

Culture Shock on The Instagram Account @PrettyPuri17: A Cross-Cultural Communication Study

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Abstract:

Cross-cultural communication is essential in interactions between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, as differences in values, norms, and social habits can lead to communication challenges, including culture shock. Social media platforms such as Instagram serve as spaces to represent cross-cultural communication experience. This study explores the representation of culture shock in interactions between Puri and Jane on the Instagram account @prettyPuri17. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected from conversations between Puri and Jane in video reels depicting culture shock phenomena in daily interactions. Data analysis applied intercultural communication theory by Samovar et al. (2010) and Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (2001), focusing on differences in cultural values, communication patterns, and the dynamics and culture shock. The results reveal that culture shock in the interactions reflects differences between Indonesian and American cultural values, particularly in the use of formal and informal language, perceptions of authority, and concepts of individualism and collectivism in work and social contexts. The content also illustrates identity negotiation and communication strategies used to adapt to new cultural settings. These findings suggest that representations of culture shock on social media can function as light yet educational tools for fostering understanding of cross-cultural communication dynamics, making them accessible to a broader audience.

Keywords: culture shock, intercultural communication, Instagram, social media

Introduction

In today's digital era, the presence of new media including social media has become a new space for people to interact and share experiences by eliminating communication distance (Utami, 2021), including people from various cultures to construct their cultural identity. One of the platforms that is quite popular is Instagram with its features that allow its users to display daily life stories in visual and audio form, namely short photos and videos or known as reels. The use of social media by individuals living in a different cultural environment from their origin to display the dynamics of cross-cultural communication in a real and personal way becomes interesting because knowledge of different cultures can help prevent misunderstandings and conflicts (Alamsyah et al., 2024).

Cross-cultural communication or also known as intercultural communication according to Samovar et al. (2010:13) is a process that occurs when members of a certain culture convey messages to members of other cultures. These interactions involve people who are different in terms of cultural perception and their symbol system. In practice, differences in values, norms, and communication styles often trigger misunderstandings, which can then give rise to the symptoms of culture shock, which is a mental state that arises when a person moves from a familiar environment to an unknown or unfamiliar environment and finds that the person's previous behavior patterns are ineffective.

Hofstede (2001:10) states that culture is a combination of common characteristics that influence how human groups respond to their surrounding environment. Culture determines the uniqueness of the group just as personality determines the uniqueness of individuals, so differences in cultural values greatly influence the way individuals communicate and react to others from different cultures. When individuals face an unfamiliar cultural environment and their values are at odds with their customs, confusion or discomfort often arises in interacting. These symptoms can be seen in various real situations, especially those experienced by people who have moved from their home environment to a new environment that contains many foreign things (Huda & Mahendra P., 2022), including in the life of the diaspora, migrant workers, international students, and individuals who move to other countries for personal and professional interests.

One of the manifestations of the phenomenon of cultural concussion is shown in the @prettyPuri17 Instagram account managed by Puri Viera, a woman from Surabaya who now lives in California, United States. In her content in the form of video reels, Puri shared her experiences in living life as an immigrant who were not spared from culture shocks. What is interesting is that the experience is presented through a conversation between two characters, both portrayed by herself; Puri, representing Indonesian culture, and Jane, representing American culture.

The interaction between Puri and Jane includes themes in daily life including gift-giving, eating together, and activities in the office. The dialogue built in the content reflects the differences in value systems and communication styles that are typical between Indonesian culture which tends to be collectivist, namely prioritizing "interdependence" and America which tends to be individualistic, which is able to do everything alone or apply individual "independence" (Syarizka dkk., 2021). The dynamics of communication will be analyzed using the theory of intercultural communication according to Samovar et al. (2010) and Hofstede (2001) which allows researchers to examine how individuals from different cultural backgrounds build interactions, adjust to differences, and manage the potential for culture shocks in daily communication. Through this perspective, @prettyPuri17 account

becomes a relevant and actual study material to examine the dynamics of cross-cultural communication, as well as show how culture shocks are interpreted and responded to through creative narratives on social media.

Previously, several studies on cross-cultural communication especially those focusing on digital media have been conducted. First, Kiram (2023) with the cultural globalization theory from Held (2000) and the cultural theory from Tylor (1870) found that the phenomenon of dangdut koplo music culture in TikTok media encourages academics to be more comprehensive in studying the diversity of dangdut koplo music in Indonesia and encourages people to be more open to the variety of cultures in the surrounding environment. The second study, Leodafira & Oktarina (2022) using a cross-cultural communication approach in general in the context of social media, found that the pattern of Indonesian-Turkish cross-cultural communication in the AnkaraClass program can be seen from the way of communication that takes place on the Ankaraesia Platform through online media Zoom, WhatsApp, and YouTube, where communication that occurs both verbal and non-verbal when combined can be a strong element in message delivery. Meanwhile, in the third study, Kristianto & Marta (2019) with the theory of co-cultural communication from Orbe (1998), it was found that through his channel, YouTuber Bayu Skak indirectly stereotyped the Javanese people who are the background of their characters and behavior, but although it is not necessarily done consciously, stereotyping can have a negative impact on the life of people in Indonesia who have different traditions, ethnicities, and races.

The three studies above show that the study of cross-cultural communication can be applied in many contexts such as popular culture, language learning, and even digital content monetization. However, judging from the focus of the discussion of these studies, there is a novelty offered by this research, namely by examining the representation of culture shock through personal interaction in social media through video reel content on Instagram account @prettyPuri17 by focusing on informal daily experiences, the use of Instagram as a creative medium, and a personal approach to the experience of culture shock. This makes this research interesting and relevant to the development of the current cross-cultural communication phenomenon in the digital era.

This study aims to explore and describe the culture shock in the interaction between the characters of Puri and Jane on @prettyPuri17's Instagram account. The main focus of this study is to identify the differences in cultural values and communication patterns reflected in the conversations between the two, as well as to understand how responses to culture shocks are constructed through the display of video content. This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of cross-cultural communication in the digital era, as well as open a space for reflection for the general public to understand the challenges and adaptations in different cultural encounters.

Research Methodology

This type of research is qualitative which is defined as a research method based on the philosophy of post-positivism or enterprising with the purpose of researching the condition of natural objects (Sugiyono, 2017:9). The researcher here acts as a key instrument, with data collection carried out by triangulation or a combination of observation, interviews, and documentation. The data obtained tends to be qualitative data whose analysis is also qualitative, and the results of the research are in the nature of understanding meaning and uniqueness, constructing phenomena, and finding hypotheses. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study intends to understand the meanings in the representation of cross-cultural communication between the characters of Puri and Jane on Instagram accounts @prettyPuri17 which requires a depth of interpretation of the social context, cultural values, and dynamics of interaction in the analyzed data, namely conversations and communication situations, which cannot be measured by statistical formulas.

The data of this research is in the form of conversations and communication situations in the form of narratives, dialogues, speaking styles, and expressions that display cultural differences in daily interactions, which originate from conversations between Puri and Jane characters in videos in @prettyPuri17 Instagram account. Data was collected by documentation observation techniques, namely watching, taking notes, and then analyzing the content of the videos based on the theme of cross-cultural communication that displays differences in cultural values and communication styles that cause culture shocks so that adaptation strategies are required. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using the approach of intercultural communication theory by Samovar dkk. (2010) and cultural dimension theory by Hofstede (2001).

Results and Discussion

The following chapter presents the results of the analysis of data collected from Instagram account uploads @prettyPuri17 especially in the form of video reels, which record the experience of account managers while living in the United States. The data were analyzed using an intercultural communication approach to identify the symptoms of culture shock that emerged by observing conversations or dialogues, expressions, and narratives, in this case Puri as an individual from Indonesian culture and Jane as an individual from American culture. These findings are further linked to the theory of intercultural communication from Samovar et al. (2010) and the theory of cultural dimension from Hofstede (2001) and interpreted according to the context of the difference in values and norms between Indonesian and United States cultures.

Data 1: Breakfast with Americans

Jane : Thanks for making breakfast.

Puri : (Smiles, waves her hand dismissively)

Hmm, you're welcome. OK Jane, I fried some fish fillets. I know you don't like whole fish with the eyes looking at you.

Jane : Fish for breakfast?
Puri : Yes, why?
Jane : I'm not used to eat fish for breakfast, especially fried.
Puri : (Annoyed facial expression)
Why?
Jane : I don't know. I mean I'll eat eggs, bacon, sausages for breakfast right? But not fish.
Unless, smoked salmon, and the bagels.
Puri : (Surprised look)
Salmon is also fish.
Jane : Yes, but it's not fried and it's served with the bagel.
Puri : I don't understand. So do you want cereal then?
Jane : That might be better.
Puri : (Putting down the plate angrily and crossing her arms.)

The conversation above shows that there is a culture clash in terms of eating habits, especially foods that are considered suitable for breakfast. The presentation of fried fish as a breakfast menu in the context of Indonesian culture is still considered reasonable, but Jane responds by showing surprise that represents different American cultural values in terms of food choices for the morning which are generally eggs, sausages, and bacon. Puri has shown an attempt to adapt by not serving the fish whole, but Jane's reaction still shows a difference in perception of what is considered suitable for breakfast, even though salmon is actually also a type of fish. Puri's lack of understanding of Jane's food logic is a form of confusion in the process of cultural adaptation, as explained by Samovar et al. (2010:476) that individuals who face foreign cultural environments experience a lot of anxiety about new values or norms that are different from their native culture. Meanwhile, Puri's expression, both verbally and nonverbally by putting the plate upset and crossing arms, shows the stages of disappointment in the culture shock curve (Samovar et al., 2010:477). This shows that Puri has not fully adapted to the new cultural norms, and still carries the expectations of the original culture.

Data 2: First Time Giving a Gift to Americans

Jane : Hey, are you coming to Mary's baby shower?
Puri : (Enthusiastic)
Yes, I'll be there. And you?
Jane : Yes, I'm going.
Have you got her any presents?
Puri : (Slightly frowns)
Not yet. What should I get her?
Jane : Oh, she has a registry.
Puri : What's that?
Jane : Registry is where you can list the things that you want for your special day. It can be wedding day, birthday, or baby shower where your guests will purchase them for you. So as a guest you don't have to think hard to figure out what gift to get. It's very convenient.
Puri : (Widening his eyes)
Oooh, there is such a thing? So you can list anything that you want and your guests will buy them for you?
Jane : Yes, pretty much. As long as the gift is reasonable. I mean it's not like you want a Ferrari, right? As long as you don't ask Ferrari.
Puri : Wow, that's nice. So where can I see the registry?
Jane : It's on the bottom part of the invitation. Look it up.
Puri : OK, OK, I'll look.

(Immediately turned his gaze to the laptop, seriously)

Oo, begini bentuknya registry. Daftar barang-barang yang dia butuhkan. Nggak perlu nanya-nanya mau kado apa? Nggak perlu mikir susah-susah, ya kan? Sip nih.

(Oo, this is what a registry looks like. A list of the things he needs. You don't have to ask yourself what to do? You don't have to think about it, do you? Okay)

The data shows the difference in Indonesian and American cultural values and customs in the social context of baby shower events. Puri, who had never known the concept of registry, showed confusion but was also interested when she found out that the mother-to-be could write down a list of desired items, so the guests only had to choose a gift from the list she made. Culture shocks can be seen from Puri's expressions and questions, which show the incompatibility of the expectations of the original culture where the giving of gifts is spontaneous according to personal considerations or discussions with the closest people and the existence of a wish list system will be considered less polite, which is contrary to the custom in the new culture.

According to Samovar et al. (2010:490), this difference shows the importance of understanding social norms and cultural

expectations in daily interactions so that a sense of respect and tolerance for cultural differences arises to gain a cultural ethical perspective. Meanwhile, according to Hofstede (2001:209), the above events show the difference in values in the culture of individualism and collectivism. The registry system reflects the values of individualism and efficiency in American culture, that each individual is free to determine her needs without making guests guesswork. This value allows a person to express preferences directly compared to the culture of collectivism in Indonesia because the urge to voice interests directly will feel unpleasant (cause hesitation) so that it prioritizes indirect politeness and social considerations (Sasmi et al., 2024).

Furthermore, according to the initial phase of resolution in a cultural concussion (Samovar et al., 2010:478), Puri is able to adjust or adapt through her openness at the end of the conversation which means she is able to understand and accept new values because the success rate in overcoming the concussion depends on the individual's effort and earnestness (Wahyutama & Maulani, 2022). This shows that cultural concussions can be viewed positively and are able to make it a more productive process of cultural adjustment as an adaptation strategy, for example by trying to learn the host culture (Samovar et al., 2010:482).

Data 3: First Time Office Work in America

Puri : Excuse me, Miss Jane.

Jane : I keep asking you to call me Jane.

Puri : (Smile) I meant Jane. I'm sorry, I'm not used to the flat hierarchy.

Jane : What's up?

Puri : So, I just want to tell you that I will have my doctor appointment tomorrow from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Jane : OK. And why are you telling me this?

Puri : Eeeem, I'm asking for your permission to go to my doctor appointment.

Jane : My permission? Why do you need my permission to go to a doctor?

Puri : (Smirks) I don't want to be rude and I don't want to think that I'm slacking.

Jane : I trust that you are able to complete the task you are responsible for. So go ahead, go to the doctor, do what you need to do. You don't need to ask my permission.

Puri : Yes. Of course I will do my job well. (Thinking) That's very nice. Thanks.

Jane : (Nodding)

Puri : (Surprised expression as he passes) *Nggak perlu izin.* (No permission is needed)

This data describes the confluence of two different cultural systems in the context of the work environment. The greeting of "Miss Jane" to superiors that in Indonesian culture reflects politeness and respect for hierarchy does not apply in America, where Jane asserts that she is more comfortable being called her direct first name "Jane" which according to Hofstede (2001:79), the principle of low power distance in American culture as a form of closeness, equality, and trust in professional relationships. Meanwhile, in the principle of high power distance in Indonesian culture, formal greetings such as "Miss (*Nona* or *Mbak*)" or "Mrs. (*Ibu* or *Bu*)" are part of the norm of politeness and respect for the position of superiors. Meanwhile, Puri's intention to ask for permission from the doctor actually made Jane surprised and felt that she didn't need to be formally informed, because Puri had been trusted to complete her task well. The cultural values and customs of Puri origin that consider the importance of obtaining the approval of the employer explicitly as a form of responsibility and loyalty cause a culture shock in the form of differences in work values and organizational structure, which in America are more informal and prioritize the quality of work over formalities (Pirade et al., 2020). According to Samovar et al. (2010:50), all behaviors that occur within the cultural scope make a unique personality that can be different, for example social and cultural norms in how to greet, speak, and show respect to superiors. When individuals encounter cultural values that are not aligned with their original values, they can experience confusion as a form of cultural concussion as shown by Puri's expressions and attitudes. Although initially surprised, in the end Puri received the new information with a positive attitude. This attitude shows that although he experienced a phase of disappointment or a period of crisis of cultural convulsions characterized by confusion and astonishment (Samovar et al., 2010:477), Puri began to understand and adapt to the norms of communication and work structures in the new culture that tended to be flat and independent.

Data 4: First Time Eating With Americans

Puri : So do you want to order a few things and then share?

Jane : (Widening eyes) Share?

Puri : Yes.

Jane : Umm... I've never done that before.

Puri : (Surprised) You never share your food?

Jane : (Confused) I mean, I would share. But usually, you know my food is my food, your food is your food.

Puri : So how about we order some chickens, some salads, some noodles or rice and then we can share them?

Jane : No, it's OK. I think I just order my own food. I'm very particular about my food.

Puri : Yes, OK, OK. (Switch to waiter) I would like to order a steak, a big one. Medium well. Just for myself.

Jane : (Nods and moves eyes)

The above conversation shows the incompatibility of cultural values between Puri and Jane in the habit of eating together, especially

regarding the sharing of food. For Puri, dividing food is a natural thing and even has a positive value to show familiarity, togetherness, and care in accordance with the collective cultural values that are commonly applied in Indonesia to build social relationships which are considered very important as an indicator of happiness (Himawan, 2024). Instead, Jane's expression was confused and shocked when asked to share food because she felt more comfortable ordering her own food, which shows that American culture tends to be individualistic where food is seen as personal property and it is not common to share food except in a family context. This difference is related to the cultural dimension of individualism that emphasizes privacy, boundaries and personal choices, including food matters, as opposed to collectivism that encourages the practice of togetherness and sharing as an expression of social relations (Hofstede, 2001:209).

The culture shock in this interaction can be seen from Puri's shocked and awkward reaction when she realizes that the invitation to share food makes Jane feel uncomfortable, which shows the incompatibility of cultural expectations in the stage of disappointment (Samovar et al., 2010:477), that is, differences in social norms can be a source of misunderstanding. However, Puri soon adapted to ordering her own food which illustrates her ability to apply adaptation strategies in cross-cultural communication to form cultural awareness (Samovar et al., 2010:482).

To further illustrate the broader experience of culture shock beyond Puri and Jane's interactions, one additional data is included below. This fifth data involves Puri's encounter with an American cashier and still reflects cultural differences in everyday social interaction.

Data 5: Cashier in America

Cashier : Hi, how you doing?

Puri : (Smiles, putting groceries on the cashier desk) Hello.

Cashier : Did you find everything OK?

Puri : Yes.

Cashier : (Looking at Puri while calculating) Wow, I love your purse.

Puri : Thanks.

Cashier : (Continuing counting) My daughter has a pink one. Her father got her at 18th birthday. She wears it all the time.

Puri : (Nodding, surprised expression)

Cashier : Cute purse. It's \$30.50. Have a great day!

Puri : (Accepting groceries) (*Kenapa dia ngajak ngobrol ya?*) (Why is she making small talk?) (Smiles and looks at the cashier, then leaves)

The data above illustrates the interaction between Puri and a cashier of a store in America. This experience looked confusing for Puri, namely the cashier who was supposed to only process transactions was very friendly by asking how he was doing, giving compliments, and even spontaneously sharing stories from his personal life. In Puri's inner thought, there was finally a signal of a culture shock in the context of public communication which was marked by his astonished reaction and the question in his heart "*Kenapa dia ngajak ngobrol ya? (Why is she making small talk?)*".

Interactions in the context of customer service in America embrace a friendly, open, and informal style of communication as part of cultural norms that reflect the values of individualism and openness in social interactions and follow the American business model of putting customer service first in a friendly and enthusiastic manner (Samovar dkk., 2010:476). Individualist societies tend to be loose in terms of bonds between individuals and are more concerned about privacy or their own affairs (Hofstede, 2001:225) but that does not mean they are unfriendly, which is shown by "small talk". This is contrary to communication in public spaces in Indonesian culture such as in stores which is only necessary without asking how to say hello or commenting personally to customers which is not usual because it is considered too familiar, especially for strangers.

Puri's surprised reaction that was still accompanied by a smile showed that she experienced cultural disorientation (Samovar et al., 2010:476) but did not cause problems because Puri chose to continue interacting even though she did not understand the intention of the cashier's attitude. In this interaction, it is reflected in the importance of understanding the differences in social expectations and communication norms in addition to accepting norms, values, habits, beliefs, behavior patterns, and ways of life of people from different cultures as a benchmark for the success of self-adjustment in the process of cross-cultural communication (Safitri et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study shows the representation of culture shock in the interaction demonstrated by the characters of Puri, Jane and an additional character (the American cashier) on the Instagram account @prettyPuri17 as an illustration of the dynamics of cross-cultural communication between Indonesian and American cultures. An analysis of the five selected video reels found that culture shocks arise in various aspects of daily life, including habits regarding menus and sharing food, giving gifts, professional work relationships, and interactions in public spaces. The situations seen in the video show the difference in cultural values and norms, especially in the dimensions of individualism versus collectivism, power distance, and direct and indirect communication styles.

The results of this study show that cultural concussions are not always negative, but can also be the starting point for a productive adaptation process, including finding out more about the cultural values encountered. In the video, Puri's character shows various kinds of responses that can be seen from his expressions and inner voices, ranging from surprise, confusion, to finally accepting and

adjusting to the new culture. In the study of cross-cultural communication, this is in line with the view of Samovar et al. that adding insight into social norms and cultural expectations is very important to minimize misunderstandings about foreign cultures. In line with this, Hofstede also emphasized that cultural understandings such as individualism, collectivism, and power distance also shape the way individuals communicate and respond to their social environment, so that if these values are not understood contextually, it will trigger confusion or culture shock. Therefore, the content in @prettyPuri17 Instagram account is not only a means of self-expression for its manager, especially in her experience of experiencing culture shocks in foreign countries, but also as a lighthearted and humorous educational medium that offers insights into the dynamics of cross-cultural communication in a way that is easily accessible and understandable to the wider public, especially today's generation who are increasingly familiar with digital media.

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