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*Communication as cause,
symptoms and solution for culture shock
in Swedish working environment*



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ABSTRACT

Culture shock is often associated with contacts with exotic cultures and primarily with the differences in religion, customs and traditions. However, it is also a communication-based phenomenon (Kim in Gudykunst, 2005, p. 379). The purpose of this thesis is to study **culture shock** in **working environment** as a communication-based phenomenon and see how **communication** functions as a cause, a symptom as well as a solution for culture shock.

Since culture shock is a multidimensional phenomenon and strongly subjective experience qualitative semi-structured interviews were used in order to provide informants with opportunity to freely talk about their experiences. Informants were 14 expatriates¹ from 11 different countries who work in two big international companies in Sweden. Low or moderate level of culture shock was reported by majority of the informants, one third reported insignificant problems, while one informant experienced high level of culture shock referring to it as a "scary experience".

The study finds that specific **patterns of interpersonal and organisational communication** in the host culture including **quality and quantity of interactions** within the host culture and towards strangers influence intensity of culture shock. Furthermore those **expatriates** who work in international and more culturally competent host environment experienced less culture shock than those surrounded with strongly locally oriented **host environment** with few or no contacts with other cultures. Ambiguous or poorly specified role and especially personality requirements common in the host culture influenced culture shock too. The use of host culture language also influenced behaviour and power balance and was positively related to higher level of stress and perceived difficulties in communication.

Key words: culture shock, communication, adjustment, intercultural communication, working environment, language, patterns of communication, host culture, expatriates

1. Two of them came initially as students and 3 of them followed their husbands, but they all started to work soon

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the global economy increases the necessity for companies to relocate their employees more often and the importance of intercultural awareness and intercultural training arises dramatically. In order to help people to adapt to new culture some companies provide intercultural seminars or trainings for their employees. However those seminars or trainings are mainly information giving rather than involving cognitive and behavioural aspects which are significant for learning. Furthermore the awareness about possible psychological difficulties seems to be very low.

According to psychiatrist Thomson (1964), 61% of prematurely returning of Peace Corps volunteers through 1962 was due to the adjustment problems in another culture (in Arnold, 1967, p. 54). Andersen Consulting's (1995) survey shows that only 44 per cent of joint ventures in China achieved their goals while others failed financially. Researchers become aware of the influence of cultural differences on the results (Ward et al, 2001, p. 177). Ward et al. point out referring to other research that the rate of prematurely expatriate executives return together with their families is 20 to 50 per cent (Black and Gregersen, 1990; Harris and Moran, 1991; Tund, 1988a in Ward et al., 2001).

Above mentioned statistics signalize that there is a need for increased research and knowledge about reasons for returns. Which are the main issues that are of importance for relocation? How can people be better prepared for the unknown conditions in the new country? What kind of personality traits are of importance for successful relocation to a specific culture? These are just some of the questions that need to be taken into consideration. Introduction programs for expatriates moving to another country should include information about psychological difficulties connected to difficulties in communication in the new environment as well as possible changes in behaviour. More strategical planning of relocation from the point of view of human resources management should be a must in an international company in today's globalized world.

1.1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this thesis is to study culture shock in working environment as communication-based phenomenon in order to see how communication could be seen as a cause, a symptom and a solution for culture shock. This thesis could be used for increasing awareness about the phenomenon, improvement of strategies for dealing with intercultural issues in the initial stages of relocation of expats, as well as reducing time and costs for failed missions.

Framework

For the purpose of focusing on communicational aspects of culture shock, working environment was used as setting. Informants were in one or another way *invited to work and live in the new culture* as opposite to students of international programs who might have less interactions with host nationals on daily bases, immigrants, who according to literature differ in their "motivation for relocation" and "usually come from the lower socio-economic spectrum than non-migrants" or refugees, dealing at the same time with previous "overwhelmingly stressful pre-migration experiences" (Ward et al., 2005, p. 193). The international business people are, according to Ward et al., "typically better educated and employed in professional occupations" (Ward et al., 2005, p. 193). Since culture shock is a multidimensional phenomenon with very many different aspects working environment was chosen as least complicated from the psychological point of view in comparison with much more complex situation of refugees adaptation to a new culture for example. Furthermore this is a study within the field of communication and it doesn't aim to discuss social or political issues which will be inevitable if the informants were immigrants or refugees.

1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Due to globalisation and development of multinational companies cultural differences seem to be easier to overcome. It could be presumed that international companies having offices in different countries and exchanging human resources between these offices would develop tools and strategies for successful adaptation of their employees to specific sites. As addition to this, specific role planning aimed to match personality traits of a sojourn to host culture preferences would be one of the HR tools in reducing cost for successful relocation.

Taking into consideration above mentioned this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How interpersonal and organisational communication, specific for a certain setting in the host culture influence culture shock?
2. In which way characteristics of a concrete host environment influence culture shock?
3. How role ambiguity and change of identity influence culture shock?

In order to provide the answers to above listed questions, following three working hypothesis were formulated as the base for the study:

Working hypothesis 1

Specific patterns of interpersonal and organisational communication including quality and quantity of interactions within the host culture and towards strangers influence intensity of culture shock.

Working hypothesis 2

Expatriates working in international or more culturally competent host environment would experience less culture shock than those surrounded with strongly locally oriented host environment with few or no contacts with other cultures.

Working hypothesis 3

Ambiguous or poorly specified role and especially personality requirements common in the host culture influence culture shock which is "similar to role shock" (Juarez, 1972).

2. BACKGROUND

This theoretical background provides a literature review about culture shock and communication as well as theories discussing both concepts. The importance of studying culture shock in relation to communication is emphasized in the beginning. Definitions of the concept such as culture shock, communication, expatriates and hosts follow. Previous research about culture shock, studying volunteers, students, immigrants and international business people is presented in the section 2.3. while Intercultural communication theories discussing problems of adjustment and integration could be found in the section 2.5. Even though conditions for expatriates including housing and practical support provided by the company might differ from those for volunteers, student or immigrants the main factors influencing culture shock are the same according to the presented literature.

2.1. Why is it important to study culture shock in relation to communication?

Taking into consideration a very long history of intercultural contacts, it is curious to notice that culture shock was only recently described in the scientific literature (Arnold, 1967). Many people from different fields such as anthropologists, diplomats, sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists and physicians were interested in this problem and they made contributions in different ways. Arnold considers that there is a need of combining all of these approaches for achieving a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

As it was pointed out by Karl Oberg (1954) people entering another culture are experiencing problems that are real, such as the differences in the climate, the temperature, the food and all other physical difficulties. At the same time larger part of difficulties are connected to person's inability to communicate in different cultural setting which leads to continuous and growing frustrations. The importance of nonverbal communication was stressed by Guthrie (1963) and Oberg who refers to them as one's own lack of means of communication. Oberg also marks that culture shock has not been studied carefully enough for people to help in an organized manner. That is why he suggests that own countrymen should play a significant role in helping a person to get over culture shock. Talking about difficulties

does not remove pain but it helps in understanding the source of pain and getting another perspective of the current conditions, according to Oberg (1954).

Many other researchers stress the role of communication in their descriptions of culture shock. Kim for example sees the process of adaptation to a new culture as communication-based phenomenon which could be impossible without interaction with host environment. This thesis will focus on ways in which interpersonal and organisational communication influence culture shock, which communication problems are symptoms of culture shock and how well planned communication activities could be used for preventing and dealing with culture shock.

2.2. DEFINITIONS

In order to set up the theoretical frame for this study the definitions of main concepts are provided in the beginning as well as explanation of some aspects significant for the study. Culture shock and different stages that all sojourners go through are described in the beginning after what definitions of communication, non-verbal communication and intercultural communication follow. Two main groups of people that are of significance for this study are defined in the end of this section together with the short discussion about the relation between activity, role and identity.

2.2.1. What is culture shock?

Karl Oberg was an anthropologist and the person who coined the term culture shock. He refers to it as "a malady, an occupational disease of people who have been suddenly transplanted abroad". Strain, feelings of deprivation, feeling rejected by host nationals and feeling of impotence in the host culture are characteristic for culture shock (Oberg, 1954). Cultural shock is experienced by students, international business people, immigrants, refugees, spouses to international business people and even tourists.

Most people are not aware of the huge amount of signs, symbols and cues, such as words, gestures, facial expressions, customs and norms that members of a certain culture automatically use in their everyday life until they start living in another culture. Unwritten rules frames everyday situations and dictate "when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when to take statements seriously and when not". Rasmussen et al. speculate that people have a base assumption that "mental models are shared" (Rasmussen et al., 2008). But when all our familiar signs and symbols usually taken for granted, are suddenly useless and can even lead to problems our peace of mind can be seriously disturbed. The state of increasing frustration and anxiety which in most cases could be seen as something happening without any obvious reason is culture shock.

According to Oberg the difficulties that a newcomer experience are real, connected to the differences in the climate, the temperature, the food and other physical difficulties. But the significant part of difficulties which one has to deal with are difficulties in communication in the new culture. Uncertainty presented by strange customs increase frustration and anxieties. Some other researchers defined culture shock in accordance with their own focus of research of this multidimensional phenomenon. Kim's definition is:

"Culture shock or the stress and "difficulties" that people experience (e.g., Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001) is manifestation of the generic process that occurs whenever an individual's internal capabilities are not adequate to the demands of the environment." (Kim in Gudykunst, p. 383).

"The multiple demands for adjustment that individuals experience at the cognitive, behavioural, emotional, social, and physiological levels, when they relocate to another culture" is another definition created by several authors (Befus; Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie, & Yong, 1986; Searle & Ward). Zapf in his article discusses Adler's and Kealey's definitions. Adler's (1975) focuses on the reaction of the individual: Culture shock is primarily a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one's own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences. Zapf notices that Kealey stresses the role of one-self in contact with new environment as main cause for physical and emotional upset and not the new environment itself (in Zapf, 1991, p. 107). Bock (1970) sees culture shock as emotional reaction to the situation when a person experiencing it is not able to predict host nationals' behaviour. Culture shock could be also seen as strong reaction to the fact that host nationals think, behave, react and communicate in completely different way which might be seen as strange, incomprehensible and pointless.

Some of the general symptoms of culture shock were described by Oberg (1954):

"excessive washing of the hands; excessive concern over drinking water, food, dishes, and bedding; fear of physical contact with attendants or servants; the absent-minded, far-away 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 drug-store, to visit one's relatives, and, in general, to **talk to people who really make sense**" (Oberg, 1954, p.2)

Even though some of the described symptoms could be seen as typical for Americans placed in non-western countries, the majority of them seems to be common for all the people entering other cultures irrespective of which nationality they belong to and what kind of reason they have for it. Anger over delays which might be cultural more characteristic for Americans might

in another case occur for a person with another time orientation being way too late even in comparison with his/her own culture.

Additional meaning of culture shock is the shock experienced whenever we feel that our beliefs, values and concepts are threatened by the corresponding concepts of another culture or even sub-culture. The literature suggest adaptation and adjustment as final stages in which a newcomer grasps all the social cues and is capable to operate in the new environment. Nevertheless it is peculiar that some basic values, beliefs and understanding of the world are extremely difficult or impossible to change (Kim in Gudykunst, 2005).

2.2.2. Stages of culture shock, U-curve, W-curve

Oberg (1954) describes 4 stages of culture shock pointing out that all people go through the whole process but that the intensity of the experience might vary from person to person.

1. Honeymoon stage – This stage can last from a few days or weeks up to six months, depending on circumstances. The environment is experienced as a new and exciting, sojourns are fascinated by different customs and traditions. The representatives of the host culture are especially attentive and hospitable

2. Involvement stage – This is the stage when a person starts to experience difficulties of real life such as transportation, shopping, language, housing and everything that might be different on daily bases and starts to feel hostile towards the people of the host country. They might help but at the same time they are **completely insensible for one's trouble and difficulties**. All the strange customs and traditions are not interesting any more but seems to just complicate life. At this stage strongly negative stereotypes are used for describing the people of the host country.

3. Coming-to-terms stage signals that a person has overcome some of the initially unbearable difficulties and started to deal with them in a more constructive way. Feeling of superiority to the host culture and people might help in this stage as well as possibilities of helping out someone who is in a less adjusted position. Learning the language of the host culture might be of significant help for getting back confidence.

4. Completion of adjustment – at this stage a person becomes efficient and productive in the new environment and starts enjoying everything in the new culture. Oberg marks that the person will still experience some stressful moments but with grasping social cues all difficulties tend to disappear. This is the stages which could bring longing for the new culture in case that the person has to leave the new environment.

The question that arises is how long does it take for a person to grasp all the social cues necessary for successful communication and is that really possible. Kim considers that complete assimilation, which is an ultimate goal of adaptive change of sojourners planning to resettle in a new environment is hard to reach during lifetime and it's rather a goal for several generations to come (in Gudykunst, 2005). On the other hand most of the authors agree that all sojourners go through all stages even if their stay in the new culture is limited. Tange suggests that the necessary time for experiencing all 4 stages and successful adaptation is three years (Tange, 2005).

Figure 1 – U – curve

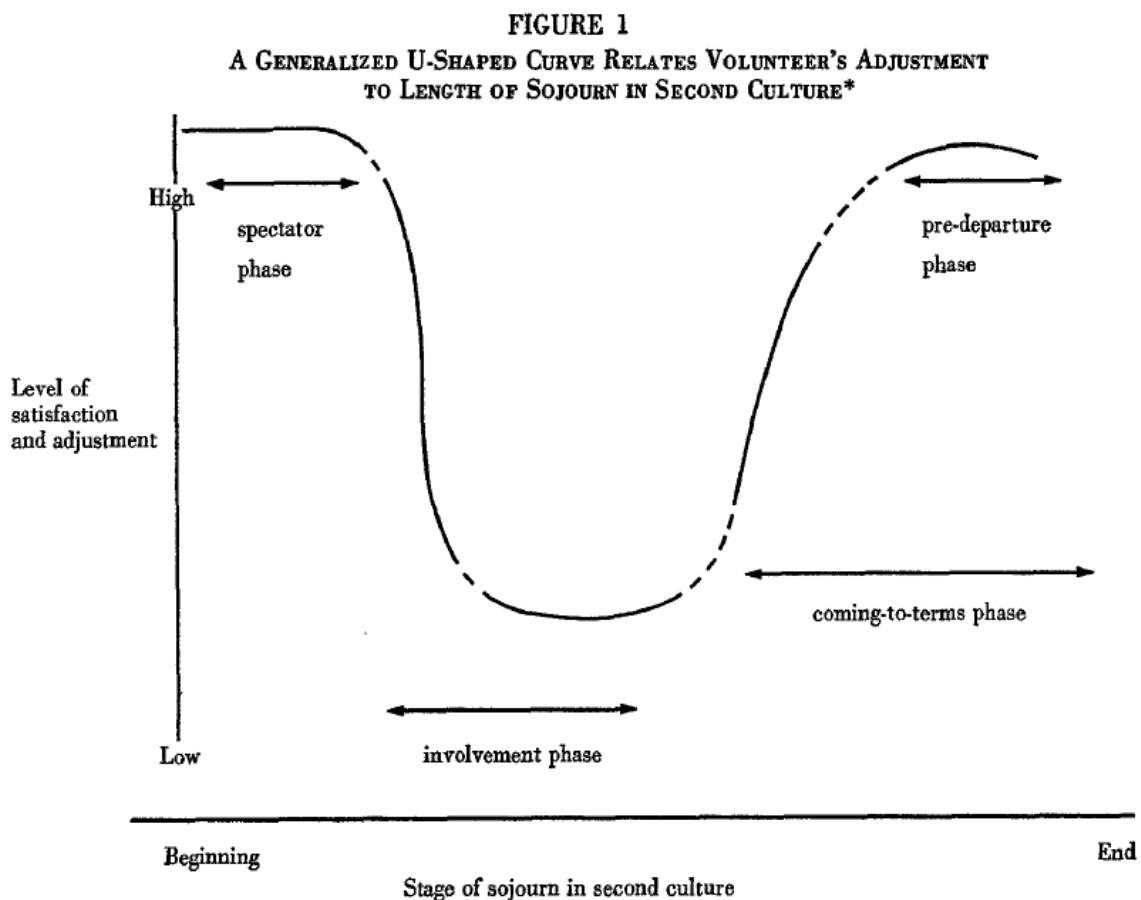
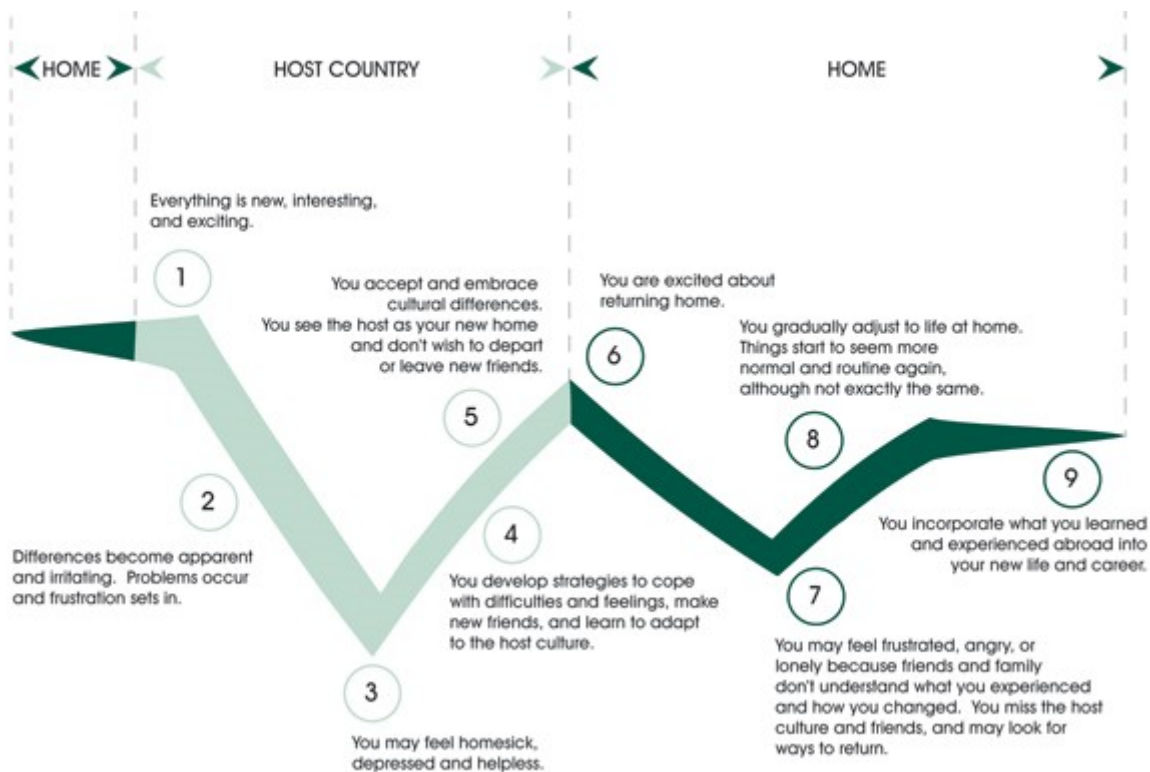


Figure 2 – W – curve

W-curve at the picture below shows additionally stage of re-entry when sojourners experience shock coming back to own culture and realizing how much they have changed in the new culture.



As it could be concluded from all above mentioned definitions, culture shock is a multidimensional phenomenon requiring changes on the cognitive, behavioural, emotional, social, and psychological level. In this thesis culture shock will be approached as a communication-based phenomenon (Kim in Gudykunst, 2005, p. 379) and all above definitions will be taken into consideration. Two main intercultural communication theories (section 2.5.1 and 2.5.2) will also be used as the base for the interviews and discussion.

2.2.3. Communication

The free dictionary defines communication as the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or behaviour (1. Wiki, 28-03-2010). As H. Clark and Brennan (1991) observe: «It takes two people working together to play a duet, shake hands, play chess, waltz, teach, or make love. To succeed, the two of them have to coordinate both the content and process of what they are doing... Communication, of course, is a collective activity of the first order.» Schwartz et al. (2008) suggest that communication should be seen as a "two-way process in which there is an exchange and progression of thoughts, feelings or ideas (energy) towards a mutually accepted goal or direction (information)" (2. Wiki, 28-03-2010).

Allwood's defines human communication as the following:

A sender S and a recipient R with a purpose P share a content C with the help of

an expression E and a medium M in an environment O.

Hence, information is shared and not transferred since both a sender who is producing information and receiver are participating in creation of meaning. Communication is also defined as "sharing of information between people on different levels of awareness and control", which is especially important when it comes to the definition of intercultural communication presented below (Allwood, 1985). Different levels of consciousness and intentionality are characteristic for both senders (production) and receiver (understanding) and that is why communication is multidimensional (Allwood, lecture fall 2008).

2.2.4. Bodily and Non-verbal Communication

Normal face-to-face communication is multi-modal both from the point of view of perception and production, employing several types of expression and media simultaneously. 3 basic ways of conveying and sharing information (cf. CS. Peirc, 1902) are: A. Indexical information, B. Iconic information and C. Symbolic information (Allwood, 2002).

In normal human communication people use the combination of above 3 types of information. Factual information is usually "symbolically expressed" with words, using hands to "iconically illustrate" what has been said while attitudes to the topic of conversation and other participants are expressed "indexically" by voice quality and facial gestures. The level of awareness about what a person is trying to say decreases from being most aware about what is shared symbolically with words, less aware about iconical illustration of what was said and least aware of information shared indexically which is at the same time most difficult to control. According to Allwood, human communication consist of 80-90% information shared by bodily movements. It is important to emphasize that bodily movements and tone of voice are the most genuine and spontaneous means of expressions for emotions and attitudes (Allwood, 2002).

Hence people communicate their attitudes, express emotions, support speech and give feedback with non-verbal signals. Some of this signals are universal but the majority vary across cultures. The face, eyes, spatial behaviour, bodily contacts and gestures were studied in different cultures. Allwood (1985) notice the differences in indicating emotions using prosody and interpretations of expressions of emotions in the voice depending on language and cultural background of participants in communication. Mutual gaze if less frequent in intercultural encounter than a person is used to in own culture could be interpreted as less polite, not paying attention and dishonest while more frequent mutual gaze is seen as disrespectful, threatening or insulting. Much research on facial expression treats it as an automatic response

to an internal state, but facial expressions can be controlled voluntarily to a considerable extent, and are used in social situations to convey a variety of kinds of information. Gestures vary in intensity and their meaning too (Ward et al., 2001).

Taking into consideration that bodily movements as the most convenient, spontaneous and automatic means of expression might differ significantly between cultures, it will be interesting to see how the differences in bodily movements and voice quality between newcomers and host culture influence culture shock.

2.2.5. Intercultural communication

Zapf explains culture as "a network of shared meanings that are taken for granted as reality by those interacting within the network". By structuring and categorizing external world people create mental models or maps which provide certainty in understanding of unpredictable and chaotic world (Zapf, 1991). Shared models of interactions reduce uncertainty in unpredictable outcomes of those interactions. When our internal conceptual model match with our social environment we feel secure and in harmony with the world around us, not being aware of the particular patterns of meanings that are assumed. When this match suddenly doesn't seem to exist the person might feel disoriented, frustrated, or afraid (Zapf, 1991).

A new approach to studies of intercultural communication is more focused on 'cross-cultural interdependence' which could be seen as the next level in understanding comparing to previously established way of studying differences and similarities of different cultures (3. Wiki, 26.03.2010.). Globalization and the growing use of internet technologies as well as growing interest, knowledge and awareness about other cultures demands a new approach to intercultural communication. The use of the term intercultural instead of previously commonly used "cross-cultural" remove the focus from the cultures to the people who are participating in intercultural communication: "It is not cultures that communicate, whatever that might imply, by people (and possibly social institutions) with different cultural backgrounds that do" (Allwood, 1985). Intercultural communication is according to Allwood:

"the sharing of information on different levels of awareness and control between people with different cultural backgrounds" (Allwood, 1985, p. 3).

By different cultural backgrounds Allwood implies cultural difference which are results of national culture as well as differences connected to activities on the national level. Allwood distinguishes four primary cultural dimensions: Patterns of thought, Patterns of behaviour, Patterns of artifacts and Imprints in nature. All these dimensions are of significance for studying culture shock. Furthermore Allwood emphasize that a culture or a subculture implies

characteristics that are “lastingly connected with a certain group of people” which doesn't have to be necessarily a national group (Allwood, 1985). Both communication and intercultural communication are defined as two-way processes and that is the way in which these definitions would be used in studying communication in relation to culture shock.

2.2.5. Identity, role and activity

National identity doesn't necessarily have to be the only identity that characterizes a person in different situations. Many other characteristics as well as activities that a person participate in could be significant for creation of social identity such as: age, sex, family position, profession, political ideology, religious believes, interests, hobbies etc. Different aspects of identity might be of importance in identifying oneself with a certain group of people who think alike (Allwood, 1985). Stella Ting-Toomey sees the difference between four “primary identities”, the “cultural”, “ethnic”, “gender” and “personal” and “situational identities” which refer to role, relationship, facework, and symbolic identities. The latest are adaptive self-images and highly situational dependent (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 29).

Furthermore Allwood (1985) emphasizes that communication characteristic and communicative behaviour of participants are influenced by **the activity** in which they participate. Factors that influence communication during different activities are: 1) **The purpose** of an activity or the goal that the activity is meant to achieve, 2) **Roles** of participants in the activity which is defined by their rights and obligations, 3) **Artifacts** which are used in communication such as pen, projector, telephone or computer and 4) **Physical circumstances** such as the level of noise, spacial setting, the distance between sender and receiver.

All this factors influence intercultural communication since spacial distance is different in different cultures between speakers for example. However during an activity the focus could be transferred from national identity of participants to their role in the activity, their professional identity and accordingly rights and obligations which might reduce culture distance between them. In studying intercultural communication involvement of different type of identities might help in distinguishing whether an interpersonal or an intergroup encounter is taking place.

2.2.6. Expatriates

Expatriates, which are in literature usually called "sojourners" are those cultural travellers, who are not planning to stay permanently in the host culture (Ward et al., 2001). They move to another country for a specific job and in most of the cases they are relocated by the company that they work for. In the theoretical background experiences of students, volunteers, expatriate and other sojourners are discussed. However the main focus of this study is on sojourners who's purpose of staying in another country is job even though some of them might decide to stay in the new country.

2.2.7. Host nationals

The hosts nationals are people who live in their own country and interact with sojourners coming from other countries. In this study host nationals are Swedish people who work closely with expatriates and interact with them on daily bases as well as Swedish people outside working environment in Sweden.

2.3. Culture shock – studies and theories

Most of the studies of culture shock were done considering experiences of students and International business people (Ward et al., 2001, p. 168). Arnold (1967) lists experts from different fields who were investigating culture shock. Oberg (1955) and Foster (1962) were both anthropologists and mostly interested in the symptoms and their development in time. Culture shock was considered to be the clinical complex. Oberg was interested in the job dysfunctions while Foster focused on behavioural and cultural factors combined with the symptoms. For a psychologist Guthrie (1963) the most important was mastering the value system, interpersonal relations, and nonverbal communication for managing interpersonal dissonance in the Peace Corps. Sociologists Smith, Fawcett, Ezekiel, and Roth (1963) were studying Peace Corps volunteers teaching in Ghana from the point of view of morale and work effectiveness.

Chapdelaine and Alexitch described 4 major approaches/explanations of the etiology of culture shock. According to 1) **Cognitive approach**, successful adjustment is based on an individual's understanding and correct interpretation of the cultural values, beliefs, behaviours, and norms of the new society. When interpreting, judging and behaving according to the own cultural standards individual's doesn't perform effective. 2) **Behavioral** - (Anderson, 1994) considers lack of knowledge about punishment and reward that are related to the host culture's verbal and nonverbal behaviour. Calling a person every day by phone might be seen as a sign of friendship in a collectivist culture, Iran, while it might be experienced as disturbing

from the point of view of individualistic country, Canada, and can lead to losing a friend instead of gaining a better relationship. 3) **Phenomenological** – a person experiencing a new culture develops a higher level of self- and cultural awareness (Adler, 1975; Bennett, 1986). The identity has to be redefined according to the new set of references in the new culture. Being “polite” differs across cultures and the person has to see this part of his/her identity in a different way. Several small incidents in a row which are related to different components of a person's identity might threaten self-concept. 4) **psychological and sociocultural** - the sociopsychological approach (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Searle, 1991) – The psychological adjustment is the feeling of well-being which depends on differences in the culture and feeling of being lonely, while the social adjustment is individual's efficiency in communicating with hosts which could be influenced by the lack of specific cultural knowledge or the strength of own cultural identity (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 1982).

2.3.1. Causes for culture shock

As it could be concluded from all previously mentioned definitions and studies of culture shock there are many different aspects of staying in another culture that cause culture shock. The **diversity of impressions** on all levels starting from physical reactions to climate, food and other differences and finishing with subtle social cues, communicative differences that are difficult to notice, understand and apply. Communicational aspects influencing culture shock will be discussed in section 2.4. while some of the general causes will be mentioned here.

When entering a new environment our basic needs for safety and need to belong (Maslow, 1943) are challenged in many ways. Not being able to predict how some everyday routines connected to transportation, housing, school etc, are supposed to be done creates a lot of uncertainty. “The immediate psychological result of being in a new situations is lack of security (Herman and Schield, 1961, p. 165). Not being able to predict the host nationals behaviour and realizing that our standard communicational and other capabilities in dealing with everyday situation might not work create an even stronger feeling of uncertainty and unpredictability. The fact that newcomers are usually not accepted by the host nationals in the way that they are used to in their own culture due to communication patterns that might differ leads to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Research shows that women experience stronger culture shock than man. Other parameters like location, the cultural context and cultural distance influence the intensity of culture shock too (Ward et al., 2001, p. 178). Misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the role and identity of the sojourner creates additional stress. When it comes to working environment role-set and status can be different in the new environment, while performance

requirements might be ambiguous. Role strain was studied by Juarez (1972) who claims in his dissertation that culture shock and role strain are “manifestations of similar phenomena” (Juarez, 1972, p. 258).

Taft (1997) in (Pantelidou & Craig, 2006) conceptualised ‘culture shock’ as comprising six distinct aspects, including: the strain of adapting to the new culture, a sense of loss, confusion in role expectations and self-identity, a feeling of being rejected by members of the new culture, and anxiety and feelings of impotence due to not being able to cope with the new environment. Some of the aspects are actually symptoms of culture shock which will be discussed here. Kenneth (1971) suggests that interacting with people who do not have the same native language, attitudes and perception may result in drastic changes in which one can gain higher level of self-awareness. According to him the sojourner becomes aware of own behaviour, attitudes and assumptions about life experiencing that contrast with host nationals behaviour, attitudes and assumptions.

The fact that one's own responses can be inappropriate in a culture makes a person realize that there are many different ways of doing things and reacting. Kenneth points out that interactions between members of two cultures don't always result in positive and harmonious development of relationships in which both sides can learn. The consequences might be development of stereotypes and decreased self-awareness too. Kenneth compares changes that a person experience during culture shock with changing jobs, joining new group or travelling to a new city. However he points out that latest changes are not too drastic. Due to the fact that culture shock is strong experience it requires immediate measures and acting which puts additional pressure on sojourner who has to deal with the requirements of the environment and thus become more aware of own patterns of thinking, behaving and reacting and consequently change (Kenneth, 1971).

The role of host nationals and environment

Kim mentions host nationals in relation to the culture shock of guests. The cultural and institutional patterns of the host environment are influencing the adjustment of guests (Kim in Gudykunst, 2005). How accessible and open the host environment is to strangers in the terms of structure and psychology also influences the adjustment of newcomers. There are 3 conditions of environment: host receptivity, host conformity pressure and ethnic group strength. Host receptivity varies in different location of host culture. The expectations that host nationals have about how newcomers should think, behave and act dictate the level of conformity pressure. But conformity pressure might be characteristic for the host culture itself which might be not obvious for a newcomer. The strength of newcomer's ethnic group and its possibility to influence host culture will influence the level of adjustment (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 388). Sojourner's actual or perceived treatment by members of the host society plays

significant role too (Ward et al., 2001, p. 181).

Host attitudes such as opposition from local managers and local suppliers, who sees expatriates activities as threat and hostility toward specific nationals group and xenophobic reactions influence the intensity of culture shock and possibilities for adjustments of sojourners (Ward et al., 2001, p. 183). The receptivity of host cultures is openness and willingness to provide opportunities for sojourners in the local social communication process. Host attitudes towards sojourners which might be positive, negative or ambiguous combined with stranger's goals in the culture influence establishment and quality of relationships between them. Host attitudes are positively related to increase of anxiety that sojourners experience. When it comes to multinational companies the level of host's ethnocentrism will influence work adjustment of sojourners (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 444).

Britt et al. (1996) suggest that the anxiety that newcomers feel is dependent on the combination of the effects of host nationals and the situation in which the interaction occurs. Gudykunst further claims that the nature of the connections that a person has with host nationals affects the level of anxiety and uncertainty. The following aspects of the interaction with hosts are important: 1) attraction to host, 2) quantity and quality of communication, 3) interdependence, 4) intimacy with the hosts which might increase in time by making friends (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 438).

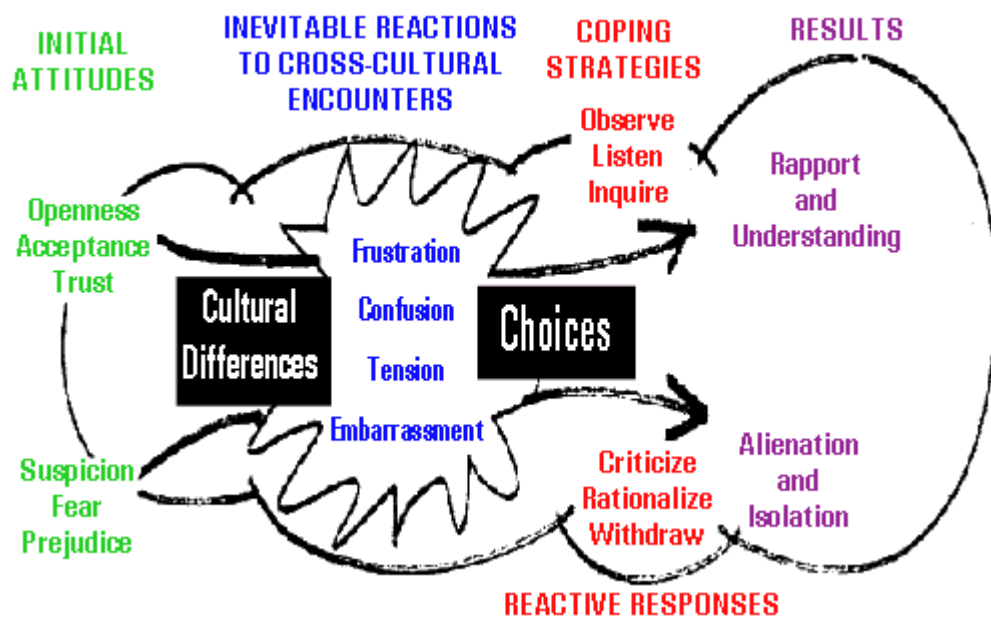


Diagram is used by permission from Duane Elmer's.

2.3.2. Symptoms of culture shock

Mumford's Culture Shock Questionnaire contains a total of 12 items measuring current adaptation, derived from the six aspects of culture shock described by Taft and additional items developed by Mumford.

The items refer to:

- feeling strain (tense) from the effort to adapt to a new culture,
- missing family and friends abroad,
- feeling accepted by local people,
- wishing to escape from new environment,
- feeling confused about role or identity in the new culture,
- finding things in new environment shocking or disgusting,
- feeling helpless or powerless when trying to cope with the new culture,
- feeling anxious or awkward when meeting local people,
- making sense of gestures or facial expressions when talking to people,
- feeling uncomfortable if people stare at oneself,
- feeling as though people may be trying to cheat oneself, when shopping,
- finding it an effort to be polite to hosts.

Zapf discusses the importance of the understanding of culture shock as well as awareness of danger signs. Danger signs described by Kealey (1978, p. 53) are the following:

- you are drinking more
- you are avoiding people
- you are subject to uncontrollable emotions
- you are spending all your time writing letters back home
- you are constantly complaining about the society
- you are adopting very negative attitudes towards the local people
- you constantly fear you are misunderstood by all, including your spouse
- you feel all alone
- you constantly think about things

Some other symptoms are listed by Zapf and he points out how contrasting they appear with initial enthusiasm and excitement. Feeling exhausted, afraid, irritated, impatient, frustrated and angry as well as feeling of self-doubt, pessimism and hopelessness are just some of the symptoms reported by persons moving across cultures:

sense of loss	impatient	apathetic
confused	irritable	depressed
ready to cry	frustrated	withdrawn

isolated	Thwarted	helpless
afraid	angry	vulnerable
exhausted	need to complain	inadequate
panic	desire to resign	overwhelmed
homesick	need to 'get out'	self-doubt
insomnia	resentful	bewildered
disoriented	contemptuous of clients	pessimistic
cynical	unable to concentrate	hopeless
physically ill	hostile	rejected
fatigued	distrusting	unaccepted
different	alienated	anxiety
lonely	disenchanted	suspicious

In severe cases person withdraws and avoids to go out at all: “.. sever culture shock can result in breakdown, withdrawal or reluctance to interact in the new culture (Zapf, 1991).

Previously listed negative aspects seem to be even more distinct compared to positive feelings of excitement and discovery which are characteristic for the time of entry and in the recovery state of the cultural adjustment:

excitement	challenge	satisfaction
fascination	euphoria	elation
anticipation	enthusiasm	creative
intrigue	capable	expressive
confident	optimism	self-actualized
stimulation	acceptance	energetic
sense of discovery	self-assured	purposive

Zapf stresses that the culture shock scales must be acknowledged as general stress scales. He speculates that the stress patterns described with generally accepted U-curve might be the stress related to some other process or event and not only to culture shock (Zapf, 1991, p. 112).

2.3.3. Solutions for culture shock

Zapf (1991) points out that previous literature was mainly focused on defining parameters and features for selection of people who are suppose to move without considering those already experiencing culture shock. Some concrete strategies and suggestions were needed. Zapf provides a set of suggestion that might be use both for preventing and dealing with culture shock:

1. Understanding of Culture Shock – gaining understanding that the stress caused by culture shock is natural and common to all sojourners can make a person feel better. Otherwise the overwhelming frustration might be perceived as weakness, severe personal problems or mental health crises. As it was showed by Arnold (1967) people are able to deal with big amount of stress if it is time-limited. Zapf points that too. Some confidence could be regained if a person knows that it is not 'just s/he', but rather the person's interactions with a strange environment that creates this state.

2. Awareness of danger signs is important helping a person to know when s/he needs to talk to someone about difficulties and things which are getting out of control. Complaining about society, avoiding people, developing negative attitudes towards local people and intensive thinking are just some of them.

3. Connections with local ethnic community was stressed by Oberg (1954). The local ethnic community in most of the cases has already established mechanisms for supporting newcomers. Kim (1988) elaborates on this liaison role of cultural middleman/woman and advocates 'the merging of ethnic and host team social service delivery' (p. 171)

4. Communication competence is essential for the feeling of well-being in a new culture. The language and specifics of effective communication characteristic for host environment are necessary to acquire. Searching for possibilities for immediate and honest feedback can increase efficiency of a newcomer's learning.

5. Analysis of culture bumps – Zapf suggestion are mainly tailored for counselling. He suggests analysing specific situations in which misunderstandings occur. In this way the focus is directed from the overwhelming phenomenon of culture shock to concrete situations which could be understood. He refers to specific way of analysing this "culture bumps" suggested by Archer (1986) where all the incident should be described as well as the behaviours of all the participants after which one should reflect on type of responses which would be expected in his/her own culture.

6. Using groups could help in increasing awareness that others are experiencing similar stress. Communication practice with feedback and analysing culture bumps in a group can be very useful in which participants gain concrete behaviour patterns that they lack in the new environment.

Zapf sees the stress activated by culture shock as a positive opportunity for learning and increased performance while stress is kept within the healthy level. Overstress results in withdrawal and defensive behaviour. Adler (1975) describes culture shock as "depth experience" which 'begins with the encounter of another culture and evolves into the encounter with self' (Zapf, 1991).

2.4. Expatriate adjustment

Ward et al refers to two approaches to study expatriate adjustment: 1) conceptual models based on theory describing adjustment in general terms without considering specific conditions of overseas assignments and 2) partly empirical studies. But in order to be used for selecting, training or mentoring expatriates, these studies should be empirically proven (Ward, 2001, p. 178).

“Conceptual models”

According to Aycan (1997) there are three forms of adjustment: Psychological – mental and physical well-being; sociocultural – successful orientation in a new environment and in interpersonal relationships; as well as work adjustment – efficient performance, achievement of goals and organisational commitment. Based on studies from 1960's, she suggests a list of sixteen “propositions” including personal characteristics of a sojourner such as technical competence, previous cross-cultural experience, relational skills, cultural flexibility and extroversion as well as organizational aspects such as existence of culture training, overseas assignment as a part of detailed career planning, thorough job design and role clarity; logistical and social support; meeting the needs of the sojourner's family members as well as planned assistance with re-entry problems.

Empirical studies

Ward et al criticize such extended schemes because they don't take into consideration specific problems and issues of a certain assignment. Stenning and Hammer (1992) studied the adjustment problems of expatriates in certain context, American managers in Japan and Thailand and Japanese in the United States and Thailand. Three measures were used in the study: 1) **an intercultural stress scale** with parameters like the ability to deal with frustration, different political systems and anxiety; 2) **an intercultural communication scale** with ability to start conversations with strangers and deal with misunderstandings; and 3) **an intercultural relationship scale** with ability to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, as well as ability to communicate with the members of other cultures with understanding and empathy. According to results the American expatriates were more adjusted and effective in comparison with their Japanese counterparts but there is no explanation why.

The following categories were defined by Ward et al as those affecting the adjustment of expatriates:

Cultural distance

Furnham and Bochner (1982) report that the greater the cultural distance between 's cultures and the host culture, the more social difficulties sojourners have in the host culture (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 435). Torbiorn (1982) did a study on Swedish managers who worked in industrialized Western countries in comparison with those situated in Africa. It was proven that cultural similarity positively affects experiences of Swedish managers. Culturally more challenging environment proved to negatively influence cultural awareness, knowledge, work satisfaction as well as business-related problems as it was the case with American managers in Japan in comparison with their German counterparts in the United States (Dunbar, 1994, p. 287). The two groups showed the same results when it comes to career satisfaction and company identification. Church's (1982) review of many studies spread the belief that low distance between cultures helps in expatriate adjustment, but Selmer and Shiu (1999) research shows the opposite. They interviewed Hong Kong expatriates business managers in the PRC and found that they were feeling lonely and frustrated with their stuff resistant to changes and trying to isolate them as newcomers, experienced communication problems with their headquarters in Hong Kong and didn't participate in social activities in order to keep distance. The situation for their wives was similar, they were socializing with other expatriate families. This research shows that managers assigned to a similar cultural environment can be less aware of intercultural issues and they try to refer to problems as their personal, managerial or organizational.

Personality traits were studied in relation to general and interaction adjustment. Parker and McEvoy (1993) tested 169 American expatriates in 12 countries. They used the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI; Carlyn, 1997) with an Extroversion-Introversion scale. Their findings show that extroversion was related to interaction adjustment but not to general adjustment. The other study by Harrison, Chadwick and Scale (1996) of American expatriates in Europe showed that self-efficacy influenced general, interaction and work adjustment (Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992). Ward et al consider this kind of studies useful in employee selection but more data is needed for indicating the significance of the role of personality in expatriate adjustment (Ward et al, 2005).

Dr Helen Burgess on the internet page describing culture shock notices that: "People who experience greater culture shock at the beginning usually adapt better in the long run because they are more perceptive of cultural differences." and "The type of person most likely to be transferred abroad (successful, high energy, "in control"...) probably has the personality type that is hardest hit by culture shock. People who "go with the flow a little" and are patient and relaxed are the ones who integrate most easily.

(<http://www.herneconsultants.com/cultureshock.htm>)

Host attitudes and interactions were studied from the point of view of expatriates as perceived attitudes. Reasons for hostility from the local community can be: local managers feeling blocked in their career by foreign managers (Hailey, 1996); local suppliers feeling threatened by foreign control (Zeira and Banai, 1981); hostility towards national groups (Stewart and DeLisle, 1994); xenophobic reactions to multinationals (Kopp, 1994). Florkowski and Fogel (1999) studied expatriates employed by 22 multinational firms. Perceived cultural superiority and intolerance, (local managers' not willing to learn from other countries) or ethnocentrism influenced negatively work adjustment and commitment to the local branch of the organisation.

Motivation to undertake an expatriate assignment

The fact that between 20 and 50 per cent of expatriate executives return prematurely (Black and Gregersen, 1990; Harris and Moran, 1991; Tung, 1988a) could be seen as the consequence of lack of strategic planning. Market forces rather than personal aspiration of assigned people influence companies' choice. "Preview" or the "realistic job interview", stressing both positive and negative aspects of a job that candidates are interested in could be used as an example for introducing a similar procedure in regular use for international assignments. Candidates that were asked questions such as under what circumstances would you remain committed to assignment are more likely to finish their work abroad (Spiess and Wittmann, 1999 in Ward et al, 2001, p.183).

Mentoring as social support

Mentoring is used in the three phases of expatriate assignment: the pre-departure, on-site monitoring and re-entering. A "mental map" provided by a mentor helps in understanding of the personal and the organizational aspects of assignment (Harvey et al., 1999) as well as realistic expectations for assigned person. During the on-site mentoring efficiency of learning of new job, degree of commitment to the organisation as well as adjustment to the new culture are supposed to be increased (Chao, Walz and Gardner, 1992). This means reduction of uncertainty about the new environment (Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1993) by providing: task and career assistance, social support and role modeling (Dreher and Ash, 1990; Turban and Dougherty, 1994). Feldman and Bolino (1999) showed that mentoring was positively influencing job satisfaction, intention to complete the expatriate assignment and knowledge about the determinants of success in international business.

Expatriate women

Women as expatriates are represented with only 11 per cent world wide (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999). The question is if there is a gender bias in sending expatriates on global assignments, are there differences in productivity of female expatriates and what influence successful operating of a female expatriate abroad. Lowe, Downes and Kroeck (1999)

conducted a study with 217 American business students who were asked to rank a list of 41 countries by showing willingness to work there for 3 years. The reasons for preferring some locations over others were economic factors such as the level of development and sociocultural factors such as cultural distance, political stability and host attitudes to gender issues. Women are less willing to work in Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia and found countries like Korea, Sweden and Brazil less attractive. The study was done as a response to Adler's (1997) research studying myths such as the assumption that women are not willing to work abroad which he proved not to be true. Another myth was that males' attitudes in a host country can constrain doing business with women (Caligiuri and Cascio, 1998). Adler found that only 20 per cent had negative experiences in this concern while 42 per cent considered being female as an advantage. Caligiuri and Tung (1999) showed that women experienced difficulties in adjustment in countries with high index of masculinity (Hofstede, 1980). Since only 20 women participated in the study the results should be treated with caution, but other studies show the same tendency and the main conclusion is that broad social support if provided influences the adjustment of expatriate women.

Most of the studies are done with expatriates on managerial positions. The group of expatriates that are studied is usually of one nationality and some studies compare adjustment of 2 groups, each group of one nationality in the same or 2 different countries. This study is done with people from different countries who all entered one single culture in different periods of time. Most of them work in 2 companies in Sweden, one big Swedish international company and one American international company with several sites in Sweden. More than half are experts in a specific field and were invited to Sweden based on their professional record. Some have managerial positions, while one third initially came to Sweden for another purpose but started to work soon.

2.5. Communication – studies and theories

Intercultural communication theories that discuss culture shock and problems of adjustment and integration are shortly presented in this section. Further on different parts of the theories will be used in order to define communicational factors influencing culture shock.

Why communication in relation to culture shock?

Cultural shock was approached in different ways and the literature referred to it as: *culture shock*, *acculturation*, *adjustment*, *assimilation*, *integration*, *adaptation*. Chapdelaine & Alexitch (2004) point out that the phenomenon was often redefined and renamed as for example *cross-cultural adjustment* (Befus, 1988; Searle & Ward, 1990), *culture learning* (Paige, 1990) and *cultural adjustment stress* (Anderson, 1994). Two theories that are going to be discussed in this thesis describe culture shock from the point of view of adaptation and intercultural adjustment.

As it could be concluded from previously said most of the studies about the initial stage after entering a new culture in order to stay for some time consider the problems of **adjustment** to the new culture. All above mentioned "names" show the effort which is made from the newcomer side. The fact that the first studies of culture shock were done by American researchers as a part of US strategies in military, charity or intelligence missions, can be considered as significant in the understanding of these approaches to study culture shock. Even later studies about immigrants in America are mostly focused on adjustment processes where it seems that a newcomer has all the responsibility for adjustment and effective communication. This study focuses on communication as a double-way process and the ways in which communication could be seen as cause, symptoms and solution for culture shock.

2.5.1. An Integrative Communication Theory by Young Yun Kim

An Integrative Communication Theory by Young Yun Kim suggests understanding of cross-cultural adaptation as "a dynamic interplay of the person and the environment" where adaptation is seen as universal phenomenon, an instinctive human struggle for regaining control over own life in new environment (Kim in Gudykunst, 2005, p. 378). The adaptation is also seen as something characteristic for evolution and all living systems.

Kim considers cultural adaptation as **a communication-based phenomenon**. "Communication is the necessary vehicle without which adaptation cannot take place". (Kim in Gudykunst, 2005, 379). Adaptation is reached through communication and requires that the individual is in the interaction with the host environment. Kim stresses the importance of establishing fruitful and healthy relationships with the host environment in the same way as it is done in the native population. She see adjustment as the process of personal transformation in which sojourners are involved in cultural learning and growth towards self-conceptions and self-orientation that are more open to otherness. She considers that her theory can be applied to both those who are planning to stay a limited period of time in a new culture and those, planning to resettle in the new culture.

2.5.2. Anxiety Uncertainty Management by Gudykunst

AUM Theory of sojourners Intercultural Adjustment considers concepts of Anxiety, Uncertainty and Mindfulness and how they influence other variables such as: self-concepts, motivation, reactions to hosts, social categorization of hosts, situational processes, connections with host nationals, ethical interactions and conditions in a host culture (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 419).

Gudykunst views (p. 425) intercultural adjustment "as a process of involving feeling comfortable in the host culture, as well as communicating effectively and engaging in socially

appropriate behaviour with host nationals". He discusses the importance of the effectiveness of the communication as the final result of intercultural adjustment where all the responsibility is on the person who is suppose to *adjust*.

2.5.3. Communication Accommodation in Intercultural Encounters

According to this theory individuals tend to emphasize or reduce social difference in encounters, deciding if a certain encounter is intergroup or interpersonal. There are some individual differences in approaching intercultural encounters as high-intergroup or high-interpersonal or both. Situational constraints can also encourage speakers to perceive a given encounter in intergroup or interpersonal terms (Kim&Gudykunst, 1998,p. 159). The verbal and nonverbal behaviours of participants in a an interaction give us the best clue about whether intergroup, interpersonal or both factors are salient and in which direction.

Speakers use different strategies to show their attitudes towards each other which are introduced by Giles (1973) in his Communication accommodation theory as convergence and divergence. In seeking approval, enhance comprehension or showing solidarity speakers change their linguistics (language, dialect, vocabulary, speech style) or paralinguistic behaviour (tone of voice, speech rate etc.) in order to be similar through convergence. By divergence speaker emphasize difference in speech between them and their partner. Maintenance is continuing in one's own style with or without reference to the other's speech. The perception of participants communicative behaviour influence convergence. Speakers seem to converge to what they think is the communicative behaviour of other participants (Kim&Gudykunst, 1998,p. 159).

2.6. Communication as cause, symptom and solution for culture shock

Both Kim and Gudykunst stresses the importance of communication for the adaptation. Different aspects of these theories will be used in the following section showing in which way communication causes culture shock, signalizes it and in which way it could be used for successful dealing with it.

2.6.1. Communication as cause of culture shock

- the lack of means for communication

As it was mentioned in the beginning Oberg marked that a large part of difficulties for a person experiencing culture shock are connected to his/her inability to communicate in different

cultural environment. This leads to continuous and growing frustrations. Gudykunst in his theory referred to Schuetz suggesting that a sojourn experience a series of crises while communicating with hosts not only because of the different understanding of roles and identities that are of significance in every social situation but because of lack of "shared realities" too. A newcomer doesn't interact in the way that is common and automatic for natives which is the result of the lack of means for reaching successful communication (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 421).

- anxiety and uncertainty in interactions

The feeling of uneasy, tense, worried, or apprehensive about what might be the consequences of the interaction which are most of the time seen as negative is anxiety (Stephan&Stephan, 1985). Gudykunst develops this by defining anxiety as the need for feeling adequate and being able to be in a harmony with the requirements of the environment (2005, p.). According to Gudykunst the level of anxiety and uncertainty influences further motivation for interactions with host representatives. Uncertainty is a cognitive phenomenon which increases in the state of culture shock since sojourner is dealing with many aspects of the environment which are unknown and new. The need to be able to predict hosts' behaviour and how things are done in the new culture increases. Anxiety and uncertainty influence and reinforce each other. A newcomer tries to manage uncertainty by seeking new information and to manage anxiety by tension reduction. Unsuccessful communication with host representatives creates anxiety since the need to belong (Maslow, 1943) and the need for group inclusion, which is expected to be in the same way as in own culture, are not satisfied which leads further to "anxiety about ourselves and our standing in the host culture" (Turner, 1988 in Gudykunst, 2005, p. 431).

- ability to establish relationships

Social difficulties are seen as the essence of culture shock by other authors too. Furnham and Bochner (1986) compare interactions with the host nationals as a game with rules that are unknown to a newcomer. As operating in a new environment requires a lot of interactions with host representatives not knowing the rules leads to increased frustrations (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004). Kim stresses the importance of establishing fruitful and healthy relationships with the host environment in the same way as it is done in the native population. She sees adjustment as the process of personal transformation in which sojourners are involved in cultural learning and growth towards self-conceptions and self-orientation that are more open to otherness.

- talk empathetically

Arnold (1967, p. 59) describes a situation of a 23 years old Peace Corps volunteer, called Len, who was assigned to a colonization project in an isolated jungle. After 5 months Len decided to go back to United States. His initial explanation was that he didn't feel that he

can contribute to the project but the real reason which was revealed in the further discussion was that he was not "able to talk [empathetically] with other volunteers in his group". Oberg (1954) suggestion that the best way for dealing with culture shock is talking to own countrymen appeared to be the main reason for Len's decision to resign. Furthermore being able to talk empathetically is important for establishing relationships with hosts too. Since there is the difference in the way that members of different cultures talk empathetically this might lead to further frustrations and misunderstandings as one can experience host national as completely insensible.

- ability to understand, empathise and deal with misunderstandings

As it was mentioned before Stening and Hammer (1992) studied adjustment problems of expatriates in a particular location. Some of the measures were the ability to initiate interactions with strangers and ability to deal with communication misunderstandings as well as the ability to develop and maintain satisfying interpersonal relationships, and to be able to understand, work and empathise with members of the host culture (Ward, 2001, p. 179). Dealing with misunderstandings is an inevitable part of intercultural encounters.

2.6.2. Communication as symptoms of culture shock

The way in which a person communicate, his/her attitudes towards host representatives expressed in communication by words and prosody as well as bodily movements can indicate if person is experiencing culture shock or not.

- gossiping about host culture

Oberg (1954) suggests that very obvious sign that people are experiencing culture shock is that they are gossiping about members of a host culture. The customs of the host culture are seen as strange, host nationals as impolite and rude, while own inabilities to communicate appropriately resulting in continuous frustrations is transformed in hostility towards representatives of host culture. Zapf (1991, p. 111) lists different indicators of culture shock among which are the need to complain which is best realized in gossiping.

- not being able to empathize with others

As mentioned before one of the causes for culture shock is inability to talk empathetically with own countrymen as in case of Len (Aronld, 1967, p. 59). However since the culture shock is closely related to high level of stress the person experiencing it is more focused on dealing and coping with it, trying to interpret social cues and respond in appropriate way, than being able to see the world from host's perspective, experience similar emotions and empathize with the host nationals (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 432).

- withdrawal or hostility towards the host nationals

Kim sees the process of adaptation as similar to process of evolution. She marks that every open system resist change. In the case of a sojourner experiencing culture shock avoiding the "pain" might result in "selective attention, denial, avoidance, and withdrawal as well as by compulsively altruistic behaviour, cynicism, and hostility towards the host environment (Lazarus, 1966, p. 262 in Gudykunst, 2005, p. 383). The level of anxiety and uncertainty will influence sojourner's motivation for communicating with host nationals. Both anxiety and uncertainty should be between sojourner's minimum and maximum thresholds. If anxiety is higher than person's maximum thresholds s/he will feel so uneasy that s/he will not want to communicate with host nationals. In this situation the source of anxiety seems to be so vague that it is difficult to define it, which paralyses any action (Riezler, 1960, p. 147 in Gudykunst, 2005, p. 422). If the level of anxiety is below minimum thresholds there is not enough adrenaline to motivate the person to communicate effectively. During the adjustment period the requirements for processing different kind of information is very high and it might lead to exhaustion (Zapf, 1991, p. 111) which lives little energy for social activities.

Refusal to participate in social activities might be interpreted by host nationals as hostility or stereotyping them and having prejudice (Gudykunst, 2005, p.). Host representatives can also sense aggressive attitude of sojourners and react in a similar hostile manner or with avoidance. Aggressive ridicule is another type of response from host representatives which might be difficult for sojourners to deal with.

- distrust and suspicion, misinterpretation

Among other symptoms of culture shock Zapf lists distrust and suspicion towards host nationals. As mentioned before Stephan and Stephan (1985) suggest that "anxiety is based on the anticipation of negative consequences of interactions with host nationals" (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 422). The communication is influenced by participants expectations and since expectations are based on sojourner's own culture reference this leads to misinterpretations of host behaviour. When focused on outcomes the sojourner can miss subtle cues which lead to misunderstandings (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 425).

2.6.3. Communication as solution of culture shock

Kim sees communication as very important part of adaptation to a new culture. She refers to adaptation as **a communication-based phenomenon**. "Communication is the necessary vehicle without which adaptation cannot take place". Adaptation is reached through communication and requires that the individual is in the interaction with the host environment. She stresses the fact that communication influences adaptation and thus adaptation cannot be treated as an independent or dependent variable (Kim in Gudykunst, 2005, p. 379). Gudykunst points out that intercultural adjustment was conceptualize in many different ways such as coping with "culture shock" through the process illustrated by U- and W-curves, general

satisfaction with living in the host culture, behaving in ways that are socially appropriate and interpersonally effective, the degree of coordination with the host culture (adopting communication and behaving appropriately to the host culture). Some of the previously mentioned are close to a communication competence view of adjustment by Spitzerg & Cupach, (1984). Adjustment is the last stage in which person is generally competent to interact in the host society.

- social support

Several authors discuss the importance of social support which are primarily expected from the family and one's own countrymen. Talking and even gossiping about host culture releases accumulated stress and can help in understanding and rationalizing own difficulties (Oberg, 1954, p. 9). Arnold (1967) suggested the use of groups for therapeutic activities, organized on daily bases. This kind of activities proved to be useful during adjustment of volunteers. Social support from colleagues, superiors and family are stressed by Ward too (Ward, 2001, p. 181). Pantelidou and Craig (2006) studied in which way social support influence the intensity of culture shock on Greek students in UK. They found that social support is highly associated with the intensity of culture shock and could be used for prevention and helping sojourners to deal with culture shock. The bigger the social network including both own countrymen and host nationals the less culture shock student experienced (Pantelidou & Craig, 2006). On the other hand Kim's study of Chinese graduate students in America showed that frequent communication with own nationals has negative consequences on host communication competence and interpersonal activities with host nationals (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 387).

- quality and quantity of contacts with hosts

The nature of the contacts with host nationals is influenced by situational processes and it can lead to establishment of the **connections with the host nationals** or not. Attraction to host nationals, quantity and quality of sojourner's contacts with host nationals as well as an increase in interdependence with host nationals will decrease anxiety and lead to better ability to predict hosts behaviour. The intimacy in sojourner's relationships, shared networks with host nationals and social support decrease anxiety (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 438).

- mindfulness in communication and searching for information

Mindfulness implies the awareness of the process of communication in which we participate. According to Langer (1989, p. 62), being mindful means that a person is 1) able to create new categories, 2) open to new information and 3) aware of more than one perspective. A mindful person can see the variety of choices that could be used for communication in more effective ways with host nationals. By activating information seeking skripts the anxiety about interacting with host nationals could be reduced (Leary et al. 1988). Skripts are logical sequences of events prescribed within a culture for a certain social situation. By trying to find out more about the culture might help in reducing anxiety but at the same time it depends on

how appropriate is asking in a certain culture (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 437).

- mentoring as a special case of social support

Mentor is an individual with previous experience in the culture who supports and guides a newcomer during 3 different stages of the trip: pre-departure, on-site and re-entering home culture. Faster learning of new jobs, commitment to organisation as well as greater expatriate adjustments are goals for this kind of support. On-site mentoring provides task and career assistance, social support and role modelling. Some companies provide mentoring but most of the time it happens without previous planning. Sometimes this kind of introduction could lead to stereotyping and prejudice passed by from the individuals that already spent some time in the culture to those entering it. The stage of culture shock or adjustment in which "mentor" is at that specific moment would influence the nature of information about the host culture and host nationals. Sometimes negative introduction can increase the intensity of culture shock.

- a host culture friend as a mode

Similar suggestion could be found on some of the internet pages providing information and suggestions about culture shock. Robert E. suggests recruiting a host culture friend who would be able to observe sojourner in the new cultural context and provide suggestions and coaching about specific responses in different situation whether they are of business or social nature (<http://www.expats-repat.com/extreme.php>)

2.7. Theoretical frame for this study

The main goal with the above presented literature was to introduce the reader into the complexity of the phenomenon of culture shock both as it was presented by anthropologists and psychologists on one side and researchers within the field of communication on the other side. Even though different researchers focus on different aspects of the phenomenon the aim of this literature review was to extract factors related to communication. By defining culture shock, communication, non-verbal and intercultural communication the scope of the study was set up. The literature review that follows is organized in the same way as the discussion in the end of this study making it possible for reader to relate findings to the concepts already established in the literature, such as ability to communicate in the new culture, ability to establish relationships, quality and quantity of communication with hosts etc. Time as a factor (Arnold, 1967), general well-being and satisfaction as well as work related adjustment (Ward et al., 2001, p. 183) are all of importance for indicating and understanding the level of culture shock. Even though two main theories by Gudykunst and Kim are only briefly explained in separate sections (2.5.1. and 2.5.2.), their context is used in further description of communication as cause, symptom and solution for culture shock. Concrete questions in the guided semi-structured interviews were based on Anxiety Uncertainty Management by

Gudykunst as well as Kim's view of communication as "the necessary vehicle for adaptation" (Gudykunst, 2005). Other authors such as Arnold, Aycan, Oberg etc. were also in one or another way referred to in the guided interviews and discussion part of this thesis. The way in which different parts of the literature were used as the base for the interviews will be described in detail in the section 3. Method.

3. METHOD

Data collection for this study is done through qualitative interviews. Since culture shock is a multidimensional phenomenon it is important to give participants opportunity to talk freely about their experiences. Culture shock is also a very individual experience and the main factors influencing it might vary from person to person. Tange (2005) stresses the limitations of this method such as highly subjective account from the informants which is additionally influenced by researcher's perception. Even though he recognizes the weaknesses of the method he still recommends qualitative approach in this kind of study. As this study didn't aim to diagnose culture shock but rather to examine which communicational factors influence it, informants were encourage to share all their association and reflections throughout the interview. Furthermore all interviews were audio recorded and attitudes expressed through prosody could be taken in account when analysing them. Video recording might be even better for analysing bodily movements of informants, but it might restrict informant's willingness to share their thoughts and feelings about their experiences.

For the purpose of limiting the conversations during the interviews to the experiences relevant to phenomenon of culture shock the overview of the literature was used to lead the conversations through different parameters and concepts of significance for the aria of the research. Semi-structured guided interviews were used as the base for the conversation lasting from approximately 40 minutes to one and a half hour. But it should be noticed that, as Charniawska suggests in her book: "What people present in the interviews is but the results of their perception, their interpretation of the world which is of the extreme value to the researcher because one may assume that it is the same perception that informs their actions" (Charniawska, 2002, p. 49).

3.1. Development of the questionnaire

The interview guide contains three sections (see Appendix 1). First part were job related questions, second part was based on Mumford measurement of culture shock from 1998 and extended with the items related to communication and the third part are general questions

connected to problems and misunderstandings in communication with host representatives as well as anything that informants experienced as strange or shocking. The idea behind the third part is to provide informants with possibility to freely reflect upon the new culture and one more time express their attitudes towards it. It should be stressed that questions were only used to guide informants through the interview and they were encouraged to share all possible reflections that they have. The way in which each separate question is related to the literature background is explained in detail here.

Part I

During the first part of the interview informants were gradually introduced into the topic of the study by answering general questions related to their job, recruitment process, intercultural training provided by the company as well as general feeling of well-being and satisfaction with the company and the new culture.

Time - First two questions (questions 1 and 2): 1. When did you arrive to Sweden? And 2. Did you know how long were you to stay in Sweden? were related to time. Arnold (1967) claims that time limit is important factor influencing the intensity of culture shock. He provides an example of a volunteer in Bolivia, a nurse who experienced a deep depression and asked to be transferred back to United States. During the time period that was given to her, necessary to organize her trip back she got better and could continue with her assignment. Arnold concludes that people can deal with significant amount of stress if there is a certain point in time when the release is suppose to come (Arnold, 1967).

Previous experience abroad and training – The following four questions (Question 3,4,5,6) are related to cultural competence and previous intercultural experiences of informants. Information about training provided by the company and the need for some kind of intercultural introduction is collected with the help of questions 5 and 6. Aycan's conceptual model of expatriate adjustment suggests that personal characteristics such as previous cross-cultural experience and organisational aspects such as existence of culture training will positively influence both general adjustment and work adjustment (Ward et al., 2001, p. 180).

Well-being – Asking informants to compare in Question 7: How does it feel for you to work and live in Sweden? to how it felt in the beginning was suppose to make them reflect upon the differences and intensity of positive or negative experiences in the beginning and with the time that passed based on U-curve (Oberg, 1954).

Job – Questions 8, 9, 10 are connected to motivation to undertake an expatriate assignment (Ward et al., 2001, p. 183) as well as the level of predictability from the point of view of job description and role expectations which in case that they are not clear might influence overall feeling of confusion (Taft, 1997) as well as more intensive phenomenon, role shock (Juarez, 1972). If the job description was clear and role expectation met it could be easier to

distinguish and concentrate on communicational factors influencing culture shock.

Perceived treatment by hosts – Question 11 aims to examine the relation between host attitudes as informants perceived them in the beginning, and the intensity of culture shock as well as the level of performance and job satisfaction (Ward et al., 183).

Work adjustment and work satisfaction – Questions 12 and 13 were suppose to explore in which way initial stress after moving to the new environment influenced job performance (effectiveness) and job and company satisfaction (commitment, Aycan, 1997) as well as the difference between usual period of adjustment to a new job and more intensive experience of culture shock that might be the cause of drop in performance (Ward et al., 2001, p. 180).

Awareness – Question 14. Zapf (1991) stresses the importance of understanding culture shock and awareness of dangerous signs. Informants were asked to describe their own understanding of culture shock and provide some examples of symptoms. It was suppose to show how informed they were about phenomenon and in case that they experienced culture shock if they would relate themselves with some of the recognized symptoms.

Part II

Part II is formed as guided interview based on already established questionnaire by Mumford (1998) who developed Taft 6 aspects (1997). It is extended with the items related to communication. It consists of questions related to "core" items of culture shock defined by Mumford and Interpersonal stress items which were changed and adjusted to communicational aspects of interactions with host nationals. First 7 questions were the same as in Mumford's questionnaire: 1. Did you feel strain from the effort to adapt to a new culture? 2. Did you miss people in your country back home? 3. Did you feel generally accepted by the local people in the new culture? 4. Did you ever wish to escape from your new environment altogether? 5. Did you ever feel confused about your role, *values* or self-identity in the new culture? 6. Have you found things in your new environment shocking or *strange*? 7. Did you feel helpless or powerless when trying to cope with the new culture? The minor changes were done in question 5 adding word *values* after role as well as exchanging the word *disgusting* with more neutral *strange*. Informants were suppose to choose between optional answers graded from not at all, occasionally and most of the time. But at the same time they were encouraged to continue with any associations or reflections they might have connected to questions stated.

The second part of Mumford questionnaire, called *Interpersonal stress items* was almost completely changed. Question 1 was extended in the beginning by adding tense, uneasy, worried: Did you feel tense, uneasy, worried, anxious or awkward when talking to host people? Mumford's question 3 was taken away. Mumford question 4: When you go out shopping, do

you fell as though people may be trying to cheat you was rephrased and used as question 3: Did you feel that you were sometimes mistrustful or suspicious about host people? Question 4 is Mumford's question 5. The rest, questions 6,7,8,9, were completely new and related to ability to understand and empathize with host people and quantity and quality of interactions with them. Question 8 (Kealey, 1978, p.53): Did you sometimes avoid to talk with host people because you were stressed or tired? was based on some of the signs of culture shock discussed by Zapf as important to be aware of. The level of motivation and uncertainty is influencing avoidance too according to Gudykunst (2005).

Part III

The third part of the interview contains questions 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 about what kind problems and misunderstandings informants experienced in communication with host people as well as how difficult it was to deal with possible misunderstandings. As mentioned before informants were supposed to complete their previous comments and reflections about the period of adoption to the new culture. What did you find as most difficult or challenging in moving to the new culture or in interacting with host colleagues was the question number 18 stated in order to cover some other difficulties that informants might have experienced but the previous questions didn't cover. While answering the question: "What do you see as main differences between Swedish way of doing things and the way things are done in your country?" informants could speak about more practical aspects of the culture that they experience as strange. The third section gave an opportunity to informants to freely discuss host culture showing how emotional they are in expressing their opinions about the new culture as well as how positive or negative they are, which might indicate a certain level of culture shock.

3.2. Informants

In order to examine what parameters of host environment would be of significance for culture shock specific for a certain location people from different countries working in Sweden were interviewed. A small presentation of the thesis topic together with researcher's CV was sent to two big international companies. 2 contact persons were willing to pass the information about the research to their international colleagues asking them if they were interested to participate. Expats from different countries replied immediately to e-mail in one company while the contact person in another company organised interviews with some of the informants.

The interviews were conducted with 14 people from 11 different countries: Korea, United Kingdom, United States (2), Brasil (3), Australia, Belgium, China, Germany, France,

Hungary and Turkey. Eight women and six men participated. The majority of informants were in one way or another invited to come to Sweden and work. 3 informants came with their husbands but soon started to work while 2 other informants came as students and started to work later. All of them have University degree and they work on following positions in 2 different companies: Administrative coordinator, Business controller, Clinical Outsourcing Manager, Project Leader, Competence Development Manager, Technical Consultant, Post Doctoral and Research Assistant, Sales Process manager, Medical Chemist, Data Manager, Project Logistics Manager, Manager Customer solutions, Senior scientists. It is important to emphasize that even though they work in only 2 different companies they work in different departments of these two companies and consequently in very different working environments.

3.3. Ethical consideration

Before each interview informants were introduced into the topic of the study and asked to sign ethical consideration stating that the information shared during the interview will be used only for research purposes and nothing else. Their participation is anonymous and their name were written down only for the researcher's own administration of the interviews (see Appendix 2).

3.4. Limitation of the method

One limitation of the study is the fact that the majority of the informants, except 4 of them have been already living in Sweden for 3 years or more at the moment of interviews so the memory of their first impressions and experiences in the beginning might have changed until now. However some of them experienced initial euphoria and started to see the problems later on. Another limitation would be the fact that offered answers in modified Mumford questionnaire, in most of the cases, had only 3 options: most of the time, occasionally or not at all. The answers chosen by informants might not catch exact degree of a certain items, since occasionally in some cases meant 2-3 times all in all while in other cases it meant repeated happenings during longer period of time. On the other hand all comments made by informants were written down and the questionnaire was mostly use as guideline for more open discussion encouraging all possible associations and reflections connected to the main topic. Talking empathetically was phrased in question C5 and C6 as "understanding the point of view" which might have been misinterpreted in some cases as misunderstandings based on language rather than understanding of the "perception of the world".

4. RESULTS

The raw results of exploration of the ways in which communication influence the level of culture shock are presented in section 4.1. while summarized experiences of all participants are presented in Appendix 2. Factors indicating culture shock in the answers are marked with colors based on Mumford scoring. According to it, first answer, most of the time, is scored with 2, second response, occasionally, with 1 and third response not at all with 0. In this table red is used for marking answers most of the time indicating items signalling high level of culture shock and high emotional engagement of informants based on the researcher's perception of it during the interview, orange for answers which are indicating moderate level of culture shock items and occasionally was marked with yellow as not being strongly emphasized from the emotional point of view. The latest was done taking into consideration that only 3 options used in Mumford questionnaire might not be enough to indicate nuances between answer occasionally indicating several occasions or more frequent appearance of certain feelings or situations. Using colors doesn't aim to show exact level of culture shock but rather to indicate the tendencies. Guided interview form used as a base for discussion during the interviews is presented in Appendix 1.

4.1. Results of the interviews

In this section answers to all questions are summarized shortly after which the table with answers per person will follow. As mentioned before summarized informant's experiences shared during the interview relevant to the study are presented in narrative form in Appendix 2. Before answering to interview questions informant's were asked about their country of origin, position at work and language that they use in their job. Information about country of origin and positions is presented in the methodology.

Language used for work

Eight out of 14 informants use only English in their work, while some of them use basic Swedish language for internal communication in the company 10-15% of their working time. 5 informants use both English and Swedish in their work. Informants were also asked if they spoke some Swedish when they arrived to Sweden. Only one person spoke basic Swedish when she arrived.

Job, relocation and general well-being

Q1 When did you arrive to Sweden? and Q2 Did you know how long were you to stay in Sweden?

Most of the informants were in Sweden more than 3 years at the moment of the interviews, while 3 of them were only 1,5 year. 6 of them planned to stay for 2 years contract while 5 of

them didn't have any plan. 2 of them knew that they would stay in Sweden.

Q 3,4,5, 6 were aimed to explore previous international experiences and knowledge about the new country as well as necessity for introduction into the culture in more organized way.

Half of the informants reported that they didn't live or work in another country before moving to Sweden. The rest of informants used to live in other countries varying from 2 months as PhD student to living permanently in another western country.

One half didn't know anything about the country when they arrived, while 4 of them were offered seminars about the language or culture in form of 1 day workshop, 2 days seminars or 1 week introduction into the Swedish language. More than 2/3 of informants think that it would be useful to get some kind of training or introduction and some think that it should be a must in a company sending own employees to other locations.

Q7 How did it feel for you to work and live in Sweden?

Almost half of informants (6 people) reported difficulties in the beginning varied from "a lot to take in", language problems and difficulties in establishing contacts with people to "it was a hell" or "it was a nightmare". On the other hand 6 informants thought that it was "extremely easy", very good and comfortable.

Q8, 9, 10 were connected to the way informants were employed or relocated by the companies, their job description and expectations about their roles

One half (7 people) used to work for the same company in their own country and were relocated (5) or expressed their wish to come to Sweden (2). 5 were employed here in Sweden, while 2 of them search for a job and got positions in Sweden.

Job descriptions were very clear for the majority of informants, while some could figure it out when they started to work. What was not clear was different expectations about personality traits common in the new culture and connected to specific position which will be discussed later.

Informants generally didn't have any other expectations about their job and roles.

Q11 How did you feel about your host colleagues perception of you, your identity and status?

While the majority thought that they were welcomed and got support, some of them also noticed that it was only until certain line "in a Swedish way" as one person expressed it or that host nationals thought that they knew a lot about some expatriates or their countries. One person thought that it was "amazing", both she and her colleagues had a feeling that she "was there forever". Another person reported perception of her in more professional way than what

she expected. 2 of them reported negative perception of them as being "loud and annoying" and as someone who "stood out in crowd", was different and with foreign accent.

Q12 and Q13 were connected to general satisfaction and successful performance

Six informants thought that they performed as good as before while some of them thought that they could perform even better because of more freedom and autonomy. The rest reported some kind of drop in performance lasting between 2 months up till 1 year while 1 informant reported that "it didn't deliver".

Q14 Awareness about the phenomenon of culture shock

Question 14 aimed to find out how aware informants were about the phenomenon of culture shock. It seems that informants were not familiar with the phenomenon of culture shock as it is described in the literature in all its aspects. Only 2 of them, P2 who experienced intensive culture shock and P11 who knows people who experienced it described majority of symptoms. Other informants could point out some of the aspects which in the summary gives the picture of phenomenon described in the literature. Some of the answers were:

- frustration, depression, scary experience
- exaggerated patriotic behaviour
- not being able to communicate with people and establish relationships, different way of doing it
- not being prepared for traditions of other culture and not feeling comfortable with them
- frustration while explaining your own culture and thinks that make perfect sense to you
- when cultural differences cause personal frustration
- culture shock is like an iceberg, information that you can find in books is just on the surface of it
- learning by experiencing frustration, embarrassment or having to deal with serious consequences of your behaviour which was misinterpreted or not acceptable in host culture
- small everyday practical things that are done in different way can cause big stress
- frustration about how things are done in new culture
- depression, low self esteem, lack of motivation to work and to the effect of criticizing and judging all the time and thinking oh back home is better
- depending on individuals host nationals would expect newcomer to adapt to their way, "you

are the strange one”

- uncertainty about how to behave once you had to deal with the consequences of own “mistakes” which took time and energy to solve
- having to adapt your personality traits to what is expected and “safe” in the environment

Some other answers were:

- accepting things, adjusting, being willing to understand and learn
- the problem would be probably the language but you don't have that problem in Sweden.
- maybe religious issues, like ramandan or Islamic countries

General adjustment

G1 Did you feel strain from the effort to adapt to a new culture?

Fourth informants out of 14 replied most of the time, 5 occasionally and 5 not at all

G2 Did you miss people in your country back home?

Fourth – most of the time, 7 occasionally, 3 not at all

G3 Did you feel generally accepted by the local people in the new culture?

Seven replied yes, 4 were not sure, 2 of them reported that they were accepted at work but not outside working environment, while 1 person replied accepted, but not integrated

G4 Did you ever wish to escape from your new environment altogether?

Seven people replied occasionally, 6 not at all or rarely and one person replied referring to 2 concrete situation which were experienced as huge culture shock

G5 Did you ever feel confused about your role, values or self-identity in the new culture?

Two people replied most of the time, one referring to the professional role, one to own national identity, 6 answered occasionally some of them feeling that they have to defend their national identity and 6 not at all

G6 Have you found things in your new environment shocking or strange?

About 7 reported few things they found shocking or strange such as self service country, not being able to make friends, mandatory Thursday fika, own alcohol if invited to a dinner, having to ask for help in a situation when it is obvious that one needs help. One person replied that things were not shocking, but mostly frustrating.

G7 Did you feel helpless or powerless when trying to cope with the culture?

1 person replied most of the time, 8 occasionally, 4 replied not at all

Communication related items of culture shock

C1 Did you feel tense, uneasy, worried, anxious, awkward when talking to host people?

Six people replied occasionally when had to ask for help or not knowing how to talk with less hierarchy, 1 person replied feeling uneasy most of the time outside work, 1 replied rarely while 6 replied not at all. 1 person felt being shy in communication which was not her personality trait.

C2 When talking to people could you make sense of their gestures and facial expressions?

Six people out of 14 could make sense of host's gestures most of the time, three could make sense occasionally, 5 couldn't make sense and some wondered "what gestures". For some it was hard to read and some noticed the difference in behaviour when you cannot read gestures before "you get to know them" after what another personality appears.

C3 Did you feel that you were sometimes mistrustful or suspicious about host people?

Four people felt this occasionally based on their intuition of what they could see from body language, 9 people replied not at all.

C4 Did you find it an effort to be polite to your hosts?

Three persons replied occasionally while most of the other replied not at all. One person expected that Swedes would be more polite.

C5 Was it an effort for you to see the world from the host's point of view?

Two replied most of the time, one didn't have chance to talk to Swedes, while 6 replied occasionally, 4 not at all but noticing that it took time to understand.

C6 Did you feel that your hosts could understand your point of view in the same way as you would expect from your countrymen?

Eight thought that they could understand, 2 replied that it depends on people or some thought that they could understand, while they actually didn't, 4 were understood occasionally and some notice that hosts didn't try to analyse.

C7 Did you have need to talk about different aspects of host culture with other expats?

Four did it most of the time, 6 occasionally, 1 rarely, 1 not at all while 1 was listening to others. 1 informant talked with a Swedish colleagues in order to understand and some reported that later on they could all joke about the differences.

C8 Did you avoid to communicate with host colleagues when you were too stressed or tired?

Four avoided most of the time especially coffee (fika) and lunch breaks that were mandatory, 6 occasionally and 4 not at all.

C9 and C10 aimed to see how often were informants interacting with host nationals and what kind of relationships could they develop?

All informants interact with Swedish colleagues on daily bases at their work except for 1 person working in international department with almost no contacts with Swedes. 5 people developed only work-related relationships while majority reports difficulties in established friendships even though some consider those friendships that are established in the end being of more quality.

An overview of the results of the interviews is presented in the table below in form of short summarized answers to the guided interview. Each person name is replaced with P1, P2 etc. The question numbers could be found in the column and each following column contains answers for each person. Because of the constraints due to the space the table is separated in 3 smaller tables containing results for 5 persons each. The best way to read the table is by comparing the interview questions and the results. First 3 questions were related to the country of origin, the level of proficiency in Swedish as well as the use of language in work.

TABLE 1: Summary of the interview results

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Country	Korea	United Kingdom	United States, roots in France	United States	Brazil
Sw lang proffic.	No, now intermediate	No, 1 week intro	No	Everyday language	No
Language at work	English	English only, Sw in e-mails from the beginning	More Swe in beginn, now Swed/morning Eng/afternoon	50% Sw/50% English now more Swedish	English only
Q1 when	4 y ago	9 years ago	6 y ago, started to work 4 y.a	9 years ago, started work after 3 m	3 years ago
Q2 plan	2 y for studies	Relocation 2 y	No plan, studied	Planned to stay	2 years contract
Q3 previous experience	No	No	Scotland, France	Stayed in Sw before	Worked w French people in Brasil
Q4 knew	Nothing	A little bit	Not much	Some parts	Did homework
Q5 training	Not for work, had experience with intern students	1 week Swedish language seminar	SFI course Swedish language	Own reflections	Read 2,3 books about Swedish culture
Q6 need	Yes, from job perspective	Yes	Yes	Yes, oh yes	Yes, reality differs from books
Q7 feel	More professional, more autonomy	It was a hell	Defensive about US	A lot to take in	Extremely easy, "Gothen-boring"
Q8 empl	Employed in Swe	Relocation to Swe	Employed in Sweden	Employed in Sweden	Invited to Sweden
Q9 job descript.	Knew what to do	The same job	Not very clear	Very clear	The same, more responsibility here
Q10 expectat.	More to do compared to Korea, more autonomy	No	No	No, blank sheet	No, knew the job
Q11 host perception	Perceived me as professional, but outsider	Loud, annoying	Stood out in crowd, "different", foreign accent in Swedish	Welcomed, but ppl thought they knew a lot about me and US	Amazing, as being here forever, later - "funny" comments
Q12 performance	Better - autonomy	It didn't deliver	Boring , have advanced education	No difference	No problem at all
Q13 satisfaction		Changed depart & career direction	Bored, but happy to have a job	Very satisfied	Liked it very much now new job
G1 strain	Most of the time	Most of the time	Not at all	Occasio , had to think	Not at all
G2 miss pp	Occasionally	Most of the time	Occasionally	Most of the time	Not at all, Skype..
G3 accepted	Not sure	Not sure	Not sure	Yes	Yes
G4 escape	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Not at all
G5 confused	Most of the time	Occasionally	Occasionally , had to defend US	Occasionally , had to defend US	Occasionally , but ab "not" being Brazilian
G6 shocking	Few things	Not shocking, but Frustrating	None	None	None
G7 helpless	Occasionally	Most of the time	Occasionally	Occasionally	Not at all
C1 tense, anxious	Occasionally	Occasionally	Yes, occasionally	Not at all, good Swe language command	Not at all

C2 gestures	Occasionally	Occasionally	Not making sense	Could make sense	Occ, What gestures?
C3 suspicious	Occasionally	Occasionally	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all
C4 effort polite to host	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all	Occasionally, not to interrupt as used to
C5 to see host world	Occasionally, priorities not same	Occasionally	Most of the time	Occasionally	Occasionally, took some months
C6 expat world	Depends on people, not sure ab some	Was understood	Not understood	Occasionally, they thought they could	Most of the time, figures are same
C7 gossip	Yes, Occasionally	Most of the time	Yes, occasionally	Most of the time	Rarely
C8 avoid	Yes, bcs of language	Not at all	Occasionally	Occasionally	Not at all
C9 quantity	On daily bases	On daily bases	On daily bases	On daily bases	On daily bases
C10 quality	Work-related only	Hard to have social life, friends later on	Difficult to make friends with Sw	Friends quickly	Friends, after 6 months
Csh/adjustm	Moderate level	Strong* 3months, but difficult 2 y	Moderate, things got better after 1 year	Low level, it goes in cycles up and down	No difficulties

² P1*

	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Country	Australia	Belgium	China	Germany	France
Level/Sw language	No, started with Sw lessons, now basic	No, after 7 y conversational Swe	No	No, learned Swed after 1-1,5 years	No Swe in beginn, now learning
Language at work	English only	English only	English only	Mix, writing English, meetings in Swedish	English 90%, global Swe/fika, internally
Q1 when	1 y & 3 m ago	7 y ago	1 y, 6 m	3,5 years ago	5 y ago
Q2 plan	1,5 y contract	Forever	2 years	Not limited	Didn't have a plan
Q3 previous experience	No	2m in California PhD	UK/2 y, Ireland/5y	Luxembourg, student	No, 1 st experience
Q4 knew	Worked for comp. for 10 y before	Co-operated with Universities in Sweden	Presumed it would be the same as UK/Ireland	Worked for company, was coming to business trips	Not so much
Q5 training	No, searched info on internet	2 days session	No, just from TV	No, didn't search info	2 days session
Q6 need	Absolutely	Info was enough	Certainly, got help from relocation consultants/first 3m	Yes, definitely	
Q7 feel	Opport for learning and growing, first 2-3 m stayed back	Not a problem, became more efficient	Work very good, often travel to visit my family in Ireland	beginning: lang probl, contact with people Very good now	1 y – nightmare, no contacts w Swedes, now – very good
Q8 empl	Applied for job	Searched for job	Searched for job	Invited, said yes	Employed in Swed
Q9 job descript.	Clear, 50% new	Pretty clear	It was clear, later slightly changed	Relatively clear, similar position before	Not so clear, in practice different
Q10	Low expectations	Don't want more, just	No, can learn from	Not really	No expectation,

2. P1* reported himself strong level of culture shock which consequently lead to the change of the department and even career direction even though the results of the interview might indicate moderate level of culture shock.

expectat.		necessary	people here		happy to have a job
Q11 host perception	Good, Intro by Germ manager	Not really different, I prefer Swedish way of communication	People are nice, I don't go to dangerous places	More relaxed, easy going, informal	They thought French girl, expatriates, nice life
Q12 performance	Dropped 1 st 6 week	Yes, but fast adjustment	Worse, it took less than 1 y to get better	3m to learn about process&communicat	Difficult w Swe, limited in commun.
Q13 satisfaction	Very satisfied very motivated	Very satisfied and very motivated	Quite satisfied, on scale 1-10: 8	Need more guidelines mentor, structur. Info; had to find own way	Very happy, better treatment by boss&colleagues
G1 strain	Most of the time	Occasionally English not perfect	Not at all	Occasionally, private, invoices, parking, car	Most of the time, launch - language
G2 miss pp	Most of the time	Not at all	Occasionally	Most of the time	Occasionally
G3 accepted	By some, not all	Yes	Not sure	Yes	Yes, French is +
G4 escape	Occasionally	Not at all	Not at all, knows why he is here	Occasionally	Not at all
G5 confused	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all – I'm typical Chinese	Occasionally, job related mostly	Not at all, to direct in conflict/changed
G6 shocking	None	None	Not being able to make friends w Swe	Shock/self service country, no admin. support at work	None, drinking own alcohol when invited to dinner
G7 helpless	Not at all	Sometimes, only job-related	Not at all	Occasionally	Occasionally, Swe bureaucracy
C1 tense, anxious	Most of the time out of work/7 m	Not at all	Occasionally, nervous person	Occasionally, how to act w less hierarchy	Occasionally, shy even if usually not personality trait
C2 gestures	Could make sense	Most of the time	Most of the time	Couldn't make sense	Occasionally, Swe double personality
C3 suspicious	Occasionally, body language	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all, I don't judge
C4 effort polite to host	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all	Occasionally	Not at all
C5 to see host world	Not at all – liked to understand	Not at all	Didn't have chance to talk to Swedes	Not at all/it took time	Not at all /could understand
C6 expat world	Could understand	Most of the time	Occasionally, not because of culture	Could understand	Occasionally, they don't try to analyse
C7 gossip	Most of the time	Occasionally, not every day	Occasionally	Occasionally, with colleagues/Germany	Most of the time, now even w Swedes
C8 avoid	Yes, definitely, occasionally, 3 m	Not at all	If s-1 avoids eye contact – they don't want to talk to you	Occasionally, Fika mandatory/you don't feel comfortable	Occasionally, it too much work, too much pressure
C9 quantity	On daily bases	Often	Not that often	On daily bases	On daily bases
C10 quality	Thought Swedes are not friendly, later made friends	Work related only, consider it to be normal	Work related only, I would like to establish, need time	Only work related, not friendships;	Work-related, it took time to develop friendships
Csh/ Adjust	Work adjustm. 2 m, outside work 7 m	No problems	Work adjustment- less than 1 year, no contacts w Swedes	Difficult/6 m, 1,5y to learn Swedish & get acceptance in meetings	No Csh, but wrong perception in begin. Sweden like France

	P11	P12	P13	P14
Country	Brazil	Brazil	Hungary	Turkey
Level/Sw language	No	No, learning now, uses 15% of time	Learned after 1-1,5 y	No
Language at work	English 90%, French 10%	English, Swedish internally 15% now	In the beginn – Eng now Swedish	English only
Q1 when	2 years ago	3 years ago	2,5 years ago	4 years ago
Q2 plan	2 years contract	1,5 y, 8 m contract	No plan	No plan
Q3 previous experience	USA, Spain, France, travelling	Travelling to Sweden and Latin America	No	France – didn't like came back after 6 m
Q4 knew	Worked for the same company	I thought that I knew a lot, but..(laughing)	Pretty much, 3 m visit to Sw organised by the company	Not much
Q5 training	No	No, something that I missed to do before	3 m visit - ab company cult. +informal at lunch, dinners	Intercultural workshop by University – cliché examples
Q6 need	It should be a must in the company	Some basic info ab live and culture	Didn't get intro, studied SFI, no need	
Q7 feel	Very good, safe very respected	Good, but the company should prepare little too	Really good, simple bureaucracy, feel reviled	Comfortable
Q8 empl	Invited, exact contract	Invited, have knowledge needed	Express a wish to come and got invited	Employed in Sweden after 2y studying at Chalmers
Q9 job descript.	Very clear	Clear, agreed	Pretty clear	Figured out in team
Q10 expectat.	No	No	Step back in career, was aware of it	No
Q11 host perception	Welcomed in the “Swedish way”	Positive, except for inappropriate jokes	Nice, got support, but barrier to become friends	Nothing distinct
Q12 performance	Better with freedom here	It took about 6 months to get into new job	High performance	Even better, easier
Q13 satisfaction	I love what I do	Very satisfied	More or less	Satisfied
G1 strain	Not at all	Not at all	Occasionally, private	W few practical issues
G2 miss pp	Occasionally	Occasionally	Not at all	Occasionally
G3 accepted	Accepted, but not integrated	Yes, I have no doubt about it	Work – yes, private - no	Yes, happier at work then studying
G4 escape	Twice – cult*shock	No, never	Occasionally	Rarely
G5 confused	Not at all	In the beginning, occasion, observing	Most of the time, outside work perceived as immigrant	Not at all
G6 shocking	More ab muslim culture, Swed-fika	Few things	None	People more friendly then expected
G7 helpless	Occasionally	Not at all	Occasionally, if you ask you get help	Yes, but got help
C1 tense, anxious	Not at all, only when asking people for help	Not at all	Not at all, bit frustrated when ppl speak only Swed	Rarely if felt that disturbed others
C2 gestures	Hard to read	Could make sense	Most of the time	Couldn't make sense, only if knew the person
C3 suspicious	Occasionally	Not at all	Not at all	People are people, some stupid comments

C4 effort polite to host	Not at all	Not at all, expected more politeness from Swedes	Occasionally, it happens	Rarely, if angry left
C5 to see host world	Occasionally	Continuous effort, takes energy	Most of the time, it takes time to see	Occasionally
C6 expat world	Most of the time	Most of the time	Occasionally, media influence strong	Most of the time
C7 gossip	Not, listens to others who do talk	Discusses with a Swedish colleague to learn	Occasionally, with other immigrants	Not at all
C8 avoid	Occasionally, fika	Occasionally, when bored	Most of the time, fika, bored - picky about topics	Not at all
C9 quantity	Often	Often	Often, share appartm with Swedish girl now	Often
C10 quality	Friends, took time	Friends, but hard	Friends, took 1 y	Friends
Csh/ adjustm	Refers to specific situations as CultSh	Work adjustment, 6m CultSh– specific Swedish topics consider impolite	No problems, 6 m crises with Hungarian identity	No effort at all

Summarized version of each interview could be found in Appendix 3.

5. DISCUSSION

In this section results presented above will be related to the theoretical background. The most important factors and categories influencing culture shock which were identified through interviews are discussed in the section 5.1. while communication as a cause, a symptom and solution of culture shock is discussed in section 5.2.

5.1. Categories influencing culture shock

Some of the symptoms mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis were reported by informants but not all of them were recognized as symptoms of culture shock or related to it in any way. Some of them could be related to any change of job or environment. They varied in intensity and time among informants, but here are some of them:

- boredom (P5)
- writing e-mails to family and friends (P5, P12)
- drop in performance lasting from 2 weeks to 1 or 2 years (P2, P6, P8, P9)
- feeling strain (tense) from the effort to adapt to a new culture (P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P9, P10, P13) but not P3, P5, P8, P11, P12, P14
- depression, feeling frustrated (P2)
- avoiding interactions with host people (P1, P3, P4, P6, P8, P9, P11, P12, P13) but not P2, P5, P7, P10, P14.
- need to discuss the culture or society with other expats (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13) but not P5, P11, P14.
- you constantly think about things (P13 identity crises for 6 months, couldn't sleep)

Rubin Herbert and Irene (1995) suggest recognizing concepts as well as hearing stories and themes in order to code the data from qualitative interviews. Following their suggestion based on the theoretical background of the study the following categories were indicated as important for analysing the results of this study:

5.1.1. Language proficiency

It seems that language proficiency and the need to use Swedish language had a significant role in the results of this study. However opposite to what the literature suggests it seems that the need to use Swedish language for the purpose of work increased difficulties reported by informants. P2, P3, P4, P9 and P13 (after a year) needed to use Swedish language for their work. As mentioned before P2, P3, P6 and P9 could indicate a specific period of time after which they didn't feel initial strain to adopt which was not only connected with work adjustment but to communication too. Together with P10 who also uses some Swedish in her work internally in the company they reported stress due to language difficulties and avoidance of participation in some social activities because of this. P1 reported avoidance of interactions from both sides because of the host's low level of English language proficiency. P13 reported feeling frustrated when some host colleagues refused to speak English because of the same reason.

On the other hand P5, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12, P14 for example didn't need to use or learn Swedish in order to perform their work and they reported less degree of stress and concern about the consequences of interactions as well as less difficulties in general. The same could be concluded from what P5 said about moving to Sweden. According to her it was extremely easy because "everybody speaks English". P5 and P14 have Financial positions where numbers speak for themselves while other have their own area of expertise. But they also work in more international environment which proved to influence adjustment positively. Allwood (1985) considers that the use of the third language although very common in the world today leads to additional difficulties in understanding. Participants in communication interpret what was said with consideration to both cultural background of participants and the values and norms of the third culture whose language is used (Allwood, 1985).

However informants in this study who only used English in communication with Swedes reported less difficulties in communication. This could be related to the Linguistic relativity principle, which main idea is that the world is experienced through cognitive classification based on cultural concepts and categories characteristic for different languages resulting in the different way of thinking and behaving among speakers of different languages. The distinctive way a language interprets the world influences habitual patterns of thought and behaviour (Lucy, 1997). If all participants of communication use English, which is not their own native language it is possible that both expatriates and hosts would change their culturally

characteristic behaviour into something more neutral and adapt to each other in higher degree. **Communication Accommodation Theory** suggests that speakers tend to adjust to what they believe is behaviour of other participants of interaction depending on whether they consider interaction to be high-intergroup or high-interpersonal or both.

5.1.2. Culture Distance

The Cultural Distance Index (CDI) used in a Mumford's study of British volunteers included items on climate, dress, language, food, religion and social norms (Mumford, 1998). The study showed that CDI was strongly related to the intensity of culture shock. Volunteers working in non-western country had the highest score of culture shock as well as those working in France which is explained as a consequence of specific placements in France in religious communities with homeless people. Most of the studies were highlighting similar results while Selmer and Shiu (1999) research shows the opposite. According to them shorter culture distance will imply less cultural competence. They interviewed Hong Kong expatriates business managers working in China. This research shows that managers assigned to a similar cultural environment can be less aware of intercultural issues and probably would not expect significant differences. They refer to problems as their personal, managerial or organizational instead (Ward et al., 2001, p.182).

Even though it is generally expected that culture shock will appear between very distant cultures when it comes to religion, politics and the way that society is organised the present study shows that culture shock can be experienced only as a consequence of differences in communication patterns and differences in socially accepted behaviour and personality traits. Since this study is done in working environment it could be concluded that the culture of a company and even specific department within the company can influence the intensity of culture shock both positively and negatively.

P1 and P8 from Korea and China reported moderate and low level of culture shock, while P14 coming from Turkey reported no difficulties in adjustment at all. The same could be concluded about P5, P11 and P12 coming from Brazil, a Latin country with very different culture comparing to Sweden. Surprisingly P2, coming from United Kingdom, a country close to Sweden both geographically and when it comes to culture experienced strong culture shock. Preferred personality traits and communication patterns characteristic for the company played significant role. P2 didn't have any experience of living or working abroad and his colleagues in the local department of the company in Sweden didn't have contacts with international departments in other countries either.

Organisational culture and the culture of the environment

It seems that the cultural distance might be seen as phenomenon connected to the specific culture in the department. It is not culture distance between different countries but rather cultural distance between people on different level of cultural awareness (Allwood, 1985) and orientation that seems to be of significance. A company can also create favourable environment for own co-workers which is reported by P5, P6, P13 who consider that they have less difficulties in adjustment within the company. Some problems occurred outside working environment for P6 who didn't feel accepted due to differences in communication which had as a consequence perceiving host nationals as "not friendly". P13 was seen as immigrants outside working environment without taking in consideration her education, professional expertise or personality. Hence in the modern globalised world the cultural distance could be seen as the distance between concrete environment and the sojourn facing it.

5.1.3. Social support

As it was mentioned before Kim considers that "Communication is the necessary vehicle without which adaptation cannot take place".

It could be concluded that the quality of interpersonal relationships with at least 1 or 2 host nationals or those who stayed in a culture longer and can act as cultural advisers in working environment influence positive adjustment as well as learning which reduces prejudices and negative feelings about experienced situations. Getting concrete interpretation of a certain behaviour from the point of view of host culture and comments and suggestions about own behaviour helped to solve initial complicated situations. P6 mentioned his boss who acted as a "mentor" many times in a positive light while P12 has a person at work who as host national could help in interpretation and successful dealing with misunderstandings and critical situations.

Two informants reported negative relation between socializing with own countrymen or other expats for adjustment. They had to make a clear decision and force themselves to stop socializing with the previously mentioned groups and start to interact with host representatives. Being able to make friends with host nationals is another important aspect of social support and life in general. But this seemed to be the most complicated thing for majority of participants even though they were some who think that it takes time but it is possible. Some of informants emphasized the difference in the quality of relationships as being higher than in their own culture once a friendship is established with a representative from Swedish culture.

5.1.4. Personality traits

As many authors suggest culture shock is not connected to a person him/herself but rather his/her interaction with different cultural environment. As mentioned before previous studies about personality traits such as the level of Extroversion and Introversion (Parker&McEvoy, 1993) showed that extroversion could be related to interaction adjustment but not to general adjustment. Self-efficacy is positively related to general, interaction and work adjustment (Harrison, Chadwick&Scale, 1996).

As the results of this study show, it is not personality traits of a concrete person that were of significance to adjustment but rather preferred personality traits in a concrete host environment. Two persons reported that their own personality traits influenced their adjustment in some way. Being extroverted was not positively influencing communication in the environment more valuing quite introverted behavioural style, but rather increased the difficulties. However P2 presumes that a person with a different personality than him in a similar situation will be in much worse position facing the difficulties in establishing social life and experiencing culture shock at the same time. P7 on the other hand when asked about host colleagues' perception of him, his identity and status and later on during the interview repeated several times: "I'm a quiet guy, we are quiet people..." which are personality traits generally preferred in host culture and specifically for his role as scientist. P7 reported very low level of culture shock and mentioned that the way that people communicate at work in Sweden is more appealing to him.

5.1.5. Time

P2 experienced high level of culture shock while P3, P6, P9 reported different level of difficulties connected to adaptation. They were all able to indicate more or less exact period of time after which they didn't feel initial strain and effort to adapt. For P2 the worst period ended after 3 months while the feeling of well-being came only after 2 years. P9 work adjustment period was about 6 months while acceptance in the meetings came after 1,5 years together with Swedish language proficiency. It took P3 one year to feel that she is in control again while P6 states 2 months as period for work adjustment and 7 months for adjustment outside the work including interactions with Swedish people. It is interesting that P2, P3 and P9 had Swedish language as requirement for their work while P6 was highly motivated to communicate with Swedish people even outside work. Two other persons reported specific time for adjustment which was for P8 less than 1 year and for P12 about 6 months. Both of them refer to this adjustment as work-related only without difficulties connected to language.

P10 spent 1 year in Sweden together with her husband before starting to work and refers to it as "a nightmare". Because she didn't have any contacts with host nationals she concludes that she was actually "not in Sweden": "I was on the Moon or I don't know

(laughing).” After starting working and interacting with host representatives as well as establishing her own social network P10 reports that she started to feel mentally better. Apart from some initial difficulties due to lack of proficiency in English and Swedish, she didn't report any culture shock at all from the point in time when she started to work. P10 experience during the first year of her stay in Sweden is described by Oberg (1954) who notice that wives experience stronger culture shock than husbands because the husband has his professional duties and activities to occupy him and his activities may not differ much from what he has been accustomed to” while wife has to operate in very different milieu (Oberg, 1954).

It is curious to speculate if P8 experienced some culture shock or not. He didn't report any, but during the interview it appeared that P8 is very dedicated to his task in the company and in the country and since the time of staying in Sweden is limited he doesn't seem to have a goal to integrate in the culture perceiving host nationals as not interested to establish initial contact with him either. Not having that many contacts with the host nationals in general and trying to spend as much free time with his family in Ireland, it seems that all above mentioned keeps P8 on safe distance from the culture and the possible difficulties.

5.1.6. Role shock and change of identity

Identity

A person experiencing a new culture develops a higher level of self- and cultural awareness (Adler, 1975; Bennett, 1986). The identity has to be redefined according to the new set of references in the new culture. But with increased pressure from the new culture one's own cultural identity might be “threaten”. As the consequence during the first period of adjustment a person might feel an overwhelming need to reinforce his/her own cultural identity. Being extremely patriotic and proud about own culture and country are some of the strong reactions to being exposed to a new culture. By exaggerated own cultural behaviour a person resists inevitable change. When asked to explain his own understanding of culture shock, P2 points out patriotic behaviour as significant symptom. It is curious that this patriotic behaviour is surprising to oneself too and it seem that the person is not completely in control of this behaviour surprisingly emphasized in comparison to previous behaviour in own country where national identity seemed not to be of significance. Country of origin is strongly idealised in comparison to the new environment.

When it comes to usual behaviour, several small incidents in a row contrasting with expected behaviour in the new culture and related to different components of a person's identity might threaten self-concept (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 1982). Misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the role and identity of the sojourner creates additional stress. P2 as an extroverted person was most likely confident in his own communication skills. But suddenly his

communicative skills appeared to lead to problems and misinterpretations labelling him as "loud and annoying". The expectations that host nationals have about how newcomers should think, behave and act dictate the level of conformity pressure (Gudykunst, 2005, p.388). Conformity pressure in Sweden is usually high even within the culture which is expressed through word "lagom" (Baringa, 1999) indicating that everyone should be the same and behave in the similar way and the person entering the culture might not be aware of this.

Activity based communication and identity

P13 experienced significant identity crises lasting for 6 months with intensive thinking and not being able to sleep. "Am I Hungarian?" was the question to be answered as a consequence of being perceived outside working environment only as an immigrant without taking into consideration her education, professional record or personality. Professional identity or identity connected to the work as activity with clearly defined rights and obligations (Allwood, 1985) in the case of P13 was of significance in the working environment. However outside working environment P13 was defined only by her national identity and categorized as an immigrant.

On the other hand preferred personality traits and communicative behaviour prescribed for a person working in the specific department of the host country and performing the specific job seemed to be another threat to identity for P2 even though he could perform the same job in United Kingdom without problems in communication. "Those who assimilate are denied the ability to express their genuine selves in the workplace; they are forced to repress significant parts of their lives within a social context that frames a large part of their daily encounters with other people" (Fine, 1980). In the end P2 changed the department to more international within the same company and consequently career direction where his personality traits were more useful and could match requirements from the environment.

Host criticism of other countries

Five informants from three different countries reported host's negative comments and criticism of their native countries while they were present. P3 and P4 experience it in relation to their own identity as feeling of being forced to defend the image of their country, which host nationals mainly absorbed from media, and consequently defend themselves. One of them even felt that she has to apologize during interactions with host people for her background. It took her time to realize and decide that she has not to apologize for her background as she doesn't expect other people to apologize for their background either.

P12 considers that small “funny” comments about Brazil and Brazilians were inappropriate but understands it as characteristic of certain people who are either young or don't have any international experience. P5 started to notice this comments only after some time experiencing them as “noise” in the background and never as something against her personally. It is curious to notice that all 5 informants were women and that no man reported anything similar. It could be concluded that some informants seem to identify themselves with their national identity in higher degree than others. The question is if this could be related to the person's focus of identity (Allwood, 1985) or possibility that a larger part of their identity is very strong national identity or it could be connected to the nature and frequency of the hosts' comments about informants' native countries.

Personal values and the culture

If a person doesn't completely share values of his/her own culture or even have values which are closer to the new culture, the person is more willing to adapt and probably will experience less difficulties. Some informants reported their reflexions about their identity which was more in accordance with the values of the new culture. P5, for example, realized, after comparing the culture in Sweden and Brazil, that: “It's not that I don't belong here, I don't belong there.” P14 is highly positive about not having to be “tricky” with people in Swedish working environment which is characteristic for Turkish according to him as well as not having to deal with “blame games”. P14 considers Swedish culture as “no punishment culture” which he appreciates a lot too. He considers that the choice of the country a person wants to live in is connected to “what kind of person you want to be”.

5.2. Communication

The results of the study in relation to communication seen as a cause, a symptom and a solution of culture shock will be discussed here.

5.2.1. Communication as cause of culture shock

In the journal *Cultural Diversity in the Workplace: The State of the Field*, Fine Marlene G. suggests: “People who spend significant amounts of energy coping with an alien environment have less energy left to do their jobs. Assimilation does not just create a situation in which people who are different are likely to fail, it also decreases the productivity of organizations.” As P12 notices “most of my energy that I spent in this organisation” is focused on learning how to communicate successfully in the new environment in order to avoid problems and solve misunderstandings. However not knowing how to communicate from the beginning influences culture shock. The following aspects were of importance for the participants:

- the lack of means for communication

After initial "mistakes" in the behaviour or the way the things were said and dealing with the consequences of own acting and reactions from the host side several people realized that their communication behaviour was not appropriate in the host environment.

P2 – communicative behaviour didn't match preferred behaviour in the host environment

P6 – cheering people on the street as people do in Australia was weird

P10 – being too direct and "brutal" in communication due to lack of knowledge of the language to express nuances and more direct communicative style in conflicts, characteristic for French culture: "It could have cost me a job", but luckily I didn't have to deal with that person any more.

P11 – not being aware that one should ask for help if needed according to host culture norms

P12 – being too open and friendly with everyone and sharing private information with colleagues at work which resulted in problems to be solved and affected time and energy needed for work

P13 – the use of words and phrases, perceived as "too much" or "too strong" from the host side as well as behaviour as too emotional

Both P2 and P5 consider that the value of words and things been said seems to be higher in Sweden than in Brazil and UK which influences the intensity of communication and how much a person is suppose to say. The consequences were similar to P10 and P12 conscious decision to be less spontaneous and think thoroughly before saying something or acting.

- making sense of gestures and facial expressions

Many informants were positively surprised with this question, some of them realizing for the first time that it was difficult to read body language of host nationals. First reaction of a person from Brasil was: "What gestures?" and she reported that a misunderstanding appeared when she joked using head movement which was signaling that it was a joke. But host nationals not being able to read body language took it seriously. This was something to be aware of in the future.

P9 coming from Germany perceived body language as very informal, very open, but distant and sometimes you can feel that you are not getting attention and it could be perceived as not so respectful (Ward et al., 2005, p.57).

The tone of voice also being part of bodily movements (Allwood, 2002) was of significance for P2 being seen as "loud and annoying". P13 tone of voice was perceived as aggressive.

P8 believes that a conversation is initiated with looking at someone. Consequently "looking around" which P8 sees as characteristic for host nationals rather than into the eyes was

perceived as avoiding communication.

- anxiety and uncertainty in interactions

After realizing that there are differences in communication and that you are supposed to think carefully about what you are about to say several informants reported anxiety and uncertainty in interactions (P1, P2, P3, P6, P8, P9, P10). Not knowing how to talk to people, what to say and what not to say, what is right and what is wrong as well as what to joke about and how to show that they are joking were causing stress and frustrations. P10 noticed that she felt shy when interacting with host nationals even if that was not her personality trait. In some cases anxiety led to avoidance of interactions with host nationals (P1, P3, P4, P6, P8, P9, P11, P12, P13). Traditions which is very unique for Sweden, Thursday's (or any other day's) fika is experienced as mandatory and not very comfortable by many informants so some of them avoided it. It is interesting that P11, P12, P13 who used mostly English in their work in the beginning explained avoidance as not wanting to waste their time or being bored with topics of conversation while those who had to speak Swedish refer to it as stress due to language and not feeling comfortable with people.

Social difficulties in establishing relationships

- ability to establish relationships

The lack of means for communication in local Swedish cultural environment as well as social difficulties in establishing non work related relationships seems to be the most challenging and frustrating during the period of adaptation. As Allwood (1982) notices "work and private life are not mixed" and that "there is not a readiness to integrate strangers in private life" in Sweden. The consequences are that the most of the informants reported difficulties in establishing non work-related relationships with host nationals. P1, P7, P8, P9 when asked about what kind of relationships they could develop with host nationals replied only work-related. Even though 2 of them reported certain degree of culture shock mostly connected to communication it seemed that it didn't influenced overall adjustment in general. But for P2 it was one of the factors triggering culture shock. P3, P10, P11, P12, P14 consider that it is difficult to make friends with Swedish people and it takes much more time, but according to some of them the quality of friendship is probably higher once the relationship is established.

Another difficulty seems to be the way in which host nationals socialize between themselves. P5 and P11 notice that host nationals socialize in groups and they tend not to mix people from different groups which results in: "They would never invite you to a tennis match for example" or "They would never invite you to join some group". As P5 concludes: "It's not because they are mean or they don't want to, it just never cross their mind."

- ability to understand, empathise and deal with misunderstandings

When asked "Was it an effort for you to see the world from the hosts' point of view" most of

the informants replied occasionally (P1, P2, P4, P5, P11, P14) or most of the time (P3, P13) while P12 considers it to be continuous effort that takes most of the energy in the organisation. It is interesting that P6, P7, P9, all being men and P10, a women didn't find it an effort to see the world from the host's point of view. P8 not having contacts with Swedes couldn't reply to this question.

When asked if the host nationals could understand their point of view most of informants thinks that they were understood while P1 thinks that it depends on person, P3 was not understood, P4 replied that host nationals thought that they could understand and knew much more about her culture that it was the case, P10 that she was not always understood but thinks that host nationals don't really try to analyse French behaviour but rather refer to it: "You crazy French people". A strong culture shock experienced by P11 when she expected her host colleagues to help her even if she didn't ask for it was a big "eye opener" and it could be referred to host's ability to empathise but it is actually connected to the rule existing in Swedish culture that everyone should be able to take care of themselves.

Those who had to deal with misunderstandings which occurred due to differences in communication (P5, P10, P12) considered that it took a lot of time to deal with misunderstandings and it had consequences to their further behaviour meaning that they were much more careful in what they say, to whom and how.

5.2.2. Communication as symptom of culture shock

The results of this study show that even though the level of difficulties varied among informants most of them reported some of the symptoms which were reflected in communication.

- gossiping about host culture

Oberg (1954) considers that the obvious sign of culture shock is expats sitting together and gossiping about the host culture. During the interview for this study informants were asked if they have need to discuss different aspects of the culture together with other international people or their family and friends. Most of the informants did: Most of the time (P2, P4, P6, P10) and occasionally (P1, P3, P7, P8, P9, P13) while P5 discussed rarely, P11 listens to others who do have this need and P14 never did.

Gossiping is described as best way of coping with the stress and the best way of gaining another perspective and understanding of the host culture. Some of informants reported discussing the differences together with Swedish colleagues (P6, P10) in form of joking and teasing where the higher level of understanding is actually achieved. On the other hand some of them P6 and P12 were lucky to have a person helping them to understand different aspects of the culture as they occur. This will be discussed later on as mentioning as a special case of

social support.

- not being able to empathize with others

Not being able to empathize with others is characteristic for very severe cases of culture shock when people occupied with own experience are not even able to register other's difficulties or problems. The majority of the informants reported that it was occasionally difficult for them to understand host nationals point of view while some of them think that being able to empathize requires continuous and conscious effort since it is difficult to understand how host nationals think because they didn't show it in behaviour.

- avoiding interactions with host nationals, withdrawal or hostility

There were no extremes when it comes to hostility to host nationals, but P6 reported that he perceived host people as being unfriendly due to wrong interpretations of their behaviour in the beginning which had as a consequence creation of negative vibrations which precluded communication. P6 presumes that host nationals could perceive him as not being friendly because of that. P2, P6, P11 reported that they were sometimes suspicious or mistrustful due to inner feeling or wrong interpretation of bodily movements of host nationals. As mentioned before P1, P3, P4, P6, P9, P11, P12, P13 occasionally avoided to talk to host people because of the language and not being comfortable with people. Having difficulties to be polite to host nationals and other people or certain aggressiveness are some of the symptoms of culture shock reported by P6, P9 and P13, but sometimes this was only work-related.

5.2.3. Communication as solution for culture shock

As it was described before the very important tool in dealing with culture shock is the understanding of the phenomenon as well as awareness of dangerous signs which would signal that it is the time to talk to someone (Zapf, 1991). Some symptoms might be perceived in the new environment as personality traits of a person experiencing culture shock. This first impression would be difficult to change later on. So the awareness of the phenomenon would be useful on both sides.

- intercultural seminars, information giving

Only 4 people (P2, P7, P10, P14) of 14 received some kind of seminar of which 1 was mostly related to Swedish language and lasted only 1 week (P2), and another one to some usual information about differences which was referred to as "clishé" by informant P14. Other 2 informants had a 2 day seminars organised by the company giving information about the country and the culture. It is difficult to see in which way those seminars helped since P7 coming from Belgium didn't experience difficulties while P10 didn't have chance to apply the knowledge during the first year. Most of the informants think that it would be definitely useful to get some kind of training or introduction about the culture and job. As it was point out by

Ward et al. (2001) "it would be absurd to teach people how to drive a car by only giving them information about how to do it". They suggest combining cognitive training with some kind of experimental learning.

- social support

Talking about the difficulties is necessary part of dealing with culture shock since one of the symptoms is constant need to complain (Oberg, 1954). Oberg stresses the role of own countrymen who are able to help and even notice that a person experiencing intensive culture shock would have a strong need to rely on another more experienced and stable person as it is the case in all deep crises. And the opposite not being able to talk about the difficulties can increase the intensity of the symptoms. 2 informants in this study, (one of them introduced into expatriate society by the company) experienced socializing with their own national groups or other expatriates as barrier to integration with the new culture. Intensive gossiping about the new culture might increase prejudices and stereotyping about host nationals even though it can release some stress. That's why talking with own countrymen as suggested by Oberg should be combined with possibilities for establishing relationships with host nationals (Pantelidou & Craig, 2006).

- quality and quantity of contacts with hosts

As adjustment is communication-based phenomenon and can not happened without communication with host nationals (Kim in Gudykunst, 2005) it could be concluded that at least some of the host representatives should be aware of the phenomenon and ready to help. As this study shows establishing non work-related relationships was the most difficult part for most of the informants and 4 of them although describing relationships as nice and having a very good cooperation never really established friendships with host nationals at all. On the other hand some of informants thought that that's the best way to learn about the culture (P3, P14) and perception of them was more positive if they were introduced to others by a Swedish friend. The question is whether a company would consider this as a part of overall adjustment that should be taken in consideration too.

- a host culture friend as a mode

Robert E. suggests recruiting a host culture friend who would be able to observe sojourner in the new cultural context and provide suggestions and coaching. P12 reported having "a work friend" to whom she could talk to whenever a difficult situation occurs. "This is happening. Is that a normal behaviour? How should I interpret that?" is questions that she could ask and get help. In some situations her friend would observe her behaviour and notice some reactions that might be seen as strange. Searching for the reasons for misunderstandings and explaining how hosts think about that helped in solving situations that might became problems. As suggested by Zapf (1991) searching for possibilities for immediate and honest feedback can increase efficiency of a newcomer's learning.

- mentoring as a special case of social support

Task assistance, career assistance, social support and role modelling are four types of on-site mentoring that were of interest for the studies of culture shock. But as Ward et al.,(2001) conclude even though this distinction might signal that it is a systematic process companies do not have established policies and practices when it comes to mentoring. In the reality mentor is usually a person who had spent more time in the company and in the new country and on voluntary bases guides his/her colleague in the beginning. As it was describe in this case P9, who experienced some difficulties due to the language and the fact that he was the only foreigner in the department and in the company, later on acted as a mentor to P6 who arrived later. The opportunity for continuous discussions of the understanding of everyday working related issues and the specifics decreases the level of stress and uncertainty. Introduction in social circle was one less difficulty to worry about. P2, P9 and P11 would all appreciate more organized and structured introduction process as well some support when it comes to administrative issues connected to both private life and work which might be difficult without knowing the language.

- analysing cultural bumps and using groups

A person lacking communication competence specific to a certain culture would make conclusion based on the reference system from own culture (Gudykunst, 2005) and thus increase negativity about the situation and host nationals. During the analyses of culture bumps it is important to describe the situation and behaviour of all participants in order to reflect upon possible appropriate responses (Zapf, 1991). This is what P12 had chance to do and it helped in solving concrete situations. Using groups was something which P4 consider very useful for exchanging of ideas and experiences because sometimes it is difficult to understand if something is connected to a concrete person, a company or environment or it is related to national culture.

- host nationals participation

It seems that some form of more aware cultural learning between host nationals and expatriates is constantly happening since people tend to discuss the culture on social occasions like dinners and lunches and one can learn a lot (P13). On the other hand joking about cultural differences was seen by P6 as the higher level of awareness and understanding between people from different cultures and it probably increases the tolerance about the differences. Taking into consideration that some informal learning is already happening in reality it could be concluded that organizing interactive seminars with people from different cultures with the aim to discuss the differences would be a step further in this direction. Even though some existing trainings described in the literature are not only information giving and try to engage in a experiential way of learning (Ward et al., 2001) it seems that the host nationals are rarely included as a part who also has an opportunity to learn and grow.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study focuses on communication as a cause, a symptom and a solution for culture shock. The following aspects were taken into consideration: **quantity and quality** of interactions with host nationals, perceived and experienced **openness and cultural competence** of host environment, and the ways in which specific **communication patterns of the culture** can influence the intensity of culture shock. Low or moderate levels of culture shock were reported by most of the informants, one third reported insignificant problems, while one informant experienced high level of culture shock referring to it as a "scary experience".

The results of this study show that the following factors can trigger the mechanism of culture shock:

- lack of previous international experience and contacts with other cultures on both newcomer's and host side
- the choice of language influencing behaviour and power balance
- specific patterns of communication in host culture, including quality and quantity of interactions within host culture and towards strangers
- preferred personality traits common in the host culture
- social difficulties of establishing relationships in the new environment

On the other hand cultural distance including geographical, economical, religious and political factors didn't seem to influence culture shock according to the results of this study. The use of English language in the very international working environment seems to influence the process of adjustment positively. It could be concluded that culture shock is not caused only by national culture of the host country but rather the specific setting that a newcomer ends up in as well as the concrete social environment in the host country.

Some informants referred to the concrete situations and even topics of conversation as culture shock when the difference in communication, behaviour and habits of their host colleagues were not in accordance with the expectations based on norms in their own culture. Very often the shock is connected to how the things are done in the new culture which might be perceived as hostile towards the person. But once foreigners understand that rules and norms in the new culture applies to everyone it's easier to accept them without taking it personally.

Previously described results provide answers to main research questions which were the base for the present study and could be seen as confirmation of working hypothesis. Since the present study is qualitative and not quantitative, statistical data necessary for proving the hypotheses was not collected. However the results of the interviews are related to the working hypotheses stated in the beginning. High and moderate levels of culture shock was

experienced due to the clashes with specific patterns of communication as well as quantity and quality of communication in the host environment which could be seen as confirmation of the first hypothesis. One third of informants who reported insignificant problems work in international environment and use mostly English for their work. The person who reported high level of culture shock in the end changed locally oriented department to more international and consequently career direction where his personality traits were not a problem and rather an asset for the company. Together with the reported experiences of other informants the second hypothesis emphasizing the importance of cultural competence of the host environment as well as the third one stating that ambiguous or poorly specified role and personality requirement would influence intensity of culture shock, were both confirmed.

Future planning of relocation can take into consideration the results of this study during selection and preparation stages. Exploring the conditions of concrete host environment in terms of openness to new influences as well as previous international experience and already established contacts with other cultures might signal the level of awareness of possible intercultural issues on both sides. Matching the personality of sojourner with the assignment should take into consideration preferred personality traits and type of behaviour which is appreciated in a host environment too. Some informants pointed out that a company receiving people from different countries should be prepared too. Intercultural competence that people with different backgrounds and international experience bring with themselves to the company could be used in much better way than it seems to be done now. Approaching this issues in more strategical way can bring more benefit to international cooperation.

6.1. Critical reflections

The present study was conducted in Swedish working environment as it was stated in the title. However the results of the study suggest that clashes with the concrete national culture are not the main reason for high level of culture shock, but rather the concrete setting in the host environment, it's cultural competence and openness for differences. In this way the results of the study could be used for planning relocations in international companies in other countries too. At the same time this study is focused on the interactions between **expats** and **host** representatives only. Taking into consideration that there is a tendency in multinational companies that people from several different countries and cultures are mixed in international teams, their interactions between each other would be of significance in the study of culture shock too and might also influence it.

Even though there is a strong relation between working hypothesis and the results of this study the number of informants is not enough for proving the hypothesis. When it comes to the level of openness and cultural competence of the host environment the results could be seen as subjective reflections of sojourners based on their own perception. An additional study

of the host environment itself with informants who are representatives of the host culture would provide more reliable picture of the real situation. The intention of the author in the beginning was to conduct a study that will include both sides but the scope of the present study and time frame were limited.

The use of the term expatriates in the present study might be seen as not being applicable to all of the participants. 2 of them initially came to Sweden as students, 2 of them came to live with their Swedish husbands while 1 followed her husband on expatriate assignment. They all started to work after some time. Additionally confusion might appear due to the fact that majority of participants in the present study decided to stay in the new country that opposes the definition of expatriates as those cultural travellers, who are not planning to stay permanently in the host culture. However heavily negatively loaded term immigrants (see framework of the present study) would probably not be the best choice either. It seems that there is a need for a new term referring to those sojourners moving between the countries within EU or worldwide based on their own professional and personal preferences with or without intentions to stay.

7. Suggestions for further research

Broader approach to culture shock could be seen as the next step in this type of research. Most of the studies about the initial stage after entering a new culture in order to stay for some time consider the problems of **adjustment** to the new culture. Different "names" used to describe the phenomenon show the effort that is made from the newcomer's side. The fact that the first studies of culture shock were done by Americans as a part of their strategies in military, charity or intelligence missions can be considered as significant in the understanding of these approach to studying culture shock. Even later studies about immigrants in America are mostly focused on adjustment processes where it seems that a newcomer has all the responsibility for adjustment and effective communication.

However since communication **is** a two way process it could be concluded that the process of "cultural learning" would be a two way process too. In the literature about culture shock host nationals are discussed in relation to adjustment of newcomer. It would be interesting to see how hosts experience intensive culture interactions on daily bases and do they consider them as opportunity for learning? Taking into consideration all previously described some future study might be done in order to see what is happening on the other side of the two-way process of communication between sojourners and the host nationals. Do host nationals experience some level of culture shock in everyday working interactions with their foreign colleagues? Do they become aware of their own patterns of thinking, behaving and acting or just consider sojourners behaviour inappropriate? Following Kenneth (1971) view on

culture shock it seems that there is potential for increased self-awareness on both sides and both sides can gain from interacting.

Since communication is a double-way process it might be interesting to start to see culture shock as a broader concept and something happening during dynamic process of communication influencing behaviour of people from different cultures who all have chance to grow and reach higher degrees of awareness. Companies sending people abroad can create better conditions for effective communication by providing seminars and trainings for both newcomers and their host colleagues in different locations as it was suggested by the participants in this study.

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Diagram is used by permission from Duane Elmer's *Cross-Cultural Connections* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 72).

Wikipedia

1. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/communication>
2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communication>, 28.03.2010.
3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross-cultural_communication, 26.03.2010.
4. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diversity>
5. Dr Helen Burgess, is Herne Consultants' in-country representative in Italy (<http://www.herneconsultants.com/culture shock.htm>)

Appendix 1 – Guided interview

Name: P X

Position: A

Country of origin: A

Language that you use in your work: A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I. General job related questions

Time

1. When did you arrive to Sweden?
2. Do you know how long are you going to stay in Sweden?

Previous experience abroad & training

3. Have you previously worked/lived in another country for more than 6 months?
4. How much did you know about Sweden before you arrived?
5. Did you get any intercultural training or did you search for information by yourself?
6. Do you think that it would be useful for you if you could get information or help in organised way?

Well-being

7. How did it feel for you to work and live in Sweden in the beginning comparing to now?

Job

8. Did your company send you to Sweden or were you directly employed here?
9. How clear was your job description?
10. Did you have any different expectations about you role?

Perceived treatment by hosts

11. How did you feel about your host colleagues' perception of you, your identity and status?

Work Adjustment

12. Do you feel that you could perform as efficient and successful as you would in your home country or another environment that you are more used to? Concrete examples.

13. How satisfied are you with your job and the company that you work for?

Awareness

14. Can you tell me what culture shock is in your understanding and what the possible symptoms could be?

Established questionnaire by Mumford, 1998

II. General adjustment

A. `Core' items

1. Did you feel strain from the effort to adapt to a new culture? (great effort)

Most of the time, Occasionally, Not at all

2. Did you miss people in your country back home?

Most of the time, Occasionally, Not at all

3. Did you feel generally accepted by the local people in the new culture?

No, Not sure, Yes

4. Did you ever wish to escape from your new environment altogether?

Most of the time, Occasionally, Not at all

5. Did you ever feel confused about your role, values or self-identity in the new culture?

Most of the time, Occasionally, Not at all

6. Have you found things in your new environment shocking or strange?

Most of the time, Occasionally, Not at all

7. Did you ever feel helpless or powerless when trying to cope with the new culture?

Most of the time, Occasionally, Not at all

B. Interpersonal stress items

1. Did you feel tense, uneasy, worried, anxious or awkward when talking to host people?

Most of the time, Occasionally, Not at all

2. When talking to people, could you make sense of their gestures or facial expressions?

Not at all, Occasionally, Most of the time

3. Did you feel that you were sometimes mistrustful or suspicious about host people?

Most of the time, Occasionally, Not at all

4. Did you find it an effort to be polite to your hosts? (bcs you felt irritated, impatient, angry)

Most of the time, Occasionally, Not at all

5. Was it an effort for you to see the world from the hosts' point of view?

Most of the time, Occasionally, Not at all

6. Did you feel that your hosts could understand your point of view in the same way as you would expect from your countrymen?

Not at all, Occasionally, Most of the time

7. Did you have need to talk about different aspects of host culture that you found strange with other international colleagues or your friends and family?

Most of the time, Occasionally, Not at all

8. Did you sometimes avoid to talk with host people because you were too stressed or tired?

Most of the time, Occasionally, Not at all

9. How often did you interact with host people?

Not that often, Occasionally, Often

10. What kind of relationships did you develop with host people?

Work related only, Acquaintance, Friends

III. Communication (Open questions):

15. What kind of problems/misunderstandings did you experience in communication with Swedes?

16. Can you think of any example of misunderstanding that you had to deal with?

17. How difficult was it for you to deal with misunderstandings?

18. What did you find as most difficult/challenging in interacting with your Swedish colleagues?

19. What do you see as main differences between Swedish way of doing things and the way things are done in your culture?

20. Is there anything else that you think might be important or interesting to mention connected to your work here in Sweden, communication with your Swedish colleagues or Swedish culture in general?

Appendix 2 – Ethical consideration

GOTHENBURG UNIVERSITY

Master Thesis, spring 2010



ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

This ethical consideration certifies that the information shared during the interview will be used only for research purposes and nothing else. Your participation is completely anonymous and your name and the recording of the interview will be used only for the purposes of researcher's own administration of the data.

The results of the research will be summarized and available for everyone who is interested.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Signatures:

Researcher

Informant

Appendix 3 – Summarized experiences

P1

P1 came to Sweden as a student of an international program. After 2 years she got offered a job in a Swedish public company. The job description was not very clear so P1 was searching for more information from her boss. In Korea the roles and responsibilities are more structured and defined. However as a consequence of more autonomy in Sweden, she could co-design her responsibilities and was more motivated. P1 thinks that her colleagues perceived her on more professional level than she expected, but at the same time she felt like an outsider.

As some of the difficulties in communication P1 experienced delays in information or silence instead of giving concrete answers to concrete questions. P1 considers that host nationals might have problems with delivering bad news. She experienced stress when initiating conversations with possible negative outcomes due to previous reactions of her colleagues who seemed to avoid giving clear and direct answers. P1 avoided interactions with her host colleagues during lunch and coffee breaks due to the language barrier. They seemed to have problems with English and P1 didn't speak Swedish at that time. At the same time she didn't need that much interactions for the purpose of her work. P1 reported moderate level of culture shock and established only work-related relationships which was what she expected from the beginning. Taking into consideration that she worked in project form lasting only 7 months it could be concluded that maybe it was not enough time for significant development of interaction with Swedish colleagues.

P2

P2 reported culture shock as **scary experience** suggesting that it would be useful to get advice, maybe not from psychiatrist, but at least somebody to speak to about what was happening.

P2 was relocated for 2 years assignment for the same job as in United Kingdom. 1 week introduction into Swedish language was provided by the company before arriving to Sweden. English was supposed to be used for work. However understanding of Swedish e-mails was required from day one. As the job description was very clear it was a good benchmark for dealing with other difficulties. P2 could perform at his job as before but lack of Swedish language proficiency was negatively influencing personal development and learning as well as getting new skills.

During the interview P2 used the phrase **"it was tricky"** often when answering to questions connected to communication with Swedish colleagues. As an extroverted person coming from United Kingdom where people talk a lot comparing to Swedes who "say only relevant things", P2 was perceived by his host colleagues, according to him, as loud and annoying which was

not in the line with the culture of the local department and even it's own ideology, where **specific personal traits were expected to follow certain professional role**. Silence was another tricky thing to deal with: "You don't really know what they think." P2 felt tense and uneasy in communication with Swedes during a certain period of time not knowing how to say appropriate things. Things in new environment were not shocking nor strange but mostly frustrating. He felt a little bit mistrustful when it comes to work-related issues, since, according to him, his Swedish colleagues wondered what was his agenda, while he was puzzled with the rule that you are not suppose to show that you are better even though Swedes are still very ambitious and try their best. It took him 1 year to understand why they behave in a certain way or where they come from.

P2 thinks that he was accepted by some people, but he was not sure about how accepted he was by his colleagues, because some of them seemed to be threatened by all foreigners in the company. P2 emphasize that the department was very locally oriented with not that much contacts with global department or other countries. Identity issues connected to extroverted personality and **exaggerated patriotic behaviour** which was too much even comparing to previous behaviour in own country as an reaction to everything new around, continuous frustration about how things are done in new culture, feeling helpless or powerless due to overwhelming amount of things to be managed and depression due to lack of opportunities for social activities were some of the **symptoms of culture shock**. According to P2 "it was hell". Being able to socialize only with other expatriates P2 discussed Swedish culture with them most of the time. In the end P2 had to make a conscious effort to stop socializing with other expats and try to socialize with host people more in order to integrate into the culture. The most difficult period was during the first three to six months while initial strain to adapt lasted up to 2 years. P2 considers that someone with a different personality in his situation would probably have much harder time.

Difficulties with the language, lack of previous international experience, personality traits which were not preferred nor prescribed for this specific professional role in the new culture and patterns of communication in the very locally oriented host environment without international contacts, together with the feeling that relocation to that position "didn't delivered what it promised" led to change of local department to international department within the same company and consequently change of career direction. P2 still works and lives in Sweden.

P3

P3 came to Sweden 6 years ago because her boyfriend at that time and now husband is Swedish. After finishing a Bachelor's degree in America she decided to continue with the Master degree in Sweden. She got employed after 2 years in Sweden. P3 used to live in Scotland for 6 months and in France for 1 year as a student, came back to US to finish her studies and then worked in France for 6 months. She came to Sweden after that. After studying SFI, P3 consider that she learned things about Swedish culture too, but since it was in

Northern Sweden, in Luleå, the culture there might differ from the culture in Gothenburg. Getting cultural introduction or training she considers as very important but at the same time she thinks that the reality is always different from expectations and the best way for learning about the culture is having a Swedish friend or colleague. P3 had a difficult time in the beginning taking comments about her country very personally. P3 is still not sure if people believe her when she tries to explain things about her country or culture because media picture seems to be very strong. Explaining things about own culture that makes perfect sense for one to people from other culture can be frustrating and tiring according to P3. At this point in time she doesn't feel completely American but she is not Swedish either even though she spent significant time in the country.

She didn't get any real introduction in her job but figure it out by herself. Her education didn't seem to be applicable in Swedish society so she considers that her job is less advanced than what she could actually do. When it comes to the perception of her by host people P3 felt that she stood out in crowd and that people looked at her and thought: "She doesn't belong. She looks like an immigrant." Having her roots in France she didn't have this impression there since she looked like other people in France. The fact that she has an accent when she speaks Swedish used to make P3 very nervous in interactions with host nationals especially when she meets them for the first time: "Sometimes I can see immediately that they look at me and they wonder: Where's she from?".

When she just arrived to Sweden P3 didn't feel strain to adapt because she was not sure how long she would stay. Most of the question showed moderate level of culture shock and P3 was not sure if host people accepted her or not. She consider it difficult to make friends with Swedes while easier to make friends with other international people. P3 used only Swedish in the beginning for her work and now she works more internationally and uses Swedish in the morning and English in the afternoon when Americans wake up.

P4

P4 came to Sweden together with her Swedish husband and got employed after 3 months. In the beginning she used 50% of English and 50% of Swedish for her work. She used to speak everyday Swedish when she arrived. She learned it on different courses during the different periods of time that she spent in Sweden before she move to live in Sweden. She learned a lot about culture during this visits from friends and family, but she didn't know much about business culture in Sweden. She considers that a seminar about culture in group setting would be useful to get "exchange of ideas and impressions because sometimes I thought it was hard to know what was specific for the company and not for Sweden and what was specific for my husband's family and not for Sweden. Just because they did it it was not something that all Swedes do".

P4 felt that she was welcomed but she felt a little overwhelmed with so many things to take in. She never worked in the same industry before so she had to learn a lot. Another thing that was specific to host perception of her was that they thought that they knew a lot about her

culture. The image of the country was absorbed from the media. So P4 had to look at herself, became aware of her opinions and stand up for what she thought. Having to explain that there were different parts in her own country and different cultures within it, P4 became more of an ambassador than she thought she had to be. She had to overcome the feeling that she has to apologize for background by deciding that she doesn't have to apologize for her background as she wouldn't expect anyone else to apologize for their background no matter what that might be.

The fact that host representatives seemed to be pretty sure about how things are in US, China or anywhere else was little bit surprising since they didn't show interest to ask about how it is really. "I'm curious to hear and I ask tell me how it is, but here I don't hear that", concludes P4.

Apart from struggling with the image of her own country which until some degree was connected to her own identity and mutual understanding in interactions where many things seemed to be assumed from the host side, P4 didn't experience major difficulties when it comes to general adjustment and communication. Gained cultural competence helped her later on to act as liaison in the meetings between the teams from two countries when differences in the culture could lead to misunderstandings and possible conflicts. P4 is very satisfied with her job and the company and her life in Sweden and she tries to get the best of it.

P5

Adjustment:

P5 used to work for the same company in Brazil and was invited to Sweden by Vice President of the company. P5 had previous experience of working with French expats in Brazil within another company. She visited Sweden 2 months before relocation. 2 or 3 books about Swedish culture helped a lot, but P5 still thinks that introduction by someone with Latin background will be useful for getting the picture about how things are in reality. Adjustment is described as extremely easy. P5 called the city "Gothen-boring" in the beginning and started to like it later on. When asked about host people attitudes towards her P5 replies that both her colleagues and she had an impression that she has been working in Sweden "for ever". Colleagues took care of her and invited her to lunch and afterwork, while company helped with apartment and provided car as a part of contract. After 6-8 months P5 started to notice some comments about Brazil in her presence as if she was not there. "What is the problem with Brazil, that they [Brazilians] don't want to go back?" However she never experienced them as being against her, but rather as "noise" in the background. P5 uses only English in her work and didn't feel that she had to learn Swedish. Now after 3 years her colleagues start to speak Swedish even in her presence expecting her to know the language.

P5 distinguish 2 types of challenges in connection to accepting a job in another country. Either you have to be completely prepared professionally for the position and then have to deal with personal challenge only as it was the case for her when moving to Sweden, or you should have everyday life under control to be able to face professional challenge, such as getting promoted

and moving to a position with more responsibility. She got offers of positions with more responsibility in Maroco, which was a consequence of misunderstanding and another offer for the position in Venezuela but she turned them down not feeling ready to deal with both personal and professional challenges at the same time.

Communication:

After learning that interrupting other people is considered to be impolite in Swedish culture, P5 had to struggle in the beginning with desire to respond immediately which would be normal in Brazil. As main communication problem she sees difficulties to read body language. The problem she experienced emerged after she made a joke during a meeting which included head movement signalling in Brazil that it was a joke. The joke was perceived as serious statement by Swedes. After difficulties to solve this misunderstanding she realized that "one can not through words in the wind" as people do in Brazil, it's better to constrain spontaneous impulses to joke since things said are taken very seriously and joking can be dangerous. Being straight to the point is needed in Sweden and this was not a problem since P5 works with numbers and the message she has to deliver is clear. There is not so much space for misunderstandings. P5 notice that there are some rules in social life in Sweden, where established groups are closed and "no one will ever invite you to join their group. It is not because Swedes are mean or they don't want to. It is something that never crosses their mind."

Values:

As very positive P5 notices the trust that people have in each other in Sweden. No need to be street smart as in Brazil, which she hates is another thing that she found positive as well as the fact that women respect themselves more in Sweden. After some time making a conscious effort to learn not to interrupt people she feels strange with Brazilians doing this all the time. Respecting other people's time was another thing that she adapted. When visiting Brazil, facing the values there that she hates, she thinks: "It's not that I don't belong here in Sweden, I don't belong there actually". Coming to Sweden was according to P5 "the best thing that ever happened to me".

P6

P6 applied for the job in the same company that he has been working for 10 years before and got opportunity to be relocated to the headquarters. He moved for 1,5 year contract. He uses only English in his work and after 12 months of lessons can understand basic Swedish. P6 searched for the information himself and was introduced both to the job, company and the culture by his expat boss who spent more time in Sweden and acted as a mentor to P6. P6 sees this job as a very positive experience and opportunity to learn and grow. He considers that he stayed back a little bit during first 2-3 months and dropped in performance during the first 6 weeks. But at the same time he wrote a diary which was his habit during the periods with lots of stress and could help himself by realizing that there were some improvements about how he felt between first week when he arrived and fifth week for example. The job

description was very clear including 50% of work that he felt very competent in and 50% of some things that P6 should have to learn about. Even though he felt very stressed in the beginning due to all new things and practical issues that he had to learn he didn't experience serious difficulties. During the first 1-3 weeks of his stay in Sweden he questioned his decision and after 2 months had a strong period of homesick.

When it comes to communication aspects of adjustment P6 felt tense, uneasy and worried when talking to host people during the first 7 months and sometimes avoided to talk during the first 3 months. But this was mostly related to the people he met outside work. He felt accepted 90% by people at work. The difficulties were connected to his own perception of host nationals friendliness as well as his misinterpretation of it. While in his own country he would greet anyone that he meets on the street this behaviour seemed weird in the new culture. P6 realized that people in Europe speak different languages and he thought that it would be easier for him if he could speak Swedish. P6 was sometimes mistrustful and suspicious about host people following his inner feeling and what he could see from their body language. On the other hand he stresses his will to understand their point of view, learn and adapt to Sweden, since he doesn't expect that Sweden will adapt to him. One of the difficulties was that P6 in the beginning perceived host people as not friendly which created negative vibrations from his side and this influenced difficulties in making initial break through in communication. Opposite to many other informants who considered fika to be a must and thus didn't feel that comfortable with people, P6 considers fika as an opportunity to understand people in a better way, discuss some work-related issues and puts own opinions in more relaxed environment. P6 having a person acting as a mentor manage to adjust at work during first 2 months while it took about 7 months to feel comfortable while communicating with host people outside work. Being able to joke about cultural difference P6 sees as higher level of awareness and understanding which he achieved both with his international as well as Swedish colleagues.

P7

P7 searched for a job in 2-3 countries in Europe and he was chosen for a job in Sweden. After accepting the job, P7 planned to move to Sweden together with his family. The company provided 2 sessions with information about life in Sweden. However P7 reported that he learned things through own experience during first 3-6 months. The follow up session was organised after 1 year. The job description was pretty clear and since P7 wanted scientific and not managerial path and the balance between work and family life he is very satisfied. The only serious problem was the difficulties that P7's wife experienced in searching for a job in Sweden even though she has a very good education and professional record from before. They were not prepared for the difficulties and the pain this caused to them. P7 notices that they have very good communication with host nationals but that they also realized that they "need to be better than the Swedish to be really accepted". Not being like in Belgium means that they can not always say what they think, that they "have to make sure to be more perfect" because

they came from another country.

Throughout the interview P7 repeated several times "I'm a quiet guy... we are quiet people" which seems to be a good fit in Swedish culture. P7 prefers the way people communicate in working environment in Sweden skipping unnecessary kissing and chatting in the corridor for example as it is the case in Belgium.

When answering to culture shock related items as well as communication related questions P7 reported no level of culture shock. P7 felt generally accepted by his Swedish colleagues and by the other international colleagues too. According to him, the environment is quite similar to his own country's so he didn't find anything strange or shocking. P7 experienced some strain in the beginning due to the English language proficiency as well as some job-related moments when P7 could feel little helpless or powerless. When it comes to communication everything seems to go smoothly even though there are some differences that P7 occasionally discusses with his wife. P7 reported that he didn't develop friendships with Swedish colleagues nor international and he considers it to be normal. Going to the swimming pool with a Swedish colleague and kids is the only social activity outside work which seems to be quite enough from the social point of view.

P8

P8 is from China, but used to live in United Kingdom for 2 years as well as in Ireland for 5 years. He applied for a job in Sweden, came for an interview and got the job. He planned to stay in Sweden for 2 years. He didn't get any kind of introduction and knew a little about Sweden from TV. P8 expected that things will be quite similar to UK and Ireland. His job description was clear and although he had some previous experience in the field he got a chance to learn from other people. He is quite satisfied with the job and the company and gives the mark 8 on the scale 1-10. P8 expected that he would perform better on the new job but it was worse in the beginning. It took him less than 1 year to start performing as usual again.

P8 uses only English for his work and is surrounded with mostly international colleagues who work in the same department. He received some help during the first 3 months from relocation consultants in the company. He considers that host colleagues are nice people and he adds that he usually meets only nice people and avoids dangerous places that might exist anywhere in the world. However P8 is not sure if he is accepted or not by host colleagues: "I don't know exactly how they...". As strange he sees the fact that it seems not that easy to make friends with Swedes, which was not the problem for him in UK and Ireland. Since he doesn't participate in any activities outside work he travels often to see his family in Ireland. P8 reported some difficulties connected to core items of culture shock. Not having chance to communicate with host people that often P8 couldn't really answer to all of the questions connected with communication with host nationals, but at the same time talked about avoidance of interactions from both host and his side. Avoidance of eye contact P8 sees as a signal of not wanting to initiate conversation and as very different from behaviour of people in

UK and Ireland. On the other hand he refused to go to some social events when he was invited since he knows what is his main task in the new culture and concentrates his energy on it. In general P8 didn't report any major difficulties.

P9

P9 used to work for the same company for several years and used to come to Sweden to business trips. He was invited to take a position in Sweden and he decided to come. He consider that even though cultural differences are not so big between Sweden and Germany it would be definitely useful to get some kind of intercultural introduction as well as guidelines or more structured introduction program when it comes to work, without clear instructions in structured form P9 felt that he had to find his own way. P9 reported that it took about a half a year to understand all the processes, to understand the system, to know how to act with people, how to write an e-mail, in which way and how to address people, how to talk to people, how to make things done.

In the beginning the problem was mainly Swedish language. Being the only foreigner in the department and even in the company P9 could not expect that all people would adapt to him. P9 learned Swedish after 1-1,5 years and it influence acceptance during the meetings. Initial stress was mostly connected to the language and consequently to some small private things which could be more difficult if a person doesn't speak the language.

P9 replied occasionally to most of the core items of culture shock but he notice in the end that it was not a major feeling. Answers to 6 items out of 10 related to communication would indicate moderate level of culture shock even though P9 marks that communicating in Sweden "was easy anyway". P9 sometimes felt tense or worried not knowing how to act with higher levels of hierarchy for example which is different in Sweden comparing to Germany. According to him bodily movements of Swedes could be perceived as if one is not getting attention or as lack of respect. P9 sees behaviour of his Swedish colleagues as very open but distant.

Sometimes not feeling comfortable with the language and the people and the fact that Friday's fika seems to be mandatory, P9 avoided interactions by staying in the office. P9 thinks that he established very good work-related relationships and have a very good cooperation with his Swedish colleagues, but no friendships occurred.

P9 considers that the only complicated issue was the language but he was bit frustrated about how things are done in Sweden. As many other informants P9 experience decision making process in Sweden as very frustrating which takes a lot of time, sometimes without any outcome. P9 notices the contradiction between the fact that people are not very used to conflicts on one hand, while on the other hand everyone should say what they think and express their opinions. It is difficult to solve conflicts because people don't discuss and don't say their opinions while at the same time everything should end in consensus.

The fact that everyone seem to accept what ever is prescribed by the Government is another strange thing. Tendency to be "the same", buying the same cars, having everything the same and thinking in the same way can give a little bit "boring" picture of the country. Self-service

culture in which everyone is expected to do everything by themselves was a bit of a shock for P9. Administrative support is quite limited no matter on what hierarchical level the person works. P9 considers that there is not that much space for individualism and taking own decision about different aspects of life.

P10

P10 came to Sweden with her husband who worked for a Swedish international company. The company organised 2 days seminar about the culture and introduced them to the French expats society by the company. P10 spent 1 year in Sweden before starting to work and refers to it as "a nightmare". Since she didn't have any contacts with host nationals during the first year she concludes that she was actually "not in Sweden": "I was on the Moon or I don't know (laughing)." After starting working and interacting with host representatives as well as establishing her own social network, P10 reports that she started to feel mentally better. Apart from some initial difficulties due to limitations because of the knowledge of English language, she doesn't consider that she experienced culture shock. But she considers that she had a wrong perception of Sweden. She thought that Sweden is like France.

P10 reports as most stressful situation in the beginning having lunch with her colleagues. They spoke Swedish language, they were laughing while she couldn't understand one word which made her feel "completely lonely" not feeling as being a part of discussion. During the first meetings P10 considers that she was too direct and "brutal" in communication due to lack of knowledge of the language to express nuances and more direct communicative style in conflicts, characteristic for French culture. She could feel that the audience was wondering what has happen. P10 thinks that she was perceived as very authoritarian which was not her intention. Later on she describes an incident with her Swedish colleagues in which she reacted very directly and openly as she would do in France. Her tone was aggressive and her colleague was shocked. "It could have cost me a job", but luckily I didn't have to deal with that person any more. In France such conflicts are common and they are quickly forgiven and forgotten which seems not to be the case in Sweden. P10 still has the feeling of frustration when she wants to express herself and the lack of knowledge in Swedish language doesn't allow it.

P10 enjoys living and working in Sweden due to less hierarchy in the working environment where people don't try to push each other down which is the case in France. In order to integrate to Swedish society P10 stopped all contacts with French expats society in Sweden. She considers that it is very important to have a group of people in which you can speak your own language in the beginning but it becomes a barrier for integration into Swedish society. As a person coming from France, she felt accepted by her colleagues and people who all reacted very positively mentioning their past knowledge of French language, nice food etc. After the above mentioned conflict she realized that she has to be less spontaneous and very careful in order to avoid stressing her Swedish colleagues as she learned that if a certain level of conflict

is reached it is impossible to continue the discussion which as a consequence increase her own frustration. P10 considers that she was the one who was shocking Swedes and that working environment in Sweden is less stressful then in France.

When asked if she was tense or worried in interactions she reports feeling shy even if that's not her own personal characteristic. Not mastering the language and not knowing how people would react was causing frustration. P10 considers that Swedes have double personality. If you don't know Swedes they seem to be cold and they control their feelings and behaviour so it's difficult to see what they think or feel, but once you get to know them another personality appears and they share private things at work which is not common in France. She thinks that it takes much more time to become a friend with a Swedish person but the quality of the relationship is probably better.

P11

P11 came to Sweden for a 2 years contract after working for the same company in Brazil for 6 years. She used to live in USA, Spain and France before and she speaks English, French and Spanish. Before moving to Sweden she used to come for meetings held every year. Being raised in a family who used to travel a lot and living on her own in different cultures she didn't feel need for preparation before coming to Sweden. Nevertheless she considers that intercultural training should be a must in the company sending own people abroad since it seems that it is taken for granted that people would manage. Even though she herself didn't experience serious difficulties, P11 is acquainted with many people who did. The job description was very clear and with developed trust P11 get more freedom to create her own responsibilities with time. She considers that she was well received and very much welcomed by her host colleagues, adding while laughing "in Swedish way". Later on she mentioned: "you are the company's friend, you are not a friend that they would invite to a tennis match for example" explaining that she felt accepted, but not integrated. According to her Swedes tend not to mix people in general.

The working environment in Sweden was experienced as slow in the beginning. Everyone seemed to have their own box of responsibilities and people were not ready to act outside them when asked to help before trust was developed. Swedish working environment, according to P11 seems to be more free from prejudices against women and young people, providing her with more freedom in her role based on her professional record from before. P11 often travels in her job to distant cultures and works with muslim people with very different religious and attitudes to women. Due to this she sees Sweden as "very normal" in comparison to these "exotic cultures". P11 emphasize that a person who judges other cultures and behaviours would probably not have chance to be in situations in which she was and experience things that she did such as Muslims stopping the meeting in order to pray, she herself using had cover during own presentation, not getting questions from men in the audience during the meetings addressed directly to her etc.

P11 showed high awareness of what culture shock is, mentioning some of the symptoms. Coming from another culture and seeing in which way the differences are treated in the company now, she suggests approaching cultural diversity in more strategic way. The company seems not to be aware and not taking into consideration possibilities that having people from other cultures provide. It seems that it is still required that a person from a different culture should adjust while being different is seen as negative, as exception, creating barrier rather than being used for learning and creating something new. P11 estimates the work done by the company on this issues as being efficient until the level of 10-20%, while desirable would be 100%.

P11 refers to concrete events as "a huge culture shock and disappointment at the same time". She described the situation she was abroad with her Swedish colleagues in the third country. She expected that her colleagues would act in certain way noticing that she is stressed and needs help with things that should be done. But no one offered help. After talking later with same colleagues she realized that expecting help was not enough, she had to ask for help. P11 refers to this situation as "a big eye opener". She considers this to be culturally related. In this and similar situations, P11 can see herself as powerless, there is only that much you can do about the situation. You have to stop and respect the culture as it is. When it comes to communication with her host colleagues P11 found it sometimes stressful in the beginning to ask for help and get answers saying: "I don't know" without no additional comments such as: "but I can search for information" as P11 would expect. However when trust was developed this attitude changed. Another big shock was self-service country which in this specific case meant that P11 didn't get the kind of support she would expect when moving to headquarters of the company. She was suppose to solve different kind of administrative problems by herself without knowing how to do it in the new country. No one explained simple rules like how to park the car and taking into consideration many different small things that one has to deal with this was little overwhelming in the beginning.

Body language seemed to be the base for a certain level of suspiciousness in the beginning. Not knowing how to read the behaviour of host culture created this feeling. One needs time to really understand the culture. But "once when you get to know them" it's easier to understand what they think. P11 was not confused about her role, values and identity but notices that sometimes it was easier to relate to muslim people whom she experience as more Latin because "they are more family oriented, they get together and they are more out-going". However comparing her experiences in working in company's markets where she experienced a lot of "scary things" that one don't understand when facing for the first time such as ladies completely covered with clothes, ramadan and status of women, who are not allowed to drive, to stay in a hotel or take a taxi she sees Sweden as "very normal". But even in Sweden it took time to learn what is right and wrong, what you should say and what you should have never said.

P12

P12 was invited to Sweden because of a specific knowledge for a project lasting 1,5 years and got an 8 months contract in the beginning. She used to work for the same company in Brazil for 10 years before with regular business trips to Sweden and Latin America. Business trips to 25 European countries during 6 months were part of the job too. P12 didn't get any introduction when she arrived and didn't search for information about the culture by herself neither. However she thinks that company should provide some basic information about practical issues and the culture. She considers that effort should be put from both sides, where expatriates should be willing to learn new things and new ways of doing things but the company taking care of expatriates should also prepare a little bit.

The fact that she accepted an offer to become local employee in Sweden shows how much she enjoyed being in the new culture. Even though she enjoyed her work so much some culturally-related comments were there and P12 considers them not to be appropriate. At the same time she understands that people wonder what does she have that a Swede cannot do. While talking with Swedish colleagues about another Brazilian person who got a position in US, a joke was uttered: "What is problem with you Brazilians? Can't you stay in your own country?" Another similar joke followed the fact that some forks were missing in the kitchen: "We have to many Brazilians here." P12 is aware that such comments are coming from either very young people or those having limited international experience.

When it comes to work adjustment P12 doesn't consider the drop in performance in the beginning to be related to the culture but thinks that the culture play a little role, delaying a little bit usual learning process at the new job. It took about 6 months in the beginning to feel completely in control when it comes to the job performance.

P12 refers to culture shock as connected to the fact that there is a strict line between a work colleague and a friend and private and work life which seems to be the rule in Sweden. Behaving in the beginning as Brazilian and being open with everyone about everything led to problems at work. After realizing that she changed her behaviour towards people, some of the colleagues got confused not understanding why. It seems that strict line might be the consequence of the fact that, according to her, Swedes seem to be very curious about other people's life and tend to talk about that, go deep into it and criticize, which is common in other cultures too, but the difference is in "how you treat the issues". The difficulties connected to the consequences of private things being said in working environment P12 see as main reason for having such a strict line between work and private life in Sweden. Sometimes it could influence her performance at work since it takes time to deal with this issues. Not knowing how people would react if you say something and having to choose what to say takes much more energy to manage this kind of situations.

P12 showed negative result on most of the items connected to culture shock and communication. A slight increase in the intensity of communication with people back home in the beginning as well as some initial cautiousness and confusion about role, values and self-identity were only difficulties which were reported. In the beginning P12 was more observing

than acting, trying to understand what is right and wrong in the new culture and discussing this with people that she trusted.

But when it comes to understanding of host nationals perspective and point of view P12 thinks that it is continuous effort and takes most of the energy in the organisation. Things are getting better all the time, but one can learn something new, every day. P12 established a good relationship with a host person in the department who helps her to see the situation from host point of view. When something happens she can ask this person for a short break and say: "This is happening. Is that a normal behaviour? How should I interpret that?" On the other hand the same person can see P12's reactions in certain situation and suggest the real meaning of what is happening and appropriate behaviour from the point of view of host culture.

P12 see the difference between changing own behaviour and adapting. Change something in one's personality might be hard and takes several years but if you consider some aspect as really important you can change it. However being a foreigner in a new country means that you need to adapt to behaviours and norms in the culture. P12 finished working on last position on the day of the interview and starts on a new position after being promoted.

P13

P13 used to work for the same company in Hungary for 3 years before getting a position in Sweden. During that time the company organised 3 months visit for group of Hungarian employees in Sweden providing information mostly about company's culture. On social occasions such as dinner and lunch during these 3 months, cultural differences were discussed in informal way. The position offered in Sweden was a step back in career but being new in the country P13 knew that she has to start from the beginning. She consider that additional information about the culture was not needed. By studying SFI, P13 got insight in the immigrant society in Sweden which she consider as a part of Swedish culture too. P13 consider moving to Sweden as a breath of fresh air taking into consideration simple bureaucracy, functioning economy and the fact that people don't struggle for survival not knowing what will happen next month as in her own country.

P13 thinks that her colleagues were very nice to her, they tried to support her but until a certain line which is experienced as very concrete line. But since P13 was always doing an excellent job and everyone was satisfied it influenced positively relationships at work. But the way she speaks and the word she uses were experienced as "too much" from the host side. P13 was used to show her emotions openly which is not common in the host culture. Her tone of voice was interpreted as aggressive and things said were taken personally. Even though she felt generally accepted at work outside working environment she seemed to be perceived only as an immigrant and it seemed that no one was interested in the fact that P13 has a good education, works in a good company etc. If she was introduced through a Swedish friend other people would accept her in a better way.

P13 didn't report major difficulties even though some of the answers would indicate some level of culture shock, but she reported personal crises connected to her identity that occurred after about 1 year living and working in Sweden. It was a tough period lasting for about 6 months with continuous thinking during the day and night. The crises was connected to national identity and consequence of it in the new culture. The question was: "Am I Hungarian", which in the host culture would mean an immigrant. Another thing connected to own national identity were discussion based on the picture of the country from media. Understanding host's point of view was difficult but through a Swedish friend this understanding was gained. Understanding of her point of view was even harder for hosts.

P13 avoided socializing at work during fika due to the limited topics that are common for such occasions. Chatting about the weather P13 considers as waste of time, but she was willing to talk to an intelligent person when the topic was good. In work-related communication P13 is usually very clear which is seen as "too hard" in Sweden based on the language issues and the fact that Swedes would use some words and expressions only in really dramatic situation which P13 learned through own mistakes.

P14

P14 arrived to Sweden 4 years ago in order to study at University in West Sweden without any long term plans. An afternoon workshop was provided by the University about intercultural issues in a classical, standardize way mostly discussing "cliché" such as which nationality arrives when to a meeting for example. Apart from minor practical difficulties like finding an apartment as a student, P14 didn't experience significant stress to adapt. The reason, according to him might be that he is from metropolis and he is used to different kinds of people. He had previously lived in France for 6 months but returned home because he didn't like it. In parallel with studies he applied for a job in a big Swedish international company and got a temporary contract. Since the company language was English there were no need for learning Swedish. More impersonal Swedish working environment suits him better in comparison with Turkish with necessity to be tricky all the time. P14 appreciates the values of Swedish working culture such as culture with no punishment, no "blame" game playing as well as individualism. Since he work internationally within the company he sometimes discussed French culture with his Swedish colleagues. As the sign of his quick adaptation he mentions that he started saying "I live in Gothenburg" very quickly. His personal values are in accordance with the culture and he suggests that the choice of the country that a person wants to live and work in is based on what kind of person you want to become.