Culture Shock

1. What is it? (causes and symptoms)
2. What can you do about it?
3. A few positive thoughts

Language Centre, TUT
Why Me?
Distance

- England
- Wales
- Spain
- Finland
- Greece
- Libya
- U.A.E.
- Saudi Arabia
- Brunei
- Singapore
- Australia

Culture shock

- Finland
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- Singapore
- Libya
- Spain
- Australia
- Wales
- Sidmouth, Devon, England
The causes of Culture Shock

• “Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse.” [1]

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What is Culture Shock?

- Misunderstanding **semiotics** = not understanding cues from foreign culture.
The causes of culture shock

• “These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life:
  • when to shake hands
  • what to say when we meet people
  • when to give tips
  • how to give orders to servants
  • how to make purchases,
  • when to accept and when to refuse invitations”
•[1]

... when an individual enters a strange culture, all or most of these familiar cues are removed. He or she is like a fish out of water.
Some of the symptoms of culture shock are:

• excessive washing of the hands;
• excessive concern over drinking water, food, dishes, and bedding;
• great concern over minor pains and eruptions of the skin;
• fear of physical contact with attendants or servants;
• the absentminded, far-away stare (sometimes called the tropical stare);
• a dependence on long-term residents of one's own nationality;
• fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations;
• refusal to learn the language of the host country;
• excessive fear of being cheated, robbed, or injured; and finally,
• that terrible longing to be back home, to be able to have a good cup of coffee and a piece of pulla in an ABC, to walk into that local K-kauppa, to visit one's relatives, and, in general, to talk to people who really make sense.

When foreigners in a strange land get together to grouse about the host country and its people – you can be sure they are suffering from culture shock.
Causes of Culture Shock

• Expectation v. Reality

• Homesickness

• Ethnocentricity/Stereotyping
Culture Shock is...?

- The lack **signs or cues** that include the thousand and one ways in which we **orient ourselves** to the situations of daily life.
Symptoms of Culture Shock

- Depression
- Isolation
- Mild Paranoia
- Stereotyping –
- Blaming others = Aggression

“the difficulties you experience are ...created by the people of the host country for your special discomfort” [1]
Culture Shock Cycle

1. Tourist Phase
2. Crisis Phase
3. Adjustment Phase
4. Back to Normal
Double Culture Shock!?
A more positive spin on it

Confidence, Knowledge, Self-reliance, Independence, Friends, Networks, Employability
Can you avoid Culture Shock?

Don’t go abroad!

Travel broadens the mind
Causes of Culture Shock for Finns Abroad

- Communication Differences
  - Toleration of Silence
  - Speech-turn
  - Avoid Argument
- Love of Solitude
- Language
- Time and Space
- Equality
- Climate
- Privacy (Who is your neighbour?)
- Alcohol culture
Managing Culture Shock

• **Adapt.** Be flexible – understand what culture shock is

• **Small steps** (Learn some of the local language – Inform yourself about the culture – Learn signs and cues in communication)

• **Contact:** sport, socializing, parties, invitations, hobbies

• **Proactive:** Take the initiative, ask questions

• **Learn to enjoy it:** (sarongs and sundowners)

• **Concentrate on positive experiences**
Things to Experience Abroad

1. Travel around – The Magic Bus, Thai trains, tractor in Prague, camels

2. Awareness (those moments)

3. Culture = siestas, meal times,

4. Hashing, tubing, bat caves, barbies

5. University life (It isn’t just study)
Why I don’t think Culture Shock will be a problem

The weather

Communication

• Your background
Summary

Culture Shock = Not a shock but a build-up
Might never happen: depends on the individual
Be aware of it... (forewarned is forearmed)

Dealing with it...

- Accentuate the positive
socialise, talk to people, be flexible, go with the flow...
Why are you here?
Embrace the experience, enjoy the contrast, learn from it.
Find your cheese slicer

https://moodle.tut.fi/course/view.php?id=2987
Good luck! When you get back, Finland will be the same, but you will not.