UNIT 4: HABITS AND CUSTOMS

Task 1. Vocabulary

Check you understand the words and phrases in bold. Then discuss to what degree the sentences apply to your country.

1 The people are incredibly welcoming because **hospitality** is central to the culture.

2 It's quite **male-dominated**. Women are looked down on and there's still a lot of discrimination.

3 It's quite conservative, so if you don't **conform**, life can be quite difficult.

4 Religion **plays a powerful role** in society.

5 Everything's very **bureaucratic**. You need a permit or ID card for everything.

6 I think it's a very family-centred culture. Most people's social life **revolves around** their extended family.

7 It's basically a very **secular society** and people have **lost touch with** their traditions.

8 Socially, it's a very liberal society. People don't like to **interfere** – it's very much **live and let live**.

9 Life is **tough**, but people generally have a very **positive outlook**.

10 **Class** is a big thing. People are very aware of your background and there's not much **social mobility**.

11 Humour is a key part of how people **relate to** each other. People often **take the mickey** out of each other.

12 People are very **reserved** – you can only relate to them **on a superficial level**.

Do you think the descriptions in Exercise 2 are good for a country? Why? / Why not? In each case, try to think of one flip side.

Task 2. Discuss these questions:

- Do you know any couples who are from different cultures? Where are they from?
- Do you think different countries have a different sense of humour? Why? In what way?
- Have you ever misinterpreted something or been misinterpreted? What happened?
- What is your best / worst experience of bureaucracy?
- Do you think the government can change aspects of culture?
- What effect can each of the following have on society and culture?
  TV & film education money travel & immigration

Task 3. Conversation.

You are going to have a conversation about the place where you live now. Make a list of things that you like about the place and another list of things that annoy you.

Work in groups. Explain your ideas. Agree or disagree with your partners. Use as much language from this lesson as you can.

Task 4. Oral mediation.

Your friend Ashley is American and she has started to learn Spanish. She came across this article in Spanish but she can't understand it very well. Can you help her understand the article?

Discuss your answers to the questions with a partner.

I can't stand it when people slurp or eat with their mouth open. It's just such bad manners!

1 What eating habits do you consider unacceptable?
2 What are your feelings about public displays of affection?
3 Do you usually complain if you have a problem in a shop or a restaurant?
4 Who do you habitually defer to: e.g. your parents, older people, your boss?
5 Do you have a laid-back attitude to life or are you more uptight?

Task 5.

Task 6. Comparing homes in different cultures:

- Do you think the place you live in is typical of homes in your country? Why? / Why not?
- Think of the objects in your house. Which do you think are very common in homes in your country? Do you have any objects that are less typical? Why?
- Have you ever been in any homes in other countries? If yes, was there anything about them that you thought was strange or unusual?
- In what ways do you think homes / rooms / household objects can reflect a person's nationality or personal cultural identity?

Task 7. Culturally important people/things:

Work in groups. Choose one of these tasks. Then spend a few minutes preparing for the task on your own.

a Make a list of eight people or things from your country that you think are culturally important. Think about: people, cultural / youth movements, kinds of food / drink, special days, places, sports, etc.

b Make a list of eight people or things from anywhere in the world that are an important part of your own cultural identity. Think about: people, historical events, books, films, music, kinds of food / drink, places, sports and sporting events, etc.