

CULTURE SHOCK AS AN SOCIAL ISSUE

**Gulkhumor Khakimova**

*Teacher, Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages  
Faculty of Tour Guiding and Translation*

**Khalilullo Kodirov**

*Teacher, Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages  
Faculty of Tour Guiding and Translation*

*E-mail: [asfodellserena@gmail.com](mailto:asfodellserena@gmail.com)*

**Annotation:** Culture shock refers to the impact of moving from a familiar culture to one that is unfamiliar. This impact includes the anxiety and feelings (such as surprise, disorientation, uncertainty, and confusion) felt when a person must adapt to a different and unknown cultural or social environment. It might include the shock of a new environment, meeting new people, eating new food, or adapting to a foreign language, as well as the shock of being separated from the important people in your life: such as family, friends, colleagues, and teachers. The article deals with culture shock as a psychic state of a person in a host culture. It examined the relationships between cultural values and experiences people gain being abroad. The article also presents the reasons and effects of this complex phenomenon.

**Key words:** *Culture shock, intercultural communication, integration, mobility, phenomenon.*

Culture shock is a widespread phenomenon. The social disintegration which it entails may cause alcoholism, drug dependence, suicide, promiscuity, crime and violence. In the inability of social groups to adapt economically it may cause debt, slavery, exploitation, general dependence, and as a result poverty, malnutrition and disease. It occurs in this way particularly with indigenous populations. Underprivileged immigrants into industrialized countries may similarly suffer. Other immigrants and sophisticated societies suffering from cultural invasion show more complicated psychological problems as a result, and the situation with nations is perhaps the most complex of all.

In the 20th century the Internet and modern technology opened boundaries and new market places that allow people to get education abroad, get married or develop their businesses in new geographic locations and cultures. And given that it can now be as easy to work with people remotely as it is to work in the same building, share the same room or have a face-to-face dialogue. Nowadays crosscultural communication is increasingly the new norm. The intercultural contact and experience offers the individual excellent opportunities to revise their mental constructs open up

and enrich his/her perspective, expanding horizons through intellectual modesty, personal and professional investment. Due to the raised importance of diversity in different countries, especially in Europe, intercultural competences are being attached a high value. Accordingly the significance for learning mobility at the stage of school or university years as means for intercultural exchange increased as well. On the other hand, in a modern, multipolar and multinational, dynamic world the problems of intercultural

communication are very topical, as they deal with the national identification and the national uniqueness of different nations. It demands future specialists and people, who want or have to live in a host country, possess a high level competence and knowledge, which enable them to orient in different culture and provide an intercultural dialogue. Thus, intercultural communication also involves the understanding of values, beliefs and paradoxes of other cultures, their collaboration and interdependence, as well as interest and respect to different cultural values, traditions, rituals, communicative experience and the good use of intercultural verbal and non-verbal codes and forms of communicative behavior. When one comes to another country for education, work or just getting married, he/she feels a strong influence of a foreign culture. People often face some differences in religion, believing and traditions of native people. On the one hand, intercultural communication is a very positive process, but on the other, it can be the reason of a —cultural shock. Culture shock results from losing all one's family relations, familiar signs, and symbols of social background, that is the ways people orient themselves in everyday life: how we greet each other, shake hands, give tips or orders, eat in a public place, make purchases, write letters, say —yes or —no, take statements seriously or not, understand jokes. These signs involve words, gestures, facial expressions, customs and norms, which were formed during one's childhood and years of study, and are a part of people's particular culture, which is based on the shared language or beliefs people accept. Such signs are beyond the level of conscious awareness, and entering a different culture people feel how these familiar signs are removed, causing the feeling of frustration, and anxiety. Then the feeling of discomfort makes people reject the new environment and suffer from the culture shock. For example, for a manager from Germany, greeting people with a warm handshake is both friendly and polite. Though the first time he met some clients from California (he thought that they were Italian descent) he felt the cultural shock: they came up to him, hugged him hard and kissed both cheeks. He was shocked, though his boss explained him it was their natural way of expressing friendliness, and that was okay. This is how things happen in everyday life.

The phenomenon of cultural shock has been a subject of different scientific studies. Thus, in social psychology we can meet the following definition of this concept: «Culture shock is an emotional and physical discomfort, connected with person's presence in a different cultural environment». In 1951, anthropologist Cora Du Bois first publicly used the term —culture shock to describe the disorienting experience that many anthropologists face when entering different cultures (Paige 1993) [2]. The phrase culture shock has been attributed to the anthropologist Kalervo Oberg, who in an article of 1954 used it to illustrate how people react to strange or unfamiliar places. Then the concept of —culture shock has become increasingly used to describe the challenges people have to cope with when entering an unfamiliar social environment. Although the term "culture" has been defined in a variety of ways, the principle of culture as shared meanings is the one which is common to all of them. It follows from the definition that contact between culturally diverse people will take place among individuals who are dissimilar, quite possibly with respect to important, deeply felt issues[14]. A further implication is that such interactions may be aversive and cause "culture shock", which create anxiety, and in extreme cases fear and loathing in the participants. While the term itself portrays these difficulties of adjustment as immediate, drastic, yet fleeting, in actuality, the process is more like a common cold than a cultural shock. In other words, the symptoms of culture shock often present themselves gradually and may not begin until after one spends some time in the new environment. Most of the research was basically a-theoretical, consisting of shotgun surveys of various samples of convenience, which meant that the results were difficult to interpret. Contemporary studies of "culture shock" tend to be much more theoretically driven, look at social as well as internal determinants, and allow for the measurement of both positive as well as negative outcomes.

T. L. Smolina, PhD in Psychology, associate professor, in Russian State University of Education named after A. I. Herzen considers such notions as —culture shock and —acculturation which are used for indication of experience of adaptation to a different cultural environment. She grounds this phenomenon on the stress theory integrative psychic factors as affective, regulative, communicative and reflexive psychic formations [4]. In our study we accept the following understanding of this phenomenon: the conflict of foreigner with different cultural norms that are ambivalent [5] to those in his native country. The numerous studies and nonscientific articles and tips for people going abroad make it possible to illustrate the list of cultural shock which includes: excessive distrustful about quality of the water, food, conditions of living, traffic problems; fear of physical contact with guide or servants; abstract glance; feeling

of helplessness; refusal of language acquisition; a big home-sickness. This list of symptoms of cultural shock was made by K.Oberg. Many researchers of this problem described about 45 symptoms of cultural shock today, which are divided in two types: physical (illnesses, feeling tiredness, problems with sleeping, nutrition (food), excessive consuming alcohol and drugs and psychological symptoms (feeling of isolation, accusing the host culture for own distress, self-pity, anger and mistrust towards members of the host society, worries about own state health, permanent strain and distress, concern to be cheated or misled, eruptions of rage about minor occurrences, decrease in self-confidence due to experienced inability to cope in the host culture, lack of assertiveness because of the validity of one's own cultural norms and values, helplessness and depression over everyday life problems that seem to be unsolvable and others). For example, in 1977 R. Taft showed certain aspects of cultural shock:

- 1) Tension, which presents person's efforts for psychological adaptation
- 2) Feeling of loss, related with the loss of friends, job, state (status) and property.
- 3) Unwillingness to communicate with representatives of foreign culture
- 4) Astonishment, anxiety, abhorrence, because of cultural differences.
- 5) Sense of weakness because of impossibility to adapt to new cultural surroundings.

Other reasons which can cause a culture shock can also happen when one takes a culture for granted or happen in places one expects to be. It's much deeper than the taller trees or buildings or unknown birds and animals. It is the accumulation of tiny details around a foreigner. Culture Shock can occur in reverse, when you return into your country from someplace quite foreign, to what you should feel home, but don't. Being abroad for a lot period of time have changed the person over the course of his/her stay in the other culture, and now his/her home culture seems out of place. And now it is much harder to adjust to, and can have greater impact on one's behavior and psychic status. The result of culture shock is a weak ability to adapt or function in the target culture. Culture shock causes a barrier to socializing, learning, and generally functioning in the particular foreign culture.

Though, some authors argue another approach to the problem of culture shock. Nevertheless, all cultural contacts are characterized in terms of negative affect, such as confusion, anxiety, disorientation, suspicion, even grief and bereavement due to a sense of loss of familiar physical objects and social relationships. The science presents some recent formulations of the affective component in inter-cultural contact draw on the stress and coping literature, which treats socio-cultural adjustment as an active, adaptive response. Self-efficacy as

described by Bandura [8]. In the 70' and 80' some scientists adjusted, that culture contact did not always lead to culture shock. Another approach says that —for individuals to function effectively in a second-culture setting, they have to acquire relevant skills and knowledge specific to the new culture; that is, they have to learn about the historical, philosophical and sociopolitical foundations of the target society, and acquire and rehearse some of the associated behaviors. The inner reason of failure is considered rather of foreigners' personalities, then of their competencies. That is why it is a lot easier to learn new skills than it is to change personalities.

Cultural shock can be overcome in different ways. One can do a lot to help him/herself adjust to a new culture. Though the main idea not to think that you are alone — there are people you can go to or contact who can help: family and friends, counselors, new friends.

Rather than giving up your culture so you can fit in, keep your mind open to new ways of doing and thinking about the new environment. The best way is to find things that are the same and things that are different. The idea one need to change everything about him/herself is rather utopian. All of the experiences before one came to his/her new home are part of them, and what makes them special.

One should know that the key rule to overcome the culture shock is to keep in touch with home and not to lose the link with relatives. The Internet, Email, mobile text, Skype, or just a phone call can help foreigners stay updated on the things happening in different country, and tell about your new experiences. The key to getting over your culture shock the attempt to understand the new culture and finding a way to live comfortably within it while continuing to be the part of the original culture and values.

The fact that culture influences communication remains true. And if understanding is the key to good intercultural relationships, then this can only be a good thing.

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