

LESSON 6: QUESTIONS OF CULTURE

AGE: Adult

LEVEL: Upper Intermediate

TIME: 90 minutes

LANGUAGE FOCUS: question types; discourse markers; topical discussion

SKILLS: reading; listening; speaking

MATERIALS: a copy of each worksheet per student; access to the listening

OVERVIEW: to learn about and practise different question types by listening to and analysing an interview

STUDENTS WILL:

- listen to an interview and identify different question types
- focus on spoken interaction and learn some discourse markers
- analyse how question formation in their language compares to English



PREPARATION

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p018qzzp

Before your class, listen carefully to the relevant sections of the interview with David Good for activity 2 (2:06–4:19) and activity 4 (5:25–6:00) to familiarize yourself with the questions that the interviewer uses in each part.

WARMER

Part of the focus of this lesson is the intercultural relationship between David Good's parents: Kenneth, an American anthropologist, and Yarima, an Amazonian tribeswoman. The purpose of these warm-up questions is to activate students' schemata and get them discussing the idea of relationship before they do a reading and listening exercise.

Warning: The topics in this lesson may be culturally insensitive for some nationalities and age groups so it is a good idea to read and listen ahead first to make sure the material is suitable for your class.

ACTIVITY 1 – READING

Students read some information about David Good to prepare them for a listening comprehension

Ask students to read the text, making sure they circle or underline any new vocabulary. You might want to pre-teach some of the more difficult vocabulary such as 'anthropologist'. When they have finished reading, ask them to discuss what they think David might discover and make predictions about what might happen during and after his visit. Write their

predictions on the board but do not confirm or deny any of them at this stage.

A short summary of David's visit is included at the end of the teacher's notes to be discussed at the end of the class. You can read the original article, which contains the conclusion to the story, by clicking the link below:

www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23758087 (note: the full article is over 5000 words)

ACTIVITY 2 – LISTENING 1

Students listen to part of an interview with David and answer some comprehension questions

Before listening to the extract, pre-teach the meaning of the noun 'betrothal' (an agreement to marry somebody, usually made on somebody's behalf) and the verb 'to become betrothed' (to form an agreement to marry somebody).

Ask the students to read questions 1–3 before listening. Play the interview from 2:06–4:19 and give them time to discuss the answers. Play the recording again if necessary.

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Key:

1. They wear no tops; the women only wear skirts.
2. They hunt; all their food comes from the forest.
3. It is different from marriage. Betrothal is an agreement between families. It can be made while the people in question are very young or not even born yet. Age (of betrothal and marriage) is not important to Yanomami people because they do not count higher than two or use a calendar.

ACTIVITY 3 – LANGUAGE FOCUS: QUESTION FORMS

Students listen to the interview again and analyse the types of question used

In the interview, six questions are asked. Tell the students they are going to listen to the same part of the interview again (2:06–4:19) and this time they are going to focus on the questions rather than the answers. In this exercise, students need to write down the questions they hear.

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TEACHING TIP: This is an authentic listening interview and the conversation is quite quick so students may struggle to identify these questions at the first time of listening. To help them, play the recording again and pause it after each question. Ask students to write down what they hear. If necessary, rewind and play the question again several times. Give students time in between to check together. If the students are still not sure, you could dictate the questions yourself for them to write down.

Key:

1. Can you just give me an idea of how primitive the tribe were, how cut off from what we would consider as normal Western life?
2. So tell me how he first met your mother, Yarima.
3. So what age was she when they became betrothed?
4. If you can explain why that made some sort of sense within the traditions of the tribe, I'd be very grateful.
5. At a very young age?
6. So what age was your mother when your father actually married her and consummated the marriage?

When the students have completed all six questions, ask them to look at the table in activity 3. This identifies four question types, their purpose, and the types of answers they typically elicit. Ask students to match the columns then check their answers with a partner. When they have finished, conduct whole class feedback.

Key:

1. (closed questions) – d – iii
2. (open questions) – a – iv
3. (clarification questions) – b – ii
4. (probing questions) – c – i

Next, ask the students to place questions 1–6 from the listening into the correct category from the table.

1. Open
2. Open
3. Closed
4. Probing

5. Clarification

6. Closed



TEACHING TIP: To help students improve their pronunciation, ask them to identify the stressed words in each question and underline them before repeating the questions to each other. This will help them be better understood when talking to native speakers. It might be necessary to model the natural pronunciation first if your students are struggling.

ACTIVITY 4 – LISTENING 2

Students write down dictation questions and match them to question types from activity 3

Tell students that they are going to listen to another part of the interview (5:25–6:00) and listen for four more questions. Not all of these are actual questions but are statements used as questions which are typical of the way native speakers interact during an interview. Ask them to write down exactly what they hear.

Repeat the dictation two or three times if necessary and when you have finished ask the students to check their answers together then as a class.

Key:

1. Do you have any memories of that time? (Closed)
2. So you had to go through the transition from the jungle back to Pennsylvania. (Clarification)
3. But it was a difficult transition, I think, for your mother. (Probing)
4. What sort of things did she feel and get up to when she moved to Pennsylvania with your father? (Open)

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ACTIVITY 5 – LANGUAGE FOCUS: DISCOURSE MARKERS

Students learn about spoken discourse markers and hesitation devices

Tell students that they are going to listen to both interviews again. During the interviews, David uses a lot of small words or discourse markers called 'fillers' or 'hesitation devices' to respond to the interviewer. These sounds and phrases can fulfil a number of different functions within a conversation,

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from offering encouragement and showing interest to signalling vagueness and disagreement. Ask students to tick the ones they hear during the two parts of the recording (2:06–4:19 and 5:25–6:00) and then discuss what they think each sound or phrase means with their partner.

Key:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Right, right ... | <input type="checkbox"/> Good point ... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Um ... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I see ... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sort of ... | <input type="checkbox"/> So ... |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pretty much ... | <input type="checkbox"/> Anyway ... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yeah ... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ah ha ... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Err ... | <input type="checkbox"/> Actually ... |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> You know ... | <input type="checkbox"/> OK ... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I mean ... |

ACTIVITY 6 – TOPICAL DISCUSSION

Students practise using discourse markers during a discussion

Tell students to ask and answer each question in their small groups. Encourage them to use the discourse markers from the previous activity and try to form follow-up questions using the four question types from activity 3.

ACTIVITY 7 – TRANSLATION

Students analyse how question forms in English compare to their language and discuss using translation

Tell students that it is very common among language learners to translate words and phrases directly from their language into English. Ask them to look at questions a–d and discuss them with their partner or group. Conduct whole class feedback with them, and if you have time you could offer the following example to prompt some further discussion.

Here is an example of direct translation using Indonesian:

Do you like living in the UK? => *Suka tinggal di Inggris?*

There is no auxiliary verb, no subject pronoun and no article. As in many languages, the question is distinguished from a statement by rising intonation on the final syllable. Directly translated, it reads as: 'Like live in UK?'



TEACHING TIP: You could use this opportunity to ask students if they have ever used Google translate and what problems there might be with it. These may include that it doesn't take context into account; it translates idiomatic language literally; it doesn't treat language as discourse but as individual words; a single concept, e.g. time or space, can be viewed and expressed very differently in different languages/cultures. These problems apply to direct translation too, if the person doing it does not take all these things into account.

At the end of the class, return to the predictions from activity 1 and read the following summary to the students:

David met his mother and reconnected with her. He spent time in the rainforest with the Yanomami tribe and learnt a lot more about them. He was even offered two wives by the elder tribesmen during his stay. Unlike his father, he declined the offer and chose instead to set up The Good Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to the education, health care and cultural preservation of indigenous groups in South and Central America.

REVIEW AND PREPARATION FOR LESSON 7

In Compass lesson 5, activity 3 your students wrote some cultural questions. Ask them to choose the top three questions from their list and review them using the new information from Compass 6, activity 3. Are there any changes they would like to make? These questions will form the basis for an interview task they will do after Compass 7 so tell them to swap papers with another group and try to think of any additional follow-up questions they could ask.

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WARMER

Nowadays it is becoming more common for people to meet their husband/wife/partner in less traditional ways. With a partner/group, discuss the following questions:

- * What are the most common ways for people to meet in your culture?
- * Do you know anyone who has married someone from another country or culture?
- * What is the most unusual relationship you have heard of?

ACTIVITY 1 – READING

Read the text below in preparation for the listening exercise in activity 2. Underline or circle any new or unfamiliar vocabulary and discuss what you think might happen with your classmates and teacher.

David Good has an unusual family background. His father, Kenneth, is an anthropologist from America, while his mother, Yarima, is a member of a tribe that lives deep in the Amazon rainforest. They met while Kenneth was working in the rainforest studying Yarima's tribe. They got married and had David, who spent some of his early years living in the rainforest. The family later moved to Pennsylvania. But Yarima was not happy living there and returned to the rainforest when David was still young, leaving Kenneth to bring him up in the US.

The tribe to which Yarima belongs is called the Yanomami. They are based in a large area of land which occupies parts of both Venezuela and Brazil. There are between 200 and 250 Yanomami villages in this area. Some of the Yanomami have absorbed some western culture due to being located near Church missions, but for others the only interaction with the rest of the world comes through trade of goods with more westernized villages. All villages have a *shapono*, a big round or oval wooden structure with a thatched roof. This is where the people cook and sleep, and where rituals are carried out, making it a very important place for them. In short, David's mother's tribal life could not be much more different from the America in which he lives.

And now, at the age of 25, David has decided that he wants to get to know his mother again, so he has made a journey deep into the Amazon in order to find Yarima and her tribe ...

ACTIVITY 2 – LISTENING 1

Listen to part of an interview with David Good and answer the following questions:

1. What do the Yanomami people wear?
2. Where does their food come from?
3. What does David say about the differences in meaning between betrothal and marriage?



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ACTIVITY 3 – LANGUAGE FOCUS: QUESTION FORMS

Listen again and write down the six questions you hear in the interview.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

These questions can be broadly divided into four categories. Look at the table below and match up the three columns. Then, when you have finished, choose which type of question each interview question is from the recording:



Question type	Purpose	Answer type
1. Closed questions <i>Do you like fish and chips?</i>	a. We use this type of question to encourage the speaker to give a long answer.	i. It gives you a reason for the person's answer. <i>Because foods like chicken tikka masala and curry pizza are very popular. They are combinations of other cuisines that are unique to the UK.</i>
2. Open questions <i>What do you think about British food?</i>	b. We use this type of question if an initial response is too vague or we haven't understood it.	ii. It gives you more information about a previous answer. <i>Well, British food isn't really British food because it has so many influences on it from lots of different cultures, with all kinds of combinations of food available.</i>
3. Clarification questions <i>What did you mean when you said 'British food is very varied'?</i>	c. We use this type of question to find out more about somebody's opinions, thoughts or feelings.	iii. It gives you single word answers. <i>Yes/No</i>
4. Probing questions <i>Could you tell me a little bit more about why you think that?</i>	d. We use this type of question because we think there is only a small range of possible answers.	iv. It gives you a longer answer. <i>I really like British food because it's so varied.</i>

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ACTIVITY 4 - LISTENING 2

Now listen to the second part of the interview. The interviewer asks four questions, two of which are statements used as questions. Write down what you hear on the notepaper below:

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Listen again and decide which question types from activity 3 match each of the four questions.

ACTIVITY 5 - LANGUAGE FOCUS: DISCOURSE MARKERS

During the interview, David uses a lot of small words or discourse markers called 'fillers' or 'hesitation devices' to respond to the interviewer. Listen to both parts of the interview again and tick the ones you hear:

- | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Right, right ... | <input type="checkbox"/> Good point ... | <input type="checkbox"/> Um ... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I see ... | <input type="checkbox"/> Sort of ... | <input type="checkbox"/> So ... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pretty much ... | <input type="checkbox"/> Anyway ... | <input type="checkbox"/> Yeah ... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ah ha ... | <input type="checkbox"/> Err ... | <input type="checkbox"/> Actually ... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> You know ... | <input type="checkbox"/> OK ... | <input type="checkbox"/> I mean ... |

Now discuss with a partner what you think each sound or phrase might indicate. Possibilities include agreement, disagreement, explanation, vagueness, uncertainty and encouragement.

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ACTIVITY 6 - TOPICAL DISCUSSION

Look at the discussion questions below. Practise using the question forms and the new language from activity 5 during your discussion.

ANIMAL TESTING

Some cosmetic companies test their products on animals before they are sold to humans. Do you think this is acceptable?



HONESTY

What would you do if a friend lied to you? Is honesty always the best policy?



FUNDING FOR ART AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

In some countries, the Government gives funding for art and cultural activities. Do you think they should do this?



AGE

How should young people behave? How do young people in your culture behave differently from older people?



CANNABIS

Do you think it should be legal to smoke cannabis? Is it legal in your country?



FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Is freedom of speech a right in your country? Do you think everybody should have the right to say what they want?



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ACTIVITY 7 - TRANSLATION

Lots of language students translate directly from their language into English or vice versa. Teachers often discourage this. Using the questions below, discuss this topic with your partner or group.

- a. Do you ever ask English questions by translating them directly from your language?
- b. Choose a question from activity 6 and translate it into your language. Can you match every English word to a word in your language?
- c. What similarities and differences are there between English and your language?
- d. Do you think translating directly is a good idea?

REVIEW AND PREPARATION FOR LESSON 7

In Compass lesson 5, activity 3 you wrote some cultural questions. Choose the top three questions from your list and review them using the new information from Compass 6, activity 3. Are there any changes you would like to make? These questions will form the basis for an interview task after Compass 7 so swap papers with another group and try to think of any additional follow-up questions they could ask.