

Close Up 1 – Culture Shock

Transcript

Hello everyone. This is Maura with the Close Up podcast at Culips, C-U-L-I-P-S.com. In this episode we are going to look at a conversation involving two friends talking about a trip.

This episode makes me think of my own experiences traveling and my own experiences with culture shock. It's not fun, but it's exciting and interesting.

Let's listen to Jen and Chris talk about the trip now.

Jen: You just got back from a trip, **didn't you?**

Chris: Yeah, I was gone for two weeks and I got back yesterday at **the crack of dawn**. It was so much fun. **The time flew by.**

Jen: Where did you go?

Chris: I was in Tokyo visiting a friend. She's living over there and teaching English to kids at a private school.

Jen: Really? That's an incredible experience. I have always wanted to travel to Asia. But I haven't had the opportunity yet.

Chris: Yeah. I am thinking about teaching English in another country too. My friend **is having the time of her life**. She doesn't even know when she'll leave.

Jen: But tell me about your trip. Did you experience any **culture shock**?

Chris: Well, once I **stumbled upon** this little restaurant and I was all alone. I decided to go in but I had difficulty ordering because everything was in Japanese. I felt embarrassed, so I just decided to choose something. But when the meal arrived I didn't know what it was or how to eat it.

Jen: Wow. So what did you do?

Chris: I tried to eat a bit of everything. Then I quickly paid and left.

Jen: Did you have any other trouble?

Chris: The train system there was **kind of** confusing too. Luckily my friend was there to **show me the ropes**.

Jen: It sounds like so much fun. I've got to start planning something soon.

Let's look at their conversation in more detail.

Jen starts:

Jen: You just got back from a trip, **didn't you**?

Here she makes a positive sentence and then puts a negative question at the end. This is called a tag question. We use this when we check for information. Jen thinks that Chris when on a trip. She is not 100% sure so she uses a tag question to check if she is correct.

I will give you another example. My friend heard that it was my birthday recently. So she said to me, "It was your birthday a few days ago, wasn't it"?

Or, I have a friend who I think knows a lot about computers but I am not completely sure. I need help with my computer. So I ask my friend, "You know a lot about computers don't you"?

In these examples I used a positive sentence, followed by a negative question.

If you would like more information on tag questions please visit our website and go to Lipservice.

Next Chris says:

Chris: Yeah, I was gone for two weeks and I got back yesterday at **the crack of dawn**. It was so much fun. **The time flew by**.

Here he uses two idiomatic expressions. The first one **at the crack of dawn** means very early in the morning. **Dawn** is the time of day when the sun rises or comes up in the sky. Chris got back very early yesterday.

You can use this expression to talk about anything you did from an early time in the day.

Like, “I have been doing homework since **the crack of dawn**.” Or “She woke up **at the crack of dawn**.” I didn’t wake up **at the crack of dawn**. I prefer to sleep late.

Chris also says that **the time flew by**. This means that time passed very quickly. The whole expression is ‘**Time flies when you are having fun**.’ So if **time flies**, it means you are having a good time.

The other week I went to a party and when I checked my watch it surprised me that it was already midnight. I said, “You know, time flies.”

Then Jen continues:

Jen: Where did you go?

Chris: I was in Tokyo visiting a friend. She’s living over there and teaching English to kids at a private school.

Jen: Really? That’s an incredible experience. I have always wanted to travel to Asia. But I haven’t had the opportunity yet.

Chris: Yeah. I am thinking about teaching English in another country too. My friend **is having the time of her life**. She doesn’t even know when she’ll leave.

Here is another expression for you.

The experience of teaching English in another country is one of the best times in Chris’s friend’s life. **To have the time of your life** means it is a really good time, maybe even the best time you have ever had. I know teaching in Japan was one of the best times in my life.

Let’s move on then. Jen changes the subject:

Jen: But tell me about your trip. Did you experience any **culture shock**?

Culture shock? I mentioned that at the beginning of this episode.

Jen wants to know if he had any confusing or uncomfortable experiences in Japanese culture. Chris experienced **culture shock** when he ordered food that he wasn't comfortable eating. **Culture shock** usually occurs when you are participating in something special to that culture. I had **culture shock** when I was at a green tea ceremony in Japan and I didn't know how to act!

Chris answers the question about **culture shock** by sharing his story:

Chris: Well, once I **stumbled upon** this little restaurant and I was all alone. I decided to go in but I had difficulty ordering because everything was in Japanese. I felt embarrassed, so I just decided to choose something. But when the meal arrived I didn't know what it was or how to eat it.

Chris starts his story by saying:

Chris: Well, once I **stumbled upon** this little restaurant.

To stumble upon means to find by accident. He was probably walking around Tokyo and saw this restaurant by chance. **To stumble**, by itself, actually means to fall or trip on something. I was walking and I **stumbled** means that you made a mistake with your feet, but **to stumble upon** is to find by accident.

I would also say that sometimes when I am surfing the internet I **stumble upon** other interesting sites that I was not planning on visiting.

Then Jen asks:

Jen: Wow. So what did you do?

Chris: I tried to eat a bit of everything. Then I quickly paid and left.

Jen: Did you have any other trouble?

Chris: The train system there was **kind of** confusing too. Luckily my friend was there to **show me the ropes**.

The first thing Chris says is: "The train system there was **kind of** confusing too." **Kind of** or 'sort of' generally means a little bit. Using **kind of** weakens the sentence or makes it

less strong. Sometimes we want to make our sentences less direct and we use **kind of** to do this.

It is definitely slang so it should not be written in formal English. It is used in speech and often pronounced like **kinda**.

Someone might also say, “I **kinda** like Mark.” This person might like Mark a lot but they are being less direct by using **kind of**. They might even be romantically interested in Mark.

In all of these examples the meaning generally stays the same. If you remove **kind of** from the sentence, it is still understood in the same way. “I like Mark” or “The train system was confusing.”

Then he says:

Chris: Luckily my friend was there to **show me the ropes**.

Another real idiom for you. **To show someone the ropes** means to explain to someone how to do something or to show someone how things work. In this case Chris’s friend explained the train system to him.

For example, some new people started working with me recently and they didn’t know how everything worked. So I explained some of the procedures to them. I could say, I **showed them the ropes**.

Jen then ends the conversation by commenting:

Jen: It sounds like so much fun. I’ve got to start planning something soon.

I would really like to plan a trip soon too.

Let’s listen again to the conversation between Jen and Chris.

Jen: You just got back from a trip, **didn't you?**

Chris: Yeah, I was gone for two weeks and I got back yesterday at **the crack of dawn**. It was so much fun. **The time flew by.**

Jen: Where did you go?

Chris: I was in Tokyo visiting a friend. She's living over there and teaching English to kids at a private school.

Jen: Really? That's an incredible experience. I have always wanted to travel to Asia. But I haven't had the opportunity yet.

Chris: Yeah. I am thinking about teaching English in another country too. My friend **is having the time of her life**. She doesn't even know when she'll leave.

Jen: But tell me about your trip. Did you experience any **culture shock?**

Chris: Well, once I **stumbled upon** this little restaurant and I was all alone. I decided to go in but I had difficulty ordering because everything was in Japanese. I felt embarrassed, so I just decided to choose something. But when the meal arrived I didn't know what it was or how to eat it.

Jen: Wow. So what did you do?

Chris: I tried to eat a bit of everything. Then I quickly paid and left.

Jen: Did you have any other trouble?

Chris: The train system there was **kind of** confusing too. Luckily my friend was there to **show me the ropes**.

Jen: It sounds like so much fun. I've got to start planning something soon.

And now that this episode is finished, I can go day dream about it.

Don't forget to visit our website, culips.com, for any further explanations or transcripts, and to quiz yourself to see how much you learned today. If you have any questions you can always email us at questions@culips.com

I hope you learned something today. This is Maura at Culips and I'll talk to you again soon. Bye!

Detailed Explanations

Tag questions

Tag questions are questions at the end, following a sentence. The sentence can be positive or negative.

If the sentence is positive, the question is negative.

If the sentence is negative, the question is positive.

Two basic examples:

“It is a nice day, isn’t it?”

“It isn’t a nice day, is it?”

In both cases the speaker believes the first part, the sentence, but is checking by asking a question. Sometimes **tag questions** are used when the speaker is just looking for agreement.

“It is such a nice present, isn’t it?”

In the above example, the speaker is just looking for agreement that the present is indeed nice.

The verb in the sentence part of a **tag question** must always match the verb in the question. Here are some more examples.

“He wasn’t there, was he?”

“The weather has been so nice lately, hasn’t it?”

“The team should do their work, shouldn’t they?”

A special example:

“Let’s meet, shall we?”

‘Let’s’ is followed by ‘shall we’ in the **tag question**.

The crack of dawn

Crack is like the word 'break'. It can be a noun and a verb and a sound. It means to break something apart and completely separate it.

You can **crack** an egg open. Sometimes in glass if it is heated or cooled very quickly it will **crack**, and a **crack** will appear. A tree branch can **crack** if something heavy is put on it. The sound that makes it also referred to as **crack**.

That is the most literal meaning of **crack**. It is used in lots of other ways too. Have a **crack** (meaning 'try') at them yourself:

Crack

To crack (under pressure) can mean to surrender to something or someone.
Example: They pressured him until he cracked.

To crack up means to laugh suddenly.
Example: I told a joke and she **cracked up**.

To crack down means to get serious about something.
Example: They really **cracked down** on violence in prisons.

*there are lots more examples

Dawn

Dawn, like I said in the podcast is the very beginning of the morning when the sun comes up. The opposite of **dawn** is dusk, when the sun does go down.

Dawn can also refer to the start of something. As it is the start of a day, you can see the connection.

Dawn can also be a girl's first name.

To dawn on someone means that the person fully understands something, usually after not understanding it.
Example: After hours of work, it **dawned on** them that they had been working on the wrong part.

The time flew by

“Time flies when you are having fun.”

(this is the whole basic expression)

Flew is the past of the verb ‘**to fly**’. We can use this expression with all kinds of verb tenses. We can use the past participle in the present perfect verb tense: flown. That looks like this: **Time has flown by**.

To fly

Fly is traveling and moving in the sky. Birds fly. Airplanes fly.

When ‘**to fly**’ is used as part of an expression, it usually had the meaning of fast. For example: “You got here so fast. Did you **fly**?”

In the example it is not a serious question about **flying**. The speaker is implying that the person must have flown here because they came so fast.

Culture Shock

If you have traveled to a foreign country you are probably already familiar with the term **culture shock**. It is an uncomfortable feeling when you are in a culture different from your own.

There are great explanations and lists of symptoms and advice for **culture shock** if you do a simple internet search.

Stumble

So **to stumble** is to make a mistake while walking; your feet do not step correctly. We can also use the word **stumble** to simply mean to make a mistake. Like, “she is having trouble but **stumbling** through it.” This means she is making errors as she proceeds.

Kind of

We use **kind of** a lot. I just wanted to repeat that because we use it so much.

Remember, we don’t use it written except very casually. And when spoken we pronounce it like **kinda**. We also say **sorta**. It means the same thing.

To show someone the ropes

This expression may have come from sailing terms. When you **show someone** how to use **the ropes** on a sailboat, you show them how to sail and how the boat works.

So **show someone the ropes** means to show someone how something works.

Gerund

This is a strange part of English grammar. We didn't mention this in the podcast because we didn't want to bore you with grammar. It is important to note though, so I included it here for you.

We have some verbs that are followed by a **gerund**, 'ing'. The real definition of a **gerund** is "a noun acting as a verb." Don't worry too much about that. Just try to familiarize yourself with the list of verbs that take gerunds.

Here are the examples in this episode:

Chris: I am **thinking about teaching** English in another country too.

Chris: . I decided to go in but I had **difficulty ordering** because everything was in Japanese.

So after the verbs 'to think' and 'to have difficulty' we always use the 'ing' form of the verb (the gerund).

One common example of a verb that takes a **gerund** is the verb '**to finish**'. You must say "I have **finished** eating." "She **finished** studying." '**To finish**' is a pretty common verb and it always takes a **gerund**. Some of the more popular ones you may already know without knowing about the **gerund**.

If a verb is not followed by a **gerund**, then it is followed by an **infinitive** ('to' with the verb, like 'to speak')

A super common example of a verb that takes an **infinitive** is with the verb '**to want**'. I am sure everyone knows this one.

"I **want** to see you."

"They **want** to see a movie."

It is obvious we **cannot** say "They **want** seeing a movie."

It just isn't right. It doesn't sound right. **Gerunds** are mostly about developing 'an ear for the language' or your listening skills.

Then there are some verbs that can take a **gerund** or an infinitive.

"He loves playing games." "He loves to play games."
Both are totally fine to use.

Below is short list of verbs that take **gerunds** or **infinitives** or both.

Verbs that take a gerund	Verbs that take an infinitive	Verbs that take a gerund or infinitive
to finish	to want	to love
to stop	to need	to like
to enjoy	to manage	to hate
to quit	to ask	can't stand
to understand	to expect	

This full list is a lot longer!

Quiz (see the answers at the bottom of this lipservice)

1. Who was Chris visiting?

- a) his sister
- b) a colleague
- c) a cousin
- d) a friend

2. When will Chris's friend leave Japan?

- a) soon
- b) in two weeks
- c) in two months
- d) she doesn't say

3. Why hasn't Jen traveled yet?

- a) She doesn't have enough money
- b) She hasn't had the opportunity
- c) She doesn't have the time
- d) She doesn't like Asia

4. Which country was Chris visiting?
 - a) Tokyo
 - b) Japan
 - c) China
 - d) Thailand
5. Did Chris experience any culture shock?
 - a) yes
 - b) no
 - c) we don't know
6. How did Chris find the little restaurant?
 - a) in a guide book
 - b) her friend told her about it
 - c) she found it by chance
 - d) it was a famous restaurant
7. What happened after Chris ordered the food?
 - a) He left before it came
 - b) He ate a little bit
 - c) He ate everything
 - d) He couldn't eat it
8. How did Chris find the train system?
 - a) a little bit confusing
 - b) completely confusing
 - c) easy
 - d) very difficult
9. What did a friend help Chris with?
 - a) the ropes
 - b) the ship
 - c) the train
 - d) sushi
10. When does Jen think he should plan a trip?
 - a) Far into the future
 - b) Soon
 - c) He doesn't know
 - d) He doesn't say

Answers for the Quiz

1-d 2-d 3-b 4-b 5-a 6-c 7-b 8-a 9-c 10-b