

Stages of culture shock essay sample

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Outline the stages of culture shock with reference to the literature and your own experience and make suggestions for how you could have dealt with culture shock better. With reference to the literature; also discuss the major differences between your home and host culture.

The phenomenon of culture shock is accompanied by almost everyone who goes outside of the home country, and sometimes even beyond the borders of the region where they grew up the longer stays and more difficult goals to achieve the greater probability for the experience of this process. Culture shock will not affect most tourists, who are going to holiday for two weeks, but is likely to affect student's in a language school, which will live for a month in the rhythm of the new country and its people, especially when it is accommodated in a student's residents or renting a room from a local family. It seems inevitable for people who travel for half a year or longer, such as contract workers, immigrants and students who are going to Erasmus international exchange programs. Culture shock arises and increases slowly, as the growing number of unpleasant and difficult events, and the accompanying negative emotions accumulate.

Culture shock is a phenomenon involving the functioning of people in mental, physical and social level, as a result of the difficulties encountered in the host culture difficulties, and its essence is experiencing negative emotions, which are accumulating, result in the deterioration of general well-being and satisfaction with life, and thus human functioning. Departure for a long time from the home university and stay in a foreign culture causes many problems in first weeks at many levels and returning back to the stable state can be difficult or even impossible for some people. Loads of British students

are choosing hot countries as Spain as I did also. However, as I'm already international student in England from East Europe going to south of Europe was a natural decision to discover new areas of world and cultures.

Following my experience essay is explaining few stages of cultural shock and influences on a student's body and mind. (Hoffsted 2010)

Changing a culture can cause a shock. Start of daily life in a new culture can be, without any exaggeration, compare to start a new life. Even if the purpose of your trip seems to favour maintaining the current pace and way of life, as a continuation of studies, a residence for a longer period in a new country is associated with learning all the basic and seemingly obvious elements of everyday life from the beginning. The first challenge and often surprises are waiting when you try to reach the station or airport to the new place of residence. There is a whole series of questions: 'What to get? How to buy a ticket? How to find a taxi? Do I have to pay extra for luggage, or not? In the native country this type of problems are solved automatically, without thinking. We just knew what, when and how to do it. And the problem of transportation is not the most difficult one.

Now when we know the rules of the use of transport we need to learn all other rules governing the social life and start to use them. When everyday life becomes a little tame, on the horizon there are more obstacles: norms, values and cultural symbolism in a new country. This process can be likened to learning how to read and write. Just as the child learns more letters and then what their combinations mean, as a stranger from another country must learn what is behind behaviour of members of a new culture and what the organization of public life is. Without understanding the hidden meanings

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and rules, it is impossible to communicate efficiently. Without the knowledge of the cultural code, finding and keeping jobs, passing a semester, make friends, receive support and assistance in times of trouble is paid for a lot of confusion, stress, and even unpleasant situations. (UK Council for International students Affairs. 2011)

The change of the cultural environment it's an also a social change. Rules governing the social life in the cultural context we learn from an early age by two processes associated with them: socialization and a process of cultural competence. The first of these is primarily responsible for the interpersonal relationships with others. During socialization, we learn to recognize others and communicate own needs and feelings, and to lead to satisfaction of both, us and the environment. We find out who is who in the various social groups, what are their duties and privileges what is the nature of relationship with other members of the group. Process of cultural competence have wider concerns of cultural space, which goes beyond the realm of direct contacts and includes the symbols, values and norms that affect these relations. Our environment in the form of closer and extended family, friends and acquaintances, teachers and even randomly encountered people from the very beginning shows us what to do, and what is totally unacceptable. This teaching takes place on a virtually imperceptible to the developing human. The problem arises when the same process must pass an adult.

Adapting to a new culture is called acculturation and concerns of people going abroad for a long time. First, the role of an adult is assigned a level of knowledge and skills, and if someone does not have one, it seems at least suspicious. Since most have no knowledge of how to act, and are very rarely

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in such a role, their behaviour does not help a foreigner. Two most common reactions include irritation or condescension. Both in most cases are the result of automatic responses, not malice. A good example was a foreign student who wanted fill in the registration papers in the university office. In the submitted documents were missing some form. Person who worked in the office said “ missing print D”. Foreigner student did not understand what form he need. University worker repeats “ missing print D”. A student asks, “ What does that mean?” And hears the answer “ D”, which although given in good faith (after all, the students know what is part D, in the end they are filling it every semester), it still does not help him solve the riddle of the missing document. Office person began to be annoyed. A student may feel the humiliation, powerlessness, anxiety, confusion.

While university employee – much more quickly forget the incident very quickly. In employee case, the dominant feeling was only fast outgoing irritation. Another bad way of treating a foreigner is to by patronizing. The representative of a new culture is explaining everything in detail as the simplest, and often very loud, the student is listening what he should do. The person explaining is trying to be conceited, begins to speak like to a child or to a very dim person and deaf in addition. This puts the student in the role of foreign inferior and self-reliant. It may result in a decline in self-esteem, powerlessness and fear. Secondly, not only the conditions for learning the basics of cultural norms are not comfortable, but the new social environment determines new roles, often in a conflict with the exercise of their native country. Being at home, was accustomed to independence and self-sufficiency in most everyday tasks. The problem is also a trust to others,

often students need to completely rely on a completely alien to the person. The bestowal of such a trust to a stranger is extremely difficult. First, because the adults don't like to be totally dependent on someone.

Second, because the object of this trust is to be someone not only alien, but in addition, can treat us with impatience, or condescending. Thirdly, because we often rely on that person with very important matters for us where we like to have total control: choosing the right doctor, renting an apartment or getting to the materials necessary to write our assignment. The source of many problems is the limited contact with family and friends remaining in the country and the loss of social space. They all disappear from the social and geographical maps closest to a foreigner. With their disappearance, the loss of the possibility of unloading stress-known and most contacts with family, friends and colleagues, we lose the support system from which we could use so far. Not only is there no friends to whom we can simply come and talk, but there is not even a safe place where we could, even for a moment, forget about the problems. Acculturation is very hard in the first period and it's not giving even a moment of rest, the result is a culture shock. (Schneider, S., 2003)

Stay in a new country is also a challenge to the adaptability of our body. Often when we leave the homeland we change the climate, eating habits and meal times, and even time zones. The body must adapt to new conditions, which requires additional expenditure of time and energy. For some time we have much less energy that is not enough for another activity. It would seem that this refers mainly to travel to very remote and exotic countries. However, even the movement of Europeans within the continent

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or even a trip to the nearest town can be a significant change in the conditions for the body. For example a siesta (Graff M., 2009) time, and times of meals in Spain and other times of activity, lazy mornings and long evenings. Another challenge is the microorganisms. Even within the same climatic zone occurring bacterial flora in water and foods is different from one in home. The same with viruses and bacteria that cause minor symptoms such as rhinitis, sore throat, cough, and a little more serious diseases such as angina.

The immune system must learn to recognize and respond to new threats, which is even more difficult, and so that your body is already very busy coping with the new environment. The new environment also charges extremely nervous system. This can be compared to driving in familiar and unfamiliar terrain. Entering to unknown territory, we are extremely vigilant, cautious and usually drive more slowly, paying attention to every road sign, billboard, intersection, narrowing and a hole in the road. We are not able to concentrate on anything else. A similar situation is a student in the first period of stay at a foreign university. Most of the signals are unknown, so the nervous system does not always know how to interpret it. Physical stimuli are relatively easy to learn and organize; it is more difficult with the information that reaches us from the social environment. There are two possible strategies for dealing with the ignorance of the cultural code. One is the adoption of ethnocentric attitudes or behaviour of other people and interprets it from the perspective of their own cultural norms.

The second is carefully looking at the interaction between the “ natives” as the most conservative of them to draw conclusions and cautious attempts to

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imitate. Unfortunately, both methods expose our nervous system at high load and the whole organism to stress. The first of these is the most commonly used at the very beginning, because from the standpoint of the cognitive system seems the most obvious. Seeing someone who gives us a hand, eye registers the familiar stimulus and the brain interprets it as always – that is according to what you learned in the process of cultural competence. From the perspective of sensory shaking hands is simply defined motion, a specific part of the body, which can mean anything. This culture “decides” when it is a sign of respect, when only an empty and formal gesture, and when the heralds danger. It gives a different meaning, depending upon with which coincide stimuli, that is, depending on situational context. The natural and automatic interpretation of the situation does not burden the cognitive system, but usually leads to confusion and these in turn to stress. So ultimately our nervous system is additionally burdened.

This strategy is not so effective. Students often have a problem with the cultural significance of the date of handing homework. Should it be just that day or you can send mail to 24: 00, or simply give in the next few days. If providing a job with a delay should it be explained and, if so, how – just “sorry”, or perhaps to tell a long history of difficulty in obtaining materials, or require a formal proof of the seriousness of the reasons for the delay. Tolerance for the delay and the subjective sense of time varies greatly between countries. It is easy to imagine what might be the consequences of their ignorance for a foreign student, and this formal university and the physical stress, fatigue and malaise. The second way is much better

protection against misunderstandings, and therefore failures in achieving the objectives.

The next step is to discover the meaning behind the information about the date of commissioning work. This requires a careful and systematic observation of the environment. You can pay attention to the timeliness of their peers and teachers, and their overall tolerance for delay. Look at the functioning of offices and public transport. You can also ask a few people get this straight. All these activities take time and energy in their own country which the nervous system could use either to relax or to another activity. Such effort, overtime, accumulates and becomes really huge, considering how many similar dilemmas every day has to settle a foreign student.

(psychologowie. info. 2011)

Changes in social roles and carried bodily functions involve changes in the overall well-being and mental functioning of humans. Overload and fatigue of the nervous system of the organism as a whole will lead to less psychological resistance, and thus the problems seem to be bigger and more difficult to overcome. They cause more stronger negative emotions, thus consume more energy, which in turn increases the load on the body. Lack of social support systems and incompatibility of the new conditions existing ways of coping with stress cause the accumulation of mental tension. Since the previous ways of coping with daily stress are impossible to use, are replaced by new. Unfortunately substitute defence mechanisms, often instead of helping the long-term harm, and only aggravate the situation. Depending on external circumstances and the suitability of the individual, they may doubt different in nature from the disease by resorting to all kinds of addictions, to

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risky behaviour, and even aggressive and trouble with the law. We can divide them into two groups: towards the inside and outside, or leading to isolation from the outside and those leading to the most frequent confrontation with it.

The first group includes psychosomatic symptoms, including frequent infections, abdominal pain, dizziness and headache, drowsiness, a general slowdown or even depression. Defence against stress is to reduce the stimulation of the body. Students generally do not connect health problems with adaptation difficulties, while almost everyone in more or less is experiencing health problems. In some cases the problem at the physical level is so great that it requires the interruption of the stay in the country and return to their country of origin in order to regenerate the body. In the contact with a new environment student are also looking for stimulation to cope with a new situation and stress. Typical examples are the manifestation of risky and often preserved in breach of cultural and legal norms. The relatively most likely to occur is increasingly experimenting with new psychoactive substances and alcohol abuse. Both types of defence mechanisms may lead to long-term pathology or cause an earlier return to the country, with guilt and shame, and even a scandal. (Cullingford F., 2005)

Mitigating the culture shock on the one hand is adequate preparation for people traveling to other country and telling them what can await them abroad, through familiarity with plenty of facts, on the other hand, providing people with skills to identify: the resources, the strategy, people and institutions that can provide support in this difficult period. There are many types of programs designed primarily to minimize the psychological and

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social costs incurred by students living abroad. An important element of preparation, which is usually placed the greatest emphasis, is to acquire basic knowledge about the country where person is going. Knowledge of the operation of public transport and public institutions, familiarity with banknotes and coins, knowledge about the holidays, basic gestures, the rhythm of meals and their contents at the beginning will reduce the amount of stress, provide basic sense of security and relieves over-exploited and that the cognitive system.

However, some of this information is likely to be forgotten even before the journey begins. The second problem with purely theoretical knowledge is that it does not automatically have the skills to practical use. What else, because it is recognition of banknotes in the privacy of the training room, and another issued to the rest of the conversion of the store, under pressure of people waiting in line and having a smooth pack purchases. Therefore absolutely necessary to use active teaching methods, preferably in the form of psychological training, and develop in the course of his situation as close as possible to those with whom the participant training will meet in the future. (polityka. pl. 2010)

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