Cultural differences

1 When you travel abroad, what is one of the first differences you tend to notice? What differences do you notice when you are in a new country for a long time? Talk about any of the items below or choose a new one.

- language
- attitudes to time
- gestures and body language
- food and meals
- clothes
- attitude to management
- social behaviour
- relationships between colleagues and clients

2 01 Watch four people talking about differences they have noticed in countries they have lived and worked in. Make notes about their answers in the table.

	Country	Differences	Changes over time
Speaker 1			
Speaker 2			
Speaker 3			
Speaker 4			

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Culture in business

4 You are going to watch an interview with Michael Dickmann, an expert in cultural differences in business. Before you watch, match words and phrases 1–8 to definitions a–h.

1 mediocre ___
2 ethics and values ___
3 disciplined ___
4 power distance ___
5 bribes ___
6 behaviour ___
7 norms ___
8 save face ___

a your actions in particular situations
b your beliefs about what is right or wrong which affect your behaviour
c average, not very good
d behaving in a very controlled way
e money you offer in a dishonest way to make someone do something for you
f the accepted way of doing things in a society or culture
g an expression meaning to avoid humiliation or not being told you are wrong in front of other people
h a term to refer to the relationship between people in power and the people who take orders, e.g. between management and workers

5 02 Watch the interview with Michael Dickmann. He talks about four areas of cultural difference in business. As you watch, number the areas A–D in the correct order 1–4.

A The hamburger approach ___
B Language in business ___
C Power distance ___
D Ethics ___

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Cultural awareness



6 03 Watch Part 1 of the video again and answer questions 1–3.

1 What might a British person mean if they say, 'It's not too bad'?
2 What might a German person think it means?
3 A Nigerian company might describe giving money to get something as Public Relations. What might a western company call it?

7 Discuss these questions as a class for your country or countries.

1 If you heard someone say 'It's not too bad', what would you think it means?
2 In your country, is giving money to win a business deal considered good public relations or is it a bribe? Is it acceptable or is it wrong?



8 04 Watch Part 2 of the video again and complete sentences 1–4. Use words you hear in the video.

1 How polite you are and how _____ you are can affect what people think about you.
2 Some people might think that if you are not punctual then you are not _____.
3 If you come from a _____ power distance culture, then you won't disagree with your boss.
4 If you come from a _____ power distance culture like Denmark and you work in a country like Japan, or Nigeria and you speak up against your boss, that is a big problem.

9 Underline the correct words in *italics* to make the sentences true for your company. Then, compare your choices with the rest of the class and give reasons for your answers.

1 In my company, *it's OK / it isn't OK* to disagree with the views of your boss.
2 Overall, I think I come from a country with *high / low* power distance.



10 05 Watch Part 3 of the video again and answer questions 1–4.

1 In what way is performance management similar to a hamburger bun?
2 If you make a mistake in the USA, how will your manager comment on your work?
3 Why does the Japanese manager miss out the 'meat'?
4 What does Michael Dickmann suggest the approach of the German manager is?

11 If you made a mistake in your company, how would your manager discuss this with you? What kind of 'hamburger approach' would he or she take?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Identifying culture in the workplace

12 Work in groups. Read about three different business situations and discuss what problem is happening in each situation and why.

1 An Italian business person and a Japanese business person are making small talk with each other. Afterwards, the Italian comments that, 'She seemed nice but she never really said anything'. The Japanese says, 'She was very friendly, but she never gave me a chance to speak.'



2 A Belgian manager is working in Thailand. He is unhappy because his Thai assistant is often late for work (between 30 minutes to an hour sometimes). One day he tells her off in front of other employees. She resigns soon after.



3 An American business person is in a meeting with a group of German colleagues. The discussion is very heated and the American feels uncomfortable. Afterwards, he's surprised that everyone decides to go and have a friendly drink together before they go home.



LIVEWORKSHEETS