CULTURAL KNOW-HOW

1. Idioms

Study the following sentences and match each underlined idiom to its correct definition below.

1. At the end of the meal, we decided to **go Dutch**.	a. change your position in order to make it easier to reach an agreement
2. If you want to win the argument, you should **stick to your guns**.	b. do something for someone because they have done something for you
3. Thank you for all your help. I hope someday we can **return the compliment**.	c. do what other people are doing
4. The politician managed to **save face** by escaping blame for the mistake.	d. keep your position even if people try to criticize you
5. Everyone at the party was wearing special costumes, and we had to **follow suit**.	e. misunderstood
6. During the negotiation, they decided to **give ground** in order to reach an agreement.	f. pay 50% of the bill each
7. We were **wined and dined** all over the city.	g. protect your reputation
8. I was trying to be polite, but he **got the wrong idea**.	h. taken out for expensive meals

2. Cultural etiquette

Decide whether the statements are true or false and then check your answers by reading the article.

1. In Singapore, the word 'no' is considered impolite.	T	F
2. In Greece, you should nod your head upwards to say 'yes'.	T	F
3. In Italy, it is a bad idea to turn up late for a meeting.	T	F
4. In the Netherlands, it is a bad idea to turn up late for a meeting.	T	F
5. In Japan, the business card is very important and should be treated with respect.	T	F
6. In Russia, you should not argue during business deals.	T	F
7. In Turkey, you should not insist on sharing the restaurant bill with your host.	T	F
8. In Mexico, you should be careful about proposing dinner arrangements with your client.	T	F

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Cultural know-how

Learning about a country's culture can help you secure good working relations on your travels.

1. Do you arrive 10 minutes early for an important business meeting in Rio or 10 minutes late in Amsterdam? In Moscow, is it a good idea to give ground at an early stage of the negotiations? And in Istanbul, should you offer to go Dutch with the host on the restaurant bill?

2. Mastering the local etiquette can be more valuable than learning the language, because so much of the world does business in English. Or a form of English. "Beware that an English word or phrase doesn't always mean the same thing abroad," warns Michael Bennett, who sells security systems in South East Asia. "In Japan and Singapore, people feel that 'no' is an impolite word, and will sometimes say 'yes' to avoid causing offence. What they really mean is 'I understand what you're saying', not 'I agree'. I'm told that in Indonesia there are 12 words for 'yes' that mean precisely the opposite."

3. Even the movement of your head can be open to misinterpretation. Publisher Robin Touquet has had difficulties in Athens: "The Greeks traditionally use an upward nod of the head to say 'no', and a tilt of the head from side to side to mean 'yes'. I was ready for that, but didn't realise the younger generation have learnt to do it our way. Confusion all round. If in doubt, keep still."

4. The issue of punctuality is almost as complicated. Oil company executive Malcolm Thorburn deliberately turns up a few minutes late for meetings in Brazil "because Brazilians believe latecomers are more likely to be commercially successful than people who arrive early. They're impressed by people who are relaxed enough not to worry about the clock. The Italians take a similar attitude. They believe that arriving late shows who is the boss." However, don't risk that in the Netherlands. "The Dutch frown upon lateness," warns film finance agent James Hindle: "They believe that people who can't use their time wisely cannot be trusted."

Adapted from The Independent, 18 June 2007

5. Hindle has also experienced the ceremony of exchanging business cards in Japan. "The business card is seen as representing the individual, so the whole affair has to be treated with respect. You must accept your client's card with both hands, perhaps admiring it, and then place it carefully in your cardholder."

6. The social side of Japanese commerce can also unnerve the western visitor, who might have to go to a karaoke bar and sing. "Many Japanese businessmen like to conclude business by performing their favourite song in a karaoke bar," says management trainer Nicole Wehden. "You're expected to follow suit."

7. In Russia, the ritual of the business meeting is more theatrical skill. "I've seen temper tantrums, sudden walkouts, table-thumping and so on, but it's all part of the fun," says Michael Bennett. "And they admire you more if you stick to your guns. Seeking a compromise early is seen as a sign of weakness."

8. In almost every business community around the world, the host pays for the meal. Malcolm Thorburn was wined and dined in Istanbul, and all went well until he insisted on paying his share: "It caused real embarrassment, " he recalls. "In Turkey, the idea of sharing a bill is quite alien. The best policy is to thank your host and return the compliment at the first opportunity."

9. Insurance underwriter Toni Morrison caused suppertime embarrassment in Mexico five years ago. "I was working late with a client, and midway through the evening I felt so hungry I suggested we carry on working at a nearby restaurant. The client thought this was a sign I had a romantic interest in him. When I realised he'd got the wrong idea I started to laugh, which made things even worse. The only way of getting out of it was to enable him to save face, so I accepted all the blame for the misunderstanding."

LIVEWORKSHEETS

3. Find the words

Find a word or phrase in the article which means...

1. offending people (phrase, P2)

2. understood incorrectly (phrase, P3)

3. an upward or downward movement of the head (noun, P3)

4. do not move (phrase, P3)

5. people who arrive late (noun, P4)

6. disapprove of (phrasal verb, P4)

7. make someone feel nervous or uncomfortable (verb, P6)

8. sudden periods of uncontrolled childish anger (plural noun, P7)

LIVEWORKSHEETS