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LC03. Cultural Taboos

Student Name: _____ Student ID Number: _____

Instructor: _____ Level: _____ Date: _____

For media links in this activity, visit [the LLC ESL Tutoring website for Upper Level SDLAs](#). Find your SDLA number to see all the resources to finish your SDLA.

Section 1: Introduction

Every culture has their own set of social rules that tells others what is acceptable to do and not to do. Sometimes these rules are about how to eat; some are about how to talk to people; and some are about how to maintain your home. Look at the list below of rules related to different cultures. Check whether you think they are true or false.

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. In Thailand, don't touch the head of someone older than you, or, in general, don't touch the head at all. | <input type="checkbox"/> True | <input type="checkbox"/> False |
| 2. Always eat while sitting down when in Indonesia. | <input type="checkbox"/> True | <input type="checkbox"/> False |
| 3. In Japan, don't point with your chopsticks. | <input type="checkbox"/> True | <input type="checkbox"/> False |
| 4. Don't give an even number of roses as a gift for a romantic occasion in Russia. | <input type="checkbox"/> True | <input type="checkbox"/> False |
| 5. In India and many other countries, don't eat food with your left hand. | <input type="checkbox"/> True | <input type="checkbox"/> False |
| 6. Don't cut your grass on Sunday in Switzerland. | <input type="checkbox"/> True | <input type="checkbox"/> False |

Actually, all of the above statements are true. These are called cultural **taboos**, rules against doing or saying something in a particular culture. One important thing to know is that these rules are not written down anywhere. Most cultural taboos are learned through experience or being told by others. For example, in some countries, including the United States, Indonesia, and Sierra Leone, asking adults about their age is generally considered taboo, but people only know this because others have told them it is taboo, or they've learned through experience, receiving the "evil eye" when they asked this unacceptable question.

Adapted from: 20 Cultural Taboos. <https://www.ufic.ufl.edu/Documents/20%20Cultural%20Taboos.pdf>





Section 2: Using Should or Shouldn't

When you want to talk about cultural taboos, one way to talk about them is by using the modal should. Should is always followed by the base form of a verb, and it can be used to express advice. When used in the present, should + base form of verb means that it is an appropriate thing to do or say. On the other hand, should not (shouldn't) + base form of verb means that it is a cultural taboo and not an appropriate thing to do or say.

For example:

- In Indonesia, you **should always** eat while sitting down.
- In Thailand, you **shouldn't touch** the head of someone older than you, or, in general, you **shouldn't touch** the head at all.

What are some things that you **should** and **shouldn't** do in your culture? Complete the chart below with your answers. You will discuss the reasons why with a tutor in Section 5.

Taboo Topics	Your Cultural Taboos	
	Should	Shouldn't
Eating habits		
Talking to people		
Maintaining your home		
Asking people questions		
Giving and receiving gifts		





Section 3: Taboos in Other Cultures

Find three other people who are from a different culture than you. Ask them the following questions about cultural taboos. Make sure you also ask them why it is a cultural taboo. Write their responses in the chart.

***Note:** You may politely ask to record their responses using your cell phone. If they allow you to record their response, a tutor can help you with any unknown vocabulary words or pronunciation.

Cultural Taboos Interviews





Name and Culture	What is something you shouldn't do when eating? Why?	What is something you shouldn't do when talking to people? Why?	What is something you should never give as a gift? Why?





Section 4: Student Self-Assessment

Complete this table BEFORE meeting with a tutor.

Communication Skill	I can't do this YET. 	I can do this WITH help. 	I can do this WITHOUT help. 	I can TEACH this to a classmate. 
I can describe what cultural taboos are.				
I can use should or shouldn't to talk about cultural taboos.				
I can talk to people from different cultures about their cultural taboos.				

Here are some words/phrases I need to practice.

Good Job!

Now make an appointment

with a tutor on the LLC ESL Tutoring Website

(www.mtsac.edu/lc/passportrewards/lctutoring).








Section 5: Practice with a Tutor!

Meet with a tutor, and share this activity with the tutor. You will review this SDLA with the tutor and have a conversation about cultural taboos. You may also ask the tutor any questions that you might have.

Grading Rubric

Possible Points	Need Practice  (0-1 Point)	Good Job  (2-3 Points)	Excellent Work  (4-5 Points)
Content	Not enough information provided in responses and often does not use correct vocabulary.	Provides most important information in responses and some of the time uses correct vocabulary.	Provides all necessary information in responses and most of the time uses correct vocabulary.
Skill: Speaking	More than 6 mistakes saying words; needs guessing more than 3 times.	Not more than 5 mistakes saying words; needs guessing on 1-2 words or sentences.	Not more than 2 mistakes saying words; needs no guess about meaning.
Oral Fluency	Speaks mostly in phrases, individual words; many pauses.	Sometimes speaks in complete sentences; several pauses.	Speaks in complete sentences; a couple pauses okay.

*Students must receive at least 10 points to move on

Possible Points: _____ / 15

Tutor Comments:

Congratulations! Keep going.

You have successfully completed this SDLA and are ready to continue to the next.

Work on this more.

You have not yet mastered this SDLA. It is recommended that you complete it again.

Tutor Signature: _____

Date: _____

