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Cultural Adjustment

- [A] Living in a second culture can be like riding on a roller coaster. Sometimes foreign visitors are *elated*; sometimes they are depressed. First there is the combination of *enthusiasm* and excitement that is felt while traveling. New foods and *aromas*, different faces, foreign languages, and interesting customs all fascinate the traveler. A foreign visitor usually has high expectations and is eager to become familiar with a new culture.
- [B] Of course, not everything is easy during a long stay in a second culture. International travelers may have difficulties understanding the adjustment problems that *beset* them. Many people do not recognize that the problems, feelings, and mood changes that are related to living in a second culture are not unique. It is common for international visitors or immigrants to *vacillate* between loving and hating a new country. The newness and strangeness of a foreign culture are bound to affect a traveler's emotions.

Culture Shock

- [C] "Culture shock" occurs as a result of total *immersion* in a new culture. It happens to "people who have been suddenly *transplanted abroad*." ¹ Newcomers may be anxious because they do not speak the language, know the customs, or understand people's behavior in daily life. The visitor finds that "yes" may not always mean "yes," that friendliness does not necessarily mean friendship, or that statements that appear to be serious are really intended as jokes. The foreigner may be unsure as to when to shake hands or embrace, when to initiate conversations, or how to approach a stranger. The notion of "culture shock" helps explain feelings of *bewilderment and* disorientation. Language problems do not account for all the frustrations that people feel. When one is *deprived* of everything that was once familiar, such as understanding a transportation system, knowing how to register for university classes, or knowing



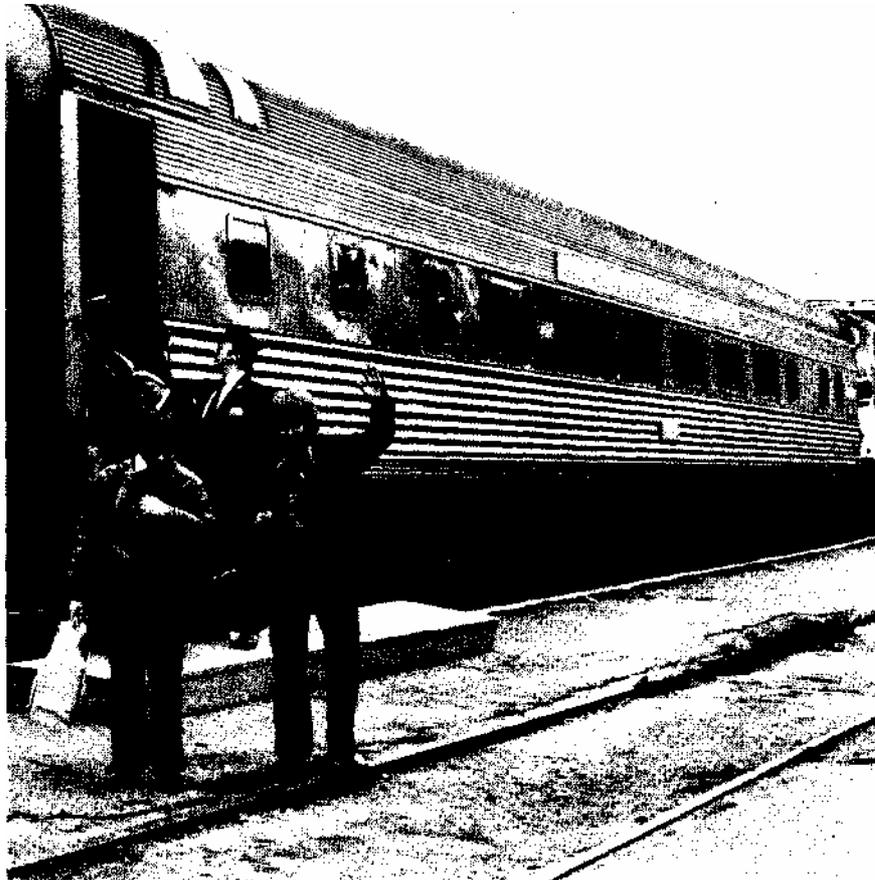
how to make friends, difficulties in coping with the new society may
15 arise.

The Adjustment Process

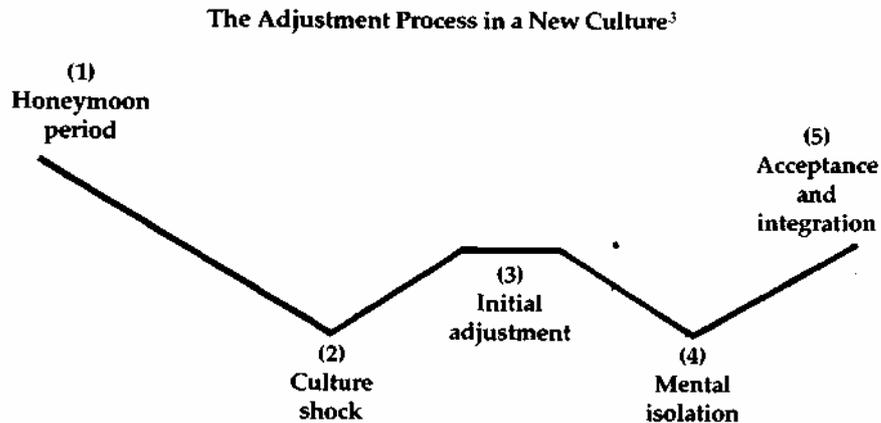
[D] "... when an individual enters a strange culture, . . . he or she is
like fish out of water."² Newcomers feel at times that they do not belong
and consequently may feel alienated from the native members of the
culture. When this happens, visitors may want to reject everything about
5 the new environment and may glorify and *exaggerate* the positive aspects
of their own culture. *Conversely*, visitors may *scorn* their native country

by rejecting its values and instead choosing to identify with (if only temporarily) the values of the new country. This may occur as an attempt to overidentify with the new culture in order to be accepted by the people in it.

- [E] Reactions to a new culture vary, but experience and research have shown that there are distinct stages in the adjustment process of foreign visitors. When leaving the comfortably *secure* environment of home, a person will naturally experience some stress and anxiety. The *severity* of 5 culture shock depends on visitors' personalities, language ability, emotional support, and duration of stay. It is also influenced by the extent of differences, either actual or perceived, between the two cultures.
- [F] Visitors coming for short periods of time do not always experience the same intense emotions as visitors who live in foreign countries for longer terms. The adjustment stages during prolonged stays may last



several months to several years. The following "W" shaped *diagram* illustrates periods of adjustment in a second culture and might apply to a one-year stay (approximately) in a foreign culture. Although the stages in the cycle do not always occur in the same order and some stages may be skipped, the following pattern is a common one:



Each stage in the process is characterized by "*symptoms*" or *outward signs* typifying certain kinds of behavior:⁴

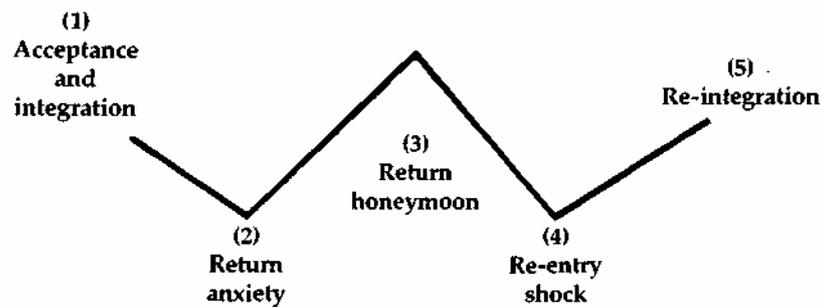
- (1) **Honeymoon period.** Initially many people are fascinated and excited by everything new. The visitor is elated to be in a new culture.
- (2) **Culture shock.** The individual is immersed in new problems: housing, transportation, shopping, and language. Mental *fatigue* results from continuously *straining* to comprehend the foreign language.
- (3) **Initial adjustment.** Everyday activities such as housing and shopping are no longer major problems. Although the visitor may not yet be fluent in the language spoken, basic ideas and feelings in the second language can be expressed.
- (4) **Mental isolation.** Individuals have been away from their family and good friends for a long period of time and may feel lonely. Many still feel they cannot express themselves as well as they can in their native language. Frustration and sometimes a loss of self-*confidence* result. Some individuals remain at this stage.

- (5) **Acceptance and integration.** A *routine* (e.g., work, business, or school) has been established. The visitor has accepted the habits, customs, foods, and characteristics of the people in the new culture. The visitor feels comfortable with friends, *associates*, and the language of the country.

The Re-entry Process

- [G] A similar process occurs when visitors return to their native countries, although the stages are usually shorter and less intense. The following "W" shaped diagram illustrates reactions and emotions experienced when a person leaves a foreign country and returns to his or her own country.

The "Re-entry" Adjustment Process⁵



As in the first diagram, each stage in the "reentry" process is characterized by symptoms and feelings.⁶

- (1) **Acceptance and integration.** See description given for the preceding diagram.
- (2) **Return anxiety.** There may be confusion and emotional pain about leaving because friendships will have to be *disrupted*. Many people realize how much they have changed because of their experiences and may be nervous about going home.
- (3) **Return honeymoon.** Immediately upon arrival in one's own

country, there is generally a great deal of excitement. There are parties to welcome back the visitor and *renewed* friendships to look forward to.

- (4) **Re-entry shock.** Family and friends may not understand or appreciate what the traveler has experienced. The native country or city may have changed in the eyes of the former traveler.
- (5) **Re-integration.** The former traveler becomes fully involved with friends, family, and activities and feels once again integrated in the society. Many people at this stage realize the positive and negative aspects of both countries and have a more *balanced* perspective about their experiences.

Individual Reactions

[H] Individuals experience the stages of adjustment and re-entry in different ways. When visitors have close relatives in the new culture or speak the foreign language fluently, they may not experience all the effects of culture shock or mental isolation. An *exile* or *refugee* would adjust differently from someone who *voluntarily* traveled to a new country. Certain individuals have difficulties adapting to a new environment and perhaps never do; others seem to adjust well from the very beginning of their stay.

[I] Day-to-day living in another culture is *undoubtedly* an educational experience. While traveling, and living abroad people learn second languages, observe different customs, and encounter new values. Many people who have lived in other countries feel that exposure to foreign cultures enables them to gain insight into their own society. When *facing* different values, beliefs, and behavior, they develop a deeper understanding of themselves and of the society that helped to shape their characters. The *striking* contrasts of a second culture provide a mirror in which one's own culture is reflected.

Comprehension Questions"

Choose the best answer for the following questions. You will find the answer either stated directly or indirectly in the reading passage.

1. The reading passage could be titled:
 - a. Elation and Depression
 - b. Experiencing a Second Culture
 - c. Culture Shock

2. "Living in a second culture is like riding on a roller coaster." The analogy is used because: [A]
 - a. People experience "highs" and "lows" during their stay in foreign countries.
 - b. Living in a second culture is as exciting and risky as riding on a roller coaster.
 - c. Living in a foreign country is all fun and no work.

3. What does the statement "'yes' may not always mean 'yes'" suggest? [C]
 - a. When people say "yes" they sometimes mean "no."
 - b. Ways of expressing "yes" (both verbally and nonverbally) may differ from culture to culture.
 - c. Nodding of the head only means "yes" in the United States.

4. In the context of this reading, the phrase, ". . . when an individual enters a strange culture . . . he or she is like fish out of water," means: [D]
 - a. It is impossible for people away from their cultures to survive in a new culture.
 - b. A fish can survive only in water.
 - c. People away from their cultures have difficulties adapting to the new environment.

5. If individuals in a foreign culture never learned the language of that culture, which stages in the adjustment process might they never experience? [F]
 - a. Culture shock, mental isolation.
 - b. Initial adjustment, acceptance and integration.
 - c. Honeymoon period.

6. If individuals have very good friends and close relatives in a second culture, which stage might they never experience? [F]

*The capital letter in brackets refers to the corresponding paragraph in the reading.

- a. Honeymoon period.
 - b. Initial adjustment.
 - c. Mental isolation.
7. If individuals never experience the "acceptance and integration" stage in a foreign culture, which stage in the "re-entry" process might they never experience? [G]
- a. Return anxiety.
 - b. Return honeymoon.
 - c. Re-integration.
8. What stages do the adjustment cycle and the re-entry cycle have in common? [F] and [G]
- a. Return anxiety.
 - b. Initial elation.
 - c. Mental isolation.
9. Why might exiles or refugees adjust to a new culture differently from those who voluntarily live in a foreign country? [H]
- a. Exiles or refugees would be concerned only with politics and would thus not experience the emotional "ups" and "downs" of living in a second culture.
 - b. Exiles or refugees would have additional psychological problems because they were forced to leave the native country.
 - c. Exiles or refugees would have more language difficulties because of political problems.
10. In your opinion, what kind of person experiences the effects of "culture shock" the least?
- a. An exile or refugee.
 - b. Someone with a two-month job in a new culture.
 - c. One-year foreign exchange students.

Vocabulary List

Paragraph A

elated
enthusiasm
aromas

Paragraph B

beset
vacillate .

Paragraph C

immersion
transplanted
abroad
bewilderment
deprived

Paragraph D
 exaggerate
 conversely
 scorn

Paragraph E
 secure
 severity

Paragraph F
 diagram
 symptoms
 outward
 typifying
 fatigue
 straining
 confidence
 routine
 associates

Paragraph G
 disrupted
 renewed
 balanced

Paragraph H
 exile
 refugee
 voluntarily

Paragraph I
 undoubtedly
 facing
 striking

Phrases and Expressions

roller coaster [A]
 culture shock [C]
 honeymoon [F]

Vocabulary Exercises *

A. First choose the correct word for the definitions. Then fill in the blanks in **Definitions** the sentences below the definitions. Note: *You may have to change the grammatical form of the word used in the sentence.*

	elated [A]	immersion [C]	• exaggerate [D]
	enthusiasm [A]	transplanted [C]	conversely [D]
aromas [A]		abroad [C]	scorn [D]
beset [B]			bewilderment [C]
vacillate [B]			deprived [C]

1. to trouble; to worry _____

There are many problems that _____ people in modern urban society.

2. lacking _____

It is difficult to be _____ of food for too long.

*The capital letter in brackets refers to the corresponding paragraph in the reading.

3. state of being surrounded _____
The child _____ himself in the cold water and began to swim quickly.
4. hold in contempt; disdain; reject _____
The artist was _____ because of his radical art.
5. on the other hand; in a reversed order _____
The professor explained the _____ of the mathematical equation.
6. magnify; overstate; overemphasize _____
I found out that his story was a complete _____ of the truth.
7. smells; odors _____
The hungry child's stomach growled when she smelled the delicious _____ from the bakery.
8. filled with joy and happiness _____
The man and woman were _____ because they were in love.
9. lifted and reset in another soil or situation _____
The patient's family rejoiced because of his successful heart _____ operation.
- 10.** strong excitement or feeling _____
Students generally prefer _____ teachers.
- 11.** beyond the boundaries of a country _____
Traveling _____ is an enriching experience.
- 12.** to go back and forth between two opinions; to waver, to fluctuate _____

The employee was criticized for _____ on an important issue.
- 13.** the condition of being hopelessly confused _____
Feelings of _____ in a new culture may last only a short time.

short

- B. Choose the word that *best* defines the italicized word:
- Multiple Choice**
1. When a child first leaves home, he misses the *secure* environment of his parents' home. [E]

a. loving	c. ordinary
b. comfortable	a. safe
 2. The *severity* of adjustment problems experienced in a second culture depends on the individual's ability to adapt to new situations. [E]

a. excitement	c. intensity
b. solutions	d. importance
 3. *Diagrams* in books help to clarify explanations. [F]

a. sub-headings	c. photographs
b. line drawings	d. page numbers
 4. *Symptoms* of influenza are fever, sore throat, and headache. [F]

a. cures	c. medications
b. indications	d. diseases
 5. The patient complained of aches and pains but she had no *outward* signs of anything wrong. [F]

a. subtle	c. direct
b. indirect	d. external
 6. Negative attitudes *typifying* pessimistic people show up in complaints and worries. [F]

a. explaining	c. contradicting
b. enhancing	d. characterizing
 7. The factory worker went to sleep immediately after work because of *fatigue*. [F]

a. monotony	c. exhaustion
b. alienation	d. boredom
 8. *Straining* to understand a foreign language all day long is extremely tiring. [F]

a. making advances	c. refusing strongly
b. making great efforts	d. failing
 9. Little by little, people began to lose *confidence* in their national leaders. [F]

a. understanding	c. admiration
b. trust	d. interest

short

10. The office employees were bored by their "eight-to-five" *routine*. [F]

- a. established procedure c. work pressure
b. job duties d. coffee break

11. The businessman liked all of his *associates*. [F]

- a. colleagues c. subordinates
b. employers d. competitors

C. Match the words on the left with the definitions on the right. Place the **Matching** letter in the space next to the word. [G], [H], and [I].

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| disrupted ____ | a. one who flees to a foreign country to escape danger |
| renewed ____ | b. noticeable, remarkable |
| balanced ----- | c. disturbed |
| exile ____ | d. bringing face to face; confronting |
| refugee | e. in a manner brought about by one's own free choice |
| voluntarily _____ | if steady, equal in weight or force |
| -undoubtedly ____ | g. certainly |
| facing | h. one who is forced to leave one's country |
| striking ____ | i. made new again |

D. Choose the correct meaning.

Phrases and Expressions

1. "Roller coasters" are found in: [A]
 - a. Second cultures.
 - b. Adjustment cycles.
 - c. Amusement parks.
2. "Culture shock" is usually experienced toward the: [C]
 - a. End of a stay in a foreign country.
 - b. Beginning of a stay in a foreign country.
 - c. Middle of a stay in a foreign country.
3. A "honeymoon" is: [F]
 - a. A sweet vision in the sky.
 - b. A sugared moon-shaped breakfast roll.
 - c. The vacation newly weds take immediately after their wedding.

Conversational Activities

A. Read the following story and think about what happened. Then complete **Perceptions** the exercise, in which you will make decisions about the degree to which **and Values** you approve and disapprove of the actions of the five characters.

ALLIGATOR RIVER⁷

CHARACTERS

- Rosemary:** Main character
Geoffrey: Rosemary's fiance
Sinbad: Boat owner
Frederick: Rosemary's acquaintance
Dennis: Rosemary's second friend

Rosemary is a woman of about 21 years of age. For several months she has been engaged to a young man named Geoffrey. The problem she faces is that between her and her fiance there lies a river. No ordinary river, but a deep, wide river filled with hungry alligators.

Rosemary wonders how she can cross the river. She remembers Sinbad, who has the only boat in the area. She then approaches Sinbad, asking him to take her across. He replies, "Yes, I'll take you across if you'll spend the night with me." Shocked at this offer, she turns to another acquaintance, Frederick, and tells him her story. Frederick responds by saying, "Yes, Rosemary, I understand your problem—but—it's your problem, not mine." Rosemary decides to return to Sinbad, spends the night with him, and in the morning he takes her across the river.

Her meeting with Geoffrey is warm. But on the evening before they are to be married, Rosemary feels she must tell Geoffrey how she succeeded in getting across the river. Geoffrey responds by saying, "I wouldn't marry you if you were the last woman on earth."

Finally, Rosemary turns to her friend Dennis. Dennis listens to her story and says, "Well, Rosemary, I don't love you . . . but I will marry you." And that's all we know of the story.

1. Rank the characters according to whom you approve of most and whom you approve of least. Use five rankings (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Then write a sentence or two explaining your first and last choice.

1 = most approve of 5 = least approve of

Ranking

___ Rosemary

___ Geoffrey

_____ Sinbad

_____ Frederick

_____ Dennis

First choice: Why? _____

Last choice: Why? _____

2. Divide into groups of four or five. Share your rankings and explain your first and last choices. Allow time for each member to contribute to the discussion.

3. Individually think about why you made the choices you did. Can you identify where you learned the values that caused you to rank the characters as you did? Try to write a paragraph explaining those values and where you learned them. Discuss what you wrote. Do you think the values that guided your choices were personal or cultural or both?

Interpretation of Alligator River

People do not always have similar interpretations of the world around them. They perceive and interpret behavior in different ways.

As a result of different values, people's beliefs, behavior and reactions are not always similar.

No two people, even from the same culture, have exactly the same perceptions and interpretations of what they see around them.

Many interpretations, however, are learned within a person's culture. Therefore, those who share a common culture will probably perceive the world more similarly than those who do not share a common culture.

Discuss:

Do you agree that people from the same culture are more likely to have similar interpretations of the world than people from different cultures?

B. What people observe and how they interpret what they see are influenced partly by culture and partly by personal biases. When one is living **Observation in a Second Culture** in another country, the ability to observe as objectively as possible can help one understand a culture. Two kinds of observations that can be made are descriptive and judgmental. For example:

Descriptive

Many children in the United States move away from their parents at about age eighteen or nineteen.

Judgmental

Many children in the United States don't like their parents, so they move away at age eighteen or nineteen.

The purpose of this activity is to differentiate between descriptive and judgmental observations.⁸

1. Work in small groups and together make a list of three to five observations of the second culture you are experiencing (or of a culture you have experienced). Include observations on family, nonverbal and verbal communication, food, dress, education, friendships, and so on.
2. Write the observations on the board or read them to the entire class.
3. Decide with the class which observations are descriptive and which are judgmental.
4. Individually or in small groups reword the judgmental observations to make them descriptive observations.

**C.
Describing
Experiences
in a Second
Culture**

The Intercultural Notes that follow this chapter are excerpts from essays written by international students on the question: "What are the problems and pleasures of living in a second culture?" These excerpts may give you ideas for the following activities.

1. Prepare a three- to five-minute oral presentation for the class describing your experiences in, observations of, or reactions to living in a second culture. For example:

Experiences	Observations	Reactions
<i>the most . . .</i>	family life	educational system
interesting	social life	political events
educational	school life	culture shock
embarrassing	dress, food,	friendships/relationships
important	customs	other . . .
surprising the	other . . .	
funniest		
other . . .		

*
|

2. Select and share with the class three objects that symbolize:

Life in the United States. Your
stay in the United States.

These objects can symbolize people, places, or things or represent abstract ideas or lessons which were meaningful to you.

- D. Answer the following questions about your own culture and then discuss intercultural similarities and differences. **Cultural**
- Cross-Questions**
1. Do you think there are stages of learning a language? If so, how do stages in language learning correspond to stages in the cultural adjustment process?
 2. Do people usually change because of their experiences in foreign countries? If so, how?
 3. What problems might someone expect when returning home after a long absence?
 4. How might students decrease the impact of culture shock during their stay in a foreign culture?
 5. What kinds of people adjust best to foreign cultures?
 6. What is the best way to prepare for life in another culture?