CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF CHINESE STUDENTS:
PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

ผู้วิจัย   Prommin Songsirisak[1]   phiathailand@hotmail.com

บทคัดย่อ

เนื่องด้วยจำนวนนักศึกษาจีนที่เพิ่มขึ้นอย่างรวดเร็วในมหาวิทยาลัยไทย ส่งผลให้เกิดความกังวลเรื่องสวัสดิการและความสามารถในการปรับตัวให้เข้ากับวัฒนธรรมไทยและการดำเนินชีวิตในรั้วมหาวิทยาลัย ความคิดเห็นของนักศึกษาจีนในช่วงที่ผ่านมาได้แสดงให้เห็นว่า มีนักศึกษาจีนเพียงบางส่วนที่สามารถปรับตัวได้เป็นอย่างดี ในขณะที่คนส่วนใหญ่ประสบกับปัญหาการปรับตัวทางวัฒนธรรมที่ไม่คุ้นเคยอันเนื่องมาจากการขาดกลยุทธ์ในการจัดการกับประสบการณ์ทางวัฒนธรรมในสภาวะใหม่ อีกทั้งยังมีความรู้ทางด้านวัฒนธรรมไทยที่ไม่เพียงพอ และขาดความสามารถในการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรม ดังนั้น การศึกษาวิจัยในครั้งนี้ จึงมุ่งศึกษาปัญหาการปรับตัวข้ามวัฒนธรรมและค้นหากลยุทธ์และแนวทางการแก้ไขปัญหาสำหรับนักศึกษาจีนก่อนเดินทางเข้ามาศึกษา ณ ประเทศไทย แบบสอบถามปลายเปิดถูกใช้เป็นเครื่องมือในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล

วิจัยจากนักศึกษาจีน จำนวน 30 คน ที่กำลังศึกษาได้ระยะเวลา 3 เดือน ณ มหาวิทยาลัยไทยและข้อมูลถูกนำไปวิเคราะห์โดยวิธีการวิเคราะห์แบบ open and axial coding techniques (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ปัญหาหลักที่สำคัญของการปรับตัวทางวัฒนธรรม คือ ปัญหาด้านการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษและภาษาไทย ขาดกลยุทธ์ในการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรมกับคนไทย ไม่คุ้นเคยกับมารยาทไทย อาหารไทย พฤติกรรมทางสังคมที่เหมาะสม และวัฒนธรรมการเรียนการสอนของไทยสำหรับด้านกลยุทธ์และแนวทางการแก้ไขปัญหานั้น ผลงานวิจัยได้เสนอแนะ 3 แนวทางหลัก คือ นักศึกษาจีนควรเพิ่มพูนความรู้ทางด้านภาษาและวัฒนธรรมไทย เพิ่มทักษะและความสามารถที่ดีในการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรมสำหรับสื่อสารกับคนไทย และมหาวิทยาลัยในจีนควรจัดให้มีการอบรมปฐมนิเทศก่อนเดินทางมาศึกษา ณ ประเทศไทยเพื่อให้เข้าใจถึงพฤติกรรมทางวัฒนธรรมไทยที่เหมาะสม มารยาทไทย และลักษณะการเรียนในมหาวิทยาลัยไทย

คำสำคัญ : การเรียนในมหาวิทยาลัยต่างประเทศ การปรับตัวข้ามวัฒนธรรม การสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรม

ABSTRACT

With the rapid increase of Chinese students studying at Thai universities, there is a growing concern for their welfare and ability to adapt to life at Thai universities and function successfully in Thai culture. Comments from past students show that a few can adapt, but most encounter problems such as prolong culture shock due to lack of strategies for dealing with new cultural experiences, inadequate knowledge of Thai culture and poor intercultural communication ability. Therefore, this study was initiated to investigate cross-cultural adaptation problems and find solutions and strategies for Chinese students to consider before coming to study

[1]Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Thailand

in Thailand. Data were collected through an open-response questionnaire with thirty new comer Chinese students who had been studying English at a Thai university for three months. The open and axial coding techniques (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that the most significant problems for cultural adaptation were including language barriers in both English and Thai, having no strategies for inter-cultural communication with Thai people, not being familiar with Thai etiquette and food, appropriate social behavior and Thai classroom culture. As far as solutions and strategies, the research recommends three main areas including increasing the study of Thai language and culture, having better competence in inter-cultural communication strategies for talking with Thai people, and providing more detail orientation training before coming to Thailand in order to understand proper Thai cultural behavior, etiquette and Thai university study habits.

Keywords: Foreign University Study, Cross-Cultural Adaptation, Inter-Cultural Communication

Introduction

In the globalization era, education across boundaries is increasing popular among international students. The major purposes of cross-boundary education for those students are to study language, culture, politics, economy, and ideology of the host country in order to make contributions upon the returning to their homeland. However, majority of international students encounter linguistic barriers and cultural in competence for effective adjustment at the host country. For those who cannot tolerant and have unsuccessfully adapting to the new cultural environment have to return their homeland before the deal date of their study.

Previous studies have shown that the significant problems correlated to cross-cultural adaptation include the lack of language competence (Shi and Wang, 2014), intercultural communicative ability (Lewthwaite, 1996), and traveling experience (Mustaffa and Ilias, 2013). Incompetence in language can cause difficulties and failures in communication among people from different cultures. It is from the mismatch of different perceptions of social values, traditions, and different cultural interpretations. In addition, many international students also come across academic difficulties while they are in university. For example, Janjua, Malik, and Rahman (2011) note that foreign students are not only face difficulties in terms of social and cultural norms and values, but also the different modes of teaching and learning and expectations of performance in university. Moreover, Mustaffa and Ilias (2013) point out that students' language proficiency is interrelated and influenced their cross-cultural adjustment process among the international students. Also, results from a study conducted with Thai undergraduates from a Thai university reveled that Thai students from different academic disciplines at the same university campus adjusted themselves differently according to their field of studies, teacher-student relationships, friend relationships, and university activities and environments (Niyomtham, Thepmanee, and Thongthai, 2017). Findings of this study further demonstrated that the freshmen had to adjust themselves to these factors over the students from other academic years because they were the new comers and unfamiliar with the

environment sat the university. These results infer that cultural adjustment not only occurs with international students, but also with Thai students who come from different regions in Thailand, and study different academic disciplines on the same university campus.

At present, there are a large number of Chinese students coming to study at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University due to the joint academic collaboration between the university and university institutions in China, the reputations of the university in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), and the signed of MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) agreements. Most of the students are from Yunman Province, China. They lack experiences in understanding the Thai academic systems and understanding about Thai culture, even though they previously studied one Thai language and culture course while in China. Since it was noted that the lack of experience, language and cultural competence are problematic for Chinese students to study abroad (Hongmei, 2017). Therefore, this study has a primarily concerned with Chinese students' adaptation in the Thai academic contexts and cultural environments which are totally different to their contexts in China. Importantly, there is a lack of research concerning the issues of cross-cultural adaption of Chinese students and guidance to facilitate their adjustment in Thailand. Thus, this study aims to investigate Chinese students' difficulties and solutions of cross-cultural adaptation at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University.Results of the current study are expected to suggest strategic solutions and effective approaches for them to apply for better cross- cultural adjustment in Thailand.

Research concerning cross-cultural adaptation has been conducted over five decades. In the mid of nineteen centuries, Lysgaard (1955) theoretically proposed a U-curve model of cross-cultural adjustment. This model consists of fourdifferent adjustment stages.The first stage is honeymoon. It starts off with the satisfaction and feeling of well-being entering to the new culture. The sojourners start learning with the new cultural conditions in their real life. The second stage is culture shock which referring to the frustration, anxiety, confusion, helplessness, and unable to deal with cultural differences effectively and successfully. However, at the adjustment stage, the sojourners gradually learn cultural norms and values of the host country. Later, they can adapt and behave confidently in the new culture. The last stage is mastery. Most of the anxieties are gone. The sojourner's life is more enjoyable and feel better. They learn to accept the norms and values and can effectively function to the host culture.

However, the U-curve model is not clear-cut identifying the process of cross-cultural adjustment since it is still vague and lacks of supportive statistical data (Black and Mendenhall, 1991). Later, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) have modified the U-curve to W-curve model of adjustment. They note that cross-cultural adjustment is the cycle of acculturation and ongoing process. The sojourners are not only adjusted to the new culture they enter, but also readjust and acculturate to their home culture after the return. The adjustment process is characterized as the same as they encounter at the host country.

Adler (1975) points out that the U- and W-curve models reflect the adjustment to culture shock at the peak through time without the consideration of the encompass actors related to

the adjustment process. Adler then proposed the model of the transitional experience explaining the five stages of cultural adjustment through the progress of experiential learning. The first stage is contact. This stage is initially contacted with the new culture and environment with excitement, euphoria, and alert to discover new learning experiences. The similarity between the two cultures reinforce the sojourners home cultural behavior rather than the difference. At the disintegration stage, it is marked as the psychological perception of confusion, differences of behaviors, values, and norms intruded by the host culture while they go through. They discover that

their behaviors are no longer appropriate. This sense makes them misunderstand of the host culture and feel depression and withdraw from the new cultural situations. They perceive to be isolated and confuse about their individual identities and home values. The third stage is the reintegration referring to the rejection and un accepting to the second culture. The negative behaviors and emotional ranges are occurred and securely withdraw back to their familiarity and those who are from the same culture. However, cultural awareness is growing with the ability to deal with cultural difficulties and frustrations in daily life encountered.
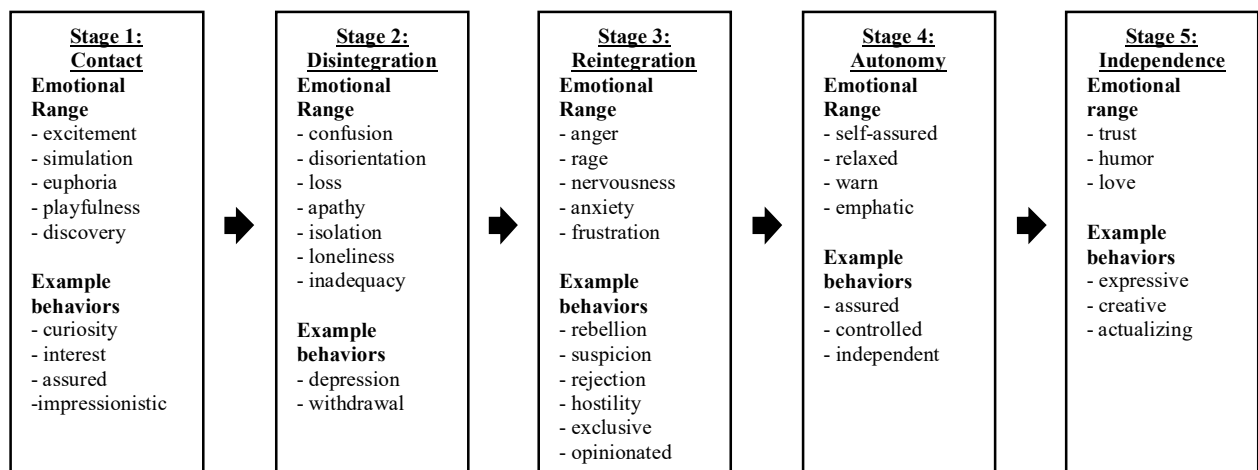
Stage 1: **Contact**		**Stage 2:** **Disintegration**		**Stage 3:** **Reintegration**		**Stage 4:** **Autonomy**		**Stage 5:** **Independence**
Emotional Range - excitement - simulation - euphoria - playfulness - discovery **Example behaviors** - curiosity - interest - assured -impressionistic	➤	**Emotional Range** - confusion - disorientation - loss - apathy - isolation - loneliness - inadequacy **Example behaviors** - depression - withdrawal	➤	**Emotional Range** - anger - rage - nervousness - anxiety - frustration **Example behaviors** - rebellion - suspicion - rejection - hostility - exclusive - opinionated	➤	**Emotional Range** - self-assured - relaxed - warn - emphatic **Example behaviors** - assured - controlled - independent	➤	**Emotional range** - trust - humor - love **Example behaviors** - expressive - creative - actualizing

Figure 1: Adapted from "The Model of the Transitional Experience" (Adler, 1975, p.19)

For the autonomy stage, it begins from the ability to acquire skills and cultural understanding of the second culture. Although the sojourners are not fully occupied the cultural competence of the host culture, individual feels assured, relaxed, and comfortable to react to that culture both verbal and non-verbal behaviors and can function well in the host society. Finally, the independence stage is characterized by psychological and cultural differences acceptance. The individual values the

differences and similarities of cultures and be able to trust and create meanings to the society.

The above theoretical literature share similar cultural adjustment process.It is also found that culture shock affects the emotions of the sojourners. According to Oberg (1960), the termculture shock refers to "the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (p. 177). Oberg (1960) notes that the symptoms of culture shock could be

summarized as the excessive concern about welfare, health problems, feeling anxiety, frustrations, and homesick. Hongmei (2017) did a review of literature and summarized that the symptoms of culture shock might be caused from different factors which influence the process of adjustment of the sojourners such as communicative skills, personality factors, demographic factors, cultural factors, motivation for transition, pre-departure preparation, and social support network. Similarly, Shi and Wang (2014) remark that there are four main factors influenced on Chinese business expatriates in the international business contexts which are ranged from: 1) religion and tradition (e.g. racism and time orientation); 2) personal issues (e.g. pressure from work duties); 3) language barriers (e.g. speaking in business conference and writing business reports); and 4) business communication (e.g. difference in communication styles and business management).

In terms of academic adjustment, Hongmei (2017) notes that the problems for Chinese students who study in the U.S. include the incompetent language ability, lack of experience and creativity, and schema of the host country. The study points out that some Chinese students feel frustrated with their learning because of the differences of academic culture and the approaches conducted by their teachers. Also, Janjua, Malik, and Rahman (2011) state that Chinese and Afghan students in Pakistan have inadequate communication skills for effective discussions, and that make them feel discomforted with the use of student-centered approach by their teachers in class. This is because those students are from the contexts of teacher-centered approach and textbook-based learning which have lacked of student participation.

However, studies show that social and organizational supports can facilitate international students' adjustment and performance in the new learning environment and culture (Lewthwaite, 1996; Tsang, 2001). According toKim's (2017) theory of cross-cultural adaptation, Individuals' engagement with social interactions can help them acquire social skills and gradually transform their identity to the new culture for better understanding of the new cultural conditions, norms, values, and communicative systems. With social interaction, it brings the sojourners closer to the cultural and linguistic differences and can effectively adapt to the host culture. Importantly, it moves their point of views of isolation and unaware of cultural differences to cultural integration between the different worldview (Bennett, 1993).

Research questions

1. What cultural problems do Chinese students encounter in Thailand?

2. What strategies do Chinese students use to deal with those problems?

Research Methodology

Participants

The participants were thirty Chinese students from a university in China. They were the students exchange program according to the MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) agreements. Twenty-nine of the participants were female and one was male. Their ages were ranged between 18 to 23 years old. They had already studied English language for two years and a course of basic Thai language for communication in China before enrolling at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University. At the university, they studied courses with both Thai and native English-speaking

teachers for three months before participating with this study. They also took courses in Thai language and culture in order to develop their holistic knowledge of Thai society and inter-cultural communicative competence for better adjustment and handling with cultural difficulties in the Thai context.

Data collection procedures

The participants were asked to participate with the present study. Researcher also asked their contact numbers and set an appointment time for answering the questionnaire. Before administering the questionnaire, all of the participants were informed the research purposes and ensured data confidentiality. The participants did the questionnaire in a convenient air - conditioning room. They were allowed to withdraw or stop answering the questionnaire if they felt uncomfortable. The questionnaire was lasted approximately 30 minutes. The researcher stayed in the room with the participants in order to clarify some items when they needed. The completed questionnaires were immediately returned to the researcher and later were analyzed to answer research questions.

Instrument

An open-response questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two main parts. The first part was used to gather the demographic data of the student participants. The second part was used to elicit students' opinions and experiences concerning the problems of cross-cultural adaptation and solutions encountered at the Thai university. This part had ten questions. Those questions were used to collect data of student's motivation and expectations of studying English at Thai university, the influence of academic differences on student's adjustment, student's

linguistic and cultural adjustment in intercultural communication, and their difficulties of Thai food.

Data Analysis

Open and axial coding techniques (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) were employed for data analysis. At the open coding stage, the phenomena from the texts were identified and broke into discrete parts according to its similarities and differences. With these processes, it helped researcher to conceptualize the data and categorize the min to themes. For the axial coding stage, data were put into dimensions associated with its relationship. They were arranged in sequence and reported for research findings.

Results

This section reports the results of cross-cultural adaptation problems and strategic solutions of Chinese student sat Thai university. The student's motivation and expectations of studying English in Thailand are reported for the first section. Then it is followed by the influence of academic differences on student's adjustment, student's linguistic and cultural adjustment in intercultural communication, and student's difficulties of Thai food. Results of this study are attempted to provide in-depth data for Chinese students to better adjust themselves as well as to raise educational institutes to be aware of and support them to overcome those difficulties while living in Thailand.

Student's motivation and expectations of studying English at Thai university

Results indicated that the majority of Chinese students had high intrinsic motivation and expectations to study in Thailand. They believed that studying the English language in Thail and can fulfill their

language competence, improve their speaking skills and pronunciations, and writing skills. It provided them a large opportunity to practice the English language with Thai students, Thai and native English teachers. For example, Students C18 stated "improve oral English, writing skills, communication with foreigners can be very good and fluency". In addition, they expected to acquire Thai language skills and to prepare for better job opportunities in the future. Results also revealed that Chinese students had experienced different culture, became more independent, and opened to real-world visions while studying in Thailand. Some students demonstrated these views.

I think I cannot only learn English …, [but I] can also learn Thai language and experience the [difference of Thai culture] different national culture. (Student C8)

Expand the [my] field of vision. (Student C21)

Have new experiences [and] make independent decisions. (Student C4)

The influence of academic differences on student's adjustment

Comparing class hours between Thailand and China, results revealed that class hour (three hours per a class) of Thai university was double to the class hour (ninety minutes per a class) of university in China. With the longer class hours, Chinese students encountered physical fatigue. They felt sleepy, tired, and hard to keep their eyes open with the classes allocated from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. For example, Data showed:

I always so sleepy and hardly keep my eyes open. (Student C2)

…When we have class at 12:00, I think I'm so tired. I can't concentrate on my studying. (Student C6)

According to Chinese culture, the period from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. is the napping hours for Chinese people. They believed that afternoon napping can recover their energy and increased working efficiency. Some Chinese students perceived that this period was the difficult academic hours for their adjustment since it was not the academic hours in China. However, results revealed that Chinese students can adapt and function well in Thai academic context. Most of them had previously heard about this difference and can once learn to adjust themselves successfully. They tried to follow class schedules and control themselves not to fall asleep in the afternoon class. To make them arrive class punctual, some Chinese students had to drink coffee and eat some snacks to keep them awake. Some students said:

I try to change this habit and do not sleep in the afternoon. (Student C22)

...when I feel sleep I drink some coffee or eat some foods. (Student C17)

Regarding teaching approaches, majority of Chinese students realized that, in China, teachers were the main sources of knowledge and the center of learning. They paid attend to their teachers' in structions and studied really hard in order to prepare for Chinese national tests. Results showed that Chinese teacher's teaching was rigid and focused on examinations and that put more pressure on them. In class, Chinese teachers prepared a complete set of activities for students to

practice, and gave them some homework afterward. Chinese teachers were more realized on individual practices in order to prepare students for the tests and usually assigned them individual tasks. On the other hand, Thai teacher's class was flexible and opened opportunities for students to interact and exchange ideas. They used cooperative learning approaches to stimulate student's discussions and assigned them group works and presentations. They also had many tests during the semester for students. For example, some participants demonstrated:

Chinese teacher will give us homework most writing in the paper. Presentation is less than paper homework and teamwork is less". (Student C24)

…Thai culture is usually practice homework. Chinese homework is personal; Thai homework is group work". (Student C12)

China has test only two times, but Thailand has many tests during the term. (Students C5 and C8)

These differences of academic approaches created different learning atmospheres and affected Chinese students' learning styles in the Thai academic context since they had to adapt and learn new ways of learning which differed to what they actually did in China. Results also further showed that Thai teachers assigned Chinese students more homework than their Chinese teachers. Some Thai teachers assigned complicated homework assignments that had to be submitted via Facebook. As a new user of Facebook, many of the Chinese lacked appropriate Facebook skills and this created problems especially with homework assignments. This problem decreased as students started utilizing Facebook or a regular basis. It is likely that this problem was the result of China's policy of banning Facebook. So, students had to learn and get acquainted with Facebook while study in Thailand.

Student's linguistic and cultural adjustment in intercultural communication

Asking Chinese students to rate their language skills, results revealed that Chinese students were strong in reading and writing skills, in contrast, speaking skills were weak. They still lacked vocabulary and grammar knowledge which limited their speaking abilities and fluency. For instance, some students stated:

My [basic English] English foundation is bad. On learning vocabulary [I want to study vocabulary very much] wants much. I didn't understand. (Student C8)

I think spoken English and grammar is my weakness. I find it hard to say English fluently. Sometime[s] I don't know how to express my idea… (Student C1)

In addition, the unfamiliarity with the English accents and pronunciations of Thai teachers were problematic for some students' understanding in class. As a new comer to Thai academic atmosphere, it was unusual and hard for Chinese students to adjust the mselves to those different accents and pronunciations. For example, some students remarked:

…we can't listen [clearly to] clear the teacher's [pronunciations] pronounce because Thai [pronunciation] pronounce and English [pronunciation] pronounce [are]is difference. (Student C7)

…sometimes I'm not clear about Thai teachers' pronunciation. (Student C17)

To understand what Thai teachers talked in class, Chinese students had to listen intentionally. In the same time, they had to develop positive attitudes toward Thai teachers' accents. These positive attitudes enabled them to develop their psychological perception to accept the difference of English accents. In addition, results showed that Chinese students positively viewed the use of English language as the medium of instruction in class. They agreed that it was one of the strengths in English language teaching of Thai teachers. It connected to their learning requirements and created a supportive learning environment for the use of the target language especially when utilizing speaking and listening skills. The students said:

Learning English in Thailand can improve my speaking ability. (Student 18)

… the strength is our English class use English all the time. It can improve our [speaking and listening skills] spoke hearing. (Students C14)

Results revealed that the crucial problems for Chinese students to adjust successfully in Thai university were the incompetent of English and Thai language and culture. These were the significant factors considerably influenced their behaviors in social interactions and understanding of Thai societies. With the lack of these competences, Chinese students misunderstood Thai people due to the new ways of cultural behaviors and communicative styles. Data showed that Chinese students had difficulty communicating with Thai people at public places especially with those who cannot speak English or those with low English proficiency. This is not only frustrated them, but also hardly made them achieve their expectations and communication purposes.

For long term survival in the Thai society, learning the Thai language and culture were one of the priority. However, to solve this problem, Chinese students initially employed a set of strategies to deal with those communication difficulties by: 1) using English at first; 2) trying to speak Thai; 3) using body language; and 4) seeking help from Thai friends.

Regarding social interactions in Chinese culture, it was polite for Chinese people to speak or talk out loud in public, but this behavior seems impolite in the Thai culture. Living in the Thai context longer, Chinese students learnt to adjust their voices and tones lower when they talked at public for polite manners. For example, they said:

…[I]try to keep quiet in public places. (Student C15)

…When we talk about something we must speak [quietly] lowly. If we speak loudly Thai people feel Chinese people so impolite. So, remember do it well. (Student C6)

Chinese students perceived that the manners of greeting and paying respect to Thai people by "*Wai*" (the manner of putting one's hand upright and bowing the head) was a way to begin and end a conversation. Showing "*Wai*" manner made Chinese students look polite and created a positive attitude to begin a conversation between them and Thai people.

In addition to "*Wai*", Chinese students were unfamiliar with Thai etiquette, especially where and when to take off their shoes before entering to a place. Thus, observation was one of the strategies used to help them learn how to show proper behaviors. For example, they had to be

observant when figuring out when to take off their shoes before entering buildings by observing the cultural signs and signals around them. Some participants mentioned:

Thai people like taking off their shoes at copy shop, toilet, office and classroom. (Student C24)

In Thailand, we need to see the notice [s] at any time, because a lot places we need to take off our shoes, otherwise, it will be impolite. (Student C30)

Student's difficulties of Thai food

One of the major impacts to Chinese students' cultural adjustment in Thai university is Thai food. Results demonstrated that Chinese students perceived that Thai food were sweet, sour, and spicy. These made some of them feel tension since they were not yet get used to it. Inevitably to Thai food, Chinese students were looking in a way to help them survive. One of the effective strategies used to avoid distasteful flavors of Thai food was to cook by themselves. This strategy helped them to cook their favorite meals and tastes. However, data showed that Chinese students perceived and acknowledged that Thai food was delicious and similar to Chinese food in Yunnan Province, China.

Discussion

1. Findings of the study revealed that most of Chinese students had strong intrinsic motivation and expectations to study in Thai university. They believed that it would be a greater opportunity for them to acquire the knowledge of English and Thai language and culture. This motivation generally made Chinese students feel excited and physically prepare to explore to new academic and cultural experiences, open to new worldviews, and learn

independent learning skills which will be beneficial for their job opportunities in the future.

The main findings found in this study indicated that teaching approaches used by Chinese teachers were differed from Thai teachers. findings showed that Chinese teachers' teaching styles were based on "Confucian-oriented culture" (Tsai and Jiang, 2013, p. 215) which aimed to make individual students benefit from their practices. In contrast, Thai teachers used different teaching approaches. They normally assigned Chinese students cooperative learning tasks rather than individual tasks. These teaching methods, in the students' point of views, were complicated as they needed to adjust their learning styles, planned their learning, dealt the tasks with friends, and looked for various sources to complete the tasks accordingly. Also, Chinese students faced physical fatigue and felt exhausted for the class allocated between 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. These class hours are normally the siesta periods for Chinese people in China as they realize that napping break in the afternoon can recover their energy and stimulate working effectiveness.

2. In regard to linguistic and cultural adjustment, most Chinese students encountered linguistic and cultural difficulties on arrival in Thai society. In fact, this study underlined that they had inadequate holistic knowledge of Thai language and culture which hugely impacted on their adjustment processes while living in Thailand. The insufficient knowledge of English and Thai language and cultural incompetence had hidden and limited their communication abilities and could lead them to encounter communicative failures and frustrations. Some of the reasons for those unsuccessful

communications may cause from different ways of communication styles and cultural interpretations. These findings were in lines with the previous studies as indicated that language competence (Hongmei, 2017; Shi and Wang, 2014), and intercultural communicative skills (Lewthwaite, 1992), communicative skills (Hongmei, 2017), and language proficiency (Mustaffa and Ilias, 2013) influenced cultural adjustment process and the ability to function well in different cultures. These findings were similarly found in the business contexts, as Shi and Wang's (2014) study noted that language barriers were problematic for Chinese business expatriates' effective cross-cultural adaption since it plays a vital role in business communication.

With the effort to achieve the communication goals, body language and friends were useful when it was hard for individual to communicate verbally with Thai people. However, this study suggests that social network and join in social activities can help raise students' abilities to gradually overcome those barriers and move them in way to cultural integration in which beneficial for their cultural adjustment. According to Kim (2017), social interaction enabled the sojourners to acquire the skills and cultural competence to better understand the cultural conditions and communicative systems for successful adaptation at the host country. These findings also imply that educators and educational institutes should be aware of the limitations of their students' language and cultural competence and the abilities to overcome culture shock. Pre-departure training of language and culture of the host country are important for students to develop their schemata knowledge of the host

country, have advanced psychological and physical preparations, raise their awareness of the differences of cultures, and get ready to encounter and handle with those unexpected cultural difficulties.

In terms of Thai etiquette, this study illustrated dissimilar findings to the previous researches (Lewthwaite, 1996; Mustaffa and Ilias, 2013; Shi and Wang, 2014) as indicated that Chinese students were not yet fully occupied and internalized it into their learning processes. Speaking and talking out loudin some situationat public places may be considered as improper behaviors in Thai society although they were the common behaviors in China. Knowing this, Chinese students learnt to lower their tones when they talked at public or with Thai people in order to show polite manners. Learning to "*Wai*" was also one of the polite way for Chinese students to begin and end their conversations with Thai people. To help facilitate Chinese students' effective adjustment to Thai etiquette, this study suggests that it is the professional responsibility of the host institutes to organize and provide them cultural orientation training to fulfill these adjustment gaps.

One surprising finding of the present study demonstrated that food culture was one of the significant factors influenced on Chinese students' adjustment processes. Some of them struggled with Thai food at the first time of arrival due to the lack of experience and unfamiliar with the flavors of Thai food. These differences made them feel tension and lack confidence in choosing their own selection of food from the public canteens. According to Mustaffa and Ilias (2013), there were many things students had to adjust and they were related to their traveling experience in abroad. They

pointed out that students' international experiences were important and helped facilitate their adjustment abilities to better cope with different cultural difficulties.

From the Chinese students' point of view, they felt that it was important for them to prepare their own cooking and favored the Chinese style of eating on their own. In their opinions, this was considered and effective strategy for dealing with the Thai eating problem while residing in Thailand.

Conclusion and implications

This study investigated cross-cultural adaption of Chinese students at a Thai university. Results of the study showed that Chinese students encountered cultural difficulties and adjustment due to the difference of cultural aspects, different ways of cultural communication and interpretation, and incomplete knowledge of Thai culture. The most crucial problems affecting their cultural adjustment processes were the insufficient knowledge of English and Thai language, and cultural competence. Thai academic environments and Thai food were also mentioned as important factors for influencing their ability to adjust. Therefore, this study suggests that educators should be aware of developing training for incoming Chinese concerning language skills, cultural schemata, norms, and values before coming to Thailand. Doing these things can help Chinese students develop adequate academic and cultural competence in order to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers at the host country. Students will have a comprehensive picture of Thai culture that support their adjustment processes. From these results, it is also feasible to further research concerning the pre-departure language and cultural

trainings of Chinese students on how those courseshelp them adjust successful in the Thai contexts.

References

Adler, P. S. (1975). The transitional experience: an alternative view of culture shock. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 15*(4), 13 – 23.

Black, J. S., & Mendenhall, M. (1991). The U-curve adjustment hypothesis revisited: a review and theoretical framework. *Journal of International Business Studies, second quarter*, 225 – 247.

Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R.M. Paige (Ed.). *Education for the Intercultural Experience*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Gullahorn, J. T., &Gullahorn, J. E. (1963). An extension of the U-cure hypothesis. *Journal of Social Issues, 19*(3), 33 – 47.

Hongmei, P. (2017, February). *The cross-cultural adaptation of chinese students in the U.S.* Retrieved from http://www.celea.org.cn/pastversion/lw/pdf/panghongmei.pdf

Janjua, F., Malik, S., & Rahman, F. (2011). Learning experiences and academic adjustment of international students: a case study from Pakistan. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 2*(6), 1359 – 1365.

Kim, Y. Y. (2017, February). *Theory reflections: cross-cultural adaption theory*. Retrieved from https://www.nafsa.org/_/File/_/theory_connections_crosscultural.pdf

Lysgaard, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society: norwegian fulbright grantees visiting the united states. *International Social Science Bulletin, 7*, 45 – 51.

Lewthwaite, M. (1996). A study of international students' perspectives on cross-cultural adaption. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 19*, 167 – 185.

Mustaffa, C. S., &Ilias, M. (2013). Relationship between students adjustment factors and cross cultural adjustment: a survey at the northern university of Malaysia. *Intercultural Communication Studies XXII: 1*, 279 – 300.

Niyomtham, O., Thepmanee, M., &Thongthai, V. (2017). The adjustment of students in Rajamangala University of Technology LannaTak. *Journal of Education Research, Faculty of Education, Srinakharinwirot University, 12* (1), 273 – 285.

Oberg, K. (1960). Culture shock: adjustment to new culture environment. *Practical Anthropology, 7*, 177 – 182.

Shi, L., & Wang, L. (2014). The culture shock and cross-cultural adaptation of chinese expatriates in international business contexts. *International Business Research, 7*(1), 23 – 33.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Sage Publications.

Tsang, E. W. K. (2001). Adjustment of mainland chinese academics and students to singapore. *International Journal of International Relations, 25*, 347 – 372.

Tsai, K. C., & Jiang, H. Y. (2013). Chinese and American Third Grade Students' Perceptions of Homework. *International Journal of Economy, Management and Social Science, 2*(6), 212 – 216.