

Learning Another Culture

Nancy Aalto
Lecturer, English and Intercultural Communication
Language Center
University of Tampere



Culture Surprise

- ◆ First few days – tourist, observer
- ◆ Become aware of superficial differences
 - ◆ Dress
 - ◆ Signs
- ◆ Surprising, but not troubling

Culture Stress

- ◆ Short term response to stimulus overload
- ◆ Have to interact, respond to others' behavior
 - ◆ Driving on the other side of the road
 - ◆ Shopping
 - ◆ Hearing comments about yourself

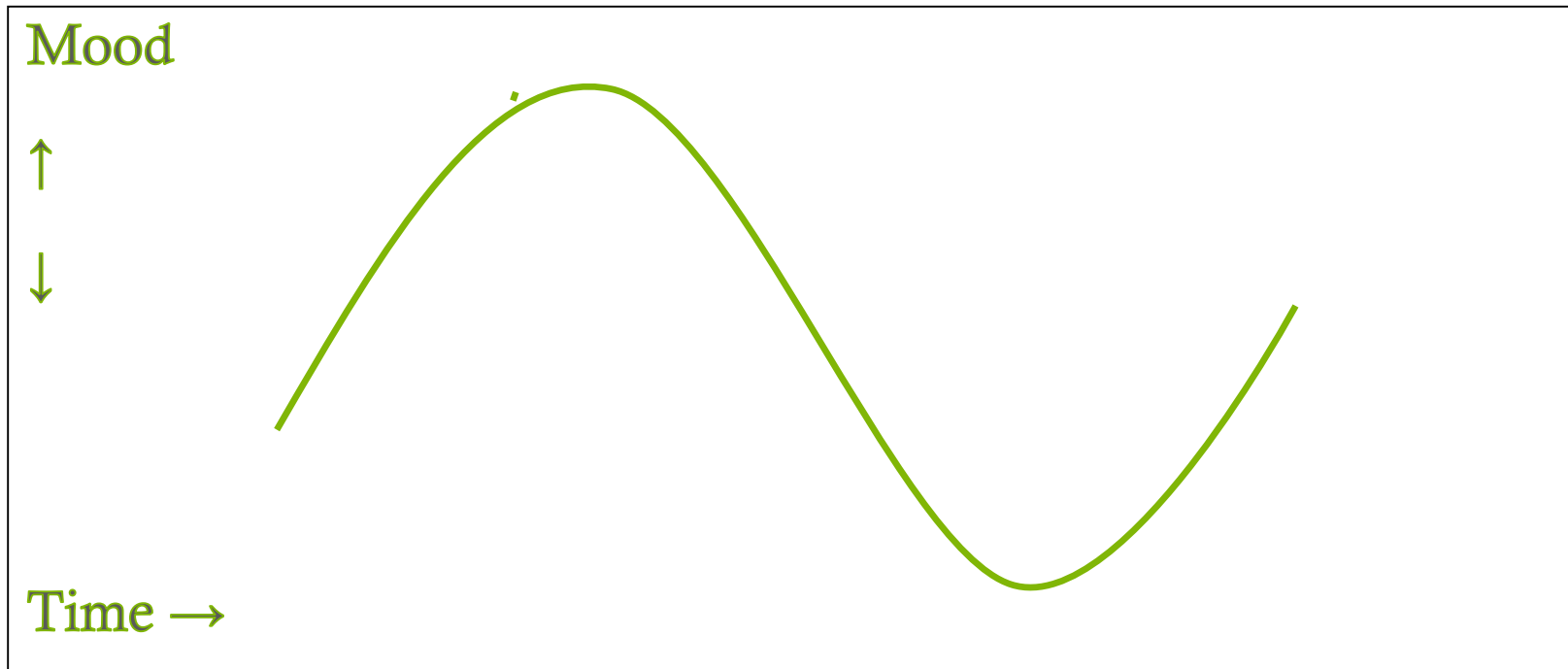
Culture Shock

- ◆ One part of the adaptation process
- ◆ Experienced by people who spend a longer period of time in another culture
- ◆ Normal, healthy psychological reaction to the stress of living in another culture
- ◆ Feelings of tension and anxiety due to the loss of familiar cues

Culture Shock: Stress

- ◆ Physical and psychological symptoms can include:
headaches, stomach aches, dizziness, rashes, nausea, irritability, insomnia or excessive sleepiness, depression, loneliness, withdrawal, paranoia, anger, aggression, hatred, fear, crying and complaining

The Adaptation Process



Why does culture shock occur?

- ◆ Loss of familiar cues
 - ◆ Physical cues – environment, objects
 - ◆ Social cues – facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, language, customs
- ◆ Breakdown of communication
- ◆ Identity crisis

How to cope with culture shock

- ◆ Anticipate it, recognize it, understand the adjustment process
- ◆ Try to control the symptoms, don't let them control you
- ◆ Consider culture shock a positive sign
- ◆ Put some familiar cues in your environment
- ◆ Communicate! Interact!

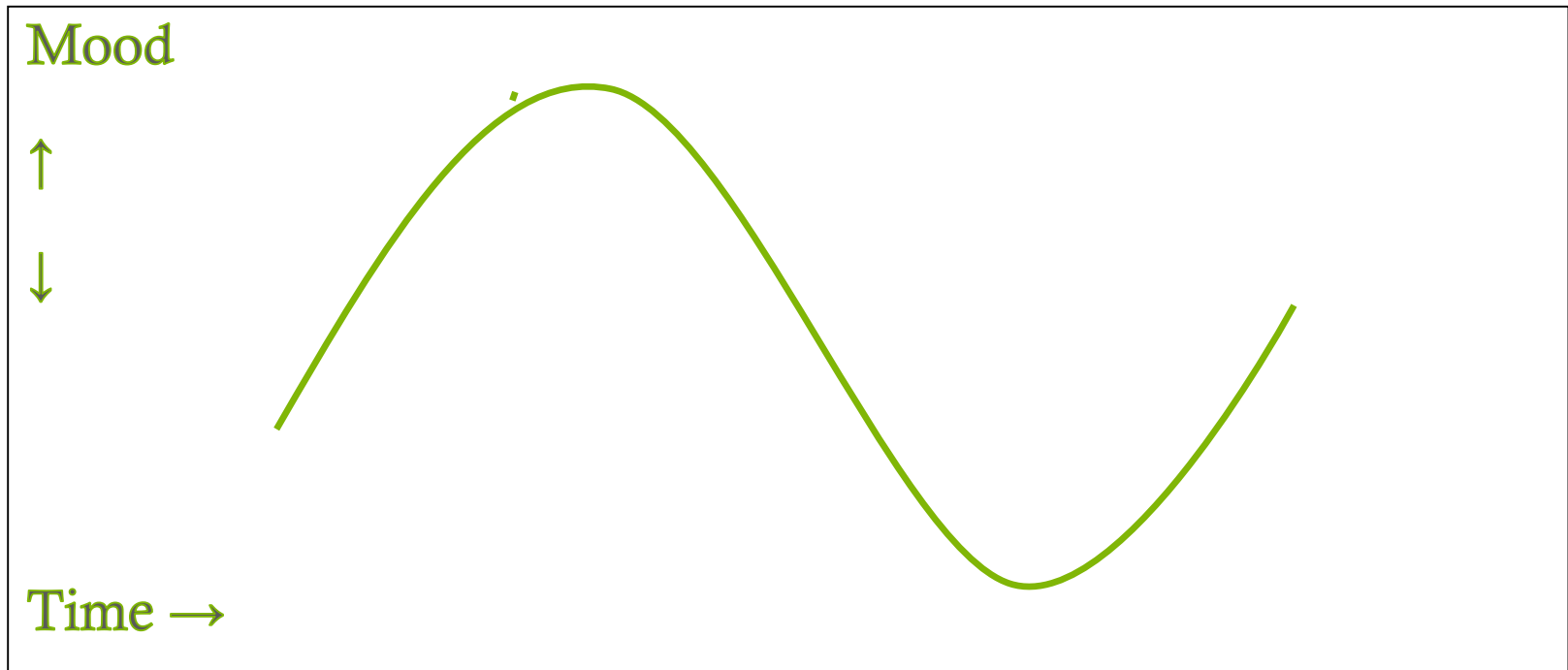
How to cope with culture shock

- ◆ Be flexible and open to new experiences
- ◆ Learn about the country, the language and the culture
- ◆ Pamper yourself a little
- ◆ Keep a diary of your experiences and reactions, reflect on your experiences
- ◆ Maintain your sense of humor



🟢 Returning home

The Re-entry Process



Why does re-entry shock occur?

- ◆ *You can't go home again*

Ideas and feelings about **home** – familiar places, people, routines

Dealing with difference

Readjustment unexpected

Learning point

Intercultural Learning

- ◆ Learning about yourself
- ◆ Learning about culture
- ◆ Learning about intercultural phenomena
- ◆ Learning about culture-specific phenomena
- ◆ Learning how to learn

(Michael Paige)

What you can do

- ◆ Observe
- ◆ Analyze
- ◆ Keep a learning diary – record your observations and thoughts
- ◆ Look for supporting information

Conclusion

Make the most of your intercultural experience, learn from it, and above all enjoy it!