

University of Economics, Prague

International Business

**French cultural standards from Czech perspective in study
environment**

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Declaration:

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis entitled “French cultural standards from Czech perspective in study environment “. I duly marked out all quotations. The used literature and sources are stated in the attached list of references.

In Prague on

.....

Student's name

Acknowledgement

I thank Ing. Zuzana Křečková Kroupová, M.A., Ph.D. for being my motivator, supervisor, critic and adviser. Without her, my work would never be finished in the form, which it has now. I also thank all the respondents, whose names are listed in the attachment, for taking their time and sharing all their experiences with me. Lastly, I would like to express gratitude to my parents and family for their life-time support and always believing in me.

Abstract:

The Czech Republic and the French Republic are both situated in the European continent and only one other country lays between them. Geographically are very close, however, culturally are very different. At the first glance, the distinctions might not be so significant. However, commonly after the arrival, a foreign student experiences misunderstandings, inconvenient situations and cultural shock due to the lack of knowledge of the unfamiliar culture. Therefore, it is essential to understand the differences in order to successfully integrate and ease the stay while studying abroad.

This Bachelor thesis concentrates on cultural standards of Alexander Thomas and how they influence everyday life of the Czech students in France. The main aim is to define the Czech-French cultural standards and compare them with the theory. Also, the standards will be applied on the historic-cultural aspects.

At the end of this Bachelor thesis, the recommendations and guidance will be provided for those students interested in studying in the French Republic.

Key words:

The Czech Republic, France, the French Republic, culture, cultural standards, Alexander Thomas, cultural dimensions, university, exchange student

Abstrakt:

Česká i Francouzská republika leží na Evropském kontinentu a dělí je od sebe pouze jedna země. Zeměpisně jsou si velmi blízko, ovšem kulturně velmi daleko. Na první pohled, tyto rozdíly nemusí být ihned rozpoznatelné, avšak pro českého studenta, který se rozhodl strávit ve Francii minimálně jeden semestr, jsou tyto rozdíly stěžejní. Právě kvůli nim a jejich nepochopení, se český student dostává do nesnází, nepříjemností či do nepohodlných situací. Proto je pro každého vyjíždějícího studenta nezbytné obeznámit se s těmito rozdíly, což mu během jeho pobytu ve Francii nejen pomůže lépe se integrovat, ale celkově ulehčí život a studium mimo Českou republiku.

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na kulturní standardy Alexandra Thomase a jak ovlivňují každodenní život českých studentů ve Francii. Hlavním cílem je definovat česko-francouzské kulturní standardy a porovnat je s teorií.

Na konci této bakalářské práce, budou poskytnuta doporučení a rady pro české zájemce o studium ve Francouzské republice.

Klíčová slova:

Česká republika, Francie, Francouzská republika, kulturní standardy, Alexander Thomas, kulturní dimenze, vysoká škola, výměnný student

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INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt France is a wonderful country. You can ask anyone who has ever visited it and they will agree with you. Hence, it is no surprise Paris, the capital, is the most visited city over the globe offering cultural, historical, artistic, culinary and fashionable experiences. The Parisians always like to joke around and say: “*A bad day in Paris is still better than a good day anywhere else.*”¹

Nevertheless, France is not only Paris. France is also represented by another thirteen regions. They diverse in their customs, habits, food, accents and even the weather. All of them have in common two things, the national prides: tasty cheese and good wine. Whether we are talking about castles at the river Loire, beaches in the Côte d’Azur or typical half-timbered houses in Brittany, any region is worth the visit. No wonder I fell in love with the country as many people before and after me. I visited it many times as a tourist and this September I took a chance and visited it as an exchange student within the Erasmus program. One semester, when I was surrounded by French students, showed me the real France and its real culture. It was a lot different to the experiences I had as “one weekend tourist”. That moment inspired me to write about French cultural standards in study environment.

The aim of my bachelor thesis is to define Czech-French cultural standards. Moreover, the questions of my research are the following : What are the differences between Czech and French in the area of school duties fulfilment? What are the differences in terms of priorities from study and leisure time? What are the differences between Czech and French in the area of the perception of authority toward the school system and toward teachers? What is the relationship of students to their university?

This Bachelor thesis is divided into three main parts. Firstly, it discusses the terms of social cognition and culture. In the following subchapters, I will explain the terms elements of culture, where Hofstede’s Onion diagram will be used for better understanding, and nation and national culture. Focus will be also on the issues of the culture stereotypes and culture shock where the subchapter will exhibit its different stages and what a student can expect while being at the certain stage of the culture shock. Furthermore, the first chapter will concentrate on the cultural standards and dimensions.

Regarding the cultural standards of Alexander Thomas, the term and what happens if two cultures meet will be explained. Most importantly, in this subchapter, the Czech-French standards will be defined too. Lastly, the subchapter will focus on cultural

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¹ Notable quotes. Paris quotes [online]. Available: http://www.notable-quotes.com/p/paris_quotes.html. Accessed: 28th December 2015.

dimensions, meaning will be defined so as two most valuable studies, Hofstede's and Trompenaars', will be picked in order to analyse their types of cultural dimensions.

The practical and also second part of my bachelor thesis will talk about the aspects influencing French culture. These aspects will be compared to the Alexander Thomas' standards. In addition, I will mention two programs, Erasmus and Freemover, that can allow Czech university students to spend semester or two in France.

The third and also the last part will be dedicated to the research itself. Firstly, the thesis will concentrate on the methodology of my research. I will personally interview twelve Czech students who have recently experienced a long term stay in France and its study environment. According to the research, the Czech-French cultural standards will be defined. Afterwards, the finding will be compared with the above described theory and with the help of the cultural standards, the thesis will include some recommendations for the potential Czech students who desire to study in France.

1. THEORETICAL PART

1.1 SOCIAL COGNITION

It is said that it would be very difficult to function without social cognition, as it is one of the most crucial aspects of social life. Social cognition, also known as social perception, deals with perception of humans and human interactions. It is a process through which we try to build impression about other people.

The process has three basic steps. At first, we often create an impression through person's appearance, verbal and nonverbal communication involving body language, eye contact, posture etc. Secondly, we focus on the most significant traits of the given person. These most significant traits are easy to be distinguished, for example talkativeness, shyness, and extrovert. Lastly, we seek for the other, less visible, personal traits and abilities of the person.²

Social cognition is also associated with own exuberance and self-concept. Therefore, impression of a person is also supplemented by own expectations and experiences. These own expectations and experiences influence the evaluation of the other person too.³

*"Social cognition is to some extent learnt, conditioned by culture and social environment."*⁴ Moreover, the way we perceive people can change. It depends on many circumstances such as new experiences, current information or also on different situations. In any case, the strength of first impression cannot be underestimated. Notwithstanding, it is the only subjective perception and it is the strongest impression of all, therefore, it is difficult to be changed.

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² STRNADOVÁ, Věra. *Sociální vnímání (percepce)*. Knihovnicko-informační zpravodaj U Nás: Naše "JÁ". 2007, 16 (2006), n. 4, p. 7. Available: http://www.svkhk.cz/SVKHK/u-nas-pdf_archiv/756.pdf. p 1. Accessed 25th December 2015.

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³ AUGOUSTINOS, Martha and Iain WALKER and Ngaire DONAGHUE. *Social cognition: an integrated introduction*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006, vii, 364 s. ISBN 0-7619-4219-x., s 7.

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⁴ STRNADOVÁ, Věra. *Sociální vnímání (percepce)*. Knihovnicko-informační zpravodaj U Nás: Naše "JÁ". 2007, 16 (2006), n. 4, p. 7. Available: http://www.svkhk.cz/SVKHK/u-nas-pdf_archiv/756.pdf. p 1. Accessed 25th December 2015.

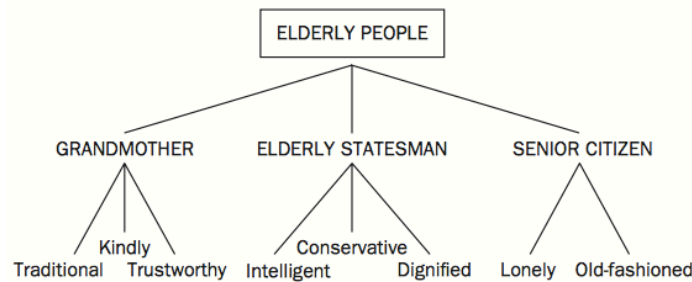


Figure 17.15

The social category 'elderly people' differentiated hierarchically into lower-order subtypes that are associated with distinctive personality traits. Source: Adapted from Brewer, Dull and Lui (1981).

Figure 1 : *Example of category of elderly people. The way, they are most likely to be socially perceived.*⁵

1.2 CULTURE

Term “culture” is notoriously complex to define. One of the evidence of its intricacy is the fact that there is no conformity among anthropologist regarding its nature.⁶ However, it is agreed, the word itself comes from the Latin word “colere” (cultivation, agriculture).⁷ In 16th century, the norm culture was rediscovered, and instead of using it as “cultivation of the soil”, it started to be perceived as “cultivation of mind and manners.”⁸

Identifying culture gets even more troublesome as there are three layers of depth at which culture exhibits itself. First level is called artifacts and behaviours and includes anything that is visible, such as physical layout, the dress code, smell, visible behaviour etc. Artefacts and behaviours explain “how” and “what”, second level, values, analyse

⁵ HEWSTONE, Miles and Frank D FINCHAM and Jonathan FOSTER. *Psychology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005, xxi, 561 p. ISBN 0631206787., p. 377.

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□ SPENCER_OATEY, Helen (2012). *What is Culture? A Compilation of Quotations*. GlobalPAD Core Concepts. 2012, p. 21. Available: https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/interculturalskills/global_pad_-_what_is_culture.pdf. Accessed: 25th December 2015.

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□ Dictionary.com (2005). *Culture* [online]. Available: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/culture>. Accessed 26th December 2015.

8

□ Oxford dictionaries. *Culture* [online]. Available: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/culture>. Accessed 26th December 2015.

“why”. Why members of a culture behave the way they do. Justifications, philosophy and norms are also used for the explanation of certain actions of a member of the culture. Additionally, fundamental reasons for their actions stay hidden or unconscious. Third level, basic underlying assumptions, is crucial in understanding the culture. This level identifies the reason why the members of a culture perceive, think and feel the way they do.

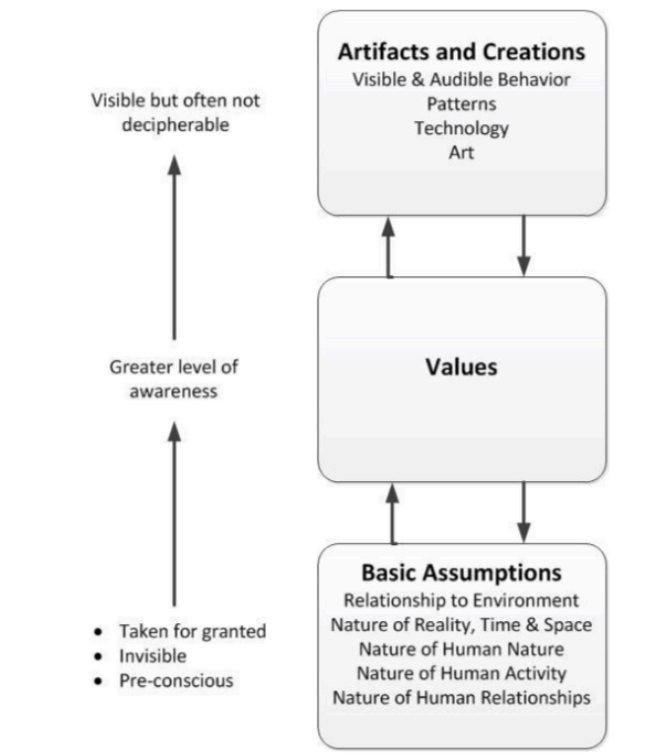


Figure 2: The levels of culture and their interaction⁹

As already illustrated, there are numerous definitions of the term culture. A Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede, well known for his pioneering study in cultures, in his book “Cultures and organizations: software of the mind: intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival” defines culture as “*collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others.*”¹⁰ Hofstede furthermore claims, this “collective programming” is learned, not inherited, and comes from one’s social environment. The process of “programming” starts in

⁹SPENCER_OATEY, Helen (2012). *What is Culture? A Compilation of Quotations*. GlobalPAD Core Concepts. 2012, p. 21. Available: https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/interculturalskills/global_pad_-_what_is_culture.pdf, p. 4. Accessed: 25th December 2015.

¹⁰ HOFSTEDE, G. – HOFSTEDE, G J. – MINKOV, M. *Cultures and organizations: software of the mind: intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010. ISBN 978- 0-07-166418-9., p. 15.

a family and afterwards continues to develop in the close social surroundings such as at school, hobby clubs etc.

In addition, Hofstede also states, culture should be differentiated from the human nature and human personality. Therefore, he created a pyramid with three distinct levels in human mental programming. At the basic level, there is a human nature. Human nature is an inherited trait that is common for any human being. It is capability to feel fear, love, hate etc. but also to feel need to socialize with other human beings. Nonetheless, the way one expresses such feeling, it is adjusted by the culture. At the top level, there is a personality. Personality includes both inherited and learned traits. Unlike human nature, personality is not shared with any other human being, therefore, it is specific for each individual. In the middle of the pyramid, there is a culture, which influences both personality and human nature. As already indicated, culture is learnt from the people one interacts with and it is challenging to unlearn it.¹¹

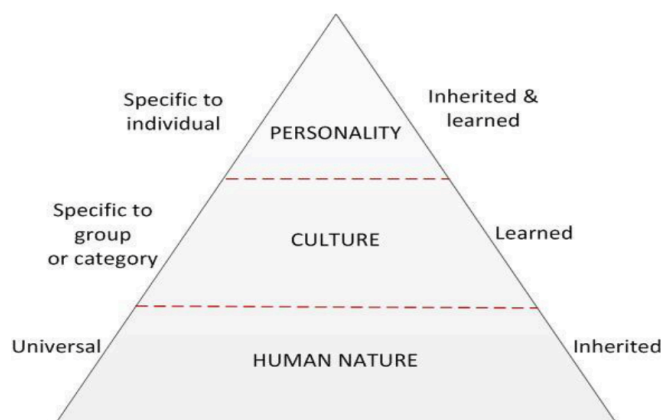


Figure 3: Three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming¹²

1.3 ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

Experiencing diverse culture without realising its uniqueness may cause many inconveniences. Thus, for better understanding, Geert Hofstede created manifestations of culture. He named it an Onion diagram and he suggested that cultural characteristics manifest themselves in four ways – values, rituals, heroes and symbols. Those elements are structured as peels of onion, from the core to the top.

¹¹ HOFSTEDDE, Geert - Gert Jan HOFSTEDDE. *Kultury a organizace: software lidské mysli: spolupráce mezi kulturami a její důležitost pro přežití*. Praha: Linde, 2007, 335 p. ISBN 978-80-86131-70-2.

¹²SPENCER_OATEY, Helen (2012). *What is Culture? A Compilation of Quotations*. GlobalPAD Core Concepts. 2012. p. 21. Available: https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/interculturalskills/global_pad_-_what_is_culture.pdf. p. 6. Accessed: 25th December 2015.

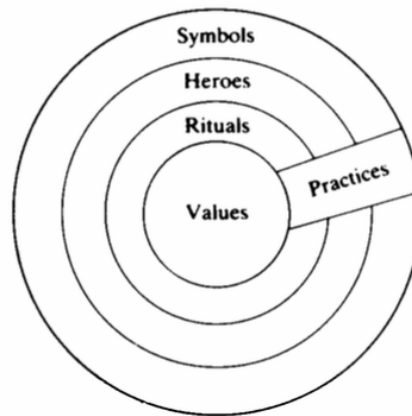


Figure 4: The 'onion diagram': Manifestations of culture at different¹³

Symbols are taken as a top coat of the Onion diagram. It is because there is a continuous development of the symbols – new are created and the old are destroyed. As symbols, we consider clothes, flags, words, gestures etc.

The second peel is represented by heroes. Heroes are perceived as the role models of the culture. They are usually the bearer of the right behavior, manners and attitudes.

In the culture, rituals are considered socially crucial even though they are, in a fact, useless. It is the way, members of culture act. Typical example could be the way members of one culture greet the others, hold ceremonies, meetings or negotiations.

Values are the core elements of the culture. That is the reason why they are placed in the heart of the Onion diagram. They represent either positive or negative attitude towards different affairs. Values distinguish evil to good, dirty to clean, ugly to beautiful, unnatural to natural, paradoxical to logical and irrational to rational. Psychologists say, values are among first things kids learn.¹⁴

1.4 NATION AND NATIONAL CULTURE

The term of national culture and its understanding is essential for this bachelor thesis. First impulse for differentiation of cultures originated in human adaption to diverse natural conditions (e.g. people living in deserts or mountains, alterations of climate).

¹³ Novsu.ru. *HOFSTEDE: Cultures and Organizations - Software of the Mind* [online]. Available: <http://www.novsu.ru/file/1092483>, p. 2. Accessed: 27th December 2015.

¹⁴ HOFSTEDE, Geert - Gert Jan HOFSTEDE. *Kultury a organizace: software lidské mysli : spolupráce mezi kulturami a její důležitost pro přežití*. Praha: Linde, 2007, 335 p. ISBN 978-80-86131-70-2. p.16-17.

Nowadays it is, and always was and will be, in constant development. Its changes are mostly influenced by significant natural events and human nature.¹⁵

1.4.1 NATION

Many people believe the term nation equals to the the term culture. This claim is false and therefore, after previous chapter which was dedicated to culture, the term nation needs to be explained as well. “*Nation is a political term referring to a government and a set of formal and legal mechanisms that have been established to regulate the political behavior of its people.*”¹⁶ As “formal and legal mechanism” are considered the tools, that support higher integration within the nation. We are talking for instance about national language, political system, educational system, currency, banking etc. Although some nations are mainly populated by one group of culture, nowadays, mostly due to the globalization and history, the majority of nations comprise of more than one culture group. Perfect example to support this claim is also France. French, African French and Arabic French, those people inhabit one geographical boundaries, however, their culture is different. On the other hand, in case of South Korea, in one nation only exists one cultural group. Furthermore, culture/s who live in a nation, have an influence on the formal and legal mechanisms that the given nation develops.¹⁷

1.4.2 NATIONAL CULTURE

Additionally, to the term nation, there is a term national culture. Ivan Nový says about national culture: “*national culture embodies something like collective consciousness of the population, specifically handed down values, norms, rules of conduct (custom, law, ordinance), ethical and moral systems derived from the images of the world and man.*”¹⁸

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□ NOVÝ, Ivan and Sylvia SCHROLL-MACHL. *Spolupráce přes hranice kultur*. Ed. 1. Praha: Management Press, 2005, 313 p. ISBN 80-7261-121-6. p. 92.

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□ SPENCER_OATEY, Helen (2012). *What is Culture? A Compilation of Quotations*. GlobalPAD Core Concepts. 2012. p. 21. Available: https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/interculturalskills/global_pad_-_what_is_culture.pdf. p. 18. Accessed: 6th January 2016.

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□ HOFSTEDE, Geert - Gert Jan HOFSTEDE. *Kultury a organizace: software lidské mysli: spolupráce mezi kulturami a její důležitost pro přežití*. Praha: Linde, 2007, 335 p. ISBN 978-80-86131-70-2. p. 25.

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□ NOVÝ, Ivan and Sylvia SCHROLL-MACHL. *Spolupráce přes hranice kultur*. Ed. 1. Praha: Management Press, 2005, 313 p. ISBN 80-7261-121-6. p. 92.

According to nation's set of norms, behaviors, beliefs and customs, international companies can easily develop management and other policies in the agreement with the national culture they run the business in¹⁹. This behavior was recognized as essential as national culture has a great impact on entrepreneurial activities. Consequently, cultural awareness results in favorable outcomes of international companies.²⁰

There are many researches on national culture. Study created by Alexander Thomas is focused on typical features of various national cultures. He based his research on the experiences of habitants of one culture who co-worked or came into contact with a different culture.²¹ Another study done by Professor Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov and their research teams divides national culture into six dimensions, which are discussed in subchapter 1.4. .²²

1.5 CULTURAL STEREOTYPES

Cultural stereotypes can be interpreted as *"A fixed impression which may have little basis in fact, but is nevertheless perpetuated by persons unwilling to look more deeply into the matter."*²³ An American writer Walter Lipmann, author of the book *Public opinion*, called stereotypes as *"simplified pictures in our heads."*²⁴ Predominantly, stereotypes are perceived as (false) generalization or even overgeneralization. Typical cultural stereotypes examples could be: French are great lovers, British are bad cooks, Italians are loud, Germans are strict etc. In case of France, a clear example

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□ Businessdictionary.com. *National culture* [online]. Available: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/national-culture.html>. Accessed: 7th January 2016.

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□ British Council. *Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions* [online]. Available: https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/sites/podcasts/files/Writing_for_a_Purpose-Explanation-Structure-Explanation1.pdf. Accessed: 7th January 2016.

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□ NOVÝ, Ivan and Sylvia SCHROLL-MACHL. *Spolupráce přes hranice kultur*. Ed. 1. Praha: Management Press, 2005, 313 p. ISBN 80-7261-121-6. p. 93.

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□ The Hofstede center. *National culture* [online]. 2012. Available: <http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html>. Accessed: 7th January 2016.

²³ SURAJ, V.K. *Encyclopedic dictionary of library and information science*. Delhi: Isha Books, 2005. ISBN 818205253x. p. 786.

²⁴ HINTON, Perry R. *Stereotypes, cognition, and culture*. New York: Psychology, 2000, x, 208 s. Psychology focus. ISBN 0-415-19866-6. p. 8.

of overgeneralization could be shown on “French unfriendliness”. Generally, people perceive French as cold and unfriendly regardless the real figures.²⁵

Stereotypes are not always just cultural. Other common stereotypes could be related to the gender, race, groups of individuals and sexual orientation.²⁶

1.6 CULTURAL SHOCK

As already illustrated in previous chapters, each culture is in many ways specific. Typical individual of one culture can have different standards, values, priorities etc. than a typical individual from other. Therefore, it can be difficult for a person from one culture to confront a different one. As the foreigner tries to cohabite with the citizens of other country, he can undergo a culture shock. Oxford dictionaries describe this phenomenon as “*The feeling of disorientation experienced by someone when they are suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes*”²⁷.

Kalevero Oberg, an anthropologist who coined the word of a culture shock, developed several stages of cultural shock adaptation. He called the first stage a honeymoon phase. As the name itself implies, in this stage new culture appears to be exciting and brings an openness to anything new and curiosity to the foreign ambiance. In the second stage foreigner undergoes the culture shock. It is a time when he starts to be disoriented in a new place, begins to feel uncomfortable in certain situations and does not always agree with behavior of the society. Elisabeth Marx in her book illustrates, that experiencing new culture can bring many troublesome feelings such as frustration, anxiety, feeling of isolation, loneliness, or depression.²⁸ Third phrase called recovery, begins with accepting the majority of the culture’s values, trying to adapt to the culture and learn to cohabite with its society. In the last stage named adjustment, the visitor can understand the newly discovered culture and is more flexible when it comes to unfamiliar affairs.²⁹

The graph below shows the evolution of above the described phrases together with the illustration of changes in the mood that are accompanied. As the curve implies,

²⁵ JOSEPH, Nadine. *Passport France: your pocket guide to French business, customs & etiquette*. San Rafael, Calif.: World Trade Press, 1997, 96 p. ISBN 1885073291. p. 22.

²⁶ Your dictionary. *Stereotype Example* [online]. Available: <http://examples.yourdictionary.com/stereotype-examples.html>. Accessed: 6th January 2016.

²⁷ Oxford Dictionaries. *Culture shock* [online]. Available: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/culture-shock>. Accessed: 6th January 2016.

²⁸ MARX, Elisabeth. *Breaking through culture shock: what you need to succeed in international business*. Updated pbk. ed. London: Nicholas Brealey Pub., 2001, xvi, 241 p. ISBN 9781857884777. p.5.

²⁹ HOFSTEDE, Geert - Gert Jan HOFSTEDE. *Kultura a organizace: software lidské mysli : spolupráce mezi kulturami a její důležitost pro přežití*. Praha: Linde, 2007, 335 p. ISBN 978-80-86131-70-2. p.244.

the most positive mood is experienced during the first stage whereas the most negative mood during the second stage. The alternation between these two phrases is significant.

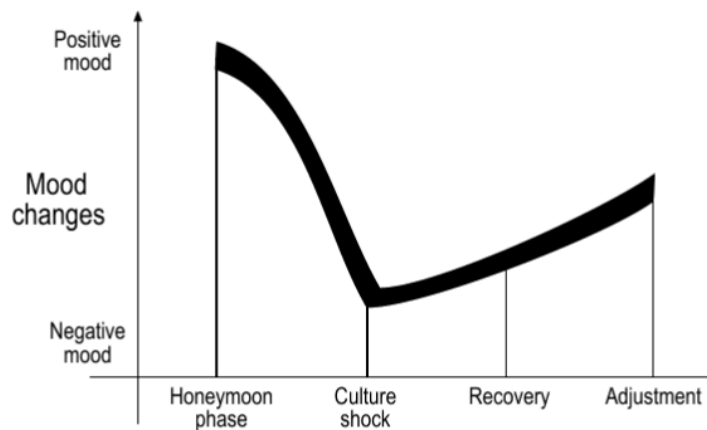


Figure 5: Culture shock triangle. Phases of adaptation³⁰

1.7 CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Nowadays, the term of cultural dimensions is perceived as *“the cultural skills and values, inherited from the community’s previous generation and undergoing adaptation and extension by current member of the community that influence how people express themselves in relation to others and how they engage in social interaction.”*³¹ However, this term was not always clearly defined. In the first half of the 20th century, the social anthropologists started to claim that all societies deal with the same basic issues, however, the ways of solving the particular issue in each society vary.³² Therefore, since then, many anthropologists tried to come up with a logical answer to this simple claim. Throughout the time, there were many social researches. All carried smaller or bigger importance in study of cultural dimensions.

³⁰ MARX, Elisabeth. *Breaking through culture shock: what you need to succeed in international business*. Updated pbk. ed. London: Nicholas Brealey Pub., 2001, xvi, 241 p. ISBN 9781857884777. p.9.

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□ UNESCO. *Towards a UNESCO culture and development indicators suite* [online].

Available:

http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/creativity/pdf/culture_and_development_indicators/Dimension%206%20Social.pdf. Accessed: 19th January.

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□ HOFSTEDE, Geert and Gert Jan HOFSTEDE. *Kultury a organizace: software lidské mysli: spolupráce mezi kulturami a její důležitost pro přežití*. Praha: Linde, 2007, 335 s. ISBN 978-80-86131-70-2. p.28.

Nevertheless, this bachelor thesis will further talk in depth about two most significant researchers in this field. Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars were the two men who contributed greatly to the study of cultural dimensions.

Even though the terms of cultural dimensions and standards are different, nonetheless, they both share the same aim. Both cultural dimensions and standards are here to underline the main differences between the national cultures. They are crucial in international business. Understanding cultural dimensions and standards of foreign country saves time, avoid mutual misunderstanding and generally, eases the flow of the business or negotiation.³³

1.7.1 HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS THEORY

Professor Geert Hofstede (1928) is a Dutch cross-cultural sociologist, who dedicated his life to the research of cultural differences. Not only he published many articles and books regarding this topic, but he contributed greatly to the understanding of the cultural differences.

Hofstede's unique study was conducted between the years 1967 and 1973. This researcher created a survey and observed approximately 116 000 IBM employees from the lowest levels of the company's sales and service departments. In total, he surveyed employees from more than 70 countries with aim to research working-oriented values.³⁴ After the first investigation of 40 countries, he presented his first four cultural dimensions. The basics of these dimensions were already coined by two scientists Inkeles and Levinson. In the 1991., with cooperation of Michael Harris Bons, Hofstede added the fifth dimension. The last dimension was added by Michael Minkov in 2010.³⁵

The Hofstede's model is represented by six cultural dimensions, which ranked from 0 to 100 in order to allow comparisons between the cultures. Hofstede explains the meaning of his cultural dimensions as follow: *"The cultural dimensions represent independent preferences for one state of affairs over another that distinguish countries (rather than individuals) from each other. In other words, culture can be only used*

³³ NOVÝ, Ivan and Sylvia SCHROLL-MACHL. *Interkulturní komunikace v řízení a podnikání*. Praha: Management Press, 1999. 183 p. ISBN 80-7261-009-0. p. 22-23.

³⁴ The Hofstede center. Geert Hofstede [online]. 2012. Available: <https://geert-hofstede.com/geert-hofstede.html>. Accessed: 19th January 2016.

³⁵ The Hofstede center. *National culture* [online]. 2012. Available: <http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html>. Accessed: 19th January 2016.

meaningfully by comparison.”³⁶ It is said, the Hofstede’s model can give an explanation to 75% of the dissimilarities in consumer behavior.³⁷

The dimensions are labeled:

1. Power Distance Index (PDI)

PDI refers to the perception of inequality and its acceptance in diverse national cultures. In his book Hofstede explains the differences between high and low power distance societies. He claims that in cultures which score high in PDI, the kids are brought up to carry in mind the importance of respecting elders. This trait continues to last throughout their adulthood as well. Consequently, in high power distance societies, inequality is accepted as a part of the shape of the society. Organizations rather enforce autocratic leadership style with emphasis on hierarchical structure. On the other hand, low power distance cultures prefer to have democratic leader who shares the decision-making with his employees. Equality in the organization is expected.³⁸

Small Power Distance	Large Power Distance
Use of power should be legitimate and is subject to criteria of good and evil	Power is a basic fact of society antedating good or evil: its legitimacy is irrelevant
Parents treat children as equals	Parents teach children obedience
Older people are neither respected nor feared	Older people are both respected and feared

Figure 6: Tree examples of differences Between Small- and Large- Power Distance Societies³⁹

2. Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV)

IDV refers to the people’s need of integration into social units. According to Hofstede, people in individualistic countries prefer to work on their own, look after themselves and think of their personal growth. Freedom is very important for them too. Collectivism, however, puts the happiness of the group before

³⁶ The Hofstede center. *National culture* [online]. 2012. Available: <http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html>. Accessed: 19th January 2016.

³⁷ The Hofstede center. *Geert Hofstede* [online]. Available: <http://geert-hofstede.com/geert-hofstede.html>. Accessed: 19th January 2016.

³⁸ British council. *Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions* [online]. Available: https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/sites/podcasts/files/Writing_for_a_Purpose-Explanation-Structure-Explanation1.pdf. Accessed: 20th January 2016. p. 1.

³⁹ Hofstede, Geert. (2011). *Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context*. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(1). Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>. Accessed: 19th January 2016. p. 9.

the individual's. In collectivist cultures the individuals are very much integrated in the groups in exchange for the fidelity.^{40 41}

⁴⁰ The Hofstede center. *National culture* [online]. 2012. Available: <http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html>. Accessed: 20th January 2016.

⁴¹ British council. *Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions* [online]. Available: https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/sites/podcasts/files/Writing_for_a_Purpose-Explanation-Structure-Explanation1.pdf. Accessed: 20th January 2016. p. 11.

Individualism	Collectivism
Everyone is supposed to take care of him- or herself and his or her immediate family only	People are born into extended families or clans which protect them in exchange for loyalty
"I" – consciousness	"We" –consciousness
Right of privacy	Stress on belonging

Figure 7: Tree examples of differences Between Collectivist and Individualist Societies⁴²

3. Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)

MAS refers to the distinction of the gender roles and the values between females and males in the culture. Masculine societies stand for clear emotional gender division. Men are expected to be fearless, bold and energetic while focusing on carrier and success. Women are expected to be gentle, humble and kind while focusing on family life. On the contrary, in feminine cultures both males and females are concentrated on the quality of life, modesty and gentleness.⁴³

Weak Uncertainty Avoidance	Strong Uncertainty Avoidance
The uncertainty inherent in life is accepted and each day is taken as it comes	The uncertainty inherent in life is felt as a continuous threat that must be fought
Ease, lower stress, self-control, low anxiety	Higher stress, emotionality, anxiety, neuroticism
Higher scores on subjective health and well-being	Lower scores on subjective health and well-being

Figure 8: Tree examples of differences Between Weak- and Strong- Uncertainty Avoidance Societies⁴⁴

4. Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)

UAI refers to the level at which the society feels uncomfortable with unfamiliar situations or future. Therefore, in high uncertainty avoidance societies, as the name itself implies, people fear uncertainty. Thus, they tend to surround themselves with rules, orders and guidelines in order to avoid unknown. Nonetheless, in low uncertainty avoidance cultures, the policies are not comfortable and are enforced only if necessary. Countries scoring low in UAI do not fear unfamiliar situations.

⁴² Hofstede, Geert. (2011). *Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context*. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(1). Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>. Accessed: 19th January 2016. p. 11.

⁴³ Ibb. p. 10.

⁴⁴ Hofstede, Geert. (2011). *Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context*. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(1). Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>. Accessed: 19th January 2016. p. 10.

Femininity	Masculinity
Minimum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders	Maximum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders
Men and women should be modest and caring	Men should be and women may be assertive and ambitious
Balance between family and work	Work prevails over family

Figure 9: Tree examples of differences Between Feminine and Masculine Societies⁴⁵

5. Long Term Orientation versus Short Term Normative Orientation (LTO)

LTO refers to the pragmatisms of the society. Regarding to the Hofstede's study, long term oriented cultures are future-oriented unlike the short term oriented cultures who are past-oriented. Therefore, LTO embrace thrifths and modern technology or education while STO concentrate on tradition and conventional norms.⁴⁶

Short-Term Orientation	Long-Term Orientation
Most important events in life occurred in the past or take place now	Most important events in life will occur in the future
Personal steadiness and stability: a good person is always the same	A good person adapts to the circumstances
There are universal guidelines about what is good and evil	What is good and evil depends upon the circumstances

Figure 10: Tree examples of differences Between Short- and Long-Term-Oriented Societies⁴⁷

6. Indulgence versus Restraint (IND)

IND refers to the degree to which the society allow the "enjoyment of life". Indulgence societies put higher importance on having fun and enjoying life. However, Restraint societies tend to have gratification under control through putting less value on leisure and hobbies.

⁴⁵ Hofstede, Geert. (2011). *Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context*. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(1). Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>. Accessed: 19th January 2016. p. 12.

⁴⁶ The Hofstede center. *National culture* [online]. 2012. Available: <http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html>. Accessed: 20th January 2016.

⁴⁷ Hofstede, Geert. (2011). *Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context*. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(1). Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>. Accessed: 19th January 2016. p. 15.

Indulgence	Restrained
Higher percentage of people declaring themselves very happy	Fewer very happy people
A perception of personal life control	A perception of helplessness: what happens to me is not my own doing
Freedom of speech seen as important	Freedom of speech is not a primary concern
Higher importance of leisure	Lower importance of leisure

Figure 11: Tree examples of differences between Indulgent and Restrained Societies⁴⁸

1.7.2 APPLICATION OF HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS THEORY: CZECH VERSUS FRENCH

As the cultural dimension ranking in figure 12 shows, there are differences in cultural values between Czech and French. According to Hofstede's study, both countries scores relatively high in PDI. French society (68) is little more hierarchical, centralized and organization's orders do not need to be justify so as in the Czech Republic (57). Also, individualism is common trait in both countries. France scores again higher (71) than the Czech Republic (58), however, in both countries the well-being of the individuals depend on their own and the loyalty to one organization through life is not expected. Regarding the masculinity, the Czech Republic is rather masculine country, nonetheless, France is rather feminine country. It means, in the Czech society, the gender roles are divided – males behave themselves in masculine way and females in feminine. On the other hand, French society expect both genders to be more emotional and care of the quality of life. Moreover, both countries score significantly high in terms of long term orientation (FR – 86, CZ – 74). As already describe in previous subchapter, UAI means preference of avoiding unfamiliarity. Following rules, working hard and punctuality are one of the keys to avoid it. With high-rankings of 63 (FR) and (70) in long term orientation, French and Czech societies are pragmatic. Lastly, Czech is a restraint culture (29) which means the society has a tendency to be pessimistic. On the contrary, France (48) is neither indulgence nor restraint nation. *“This, in combination with a high score on Uncertainty Avoidance, implies that the French are less relaxed and enjoy life less often than is commonly assumed.”*⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Hofstede, Geert. (2011). *Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context*. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(1). Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>. Accessed: 19th January 2016. p. 16.

⁴⁹ The Hofstede center. *France* [online]. Available <http://geert-hofstede.com/france.html> Accessed: 22th January 2016.

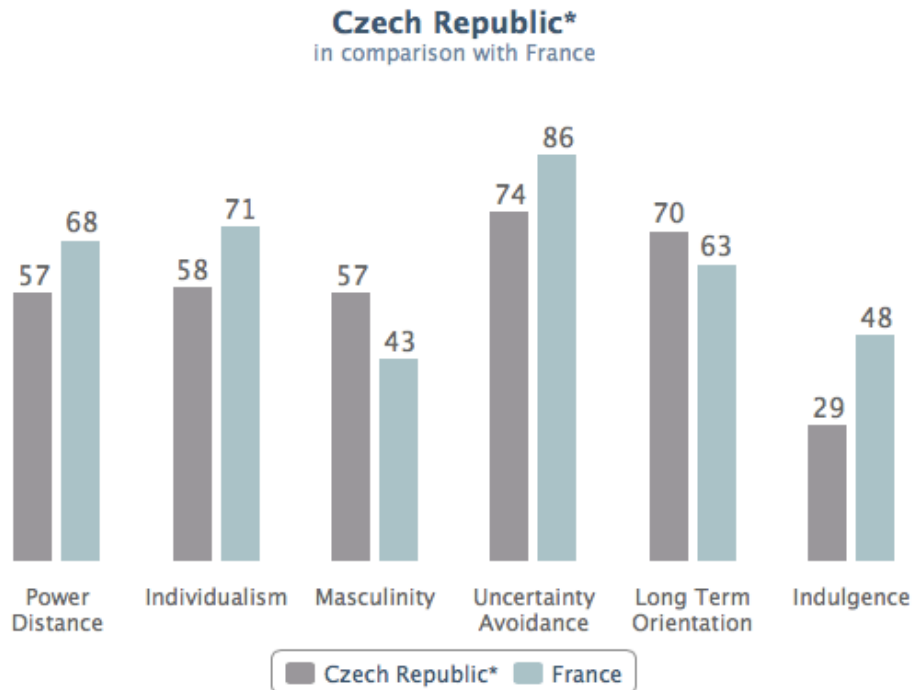


Figure 12: Comparison of Czech and French Hofstede's cultural dimensions⁵⁰

1.7.3 TROMPENAARS' CULTURAL DIMENSIONS THEORY

Fons Trompenaars, born in 1953, earned his first university title in field Economics in Amsterdam. Nonetheless, he is not known for his economics contributions but for the input into cross-cultural studies. Based on his doctoral thesis from the University of Pennsylvania, Trompenaars spend almost 14 years surveying 46 thousand managers from over than 40 countries. So as Hofstede, he found out people from various cultures differs in many ways such as in manner of thinking, beliefs, values etc. To develop model, he built 7 dimensions of culture based on problem-solving behavior. Furthermore, these 7 dimensions were divided to 3 categories depending on relationship towards other people, relationship towards time and relationship towards nature.^{51 52}

⁵⁰ The Hofstede center. *Czech Republic* [online]. Available: <http://geert-hofstede.com/czech-republic.html>. Accessed: 20th January 2016.

⁵¹ HAMPDEN-TURNER, Charles and TROMPENAARS, Fons. *Building cross-cultural competence: how to create wealth from conflicting values*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, xi, 388 p. ISBN: 9780300130638. p.11.

⁵² MindTools Corporate. *The Seven Dimensions of Culture: Your 10-Minute Guide to Understanding Cultural Differences* [online]. 2014. Available: <https://www.mindtools.com/blog/corporate/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/09/Seven-Dimensions-Culture.pdf>. Accessed: 26th January 2016

The dimensions are labelled:

1. Universalism versus particularism

Trompenaars' first dimension deals with an issue whether the rules carry higher importance than relationships or not. Universalism cultures are rules oriented and believe there is clear good or bad and right or wrong circumstances. Same applies to lie and truth. On the other hand, particularism cultures put greater attention to specific circumstances. In such cultures, the relationships are very important, therefore, one should always keep in mind the needs of others and be flexible to him/her.^{53 54}

<i>Universalism</i> (rules, codes, laws, and generalizations)	<i>Particularism</i> (exceptions, circumstances, relations)
---	---

Figure 13: Universalism vs. Particularism⁵⁵

2. Individualism versus communitarianism

Similarly, as Hofstede, Trompenaars speaks about differences between individualistic cultures and communitarianism cultures. According to Trompenaars, individualism is based on personal fulfilment, personal freedom and personal achievement. In communitarianism, people believe in endowments, team work and sharing loss and wins within the group.⁵⁶

⁵³ HAMPDEN-TURNER, Charles and TROMPENAARS, Fons. *Building cross-cultural competence: how to create wealth from conflicting values*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, xi, 388 p. ISBN: 9780300130638. p.13.

⁵⁴ MindTools Corporate. *The Seven Dimensions of Culture: Your 10-Minute Guide to Understanding Cultural Differences* [online]. 2014. Available: <https://www.mindtools.com/blog/corporate/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/09/Seven-Dimensions-Culture.pdf>. Accessed: 26th January 2016

⁵⁵ HAMPDEN-TURNER, Charles and TROMPENAARS, Fons. *Building cross-cultural competence: how to create wealth from conflicting values*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, xi, 388 p. ISBN: 9780300130638. p.11.

⁵⁶ HAMPDEN-TURNER, Charles and TROMPENAARS, Fons. *Building cross-cultural competence: how to create wealth from conflicting values*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, xi, 388 p. ISBN: 9780300130638. p.68.

Individualism (personal freedom, human rights, competitiveness)	Communitarianism (social responsibility, harmonious relations, cooperation)
--	--

Figure 14: Individualism vs. Communitarianism⁵⁷

3. Neutral versus emotional

This dimension covers the question of showing or hiding emotion. In emotional nations, it is believed, it is good to show emotions and acceptable to be spontaneous. People from emotional cultures use widely a body language and are not afraid to open themselves to others. On the contrary, neutral cultures prefer to hid their emotions and they do not let themselves influenced by their feelings either.⁵⁸

4. Specific versus diffuse

In specific cultures, people keep their personal life separately from their working life. While doing business, they tend to get straight to the point and concentrate on the business aims. Diffuse cultures, however, there is interconnection between work and personal life. While doing business, relationship between the businessman is assigned high importance.

Specificity (atomistic, reductive analytic, objective)	Diffusion (holistic, elaborative synthetic, relational)
---	--

Figure 15: Specific vs. Diffuse⁵⁹

5. Achievement versus ascription

In achievement cultures, one is valued according “what he/she does”, contrary, in ascription cultures one is valued according “who he/she is”. Trompenaars, in his book claims, in achievement culture people are rewarded and recognized based

⁵⁷ HAMPDEN-TURNER, Charles and TROMPENAARS, Fons. *Building cross-cultural competence: how to create wealth from conflicting values*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, xi, 388 p. ISBN: 9780300130638. p.11.

⁵⁸ HAMPDEN-TURNER, Charles and TROMPENAARS, Fons. *Building cross-cultural competence: how to create wealth from conflicting values*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, xi, 388 p. ISBN: 9780300130638. p.11.

⁵⁹ HAMPDEN-TURNER, Charles and TROMPENAARS, Fons. *Building cross-cultural competence: how to create wealth from conflicting values*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, xi, 388 p. ISBN: 9780300130638. p.11.

on their achievements. In ascription cultures status is gained through the birth, connections, gender, type of education, age, gender and so on.

Achieved status (what you've done, your track record)	Ascribed status (who you are, your potential and connections)
---	---

Figure 16: Achievement vs. Ascription⁶⁰

6. Sequential time versus synchronous time

Sixth dimension speaks about managing and perceiving time. Sequential cultures lead themselves by saying “Never put off till tomorrow” and “Time is money” Commitments and plans are put in order one after the other, in logical sequences. Punctuality and sticking to deathliness is the key to success. The contrast goes with synchronous time. In eyes of people from synchronous cultures, time is cyclical, events are movable and a person should be more flexible towards scheduling.

Sequential time (time is a race along a set course)	Synchronous time (time is a dance of fine coordinations)
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Figure 17: Sequential time vs. Synchronous time⁶¹

7. Internal direction versus outer direction

Last cultural difference along with the previous six, deals with the question whether nature control us or the other way around. Trompenaars recognizes two different attitudes: internal direction and outer direction. Regarding to the internal direction, people believe they can control the environment in order to reach their aims. Regarding to the outer direction, people believe the opposite – they believe, environment controls them.

⁶⁰ HAMPDEN-TURNER, Charles and TROMPENAARS, Fons. *Building cross-cultural competence: how to create wealth from conflicting values*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, xi, 388 p. ISBN: 9780300130638. p.11.

⁶¹ HAMPDEN-TURNER, Charles and TROMPENAARS, Fons. *Building cross-cultural competence: how to create wealth from conflicting values*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, xi, 388 p. ISBN: 9780300130638. p.11.

Inner direction (conscience and convictions are located inside)	Outer direction (examples and influences are located outside)
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Figure 18: Internal direction vs. Outer direction⁶²

Trompenaars together with his colleague Hampden-Turner, with whom he has written book called Building cross-cultural competence, still works on his research in order to enrich it.

1.7.4 APPLICATION OF TROMPENAARS' CULTURAL DIMENSIONS THEORY:

CZECH VERSUS FRENCH

This subchapter is devoted to the application of Trompenaars' cultural dimensions' theory on the Czech Republic and the French Republic. The outcomes, which are taken from the dissertation of Ing. Zuzana Křečková Kroupová, M.A., Ph.D., will be compared together.

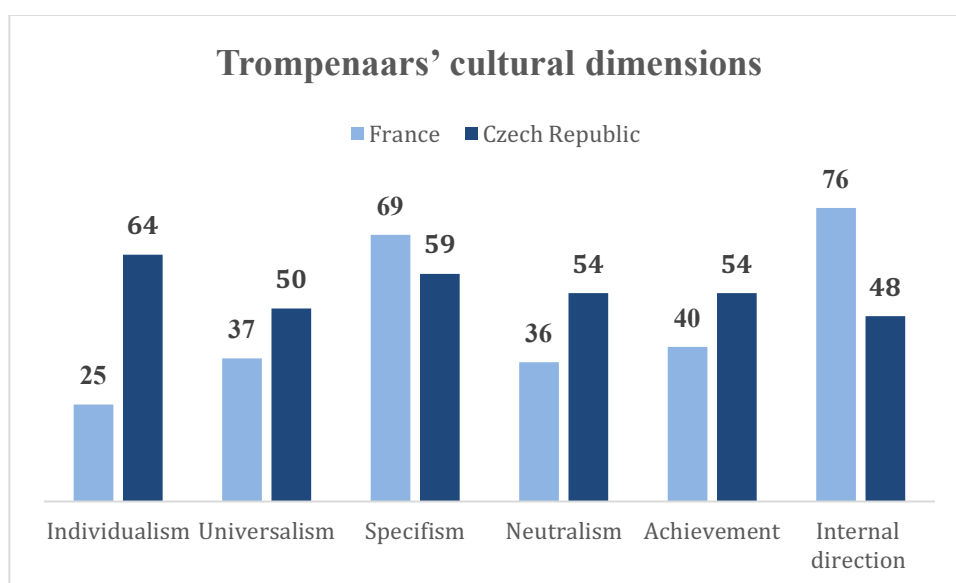


Figure 19: Ranking of Trompenaars' cultural dimensions: Czech Republic vs. France⁶³

⁶² HAMPDEN-TURNER, Charles and TROMPENAARS, Fons. *Building cross-cultural competence: how to create wealth from conflicting values*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000, xi, 388 p. ISBN: 9780300130638. p.12.

⁶³ KŘEČKOVÁ-KROUPOVÁ, Zuzana. *Cultural Specifics of Management in Multinational Companies*. Praha, 2009. Doktorská disertační práce. Vysoká škola ekonomická v Praze. Vedoucí práce Lenka Pražská., str. 171- 210. Translated by author.

The first dimension, individualism, has the most notable divergence between the two countries. According to the Trompenaars' theory, France scores very low (25) in comparison to the Czech Republic (64). Therefore, France is communitarianism-oriented country which indicates focus on the harmonic relationships, social responsibility and loyalty to their family or their country. On contrary, the Czech Republic is perceived as individualistic country which cares about freedom its individuals and competitive environment.

Notably, the dimension of individualism differs broadly between Hofstede's and Trompenaars' theories. Hofstede's theory believes in high individualism of France, on the other hand, Trompenaars' theory claims the opposite. Nonetheless, both researches ranks the Czech Republic as little above average in the individualism.

Regarding to the universalism, which deals with the importance of rules and relationships, France with 37 points is more relationship oriented. The Czech Republic which is right in the middle of the scale is both rules and relationship oriented. In practice it means, French can be more flexible, make exceptions and can see more in the situation than its black and white side of it. Concerning the specific versus diffuse dimension, both countries are perceived as specific nations. As the specific cultures, they like to keep their personal life separately from the working life. Both countries are also rather extrovert, objective and straight-forward in business. Moreover, the Czech Republic also score average (54) in neutralism and France (40) is recognized as an emotional country. Emotional traits are characterized by showing emotions and using a lot body language. In case of the Czech Republic, people are more calm and do not tend to show their emotions that much. In terms of achievement, French (40) care more about who the certain person is, his connections and social status. Czechs (54) are more concerned by what the person achieved in his life. Lastly, there is a difference between both countries related to internal direction. Trompenaars' theory claims, French (76) are internal oriented: they believe the environment can be controlled in order to reach for their goals. Contrarily, Czechs are both, like in most of the other dimensions, in the middle taking both internal and outer direction. In this case, Czech have tendencies to be little more outer-oriented, believing the environment controls them.

1.8 CULTURAL STANDARDS ACCORDING TO ALEXANDER THOMAS

After explaining the meaning of dimensions, this subchapter will focus on the most crucial part of the theoretical section, cultural standards, and their biggest contributor, Alexander Thomas. Alexander Thomas, German psychologist, in his book "Handbook

of Intercultural Communication and Cooperation” describes cultural standards as follows:

- *“Cultural standards are forms of perception, thought patterns, judgment and interaction that are shared by a majority of the members of a specific culture who regard their behavior as normal, typical and binding.*
- *Own and other unfamiliar behavior is directed, regulated and judged on the basis of this cultural standard.*
- *Cultural standards provide a regulatory function for mastering a given situation and dealing with people.*
- *The individual and group-specific way of applying cultural standards to adjust behavior can fluctuate within a range of tolerance.*
- *Forms of behavior that exceed this specific range are not accepted or sanctioned by the respective collective.”⁶⁴*

Simply put, cultural standards represent typical norms and manners of one culture. It includes the way of thinking or perceiving, sociably acceptable behavior etc. Therefore, cultural standards are not recognized within one culture as members of the given culture behave themselves more or less equally. Cultural standards start to be perceived instantly, when one culture meets the other. Therefore, cultural standards can be identified only when compared. During comparing, differences in behavior get analyzed. Vast differences can lead to inconveniences and in critical moments, it can lead to cultural shock.^{65 66}

⁶⁴ THOMAS, Alexander and KINAST, Eva-Ulrike. *Handbook of Intercultural Communication and Cooperation Basics and Areas of Application*. 2nd rev. ed. Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010. ISBN 9783647403274. p. 22.

⁶⁵ NOVÝ, Ivan and SCHROLL-MACHL, S. *Interkulturní komunikace v řízení a podnikání česko-německá*. Praha: Management Press, 2007. ISBN 978-80-7261- 158-4. p. 14.

⁶⁶ NOVÝ, Ivan. *Spolupráce přes hranice kultur*. Ed. 1. Praha: Management Press, 2005, 313 p. ISBN 80-726-1121-6. p. 14.

2 PRACTICAL PART

2.1 ASPECTS INFLUENCING FRENCH CULTURE

- **Geographical Features**

France, shaped in the form of hexagon, is divided to 26 regions and 101 departments. Out of the 26 regions, there are 5 (Martinique, Réunion, Mayotte, French Guyana and Guadeloupe) in the overseas and they are remains from the time of colonialism. French Republic itself has area of 547 030 km² which makes it the biggest country in the Western Europe and the largest member of the EU. It borders with Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Andorra. Maritime borders of France lie along the Mediterranean Sea, Atlantic Ocean, English Channel and North Sea. The capital and as well as the largest city of France is Paris, which is the cultural and intellectual center of the country. Other biggest and the most important cities are Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, Nice and Nantes.

In France, a person can find maritime, continental and Mediterranean weather. The climate has a significant influence on fauna and flora in the country. Therefore, anywhere a tourist goes within France, he/she might feel like in a different country. Also, landscape of the country varies widely. In the Alps, the biggest mountain of France and Europe, Mont Blanc, is situated.⁶⁷

- **Demographical Features**

To 1st January 2014, there were 65,8 million French inhabitants. 58,2 million of the total population of France were also born in France and 7,6 million were born abroad. Until the 19th century, France was ethnically homogeneous having Celtic and Roman roots. In 20th century, France opened its borders to migrants from its colonial possessions. That time, the highest number of immigrants came from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Nowadays, the highest number of immigrants comes from Africa (43,2%) European Union (32,2%) and Asia (14,4%).⁶⁸

The urbanization of the state is high, 79% of inhabitants live in the cities, and this trend continues to grow. Moreover, French fertility rate is relatively high in comparison to other European countries. There were 800 000 babies born in France in 2015.

⁶⁷ KURIAN, George Thomas. Encyclopedia of the world's nations and cultures. New York: Facts On File, Inc., c2007. ISBN 9780816063079. p. 849.

⁶⁸ Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques. *Étrangers - Immigrés* [online]. Available: http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=T16F037. Accessed: 13th March 2016.

Although, this number is by 2,3% smaller than the previous year, the natality of the county is relatively stable.^{69 70}

- **Language**

French is the official and national language of France. Moreover, it is also an official language in other 28 countries, majority of which are members of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie.⁷¹ It is estimated, there are 220 million French speakers in the world. French is also, together with German, the official language of the European Union so as of other international organizations such as United Nations, NATO or WTO. Universally, French was ranked as the third most important language for business.^{72 73}

- **Religion**

France does not collect data about religion in its census. However, during the last study from 2007 it was learnt, that almost 60% of the population belongs to Catholicism. The other religions that carry importance are Islam (6,3%), Protestantism (1,7%) and Judaism (0,8%). The rest, 31,5%, are either atheists or have faith in other religion.⁷⁴

2.1.1 HISTORY OF FRANCE

History always plays a great role in shaping the culture and France is no exception. Its rich history lures tourists from all over the globe to travel to the country to explore it. This chapter talks about the most significant past events in French history.

⁶⁹ The World Bank. *Urban population (% of total)* [online]. Available: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?order=wbapi_data_value_2014+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-last&sort=desc. Accessed: 13th March 2016.

⁷⁰ Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques. *Natalité – Fécondité* [online]. Available: http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=T16F035. Accessed: 13th March 2016.

⁷¹ International Organisation of La Francophonie, also called La Francophonie. It is an international organization representing countries and regions where French is the first or customary language

⁷² KURIAN, George Thomas. *Encyclopedia of the world's nations and cultures*. New York: Facts On File, Inc., c2007. ISBN 9780816063079. p. 849.

⁷³ France Diplomatie. *The status of French in the world* [online]. Available: <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/francophony/the-status-of-french-in-the-world/>. Accessed: 13th March 2016.

⁷⁴ BussinessInfo.cz. *Francie: Základní charakteristika teritoria, ekonomický přehled* [online]. Available: <http://www.businessinfo.cz/cs/clanky/francie-zakladni-charakteristika-teritoria-19012.html>. Accessed: 13th March 2016.

Very little is known about today's France before it was conquered by Romans. It is known it was inhabited by a Celtic tribe called Gauls. Approximately 58 – 51 the Gauls were defeated by Romans who stayed until 5th century. During their reign, they built roads and cities and gave roots to today's French language as Latin replaced the Celtic language. The first ruler, who united the present territory of France, was named the King of Franks, Clovis.⁷⁵

- **Louis XIV**

A successor and son of Louis XIII, Louis XIV is by many considered the most significant sovereign of French history. Louis XIV, called the Sun King, ruled France for 72 years (1643 – 1715). During that time, he transformed his country into the centralized absolute monarchy by taking the power from the nobility. Keeping a distance from the French aristocracy, he built an extravagant palace at Versailles which became during his reign the political and cultural center. The reign of Louis XIV was the golden age of French culture, his aggressive foreign policy due to his hunger for wars and. In 1598, Louis XIV revoke the Edict of Nantes, which awarded the Protestants to religious freedom. As a consequence, hundreds of thousands of Protestants fled from France which resulted in economical and cultural decline.⁷⁶

- **French Revolution**

Lavish spending of King Louis XV and XVI, France's expenses while participating in America Revolution, raising of taxes, increasing prices of bread, drought, penurious cereal harvest and spread of diseases among livestock, all these events fan the flame in the commoners' minds. With the influence of French Enlightenments, the revolutionary ideas started to spread among the peasants and poor. In 1780s, when France authorities wanted to increase the taxes again, the resentment towards the regime resulted in riots and strikes. 14th July 1789, the Bastille fortress, which was that time a symbol of a regal power, was conquered by the revolutionists and the First Republic was declared. In August 1789, the French adopted the Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen, whose principles were: liberté, égalité, fraternité.⁷⁷ However, instead of peaceful continuing, France underwent the "Reign of Terror" when the Jacobins, the radicals, with use of guillotine, beheaded hundreds of thousands French. In 1799, the Revolution ended by commander Napoleon Bonaparte who named himself as a first consul and later, in 1804, the emperor of France.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ KURIAN, George Thomas. Encyclopedia of the world's nations and cultures. New York: Facts On File, Inc., c2007. ISBN 9780816063079. p. 849.

⁷⁶ Bibliography. *Louis XIV Biography* [online]. Available: <http://www.biography.com/people/louis-xiv-9386885#synopsis>. Accessed: 13th March 2016.

⁷⁷ Liberty, equality, brotherhood

⁷⁸ History. *French Revolution* [online]. Available: <http://www.history.com/topics/french-revolution>. Accessed: 13th March 2016.

- **Napoleon Bonaparte**

Napoleon Bonaparte, also called Napoleon I, was a military leader and emperor of France. Nowadays he is one of the most significant military leaders in the history. He is known for transforming military through its organization and training. Napoleon was born in Corsica in 1769 to a Corsican nobility. During the French Revolution, Napoleon was quickly stepping up in the military hierarchy reaching to the position of commander of the Army of the Interior. Under Napoleon's command, many victories were gained, French territory expanded and great part of Europe was seized. From 1799 Napoleon ruled as a First Consul, a consul for life, and in 1804 he proclaimed himself an emperor of France. Under his rule, he introduced many reforms such as economic, education or legal system. Lastly, he adopted the Napoleonic Code, allowing freedom of religion. In 182, after invasion of Russia, which ended up tragically, Napoleon was exiled to the island of Elba. After 3 year he has returned but was defeated at the Battle of Waterloo and exiled again to the island of Saint Helena, where he also died.⁷⁹

- **Modern History**

World War I brought to France a victory and regions of Alsace and Lorraine back. Even though France was considered as one of the winners of the war, the country was left demolished. Therefore, the time between the wars was marked by economic depression and political vulnerability. World War II divided France to two parts – zone near town Vichy, under a French control, and the rest under a German control. This was also the moment, when the Third Republic ended. The Fourth Republic was proclaimed in 1946, soon after the termination of the World War II. However, the Fourth Republic did not last long, just until 1959 when Charles de Gaulle proposed a new constitution which immediately after its implementation formed the Fifth Republic which lasts until today.⁸⁰

2.1.2 CURRENT SITUATION IN FRANCE

- **Economics**

Nowadays, France is one of the strongest economies in the world. Therefore, it belongs to the countries of high income. According to the IMF, France is ranked as 20th country by GDP per capita with \$37,728 per habitant. France is a member of many

⁷⁹ Biography. Napoleon Biography [online]. Available: <http://www.biography.com/people/napoleon-9420291#first-consul>. Accessed: 13th March 2016.

⁸⁰ KURIAN, George Thomas. Encyclopedia of the world's nations and cultures. New York: Facts On File, Inc., c2007. ISBN 9780816063079. p. 850.

French leading industries are automobiles, aircraft, chemicals, machinery, metals, food, especially cheese, fashion and pharmaceuticals. With more than 85 million tourists a year, France is the most visited country and Paris is the most visited city in the world. That makes tourism the most important component of French economy. Besides Paris, cities such as Strasbourg, Lyon, Marseilles, Toulouse and Nantes are other crucial industrial cities.⁸¹

Interestingly, in comparison to other major economic powers, agriculture plays an important role in France. There is a great importance of the livestock, particularly in the Alpine and Pyrenees plains. The main agricultural products are wheat, corn, potatoes and sugar. Moreover, France is one of the leading countries in wine production. Wines from the regions of Bordeaux, Gijon and Reims are known all over the globe.⁸²

The main export partners of France are Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. On the other hand, France imports the most from Germany, Belgium, Italy and Netherlands. Overall, in 2015, imported goods had a value of \$572.7 billion and the mostly imported products included machinery and equipment, aircraft and spacecraft, oil, vehicles and electronic devices.⁸³

64 principal French corporations collected together revenues of \$2.185 trillion and profit worth \$72.5 billion. In the figure 20 from the year 2013, a reader can find the top 15 French companies, their global ranking and sales.⁸⁴

Lastly, the French tax burden continues to be highly above the European average with 55% of corporate tax and with a maximum tax of individual of 75%.

⁸¹ OECD. *Global Economic Outlook and Interim Economic Outlook* [online]. Available: <http://www.oecd.org/eco/outlook/economicoutlook.htm>. Accessed: 25th March 2016.

⁸² Infoplease. *France* [online]. Available: <http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/world/france-economy.html>. Accessed: 25th March 2016.

⁸³ World's richest countries. *Top French Imports from the World* [online]. Available: <http://www.worldsrichestcountries.com/top-france-imports.html>. Accessed: 25th March 2016.

⁸⁴ Economy Watch. *Forbes Global 2000: France's Largest Companies* [online]. Available: <http://www.economywatch.com/companies/forbes-list/france.html>. Accessed: 26th March 2016.

Global Rank	Company	Sales (\$billion)	Profits (\$billion)	Assets (\$billion)	Market Value (\$billion)
22	BNP Paribas	126.2	8.6	2504.2	71.3
23	Total	240.5	14.1	224.1	114.4
39	AXA Group	147.5	5.3	1005.4	45.3
72	Sanofi	46.1	6.6	132.4	131.6
74	EDF	95.9	4.4	325.2	35.3
95	GDF Suez	128	2	268.9	45
146	Société Générale	107.8	1	1648.9	29.5
162	Vinci	51.7	2.5	80.9	25.4
169	France Telecom	57.4	1.5	113.9	29.2
175	Renault	54.4	2.3	98.9	20.3

Figure 20: French 15 biggest companies⁸⁵

- **Politics**

The French politics is determined by the Constitution of the fifth Republic, whose first article says “*La France est une république indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale*”.⁸⁶ The system of government of France is semi-presidential. It means, president, the executive head of state, coexists together with a prime minister and the council. The division of power is a quite complicated issue. Overall, the president has great influence and power, particularly in questions of defence and foreign policy. He can also name the prime minister. If the president and prime minister are representatives of different parties, this situation lead to political cohabitation and the president’s autonomy diminishes. However, in case both the president and prime minister are representatives of one party, president can de facto take care of all government’s policies. On 15th May 2012, François Hollande was elected by people of France a president of France, he will be in the office for five years.

François Hollande is representative of French Socialist Party (PS)⁸⁷ so as the prime minister, Manuel Valls. PS is as well the most powerful party in France being one of the governing parties. PS is very social oriented, carrying values of strong welfare state, nationalism and participative democracy. Second biggest player in French politics is The Republicans (LR).⁸⁸ LR are centre-right-wing party with conservative believes.

⁸⁵ Economy Watch. *Forbes Global 2000: France's Largest Companies* [online]. Available: <http://www.economywatch.com/companies/forbes-list/france.html>. Accessed: 26th March 2016.

⁸⁶ France is a republic, indivisible, secular, democratic and social / Vie Publique. *Quels sont les héritages et les principes de la Ve République?* [online]. Available: <http://www.vie-publique.fr/decouverte-institutions/institutions/veme-republique/heritages/quels-sont-principes-fondamentaux-republique-francaise.html>. Accessed: 25th March 2016.

⁸⁷ Parti Socialiste

⁸⁸ Les Républicains

Today's leader, Nicolas Sarkozy, is a former President of France. Among other significant parties belong National Front, Left Front, French Communist Party and Together.^{89 90}

2.1.3 SCHOOL SYSTEM IN FRANCE

“Good education and skills are important requisites for finding a job. In France, 73% of adults aged 25-64 have completed upper secondary education, close to the OECD average of 75%. This is truer of men than women, as 73% of men have successfully completed high school compared with 72% of women. In terms of the quality of the education system, the average student scored 500 in reading literacy, maths and science in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). This score is slightly higher than the OECD average of 497. On average in France, girls outperformed boys by 13 points, higher than the average OECD gap of 8 points.”⁹¹

School system in France is very different to the one in the Czech Republic. The schooling is compulsory for all of the age 6 till 16. There are three options of schooling: either a child can attend public school, private school and he or she can get education at home. French education is divided to several stages as following:

- **École maternelle**

École maternelle means preschool or nursery school and provide care for 3 to 6 years olds. In these nursery schools, the main aim is to prepare kids for primary school via teaching them to read, write and count. Another objective is to teach the kids to play with others. This type of education is no mandatory.

- **École primaire**

From the age of 6 to age of 11, the French kids attend the primary school, in France called école primaire. Primary education is compulsory for every kid without any exception. The syllabus aims to enrich students in French language, history, geography, arts, mathematics and also foreign language

- **Collège**

College, also called a middle school, lasts from the age of 11 to 15. All students get accepted without any enrollment exam or special requirement. Besides the subjects

⁸⁹ Parties and Elections in Europe. *France* [online]. Available: <http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/france.html>. Accessed: 25th March 2016.

⁹⁰ About-France.com. *Political parties in France with a comparison to political parties in Britain and in the USA* [online]. Available: <http://about-france.com/political-parties.htm>. Accessed: 25th March

⁹¹ OECD Better Life Index. *France* [online]. Available: <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/france/>. Accessed: 26th March 2016.

that were already taught at primary school, the curriculum is composed of civics, physics, physical education, biology, technology, art and music.

At the end of the college, students have to take “*Diplôme National du Brevet*”. This exam tests their French, math and either history or geography knowledge. Moreover, the students have to take a B2i exam that tests their computer and internet skills and proof an understanding of foreign language on the level A2 or higher.

- **Lycée**

The age of 15 to 18 is spent on either lycée general, lycée technique or a lycée professionnel. No matter what institution a student attends, at the end of the secondary education, everyone takes a baccalaureat. An exam, which was introduced by Napoleon I and is mostly called “le bac”, is the major diploma demanded in order to pursue university.

- **Higher education**

Higher education in France is divided to 3 levels: *Licence* and *Licence Professionnelle* (Bachelor degree / undergraduate studies), *Master* (Master degree / postgraduate studies), *Doctorat* (Doctorate degree, PhD).⁹²

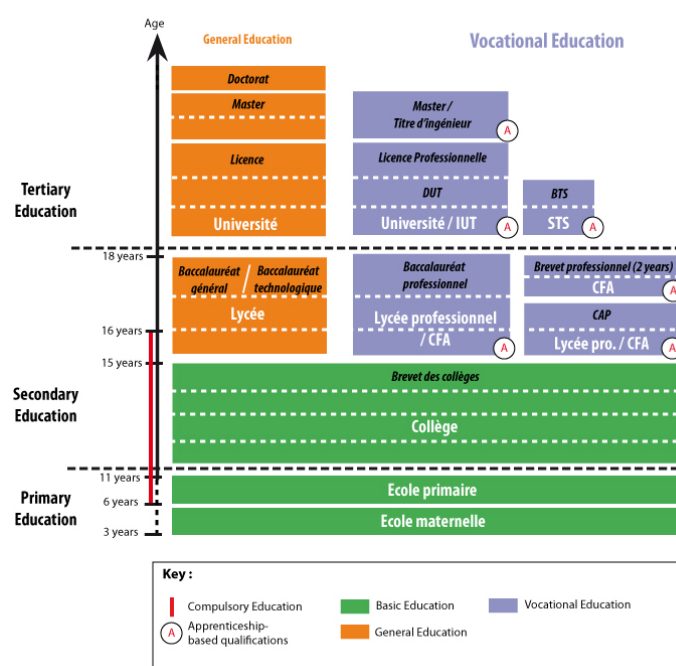


Figure 21: French Education System⁹³

⁹² Expatica. *A guide to French education* [online]. Available: http://www.expatica.com/fr/education/Education-in-France_101147.html. Accessed: 27th March 2016.

⁹³ Ma Voie Pro Europe. France [online]. Available: <http://mavoieproeurope.onisep.fr/en/initial-vocational-education-and-training-in-europe/france/>. Accessed: 26th March 2016.

2.2 THE POSSIBILITY FOR CZECH STUDENTS SPENDING EXCHANGE IN FRANCE

As a Bachelor student, this chapter focuses on the possibilities of spending some time abroad for Bachelor students.

2.2.1 *ERASMUS*

Erasmus programme was established in 1987 by the European Union and it is an abbreviation for “European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students”. Therefore, as the name implies, the Erasmus programme serves as a student exchange programme for the university students within the European Union. Additionally, at beginning of 2014, the Erasmus+ programme was established.

There are currently 33 countries participating in the programme, including the Czech Republic. In the University of Economics in Prague a bachelor student can get involved in the programme for one semester. The main source of information for its students provides the university via OZS.⁹⁴ OZS employees are to be found on the 5th floor in the Rajská Building during the office hours or there is also many important information available on the OZS’s website.⁹⁵ Moreover, each year in autumn, the office issues a brochure with all possibilities for Erasmus candidates. Not only it includes all the details about universities, taught languages and number of places available, but also all important steps to be completed before and after applying for the Erasmus. Also in autumn, there are informational meetings taking place regarding the Erasmus programme possibilities.

In order to successfully undergo the enrolment for the Erasmus programme, certain aspects are taken into the account, such as participation in Buddy system (10 points), grading (100 points) and English exam (30 points). After a successful acceptance to the programme, other informational meetings will be held advising students about errands and dates that are needed to be done and kept before and after leaving the foreign university.⁹⁶

2.2.2 *FREEMOVER*

Freemover programme is not an exchange student program as it is in case of Erasmus. During the programme period, no exchange of students is conducted. This mobility is managed and organized by an individual student. This student seeks for his desired

⁹⁴ Oddělení Zahraničních Styků = The bureau for international relations

⁹⁵ <http://ozs.vse.cz>

⁹⁶ VŠE. *Studium v zahraničí* [online]. Available: <http://ozs.vse.cz/pro-studenty/studium-v-zahranici/>. Accessed: 14th April 2016.

university with a similar major like in the home university, contacts the school abroad and if both the home and foreign university agree with the mobility, the student can become a part of freemover programme for a semester or two. The greatest difference between Freemover and Erasmus is the fact that a student has to deal with all the paper-work and communication on his own. Moreover, if the foreign university demands a tuition fee, it must be paid by a student too.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ VŠE. *Freemover*. [online]. Available: <http://ozs.vse.cz/pro-studenty/freemover/>. Accessed: 16th April 2016.

3 RESEARCH

3.1 METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The main objective of this thesis was to identify French cultural standards from Czech perspective with a focus on study environment. For clear recognition of my thesis's aim, the questions were concentrated on the underlying norms of thinking, typical way of perceiving, judging and acting of the given culture. The qualitative research methodology composing of 12 respondents, who recently spent semester or more in France, was based on the technique of narrative interview that was used in order to gather critical incidents. These critical incidents helped to define the French cultural standards.

The criteria for choosing respondents were following: 1.) to have an experience with French culture and experience French study environment, 2.) the experience to be recent and still in live-memory, 3.) to agree with the interview. Out of 12 overall respondents, 11 of them spent one or two semesters in France as exchange students, only one Czech studied in France over 4 years as a full-time student.

During approximately 30 minutes long discussion, either through the Skype or personally, each respondent was asked to speak about stories or situations he/she came across while living in France. Every questionnaire begun with the explanation of the purpose of the methodology, question about the age and the period of study. Afterwards, the main questions' structure of the research was as follow:

- What shocking, unexpected or surprising has happened to you?
- Did you perceived some behavior of French strange and how it appeared to be different from the Czech one?
- What are differences between Czech and French in the area of fulfillment school duties?
- What are the differences in terms of priorities from study and leisure time?
- What are the differences between Czech and French in the area of the perception of authority toward the system and toward teachers?
- What is the relationship of students to their university?

Each respondent was asked to describe the particular situations in more details (its context, place and people) and specify why it occurred to be strange or different to them. During each interview the questions were added or shortened according to the need.

All interviews were conducted during the March and April 2016.

3.2 OWN RESEARCH

To get the idea about this thesis' respondents structure, the interviewed people were also asked about their gender, age, number of semesters spent in France and lastly, the city and name of the university. More detailed profiles of each respondent are to be found as an attachment at the end of this thesis.

- **Gender**

Only 4 out of 12 respondents were males.

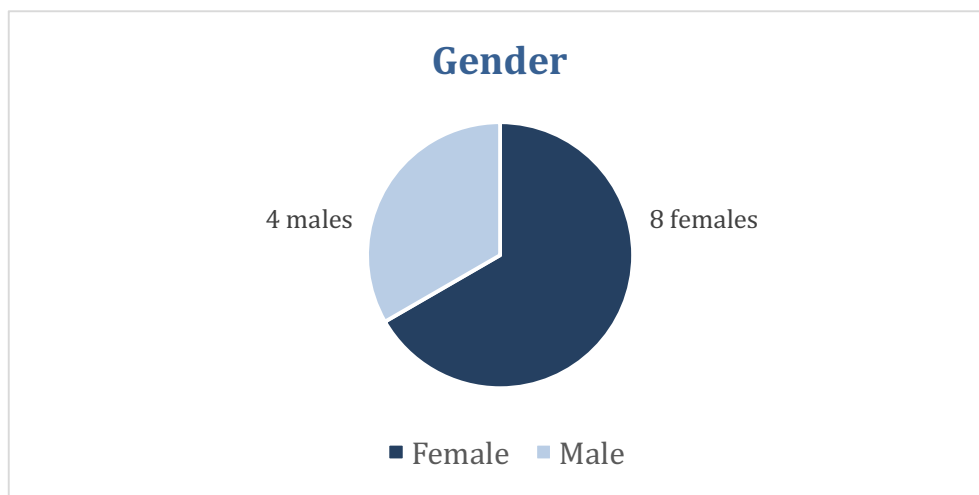


Table 1: Structure of the respondents according to the gender

- **Age**

Since the research was focused on the university students spending their studies or exchange semester(s) in France, the strongest group was represented by students of 24 – 26 years old.

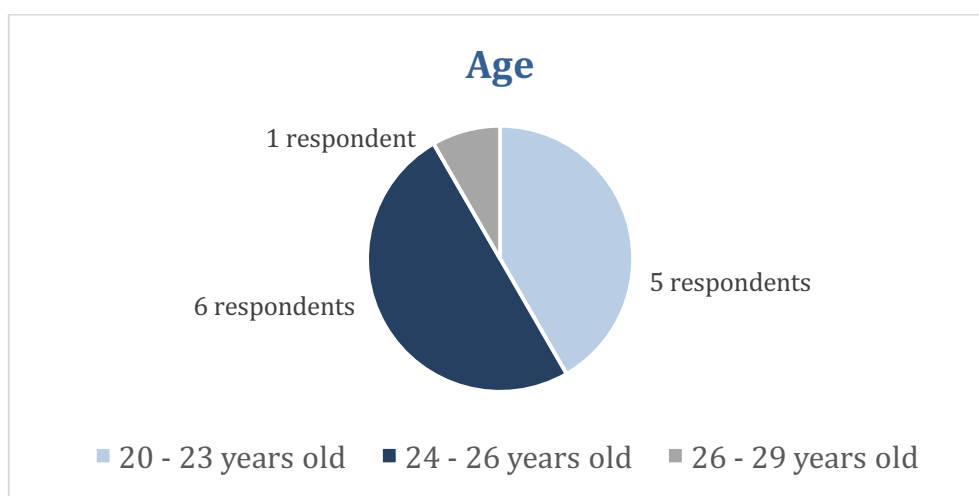


Table 2: Structure of the respondents according to the age groups

- **Number of semesters**

10 respondents spent only one semester in France. Only one respondent is full-time student in France.

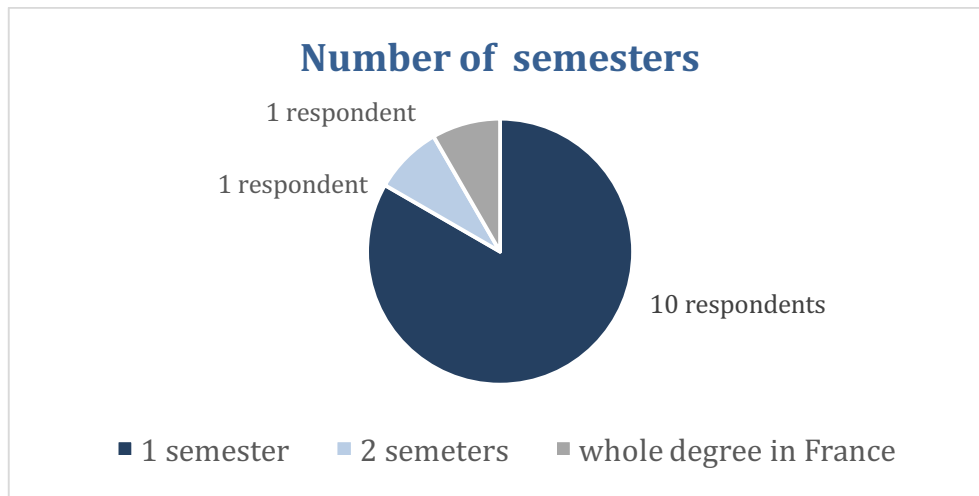


Table 3: Structure of the respondents according to the number of semesters spent in France

- **Bachelor or Master degree**

6 respondents studied in France during their bachelor degree and 5 respondents studied in France while on their masters. Only one student studied both the bachelor and master in France.

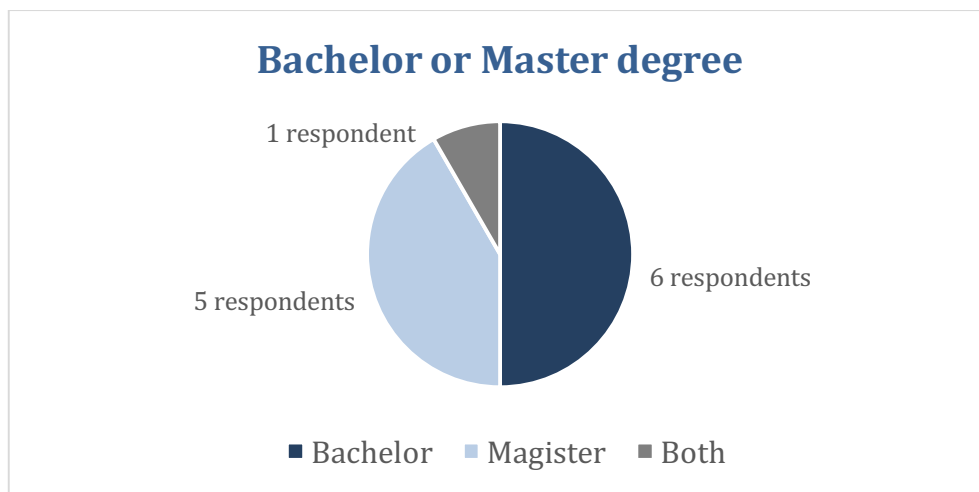


Table 4: Structure of the respondents according to the type of education conducted in France

3.3 RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The research brought several cultural standards that are summarized in the table. Furthermore, the extracts from the narrative interviews are accompanied with each standard for its better understanding-

Czech-French cultural standards	
1	Bureaucracy and Rules
2	Strong inner focus on French environment only (no effort to look at problem from foreigner's point of view)
3	Structure of classes and exams
4	Full devotion to being a student
5	Dramatizing
6	Attitude towards customers
7	Punctuality
8	Politeness at any time

Table 5: Czech-French cultural standards

Bureaucracy and Rules

Most of the respondents found difficulties regarding the bureaucracy and rules. It was many times mentioned, no exceptions were given concerning the administration and rules, therefore, no space for improvisation or flexibility was given. French like the certainty their rules brings them. Nonetheless, most of the respondents agreed, the administration procedures were smooth at school.

Bureaucracy

“I was surprised by their administrative procedures which I find very complicated and full of rules. The rarest thing happened to me at the beginning of my stay, when I asked for a state financial support. I needed to submit an application and to do so, I needed a French telephone number and French bank account. Of course, I did not have either at the beginning so I went to get it. However, for obtaining a French bank account I needed to have a French telephone number and vice versa – for obtaining a French telephone number, I needed to have a French bank account!” Eva

“Just for renting a mobile house in a camping, you needed so many documents! What I found the silliest was the fact they wanted the insurance for the mobile house even before they promised us to rent it to us. And when we went to insure the mobile house, they wanted to see the contract for renting the cottage. So stupid” Martin

“I don't have bad experience with bureaucracy from the school environment, but I have plenty from outside school environment. I needed to obtain “Numéro société générale”, just getting this one number it cost me incredible amount of time, plenty of papers, calls to the office and going to the office. It took ages and they wanted such useless information. I am sure the whole process could have been done more effectively and easier.” Barbora

“I am always very surprised, how all the procedures at school go quite smoothly. Total opposite of all the administration outside the school.”

Anna

“Nantes is a student city and as I could not find any place to stay, I have decided to live in over-priced private residence for students. When I arrived, it was Saturday evening and all I wanted was to get the room I paid for. However, they realized I don't have a housing insurance. No one told me about any housing insurance before but I was insured myself so I tried to persuade them if I have broken anything, my insurance would cover it anyway – with or without the housing insurance. They did not let me stay and so I had to go to stay in a hotel until Monday as everything was already closed and shops don't open on Sundays either.”

Zlata

Rules

“They really like to follow the rules. Once I am in the mall and there is a supermarket inside of it too. I want to enter the supermarket but its entrance is on the other side of the hall. So I decide to go through a shortcut and enter through one of the closed cash-desks. Of course, someone sees me and gets so mad like if it would be a crime or something! So instead of letting me pass and be quick with my one-item shopping, they make me go back and come through the proper entrance!”

Veronika

“Oh, yeah, French and their rules. For example, there is a rule not to disturb others in public transport. When we were taking a train for our trip to Bordeaux, we were 4 international students, just chatting and laughing. The train was almost empty and we were not being loud or making any mess. Suddenly, a French woman came to us saying we are disturbing her and we should lower our voices. Yet we were just chatting. In the Czech Republic people either would not mind others talking and if so, they would change their seat and leave you talking with your friends. In France, they can't just let it be, they feel obliged to tell you when you are not doing something exactly according to their rules.”

Kristýna

“We had to do many presentations during the semester and I have noticed, all the French students had their presentations all the same: according to the rules of “French presentations”. They always put phrases and definitions. But definitions even for basic stuff that we all should know. And it was impossible to convince them the definitions are not needed, that we should keep our presentation clear and get to the point. They would not listen. If there was no definition in the presentation, it was not a good work for them.”

Vojtěch

Strong inner focus on French environment only (no effort to look at problem from foreigner's point of view)

Czech students here are used to help their international counter-partners receive while travelling to the Czech Republic. Getting a buddy that takes care of the foreigner from the arrival till the departure, dorms offered to him/her for any time-period needed

and student association that takes care of students, prepares for their trip and events. That is the reason why most of the students were shocked by no help with their arrival and finding accommodation. French students are independent, use to working on their own and it is expected of the new-comers too. However, without French language and knowledge of local circumstances and conditions, it was very difficult to orient and manage basic survival things like accommodation.

“The main issue during my stay in France was the accommodation. The school did not help us at all and my friend and I could not find anything from the Czech Republic. At first, after the arrival to France, we had to stay at friend’s friend’s flat before we managed to get our own place. It was very unpleasant.”

Eva

“I had problems finding accommodation in Marseille. The school did not offer us any dorms neither any help. I had to stay in a host-family during my stay as that was the only available accommodation I could find.”

Jan

“I could not find any accommodation before coming to Nantes and school was not helpful at all, so at the beginning I was “couch-surfing”. First day of the orientation day, we were asked who still has not any permanent accommodation. Almost 1/3 of students raised their hand. Therefore, they offered us a lecture to help us with seeking the accommodation. At the end, the lecture was only about CAF. But who needs state financial aid when you do not have a place to finance it, right? Finally, 2 other international students and I stayed in camping in mobile house for the whole semester because we literally had no other place to go.”

Martin

“There were so many events, however the internationals were quite left behind – I mean, without understanding French, it was difficult. So many associations for the French students, but no one really took care of us. If we wanted to have some action, we had to manage it on our own”

Kristýna

Structure of classes and exams

All the respondents agreed, the classes are more practical than in the Czech Republic. Not only they bring theory into practice, but push a student to seek for information and be active, not passive. They want a student to think outside the box, be creative and innovative. Working on all the reports, homework, assignments and case studies is a way of teaching and learning. Therefore, for those who work hard during the semester, it is not such a need to prepare for the exams.

Classes

“I liked the different system of the classes. We had couple of classes where the teacher would be a real businessman and he would hold a class for 3 days in a row and then the class would be over.”

Eva

"The school is more practical than theoretical. It is better fun however, sometimes it was a problem as a person did not have enough even basic information in order to fulfill the assignment."

Kateřina

"The case studies were great! While talking about leadership, we had a case study on Volkswagen and I still remember it even now. I remember all the case studies, they taught me a lot."

Barbora

"It was a business school, not a university that I have attended. We had classes of maximum 20 people and when a student did not know anything, the teacher did not say "Come to see me after the class, I will explain it to you", contrary, he addressed to your problem straight away and tried to help you to explain."

Jan

"Workload is basically the same, however in the Czech Republic, a student does not have to do much during the semester and there is lots of workload particularly during the examination period. On the other hand, in France, due to the case studies, reports and presentation we had continuously many things to do and prepare for during the whole semester and there was not much of studying needed during the finals."

Lucie

"As the classes are also very practical too, the teachers were using current and accurate topics from the business world. It was interesting to see into the core of with someone who has a great knowledge to the topic."

Kristýna

"The classes are both the practical and theoretical. Which is good because the classes are also structured the way so everyone would get a chance to speak and express their opinion. I also felt like there is also space for more point of views not only the teachers' ones."

Zlata

"There are so many group works. It really teaches a person how to work and cooperate with the others. Now I know it is a good preparation for work."

Marek

Exams

"We had to take 20 subjects in France. It was a huge workload and all the foreign students were worried for the final. At the end, it turned out we will have just 4 exams. Imagine, out of 20 subjects only 4 examinations!"

Veronika

"All the exams were in a form of essays. It would be ok, if I would have a humanities oriented classes. But most of my classes were finance oriented. So at the exam we were supposed to describe all the equations and so on. I found it so stupid – you count the equations, not describe them!"

Eva

"The final exams were basically case studies. For example, in finance oriented classes it was a numerical task, a work with spread sheets or income statements. I did not really have to do a math but the aim of the exam strategy class was to work with the numbers and understand the point. In this case study, we were given 3 hours and 20 pages of information regarding to the case study and at the end of the exam I was supposed

to hand in a business strategy plan for an enterprise I was analyzing.”

Jan

“I got a feeling when a person once gets to the French university, it is almost impossible to get kicked out from the school. The exams are structured a way, that even though you haven’t study for the exam, but went to the lectures, with a common sense you can get the answer right.”

Martin

Full devotion to being a student

Czech students perceive that French students are not only part of the university during the lectures. They are part of the university by participating in association, going to the events organized by the school, showing on public which university they are from and taking part in sports which represent the university in the competitions. French students fully devote to their student life, they do not work next to their studies.

“Students of Audencia were full-time students, doing nothing else besides studying. And so they had plenty of time to take part in numerous associations according to their point of interests”

Kateřina

“The associations were organizing so many events. Not only representative events such as dancing and singing performance for the school but also every weeks’ parties. It was something incredible for me: school vouch for all the parties the association organized and let them sell the tickets for the entrance and drinks in the school.”

Zlata

“There were so many sports a student could join, it was incredible! They were no classes on Thursday afternoon as all the sports had matches and competition. I really like the approach of the school, encouraging the students in such way,”

Veronika

“They are so proud of the association they are part of. Always wearing the association hoodies – to a school, to a club, to a bar: anywhere!”

Kristýna

“Participation in school events is very high. I really liked how feeling of belonging and taking part in the school activities plays significant role in their school years.”

Marek

“They wear school hoodies, bags for notebooks ... I think that they are very proud of the university they go to.”

Anna

“They are crazy about being a part of some association. To me thought, it seemed like they took their association too much seriously putting the association’s duties ahead at the expense of school duties.”

Barbora

Dramatizing

French like to carry away by their feelings. Consequently, they like to dramatize the situations. They are not afraid to express their opinion or discuss their different views. They show their feeling by many gestures, facial expressions and verbal and non-verbal expressions.

“The noises they sometimes make while speaking. I don’t speak French myself so without understanding while watching them speaking, it seemed to me like a theatre play.”

Zlata

“You don’t have to understand French, you can feel the emotions they put to each conversation.”

Kristýna

“During my stay, I perceived, they have little actor or actresses hidden inside of them. And when it comes to the intense situations when they feel like they have the right to do something or they have the truth, they can really show it. I remember once, when I was in the supermarket, there was a problem with a payment and the woman, whose payment could not be proceeded, instead of keeping this humiliating situation all quite, was, on contrary, all loud and using gestures and her hands to express how unsatisfied she is.”

Lucie

“Besides waving hands and all their acting, they also use their face muscles to express whether they are satisfied or not. U actually never know how much muscles you have on your face until going to France.”

Anna

Attitude towards customers

Czech students recognized French in services as less efficient. French enjoy what they do and live by the quote “la vie est belle”, therefore, there are more smiling and nice however, they take their time and are more indifferent to certain situations.

“French are very casual. In French restaurant they let you sit for 10minutes before they come to serve you. I work as a waitress during summers and I know in the Czech Republic, it would be a problem. In France, they come to you triumphantly like if it is great they make it this soon.”

Kristýna

“In the Czech Republic, there is this unwritten rule “My costumer, my ruler”. It does not count for France. It happened to me 3 times, I would be in a rush and just tell a shop-assistant “2 croissants, s’il vous plaît.” The shop-assistant would correct me “Bonjour, Mademoiselle, je voudrais 2 croissants, s’il vous plaît.”

Marek

“In all French cities, except Paris, people do not tip. If a waiter knows he is not going to be tipped, he does not try. According to that, the service is what it is.”

Anna

“In the shops, French still like to pay by their checks. There was always a long queue at the cash-desk and the shop assistant would always have a chat with the paying costumer, being so indifferent that he is even more holding the other costumers to wait.”

Lucie

Punctuality

Their casualty and attitude towards life “la vie est belle” is not only reflected in the treatment of the costumer but also with their punctuality. Respondents agreed, 10-15minutes delay is never a deal for them.

“French are always late. I was always the first one in the classroom.”

Kateřina

“French are always late. Not too much but still. They take it as a normal thing, they don’t even apologize for being late.”

Barbora

“They would come late to a class, sit down and pretend like nothing happened. They would not apologize and the teachers would not expect any apology either. I would be already ashamed coming late and not saying “sorry” would be despicable in my case. French did not mind!”

Vojtěch

Politeness at any time

“In the Czech Republic, there is this unwritten rule “My costumer, my ruler”. It does not count for France. It happened to me 3 times, I would be in a rush and just tell a shop-assistant “2 croissants, s’il vous plaît.” The shop-assistant would correct me “Bonjour, Mademoiselle, je voudrais 2 croissants, s’il vous plaît.”

Marek

“Oh, yeah, French and their rules. For example, there is a rule not to disturb others in public transport. When we were taking a train for our trip to Bordeaux, we were 4 international students, just chatting and laughing. The train was almost empty and we were not being loud or making any mess. Suddenly, a French woman came to us saying we are disturbing her and we should lower our voices. Yet we were just chatting. In the Czech Republic people either would not mind others talking and if so, they would change their seat and leave you talking with your friends. In France, they can’t just let it be, they feel obliged to tell you when you are not doing something exactly according to their rules.”

Kristýna

3.4 COMPARISON OF THE RESEARCH WITH THE THEORETICAL BASES

This chapter’s objective is to make a comparison between 8 identified Czech-French cultural standards and the knowledge gained in chapter 2, by analyzing aspects influencing French culture (geographical features, language etc.), current situation in France (policy, economy), history and the school system.

Bureaucracy and rules

- Since the reign of Louis XIV, France is very centralistic state. Bureaucracy and strong orientation on rules support this system
- It is also the heritage of absolutism when the authority was unquestionable
- Many rules and administration procedures are counterproductive and ineffective and prove greater focus of political and economical system on social benefits for the society rather than profit

Strong inner focus on French environment only (no effort to look at problem from foreigner's point of view)

- This trait has many origins. Firstly, it is the pride of who they are: everything French had ever had, they made it on their own. Example is a French tricolor which is a legacy of French Revolution and which can be find almost everywhere
- The legacy of colonialism times when French are used to having others to be adapted without them helping to adapt
- One of the most significant figure of 20th century, Charles de Gaulle, was a patriotisms supported

Structure of classes and exams

- French are used to spend lots of their time at school and devote their free time to school duties – this trait is common in all stages of education
- Prestige of schools carries high importance – so-called “Grand écoles” are raising future managers and CEO and they want their student to be ready for their future carrier
- Grand écoles are also very expensive schools, therefore the university has many financial sources and partnerships with corporations

Full devotion to being a student

- Through their life the school system is very complex and demanding
- Since the elementary school, French school lasts through the whole day and so French students are used to focus on the school activities only since childhood
- Louis IX is a prove of high importance of good education and knowledge

Dramatizing

- Through history, French are not afraid to express their opinion
- French bear the legacy of the French Revolution and disintegration and creation of 5 Republics. They are not afraid to go to the conflict if they believe, they have the truth

Attitude towards customers

- Attitude towards customer has origins in two aspects: in the social orientation of the state and in the way of life of French people
- The French constitution states itself “France is social country” and France has very generous social system
- National motto “Liberté, égalité, fraternité”⁹⁸ suggest everybody is equal so as customer and people in services
- Lifestyle of French is casual, they do not rush themselves in their personal life neither while working
- Frequent strikes at the expense of states profits

Punctuality

- “La vie est belle” sentence explains why French do put such importance on punctuality
- French life-style (tasty food, good-quality wine, spend time with friends) is a prove French want to enjoy life rather than hunt for life
- Being stylishly late is part of their image

Politeness at any time

- Politeness of French has roots in a language itself
- Fixed phrases (for example while greeting or ordering) they put great emphasis on politeness
- French language is an official language of many international organizations, diplomats and representatives – it is an opulent language
- Politeness is part of courtesy that was highly demanded on the court of Louis IX

3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Czech students come across critical and inconvenient situations with French while studying in France. In order to avoid difficulties, recommendations for future or potential Czech students coming to French study environment are suggested.

Learn French

It is notorious, French are not very strong English-speakers. Many French are timid to speak even though their spoken English is quite good. It will make it easier for a Czech student to know at least little French in order to break barriers while getting to know the locals. Moreover, knowing French language eases a Czech student life while shopping and dining outside as French in services generally do not speak foreign languages and menus are usually just in French.

⁹⁸ Liberty, equality, fraternity

Be as polite as possible

Knowing French, one realizes, it is very polite language. Sometimes too much for a Czech-speaking student. French follow good-manners and they expect others to use certain courtesies in certain situations. It is recommended to used “Monsieur or Madame” while starting a sentence with a stranger. Lastly, they consider as a politeness to kiss each others cheeks while greeting each other.

Do not take French too seriously.

French language is polite language as well as very expressive. Additionally, French like to accompany dialogues with facial expressions and using hands. All the dramatizing might not be so overwhelming as they tend to show. It is just the way they are.

Follow the structure

Learn information about the way French structure their essays, reports or presentations. The same applies for speeches. All the necessary information, does not strictly mean, good work. According to French, good work also includes proper structure. The same goes to the bureaucracy. All the requirements, even if useless, needs to be met in order to proceed somewhere further.

Be ready to work

French students are used to working during the whole semester and they expect the same from their exchange schoolmates. Moreover, part of the fulfillment of these expectations is also individual preparation and research. Be ready for time-consuming work-load that is part of the practical part of classes.

4 CONCLUSION

The objective of this bachelor thesis was to identify French cultural standards from Czech perspective with a focus on study environment. Moreover, secondary objective was to analyse aspects influencing French culture. As a whole, the bachelor thesis aim is to serve as a guide for future or potential Czech students planning to study to France.

Before conducting a research, the analysis of theoretical approach was made. The theoretical part is to be found in the first chapter that deals with a definition of a culture and terms that are somehow related to the culture such as national culture, culture shock, cultural stereotypes etc. Most importantly, chapter one also describes theories of cultural dimensions of G. Hofstede and F Trompenaars and cultural standards theory of A. Thomas.

Second chapter, the practical one, concerns the aspects influencing French culture, therefore the French. For the ease of reading, the aspects were divided into three most significant ones – historical and current influences and given to the focus of this bachelor thesis, the French system. As history of France is very rich and complex, only the most noteworthy moments of French past were described. Regarding to the present situation, influences such as policy, economy, demography, geography or language were analyzed. Lastly, the French school system was identified together with the possibilities for Czech university students to participate in mobility program to France.

The third and also the last chapter is dedicated to a research and identification of Czech-French cultural standards. For gathering the information, the method of critical events was used while interviewing twelve Czechs. Eleven respondents had an experience with French study environment as exchange students and one as a full-time student. After the qualitative questioning, eight cultural standards were recognized.

First described standard deals with high importance of rules and bureaucracy. Students did not mention any great issue in the school environment, however everybody mentioned inconveniences happening outside the school such as issues while establishing bank accounts or telephone numbers. Other significant standards outside the school were French attitude towards customers and French politeness at any time. As a most significant cultural standards related to school environment was by Czech perceived structure of the classes and exams. All Czechs agreed, the school semester is divided completely differently than in their home university. Furthermore, many respondents undergone hardship related to a cultural standard describing strong inner focus on French environment only when French did not try to look at problem from foreigner's point of view. Mostly, this problem was linked to difficulties while finding accommodation. Other Czech-French cultural standards were also full devotion to being a student, dramatizing and punctuality.

After identification of the Czech-French cultural standards, some proposals for future or eventual Czech exchange students on how to avoid misunderstanding, cultural shock and troublesome situations were suggested.

As a whole, the bachelor thesis in its final form serve as a solid source for those interested in going from the Czech Republic to the French Republic to study.

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Attachments

Attachment 1: Profiles of the respondents

Anna Těhlová (23 years old)

Anna lives four years in France, in Paris. She studied there a Bachelor degree and now continues with her Master at SciencesPo University with a major of Europe-Afrique studies. She lives with a French woman and comes to a contact with French everyday.

Vojtěch Knespl (24 years old)

Vojtěch is a last year student of CEMS program, which is a global alliance in management education. He has spent his winter semester abroad in Lyon, in University of Lyon, in 2013. Nowadays, he has an internship in Lyon too.

Martin Bašta (21 years old)

Martin is a bachelor student of Diplomacy in VŠE. He spent last semester in Nantes, in Audencia Business School as an Erasmus student.

Zlata Straková (24 years old)

Zlata is master's degree student of University of Economics, Prague. So as Martin and Kateřina, she spent her winter semester 2015 in France, in Audencia Business school.

Marek Jansa (28 years old)

Marek conducted his bachelor degree in Palacký University with a major in Applied economics. As his major was fully run in French, it was compulsory for him to spend two semesters in France in order to master the language. Marek has chosen university in Lille, Charles de Gaulle University – Lille III, for his one school year abroad. While in France, not only he came into contact with French at school but also in his host-family where he stayed.

Jan Vaniš (21years old)

Jan is in his final year of bachelor in faculty of Business Administration in VŠE. Within Erasmus program, he spent his winter semester 2015 in Marseille, in KEDGE Business School.

Kateřina Filipová (25 years old)

Kateřina is a student of VŠE who has spent one semester in Nantes, in Audencia Business School as an Erasmus student. She has taken all her classes in French and lived with a French family through her stay.

Eva Smotlachová (24 years old)

Eva is a student of Institute of Economic Studies in Charles' University. She is conducting her last semester of master degree and the previous semester spent in Strasbourg as a student of SciencesPo in Corporate strategy and finance.

Barbora Štelcíková (24 years old)

Barbora is currently a student of Jan Amos Komenský University in Prague. During winter semester 2015, she spent her Erasmus programme in Paris, in ISC Paris Business School. Barbora knows French environment very well not only thanks to her semester there but also thanks to taking a gap year in 2012 and spending a year in France working as an au-pair. Moreover, she has a French boyfriend whom she comes to visit in France quite often.

Lucie Oliveriusová (24 years old)

Lucie has been studying for becoming a teacher of Czech and French language in Charles' University. She stayed in Avignon for a winter semester 2015, where she studied in the University of Avignon programme run in French. During her stay, she also met her current boyfriend who is a native French.

Veronika Vohlmuthová (23 years old)

Veronika is an undergraduate student of Warwick University so as of the University of Economics in Prague. From September 2015 till January 2016, she spent her exchange programme in Paris, in SciencesPo.

Kristýna Koldasová (22 years old)

Kristýna is a student of faculty of Business and Economics in Mendel University in Brno. In 2014, Kristýna participated in Erasmus programme and as an exchange student she spent one semester in La Rochelle in École Supérieure de Commerce.