



Unit

1

Social Customs

Objectives:

- ◇ Understand descriptions of various social customs.
- ◇ Learn to make comparisons.
- ◇ Understand discussions of advantages and disadvantages of customs.
- ◇ Understand cohesiveness of a passage in expressing similarities and differences.

Task 1

Script

Yesterday morning Gretel went to the City of London. She wanted to see St Paul's Cathedral. She was surprised to see so many Englishmen who looked alike. They were all wearing dark suits and bowler hats. They were all carrying umbrellas and newspapers. When she returned home she asked Mr. Clark about these strange creatures. "They must be typical English gentlemen," she said. "I have often read about them and seen photographs of them. They all look as if they are wearing a uniform. Does the typical English gentleman still exist?"

Mr. Clark laughed. "I've never thought about it," he answered. "It's true that many of the men who work in the City of London still wear bowler hats and I suppose they are typical Englishmen. But look at this." Mr. Clark picked up a magazine and pointed at a photo of a young man. "He's just as typical, perhaps. It seems as if there is no such thing as a 'typical' Englishman. Do you know the English saying 'It takes all kinds to make a world'? That's true of all countries—including England."

"Oh, just like the poem 'If All the Seas Were One Sea'," Gretel began to hum happily. "If all the seas were one sea, what a great sea it would be! And if all the trees were one tree, what a great tree it would be! And if this tree were to fall in the sea, what a great splash there would be!"



Key

A. Answer the following questions.

1) What did Gretel want to see in the City of London?

Key: She wanted to see St. Paul's Cathedral.

2) Why was she so surprised?

Key: She was so surprised because she saw so many Englishmen who looked alike.

3) What did the Englishmen look like?

Key: They were all wearing dark suits and bowler hats, carrying umbrellas and newspapers.

4) Why did Gretel think they must be typical English gentlemen?

Key: Because she had often read about them and seen photographs of them, who all looked as if they were wearing a uniform.

5) Did Mr. Clark also think there is such thing as a "typical" Englishman?

Key: No, he didn't.

6) What English saying did Mr. Clark use to prove his opinion?

Key: He used the English saying "It takes all kinds to make a world" to prove his opinion.

B. Write down the poem "If All the Seas Were One Sea".

If all the seas were one sea, what a great sea it would be! And if all the trees were one tree, what a great tree it would be! And if this tree were to fall in the sea, what a great splash there would be!

Task 2

Script

John is British but has worked in Japan. Etsuko is a Japanese student from Osaka, and she is studying in Britain. Now they are comparing life in the two countries.

John: I found that living in Japan, people were much busier. They seem to work the whole day.

Etsuko: Yes, that's right. We work from Monday through Saturday, even in summer. You know, summer in Japan is just horrible. It's very, very humid and hot, and you need to shower



three times a day.

John: So you find it cooler in England?

Etsuko: Yes, that's right.

John: Where I was living in Japan, in the north, it was much colder than England, especially in winter, minus thirty degrees centigrade. Does the winter in Osaka last longer than the winter in England?

Etsuko: No, I don't think so. December, January, February, March...

John: Yes. It's a little bit shorter if anything.

Etsuko: Ever since I came here, I noticed that the countryside here in England is really beautiful.

John: It's much flatter than in Japan.

Etsuko: Yes. Japan is a mountainous country and our cities are full of people. There are lots of people in a limited area.

John: Yes. I found Japan much more mountainous than Britain, especially in the north. The mountains are much higher and much more rocky. I found it more beautiful than Britain.

Etsuko: Yes, if you like mountains!

John: And therefore the towns and villages tend to be more crowded.

Etsuko: Yes, that's right.

John: Yes. So because the cities are more crowded, the houses tend to be smaller, don't they?

Etsuko: Yes, they are very compact, and we don't have a lot of space. In big cities we have a lot of taller buildings now.

John: Is this a problem because there are more earthquakes in Japan?

Etsuko: Yes, that's right, and...

Key

A. Complete the following sentences with what you hear on the tape.

- 1) I found that living in Japan, people were much busier. They seem to work the whole day.
- 2) Where I was living in Japan, in the north, it was much colder than England, especially in winter, minus thirty degrees centigrade. Does the winter in Osaka last longer than the winter in England?
- 3) I found Japan much more mountainous than Britain, especially in the north. The mountains are much higher and much more rocky. I found it more beautiful than Britain.



- 4) And therefore the towns and villages tend to be more crowded.
- 5) So because the cities are more crowded, the houses tend to be smaller, don't they?

B. Decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F) according to the tape.

- 1) People need to take three showers a day in the humid and hot summer in Japan. [T]
- 2) Winter in Osaka is shorter than that in England. [T]
- 3) Etsuko thinks the countryside in Japan is more beautiful than that in England. [F]
- 4) Britain is mountainous and Japan is much flatter. [F]
- 5) Houses in Britain tend to be smaller and compact. [F]

Tips

In this task, students will hear two people, Japanese and British, comparing Japan and Britain, with respect to the climate, geography, cities, buildings, and so on. Show students how to make comparisons.

Exercise A is designed to draw students' attention to some things compared in this passage. Exercise B is to check their understanding of details.

Task 3

Script

Rosa: Why don't you have folk dances in the United States? Most countries have special dances that the people have done for many years. The dancers wear clothes from the old days. Everyone likes to watch them dance.

Steve: We have folk dances, too. A lot of people belong to folk dancing groups. But when they dance, they usually do it just to enjoy themselves. They don't invite other people to watch them.

Rosa: Is there a folk dancing group here?



Steve: I think so. There's one in almost every city, and some big cities have several.

Rosa: What are the dances like?

Steve: Usually eight people dance together, four men and four women. When they start, they form a square, with a man and a woman on each side of the square. That's why it's called square dancing. Then there's a man who tells the dancers what they should do. He usually makes it into a song, and sings it while they dance.

Rosa: Oh, that should make the dances easy!

Steve: Yes, but they are very fast. They don't have much time to think. I like to watch them, though. The dancers wear old-fashioned clothes. They makes the dances pretty to watch.

Rosa: I'd like to watch a group dance.

Steve: I'll take you sometime.

Key

A. Answer the following questions.

- 1) What is the difference between the folk dances in the US and other countries?

Key: In the US, people usually dance just to enjoy themselves; they don't invite other people to watch them.

- 2) How many dancers are there in a folk dance in the US according to the man?

Key: Usually eight people dance together.

- 3) Why is it called square dance?

Key: Because people form a square in dancing with a man and a woman on each side of the square.

- 4) How does the man tell the dancers what they should do?

Key: He usually makes it into a song.

- 5) What kind of clothes do people wear in folk dancing?

Key: They wear old-fashioned clothes.

B. Decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F) according to the tape.

- 1) There is only one folk dancing group in each city in the United States. [F]



- 2) Usually there are four men and four women in a folk dancing group. [T]
- 3) In square dancing, there are four people on each side of the square. [F]
- 4) A man usually speaks quickly to tell the dancers what they should do. [F]
- 5) People dance fast, therefore there is not much time for them to think of the instructions in the song. [T]

C. Complete the following sentences with what you hear on the tape.

- 1) In square dancing, usually eight people form a square when they start, with a man and a woman on each side of the square.
- 2) Then there's a man who tells the dancers what they should do. He usually makes it into a song, and sings it while they dance.
- 3) Folk dancing in the United States is very fast; people don't have much time to think.
- 4) The dancers wear old-fashioned clothes. They make the dances pretty to watch.

Tips

In this part, students will hear two people talking about folk dancing in the United States: the square dancing.

Exercise A is designed for students to get the general idea whereas Exercise B is for the details. Exercise C aims to help students summarize the descriptions of square dancing. After finishing the exercises, students are encouraged to describe square dancing in the United States in their own words.

Task 4

Script

- 1) On the evening of February 3rd, people in Japanese families took one dried bean for each year of their age and threw the beans on the floor, shouting "Good luck in! Evil spirits out!" This was known as "Setsubun", a time to celebrate the end of winter and the beginning of spring.
- 2) Before the Chinese Lunar New Year in the old days, many Chinese families burned the picture of



their kitchen god to bring good luck. When Lunar New Year's Day came, they put a new picture of the kitchen god on the wall.

- 3) When American women got married, they sometimes followed an old custom in choosing what to wear on their wedding day. The custom said the bride must wear "something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue". This was to bring good luck.
- 4) Before Lent (a time on the Christian calendar), the people of Ponti, Italy ate an omelet made with 1,000 eggs. People could not eat meat, eggs or dairy products during Lent, so they tried to use up these things before Lent began.
- 5) When winter ended in Czech, the children made a straw man called "Smrt", which was a figure of death. They burned it or threw it in the river. After they destroyed it, they carried flowers home to show the arrival of spring.
- 6) January 17th was St. Anthony's Day in Mexico. It was a day when people brought their animals to church. But before the animals went into the church, the people dressed them up in flowers and ribbons. This ceremony was to protect people's animals.

Key

Answer the following questions.

- 1) What was known as "Setsubun"?

Key: It was a time to celebrate the end of winter and the beginning of spring.

- 2) What did many Chinese families burn to bring good luck before the Chinese Lunar New Year?

Key: They burned the picture of their kitchen god to bring good luck.

- 3) What was the old custom in choosing what to wear by brides in America?

Key: The custom said the brides must wear "something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue" to bring good luck.

- 4) Why did the people of Ponti, Italy eat an omelet made with 1,000 eggs before Lent?

Key: Because they could not eat meat, eggs or dairy products during Lent, so they tried to use up these things before Lent began.

- 5) What was a "Smrt"?

Key: It was a straw man made by children in Czech; it was a figure of death.



6) What did people do on St. Anthony's Day in Mexico?

Key: People brought their animals to church. And before the animals went into the church, people dressed them up in flowers and ribbons.

Tips

In this part, students will hear six traditional customs in different countries, namely Japan, China, US, Italy, Czech and Mexico.

Before playing the tape, spend three to five minutes talking about some of the interesting customs in China (e.g. customs associated with marriage, birthday, New Year, change of seasons). Try to generate a short discussion about these customs. The exercise is designed for students to catch the important details of each custom.

Task 5

Script

Man: Well, I think life used to be much more fun than it is now. I mean, look at the Victorians. They had lots of servants to do all the work; they never had to do any cooking or cleaning; they just wore those beautiful dresses and went to tea parties.

Woman: You must be joking! Their clothes were terribly uncomfortable and their tea parties were very formal and boring. They used to wear their hats and long gloves even when they were eating cakes and biscuits. And men were not usually invited.

Man: Really? Weren't they?

Woman: And think of the poor servants. What a terrible life—just cleaning and cooking for other people all the time!

Man: But you hate housework!

Woman: Yes, I know, but there are lots of machines now to help you with the housework. People don't need servants.

Man: Maybe they don't, but life then was much slower than it is now—people nowadays are always rushing, and they never have time to stop and enjoy themselves.

Woman: Life then was fine for the rich, but it was dreadful for the poor. There was much more



illness. They didn't have the money to pay doctors, and they often used to die of illnesses that don't exist in England now.

Man: Maybe. But people used to talk to each other, play the piano or play cards together. Nowadays people just sit in front of the television for hours and never talk to each other.

Woman: I agree with you about television; but what about their children? They left their children with the servants all day. Children hardly ever saw their parents! And the clothes they had to wear! Horrible, tight, uncomfortable, grown-up clothes. Children have a much better life now than they used to, and schools and education are much better too.

Man: I hate school.

Woman: And look at opportunities for women. In those days, women used to stay at home, play the piano, change their clothes several times a day and have tea parties. What a life! They didn't have any freedom at all. I'm very happy living now. I can work, have a career, do what I want to.

Man: You mean you can work hard all your life like a Victorian servant.

Woman: Life isn't all tea parties, you know.

Key

A. Decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F) according to the tape.

- 1) The two speakers agree that Victorian life used to be much more fun than it is now. [F]
- 2) In Victorian England, people had to wear hats and long gloves even when they were eating cakes and biscuits. [T]
- 3) Life is much slower than it used to be in Victorian England, where people never had time to stop and enjoy themselves. [F]
- 4) There were more illnesses in Victorian times, some of which do not exist today. [T]
- 5) Children in Victorian England hardly ever saw their parents, because their parents were working hard. [F]
- 6) Children nowadays do not wear tight, uncomfortable grown-up clothes, and their life is much better than before. [T]
- 7) According to the woman, women today enjoy more freedom, though they may have to work hard. [T]



B. Write out a list of the advantages and disadvantages of life in the Victorian times.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Lots of servants to do the work	Terrible life for servants
Beautiful clothes to wear	Very uncomfortable clothes
Lots of tea parties	boring and formal tea parties—often no men being invited
Life being slower	Much more illness
Plenty of time to talk to each other	Children left with servants all day
	very poor education
	No freedom for women

Tips

In this part, two people compare life in Victorian times to life today in England. The interesting thing is, they seem to have different views about the respective advantages and disadvantages.

Before playing the tape, ask students to read the statements in Exercise A so as to get a general idea of what the passage is about. While listening, students should pay special attention to the two speakers' arguments in support of their opinions. Students may take notes, and it is recommended that the ideas of the two speakers are put in different columns to avoid confusion.

Exercise A helps students to make clear of some important supporting details of the two speakers' views. In Exercise B, the key only provides the most important advantages and disadvantages. The students may add some more.

Task 6

Script

The American family unit is in the process of change. There used to be mainly two types of families: the extended and the nuclear. The extended family most often included mother, father, children, and some other relatives, such as grandparents, living in the same house or nearby. Then as job patterns changed and the economy progressed from agricultural to industrial, people were forced to



- 3) Now besides these two types of traditional groupings, the word “family” is being expanded to include a variety of other living arrangements.

C. Complete the definitions below according to what you hear on the tape.

- 1) The extended families most often include mother, father, children, and some other relatives, such as grandparents, living in the same house or nearby.
- 2) The nuclear families usually consist of only the parents and the children.
- 3) The blended families occur when previously married men and women marry again and combine the children from former marriages into a new family.

Tips

Play the tape once and ask students to finish Exercise A, for it is designed to test their general understanding of the passage. Then play the tape again for Exercise B and C. Students can use their own words to complete the definitions in Exercise C.

Task 7

Script

In Japan both men and women go to university and both men and women study the arts such as history or English. But very few women study science, medicine or engineering. In engineering classes of thirty or forty students, there may be only one or two women. Men and women both go to university in order to get good jobs: men want to work for a big company, be successful, earn a lot of money and support a family; women, on the other hand, want to work for a big company because they have a better chance of meeting a successful man and getting married. This is changing, however, as Japanese women begin to think about their own careers. They have begun to take jobs which they like rather than jobs in order to find a husband.

Men work for their whole lives and usually stay with the same company. A woman may work up to ten years, but after that she usually gets married. Most women are married by the age of twenty-seven, then they stay at home and look after the children. A man does not cook or look after the

children. When he comes home, his meal must be ready. The woman may go out in the afternoon, shopping with her friends or having a chat, but she must go back home by four o'clock to prepare the meal. Then she may have to wait a long time for her husband to come home. Often he has to go out for a drink after work: if he doesn't he may not rise very high in the company. After her children grow up, a woman can go back to work, but it is not easy. If her former company takes older women back, she might be lucky. But most women find it difficult to find a job when they are older.

Key

A. Fill in the following chart with a "✓" mark in corresponding columns according to the information given on the tape.

	Men	Women	Both
Study subjects like history or English			✓
Study engineering	✓		
Go to university to get good jobs			✓
Look for a good job because they want a good husband		✓	
Look for a good job because they want to be successful	✓		
Work for a lifetime	✓		
Work up to ten years		✓	
Get married by twenty-seven		✓	
Cook the meals		✓	
Look after the children		✓	
Go out for a drink after work	✓		
Come home by four o'clock in the afternoon		✓	

B. Choose the best answer to complete each of the following sentences.

- Japanese women often go to university to study _____. (← **c**)
 a) medicine b) science c) arts
- There may be _____ women in engineering classes of thirty or forty students. (← **c**)
 a) three or five b) two or four c) one or two
- Men do NOT want to work for a big company to _____. (← **a**)
 a) look for a wife b) earn a lot of money c) support a family



- 4) Nowadays Japanese women begin to look for a job because they _____. (← **b**)
a) want to compete with men b) like it c) hope to find a good husband
- 5) A few years after Japanese women get married, they often _____. (← **c**)
a) work in the same company
b) find a better job in another company
c) stay at home and look after everything
- 6) After Japanese men get married, they often _____. (← **c**)
a) prepare the meal
b) look after the children
c) go out for a drink after work
- 7) Japanese women can go back to work _____. (← **c**)
a) after their children are born
b) when their old company wants them back
c) after their children have grown up

Tips

Before playing the tape, tell students that they should pay special attention to the alternative comparison pattern of this passage. Exercise A is designed for them to get the general idea of the comparison.

Task 8

Script

Matthew: Geth, how do people set about getting married in England?

Geth: I suppose the most common way is still for people to go home. For example, people who live in London now will go back to their homes in the provinces where they'll meet all their relatives and their parents, and they'll get married in a church, with the bride wearing white, the traditional white. Then they'll go off and have a booze-up with their relatives and friends and a jolly good time will be had by all. Otherwise you can get married in a registry office, which means you turn up with your bride-to-be or bridegroom-to-be with



two witnesses only. The ceremony takes about five minutes, I suppose. You sign the form and that's it.

Matthew: There are many today who say that marriage is a complete waste of time. What's your view of marriage in the twentieth century?

Geth: Well, I live in London as you know. I think in London, the tendency is to... for a... boy and girl, man or woman to live together before marriage and often to live together without any prospect of marriage at all. I think this probably is... is true of London and the other big cities than elsewhere, because after all people in London are living in a big place where home ties are obviously less restrictive. They can do more or less as they please and I think this is the pattern.

Matthew: But do you think it helps for people to live together before taking their vows?

Geth: I think in a sense the habit of living together before marriage may, in a strange sort of way, make marriage stronger, because after all the people will know each other better when they do get married and it might be suggested that divorce would be less likely between such a couple.

Matthew: Sue, you've been married for two or three years now. How's it working out?

Sue: I think it's a successful marriage. It's... I mean, it's difficult to say why, because we basically suit each other very much. We have a good friendship, apart from anything else, and, you know, we just go together very well because we respect each other's freedom and individuality, but on the other hand we really need each other, you know, it's...

Matthew: What about... have you thought of having children?

Sue: Well, obviously, like most young couples, we have thought about it, but, you know, we both feel rather, sort of, loath to lose our freedom just yet. I think we'll probably wait another few years.

Matthew: Is it easy in England today to people to get divorced, or is that quite difficult?

Chris: I think technically it's probably fairly easy, I think, because I'm not English but, I think technically it's fairly easy to be... to get divorced. But it's not just the technicality of it which is the problem. Divorce is... is a social stigma which people can probably cope with to varying degrees, but it's also a lot easier for the man because the woman, after she is divorced is, in fact, frowned upon by... by a lot of people in society. She is... is... at a... a much more difficult social position in terms of... of meeting other men, or whatever, simply because she is a divorcee.

Key

A. Choose the best answer to complete each of the following sentences.

- 1) "Taking their vows" means _____. (← **a**)
a) getting married b) getting divorced c) getting engaged
- 2) "We basically suit each other very well" means _____. (← **c**)
a) we like each other
b) we're completely similiar to each other
c) we get along with each other
- 3) When Sue says that she and her husband are "loath to lose their freedom just yet". She means _____. (← **b**)
a) they hate the idea of having children
b) they want to enjoy their freedom for a few more years, but they may consider having some kids later
c) they are revolted by the idea of giving up their freedom
- 4) If a person is frowned upon by society, he/she is _____. (← **c**)
a) criticized severely by society
b) ridiculed by people
c) disapproved of by society
- 5) When asked about how people get married in England, Geth is talking about _____. (← **c**)
a) people born in London only
b) people whose family are all living in London
c) people living in London with their parents and relatives living elsewhere in Britain
- 6) At a registry office you need a minimum of _____. (← **b**)
a) the bride and bridegroom plus four other people
b) the bride and bridegroom and two other people
c) the bride and bridegroom only
- 7) Geth thinks that young people in London often live together _____. (← **c**)
a) because they are afraid of marriage
b) with the intention to get married eventually
c) without thinking of ever getting married



- 8) Chris thinks divorce is _____. (← **b**)
- a) more difficult for men
 - b) more difficult for women
 - c) now considered quite acceptable by society

B. Decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F) according to the tape.

- 1) In Geth's opinion, people usually go back to where their parents live to get married. [T]
- 2) It is a tradition for all the relatives and friends to have a drink together after the wedding ceremony. [T]
- 3) Marriage in a registry office takes longer than in a church. [F]
- 4) Home ties are more restrictive in London than in the country. [F]
- 5) In Geth's opinion, people who live in London can do more or less as they please. [T]
- 6) Geth thinks divorce is more likely if people have been living together before getting married. [F]
- 7) Sue's marriage is unsuccessful because she and her husband have little in common. [F]
- 8) Sue and her husband loathe the idea of having children. [F]
- 9) Divorced women sometimes find it difficult to get married again. [T]
- 10) The technical difficulties are the only problems in getting a divorce. [F]

Tips

Exercise A, Questions 1—4 focus on vocabulary, especially some important phrases; Questions 5—8 are designed for students to catch the main idea of the passage. Exercise B is to check the understanding of details in listening.

Task 9

Script

Social customs and ways of behaving change. But they do not necessarily always change for the better. Things which were considered impolite many years ago are now acceptable. Just a few years



ago, it was considered impolite behaviour for a man to smoke on the street. No man who thought of himself as being a gentleman would make a fool of himself by smoking when a lady was in the room.

The important thing to remember about social customs is not to do anything that might make other people feel uncomfortable—especially if they are your guests. There is a story about a rich nobleman who had a very formal dinner party. When the food was served, one of the guests started to eat his peas with a knife. Other guests were amused or shocked, but the nobleman calmly picked up his knife and began eating in the same way. It would have been bad manners to make his guest feel foolish or uncomfortable.