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Research Article

Culture Shock Experienced by the Main Character in the Picture Book The Way We Do It in Japan

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Abstract. Culture shock is a phenomenon that can be experienced by anyone, including children, when interacting with a different culture. This phenomenon is represented in the picture book The Way We Do It in Japan by Geneva Cobb Iijima and Paige Billin-Frye through the main character, Gregory, an Asian-American child who moves from America to Japan and encounters cultural differences in daily life. This study aims to analyze how cultural differences between Japan and America are represented, how the stages of culture shock are experienced by Gregory, and how these impact his emotional and character development. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method with a literary analysis approach based on both text and illustrations. The analysis is grounded in Oberg's (1960) theory of culture shock and Pedersen's (1995) stages of culture shock, which include the honeymoon, disintegration, reintegration, and autonomy stages. The results show that differences in language, social norms, habits, and school rules serve as the main triggers of Gregory's culture shock. His experience develops dynamically from positive responses to emotional pressure and eventually to a more stable acceptance. The impact is reflected in Gregory's emotional changes and character development, as he becomes more open, adaptive, and capable of understanding cultural differences objectively. Thus, culture shock is not merely an obstacle but also a learning process that contributes to the formation of the character's identity.

Keywords: Character Development; Cultural Differences; Culture Shock; Multicultural Literature; Picture Book

1. Introduction

Multicultural literature is a form of literary work that represents cultural diversity and individual experiences in dealing with social and cultural differences. According to Cai (2002), multicultural literature can be defined based on both its intrinsic literary characteristics and its pedagogical purposes in education. From a literary perspective, multicultural works refer to texts that explicitly depict multicultural societies or implicitly introduce readers from different cultural backgrounds to specific cultural dynamics. Thus, multicultural literature functions not only as a representation of culture but also as a means of understanding intercultural interactions. In the context of globalization, cross-cultural mobility has significantly increased, making culture shock a common experience not only for adults but also for children. This phenomenon arises when individuals are confronted with value systems, habits, and social norms that differ from those of their original culture, thereby triggering a process of adaptation to a new cultural environment.

Culture shock is a psychological condition experienced by individuals when encountering a new cultural environment. This concept was first introduced by Oberg (1960) as a reaction of anxiety caused by the loss of familiar social cues. Pedersen (1995) proposed that culture shock consists of five stages: honeymoon, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy, and interdependence. These stages indicate that cross-cultural experiences are dynamic and involve gradual emotional and cognitive changes. Differences in values, habits, language, and

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social systems are key factors that trigger culture shock, which may lead to anxiety, confusion, and changes in attitudes and perspectives. In literary contexts, culture shock is often represented through works depicting cross-cultural journeys, where the main character engages intensively with a foreign culture. This experience not only generates internal conflict but also shapes character development throughout the narrative.

This experience is represented in the picture book The Way We Do It in Japan by Geneva Cobb Iijima and Paige Billin-Frye through Gregory, an Asian-American child who moves from the United States to Japan. This relocation places him in a significantly different cultural environment in terms of language, daily habits, and social values. Gregory is raised in American culture but comes from a mixed Japanese–American family, making his position unique when facing Japanese culture, which he has not directly experienced before.

The uniqueness of this picture book lies in its use of both text and illustrations to construct meaning. According to Slamet (2013), a picture book combines text and images that complement each other to form a cohesive narrative. Therefore, meaning is conveyed not only through narration but also through visuals that strengthen emotional expression and social situations. Consequently, analyzing this picture book requires considering the relationship between verbal and visual elements as a unified whole in representing cultural experiences.

The study of culture shock in this picture book is important because it portrays a child's direct experience in dealing with cultural differences. Gregory undergoes complex stages of culture shock, from enthusiasm toward a new culture to confusion and adaptation. His interaction with an unfamiliar cultural environment creates an interesting psychological dynamic that reflects the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Previous research by Wulandari (2024) analyzed culture shock stages in the *Yoon* series, focusing on a Korean child adapting to America. However, it did not explore the reverse migration (from America to Asia) nor how Asian cultural contexts influence children's adaptation. Therefore, this study offers a different perspective by examining culture shock in the context of moving from America to Japan.

Additionally, Gregory's characterization plays a central role in representing a child's experience of culture shock. He is depicted as an Asian American child from a mixed Japanese–American family, with a Japanese father and a white American mother from Kansas. Although he initially feels surprised by the contrast between American and Japanese cultures, he is portrayed as curious and willing to try new things. This internal dynamic reflects a complex adaptation process, from initial shock to gradual adjustment. Hall (1997) argues that cultural differences often create identity tension, encouraging individuals to adapt while maintaining their uniqueness.

The setting also plays a significant role in representing cultural differences. Gregory's move from America to Japan highlights contrasts between American culture, which tends to be individualistic, informal, and freedom-oriented, and Japanese culture, which emphasizes harmony, politeness, and social hierarchy (Benedict, 1946; Kelley, 2008; Khusnah et al., 2024; Kohls, 1985). These differences are conveyed not only through narrative text but also through illustrations that visually depict Japanese social and cultural environments. As Damono (2019) states, setting in literature functions not only as a physical backdrop but also as a means of representing characters' internal changes when facing new realities.

Based on this background, the research questions focus on three main aspects: how cultural differences between Japan and America are represented in the picture book; what stages of culture shock are experienced by Gregory; and how culture shock affects Gregory's character development. This study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of children's culture shock experiences through a literary approach that includes both text and illustrations. Theoretically, this research contributes to children's literature studies, particularly in understanding multicultural representation. Practically, it provides insights into culture shock as a real-life phenomenon and helps readers, especially children, understand and navigate cultural adaptation. Thus, The Way We Do It in Japan functions as a cultural mediator that introduces diversity and promotes intercultural understanding from an early age.

2. Literature Review

According to Koentjaraningrat (1985), culture is the entire system of ideas, actions, and human creations in social life that are learned and shared (p. 180). Furthermore, culture functions as a guideline for individuals in their behavior, enabling members of a society to act in accordance with the values and norms of their group. In the context of cultural relocation, individuals are required to understand and adapt to new cultural values. This is reflected in

the picture book The Way We Do It in Japan, where the main character, Gregory, experiences a transition from America to Japan. Gregory carries American cultural values that emphasize individualism, freedom, equality, and informality (Khusnah et al., 2024). In contrast, he encounters Japanese culture, which emphasizes harmony, collectivism, politeness, and social hierarchy (Benedict, 1946; Kelley, 2014). These differences create a significant contrast between Gregory's original culture and the new culture he faces.

Such cultural differences often trigger culture shock, defined as a condition of psychological anxiety experienced when individuals encounter a culture different from their own. The term was first introduced by Oberg (1960), who defined culture shock as anxiety resulting from the loss of familiar social signs and symbols in everyday interactions. This condition is typically marked by confusion, anxiety, and discomfort when individuals must adjust to new values, norms, and habits. In this context, culture shock is not limited to adults but can also be experienced by children, especially in situations involving significant cultural transitions.

To understand the process of culture shock more comprehensively, Pedersen (1995) proposes five stages: honeymoon, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy, and interdependence. These stages show that culture shock is a dynamic process that begins with positive responses, develops into emotional challenges, and gradually leads to more stable adaptation. The honeymoon stage is characterized by curiosity and excitement toward the new culture, where differences are perceived as interesting and positive, and individuals still interpret the new culture through the perspective of their home culture while feeling enthusiastic and eager to explore. The disintegration stage occurs when initial excitement fades and individuals begin to experience cultural stress, marked by confusion, anxiety, loneliness, and a decline in self-confidence as they struggle to adjust to unfamiliar cultural demands. The reintegration stage is when individuals begin to respond more actively to cultural differences, sometimes showing frustration or negative judgments toward the host culture; however, this stage also marks the beginning of recovery as individuals gradually re-engage with their environment. The autonomy stage reflects greater emotional stability and the ability to understand cultural differences more objectively, as individuals become more confident, tolerant, and capable of functioning effectively in the new cultural setting. Finally, the interdependence stage represents the integration of both original and host cultures into a balanced identity, where individuals can interact effectively across cultures and no longer perceive differences as sources of stress (Pedersen, 1995).

The impact of culture shock can be both positive and negative. In the early stages, individuals often show enthusiasm and curiosity, which contribute to openness toward new experiences. However, in later stages, individuals may experience anxiety, alienation, and decreased self-confidence due to difficulties in adapting (Pedersen, 1995). As the adjustment process continues, individuals gradually develop adaptive abilities, improve social skills, and gain a more objective understanding of cultural differences. Therefore, culture shock is not only a challenge but also an important part of learning and identity development.

In literary studies, culture shock is often represented in children's literature, particularly in picture books. Slamet (2013) defines a picture book as a book that combines written text and illustrations to construct a strong narrative. The interaction between text and illustrations allows readers to understand characters' experiences more concretely, including emotions, conflicts, and responses to new environments. Through this combination, picture books function not only as entertainment but also as educational tools that help children understand cultural values more easily, especially with the role of adults as mediators in the reading process (Slamet, 2013).

Furthermore, picture books can be categorized as part of multicultural literature, which represents cultural diversity and individual experiences in dealing with social and cultural differences (Cai, 2002). Multicultural literature serves not only as cultural representation but also as a means of fostering understanding and tolerance toward diversity. In this context, works such as The Way We Do It in Japan present characters who interact with new cultures, offering insight into cultural adaptation and identity formation within multicultural settings.

Based on this theoretical framework, this study analyzes how culture shock is represented in the picture book The Way We Do It in Japan through the main character's experience in encountering cultural differences between Japan and America. The analysis focuses on the stages of culture shock and their impact on character development.

3. Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with a literary analysis approach to identify representations of culture shock in the picture book The Way We Do It in Japan. A qualitative approach is used to understand the meaning of cultural experiences represented through both text and illustrations (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The data consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary data include narrative text, dialogue, and illustrations from the picture book. Secondary data consist of books, journals, articles, and previous studies relevant to the research topic. Data collection techniques involve a literature review and in-depth textual analysis. The researcher identifies and collects narrative passages, dialogues, and illustrations that depict cultural differences and culture shock experiences. Data analysis is conducted using close reading to interpret meanings within the text and illustrations (Braun, 2022). The analysis begins by identifying cultural differences between Japan and America as the main context. The data are then classified according to Pedersen's (1995) stages of culture shock: honeymoon, disintegration, reintegration, and autonomy. Finally, the analysis interprets the impact of culture shock on the character's emotional and cognitive development.

4. Results and Discussion

Representation of Cultural Differences Between Japan and America

The representation of culture shock in the picture book The Way We Do It in Japan cannot be separated from the cultural differences between Japan and America, which form the primary background of the main character's experience. These differences are reflected in various aspects of daily life, including language, social norms, habits, and school rules, all of which function as triggers for the emergence of culture shock.

In terms of language, Gregory experiences confusion when he first hears Japanese expressions that he does not understand. This is evident in the dialogue: "Ohayoo gozaimasu," said the stewardess. "What did she say?" asked Gregory. "She said 'Good morning,'" replied Dad. "Ohayoo gozaimasu," Gregory called after her (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 4). This dialogue demonstrates that differences in language systems become an initial barrier in cross-cultural communication, as Gregory lacks understanding of the expression until it is explained by his father.

Furthermore, the use of terms such as sensei in the school context, as seen in the dialogue, "Your teacher, Inoue-sensei, speaks English. You will do fine" (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 18), indicates that language also represents politeness and social hierarchy in Japanese culture. Unlike American culture, which tends to be more informal, the use of titles in Japanese culture signals hierarchical social relationships. This aligns with Benedict's (1946) argument that Japanese social behavior is influenced by the concepts of on (a sense of obligation) and giri (the moral duty to repay it), which shape politeness and social structure in everyday interactions.

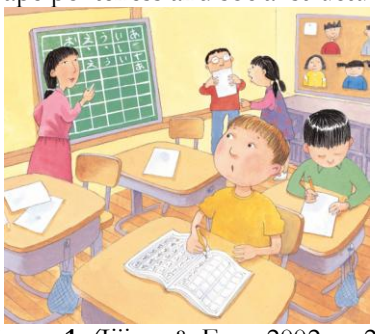

Figure 1. (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 20)

The representation of linguistic differences is further reinforced through illustrations, such as in Fig. 1, which depicts Japanese writing on a classroom board. This illustration shows that language differences are not limited to spoken forms but also involve distinct writing systems. Gregory appears confused when confronted with these unfamiliar symbols, as reflected in the narrative: "How would he ever learn to read those funny marks?" (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 20). This situation highlights how differences in writing systems intensify Gregory's sense of unfamiliarity. Japanese uses three writing systems, 'Hiragana,' 'Katakana,' and 'Kanji,' whereas English uses the Latin alphabet (Angelina et al., 2018; Wallace, 2011).

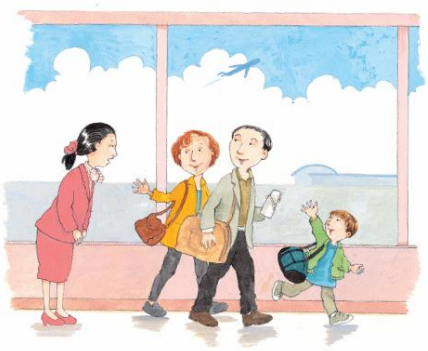

Figure 2. (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 4)

Cultural differences are also evident in social norms and etiquette, particularly in greeting practices. In Fig. 2, a Japanese flight attendant greets passengers by bowing, while Gregory and his mother respond by waving. This contrast illustrates differing forms of politeness between the two cultures. In Japanese culture, bowing represents respect and awareness of social hierarchy, whereas in American culture, greetings tend to be more casual and egalitarian. This difference is consistent with Kohls (1985), who argues that American culture emphasizes practicality and equality in social interaction.

Another cultural difference appears in the custom of removing shoes before entering a house, as shown in the narrative: "The Japanese like to keep their floors very clean," he said. "So you wear your slippers inside the house" (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 9). This practice reflects values of cleanliness and order in Japanese culture. For Gregory, this experience reinforces the understanding that cultural norms are relative and vary across societies.

Figure 3. (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 5)

Differences in daily habits are also reflected in eating practices. In Fig. 3, supported by the narrative "He was glad he knew how to use the chopsticks on his tray. 'This is the way they eat in Japan,' he told the girl across the aisle. She was eating with a fork" (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 5), Gregory becomes aware of differences in eating customs. This awareness deepens when he brings an American-style lunch and feels out of place, concluding, "He had the wrong kind of lunch!" (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 21). This suggests that cultural practices are not merely functional but are also connected to collectivist values and social conformity in Japanese society (Tsunekawa, 2020).

Cultural differences are further evident in the educational system, particularly in school rules emphasizing discipline and unity. This is illustrated in the dialogue:

"The girls all wear red ones, and the boys wear black ones. That's the custom," the clerk told them. "But at your school the students wear blue gym uniforms on days they have gym. And you'll need a red cap, too" (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 16).

This indicates that school uniforms in Japan are standardized, reflecting values of harmony and collectivism, where uniformity minimizes individual differences and promotes group cohesion (Kelley, 2008). In contrast, American culture places greater emphasis on individuality and freedom of expression (Khusnah et al., 2024).

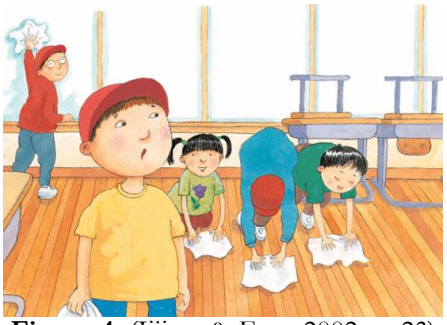

Figure 4. (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 23)

Additionally, the Japanese education system is reflected in students' responsibility for cleaning classrooms, as seen in the narrative: "Other children were sweeping the floor or dusting" (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 23), supported by Fig. 4. This practice represents values of responsibility, discipline, and cooperation instilled from an early age (Widisuseno, 2018). Unlike in American schools, where students are typically not directly involved in such tasks, this experience initially feels unfamiliar to Gregory, but he gradually begins to understand and even enjoy it.

Overall, these cultural differences serve as the primary triggers of Gregory's culture shock, as the values he previously considered normal no longer apply in the new environment. This aligns with Oberg's (1960) concept of culture shock as a condition of confusion and anxiety when individuals encounter unfamiliar cultural systems. Thus, the representation of cultural differences in The Way We Do It in Japan not only highlights contrasts between two cultures but also illustrates how individuals experience, respond to, and gradually understand these differences. In line with Hofstede (2001), understanding cultural differences is essential for achieving adaptation and harmony in multicultural contexts. Gregory's experience demonstrates that cultural differences are not merely obstacles but also opportunities for learning that broaden one's understanding of cultural diversity.

This finding is also consistent with previous research by Wee et al. (2018), who examined children's picture books representing Japanese culture. Their study found that cultural authenticity in picture books is often conveyed through depictions of everyday life rather than explicit discussions of historical or political issues. In line with this, The Way We Do It in Japan presents Japanese culture through the daily experiences of a child in a cross-cultural context. However, while Wee et al. focus on cultural representation, the present study extends this discussion by analyzing how these cultural elements function as triggers of culture shock and influence the character's adaptation process.

Stages of Culture Shock Experienced by Gregory

The culture shock experienced by Gregory in the picture book The Way We Do It in Japan represents the emotional and psychological journey of an individual interacting with a new culture. This process does not occur instantly; rather, it develops gradually through several stages as proposed by Pedersen (1995), namely honeymoon, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy, and interdependence. These stages demonstrate that cultural adaptation is dynamic and involves changes in emotions, responses, and behavior as individuals engage with a new cultural environment.

In the initial stage, Gregory exhibits an enthusiastic response to his move to Japan. This is reflected in his statement, "I want to go, too!" (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 2), as well as his curiosity when encountering the Japanese expression "Ohayoo gozaimasu," which he responds to by asking, "What did she say?" (p. 4). These responses indicate that Gregory perceives Japan as an exciting new experience that has not yet generated psychological pressure. His interest in the language and unfamiliar situations reflects a phase of exploration without significant conflict. This condition corresponds to the honeymoon stage, in which individuals tend to perceive the new culture positively because they have not yet encountered substantial adaptation challenges (Pedersen, 1995).

As his interactions become more frequent and complex, Gregory begins to recognize deeper cultural differences. This is evident when he states, "Everyone is driving on the wrong side of the street!" (p. 7). The phrase "wrong side" suggests that Gregory is still using his original cultural framework as a standard for evaluating the new environment. His confusion continues when he questions the absence of familiar household items, as seen in the dialogues: "But aren't there any chairs in the living room?" (p. 11) and "There are no beds in this apartment" (p. 12). However, after receiving explanations from his father, Gregory maintains a positive response, stating, "That'll be just like camping!" (p. 13) and "I like the way we do it

in Japan" (p. 15). These reactions indicate that although Gregory begins to recognize cultural differences, he does not reject them; instead, he continues to interpret them as interesting new experiences. Therefore, this condition still reflects the honeymoon stage, in which curiosity and positive attitudes remain more dominant than cultural stress (Pedersen, 1995).

Figure 5. (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 21)

Upon entering the school environment, Gregory's experience begins to reflect more complex cultural pressure. This is evident when he questions his social acceptance by asking, "Will the kids like me?" (p. 17). This question signals a shift from curiosity to self-doubt. In addition, his difficulty in reading Japanese writing and his experience with unfamiliar lunch practices contribute to feelings of alienation, as reflected in the narrative describing him as feeling "very alone" (Iijima & Frye, 2002). This situation is further reinforced by the illustration in Fig. 5, which highlights the contrast between Gregory's discomfort and the relaxed attitudes of his classmates.

This condition indicates the emergence of emotional pressure in the form of anxiety, confusion, and isolation resulting from cultural differences. Such experiences correspond to the disintegration stage, a phase in which individuals begin to experience internal conflict and psychological stress when facing a new cultural environment (Pedersen, 1995).

After experiencing this pressure, Gregory begins to demonstrate changes in his interaction with his surroundings. This is evident as he becomes involved in social activities, such as playing with his friend Yuuki and participating in classroom activities.

Figure 6. (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 22)

The illustration in Fig. 6 shows increased physical proximity and more open interaction, indicating greater social engagement. This suggests that Gregory is no longer entirely isolated but is beginning to build relationships within his new environment. This condition reflects the reintegration stage, in which individuals begin to adjust through direct experience and social interaction, although the adaptation process is not yet fully stable (Pedersen, 1995).

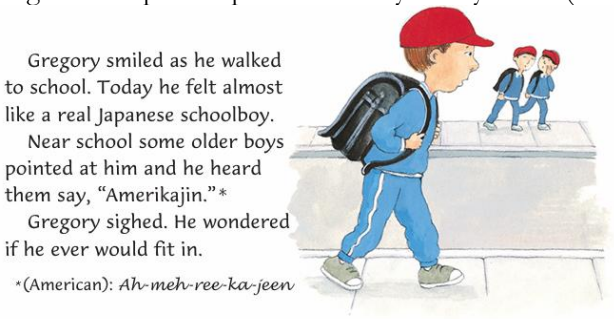

Figure 7. (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 25)

In the subsequent stage, Gregory demonstrates a more stable acceptance of the new culture. This is evident when he begins to understand the school system and continues his daily activities despite being referred to as "Amerikajin," as shown in Figure 7. The illustration depicts Gregory walking to school while other children point at him and identify him as a foreigner. His response, merely sighing, indicates that he is still aware of the differences but no longer reacts with strong emotional distress as he did previously.

Furthermore, his growing awareness of cultural differences is reflected in the dialogue, "But that's the way we do it in Japan," to which his teacher responds, "And this is the way you do it in America" (p. 28). This exchange demonstrates that Gregory begins to understand that cultural differences do not necessarily lead to conflict but can coexist as distinct systems. This condition corresponds to the autonomy stage, in which individuals achieve emotional stability and are able to function effectively within a new cultural environment (Pedersen, 1995).

However, Gregory does not fully reach the interdependence stage. This is evident in the continued dominance of his identity as an American throughout the story, without a balanced integration of both cultures. Although he is able to adapt, he does not fully develop a bicultural identity. Thus, Gregory's experience illustrates that the process of culture shock does not always culminate in full integration but may conclude at a particular stage depending on the individual's experience (Pedersen, 1995).

In a broader context, the representation of culture shock in The Way We Do It in Japan highlights the importance of openness, flexibility, and preparedness in encountering cultural differences from an early age. Gregory's experience demonstrates that engaging with a new culture is not always a smooth process but involves gradual stages of curiosity, confusion, and eventual acceptance. As noted by Kim (2001), individuals who develop cultural flexibility are more likely to achieve effective adaptation in new environments. In this case, Gregory begins to exhibit such flexibility as he not only confronts cultural differences but also attempts to understand and accept Japanese cultural practices as part of his lived experience. Therefore, Gregory's experience illustrates that culture shock is not merely an obstacle but also a learning process that contributes to the development of a more open and inclusive perspective on cultural diversity.

The Impact of Culture Shock on Gregory

The impact of culture shock in The Way We Do It in Japan is reflected not only in Gregory's emotional changes but also in his character development as the main character. His emotional responses illustrate how his identity undergoes gradual transformation through interaction with a new culture. In other words, Gregory's emotions do not merely represent what he feels, but also demonstrate how he learns to understand and adapt to his new environment. According to Pedersen (1995), each stage of culture shock produces different impacts, both positive and negative, depending on how individuals respond to their experiences.

During the honeymoon stage, Gregory's emotional responses are dominated by enthusiasm and curiosity. This is evident in his desire to move to Japan, as expressed in "I want to go, too!" (Iijima & Frye, 2002, p. 2), as well as his attempts to imitate Japanese expressions. This attitude reflects openness to new experiences. The impact at this stage tends to be positive, as Gregory's enthusiasm facilitates his entry into the adaptation process without resistance. Although confusion arises—such as when he encounters differences in traffic systems and living conditions—these do not yet develop into significant emotional stress. This condition aligns with the characteristics of the honeymoon stage, in which cultural differences are still perceived positively (Pedersen, 1995).

As Gregory enters the disintegration stage, he begins to experience more complex and predominantly negative impacts. He develops anxiety related to social acceptance, encounters difficulties in the academic context, and feels different from his peers, particularly during lunchtime situations. These experiences lead to decreased self-confidence, feelings of embarrassment, and a sense of isolation. Cultural differences that were initially perceived as interesting begin to transform into sources of pressure. This condition corresponds to the disintegration stage, which is characterized by cultural stress and negative emotional responses (Pedersen, 1995).

In the reintegration stage, Gregory begins to show more positive responses. His involvement in social interactions, such as playing with Yuuki and participating in classroom activities, indicates improved social skills and a reduced sense of alienation. The impact at this stage is transitional, as negative emotions gradually diminish and are replaced by active efforts to adapt (Pedersen, 1995).

Furthermore, in the autonomy stage, Gregory achieves greater emotional stability and demonstrates stronger adaptive abilities. He no longer responds negatively to cultural differences; instead, he is able to understand them more objectively. This stage reflects increased self-confidence, the ability to function effectively in a new environment, and acceptance of cultural differences (Pedersen, 1995).

However, Gregory does not fully reach the interdependence stage, as his identity as an American remains dominant and is not yet fully integrated with the new cultural context. Consequently, the impact of culture shock in his experience concludes at the stage of adaptive stabilization rather than full cultural integration. Overall, Gregory's emotional and behavioral changes not only illustrate the impact of culture shock but also reflect his character development. His experience progresses from positive responses, to emotional pressure, and ultimately to acceptance, demonstrating that culture shock is not merely a challenge but also an essential part of the process of identity formation.

5. Conclusions

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that The Way We Do It in Japan represents the experience of culture shock through the integration of narrative text, dialogue, and illustrations that depict the main character's interaction with a new cultural environment. The cultural differences between Japan and America, covering aspects such as language, social norms, daily habits, and school rules, serve as the primary triggers for Gregory's culture shock. These differences are not merely presented as background elements but function as central components that shape the storyline and character development.

Furthermore, Gregory's experience of culture shock develops through the stages proposed by Pedersen (1995), namely honeymoon, disintegration, reintegration, and autonomy. In the honeymoon stage, Gregory shows enthusiasm and curiosity toward the new culture. This initial response gradually shifts as he begins to confront cultural differences directly, leading to confusion and emotional pressure. This change becomes more evident in the disintegration stage, where he experiences emotional distress such as anxiety, loneliness, and a decline in self-confidence. Over time, Gregory begins to adjust in the reintegration stage through social interaction and support from his environment, allowing him to gradually rebuild his sense of comfort. This process becomes more stable in the autonomy stage, where he is able to accept cultural differences without negative judgment and function more effectively in the new environment. However, Gregory does not fully reach the interdependence stage, as his original cultural identity remains dominant and he has not completely integrated both cultures into a balanced bicultural identity.

The impact of culture shock is reflected in Gregory's emotional changes as well as his character development. These impacts are dynamic, beginning with positive responses such as enthusiasm, curiosity, and openness toward the new culture. As cultural pressures emerge, these responses shift into negative impacts, including anxiety, loneliness, embarrassment, and a decline in self-confidence. Subsequently, through the process of adaptation, these impacts move back toward a positive direction, marked by improved social interaction skills, reduced feelings of isolation, and the growth of confidence and acceptance of cultural differences. This transformation reshapes Gregory's perspective**,** from initially viewing differences as something unfamiliar to becoming more open and capable of understanding them objectively. Thus, culture shock in this story functions not only as a challenge but also as a learning process that contributes to the development of the character's identity.

Overall, this study shows that picture books can serve as an effective medium for representing cross-cultural experiences, particularly for children. Through the combination of verbal and visual elements, The Way We Do It in Japan not only presents cultural differences but also teaches the importance of openness, adaptation, and understanding of cultural diversity in everyday life.

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