?
 E _____ do you hope to work after you graduate?
 F _____ is reading academic texts so difficult?

CRITICAL THINKING – responding to an opinion

Task 7 Do you agree with the statement '*Education should be a priority for government spending, even more than health, transport, and defence.*' Note down two points to support your view.

Example: *Education and health are equally important because (1) you need to educate people to work as doctors and nurses, and (2) everyone needs to have access to healthcare when they are sick.*

LISTENING

Task 8 Listen to Extract 2 from the above discussion about education. The speakers are talking about the statement in Task 7.

- 1 Do the speakers agree or disagree with the statement?
- 2 Did any of the speakers make the same point that you made?

EXPRESSING AND EXCHANGING OPINIONS

There are many ways to exchange opinions. Look at the examples for six key functions.

1 Asking for opinions

Do you agree?

What do you think? What about you? Yes, but what about ...?

2 Giving your opinion

My view is (that) ..., I would say (that) ...

I think that... For me, ...

3 Recognizing an opinion

OK, I understand (that),..

I see...

4 Agreeing

I think that's right (and)... Yes, absolutely. I see what you mean. I agree (with /that) ...

5 Disagreeing

No, I don't really agree. I think that's right, but ...

Yes, but...

I don't agree with that (at all (!) / overall / generally).

6 Clarifying your statement

I mean...

What I meant to say is.

I wouldn't say that.

REPORTING VERBS

In an academic context, the present tense is used to report what someone said or wrote, or what they believe. Reporting opinions and ideas usually follows a simple sentence structure.

Subject	Verb	Object
<i>I</i>	<i>would say</i>	<i>(that) university education should be subsidized.</i>
<i>Some people</i>	<i>think</i>	<i>(that) education should be the main priority.</i>
<i>The government</i>	<i>believes</i>	<i>that universities should focus on science, technology, engineering, and medicine.</i>
<i>McKinsky (2012)</i>	<i>argues</i>	<i>that access to education should be universal.</i>
<i>Shakespeare</i>	<i>seems to suggest</i>	<i>that people are often not in control of their actions.</i>

There are many other reporting verbs, including: *state, suggest, propose, consider*. Check in your dictionary to see how each verb is used.

REPORTING VERBS IN A SUMMARY OF A DISCUSSION

Read the summary below of the discussion you listened to in Task 5.

What tenses are used in the summary?

The discussion focused on education as a priority for government spending. Some of the participants think that education is the most important priority for governments. Other people believe that things like health and transport are equally important. One view is that the government should cut university courses such as media studies and history, because these do not help the economy. The main reasons for not cutting education are that you need education to produce important professionals such as doctors, teachers, and engineers. One participant argues that if the government cut education there would be problems in the future. Overall, there was no final agreement.

De Chazal, E. & McCarter, S.; Oxford EAP: A course in English for Academic Purposes, OUP, pp. 8-11.

What verbs are used to report the discussion?

Task 9 Underline any words / phrases in the summary that you could use to write a summary of your own discussion.

WRITING A SUMMARY

Study the link on summary writing <http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/ViewObject.aspx?ID=TRG2603>

Task 10 HOMEWORK: Based on what you have learnt, write a summary of the article below for the next session.

Ways of Investigating Stereotypes

1 There are experimental ways of investigating stereotypes. One of the most obvious is to ask a group of people what traits characterize the Germans, the Italians, the Americans and so forth. Results of such studies on the whole agree fairly well with what might have been expected; there is considerable agreement between different people in any one nation regarding the most characteristic traits of other

nations. There is even agreement between different nations; for instance, the Americans and English agree with respect to other groups, and even, though less markedly, themselves. The Germans, for instance, are regarded as scientifically minded and industrious by English and Americans alike; they are also considered solid, intelligent, mathematical, extremely nationalistic, efficient and musical by the Americans, and arrogant, aggressive and over-nationalistic by the English. Italians are regarded as artistic, impulsive, passionate, quick-tempered, musical, religious, talkative, revengeful, lazy, unreliable and dirty by both. Negroes fare even worse. They are considered to be superstitious, lazy, happy-go-lucky, ignorant, ostentatious, musical, slovenly, unreliable, dirty and religious by both Americans and English.

2 The Irish do rather better. While they too are religious and happy-go-lucky, they are also supposed to be quick-tempered, witty, industrious, nationalistic, quarrelsome, aggressive and pugnacious. Jews are believed to be shrewd, mercenary, industrious, intelligent, loyal to family, grasping, ambitious, sly and persistent. They are also credited with being very religious.

3 The Chinese, as one would have expected, are looked upon with more favour by the English, who consider them industrious, courteous, meditative, intelligent and loyal to their families, than by the Americans, who consider them superstitious, sly, conservative, ignorant and deceitful. The Japanese stereotype seems to have altered considerably as a result of the war. Where pre-war they were considered intelligent, progressive, industrious, shrewd and meditative, they are now considered cruel, fanatic, treacherous, though still imitative and industrious. Perhaps a few more years will serve to restore them to their previous status. Turks do rather badly; apparently they are cruel, treacherous, sensual, dirty, deceitful, sly, quarrelsome, revengeful and superstitious. They make up for this by being very religious. The French, needless to say, are sophisticated, talkative, artistic, passionate and witty, whereas the Russians are industrious, tough, suspicious, brave and progressive. The English consider themselves sportsmanlike, reserved, tradition-loving, conventional and intelligent; astonishingly enough, Americans agree, adding, however, that the English are also sophisticated, courteous, honest, industrious, extremely nationalistic, and, I hardly dare put this down, humourless!

4 The Americans consider themselves industrious, intelligent, materialistic, ambitious, progressive, pleasure-loving, alert, efficient, straightforward, practical and sportsmanlike; the English agree that Americans are materialistic and pleasure-loving, but also consider them generous, talkative and, most widely used adjective of all, boastful.

5 The close agreement found in English and American groups is probably due to the fact that these stereotypes derive from books, films and other cultural media shared by both groups. It is unlikely that a comparison between stereotypes held by Spaniards, Turks or Russians would show much agreement with those given here. To judge by German writings, it appears that, to the Germans, the average Englishman is 'a clever and unscrupulous hypocrite; a man who, with superhuman ingenuity and foresight, is able in some miraculous manner to be always on the winning side; a person whose incompetence in business and salesmanship is balanced by an uncanny and unfair mastery of the diplomatic wiles; a cold-blooded, prescient, ruthless opportunist; a calculating and conceited egoist. There is little resemblance between this picture of the Englishman, quoted from an account by Harold Nicolson, and another one given by him. The French portrait of the Englishman is a picture of an inelegant, stupid, arrogant and inarticulate person with an extremely red face. The French seem to mind our national complexion more than other things. They attribute it to over-consumption of ill-cooked meat. They are apt, for this reason, to regard us as barbarians and gross. Only at one point does the French picture coincide with the German picture. The French share with the Germans the conviction of our hypocrisy.