

# Culture Shock

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## ABSTRACT

The ability to communicate well in a foreign culture is considered as a set of learned social skills. The notion of culture shock is introduced to cover a broad range of psychological and social reactions to immersion in another culture, many of them detrimental to communication. Programs aimed at reducing the harmful effects of culture shock are examined in terms of the strategies adopted: (1) information giving, (2) cultural sensitization, (3) isomorphic attention, (4) learning by doing, and (5) social skills training (SST). The latter, it is argued, is the most effective.

**Keywords:** Communicate; information giving; cultural sensitization; learning by doing

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As international travel becomes cheaper, more and more people go on overseas holidays. The average earliest age at which people first leave their country is declining all over the world. Furthermore the increase in economic ties between countries, especially in Europe, means that many people now work in different countries at some stage in their life. In short, the world is becoming a smaller place as international movement increases.

One very dramatic sign of this is the high increase in international student exchange. Well over a million young people go abroad to study at a foreign university. Many go from third world to first world countries but a significant number make the journey in reverse. The experience of studying in a foreign country leaves a powerful impression on young people that may last for their lives. For a few the experience is negative and they recall the loneliness and rejection of a foreign country, but for most the experience is very enriching so much so that some people never return home and to continue living in their new country. As a result of the increase in student movement much has been written on this topic (Jenkins, 1983; Weinberg & Hall, 1979; Kagan & Cohen, 1990; Searle & Ward, 1990).

But for thousands of years people have travelled to other lands to trade, teach, learn, convert, settle, and conquer. Long before social scientists ever thought of writing about the topic, accounts of travel have been written by explorers, adventurers, refugees, charlatans, traders, and missionaries. But now, because of international education, mass migration and tourism, social scientists have begun to take an interest in the area.

Social scientists have become very aware of the fact that communicating with a person from another culture is difficult. This is particularly the case if people speak different languages, obey different moral, religious and social codes of behavior, and have a history of distrust or animosity. People from different cultures may hold very different languages, obey different moral, religious and social codes of behavior, and have a history of distrust or

animosity. People from different cultures may hold very different views on the relationship between the sexes, which can be both perplexing and annoying.

As a result there is now a growing and significant literature on communication problems of people from different cultures. This paper will consider some of these problems that culture travelers experience. The focus will be on how individuals manage in a foreign culture. It will be assumed that for mutually understood and satisfying communication to take place between people from different cultures, they need to acquire the special and necessary *skills* of social interaction in that culture.

## 2. SITUATIONS AND SKILLS

Argyle (1983) has suggested that social behavior may be understood as skilled performance. Inter-personal difficulties occur when this performance breaks down, or indeed cannot be successfully initiated. A great deal of the research on social skills has concerned itself with those individuals who may be described as unskilled or inadequate. Socially inadequate individuals are people who have apparently failed to learn a wide range of inter-personal skills, due to poor child-parent and peer group relationships, and because of other forms of social and physical deprivation. Such individuals may be incompetent in or incapable of, certain verbal exchanges; they are unable to accurately interpret or emit non-verbal signals; they have not mastered the social conventions of the society at large, and may also be unaware of many of the rules of social behavior pertaining to their own particular subgroup, i.e. appropriate etiquette. Thus it could be said that socially inadequate individuals are often like *strangers in their own land* and culture: they are perplexed by the 'unfamiliar' behavior of others. Some of the social behaviors which the socially incompetent usually performs unsatisfactorily, include expressing attitudes; feelings and emotion appropriately; misunderstanding the gaze patterns of the people they are interacting with; clumsiness or errors carrying out ritualized routines such as greetings, leaving-taking, self-disclosure, making or refusing requests; and asserting themselves. All of these elements of social interaction have been shown to vary across cultures (Bochner, 1982; Furnham, 1979; Collin, 1982; Hall & Beil-Warner, 1978; Leff, 1977). It follows therefore that people who are new to a culture or subculture will not have been socialized in the rules and routines of behavior pertaining to that society, and will therefore be at least *initially be socially unskilled in their new environment*. Individuals in this predicament include foreign students, visiting academics, businessmen and diplomats. Many of these people tend to be highly skilled in the verbal and non-verbal facets of interaction of their own society, and find their inadequacy in the new culture particularly frustrating and embarrassing. Ordinary everyday situations such as attending parties, making contacts with the opposite sex, ordering meals, shopping, even using the bathroom: all activities which hitherto presented no problems suddenly become major obstacles. More complicated and subtle debates, different views on the relationship between the sexes, which can be both perplexing and annoying. As a result there is now a growing and significant literature on communication problems of people from different cultures.

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Furnham & Bochner (1982) tried to determine the typical everyday situations that cause foreign travelers problems. The following list of 40 was typical of problems encountered by students in Britain:

1. Making friends of your own age.
2. Shopping in a large supermarket.
3. Going on public transport (trains, buses, tubes).
4. Going to discotheques or dances.
5. Making British friends of your own age.
6. Making close friends from other countries of your own age.
7. Going to a small private party with English friends.
8. Going out with somebody who you are sexually attracted to.
9. Being with a group of people of your own age, but of the opposite sex.
10. Going into restaurants or cafés.
11. Going into a room full of people.
12. Being with older English people.
13. Meeting strangers and being introduced to new people.
14. Being with people that you don't know very well.
15. Approaching others making the first move in starting up a friendship.

16. Making ordinary decisions (plans) affecting others (what to do in the evenings).
17. Getting to know people in depth (well, intimately).
18. Taking the initiative in keeping the conversation going.
19. People standing or sitting very close to you.
20. Talking about yourself and your feelings in a conversation.
21. Dealing with people staring at you.
22. Attending a formal dinner.
23. Complaining in public dealing with unsatisfactory service in a shop where you think you have been cheated or misled.
24. Seeing a doctor.
25. Appearing in front of an audience (acting, giving a speech).
26. Being interviewed for something.
27. Being the leader (chairman) of a small group.
28. Dealing with people of higher status than you.
29. Reprimanding a subordinate telling off someone below you for something that they have done wrong.
30. Going to a social occasion where there are many people of another national or cultural group to yourself.
31. Apologizing to a superior if you have done wrong.
32. Understanding jokes, humor and sarcasm.
33. Dealing with somebody who is cross and aggressive (abusive).
34. Buying special goods (medicines, books, electrical goods, etc.).
35. Using public and private toilet facilities.
36. Waiting in a queue.
37. Getting very intimate with a person of the opposite sex.
38. Going into pubs.
39. Going to worship (church, temple, mosque).
40. Talking about serious matters (politics, religion) to people of your own age.

Argyle (1979) found that almost seven social skills are capable of being developed in lacking individuals. They are:

- (1) *Perspective skills*: coordinating verbal and non-verbal behavior, encouraging the speaker, and giving appropriate feedback.
- (2) *Expressive skills*: speaking loudly and clearly, with the appropriate emotional tone in the voice.
- (3) *Conversational skills*: appropriate timing, speaker exchanges, topics, and self-disclosure.
- (4) *Assertiveness*: standing up for one's own rights without aggression or undue passivity.
- (5) *Emotional expression*: the expression of a full range of appropriate emotions in various situations.
- (6) *Anxiety management*: coping with social anxiety during moments of stress, such as in decision making, or when being the focus of attention.
- (7) *Affiliative skills*: being able to express feelings of warmth, affection, and sexuality where appropriate.

The elements in which Trower *et al.* (1978) draw attention are sub-divided into verbal and non-verbal. *Verbal* includes asking and answering questions; giving and seeking information; giving instructions; offering and seeking opinions, suggestions; greeting, bidding farewell; apologizing, explaining; telling jokes; agreeing, disagreeing; thanking. *Non-verbal* includes gaze, mutual gaze, glance; facial expression; proximity and orientation; voice quality-pitch, loudness, speed, accent; gestures accompanying speech and expressing

emotions; posture-relaxed-tense, dominant-submissive; appearance-image conveyed by hair, grooming, clothes. The point being made here is simple but nevertheless extremely important. Because so many aspects of social interactions are culture-specific, the ability to communicate effectively in one culture does not necessarily mean that one can do so in others. Hence, the concept of culture shock which is the realization that the patterns (contingencies, meanings, etc.) of social behavior found in one culture are quite different in another.

### 3. CULTURE SHOCK: THE SHOCK OF THE NEW

The Culture Shock 'hypothesis' or 'concept' implies that the experience of visiting or living in a new culture is an unpleasant surprise or shock, partly because it is unexpected, and partly it may lead to a negative evaluation of one's own and/or the other culture. The anthropologist (Oberg, 1960) was the first to have used the term. In a brief and largely anecdotal article he mentions at least six aspects of culture shock. These include:

- (1) *Strain* due to the effort required to make necessary psychological adaptations.
- (2) *A sense of loss and feelings of deprivation* in regard to friends, status, profession, and possessions.
- (3) Being *rejected* by/and or rejecting members of the new culture.
- (4) *Confusion* in role, role expectations, values, feeling and self-identity.
- (5) *Surprise, anxiety, even disgust and indignation* after becoming aware of cultural differences.
- (6) *Feelings of impotence* due to not being able to cope with the new environment.

The flavor of Oberg's observations may be gathered from this quote:

Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety which results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when not. Now these cues which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs or norms are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind and our efficacy on hundreds of these cues, most of which we are not consciously aware . . . Some of the symptoms of culture shock are: excessive washing of the hands, concern over drinking water, food, dishes, and bedding; fear of physical contact with attendants or servants; the absent-minded, faraway stare (sometimes called "the tropical stare"); a feeling of helplessness and a desire for dependence on long-term residents of one's own nationality; fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations; delay and outright refusal to learn the language of the host country; excessive fear of being cheated, robbed, or injured; great concern over minor pains and eruptions of the skin and finally, that terrible longing to be back home, to be able to have a good cup of coffee and a piece of apple pie, to walk into that corner drugstore, to visit one's relatives, and, in general, to talk to people who really make sense. (Oberg, 1960: 176)

Cleveland *et al.* (1963) offered a similar analysis relying heavily on the personal experience of business and other travelers, especially those at two extremes of the adaptation continuum: individuals who act as if they had 'never left home' and those who immediately 'go native'. There are many other anecdotal references in the literature. Research since Oberg have seen culture shock as a normal and expected reaction as part of the routine process of adaptation to cultural differences and the manifestation of a longing for a more predictable,

stable and understandable environment. Others have attempted to improve and extend Oberg's definition and concept of culture shock. Guthrie (1975) has used the term *culture fatigue*, Smalley (1963) *language shock*, Brynes (1966) *role shock* and Ball-Rokeach (1973) *pervasive ambiguity*. In doing so different researchers have simply placed the emphasis on different problems language, physical irritability, role ambiguity.

Bock (1970) has described culture shock as primarily an emotional reaction that follows from not being able to understand, control and predict another's behavior. When customary experiences no longer seem relevant or applicable, peoples' usual behavior changes to becoming 'unusual'. Lack of familiarity with environment (etiquette, ritual) have this effect, as do the experiences of use of time (Hall, 1959). This theme is reiterated by all the writers in the field (Lundstedt, 1963; Hays, 1972). Culture shock is seen as a stress reaction where salient psychological and physical rewards are generally uncertain, and hence, difficult to control or predict. Thus a person is anxious, confused, and apparently apathetic until he or she has had time to develop a new set of cognitive constructs to understand and enact the appropriate behavior. Thus in the business world, where a manager has been successful and developed all the requisite skills for dealing with peers, subordinates, supervisors and clients in his/her culture, all or many of these skills, strategies and techniques become ineffective or irrelevant in the new culture. Hence the anxiety and confusion until new techniques are learnt.

Writers about culture shock have often referred to individuals lacking points of reference, social norms and rules to guide their actions and understand others' behavior. This is very similar to the attributes studied under the heading of *alienation* and *anomie*, which includes powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, self and social estrangement and social isolation.

In addition, ideas associated with *anxiety* permeate the culture shock literature. Observers have pointed to a continuous general 'free-floating' anxiety which affects peoples' normal behavior. Lack of self-confidence, distrust of others, and psychosomatic complaints are also common (May, 1970). Furthermore, people appear to lose their inventiveness and spontaneity, and become obsessively concerned with orderliness (Nash, 1967).

Most of the investigations on culture shock have been descriptive, in that they have attempted to list the various difficulties that sojourners experience, and their typical reactions. Less attention has been paid to explain for whom the shock will be more or less intense (e.g. the old or the less educated), what determines which reaction a person is likely to experience; how long they remain in a period of shock, and so forth. The literature suggests that all people will suffer culture shock to some extent, which is always thought of as being unpleasant and stressful. This assumption needs to be empirically supported. In theory some people need not experience any negative aspects of shock, instead they may seek out these experiences for their enjoyment. Sensation-seekers for instance might be expected not to suffer any adverse effects, but to enjoy the highly arousing stimuli of the unfamiliar (Zuckerman, 1970). People with multi-cultural backgrounds or experiences may also adapt more successfully. For instance Adler (1975) and David (1971) have stated that although culture shock is more often associated with negative consequences, it may, in mild doses, be important for self-development and personal growth. Culture shock is seen as a transitional experience which can result in the adoption of new values, attitudes and behavior patterns.

In the encounter with another culture the individual gains new experiential knowledge by coming to understand the roots of his or her own ethnocentrism and by gaining new perspectives and outlooks on the nature of culture . . . Paradoxically, the more one is capable of experiencing new and different dimensions of human diversity, the more one learns of oneself. (Adler, 1975: 22)

Thus, although different writers have put emphases on different aspects of culture shock, there is by-and-large agreement that exposure to new cultures is stressful. Fewer researchers have seen the positive side of culture shock either for those individuals who revel in exciting and different environments, or for those whose initial discomfort leads to personal growth. The quality and quantity of culture shock has been shown to be related to the amount of *difference* between the visitor's (sojourners', managers') culture and the culture of the country they are visiting or working in. These differences refer to the numerous culture differences in social beliefs and behaviors.

From a practical point of view what the organization that sends people abroad wants to know (diplomatic office; multinational; church head-quarters) is what factors are the best predictors of adaptation in a new culture. Knowing which factors are more or less important enables selectors to choose the most appropriate people.

Training Intercultural Skills Few people would disagree with the idea that men or women working in culturally different environments require some sort of orientation program. Many techniques are available which differ according to theoretical orientation, length of training, type of training, etc. For instance Brislin (1979) has listed five such programs: self-awareness training (in which people learn about the cultural bases of their own behavior); cognitive training (where people are presented with various facts about other cultures); attribution training (where people learn the explanation of behavior from the point of view of people in other cultures); behavior modification (where people are asked to analyze the aspects of their culture that they find rewarding or punishing) and experiential learning (where people actively participate in realistic simulations). These techniques do overlap and are not mutually exclusive. Furnham & Bochner (1998) have examined some of these in greater detail.

#### 4. INFORMATION GIVING

The most common type of cross-cultural orientation usually involves providing prospective sojourners with specific information about their new culture. Travelers are presented with all sorts of facts and figures, either in written form or in lectures or films, about topics such as the climate, food, sexual relations, religious customs, and anything else the trainer may consider important. However, the effectiveness of such illustrative programs is limited, because firstly the facts are often too general to have any clear specific application in particular, mostly business circumstances; secondly the facts emphasize the exotic yet tend to ignore the mundane but more commonly occurring happenings, such as how to hail or pay a taxi; thirdly such programs give the false impression that a culture can be learned in a few easy lessons whereas all that they convey is a superficial, incoherent and often misleading picture which glosses over that culture's hidden agenda; and finally, even if the facts are recommended they do not necessarily lead to action, or to the correct action. It would be absurd to teach people how to operate a machine by *only* giving them information about how to do it. If the cognitive informational training is to be of any practical use it must be combined with some form of practical experiential learning in the appropriate setting.

## 5. CULTURAL SENSITIZATION

Programs based on this approach set out to provide trainees with information about other cultures, as well as to heighten their awareness about the cultural bias of their own behavior, and how the practices of their society differ from those of the host country. The aim is therefore to *compare* and *contrast* the two or more cultures, look at various behaviors from the perspective of each society, and thus develop a sensitivity to, and awareness of, cultural relativity. This view holds that very human values, beliefs, and behaviors are absolute and universal, and that what a particular individual believes to be true and good will depend on the norms prevailing in that person's society; norms that other societies may reject.

Such programs often operate at two levels: they aim to achieve self-awareness about one's model values and attitudes that are typically held by members of one's society, and to gain insight into one's own personal traits, attitudes and prejudices. Culture sensitization and self-awareness programs, being essentially cognitive techniques, suffer from many of the same limitations as information giving. For instance, it is all very well for a visitor to accept the same socially cohesive function as say the Trooping of the Color in England, but is another matter to then willingly observe such occasions and regard them in the same light as indigenous spectators do.

## 6. ISOMORPHIC ATTRIBUTIONS

Many researchers have pointed out that a potential obstacle to effective cross-cultural communication is the inability of the participants to understand the causes of each other's behavior, i.e. to make correct attributions about the other's actions. Effective intercultural relations require isomorphic attributions, which means observers offer the same cause or reason for actors' (others) behavior as they would for themselves. The likelihood of making isomorphic attributions decreases as the divergence between the subjective cultures of the participants increases, and explains why intercultural relations are often characterized by mutual hostility, misunderstanding, and poor effect.

One solution is to train the individuals to understand the subjective culture of the other group, which in practice means teaching them how to make 'correct' behavioral attributions. This is done through a device called *the cultural assimilator*, which in effect is a programmed learning manual. The booklet contains descriptions of episodes in which two culturally disparate individuals meet. The interactions are unsuccessful, in that each incident terminates in embarrassment, misunderstanding, or interpersonal hostility. The trainee is then presented with four or five alternate explanations of what they went wrong, which correspond to different attributions of the observed behavior. Only one of these attributions is 'correct' from the perspective of the culture being learned. The trainees select the answer they regard as correct, and are then instructed to turn to a subsequent page, where they are either praised if they selected the 'right' answer, or told why they were wrong if they selected an 'incorrect' answer. A great deal also depends on which particular critical incidents are selected to form the basic curriculum. Inevitably, exotic, strange and hence less common events tend to be given greater prominence than the less interesting but more frequently encountered day-to-day problems that make up the bread and-butter content of inter-cultural contacts.

## 7. LEARNING BY DOING

The limitations of information-based orientation programs led to various attempts to expose trainees to supervised real or simulated second culture experiences. Most organizations do not have, or are unwilling to commit such massive resources to experiential culture training. More typically, behaviorally based culture training programs rely on role-playing encounters between trainees and persons pretending to come from some other cultures, or if other-culture professional personnel are available, with such persons. In this respect the techniques are similar to those employed by social skills trainees. Some programs also contain a behavioral evaluation component, which may take the form of a team of psychologists evaluating and training the performance of the candidates in the field.

Finally, the vast majority of sojourners, or those who come into contact with members of other cultures in their own societies, receive no systematic culture training whatsoever. The little 'training' that does occur is done informally by experienced migrants who pass on useful information to the new visitors. This in itself may not be such a bad thing. One of the requirements of a successful culture trainer is to be a mediating person, a person who is intimately familiar with both cultures and can act as a link between them representing each to the other. In theory experienced sojourners should have that rare capacity, but in practice some may have highly specialized, distorted, or even prejudiced views of one or both of their cultures, and perpetuate these distortions in the informal training they impart to highly impressionable newcomers.

## 8. INTERCULTURAL (SOCIAL) SKILLS TRAINING

Although there are a number of different approaches to social skills training they share various elements in common. The first is an *assessment* or 'diagnosis' of particular problem (e.g. assertiveness) areas of situations (e.g. chairing meetings) that the person has or is likely to encounter. The second stage is *analysis* or *discussion* of the elements in these problem areas possibly followed by a modeling exercise where a trainer enacts the role. This in turn is followed by a *role-play* by the trainee with *critical feedback* in length following each practice. The number, range and variety of contexts in which the role-plays are enacted add to the generalizability of the training. Trainees are also encouraged to do homework exercises between role-play and feedback sessions.

## 9. TECHNIQUES

The precise techniques employed in organizing the practice element of the Social Skills Training program vary considerably.

(1) *Introducing Trainees to Practice.* There is evidence from specialized SST that first exposure to practice (and, particularly, feedback on practice) can be highly anxiety provoking and it has become standard to allow trainees a first session in which no skill as such is practiced. They are merely allowed to do what they normally do and receive feedback upon it. It is one of the advantages of the system that trainer and trainee can be seen as involved in a joint exercise in the observation, analysis and modification of the trainees' behavior.

(2) *Tasks or Situations in which the Skill is to be Practiced.* The focus in SST is upon skills, but skills cannot be practiced *in vacuo*. In SST the nature of clients' difficulties to some

extent dictates situations as well as skills and the behavioral interviews carried out should certainly explore the areas of the client's life in which he or she is most likely to experience difficulty. Whether this is possible or not it is certainly important to ensure that the situations chosen for skill practice bear some relationship to the everyday life of the trainee. Otherwise the entire exercise may lose its validity. In specialized and developmental SST likewise, it is important that the tasks be used for practice be relatively lifelike. A danger in this kind of SST, however, is that trainees (and trainers) may begin to focus on content rather than skill.

(3) *Other Interactors to be Involved in the Practice.* Interpersonal skills practice, by definition, needs other persons upon whom to practice. Basically there are three alternatives. Skills may be tried out on other trainees (peers), on appropriate groups brought into the SST unit (e.g. pupils for microteaching, interviewees for vocational guidance counselors), or upon confederates brought in by the trainers to role-play 'others' significant in the situation. Working in groups at some point (i.e. not necessarily during the role plays) in the progress of the course allows trainees to share difficulties and explore ideas about their own and other people's performance. Supportively used it can therefore be a useful adjunct.

(4) *Number, Length and Disposition of Practices.* Few explicit investigations have been undertaken but most stress the establishment of a hierarchy of difficulty and suggest that clients be allowed to practice a particular skill as often as necessary for the development of competence before progressing to a more difficult one. Resources, however, often prevent such a scheme and indeed almost all predetermined programs predetermine not only skills but the number of practices.

## 10. FEEDBACK

Feedback or knowledge of results which a learner obtains is an essential element in the cybernetic model of learning. There is therefore much emphasis upon feedback in SST and since the manipulation of reinforcement contingencies is an essential feature in the operant conditioning model, it is not surprising to find that the more behavioral program designers are much concerned with the rewards which follow on performance.

It is suggested that feedback, in whatever form, be specifically related to observed features of the records and provided in a generally supportive framework. These principles should guide decisions as to the following.

(1) *Record of Performance.* Should trainees obtain feedback from video or audio-records, from observation schedules or from informal observations? Should some combination of records be used? All of the above have been successfully employed. Since the video record is most complete it can be argued that it offers more opportunity for subsequent analysis and comment. Its disadvantage is that it must be analyzed by itself it is non-specific and distracts trainees from consideration of skills as such.

(2) *Source of Feedback.* Should trainees obtain feedback from the trainer, from peers, or from other participants? The important variable seems to be not source but method. Trainees do, however, prefer trainers to be present and it may be that they interpret this as a general expression of support and involvement.

(3) *Content of Feedback.* Feedback should be generally positive but should highlight significant features of performance whether positive or negative. If positive feedback cannot be provided the task is too difficult and should be changed. Feedback should always offer guidance as to how subsequent performance might be modified. There is evidence to suggest that this is best facilitated where a more objective record (i.e. videotape, observation

schedule) is available for consultation and confirmation by the trainer and trainee together. Indeed, the presence of such a record may be sufficient to lead the trainee to pick out significant features of his performance without any comment for the trainer.

(4) *Timing of Feedback.* Experimental psychology might suggest that immediate knowledge of results is important, but apparently where a videotape record is used this is not so and replaying the tape 'reinstates the performance'.

Otherwise, however, it is important to provide feedback at least while the performance is fresh in the trainee's mind. For Ellis & Whittington (1981) the following strategies may be useful in helping individual trainees to obtain maximum benefit:

- (1) The program should be carefully introduced to trainees and something of its rationale should be explained.
- (2) Trainees should be allowed ample time for 'practice' practices so that any cosmetic effect of video or other feedback can be got over.
- (3) Models should be as closely related to individual trainee characteristics as possible.
- (4) Trainees should participate as much as possible in the sensitization phase and every effort should be made to accommodate individual learning differences in the activities provided.
- (5) Practice talks and situations should be readily comprehensible and should have face validity for trainees.
- (6) Feedback should be at an appropriate intellectual level and should have a supportive emotional tone. (p. 73)

The advantages of the intercultural skills approach include the following: firstly, the training procedures are based on a *specific theory*, which avoids vague statements about 'mutual understanding' and instead emphasizes behavioral skill deficits.

Secondly, the theory is '*practical*' in the sense that it has at its centre every day, common, as well as business situations which nevertheless cause friction, misunderstanding, and inter-personal hostility. This approach avoids vague statements about culture shock by attempting to quantify social difficulty on various dimensions and then to reduce it.

Thirdly, the program can be *tailor-made* to the trainee, in that a particular person's social skills difficulties are assessed and the person is then given culturally appropriate remedial training aimed at removing those specific deficiencies. The training program avoids general, non-specific lectures and films about superficial and/or exotic aspects of the host culture, preferring instead to concentrate on those specific features of the culture that the clients find problematic.

Fourthly, the training uses well tried, *behavioral techniques* such as video feedback, role playing, and modeling to realistically simulate real life situations. The training does not rely exclusively on cognitive or information-giving procedures, partly because these do not generalize readily across to real life situations, and partly because they are readily forgotten.

Fifthly, the training focuses on the *management* of inter-personal encounters. Its emphasis therefore is on the social psychology of the sojourner, and avoids vague assumptions about achieving personal growth and insight. The stress is on the acquisition and execution of skills.

Sixthly, the *evaluation* of the theory, training content, training techniques, and impact of the program can be built into a project from the start, and not tacked on as an afterthought. At its completion, it is possible to indicate if, and exactly how well, the various aspects of the project performed in accordance with expectations.

The disadvantages of this approach are that because of the systematic nature of such programs they are likely to cost more, intrude into and disrupt the activities of the institution

whose members are being trained, and require an interdisciplinary team of trainers, unless relevant bi-cultural mediating trainers (Bochner, 1982) are available.

## 11. CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

An essential part of any intercultural skills training is a comprehensive knowledge of cultural differences in social behavior. Anthropologists, comparative sociologists, and cross-cultural psychologists have documented in great detail some of the obvious as well as subtle cultural differences in social behavior. Many of these differences are of academic interest alone, but others may be the cause of important misunderstandings. Argyle (1981) has divided these cultural differences into various categories: language; non-verbal communication; social rules; social relationships; motivation; and concepts and ideology; and has shown how these differ from culture to culture. It is quite beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the research in these different areas, or even describe all relevant cultural differences. Nevertheless to illustrate the point cultural differences in social rules will be examined. Argyle & Henderson (1985) have argued that social rules are developed so that people's goals in different relationships, groups or situations can be attained. That is groups find successful routes to their goals (the co-ordination of some behaviors and exclusion of others) which become collective solutions or sub-cultural goals. Rules work by coordinating the behavior of a number of different people, or restricting their activities so that goals may be obtained. Different cultures have devised quite different social rules the infringement of which may cause both embarrassment and misunderstanding.

## 12. RULES ABOUT EXCHANGE

The essence of much of business is exchange: exchange of information, products, gifts, etc. A number of rules of exchange differ greatly from society to society. Indeed the very fact that certain, often pejorative terms exist in a society for certain acts of exchange, shows different cultures' attitudes to that behavior. *Bribery*, seen in one country to be illegal and unethical, is quite acceptable, even expected, in another where it is seen as legitimate means of exchange. Similarly whereas *nepotism* may be an ordinary, everyday occurrence in some countries and seen to be a form of familial social welfare, in others it is thought of as being immoral. There are also elaborate and problematic rules for the exchange of *gifts* (Morsbach, 1977); *buying and selling*; rewarding hard work; settling disputes, etc. Recent studies on cultural differences in reward allocation (Lueng & Bond, 1984), and perceptions of fairness (Barnlund *et al.*, 1985) have emphasized the *individualistic, equity* based schemes of industrialized cultures in North America and Europe versus the *societal, equality* based schemes of third world cultures in Africa and Asia. Related topics include co-operative and advancement of managers (Rosenstein, 1985), and the management of compliments (Barnlund & Araki, 1985). Many of these rule differences occur because of differences in motivation and values in different cultures (Howard *et al.*, 1983; Hofstede & Bond, 1984).

### 13. RULES ABOUT SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Argyle & Henderson (1985) have done fairly extensive work on the different kinds of rules for social relationships. These rules refer to such things as rewardingness (the amount, type, and timing of rewards in different cultures); intimacy (the desired and appropriate level of intimacy); avoiding difficulties (preventing or minimizing interpersonal difficulties); third parties (dealing with problems of jealousy, keeping confidences, etc.). They studied the application of 33 rules in four cultures: Japan, Hong Kong, Italy and Britain. These rules were factor analyzed and the factor scores compared.

Overall the Eastern cultures prescribe fewer rules about expressing emotions, opinions and affection across all types of relationships. The Japanese stood out as the most different group particularly with their emphasis on not losing face (through public criticism), controlling the outward show of emotions in public and respecting hierarchical relationship. The number of rules governing varying different social relationships are too numerous to mention but show up numerous interesting differences. As Argyle & Henderson (1985) have noted:

What do these findings tell us about relationships in general? First, they show the people share a consensus about what behaviors are appropriate in which relationships. Secondly, while certain rules apply across relationships in all four cultures, others are more specific to individual relationships sometimes across cultures, but more often within particular cultures. Things we should not do in one relationship are strongly prescribed in others, and may not apply at all to a third relationship or to the same relationship in a different country. This can obviously create difficulties and misunderstandings as many Western businessmen have found, to their consternation, when dealing with non-Western cultures. (p. 58)

### 14. RULES ABOUT TIME

Because 'time is money' at least in some societies, businessmen and women are often very concerned with time constraints. Time-urgency which along with competitiveness, drive and achievement appear to be characteristic of the business world, also appears to be related to coronary heart disease. Expectations of how late it may be acceptable to arrive; how long a social or business function or meeting may last; how accurate 'time estimates' should be, etc. are culture bound. Perhaps this is best summed up by the following anecdote:

One of the most deeply rooted, and largely unconscious, features of any culture is what the psychologists call the *time perspective*. Within the United Nations, at least three different time perspectives operate.

'... *It is time for lunch, we must adjourn*', announces the Anglo-Saxon chairman in the unabashed belief that having three meals a day at regular hours is the proper way for mankind to exist.

'*But why? We haven't finished what we were doing*', replies in a puzzled manner that grows rapidly more impatient an Eastern European delegate, in whose country people eat when the inclination moves them and every family follows its own individual timetable.

'*Why indeed?*' placidly inquires the Far Eastern representative, hailing from a country where life and time are conceived as a continuous stream, with no man indispensable, with no life-process needing to be interrupted for any human being, and where members of electoral bodies walk in and out of the room quietly, eating a bite to eat when necessary, talking to a

friend when pleasant; but where meetings, theatre performances, and other arranged affairs last without interruption for hours on end, while individuals come and go, are replaced by others, mediate or participate as the occasion requires, without undue strain, stress, or nervous tension.

As one of the other group persists in its own conception of the time perspective, as the Anglo-Saxon demand that the duration of meetings and conferences be fixed in advance and that meals be taken regularly at fixed hours, and as the Russians sit irritated and the Latins puzzled and the Secretariat frantically this condition continues, mutual friction grows, murmurs of 'unreasonableness' are heard around the room; and, when the issue under discussion is an important one, overt accusations are hurled across the room of 'insincerity', 'lack of a serious approach to the problem', and even 'sabotage'.

Telbert, Ina (1950) They don't do it our way. *Courier (UNESCO)* 3 (4).

When a man or woman moves into a new culture he or she should immediately become acquainted with local expectations about time both within and outside work. This may at first prove highly frustrating particularly if he or she perceives the use and understanding of time in the other culture is wasteful. The list of rules is far beyond the scope of this chapter (see Argyle, 1983) but their importance in inter-cultural contact cannot be overestimated. The problem with these rules however is that they are implicit and not explicit; they are subtle and their infringement has often serious consequences. Yet they are clearly important and must constitute an important aspect of intercultural skills training.

## 15. CONCLUSION

It has been argued in this paper that a person's ability to communicate with superiors, peers, subordinates and clients in another (foreign) culture can be regarded as a social skill somewhat like communication, teaching, interviewing, negotiations, etc. Precisely because intercultural communication can be conceptualized as skill means that it can be analyzed, taught, learnt, practiced and improved. All strangers, be they tourists, sojourners, or migrants in a new culture, may be seen as culture shocked because they are unable to understand others, or communicate to them in the previously successfully learnt manner. Although some aspects of culture shock may be debilitating from both a personal and business point of view, many studies have attempted to understand the psychology of business sojourn and find the best predictors of adaptation or its opposite. Yet, however well a company selects and supports its sojourners they nearly always need training. This training in appropriate intercultural skills exists in many forms, not all of which are equally successful. Of the five strategies mentioned information giving, cultural sensitization, isomorphic attributions, learning by doing, and social skills training the latter seemed the most effective, in the present author's experience. Part of this training involves understanding some of the numerous cultural differences in social behavior, some of which are outlined above.

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