

Generalising about social customs in your country hedging and generalising/ cultural training

Below are things that books like Culture Shock and Lonely Planet tend to over-generalise about. Choose one of the topics and try to agree what completely accurate sentence you would write for a foreigner (e.g. someone coming to your country on a business trip), then take turns choosing topics to do the same with. Your teacher will tell you if, when and how to use the useful language on the next page to help.

1. Blowing your nose in public
2. Constant sniffing to avoid having to blow your nose
3. Drinking directly from a soup bowl
4. Eating while you are walking
5. Eating with your hands
6. Eating your rice with chopsticks
7. Filling your own glass (e.g. pouring beer for yourself)
8. Gesturing with your chopsticks
9. Giving someone four flowers
10. Holding hands or walking arm in arm with your boyfriend/ girlfriend/ same sex friend
11. Jewellery for men
12. Kissing in public
13. Leaving food at the end of the meal
14. Leaving your chopsticks stuck in your rice
15. Opening a gift in front of the person who gave it to you
16. Passing things with your left hand
17. Picking your bowl up while you are eating
18. Ripping open presents
19. Slurping while you are eating
20. Spitting in the street
21. Taking off your jacket in a business meeting
22. Tipping
23. Touching people on the head
24. Wearing shoes indoors
25. Writing someone's name with red ink

Look at everything above and below, ask about anything you aren't sure about, and work together as a class to link the generalisations language and the topics above.

Without looking below, brainstorm phrases for generalising.

Compare with the list below. Many other phrases are possible, so please check if you wrote something different.

Change partners. Make other generalisations about your culture, this time without the worksheets to help. Then compare with another group.

Useful language for generalising

(Only) older people/ young people/ children/ teenagers/ conservative people/ traditional people/ rural people/ people from small towns/ the elite/ posh people/ women/ the religious...

The vast majority of people/ almost everyone...

Quite a lot of people...

Only a minority of people/ (Very) few people...

People usually/ generally/ almost always...

People rarely/ seldom/ hardly ever/ almost never...

These days/ In the modern world, people...

Traditionally/ A generation ago/ Until..., people...

People tend to/ make a habit of/ try to...

... don't care one way or the other/ don't have any strong feelings on this

... disapprove of/ hate/ object to/ are offended by...

... think it is rude (= impolite = bad manners)/ strange/ offensive/ unacceptable/ ill-bred/ disgusting (= revolting)/ disrespectful/ unhygienic to...

... are superstitious about.../ think... is bad luck/ ... have religious reasons for...

... don't/ avoid...

...are shocked/ surprised/ offended (by...)

... expect you to...

... are impressed/ flattered if you...

... tend to/ make a habit of/ try to...

... disagree about...

It's (completely) taboo (for ... people/ in ... situations), because...

It's (very/ extremely) important to...

It is (very/ perfectly) normal/ (very) common to...

It is acceptable/ polite to... (when/ as long as...)