



★ ★
★ MAKE THE MOST
OF YOUR
EXCHANGE! ★ ★

Mari Dagnall
2023

A?
Aalto University



**Did my way to
present myself
raise any
thoughts?**

**Do you feel that
you got the
validation of my
qualifications?**

Our ways of perceiving and evaluating the world are culturally learned and guided by our culture.

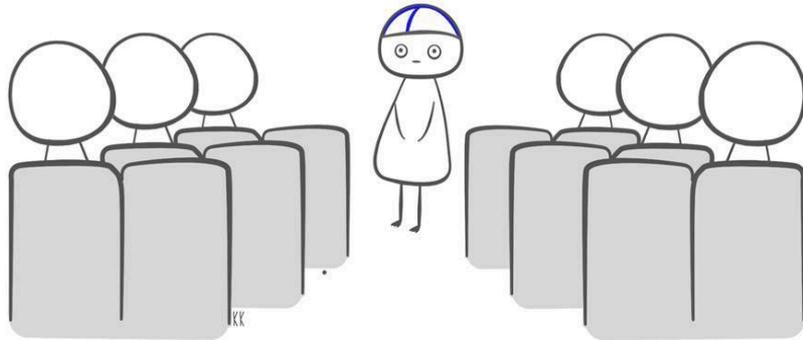
People from different cultural backgrounds perceive the world in different ways.

There are no right or wrong customs, but culture-bound.

What is the way?

FINNISH NIGHTMARES

FINNISHNIGHTMARES.BLOGSPOT.FI - FACEBOOK.COM/FINNISHNIGHTMARES - TWITTER.COM/FINN_MATTI

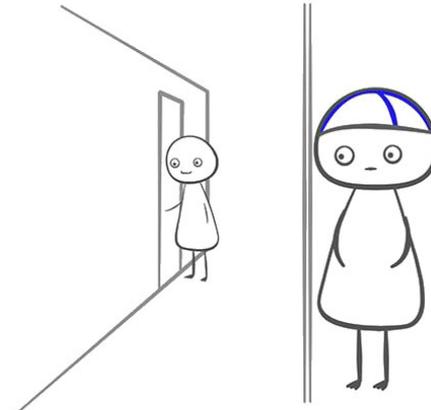


THE BUS IS "FULL".

What is the value behind?

FINNISH NIGHTMARES

FINNISHNIGHTMARES.BLOGSPOT.FI
FACEBOOK.COM/FINNISHNIGHTMARES
TWITTER.COM/FINN_MATTI



WHEN YOU WANT TO LEAVE YOUR APARTMENT
BUT YOUR NEIGHBOR IS IN THE HALLWAY

The presentation of myself could be, for example, kept by someone with an African background.

In African cultures, the basis of community is in families and clans, not on individuals.

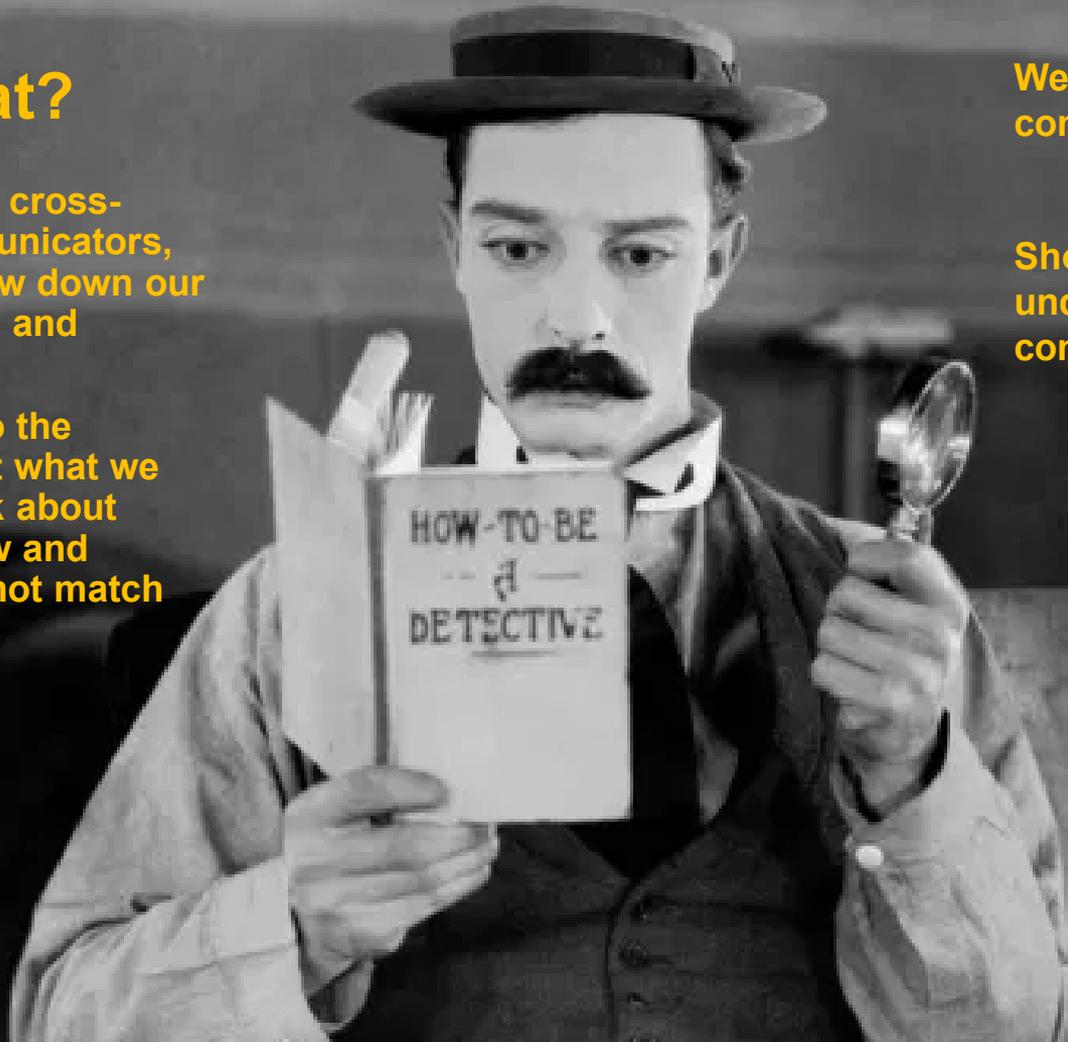
Family background affects success and defines a person more than for example in Finland.

In Africa, the situation would not necessarily cause as much confusion as it did here now. With mostly Finnish audience, the situation did not meet the expectations.

So...what?

To be effective cross-cultural communicators, we need to slow down our interpretations and judgments

and be open to the possibility that what we think and think about something new and different may not match what we see.



We shouldn't jump to conclusions.

Should always try to understand the original context.



TODAY

CULTURE SHOCK

STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH CULTURE SHOCK

GOALS FOR EXCHANGE - MAKE THE MOST OUT OF YOUR EXCHANGE



ABOUT CULTURE

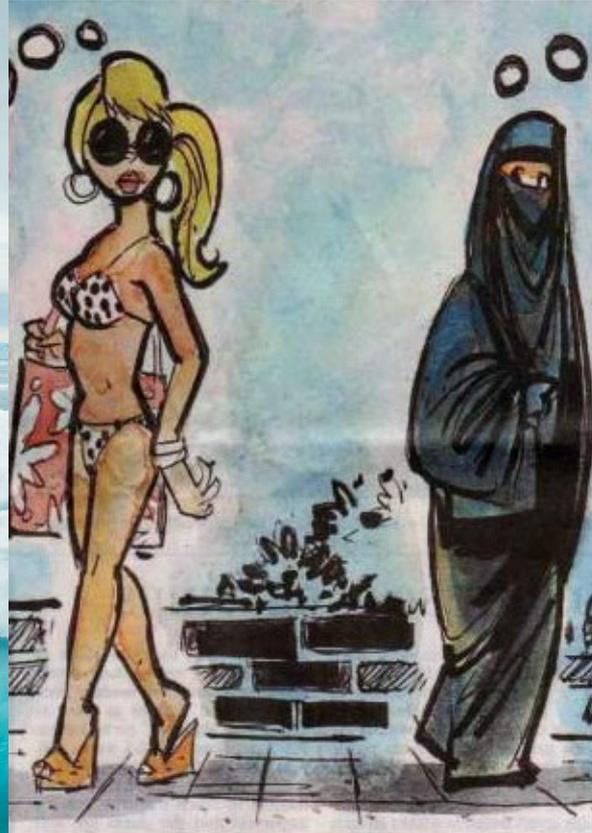
Why is it sometimes hard, despite all the good intentions and a friendly mind, to succeed in communication across cultures?



Culture as iceberg

Edward T. Hall: Cultural Iceberg Model

**Customs,
traditions,
food, language,
history
→ way of doing
things**



But, larger portion is beneath the surface, difficult to see.



Values, beliefs,
attitudes,
vision of the world,
presumptions
→ way of thinking

**When we first enter the new culture, only the visible
= easiest things and behavior are apparent.**



A photograph showing two large brown bison standing in the middle of a road, facing each other. They are surrounded by cars, including a white car on the right and a dark car on the left, suggesting a traffic jam. The scene is brightly lit, likely during the day.

When we spend more time (and effort) in the new culture, the underlying beliefs and values that dictate the behavior of the locals, will be uncovered and you learn to understand more deeply and more correct way.

But before that... it may take its toll.



CULTURE SHOCK

Photo credit: unsplash.com



When you enter the unfamiliar culture, the **constant** need to learn the new society's unspoken rules, gestures, and assumptions about behavior can be **emotionally exhausting**.

New culture - different rules.
Nothing can be taken for granted, nothing happens easily like at home.

It can be hard **having your values** (which have so far been considered absolutes) **brought into question**.

Rules and codes you have learned, do not apply anymore

- Lack of direction
- Not knowing:
 - What to do?
 - How to do things?
 - When to do things?
 - Why things are done some way?



**Thanks but no thanks.
Not interested.
Too tired.
Stupid rules.
Stupid X people.
Stupid everybody.
Miss my people.
I want to go home.**

- Happens gradually
- Feelings of psychological stress, personal loss, confusion and anxiety
- Possible symptoms: *tiredness, insomnia, feeling down and homesick, feeling irritated, increase in alcohol usage, eating problems, social tiredness and withdrawal*

The 5 stages of culture shock

1. **The honeymoon stage** - Everything is still new and exciting.
2. **Crisis phase** - All the newness starts to feel overwhelming.
3. **Recovery** - Gradual adjustment. I think I will survive.
4. **Adjustment** - Understanding and accepting the cultural differences they are experiencing. New things start to feel normal.
5. **Re-entry shock** – Is this my life now?

Culture shock is a process / phase of individual length depending on how close / distant the new culture is to the home culture.

Individuals go through a cycle of four sub-phases that can repeat themselves within the process.

THE CULTURE SHOCK CURVE/ROLLER COASTER

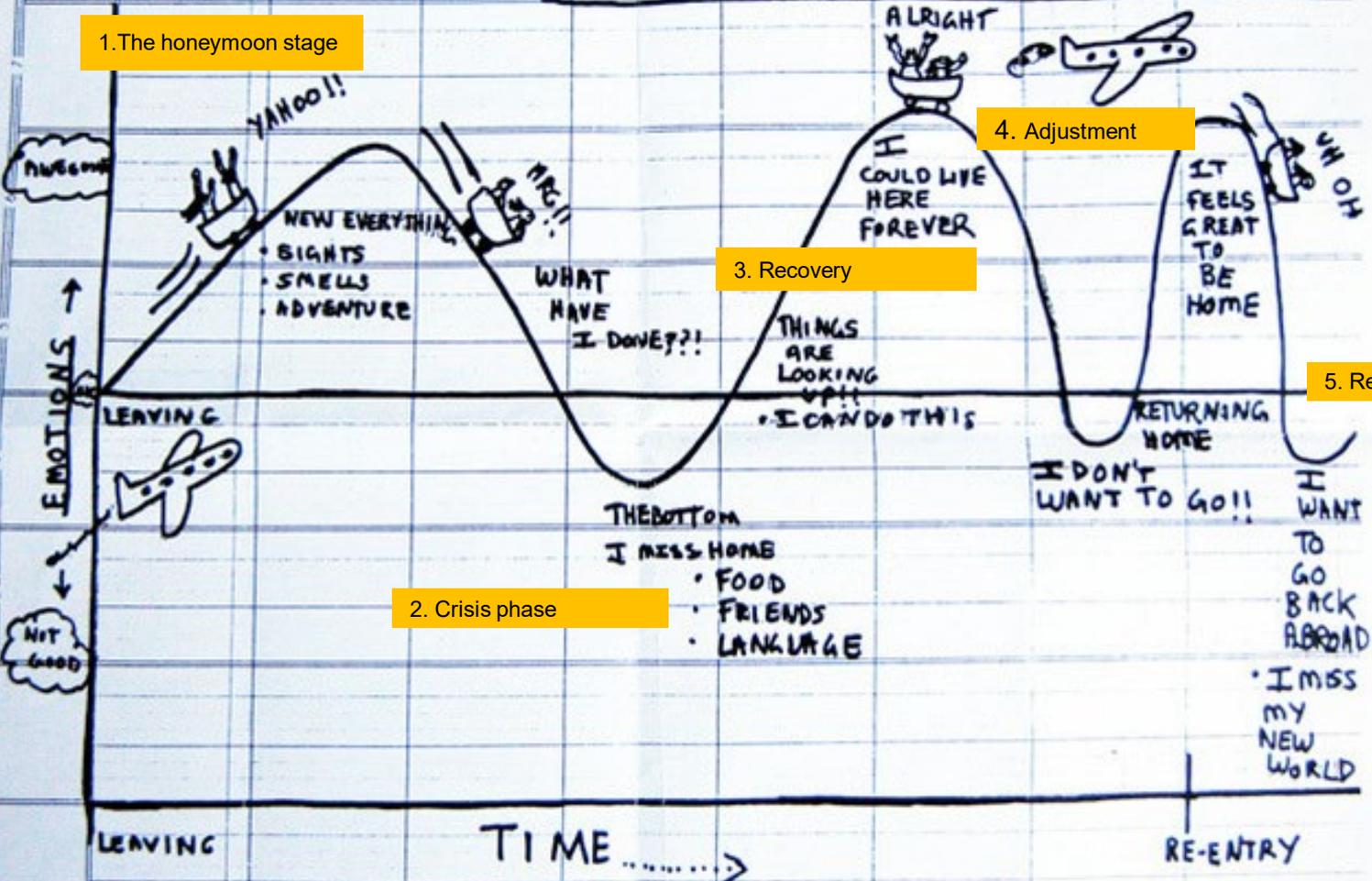
1. The honeymoon stage

4. Adjustment

3. Recovery

5. Re-entry shock

2. Crisis phase





STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH CULTURE SHOCK

Photo credit: unsplash.com



What did I expect?

Why?

***Was my
expectation
reasonable?***

***Managing
expectations.***



Photo credits: unknown.

<https://www.is.fi/musiikki/art-2000000665580.html>

- RAIKKONEN'S MOOD STATES -



SAD



HAPPY



HAVING FUN



DESTROYED



WINS THE RACE



DO NOT FINISH THE RACE



GETS THE POLE



ALONSO DNF'S



A HURRICANE IS COMING



A FUNNY JOKE



THE BEST JOKE EVER



LAUGHING ATTEMPT

A black dog, possibly a Labrador Retriever, is sitting on a light-colored wooden floor. The dog is looking directly at the camera with a questioning or curious expression, its ears slightly drooping. The lighting is soft, highlighting the dog's fur and the texture of the floor. In the background, a white vent is visible on the wall, and a grey bag or piece of fabric is on the floor to the left.

**Dare to say:
sorry, I didn't
understand or
sorry, could you
explain a bit more
what do you
mean?**



**Allow yourself to
see the humor in
misunderstandings
or embarrass
ments.**

Laughing heals.



Keep an eye on *yourself*:

- **Are the studies kicking off okay or do you feel stuck?**
- **How does the everyday life feel like?**
- **Are you able to concentrate on things and people around you, are you interested in them?**

A photograph of a white ceramic bowl with a black rim and leaf-shaped cutouts, filled with a yellowish soup containing salmon, potatoes, and dill. The bowl sits on a colorful, woven placemat on a light-colored wooden table. A silver spoon is visible to the left of the bowl. In the background, another white bowl with a yellow and black design is partially visible.

**Make yourself
find every week
something new
or something
that you like
about in your
host country.**

Do also something familiar.

Make your favorite food.

Watch your favorite movies.

Listen to music that makes
you feel good in your
own language.

Invite locals over
to celebrate your
home culture's holiday.

Do your favourite sports. Keep
a diary.

Stay connected with home.

Take the benefits!

Having experienced culture shock

1. Teaches you how to survive unfamiliar and tough situations
2. You will be more comfortable in the next new surroundings and situations
3. You'll become stronger, wiser, more confident



When problems

1. Mentally step back from them.
2. Divide your problems up.
3. Understand each one.
4. Work on them one at a time.

Disregard your old assumptions and expectations - open your mind and attitude to learn new things.





Photo credit: unsplash.com

HOW TO
MAKE THE
MOST OF THE
EXCHANGE?

The goals of exchange studies at Aalto

- ✓ **Personal growth** – including academic and ethical growth
- ✓ **Developing** intercultural and international **competencies**
- ✓ Being **ready for a career** in the increasingly international working life
- ✓ **Fluency** in a foreign language.



To grow academically, personally and ethically

- ❑ Establish academic goals
- ❑ Take the advantage of possible new resources available at your host university
- ❑ Be curious for locally related study topics – learning e.g. about the local industry, politics, culture.. gives you valuable insight to your host country.



- **To develop higher level of global and intercultural competence**
- **To become better prepared for any career, particularly international career**

Get a “local culture dictionary”

(make friends with someone from the host culture).

Go for walks/bike rides

Spend time exploring on foot. In your own culture, you take for granted how the trash is picked up, how the mail is delivered, the colors that the houses are painted, etc. Take time to figure out how the minutia of life gets done - being on foot helps you to notice the little details.

Explain your own culture. In many cases, the biggest learning experience during the exchange is to learn about your own culture and personality. When having to explain and rationalize the things you normally take for granted, makes you look the familiar things with new eyes.

Walk a mile in local shoes. When trying to live like the locals, you can learn to understand and empathize with their perspectives, opinions or point of views.

Volunteer to get the wider perspectives. Voluntary work helps you to meet other people than only of your own age and exposes you to people with common interests. Volunteering is a great way to develop new skills, and put into practice existing skills, while learning something new from your host country and culture.

- **To develop greater function fluency of foreign language**

- **Continue improving your language proficiency.** Watch local TV, listen to the local radio, podcasts and music, read local newspapers, follow interesting local people on Instagram..



Feelings and expectations

Things to reflect (now or later)

Do you expect exchange to be a life changing experience?

Does change stress you out, excite you, or something else?

What do you look forward to happen during your exchange?

What are your fears of going abroad?

A young boy is running through a field of golden light and water spray. He is wearing a white t-shirt with a graphic that reads "THIS WORLD IS FULL OF HOPE. LET'S BEGIN TO PROCEED WITH FAITH." and blue jeans. The background is a bright, hazy field of golden light, and the foreground is filled with a dense spray of water droplets that catch the light, creating a bokeh effect. The boy has a joyful expression, with his mouth open as if laughing or shouting.

**Enjoy your
exchange!**

Photo credit: unsplash.com

Additional material

Dive deeper! ^{1/3}

Host country

1. Do you know the geopolitical divisions of your host country? Is the country divided into states, provinces, counties or some other way? How many? Name them?
2. Can you name the principal cities?
 - a. The population?
 - b. The main industries?
3. Are you familiar with your host country's basic culture and history? Date of Independence? Relationship to other countries?

In general

1. There are many prominent contemporary and historical people of whom your host country is proud. Can you name any
 - a. politicians?
 - b. poets?
 - c. philosophers/intellectuals?
 - d. musicians?
 - e. actors/actresses?
 - f. artists?
 - g. sports figures/athletes?
 - h. business leaders?

Dive deeper! ^{2/3}

People of your host country

1. What kind of person is a local person? (by character)
2. What would you say is, from your perspective, the most commonly held misconception about the culture and the people or your host country?

Daily Life in your host country

1. What is considered the best thing about living in your host country?
2. What is considered the worst thing about living in your host country?
3. How is the success defined?
4. How important is education and success in the host culture?
5. What is the importance of religion?
6. What taboos are there? What questions should not be asked?
7. What individuals and events in history are a source of pride for the locals?

Customs

1. Do you know how local people greet each others in different kind of circumstances?
2. Do you know if gift-giving is a custom and what kind of gifts are considered good or bad and in what particular occasions?
3. What kind of food is indigenous to your host culture?
4. Is there any eating habits/rituals that are specific to your host culture?
5. What is the most important meal of the day and what do you eat then?
6. Define and describe the most important (or most celebrated) holiday of your host country.
7. What is considered respectful in your host culture?
8. What is considered most disrespectful in your host culture?
9. What clothing is 'typical'? What is worn for special occasions?

Dive deeper! 3/3

Relationships

1. How would you describe the roles of men and women in your host country?
2. How is physical contact (in love and hate) viewed in the host culture? (where is the limit for tolerance towards physical contact in love or hate?)
3. Is there any meanings attached to direct eye contact? How about to eye contact avoidance?
4. Who may disagree with whom? Under what circumstances?

Family

1. How they define "family?" in your host country? (who are the members of a typical family?)
2. Who holds the most "status" in the family? Why?
3. What is the relative importance of an individual family member vs. the family as a whole? What is the degree of solidarity or cohesiveness in the family?

Politics

1. Can you identify current prominent political leaders and their titles?
2. What are the names of the (main) political parties and their beliefs, functions and symbols?
3. How visible or invisible women are in the politics?
4. Is politics appropriate topic for conversation?