

# All the right questions

## LINKS TO:

Stage 3, Module 2

Learning Object 3: *Could you please help me?*

## Exercise 1

### 1.1 Which of the questions, if any, do you think an Australian would feel comfortable asking another Australian? Give reasons for your answer.

I think an Australian would be comfortable asking some of these questions of another Australian. Some Australians might be uncomfortable being asked when they are getting married, or why they don't have children, partly because the answers might be quite difficult for them to talk about.

I think many Australians would consider it inappropriate to ask an adult their age, but would feel okay about asking a child or teenager how old they are.

I think Australians would feel uncomfortable asking another Australian about being dismissed from their job unless they were close friends, or were related.

I think an Australian would feel comfortable asking someone about their new car, but not in the abrupt tone that the sample question is phrased.

Although politics is a popular topic of discussion among Australians, I think most people feel it is improper to ask another person directly for whom they voted, although many people would feel okay offering this information unasked in some contexts.

### 1.2 Which of the questions, if any, do you think an Australian person would feel comfortable asking someone from Indonesia? Give reasons for your answer.

I think an Australian would be comfortable asking some of these questions to an Indonesian. Some Australians might be uncomfortable being asked when they are getting married, or why they don't have children, so they would most probably not ask an Indonesian these questions.

I think Australians would consider it inappropriate to ask an adult their age, so they would not ask an Indonesian the same questions. However, they would ask an Indonesian child or teenager how old they are.

I think many Australians would feel uncomfortable asking another Australian about being dismissed from their job, so they would not ask an Indonesian the same question unless they were an employer who was considering offering the Indonesian person a job.

I think most Australians would feel comfortable asking someone about their new car, so would ask an Indonesian the same question too. In Indonesia, it is quite common for people to discuss the price of things they buy, so if the Australian has known the Indonesian for some time, they might ask that question.

In Indonesia, it is quite acceptable to ask another person how they voted, but I know in Australia, most people feel it is improper to ask the same question of another person, so I don't think an Australian would ask an Indonesian this question.

### 1.3 Which of the questions, if any, do you think an Indonesian person would feel comfortable asking another Indonesian person? Give reasons for your answer.

In Indonesia, I know that it is common that most people ask the most private questions of other Indonesians. So, I think that an Indonesian would feel quite comfortable asking another Indonesian all of these questions. This is not to say, however, that the other Indonesian would respond to all the questions asked.

### 1.4 Which of the questions, if any, do you think an Indonesian person would feel comfortable asking an Australian? Give reasons for your answer.

Because it is common for Indonesians to ask very private questions, some Indonesians would feel comfortable asking an Australian all of these questions, especially in a social situation.

## Exercise 2

---

Sample answers:

**2.1 Which of the questions, if any, would an Australian feel comfortable answering on a form provided by an Australian government agency? Give reasons for your answer.**

Although an Australian wouldn't necessarily like answering some of these questions, they would expect to be asked many of them by a Australian government agencies such as the Australian Taxation Office or Centrelink.

Some Australians would feel uncomfortable being asked whether they had ever been convicted of an offence. I think most Australians would wonder why this question was being asked. In many circumstances, an Australian would the question an unnecessary invasion of their right to privacy.

**2.2 Which of the questions above, if any, would an Australian feel comfortable answering on a form from a prospective Australian employer? Give reasons for your answer.**

I believe that an Australian would feel comfortable giving a prospective employer their contact details, full name, and details of their education. Once they had been employed, they would be happy to provide details of a bank account into which their pay could be deposited, and give their date of birth for superannuation requirements. I don't think any of the other questions would be appropriate for an employer to ask as part of an interview process because they don't relate to a person's capacity to do a job. An employer has a right to ask this question in Australia, but I can see that for some people it could be disconcerting, especially if they had committed an offence at some time in the past.

**2.3 Which of the questions, if any, do you think an Indonesian person would feel comfortable answering on a government form? Give reasons for your answer.**

Indonesians are used to being asked all sorts of questions both in social and formal situations, so I think an Indonesian would feel comfortable answering

almost all the questions on a government form. Depending on what the form is for, however, some Indonesians might feel uncomfortable having to answer the question about whether or not they have been convicted of a crime. This is because they fear the stigma that might be attached to them as a person who has broken the law.

**2.4 Which of the questions, if any, do you think an Indonesian person would feel comfortable answering on a form provided by a prospective employer? Give reasons for your answer.**

In Indonesia, getting a job is difficult, so most people tend to embrace any opportunity for employment, even if it means having to answer some private questions. However, I feel that Indonesians would be a bit reluctant to answer the question about whether or not they have been convicted of a crime as that might minimise that person's chance of getting the job.

## Exercise 3

---

**3.1 Consider your answers to Exercises 1 and 2. What values, attitudes and/or beliefs inform the differences between the kinds of questions Australians and Indonesians feel comfortable answering in *informal* situations?**

Indonesians do not value the concept of privacy in the way people in Western countries do. This is because Indonesian society is based on communal values where the interests of the group are more important than the individuals. There is also an understanding of shared ownership among members of that group and this includes information about individuals within that group. Taking this into account, there is usually no offence intended. All the questions asked usually function as ice-breakers or because Indonesians are genuinely interested in the other person.

**3.2 Consider your answers to Exercises 1 and 2. What values, attitudes and/or beliefs inform the differences between the kinds of questions Australians and Indonesian people feel comfortable answering in formal situations?**

Australians value their privacy very highly, and as a result are often well-informed about their rights to privacy and protection of the information they provide to a government agency or employer. In Indonesia, most people do not place such a high value on the privacy of their personal information and, when asked by government agencies or employers, would not be as concerned with questioning how that information will be stored, used by the agency, or shared with others.

Both Indonesians and Australians generally share a belief that one should be able to leave the errors of their past behind them, and therefore would both be reluctant to answer questions about their past involvement in any criminal activity, particularly where they do not believe the information is pertinent.

Both Indonesians and Australians generally believe that their government should respect their rights, and use the information they provide in appropriate ways. I think that both Indonesians and Australians also believe that they are obligated to provide information to various government agencies, such as the taxation department or electoral enrolment agency.

**Exercise 4**

**4.1 Write a list of five questions, in Indonesian, that you feel it would be appropriate to ask an Indonesian musician.**

- Pengaruh apa yang mewarnai musik Anda?
- Dari mana Anda mendapat inspirasi untuk menulis musik Anda?
- Apakah Anda menulis semua lirik dan musik Anda atau apakah Anda bekerja sama dengan pemusik lain?
- Hal apa yang paling tidak Anda sukai pada waktu pergi tur?
- Di album terakhir Anda, Anda muncul bugil kecuali pada bagian tertentu yang ditutupi gitar; apa kita

akan melihat 'lebih banyak' dalam album Anda yang berikutnya?

**4.2 Write a list of five questions, in Indonesian, that you feel it would be appropriate to ask an Australian musician.**

- Pengaruh apa yang mewarnai musik Anda?
- Dari mana Anda mendapat inspirasi untuk menulis musik Anda?
- Apakah Anda menulis semua lirik dan musik Anda atau apakah Anda bekerja sama dengan pemusik lain?
- Hal apa yang paling tidak Anda sukai pada waktu pergi tur?
- Di album terakhir Anda, Anda muncul bugil kecuali pada bagian tertentu yang ditutupi gitar; apa kita akan melihat 'lebih banyak' dalam album Anda yang berikutnya?

**4.3 What differences and similarities are there between your two sets of questions, if any?**

I have asked similar questions for both the Indonesian and Australian musician.

**4.4 If there are differences in your questions, how do these questions reflect differences in the values, attitudes and beliefs of Indonesian people and Australians?**

There are no differences in the questions that I have asked the Indonesian and the Australian musician, however, on reflection I could have asked some different questions to reflect cultural differences.

Most songs in the international charts are in English, so although English-speaking musicians will never get asked about the language of their songs, many people from other countries will be asked about the language they sing in, and why they sing in either English or another language. Indonesian musicians often perform songs in both languages, so I could have asked a question about which language or languages the musician writes and sings.

Musicians are usually inspired or influenced by other music or by certain musicians. Indonesian and Australian musicians are similar in this respect, so I have asked them both about their musical influences.

Touring in Australia would be very different to touring in an archipelago like Indonesia. Australian musicians would generally travel by plane or road because Australia is one large landmass. These differences in

the landscape would affect the amount of time and the expense of mounting a national tour, so I could have asked different questions about what it's like being on the road in the different countries.

## Exercise 5

---

### 5.1 **If you were in Indonesia and were asked to provide personal information you did not feel comfortable giving, how could you decline without causing offence?**

If I was in Indonesia and was asked to provide personal information that I did not feel comfortable giving, I would smile and change the subject. If it was not possible to change the subject easily, I would provide an alternative answer. For example, if someone asked me how much I paid for my watch, I would say something like 'the prices of most things here are cheaper than in Australia'.

### 5.2 **What strategies could you use to handle the situation without causing offence to the person asking?**

I would adopt the following strategies to handle the situation: before being asked any questions, I would take the lead by asking questions. There will be many things that I do not know about Indonesia anyway, so it is not difficult for me to find questions to ask an Indonesian person. If I didn't really know the person asking me the questions, for example if they were a taxi driver, I could show a lack of interest in having a conversation by making a telephone call while I was in the taxi.