

CULTURE SHOCK IN KYRGYZSTAN AND IN THE USA, CULTURE EXPERIENCE OF AMERICANS IN KYRGYZSTAN AND KYRGYZ PEOPLE IN AMERICA

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Keywords: culture shock, foreigner, expectations, changes.

Каждый человек может испытать культурный шок, приехав в чужую страну. А столкнувшись с этой проблемой, решать ее различными путями.

Ключевые слова: культурный шок, иностранец, ожидания, изменения.

The aim of choosing this topic for symposium is to give information and share the results of the research on culture shock of Americans in Kyrgyzstan and Kyrgyz people in the USA. The actuality of the topic lies on the fact that I notice and see some culture changes with the alumnus (students, pupils, teachers and others and American volunteers who work as my colleagues today. I have been working on this problem for 3

years. I want to present my findings and the results of the research in the form as an inquiry project in this symposium.

What is Culture Shock?

Culture shock is natural for every person as a foreigner, but they face and solve this problem in a quite different way. Culture shock" describes the impact of moving from a familiar culture to one which is unfamiliar. It is an experience

described by people who have travelled abroad to work, live or study. It can affect anyone, including international students. It includes the shock of a new environment, meeting lots of new people and learning the ways of a different country. It also includes the shock of being separated from the important people in your life, maybe family, friends, colleagues, and teachers. I want to learn what culture problems they have and how they solve them.

A model of culture shock

The process of culture shock can be illustrated by a model known as the “W” curve. This model may not relate to your experience or only partially. Sometimes the process is faster or slower. Many people go through different phases of the process of adjustment several times, so parts of the curve in the diagram may repeat themselves. For instance, at significant times such as important family dates or festivals you may feel distressed or lonely, while at other times you feel quite settled. However, many people have reported that this model has reflected something of their experience and they have found it helpful to realize they are not the only ones to have had these feelings. The process can be broken down into 5 stages:

1. The “honeymoon” stage

When you first arrive in a new culture, differences are intriguing and you may feel excited, stimulated and curious. At this stage you are still protected by the close memory of your home culture.

2. The “distress” stage

A little later, differences create an impact and you may feel confused, isolated or inadequate as cultural differences intrude and familiar supports (eg family or friends) are not immediately available.

3. “Re-integration” stage

Next you may reject the differences you encounter. You may feel angry or frustrated, or hostile to the new culture. At this stage you may be conscious mainly of how much you dislike it compared to home. Don’t worry, as this is quite a healthy reaction. You are reconnecting with what you value about yourself and your own culture.

4. “Autonomy” stage

Differences and similarities are accepted. You may feel relaxed, confident, more like an old hand as you become more familiar with situations and feel well able to cope with new situations based on your growing experience.

5. “Independence” stage

Differences and similarities are valued and important. You may feel full of potential and able to trust yourself in all kinds of situations. Most situations become enjoyable and you are able to make choices according to your preferences and values.

Let me pass over to the practical part of my presentation, and discuss the influence of American culture on the students and people who had been in America and Kyrgyz culture on Americans today and their experiences. As I have already mentioned Culture Shock hit you whatever culture you come from and however experienced or well-travelled you are. I grouped the objects of the research into 2 main groups: 1. **alumnus** 2. **American volunteer at our faculty.** For the 1st group of object I chose 3 groups of people: 1 Students who were in the USA by different programmes, 2. Alumni colleagues by different programmes. 3. school alumni student and her mother. I want to share questionnaires which are created by me for learning this problem:

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According to the results of the research work and the answers of responders, I came to the conclusion, that all people pass all the stages of the process of Culture Shock.

Let me share the results of the first group of the work. I interviewed 10 students who were in the USA by Work and Travel program. 90% of them are the 5th or 4th years students, 10% of them are 3rd year students. As for gender policy females dominate males in this work too. Among 10 only 2 of them are male students.

I want to analyze the responders’ answers following the above mentioned 5 tables of questionnaires:

1) Table 1

For the 1st question the responders answered that they knew the USA:

- as highly developed country
- Education system
- States
- Presidents
- Geography
- Universities
- Clothes
- Keeping principles of Democracy
- Multinational

2) What did they want to know from the USA (EXPECTATIONS)

- American culture
- Slangs, jargons
- Smile which seemed for her artificial

before

- The life of Indians
- Lifestyle
- Economy
- Free enterprise system
- Education

3) What did they learn from the USA?

- Communication with different people
- Be and do everything in time
- Follow daily program
- How to achieve goals

The second table: **What changes did you notice in yourself, (cultural influence) after visiting the USA?**

- American speech speed and pronunciation
- American dialects
- How to use credit card
- Act by plan
- More independent and self confident
- Enriched English vocabulary
- Imitation of American style of clothes
- More polite (smile)
- Communicative
- Using slangs, jargons
- Improved American- English pronunciation
- Development of outlook
- To take a risk
- Open, easy-going, honest, more patient, responsible, optimist, punctual, reliable and helpful

What Culture Shock did you have in the USA?

- Guys do the housework
- Homosexuality
- Treatment to pets, (carrying a goat at the pram)
- Independent (from early ages)
- Parents are not authoritarian
- Everyone pays separately
- Pierced men
- Food
- Quick speed of speech
- Cuisine
- American pronunciation, dialects, slangs, jargons
- Housing tools (kitchen utensils: dish washing machine)
- High sky scrapers
- Unknown Americans said "Hello"

How did you overcome culture shock in the USA?

- Day by day used to everyday life
- Tried not to pay attention to homosexuality
- Said hello to everyone

- Asked advice (how to act)
- Communicate more (practice)

Table 3

What challenges did you have after coming back home country? (The influences of American culture (in your family, university, school, etc))

How did you overcome those challenges?

- Missing American friends- communicate by phone, e-mail
- Problems with native language (day by day it improved)

- More independent- our mentality influenced
- To change family life- shared with the family members about American family life

- Economize money- not to waste money
- Miss America- see American films
- Impolite manners of people- don't pay attention

- Dirty streets, garbage- time changed

Analyzing the answers of the questionnaires I want to make a list of advantages and disadvantages of being in America for students from Kyrgyzstan by Work and Travel program:

Advantages:

- More polite, responsible, independent, self-confident, modest, more kind, decent, frank, punctual, reserved, tactful, and optimist.

- Treat pets like people
- American psychology
- Follow written plan
- How to achieve goals
- How to use some high-tech and make and spend money

- Enriched English vocabulary
- Improvement in the language
- Development of outlook
- No age differences (in marriage, in family relationship)

- Being used to see unusual parts of the society (homosexuals)

- To greet everyone
- Learn and practice gender equality
- How to follow and respect law and constitution

- Had an experience of culture shock and how to overcome it in future

Disadvantages:

- Unusual people in the society (homosexuals)

- Being too independent
- Walking alone in the street
- Missing home country, friends and family
- To get used to American life style and having problems after coming back home

- Staying jobless (if the vacancy has been already occupied)

The 2nd group of people are my colleagues. There are 3 of them. I used interview form of research in this part. The periods of time of their visit are different. TEA-2 months, Fulbright Pr.-one year, and Civic Edu.-2 months. Their ages are also different.

1. Fulbright Programme graduate- young. She didn't notice any culture shock when she was in the USA. I think her former experience being in foreign countries, her high knowledge of American culture, living with her own family members together (children, a husband) helped her to have quick time of Culture Shock, but when she came back home she had a real culture shock seeing everyday life, living conditions of people, dirty and dust everywhere, rude manners, negative sides of our mentality. She missed America. Because it is a long period of time to live in one culture and one day to see the other one, though they are usual actions for her.

2. TEA programmer participator-middle aged. She had a very strange culture shock. She couldn't eat and sleep at night. The tasks and the requirements were difficult for because of her age. She had very bad computer knowledge. She had stomachache and headache because of different climate.

3. Civic Education Programme participator-young 40-45. She had some problems with speech, manner, privacy (works actively), living alone and sleeping alone in the room at night, in the countryside house (forest), food illness; Americans use ice tea, she preferred to have hot (green tea). Later she tried to make hot tea and fried eggs. Coming back she had some problems in living conveniences. But time by time she had to be adapted to home culture.

4. **Colleague Burul.** She lived in the USA with a husband for 6 months as a guest with her children in Washington and Chicago. She wanted to see with her eyes which she had seen before in the video, but unfortunately she couldn't because of time. She was happy to see the White House, museums and botanic gardens. She **found out some differences**: 1. Street concerts are interesting and well applauded by the audience. They respect concert culture. 2. streets and building are very clean. 3. high service 4. full of transportation, but everyone obeys traffic rules 5. drivers respect passengers 7. Christmas is great holiday, every tree, every house building are decorated 8. high medical service 9. before buying any medicine a person's blood pressure is checked and then you

may get it by prescription. 10. people don't care about others clothes. But in Kyrgyzstan they look at your cloth and begin to speak, even they discuss about it. 11. everyone says hello 12. she could get rid of her coughing because of climate. 12. tickets for concerts and theaters are very expensive and are booked beforehand sometimes a year before. 13. for 100 dollars you can buy enough food, 14. Libraries not only full of books but visitors, too. 15. the maximum number at kindergartens are 10.

Similarities: the are people are hospitable, they like to help, you can find all seasons and food as in our country. As she lived together with her family she has less culture shock than other responders. 1. food- **prepare at home.** 2. **cloth problems – began to wear trousers and jeans.**

5. **The next group is a school student,** Jibek - 17 and her mother. As Jibek lived in the USA a year in American Family and she is young she had more culture shock than other group's of people of older ages. She said she had a culture shock being in a different family, place, society, school, friends and etc. She had food illness too. But time by time everything had changed into positive side and she was adapted to the American style of life and she had a noticeable culture shock when she came home. She had some problems in the family misunderstanding with parents as American parents are not authoritarian and permissive, She became far from doing housework as the eldest child in the family. It was difficult for her to be used to her home school and to her Kyrgyz friends. She could hardly speak in Kyrgyz.

I also interviewed **her mother.** She said that when Jibek came back home they had some problems in mutual understanding. Parents seemed to her authoritarian. She wanted to be more independent, changes in the clothes, earned American thinking and misunderstanding in household. She began to wear more free style of clothes, sports costumes sometimes without ironing. She became far from our mentality to keep the room and clothes tidy and was absentminded. The parents demanded her to follow their suggestions, decisions as our mentality. She could hardly begin to wear school uniforms. And mother said that time by time everything was put in its place under the influence of friends, classmates, relatives, teachers and of course our traditions. The parents were patient in solving these problems as both parents had an experience in culture shock being in different countries. As for advantages of American culture she became more independent in everything, and

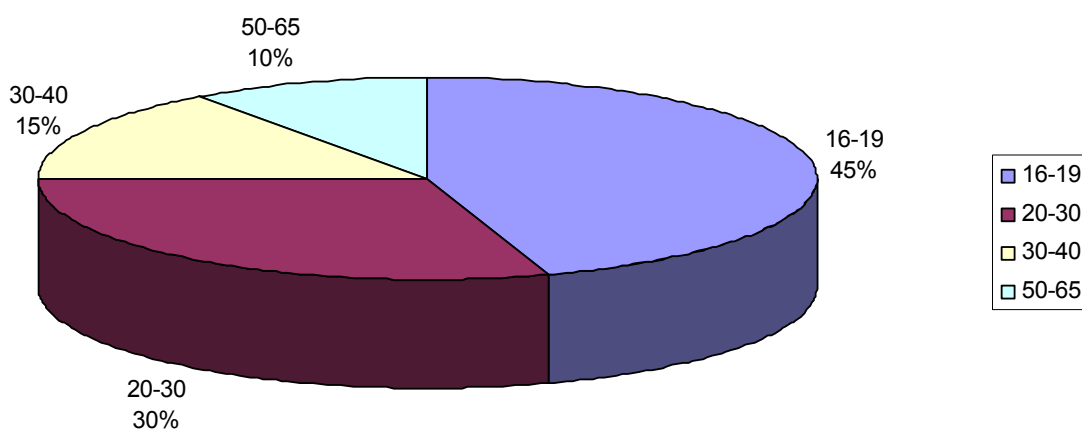
began to involve her brother in taking part in international programs. Jibek also became more self-confident and open. As for the 2nd part of my research I questioned 1 American Volunteer. He has been as a volunteer since September. He shared his culture experiences in Kyrgyzstan. **1. Similarities:**

1. full of traditions 2. Political problems (south and north) or antagonism. **2. Differences:**1.

Taking in lines (everywhere), 2. Very big personal space or having special rooms for workers. 3. Teachers are overworked. They have 4- 5 classes a day. 4. Eating is quite different, eating is communicable or handy, 5. People touch everything, greeting (shakes in hands but in America it is done in official meeting, they just say hello, 6. More dancing in informal parties, 7. Less –self-conscious in social gathering, 8. Style of public speeches and presentations are quite different 9. Often are late or don't come 10. Family is in the 1st place for workers, 11 Different ideas of respect. **1. Faced culture problems:** 1.

Sickness because of not- sanitarian food and places –he tries to appear less in public places- it was negative experience for him and changed all his experiences he had to go to the USA. 2. Large number of teaching staff of people – tries to limit the number of people and only works with people who have a desire and interest 3. Less priority teach good classes- organized seminars, attended classes and give feedback, 4. Becoming fat- vary diet with bread, meat and milk), 5. University was too cold in winter- he worked at home. Finally, analyzing the results of research work we came to

the conclusion that it is important to stress that culture shock is entirely normal, usually unavoidable and not a sign that you have made a mistake or that you won't manage. In fact, there are very positive aspects of culture shock. The experience can be a significant learning experience, making you more aware of aspects of your own culture as well as the new culture you have entered. It will give you valuable skills that will serve you in many ways now and in the future and which will be part of the benefit of an international education and other different problems. After research of group of people of different ages-16-17- 20-23, 40-50-65 we can share my own opinion that everyone has a culture shock, sometimes they say they don't have but it is because they don't know what culture shock is. All people pass through the 5 stages of the process of culture shock. After learning and analyzing research work I had an idea that culture shock depends on the age, knowledge and experience, the place of home stay and with whom they stay. If she or he lives with her own children or family members they have less culture shock. They don't have strong feeling of missing the family or friends or home in comparison with those who live separately in different American families, dormitories or home. They mostly feel loneliness. According to the results age by age a person has enough knowledge, psychologically also stable, and have less culture shock experience. Let me show you the idea about the influence of age differences in culture shock according to the results of the research in the diagram.



ВЕСТНИК МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО УНИВЕРСИТЕТА КЫРГЫЗСТАНА

At the end of my speech I want to mention out that under collaboration of Kyrgyzstan and the USA in different programs if our students or people have a chance to visit the USA and Kyrgyzstan often I am sure they will have only less and positive culture shock. Every person faces all stages of culture shock and solves them

in different ways. A person who has pre-knowledge of this or that culture will have less and quickly past culture shock. It also depends on the age and culture knowledge of the person. Older people often miss home country and relatives in comparison with younger ones.

Literature:

1. [www. google.com](http://www.google.com)
2. tables created by the author
3. Interviewees: students, colleagues, a school student and American volunteers.