



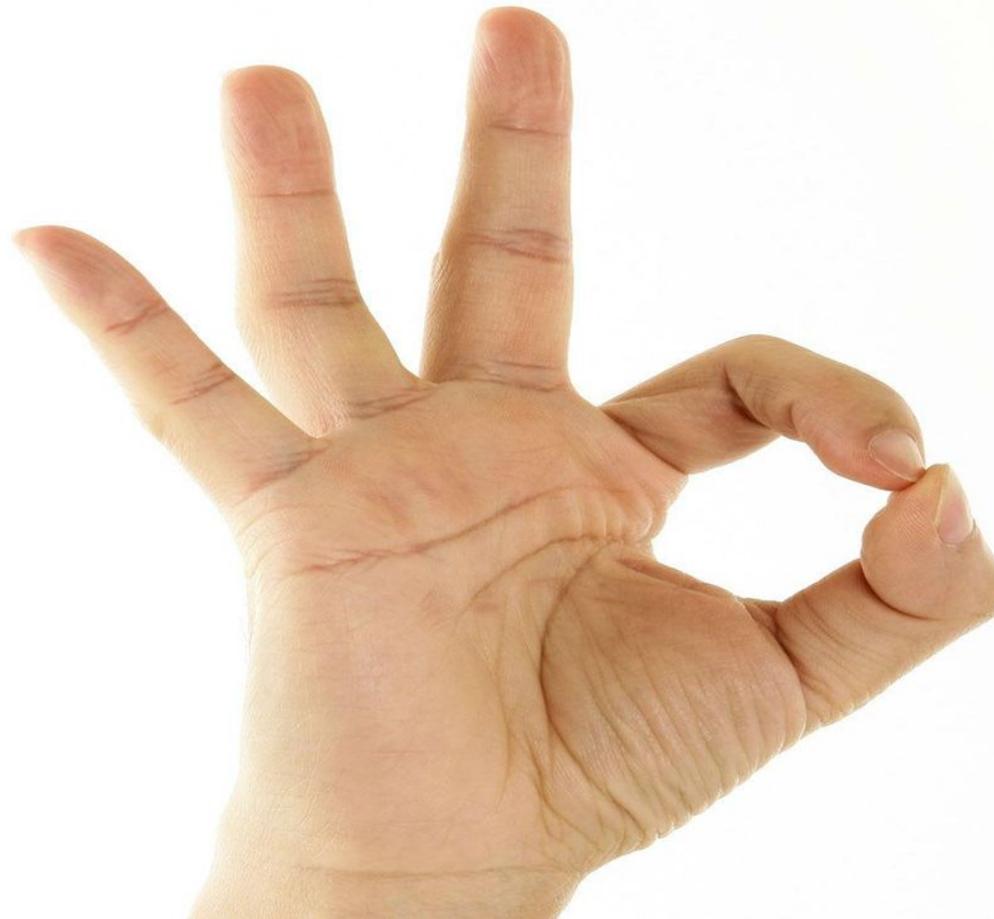
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# Using culture to engage young learners

By

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# Is it really OK?





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In **Japan**...it refers to  
MONEY

In **Brazil,**  
**Germany**  
and  
**Russia**...it  
refers to a  
certain part  
of the  
body...

In **Turkey, Greece,**  
**Tunisia** and many  
**Middle Eastern**  
**countries**...it is a  
rude and offensive  
hand gesture.



In **France** and  
**Belgium**...it refers to  
ZERO or something  
that's worthless

In many parts of  
**the Arabic**  
**world**...it  
symbolises  
something evil

# What IS 'culture'?

- Talk together in 2/3's for 3 minutes about all the different things we associate with culture.

• *Is there one single definition?*



**What do you  
think?**



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**LANGUAGE AND  
CULTURE ARE THE  
FRAMEWORKS THROUGH  
WHICH HUMANS  
EXPERIENCE,  
COMMUNICATE, AND  
UNDERSTAND REALITY.  
(LEV VYGOTSKY, 1968)**



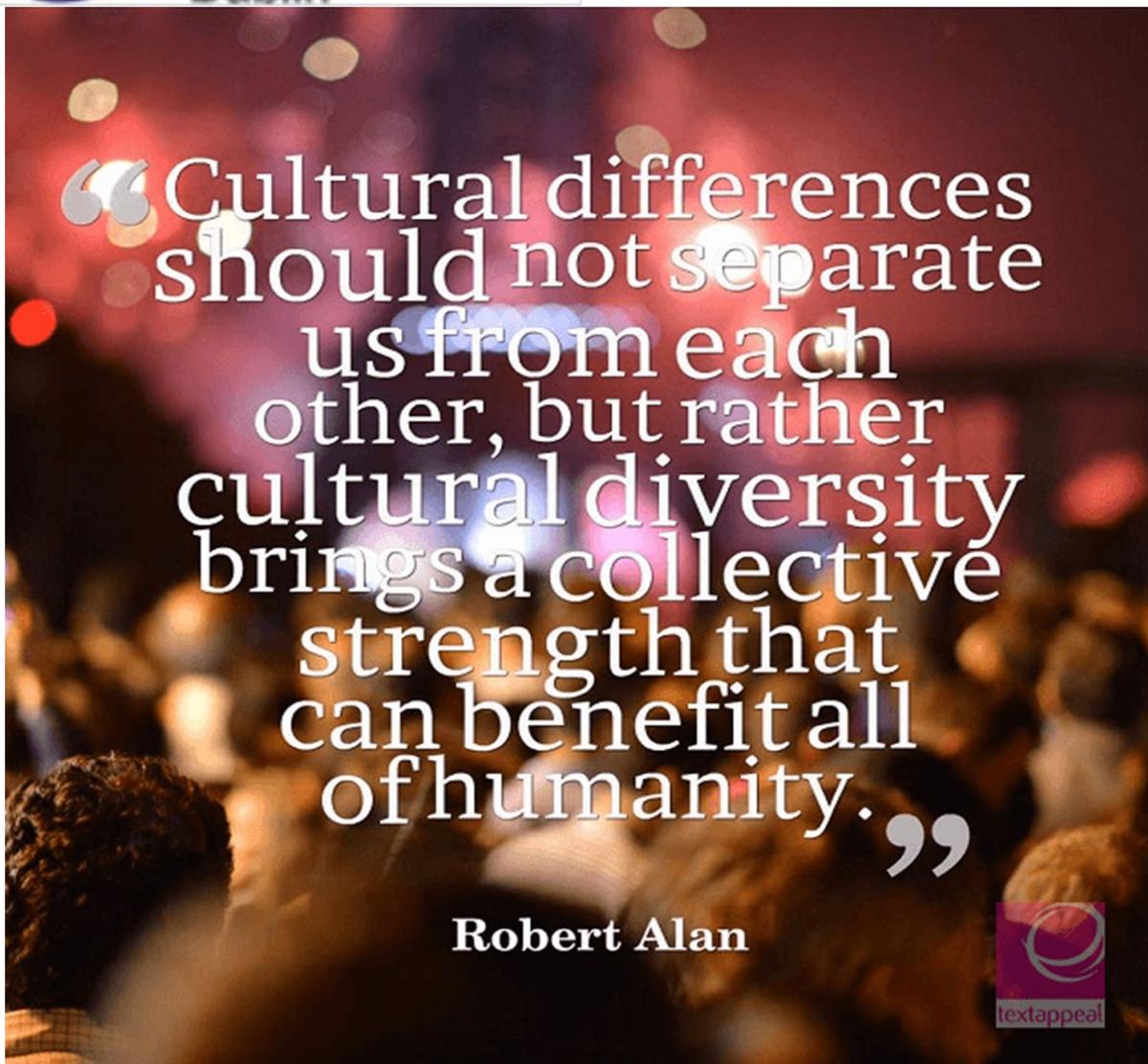
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**What do you think?**

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**What do you think?**

**There are many  
cultural differences  
between us, but I think  
we'll find a lot of  
similarities, too.**

Sandy Thoma

**What do  
you  
think?**

If culture was a house,  
then language was the  
key to the front door,  
to all the rooms  
inside.

*Khaled Housseini*

# Young learners

- In your work context, do you teach young learner groups?
- How do we already help to accommodate them in classes?
- **AND**, who are 'young learners' anyway?

# Young learners

- Could be as wide a range as 11-40!
- **CONTEXT** is essential
- What we are really focusing on are those students between 11-19, still in secondary school education.
- So we are working with **teenagers and adolescents...**

- Do you recognize anyone like this? Or were you like this?!
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLuEY6jN6gY>



**Bored,  
distracted  
demotivated,  
uninterested.**



**Look familiar?**



# The top 6 reasons why teenagers disengage

1. Sitting at the **same desks** for too long.
2. Activities have gone on for **too long**.
3. Ss have been working beside the **same partner** for too long.
4. Ss have been doing the **same type of activity** for too long.
5. Ss have been doing **different activities but in the same way**.
6. Teachers have been going through the activities in the book, as they're presented and **not adapting them** with learners or the learning context in mind.

# How will using culture help?

- **Short term** there is only so much we can teach them in that time with regards to English. We must be **realistic**, but not complacent.
- **First time away from home for many students**
  - Talking about this unfamiliar culture is a great **gate opener** and as teachers from this culture, we are in a unique opportunity to bond with them quickly.

- Talking about cultural similarities, differences, traditions, customs, history etc **encourages students to TALK.**
- **And finally...** let's look 10 years from now. What will that student remember from their visit to Dublin?
  1. Social programme activities
  2. Experiences with their host family
  3. Food
  4. Present perfect
  5. Exchanging stories with people from different cultures

# Your turn

- Have a chat in your groups about **how you have used culture in your classes in the past:**

1. What activities did you do?
2. How did the students respond?



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## Here are some other ideas...

- You'll see different types of activities you could do related to culture on your handout.

- **My favourites:**

1. Slang
2. Music
3. Accents

# Some things to be aware of...

- You could base your lessons around culture OR you can lead with culture to **ATTRACT** interest.
- Sometimes groups will specify that they want to learn in a very particular language context E.g. Scientific English, Business English  
= **MIX** the activities in!
- Using culture isn't a miracle fix **BUT** it will be more effective than purely language based learning

# Summary

- **Teaching context:** very often closed groups of young learners – culture gives more confidence for students to speak about *something*.
- Reduces the pressure on weaker learners who can still get involved.
- It's a memorable way of attracting their attention and interest.

Culture can be gateway  
to greater  
**communication.**

