

Section 4

You'll hear a lecture about some useful information when you go to study overseas.

First, you have some time to look at questions 31 to 40.

Now listen carefully and answer questions 31 to 40.

Hello everybody and thank you for coming. I know that you're all very busy at this time. But I hope that by coming to this talk, you'll at least get some useful information for when you go to study overseas. Well today, I want to talk about the effects of cultural background on learning style. That is how a learners culture might impact on his or her approach to study. I want to begin by looking at some basic cultural values and how these affect teaching and learning. I'll then go on to present evidence which shows that approaches to learning which are acceptable in one culture may not be acceptable in another. If you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them at the end of the talk. Now, I want to start by introducing the two concepts. They're actually contrasting concepts. These are conserving and extending cultures. What do these terms mean? Experts have categorized cultures as being either basically conserving or extending in their attitude to the transmission of knowledge. Let me give you an example to try to make this clear. A good example of a conserving cultural attitude is demonstrated by most Arabic cultures. Here, there is the requirement to learn the holy book, the Quran, by heart. This demands a huge effort of memorization as you can imagine. The way the Quran is learnt impacts on the way other subjects are learnt, generally. It might also have an effect on learners' perception of what constitutes an acceptable teaching style. By this, I mean that the unquestioning acceptance of the messages in the Quran and the concentration and repetition

necessary to memorize those messages are transferred to the learning of school subjects and to the expectations students have on teachers. That's Arab culture.

Let's turn now to Chinese culture. There is evidence to suggest that Chinese culture is conserving in nature. For example, keeping quiet in the classroom, listening to the teacher, not talking to other students, not interacting. These tend to characterize the Chinese classroom. As a result Chinese learners do not develop argumentation skills as quickly as their American counterparts. American students tend to be actively encouraged to question their teachers, their materials and to interact with other classmates. However, I have to say, in the interests of balance, that Chinese students tend to work with greater concentration. But this is not the point, I'm trying to make. The point is that some cultures display a conserving attitude to teaching and learning, while others display a more extending attitude to learning.

Now the memorization and non-interactive styles of learning encouraged, for example, in Arab and Chinese cultures, may disadvantage learners, at least initially, when they progress from secondary school to university. Why is this? Well, it's because universities worldwide are increasingly adopting, with a few local variations, the western requirement for students to show argumentation skills in written assignments and effective interpersonal skills in tutorials and seminars. In other words, the world model for university teaching and learning is now the western model, the interactive model if you like. Now, of course students from conserving backgrounds who go on to study in an extending culture will obviously need to adapt to a different learning style to accommodate to the new conditions. This unsurprisingly can often prove to be a painful process.

However, such learners are able to make the transition quite successfully with guidance from academic staff and a lot of determination from their own part to unlearn or dismantle the study related approaches and strategies acquired in their own cultures. Let me give you some examples from real life, to try to illuminate this issue. I've put these on slides. Now, let's look at the comments made by three Asian students who found the western university system of teaching and learning very different from their previous experience. If you just look at the screen, I've put these comments on slides as I said. This is what a Chinese undergraduate from Shanghai, studying at an Australian University had to say. Generally, many of us are trained in a system where you don't contribute much to classroom discussions. Some students even hesitate to ask questions from lecturers. Here's what a master's student from Japan studying at an English university in London had to say. In Japanese culture and education, the emphasis on training seems to be on intuition rather than logical construction of arguments. This makes it much harder to study at my British university. Finally, let's take a look at the comments by an Indian research student studying at an American university. One problem was getting used to the American system, where a student is expected to find out for herself or himself, the requirements and facilities of the university. This contrasts with the system at home, whereby a person, generally the lecturer or supervisor is responsible for the needs of the student. To sum up then, there is certainly evidence to show that the cultural values of a society affect the way that society's educational institutions function and how the teaching in them is carried out. While ensuring the continuation of cultural identity and solidarity, the existence of culturally determined patterns of teaching and learning means that individual learning style, the way a learner would prefer to learn is largely ignored in classrooms around the world. Well, that's all I want to say for the moment. I hope you'll find what I've said interesting and useful when you go overseas to study. Are there any questions?

That is the end of section four. You now have half a minute to check your answers.

This is the end of the listening test. The IELTS test. You now have 10 minutes to transfer your answers to the listening answer sheet.

Section 4

Question 31-40

Q. 31 and 32

Complete the following summary of the lecturer's introduction by using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** for each gap.

The lecturer says that he will first look at how some cultural values influence 31 _____ and that then he will 32 _____ demonstrating that approaches to learning in one culture may not be considered suitable in others.

Q. 33 and 36

Complete the notes on the way students learn in different cultures.

Use only **ONE WORD** for each gap.

33 _____	Arab culture	34 _____ of the Koran influences how other subjects are learnt.
	Chinese culture	Little or no talking or 35 _____ with other students or teachers.
Extending	American culture	Focus on developing 36 _____ skills through questioning, for example.

Q. 37-40

Complete the notes on three Asian students and their experiences.

Use **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** for each gap.

Country of origin	Level of study	Experience of own education system
China	37 _____	Students contribute little to discussions.
		Students 38 _____ to ask lecturers questions.
Japan	Master's	Less focus on constructing 39 _____
India	research	40 _____ is responsible for providing information about facilities and requirements