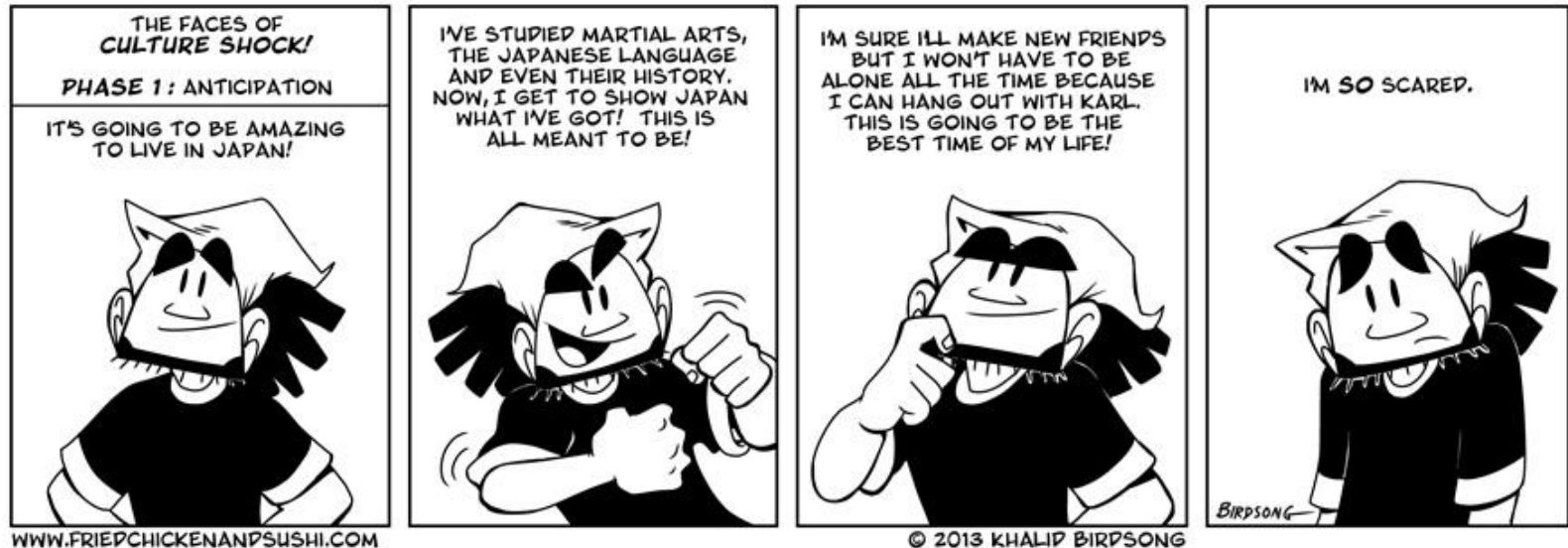


CULTURE SHOCK

ESLDO - Unit 3

What is Culture Shock?

Culture shock is the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone who is suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes.



What is Culture Shock?

It's common to experience culture shock when you're transplanted into a foreign setting. This is a normal reaction to a new environment where you are no longer in control as you have been at home. You may experience a range of emotions when adapting to a foreign culture, from excitement and interest to frustration, depression and fear of the unknown. Culture shock is a term used to describe what happens to people when they encounter unfamiliar surroundings and conditions.

Symptoms of Culture Shock

People differ greatly in the degree to which culture shock affects them, but almost everyone is affected by it in one way or another. Symptoms vary, but can include:

- ❖ Boredom
- ❖ Withdrawal or avoidance(e.g. spending excessive amounts of time reading; avoiding contact with locals)
- ❖ Feeling isolated or helpless
- ❖ Sleeping a lot or tiring easily
- ❖ Irritation over delays and other minor frustrations
- ❖ Suffering from body pains and aches
- ❖ Longing to be back home
- ❖ Criticizing local customs or ways of doing things

The Four Phases of Culture Shock:

1. Honeymoon Period
2. Irritability
3. Adjustment
4. Adaptation

The Honeymoon Period

You are very positive, curious, and anticipate new exciting experiences.

The Honeymoon Stage is the first stage of culture shock, and it can often last for several weeks or even months. This is the euphoric phase when you're fascinated by all the exciting and different aspects of your new life – from the sights and smells to the pace of life and cultural habits.

During this phase, you're quick to identify similarities between the new culture and your own, and you find the locals hospitable and friendly. You may even find things that would be a nuisance back home, such as a traffic jam, amusing and charming in your new location.

Irritability

This stage is characterised by frustration and anxiety. This usually hits around the three-month mark, although it can be earlier for some individuals. As the excitement gradually disappears you are continually faced with difficulties or uncomfortable situations that may offend or make you feel disconnected.

The simplest of things may set you off. Maybe you can't remember the way back to your new home because the street signs are confusing, or you can't fathom how and what to order in a restaurant. At this point, you also start to miss your friends and family back home and idealise the life you had there. This is often when physical symptoms can appear and you may experience minor health ailments as a result of the transition.

Adjustment

Thankfully this irritability will come to an end as you begin to move into the adjustment phase, usually at around six to twelve months. This is the stage where life gradually starts to get better and routine sets in.

You begin to get your bearings and become more familiar with the local way of life, food and customs. By this point you may have made a few friends or learnt some of the languages, helping you to adjust and better understand the local culture. You may still experience some difficulties at this stage, but you're now able to handle them in a more rational and calm way.

Adaptation

Finally, you reach the adaptation stage, sometimes known as the bicultural stage. You now feel comfortable in your new country and better integrated – you have successfully adapted to your new way of life.

You no longer feel isolated and lonely and are used to your new daily activities and friends. While you may never get back to the heightened euphoria you felt during the honeymoon stage, you've now gained a strong sense of belonging and finally feel at home in your new environment.