

CULTURE TOPICS

Here are lots of ideas of what to learn about. The **LAMP** book has many more in Chapter 2. When you get to Stage 3, see Thomson's *Language Learning in the Real World* (Chapter 3.2.2.1, pp. 41 – 45) for excellent help in learning about the culture, relating general, overarching ideas and information to specific daily outworkings of it.

Stage 2 - Culture Topics Ideas

1. Learn to describe **locations** of major places in your city and to give detailed directions to them. Go out into the community, get directions to and find a location you've never been to before. You must find the place based solely on directions you can get from people on the street.
2. Learn to give a more detailed **autobiography**. Get the different words for phases of life like childhood, youth, school, military service, university, jobs, etc. Explain the different phases of your life (childhood, school, military service, marriage, university, jobs). Study the different forms of the past tense and learn how to appropriately use them in telling about your past.
3. Learn about engagement and **marriage** in Turkish culture. Discuss the different steps towards marriage in Turkey from *sözlü, ni anlı to nikah*. Learn what kind of gifts you should give to an acquaintance who gets married or take to a wedding celebration to which you are invited.
4. Learn about work and **jobs** in Turkish culture (hiring help, e.g., language helper, maid, babysitter). Learn the words for different qualifications/statuses like *çırak, kalfa, usta*, and high school diploma, university graduate... Study signs for job offers on *i hanları* to find out key qualifications that are expected.
5. Learn to describe a Turk's idea of an ideal **apartment** (using different grammar forms).
6. Describe the **geography** of your previous home area and your Turkish home area. Get the most basic geography words like river, valley, mountain, industry, population, and agriculture. Look at an early elementary grade-school book about local or Turkey's geography. The 3-D Turkey CD-Rom or one of the geographical puzzles of Turkey is also helpful in this respect. Explore the meaning of *memleket* and what people consider to be their *memleket*. Ask many people about the geography of their *memleket* and then tell them about yours. Ask friends and neighbors about different places they have gone and where they would like to live if they could choose. This can be favorably combined with studying likes and dislikes in general.
7. Describe **actions** more completely, using *-erek* and other adverbs you need.
8. Describe the **weather**, using correct vocabulary and forms. Get key words like hot, warm, cold, snow, rain, sunshine, wind, cloud, etc. Listen to the weather report on TV daily until you can understand most it. Discuss the different kinds of climates with people whose

memlekets are in different parts of Turkey. You can do this in conjunction with expanding your usage of the *-ir* verb. Listen for special weather-related concepts or phrases, such as *pastırma yazı, kırk ikindi ya muru, cemre*. Talking about the weather in times of change can be used to practice expressing expectations. Tell people what the climate is like in your *memleket* and what are the easy and hard aspects of adjusting to Turkish climate. Ask many people how they cope with hot/cold weather.

9. Observe product **labels**, public **signs** and notices (what forms are used).
10. Learn to describe the functions of different **household items**. Have sessions with your language helper where you describe one room and the items in it. Preferably do this in conjunction with learning the words for relative positions. Describe the different functions of items using the *için* form extensively.
11. Learn about the **religious practices** of your acquaintances. Find out about the most basic terms by which people describe their religious creed (like the five pillars, the six conditions of faith,). What do they mean to people? Ask friends, neighbors and your language helpers about their *mezhep*, the keeping of religious practices in their *çevre*, the meaning of religious holidays to them, etc. This can be combined with learning how to express obligation.
12. Describe your own **abilities** and inabilities, using the correct grammar forms.
13. Learn how to make a **doctor** visit, including making an appointment, describing symptoms, and buying medicine at the pharmacy.
14. Learn information and terms used for **family relationships** beyond the immediate family, especially aunts, uncles and their spouses, various cousins, and anyone else that is viewed as being a significant relative. Draw lots of family tree diagrams with your friends and neighbors and also show them the tree of your extended family. Use the opportunity to ask questions like where the relatives live, what they do for a living, how old they are, if they are married, etc. Ask people about their family history, where they came from, how life was in the old days. Tell them your own family history and stories using the proper grammatical forms. Retell what you learn to someone else in the family (this is personal info.) using *-mi* . Discuss how different relatives interact with each other, how often, what they do together...
15. Learn how to tell about **hopes** and plans. Study the future, the aorist and the *me/mek* infinitives to describe your plans and hopes. In a later stage, use forms of relative timing (before, during, after,...) to give a more accurate and natural autobiography. Explain your plans for the future in Turkey to your friends and neighbors. Explain where you will go on your holiday, what you will do on the weekend, etc. You can combine this with studying the real conditional.
16. Learn to describe the Turkish **education** system: types of schools and universities, years of schooling, assessments, *dershaneler*, etc.
17. Learn how to make and respond to **complaints**. Study carefully the way complaints are made. Discuss some real-life situations first with your language helper and then with a friend; for example, the taxi driver tries to cheat you, the *kapıcı* did not take the trash for three consecutive days, water is dripping from your neighbor's bathroom into your living room, the *yönetici* wants money from you for the repair of the roof of the building, (for women) a man tries to approach you inappropriately, etc. Study carefully how complaints are received and

dealt with. Discuss some real-life situations first with your language helper and then with a friend; for example, your son had a fight with the neighbor's boy, you made someone feel ashamed by making a comment about his/her reliability, you were misunderstood and someone is angry about what they thought you said, you want to limit your involvement with a person who tries to take too much of your time or tries to take advantage of you, you didn't pay the right amount of money at a store and realize it later, etc.

18. Learn how to cultural appropriate ask for **forgiveness** and how to respond to one who is asking your forgiveness.
19. Tell about your **previous jobs and present role**. Get the appropriate words for organization, company, etc., and words that are specific to your area of business. Get the appropriate words from your most recent job. Get the appropriate words for your present role as a language learner such as language helper, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. Formulate appropriate statements that describe the importance and obstacles of learning a foreign language in general and Turkish in particular. Discuss them with many people who have some rudimentary knowledge of a foreign language. This can be combined favorably with a study of expressing needs and obligations.
20. Learn to describe the Turkish **government** system. Get the words of the most basic government institutions: (President, Parliament, Laws, Decrees, Tax, Election). Use an *ilkokul* schoolbook for social sciences to get a rudimentary description of the state in simple terms. Take a newspaper article and ask a friend or language helper about all the government institutions that are mentioned and how they are formed. Then try to explain the equivalent government institutions in your country. Make sure to tell him that you want to understand this country but are not interested in politics as such. Stay away from any comments. Ask people about local officials, like the *muhtar*, *kaymakam*, *belediye ba kanı*, etc.
21. Explain **why you left home** to come to Turkey.
22. Learn to give and take **telephone messages**. Learn to make calls for information or zip codes and check to confirm the information you get with information you already have. Order a meal over the phone from a nearby place. Call different museums and ask for their opening hours (cf. Chapters 5 & 6 TYT), entrance fees, whether or not photographing is allowed, etc. This can be done favorably by studying proper expressions for stating intention and willingness (Chapter 7 TYT). Call different bookstores for a book that you would like to buy. Ask for the book and how much it costs.
23. Describe a **film** you have seen recently.
24. Learn about Turkish **music**. Learn the types of music and well-known artists. Learn to sing along with a popular Turkish song that you like.
25. Learn names of favorite **folktale** characters and the names of some of the most popular **stories**.

Other Ideas for Developing Culture Topics (Stages 2 & 3)

Housing:

9 From earlier house-hunting you already know the names of some items. Try to broaden that base. (apartment/flat, house, garden...bed, couch, mattress, pillow...washing machine, oven ... square meters, heating, water/electric cuts).

9 While you are with friends or neighbors, tell them you want to practice by talking about their home.

Giving simple instructions:

9 Study the different forms of imperatives and their proper use in dealing with different people.

9 Get the appropriate titles for different social and business hierarchies (director, manager, etc.) and learn how and when they are used.

9 Do different role-plays with your language helper, where he/she instructs you to, for example, prepare a meal, fix the broken leg of a chair, etc.

Giving simple explanations:

9 Learn to form sentences that give a reason for something. This can be done in simplest form by using *için* (Chapter 5 TYT) and using comparisons (Chapter 8 TYT).

9 Prepare a short account in the form of a story and discuss it with your language helper.

9 Prepare 10 key short statements that explain an aspect of your future work, and discuss them with your language helper.

9 Explain your favorite sports or game to your language helper. In conjunction with this, sentences containing 'which' and 'that' can be studied.

Giving simple descriptions:

9 Get the appropriate words that are specific to your future working environment.

9 Get a simple book on themes of your working environment.

9 Discuss with a friend or your language helper how things are explained. You can do this in conjunction with studying the *-ır* (simple present) tense.

9 Study advertisements in magazines and the way things are discussed therein.

9 Do a lot of role-plays where you describe everyday actions with your language helper. In the most simple form, this can be used to get into Turkish word order and the *-e* and *-i* cases. Later it can be combined with studying the *-en*, *-erek* (Chapter 7 TYT), and the *-lemek* and *-le mek* forms.

9 In conjunction with this, learn to describe people; study this along with the 'parts of the body'.

Comprehension:

9 (for men) Go to a park or a mosque where old men are sitting on a bench. Try to sit next to them or sit down on a free bench and wait for them to come. Then try to listen to them speaking slowly, maybe telling them that you have to improve your ability to listen to two natives talking

9 (for women) Become member of a tea with mostly old women who talk slowly and loudly, at least for a while.

Culture:

9 Find out about status/hierarchy-thinking and status symbols. Who befriends whom on what level and why in this society? What are the obligations a friend has towards another friend? Who would consider giving his daughter to whom for marriage in this society?

9 Find out about the classical values of Turks by watching movies that were produced long ago or portray something happening in the past. Contrast them with the modern consumer value system and the conflicts which might arise from this clash.

9 Find out about mechanisms this society uses to deal with potentially threatening areas, such as mobility and the loosening of family bonds, loosening of moral standards through negative Western influence, dark spots in the national history, value differences among generations, the transition from a village-oriented agricultural society to an industrial society, jealousy, etc.

9 Find out about different definitions of national and personal identity in the society. What constitute elements of being a Turk? What are they proud of as a people?

Additional Ideas for Culture Topics (Stages 2 & 3)

Get your ideas for other culture topics from the list below or from ideas you write down in your Needs Notebook.

Functional/Social

1. Request to borrow something
2. Respond to a request to borrow something
3. Retrieve a borrowed item
4. Carry out a limited financial transaction (depositing a check, exchanging currency)
5. Ask for/grant favors
6. Arrange for repairs and service (household)
7. Make small talk
8. Share simple likes and dislikes
9. Issue/decline an invitation
10. Visit/entertain a visitor
11. Play simple games/sports
12. Giving/receiving gifts
13. Express basic emotions (happy, sad, angry...)
14. Request/give permission
15. Compliment/accept a compliment
16. Express an opinion/ask for an opinion
17. Express doubt/certainty
18. Express irritation/disappointment
19. Plan a social event
20. Attend a recreational event
21. Avoid commitments
22. Sympathize
23. Understand jokes
24. Disagree tactfully
25. Make an excuse
26. Make promises
27. Express congratulations
28. Express sympathy
29. Express gratitude
30. Change the subject
31. Contradict
32. Emphasize
33. Insist
34. Clarify misunderstandings
35. Ask for definitions

Cultural

1. Etiquette
2. Mealtimes
3. Housing
4. Cooking
5. Gift-giving
6. Holidays and festivals
7. Sex
8. Childbirth, pregnancy, abortion
9. Racial and ethnic groups
10. Death, mourning, funerals
11. Superstitions
12. Hospitality
13. Humor
14. Inappropriate subjects/taboos
15. Leisure, travel, vacation
16. Turkish history
17. Lifestyles
18. Coming of age
19. Pets and domestic animals
20. Dreams
21. Describing textures
22. Arts and crafts
23. Describing geography in much more detail
24. Do a fuller study of holidays
25. Do a study of religious sects (mezhepler) in Turkey

Other

1. Perform arithmetic operations
2. Comprehend ads and announcements on radio and TV
3. Read advertisements
4. Write short informational notes
5. Understand radio and TV
6. Break social contact with appropriate mannerisms
7. Tongue twisters

Additional Ideas for Culture Topics (Stage 3)

Go back and look again at your Stage 2 list for ideas. You may want to take a fresh look at some of them in greater detail, especially the ones you did early on.

General

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|----|-----------------------------------|-----|---|
| 1. | What to do in emergencies | 10. | Plead |
| 2. | Share secrets | 11. | Soften the truth |
| 3. | Speak of personal accomplishments | 12. | Chastise another person |
| 4. | Tease | 13. | Threaten |
| 5. | Break off a relationship | 14. | Tell jokes |
| 6. | Counsel | 15. | Interpret and translate |
| 7. | Praise | 16. | Paraphrase |
| 8. | Flatter | 17. | Play word games |
| 9. | Insult | 18. | Take and defend a stand on a current national issue |

Professional

1. Discuss ideas related to your field
2. Apply for business permits
3. Setup your business/office
4. Make business contacts
5. Prepare a business brochure

Cultural

1. Arts
2. Law
3. Attitudes toward animals and nature
4. Community organization
5. Residence rules
6. Property rights
7. Status differentiation
8. Social mobility
9. Ethics

Ministry (You can use the spiritual topics that you are working on in your Culture Topics)

1. Further develop your personal testimony (long and short versions)
2. Summarize the Gospel in terms meaningful to Turks (perhaps in separate sections, e.g., who God is, who Jesus is, who the Holy Spirit is, what sin is, etc.)
3. Learn witnessing terminology and phrases
4. Learn the common Muslim “objections” to the Gospel and ways to address them
5. Specific answers to prayer
6. God’s special care or protection, direction or guidance, provision
7. God’s special physical touch or healing
8. Specific areas where God is currently working in your life

**American Association of Teachers of Turkish (AATT)
Language Learning Framework For Turkish
Interim Report, Draft, 1995: pp. 39, 40**

Among the questions teachers might want students to consider within this cultural literacy framework are the following:

From the viewpoint of a Turk:

What is a Turk?

What does he regard as his duties and responsibilities, to himself, his family, his friends and neighbors, his co-workers in the work place, his co-religionists, the wider society, his nation?

How extensive is that group which he regards as family?

What does he regard as the duties of his family, his friends and neighbors, his co-religionists, the wider society, the country toward him?

What are the characteristics of his personal relationships?

What are they for, what should they yield?

What is a friend and what are his roles?

How much time in a week does a Turk spend in social activities?

What is the nature of these activities?

What are the characteristics of communication between friends, between acquaintances?

What are acceptable topics of conversation between what kind of speakers under what social circumstances?

What are the relative roles of cooperation and competition between which persons or groups under what circumstances?

What are his views of relations between the sexes, between siblings, between the generations, between families, between classes?

What is his view of human nature [Are men basically good? How far are they to be trusted? What can one expect of them]?

What is his moral orientation?

What is the well-lived, ideal life?

What personal qualities does he most admire?

What does he see as the ideal person from a moral perspective?

Who are his role models?

To what extent are his values related to Islam, to other standards?

What does he regard as the proper role of religion in life?

What does he regard as his religious duties?

How does he actually practice his religion? [What part of the population does what?]

How much time does he spend in this activity?

How do his practices relate to his values?

What is time well spent?

How does he view the main stages of life: birth, marriage, death?

With what observances and ceremonies does he mark these events?

What are his views on the world of work, earning a living?

What for him is the importance, value of work?

What does he regard as necessary work, what as not?

How does he rank different occupations in terms of status?

How does he get things done within the structure of Turkish society? [What is the relative role of established institutions, personal connections, etc.?]

What does he feel should be the relationship between cooperation and competition, work and leisure?

What is his attitude toward authority?

How does he spend his leisure time, what are his favorite forms of entertainment: his favorite sports and games?

Which arts does he prefer?

What are his favorite TV and radio programs?

What are his tastes in art, music, literature, film, etc.?

What styles of writing does he prefer? [Note the importance of poetry.]

Who are the favorite writers [popular, high culture cannons], the best loved, most popular works?

What are his criteria for 'good literature'?

What are the popular forms of music? [Specific examples of songs everyone knows, etc.]

In what contexts are works of art viewed and what are the determinants of these contexts?

What does he consider funny?

What are the characteristics of Turkish humor?

Where are they best exemplified?

How does he view his homeland Turkey?

What is his relationship with its historical past?

How does he identify himself within it, with what groups?

What are his modes and styles of interaction on the political level?

What are his criteria for high status within Turkish society?

How does he look upon its history, social organization, present state, how it functions?

What does he regard as the enduring social problems it faces?

Where does he think the responsibility for them lies?

What possible solutions does he see?

What are Turkey's most pressing immediate concerns?

How does he regard the future of his country?

What minorities does he recognize and what characteristics and roles does he attribute to them?

What is his view of world of nature and the environment?

What are his views on environmental issues, the use of natural resources?

Who in Turkey is at present concerned about these issues, who is not? Why?

What is his view of the world outside Turkey?

How does he view Turkey in relation to the rest of the world, what does he regard as its place in world history?

How does he characterize the other nations or peoples of the world, especially those with which Turkey has close ties: her European neighbors, the other Turkic peoples, her Arab neighbors, other Islamic nations, Israel, the United States?

What accounts for these views?

How does he think the outside world views Turkey?

What are his feelings about these views?

What does he regard as the influence/role of various countries within Turkey?

What does he see as the role of his countrymen, both Turkish workers and intellectuals, who have left Turkey and reside abroad?

What does he regard as his place in the wider universe?

What are his common beliefs, religious convictions, and superstitions that link him to it?

Students should have an acquaintance with the basic culture common to most classes in Turkey, but they should also have a sense of the perspective of the Turkish cultural elite or elites on their own culture and of how Turkish elite culture has developed in the modern period. Among study questions relevant here are the following:

Who are the elites?

How may major elite groupings be discerned and what are their characteristics? [What kind of families do they come from? How have they achieved their elite status? What type of education do they have? What professions do they occupy? Of these who are the

intellectual elites, what are their characteristics, the role expected of them, the treatment they expect?]

What changes have these elites undergone and are they undergoing now?

What is the relationship of the elites to each other, to the other classes, to influences from abroad?

What tensions exist among different layers of Turkish society and how are they expressed?

What is the relative power of the different elites?

What are their goals for Turkish society and how are they attempting to achieve them?

How are they represented?

What is the relative power of the different elites? What are their goals for Turkish society and how are they attempting to achieve them?

How are they represented by the political parties?

What are the features of Turkish elite culture? [What features with what group?]

What current issues are engaging the elite [reform, Westernization, Islamization, etc.] and what positions are they taking toward them?

What is their view of the status of the Turkish language? [Note that this is an important question in Turkey. What is good Turkish?]

What are the major publications of the elites?

What trends do they reflect?

Who are the major writers representative of these trends?

What are the features of the language they employ?

Sources: To ascertain the main outlines of the cultural literacy of the general public and to get a sense of the perspective of the Turkish cultural elites on their own culture, teachers should look at Turkish sources from which they can deduce answers to such questions as well as at a still wider variety of sources that address these questions directly. Among the former are the chief means of Turkish culture transmission: specifically curricula and instructional materials used in Turkish schools and the Turkish media. They are especially important in Turkey, where the state has played and continues to play an important role as a builder of the nation and Turkish identity.

Teachers could look for items in the following categories:

- 1) Descriptions of Turkish culture designed for Turks
- 2) Turkish characterizations of Turks
- 3) Descriptions by Turks of their experiences abroad

4) Turkish accounts concerning foreigners in Turkey

Students should also be aware of how Turkey, the Turks, and Turkish culture have been regarded outside Turkey. Among the study questions relevant here are the following:

How has the world outside of Turkey regarded Turkey and her culture at different times in history?

How does it regard it today? [Of course different areas of the world will look at Turkey differently.]

What are the dominant issues that have formed public opinion toward Turkey?

For our students in particular: How have Americans viewed Turkey?

When, why, and how did American interest in Turkey develop?

What are the main features of American-Turkish relations at present?

How has the world press portrayed Turkey and Turkish culture?