

# Le rapport au temps: cultures monochroniques et polychroniques

## SUBJECT

FLA

## GRADE

9-12

## LENGTH

~2 hours

## OVERVIEW/RATIONALE

The notion of time is not the same in all cultures. Some cultures are classified as monochronic while others are classified as polychronic. It is important for students to know that their understanding of time is not the only one that exists. This will help them increase their understanding of the values and actions of others in a variety of contexts. Many conflicts and misunderstandings can be avoided between people (peers, colleagues, employers) with a better understanding of how time is viewed in other parts of the world as well as within other cultures in their own surroundings. Canada, being a very culturally diverse country, as well as being a country that was inhabited by the First Nations, Métis and Inuit people long before it was colonized, houses people from both views of time.

## TEACHER GUIDE

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>Students will be able to identify the notion of time that exists in their culture as well as the notion of time that exists in other cultures.</p> <p>Students will be able to categorize a variety of quotes, idiomatic expressions and scenarios that are either representative of monochronic/linear time or polychronic/cyclical time.</p> <p>Students will be able to create their own quotes and scenarios to demonstrate their understanding of both monochronic/linear time and polychronic/cyclical time.</p>
<b>MATERIAL</b>	<p>Display an interesting visual that represents time for students to ponder as they arrive. An example of this is available in the first link in the resources section of this lesson plan.</p> <p>Print off the resource IC-1.1 for each student. It is an explanatory chart of both monochronic and polychronic cultures.</p> <p>Print off scenarios from resource IC-1.2. Print off enough copies for groups of 3.</p> <p>Print off and cut out all the slips from resource IC-1.3. Print off enough copies for groups of 3.</p> <p>As an alternative to a final class discussion, print off enough copies of the exit slip IC-1.4 for each student. This slip contains the same questions that are proposed for the class discussion. Each page contains 6 slips that will need to be cut out in advance.</p>
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<p>Start with a class discussion by asking students how they perceive time, keeping in mind that there are no correct answers. Responses may vary greatly, especially if the class is composed of students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. This will enrich the conversations. Prompting questions might include the following: What is time? Is time tangible? How do we make sense of time (e.g., memories, future plans)? How do we measure time (e.g., clocks,</p>

atomic clocks, watches, cell phones, day planners, stopwatches, seasons)? How do we prioritize our time? What do we view as a waste of time? What do we mean when we say, "Time is money"?

Summarize their comments by writing them out in point form on the board for all to see. This will help them to better visualize their own definition of time. If the class is culturally diverse, split the board into two sections for the possibility of two definitions of time. Then draw a long line that shows the past on the left and the future on the right. Ask students if this is a good way of representing their notion of time. Then draw a large circle and ask students if they have seen this as a way to represent time.

Introduce the term monochronic (*monochronique*) by breaking down the word. Explain that "mono" means "one" and "chronic" means "time." Explain that monochronic cultures view time as linear. Time is generally viewed as one continual stream of events wherein one event happens at a time and people organize their day by accomplishing one task at a time. Deadlines and productivity are highly valued in monochronic societies. Ask students : « Est-ce important d'être à l'heure si vous voyez le temps comme étant monochronique? Pourquoi? »

Introduce the term polychronic (*polychronique*) by breaking down the word. Explain that "poly" means "many" and that "chronic" means "time." Explain that polychronic cultures view time as cyclical with no defined beginning or end. Time is generally viewed as secondary to actions, outcomes and relationships. People go about their day moving back and forth from a variety of tasks and view interruptions as normal. Deadlines are seen as flexible goals because quality is valued over productivity. Ask students : « Est-ce important d'être à l'heure si vous voyez le temps comme étant polychronique? Pourquoi? »

It is very important to explain that differences in one particular culture are common. This means that a small country, such as Belgium, is inhabited by people with diverse cultural backgrounds. The Flemish demographic view time as linear but the French demographic view time as cyclical. Both cohabitate in the same small space. Furthermore, one's cultural heritage does not necessarily define their view of time. This means that not all Flemish people are monochromatic. This is what we would otherwise refer to as a *generalization*. When we categorize a culture or country into one of two camps, we are not inferring that all who inhabit it are the same – just as all Canadians are not the same.

Hand out the resource IC-1.1 to each student. Give them a few minutes to read it over silently or go over it as a class. Ask students if they have any questions. Let them know that this resource should be kept close by for the remainder of the lesson.

Give students a bit of a brain-break by asking them to stand up. Assign one end of the classroom as "the monochronic camp" and the other as "the polychronic camp." Explain that this is a continuum wherein placing oneself in the middle would mean that they feel ambiguous about either side. Ask students to physically place themselves on the time perception continuum. Ask a few willing participants to explain why they placed themselves where they did. If a student says something (in French) such as, "I placed myself in the monochronic camp because I believe that productivity and punctuality are important" point out that this is what is referred to as a personal value. Aid students in recognizing personal values from cultural norms and opinions from social expectations, etc.

Differentiating between cultural norms and personal values is a complex topic as they tend to overlap and influence each other. Simply making students aware that these two concepts exist can be beneficial to their understanding of culture.

Next, place students into groups of 3. Hand them each a copy of the scenarios resource IC-1.2. Students will read them, discuss in their groups and then answer the prompting questions. Once this is done, the teacher can call on groups to explain the answers they agreed or disagreed upon. After this, ask them what they have learned so far to formatively assess their current understanding.

Ask, students how someone from a polychronic culture might view someone from a monochronic culture. For example, they may view them as highly organized but also overly rigid with their time management.

Ask, students how someone from a monochronic culture view might someone from a polychronic culture. For example, they might view them as unorganized, scatterbrained but also highly flexible with their time management.

Next, have groups prepare a short skit that will either display a monochronic or polychronic use of time. Tell them not to discuss with other groups so that the skits can be used as a guessing game. After each group has presented their skit, they should ask the class which perception of time they were trying to convey. If some groups need ideas for skits, suggest topics that would interest them, as everything involves time. If needed, suggest topics such as: meeting a friend for coffee, planning a party, having friends over for dinner, planning a vacation, attending a school club meeting, etc.

Now hand out the resource IC-1.3 to each small group. Students will place the quotes and idiomatic expressions into the Venn diagram. During this time, walk around the class to observe and answer any questions. The center of the diagram is where students can place quotes and idiomatic expressions they feel convey either both views of time or that they are unsure of. Once this is done, ask students to share what they have done. This may spark some conversation or debate.

In their current groups, ask students to invent one French quote that would convey the monochronic view of time and one quote that would convey the polychronic view of time. Once this is done, ask groups to share what they have come up with. Students can vote on their three favourite invented quotes for both perceptions of time and the teacher can display these somewhere in the class.

End the lesson with these questions to formatively assess student learning:

- Is one view of time better than the other? (No, they both have their advantages and disadvantages.)
- Why do different people perceive time differently? (Because of cultural norms, cultural values, geographic location, etc. Everyone perceives any event differently due to their personal interpretation of it, their role in it, as well as their psychological differences.)
- Why is it important to understand the different views of time? (To better understand other people/cultures, to better understand one's own culture, to be more accepting of others, etc.)

	<p>This may be done in the form of a class discussion or an individual exit slip. The exit slip (IC-1.4) is included in the resources section of this lesson. As an optional final activity, the time perception continuum activity could be replayed to see if any students have changed their opinions or if they feel more ambiguous than before. Some students might also want to suggest that they appreciate both sides or might have new questions about the topic.</p>
<p>PROMPTS</p>	<p>Supplemental discussion prompts and some suggested responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do many languages express time? (Multiple verb tenses, quotes, idiomatic expressions.)</li> <li>• <i>Combien de langues expriment le temps? (Temps des verbes, citations, expressions idiomatiques.)</i></li> <li>• What tools are used to measure time in polychronic cultures? (The same tools are used in many of these cultures but much less emphasis is placed on them. Some cultures measure time only by the seasons. Some cultures, such as a small indigenous tribe in the Amazon known as the <i>Pirahã</i> do not even measure time and have little to no concept of numbers.)</li> <li>• <i>Quels outils sont utilisés pour mesurer le temps dans les cultures polychroniques? (On se sert des mêmes outils dans plusieurs cultures mais moins d'importance est placée sur ces derniers. Certaines cultures mesurent le temps en se basant uniquement sur les saisons. Certaines cultures, telle qu'une petite tribu indigène d'Amazonie, les Pirahã, ne mesure pas le temps et n'a presque aucun concept des chiffres. <a href="http://www.telerama.fr/television/a-la-rencontre-d-un-peuple-d-amazonie-a-la-langue-unique,102872.php">http://www.telerama.fr/television/a-la-rencontre-d-un-peuple-d-amazonie-a-la-langue-unique,102872.php</a></i></li> <li>• Can time speed up or slow down? (Einstein had an opinion on this topic! Time can seem as though it is slowing down when we are doing something that is not enjoyable and vice versa.) <i>Est-ce que le temps peut accélérer ou ralentir (Einstein avait une opinion sur ce sujet! On peut avoir l'impression que le temps ralentit quand on fait quelque chose de plus ou moins plaisant. On peut aussi avoir l'impression que le temps accélère quand on s'amuse.)</i></li> <li>• Why are Western cultures infatuated with the notion of time travel? <i>Pourquoi les cultures occidentales sont obsédées par la notion du voyage dans le temps?</i></li> <li>• Why do we place so much importance on time? (Productivity, aging, determining the speed of Olympic athletes with incredible precision.) <i>Pourquoi plaçons-nous tant d'importance sur le temps? (Productivité, vieillissement, déterminer la vitesse des athlètes olympiques avec une précision incroyable.)</i></li> <li>• Ask students if they can think of any songs, poems or movies that explore the topic of time? <i>Demandez aux élèves s'ils peuvent nommer des chansons, poèmes ou films qui touchent le sujet de temps?</i></li> <li>• Ask students if there are any other cultures or countries that they would like to plot out in their IC-1.1 chart. <i>Demandez aux élèves s'il y a d'autres cultures ou pays qu'ils voudraient catégoriser dans leur tableau IC-1.1.</i></li> </ul>

## RESOURCES

- <https://www.pexels.com/photo/art-city-clock-clock-face-277458/>
- IC-1.1 – *Les deux rapports au temps*
- IC-1.2 – *Les scénarios culturels*
- IC-1.3 – *Les citations et expressions idiomatiques*
- IC-1.4 – *Billet de sortie*

## NOTES

This lesson plan can easily be split up into two sequential lessons.

Monochronic and polychronic views of time is a concept that was developed by anthropologist Edward T. Hall.