

Cultural Exchange: Understanding Others



Travel Series | Episode 8

PRE-LISTENING | Warm-up

Prepare before you listen to the conversation.

Brainstorm

1. Look at the topic of this episode. Do you have any personal experiences related to this topic? If not, do you have any thoughts or opinions about it?
2. Below, write notes about what comes to your mind.

--

Vocabulary

1. What vocabulary do you think will come up in this conversation? If you can't think of the English word, check it in a dictionary.
2. Write the vocabulary that you came up with in the table below.

LISTENING | Exercise

Listen to the conversation – feel free to pause any time or go back if you miss something.

In episode eight of the travel series, Colin and Su discuss cultural exchange and the impact of stereotypes. They define stereotypes as oversimplified beliefs about people from specific countries, emphasizing that travel provides real experiences that challenge and break these stereotypes. The conversation highlights the importance of cross-cultural communication in modern work settings, noting that understanding cultural nuances is crucial for effective collaboration. Su adds that cultural knowledge is valuable not only for learning about others but also for understanding the stereotypes others might have about one's own culture. Ultimately, the discussion highlights the significance of being open to differences and developing the skills to navigate diverse cultural environments.

Note-taking

Identify the key points of the conversation and add notes on some details. Try to keep it short.

Key Points	Details

Quiz

Choose the correct answer – you can check your answers at the end of this PDF.

1. What is the main topic of today's travel series episode?
 - a. Business communication
 - b. Summer fashion in London
 - c. Formality in Japanese business
 - d. Stereotypes and cultural exchange
2. According to Colin, what is a stereotype?
 - a. An untrue belief about people from a certain place
 - b. A proven fact about a group of people
 - c. A positive generalization about individuals
 - d. A common behavior shared by everyone in a culture
3. Why does Su think stereotypes are easy to use?
 - a. Because they are always accurate
 - b. Because they simplify understanding of a large group
 - c. Because they are positive generalizations
 - d. Because they are difficult to understand
4. How does travel help in overcoming stereotypes, according to Su?
 - a. By reinforcing stereotypes
 - b. By exposing oneself to stereotypes
 - c. By providing real experiences in a culture
 - d. By creating more stereotypes
5. What does Colin emphasize about stereotypes in business?
 - a. They can lead to misunderstandings
 - b. They are always true
 - c. They are unimportant
 - d. They don't affect business relationships
6. According to Su, what is a key skill in modern work situations?
 - a. Knowing other cultures completely
 - b. Ignoring cultural differences
 - c. Cross-cultural communication
 - d. Strict adherence to one's own culture

7. Why does Su think cultural knowledge is important in professional life?

- a. It helps in making more stereotypes
- b. It doesn't have any impact on work
- c. It limits opportunities for working with others
- d. It aids in cross-cultural communication

8. What does Colin suggest is essential for effective cross-cultural communication?

- a. Knowing every detail about the other culture
- b. Being open to differences and dealing with them
- c. Ignoring cultural nuances
- d. Sticking to one's own cultural norms

POST-LISTENING | Resources

Review the language used in the podcast

Word/Phrase	Class	Example Sentence
cultural exchange	<i>noun</i>	Participating in cultural exchange programs enhances understanding between people from different backgrounds.
The sharing of cultural values and practices		
stereotype	<i>noun</i>	Stereotypes often lead to misunderstandings and hinder true understanding of diverse cultures.
An oversimplified and fixed idea about a group of people		
misconception	<i>noun</i>	Many stereotypes are based on misconceptions rather than accurate information.
A mistaken belief or idea		
cross-cultural	<i>adjective</i>	Cross-cultural communication skills are crucial in today's globalized world.
Involving or bridging different cultures		
formality	<i>noun</i>	Japanese business culture places a high value on formality and traditional practices.
Observance of established procedures, rituals, or etiquette		
nuances	<i>noun</i>	Understanding cultural nuances is essential for effective communication in diverse settings.
Subtle differences or distinctions in expression, meaning, or response		
professionalism	<i>noun</i>	Developing professionalism involves mastering both technical skills and appropriate behavior in the workplace.
The competence or skill expected of a professional		
generalization	<i>noun</i>	Making generalizations about a culture can lead to unfair judgments and perpetuate stereotypes.
A broad statement or idea that applies to a group as a whole		
interaction	<i>noun</i>	Meaningful interactions with individuals from various cultures can break down stereotypes and foster understanding.
Communication or direct involvement		
stereotypical	<i>adjective</i>	The media often portrays certain nationalities in a stereotypical way, perpetuating biased views among the audience.
Conforming to a fixed or oversimplified idea		

POST-LISTENING | Activities

Shadowing

Choose one part of the conversation and listen to it again. Try to repeat what you hear out loud. Make sure you copy pronunciation, pauses*, and stress*.

Use the transcript to mark the **pauses with a slash / and the **stress** with an underline __.*

Speaking Practice

Below are two questions you can use for speaking practice.

- 1. Read each question and write some notes. Keep them short and only use bullet points or a mind map – these notes are just to help you organize your ideas.*
- 2. Record yourself answering the questions. Try to speak for at least 2 minutes for each question.*

Cultural Misconceptions: Talk about a cultural misconception you once had about a specific group of people. Explain how your opinion changed after learning more about that culture.

Challenging Stereotypes: Share strategies on how individuals can challenge and overcome stereotypes. Discuss the role of education and personal experiences in breaking down stereotypes.

Transcript

Colin: This is episode eight of our travel series and today's topic is cultural exchange: understanding others. Hello, Su.

Su: Hey.

Colin: How are you?

Su: Good. How are you?

Colin: I'm very well. Um, so we're going to start by talking about stereotypes.

Su: Yeah. So what, how would you define a stereotype?

Colin: Um, a stereotype is a belief that people have about certain people, maybe people from a certain country.

And the belief is about how they behave or what they are like as people. So you might have a stereotype about French people, or you might have a stereotype about American people. So you have a belief about what those people are like, the things they do, the way that they behave. But stereotypes are not always true. Very often they're not true. For example, there's a stereotype about British people. That British people are very polite. British people are, um, very gentlemanly. That's often true, but it's not always true. Um, so that's a stereotype. It's not a bad stereotype. Very often stereotypes are negative. That's quite a nice positive stereotype that I like to, uh, encourage, but so, yeah, stereotypes are often untrue beliefs about people from a certain place. Um, so how do you think travel helps us? Remove these stereotypes, these beliefs about people and places.

Su: Well, it's reality, isn't it? You experience what is actually real. When you travel, um, you are... in this culture. Stereotypes are easy. That's, that's why we use them.

Colin: Yes, the stereotypes, it's a very, very easy way to have an understanding about a large group of people.

Um, it's really easy to say, all Japanese people, dot, dot, dot, or all Brazilian people, dot, dot, dot. That is a very easy statement. All is a hundred percent, and people are different. You know, even within small groups of people, you're going to get variation. Like, this person does this, this person doesn't do that, but they're from the same group.

Su: Yeah, and that's what travel allows you to experience. You, um, have interactions with people, with individuals, not with a group. But with individuals that will be different, as you were saying, you know, British people are polite and people are polite, not because they're British, but because of their education, um, I don't know, their family. Uh, but it's, it's more like a personal thing. Maybe many are more than average, let's say, but, uh, you experience that and the more people you know, the more you understand that these stereotypes cannot apply to everyone.

Colin: Yeah, I think getting back to the negative stereotypes and many stereotypes are negative. When you travel, you start to realize that these stereotypes are not true. And as you

said, you're interacting with individual people and you get to see what that individual is like. And then you start to realize actually, my stereotype of this country is not true.

Yes, for some people in this country, this stereotype might be true, but it's not for everybody. So we have these misconceptions of what people are like and traveling allows you to experience that first hand.

Su: I think also when you travel, uh, you expose yourself to these stereotypes as well. So you come into a different country and people there will have stereotypes about you, right? And many times they expect you to live up to those stereotypes.

Colin: Right. Yeah, so it kind of works both ways.

Su: It does. So it's not only about you learning from others, but I think it also is learning about yourself and the stereotypes others might have about you and your culture.

Colin: So why is it a good thing? Why is it a good thing to actually understand that these stereotypes are not true? Is it something that can help you in your future life, do you think?

Su: I think so. I think, uh, I mean, today we can communicate with anyone around the world and we can work with people around the world. So I think definitely understanding, not only having the language ability, is having this cultural knowledge. It definitely will help you in your professional life. You know, you will be able to, uh, work with people that are different and sometimes when there's stereotypes, there can be misunderstandings, but if you know about them, I think you can have a better opportunity to work with others.

Colin: Yeah. I mean, a key skill, I think, in modern, uh, work situations is cross cultural . communication, like being able to effectively communicate with people from other cultures. Um, because you could be from one country and your client, your customer, uh, is from another country and the way that you expect them to behave or the way that they expect you to behave could be very different. Um, and in business, you've got to be very careful because there are clear expectations. Um, on both sides. So understanding about different cultures and being able to communicate effectively is so important these days.

Su: It's not necessarily about knowing this other culture a hundred percent, but it's being open to differences and kind of having the skill of being able to deal with these differences in real time.

Colin: Yeah.

Su: I think that's the skill that you get when you travel. You put yourself in situations where you have to deal with these differences in real time.

Colin: Right.

Su: And then you can apply those skills when you're working and you have to do this cross cultural communication.

Colin: Yeah, I think for people coming to Japan to do business, I think they find that the business culture in Japan is very formal. Very, very formal. It's, it's still very much suits, ties,

business cards, uh, formal meetings, all this kind of stuff, face to face. Um, whereas, if you take America, uh, UK as examples, um, business culture has changed a lot in recent years. It's become much less formal, um, and the way that business is done, the way that people communicate, even just the way they dress. Uh, we were in London in the summer and yes, it was summertime, but still there were a lot of people not wearing ties working in the city, um, in the financial city of London and that wouldn't work in Japan.

Um, the summertime in London doesn't get crazy hot. In Japan, it does get very, very hot, so people might not wear ties, but, um, in London, you would expect to see more people wearing ties. Um, so that's a change that I think has happened in recent years. And it could be difficult if you come from one country to Japan and then you don't have that cross cultural understanding.

Um, so yeah, it's, it's understanding that things can be different, things can be done differently and that's okay. You just need to kind of understand that this is how they do things. This is what polite behavior, polite business environments, professional business environment looks like for these people. And this is how you need to work if you're planning to do business with them.

ANSWERS – Multiple-Choice Questions

- | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| 1. d | 2. a | 3. b | 4. c |
| 5. a | 6. c | 7. d | 8. b |