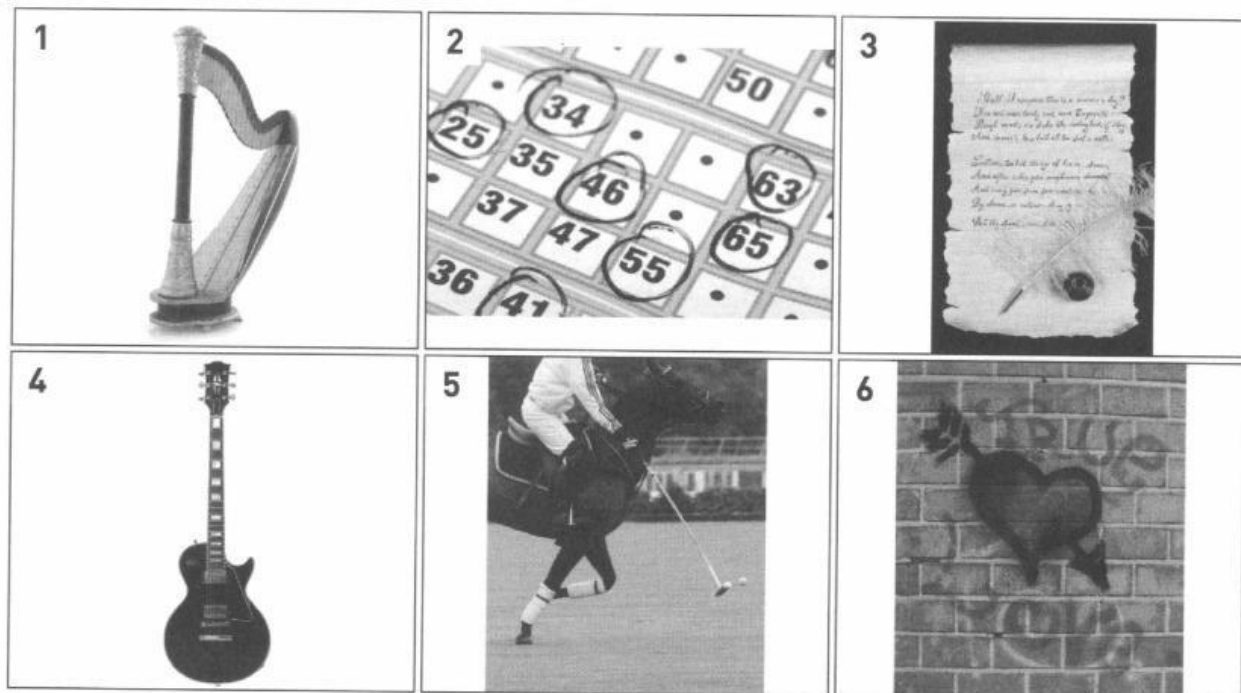


11 Cultural differences

Exam focus: Matching features

Aims: Identifying facts | Identifying opinions | Working with paraphrases
Skimming and scanning | Recognising connections between facts

Part 1: Vocabulary



1 Match the pictures 1–6 above with the words a–f.

- | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| a a game of bingo ____ | c a harp ____ | e graffiti ____ |
| b a game of polo ____ | d an electric guitar ____ | f poetry ____ |

2 A culture is a particular society or civilisation, especially considered in relation to its beliefs, way of life, or art. The word 'culture' also refers to activities such as the arts and philosophy, which are considered to be important for the development of civilisation and of people's minds. 'Low culture' refers to anything which appeals to most people, whereas 'high culture' refers to things which are highly valued in a society, especially by educated people.

Draw a table like the one on page 95 and put the words below into the group with which they are usually associated.

baked beans ballet basketball bestsellers bingo caviar champagne classical music
coin-collecting electric guitars gossip magazines graffiti horse-riding literary festivals
novels opera plays by Shakespeare poetry polo reality television rock concerts
romantic fiction slapstick humour soap operas take-away meals violins

- 3 Underline at least fifteen words or phrases related to the topic of cultural activities in the text below. Use your dictionary if necessary.

How affordable is high culture? One great myth of our time is that tickets for opera, theatre, ballet and orchestral concerts are too expensive, especially for the young. This is infuriating as, in Britain, at least, it's nonsense. The cheap tickets to hear London's orchestras range from £7 to £9 – same as a cinema ticket, and lower than at many pop and comedy venues. For comparison, when the Los Angeles Philharmonic perform with top soloists and conductors the cheapest seat is £30; and at the Berlin Philharmonic it's an expensive £46.

Finding cheap tickets to the opera and ballet isn't so easy. True, British companies don't charge the stratospheric prices found on the Continent (£2,000 for a good seat at the premiere of La Scala's *Carmen* last December), but the tickets are still pretty steep. Plump fees paid to star performers partly account for that. Luckily, however, one spectacular technological innovation has stunningly transformed the scene. It's live (or slightly delayed) cinema transmissions. The New York Metropolitan Opera now beams its shows to 800 cinemas round the world, and British companies aren't far behind. Cinematic opera is excellent value. For the cost of a good bottle of wine (£10 or £15 for the Royal Opera House's shows; £25 for the Met) you can sit in your local movie-house and see a high-definition relay of what's occurring on the world's grandest stages. No, it's not the same as being there. But in some ways it's better. The sound is impeccable. The close-ups, particularly of dancers, are enthralling. And you can react to the show as part of a live audience, rather than sitting on your own at home.

To me, this mountain of evidence, together with free museum admissions, indicates that the arts world should stop worrying that its audiences are still mostly middle-class. Anyone who can afford to visit a pub can also afford to see top-quality drama, music and dance. The real battle now should be ensuring that schoolchildren are given enough tastes of high culture to make them want to buy all those cheap tickets when they grow up.

- 4 Match words from the text in Exercise 3 above with their definitions a–k.

- | | | | |
|---|-------|---|-------|
| a a belief or explanation that many people believe but which is actually untrue | _____ | f big, fat | _____ |
| b places where an event or activity will happen | _____ | g in an extremely impressive or attractive way | _____ |
| c a person who stands in front of an orchestra or choir and directs its performance | _____ | h to send (radio signals or television pictures) somewhere by means of electronic equipment | _____ |
| d very high indeed | _____ | i a signal or broadcast | _____ |
| e expensive | _____ | j perfect, with no faults | _____ |
| | | k fascinating | _____ |

Exam tip: It is easy to forget the meaning of new words. Try to work with new words you come across: look at the different related meanings, look up the different word forms and use them in a sentence about yourself. The more you do with a word when you first come across it, the more likely you are to remember its meaning later.

- 5** Check your answers to Exercise 4 before you do this exercise. Think of your own examples for 1–6.
- 1 a myth that you believed for a long time
 - 2 a venue that you have been to
 - 3 someone you know who was a plump baby
 - 4 someone who is stunningly beautiful
 - 5 someone who has impeccable taste in clothes
 - 6 a performance that you found enthralling
- 6** The words in *italics* in the sentences 1–4 are different forms of words from Exercise 3, with different but related meanings. Work out their meaning by studying their context in the sentences.
- 1 The rocket has passed the *stratosphere* and has entered outer space.
 - 2 Let me *plump* your pillows so that you are more comfortable.
 - 3 After her first performance, she *beamed* with pleasure.
 - 4 We were *stunned* when we heard the tragic news.
- 7** Which answers from the text in Exercise 4 above can also have the meanings 1–4?
- 1 a substance that heat or electricity can pass through or along
 - 2 a race between two or more teams, for example teams of runners or swimmers. Each member of the team runs or swims one section of the race.
 - 3 rising at a very sharp angle and difficult to go up
 - 4 a well-known story which was made up in the past to explain natural events or to justify religious beliefs or social customs
- 8** Write a paragraph about cultural events in your home town or country. You could write about the current situation or what you would like to change. Try to use all the words below. (They are from the text in Exercise 3.)
- affordable cinema museum spectacular stunning theatre tickets venue

Part 2: Practice exercises



Exam information: Feature-matching

In this type of task, you will be asked to match a numbered list of factual statements or opinions to a group of features taken from a text.

This task tests your ability to identify opinions and recognise the connections between facts in a text.

The information contained in the list of statements is NOT in the order you read about it in the text.

1 Underline one fact and one opinion in the text.

Art is more important than almost anything else. But it is also very difficult to do and often difficult to understand. So why should we pay for this high culture for the fun of a few? And, come to that, how should we pay? Answering those questions convincingly is now more urgent than ever. The government has recently announced that it will cut the arts budget, so we need to think about what can be done.

2 Identify some areas that are mentioned in the texts a–d. Text a has been done for you.

a

A study commissioned by the Australian government to tackle obesity recommended this month that children under two should be banned from watching TV and electronic media such as computer games. It also said those aged two to five should watch no more than one hour a day, as exposure to TV at an early age could delay language development, affect concentration, and lead to obesity.

Areas mentioned: *research, Australia, obesity, young children, TV, computer games, children's development*

b

For ten years the official advice to parents from the American Academy of Paediatrics has been that children under two should not see any electronic media. In 2000, a law was passed that requires all television units to have V-chip technology. This allows parents to block certain programmes based on their ratings category. A password prevents children from changing the settings.

Areas mentioned: _____

c

Advertising junk food during young children's programmes was banned in Britain in 2007; this was later extended to all those aimed at under-16s. But health campaigners say children are still seeing the ads during adult shows and have called for a total pre-9 p.m. ban on junk food ads.

Areas mentioned: _____

d

Over the past thirty years the globalisation of the economy has proceeded at a faster pace than ever. Customers, suppliers and employees often come from all over the globe, resulting in an increasingly diverse workforce and business environment. Managers routinely interact with and rate the performance of employees from diverse backgrounds. One country with an increasingly important role is China, which accounts for almost four per cent of world output and is a viable site for cross-cultural research on job performance.

Areas mentioned: _____

3 Skim-reading and scanning are useful techniques in tasks that require you to match features. For each paragraph, do the following:

- Skim-read the paragraph and make a note about the topic(s) of each paragraph.
- Make notes about the information in each paragraph.
- Scan the text to make sure you have identified all the information about the West and about China. If necessary, add to your notes.

You should end up with an outline of the text.

In Western literature, traditionally job performance appraisal systems were related to the completion of tasks specific to one's job. Chinese tradition, on the other hand, is rooted in collectivist philosophies such as the Confucian principles of benevolence, right conduct, loyalty and good manners. More than 2,000 years ago, Confucius described an ideal commonwealth state in which 'a sense of sharing displaces the effects of selfishness and materialism'. President Hu Jintao recently declared the importance of developing an 'advanced socialist culture'.

Given these cultural differences, our study addressed two questions: whether the Chinese concept of counterproductive work behaviour is the same as in the West; and what relative importance Chinese and Western managers give to task performance and other work behaviours when assessing job performance.

There were noticeable similarities between Chinese and Western managers in terms of what they considered to be counterproductive behaviour such as stealing from the organisation, which is frowned on in any work environment, Chinese or Western.

But Chinese managers scored higher than Western managers on the importance placed on task completion and on individualistic aspects such as 'challenging work' and 'opportunity for advancement'. They rated equally with Western managers on aspects such as 'work with people who cooperate'. China has evolved from a centralised and planned economy to a decentralised and market-driven one in 20 years. It is possible that the increasingly competitive environment has forced organisations and managers to pay more attention to the completion of tasks to survive and succeed. It is also possible that Chinese people have generally become more individualistic during industrialisation.

4 In feature-matching tasks, synonyms and paraphrases are used to re-state information in the text. Paraphrase the phrases 1–4, which reflect ideas from the text in Exercise 3.

- 1 our study addressed two questions
- 2 stealing from the organisation is frowned on in any work environment
- 3 they rated equally with Western managers
- 4 organisations and managers need to pay more attention to the completion of tasks

5 Match the statements 1–5 with a–c. Refer your notes from Exercise 3, your paraphrases from Exercise 4, and the text if you need to.

- 1 There are historical documents available about attitudes regarding work culture. _____
- 2 Thefts from one's employer are regarded as unacceptable. _____
- 3 Managers did not give career progression the highest rating. _____
- 4 Team work is considered important. _____
- 5 There have been fundamental changes in the economy. _____

- | | |
|----------|-------------------------|
| a | China |
| b | the West |
| c | both China and the West |

6 Use the strategies you learnt in Exercises 1–5 and match the statements 1–4 with the facts and opinions a–d based on the text below.

- 1 The new theatre did not need more time or money to be built than had been predicted. _____
- 2 The new building does not live up to expectations. _____
- 3 The money to build the new theatre came from three different sources. _____
- 4 Performances are not about perfection but about sharing experiences. _____

- a** an opinion expressed by the writer
- b** an opinion expressed by the company or its representative
- c** a statement of fact by the writer
- d** a statement of fact by the company or its representative

The newly rebuilt Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon is on budget and on time, a message which has been repeated often by all the directors, theatre consultants, project managers and PRs showing people round the new building. But it is also deeply disappointing.

You see, there's more to theatre than the play. Drama starts at the front door, and should unfold every step towards your seat. The lobby, the stairs, the loos: they're all part of it. Shakespeare understood this: Elizabethan theatres were marvellous, fantastical, riotous places. Great theatre designers understood it and some modern companies understand it, and drama is present in whole buildings – loos, lobbies and all. There should be intrigue, seduction and surprise. Great theatre, great theatres, should transport you to another world the second you enter. And by another world, I don't mean something that feels like the local council sports centre.

Today, though, theatres can't just be theatres. They have, the consultants say, to be 'revenue generators', open, friendly, accessible and transparent.

But the Royal Shakespeare Company had a problem: money. They first wanted to demolish the entire building for an 'iconic' replacement by the fashionable Dutch architect Erick van Egeraat. In the end they decided to build a new theatre within the skin of the old: £112.8 million was raised, a third privately, two thirds from the Arts Council and the regional development agency. This seems like a lot of money. However, to rebuild completely a major national – no, world – theatre within the shell of an old one on a very tricky site, it's not much money at all. And it shows.

Theatre, says the RSC's artistic director, Michael Boyd, is about experiences 'shared in the same space in real time'. That's exactly what architecture should be, and what the Royal Shakespeare Theatre is not. 'The theatre experiences we most enjoy,' he adds, 'are the ones with loads of problems but bags of character.' I wonder if he is being ironic.

Part 3: Exam practice

Match the statements 1–6, which describe number systems in different cultures, with the cultures and languages A–F.

- 1 In this community, people do not really learn how to count, because there is no need for them to learn. _____
- 2 The most used system was started by these people. _____
- 3 The counting system in this culture works with small sets but uses addition. _____
- 4 The situation in this community demonstrates that people can estimate quantities even in cultures where exact numbers do not exist. _____
- 5 The system here has been in existence for a very long time but may not be the best one. _____
- 6 The counting system in this culture is different from that in most other cultures. _____

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| A | Pirahã |
| B | Mundurucu |
| C | Yupno |
| D | Waimirí |
| E | English |
| F | Indian |

In *Rarities in Numeral Systems*, Harald Hammarström lists 12 South American languages that lack exact numbers above one. He prefers to call these systems 'one-few-many', since there are usually words in these languages for 'few' and 'many'. He also mentions two languages that have no exact numbers. The most studied of these is Pirahã, which is spoken by only about 400 people. It has a word for 'about one' and a word for 'about two'. As if that wasn't fuzzy enough, the words for 'about one' and 'about two' are the same – hoi – the only difference being a change in inflection.

The Amazonian Indians whose sense of number has been most closely studied are the Mundurucu, who have numerical words only up to five. Animals and babies are good at discriminating quantities above five, so one would expect that the Indians are too – even though they do not have words to express such amounts. And this is exactly what experiments conducted by the French linguist Pierre Pica have confirmed: when given tests that involve comparing sets of more than five dots on a screen, the Mundurucu scored just as high as Westerners. When Pica looked more closely at the Mundurucu's number words, he realised that only their words for one and two were used with any sense of exactness. The words for three, four and five were approximations – as if what they meant to say was 'threeish', 'fourish' and 'fiveish'. In this aspect, the Mundurucu are just like the 'one-two-many' tribes, who also have exact numbers only up to two.

When Indians do learn numbers, in fact, they appear uninterested by them. A Pirahã girl was once taken out of the village to receive medical treatment. During her time with Brazilians she learnt some Portuguese and how to count in Portuguese. No problem. But after returning to the community, while she retained some Portuguese she quickly forgot how to count.

Anthropologists first reached communities on the other side of the world, in Papua New Guinea, in the late nineteenth century. They discovered that they used not just their fingers to count but also their whole bodies. The natives started out with the fingers and thumb of one hand for one to five, but then carried on for higher numbers with wrist, elbow, shoulders, sternum and so on. For example, one tribe, the Yupno, go as high as 34: their word for 34 is 'one dead man'. These Papuan 'body-tally' systems are unusual because almost all other systems group numbers in much smaller sets.

In the Amazon there are also tribes with bases of two, three and four. For example, the Waimiri have words for one to three, and then say '3+1', '3+2', '3+3', '3+3+1', '3+3+2' and '3+3+3'.

Our base ten system of the digits zero to nine, which has its origins in India, is now in use all over the developed world. It is a natural system, but for several hundred years mathematicians have questioned whether it is the wisest base for us to have. The campaign for adding two new numbers, so that our system becomes base 12, is still active – the argument is to do with the extra divisibility of 12 compared with ten, since 12 can be divided by two, three, four and six while ten can be divided only by two and five. In fact, there are humans that already use base 12: and almost all of them belong to the tribes of the Plateau area of northern Nigeria.