INTERCULTURAL ADAPTATION OF CHINESE LECTURERS IN THAILAND

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Abstract

With a qualitative study, our aim is to investigate the dynamic aspects of intercultural adaptation of Chinese lecturers in a Thai international university. Three Chinese participants involved in this study are from three age categories, ranging from 25 to 45 years old and have been observed from one to two years. Qualitative semi-structured interviews are also conducted with three Thai administrative teachers as a supplementary contrast for the Thai host's role in the intercultural adaptation process of Chinese teachers. Our results show certain difficulties across six culture facets (Thai University administrative culture, Thai teaching culture, Thai interpersonal culture, Thai social culture, Thai eating habits, and Thai daily habits) and nonverbal facets which are linked to cultural values such as total harmony maintaining leads to conflicts/criticism avoidance and presenting a smile with students in class. It is hoped the findings will contribute to a better and more complete understanding of adaptation aspects of Chinese teachers who teach in Thai international universities and help them adapt more successfully. The results obtained might further be useful in compiling teacher intercultural training guides for teachers teaching Chinese as a second language or for those who just want to teach in Thailand and to assist Thai universities propose

intercultural programs that will enhance the teaching prerequisite for Chinese language teachers.

Introduction

Intercultural adaptation is a key concept in intercultural communication, which can be studied by level, type, model and dimension. Scholars in the psychology and communication disciplines use an individual level approach whereas those in anthropology and sociology use a group level approach where the acculturation process is their main focus. Studies of varied types of interactants, such as foreign teachers involved in the adaptation process, provide the nature of intercultural adaptation mainly within a host culture. As far as models are concerned, the *recuperation* model from Oberg's "culture shock" study in 1960 posits the mechanisms for adaptation of a sojourner; the *learning* model is the acquisition of verbal and nonverbal communication skills in suitable interaction; the *recovery* model focuses on the psychological journey; the *dynamic tension reduction* model treats intercultural adaptation a process of uncertainty; the *dialectical* model takes it as a cyclic process. Dimensions of intercultural adaptation can thus be thought of as major elements in Oberg's six dimensions of "culture shock" (Chen, 2013).

With the enthusiasm for Chinese learning worldwide, there is strong and urgent need for Chinese language teachers around the world. Intercultural adaptation of Chinese language teachers in Thailand mostly focus on Chinese volunteer teachers who are assigned and then sent out by the Chinese government. Some researchers (Li, 2013; Yu, H., 2012; Chen, 2012) have studied their own experiences, along with their partners during their service in Thai primary schools, secondary schools or universities. Although little intercultural training is provided to those teachers before departing China, they still experience certain difficulties while being introduced to Thai culture, both in their daily lives and when teaching. However, not all international universities adopt service to the Chinese government for recruiting teachers. To address this, our study focuses on Chinese lecturers who are not volunteer teachers in a Thai international university.

Literature Review

According to Kulich and Dai (2012), a popular focus of cross-cultural communication research is intercultural adaptation. This concept was first introduced by anthropologists who believe that direct contact of native residents in a new cultural context changes their cultural mode thereby removing traditional customs while learning and adapting to a new cultural environment (Redfield et al., 1936). After World War II, refugees, sojourners, international businessmen, laborers and students came under the scrutiny of frequent international exchange initiatives for intercultural adaptation researches. They cover cycle or strategies of adaptation, cultural identity, social relationship, etc.

Li (2015) categorizes intercultural adaptation into three levels which he gives as: *individual* level, *interpersonal* and *intergroup* level, and *sociocultural* level. Individual level concerns psychological to cognitive changes. The most well-known model of adaptation process is elaborated by Oberg (1960). The 'culture shock' stage he suggests describes the frustration individuals encounter when moving to a new culture. Their anxiety which largely comes from not knowing how to cope with the verbal and nonverbal symbols in the unfamiliar culture. It could be barriers such as the use of simple greetings or more complex responses to the new culture that leads to a rejection of the foreign environment and a desire to leave. However, such a linear process does not seem to mention the recurrences and intricacies of the process. The key factors that influence individual's adjustment to a new culture, according to Li and Sun (2008), are cultural distance, social support and a system of values. The bigger the cultural distance between two cultures, the harder it becomes for individuals to build and maintain harmonious relationships. Berry (1997, 2001) proposes a process and 4 acculturation strategies, which is one of the most cited theoretical frameworks. The *integration strategy* is used when the individual can maintain one's own culture and still engage in activities with other cultural groups. When immigrants avoid interaction with other groups and only focus on their original culture, the *separation strategy* is used. Zu (2017) mentions that most Chinese language teachers who work overseas use integration or separation strategies.
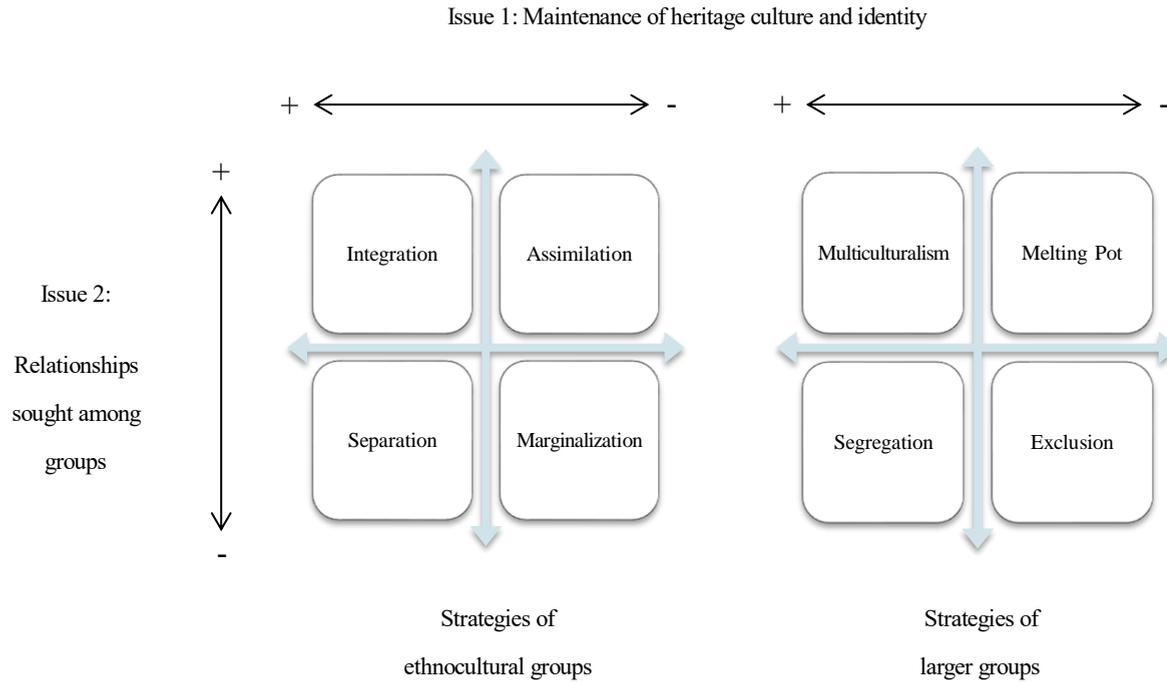
Issue 1: Maintenance of heritage culture and identity

Figure 1: Intercultural Strategies (Berry, 2001)

It should also be noted that the host society also plays a key role in intercultural relations. Among the four strategies, (integration, assimilation, marginalization and segregation), for integration, a hosting society such as Canada which is already multicultural, has an open and inclusive attitude towards immigrants (Berry, 2001; Yu and Zheng, 2005). However, this framework comes out of western mainstream society viewpoints towards immigrants. Immigrants might use different strategies in varied fields of life, so the context should be taken into account (Li, 2015).

Since culture as Byram (2017) explains are rules of behaviors, values and beliefs, thus intercultural adaptation is closely linked with the sociocultural context. Hall (1959, 1976) and Hofstede (1984, 2001) provide a continuum in which cultural dimensions can be used for value analysis.

From Figure 2, it can be seen that China only scores the same as Thailand in Collectivism. We note that in Thailand, taking Masculinity and Femininity as an example, it obtains a score of 34 and falls close to Femininity which esteems virtues of harmony and interpersonal relationship. We then contrast with China and a score of 66[1], which is at the other end of the scale up close to Masculinity. It should be noted that the scores of High- and Low-Power Distance for China and Thailand are 80 and 64 respectively. China has higher power distance which suggests that people are dependent on others and where people accept the uneven power and social class structures.

Although their theories of values measured applied to business staff are well applied, they cannot explain the values in different contexts. Chen (2013) says their dichotomy in thinking is rooted from Eurocentric domination (Asante, 2006) which excludes non-Western cultures; the second problem with their conclusions is to treat cultural values with categorical discrepancies and which creates a barrier for intercultural communication.

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[1] The matrix of dimension scores is taken from the version of 2015 12 08. http://www.geerthofstede.nl/
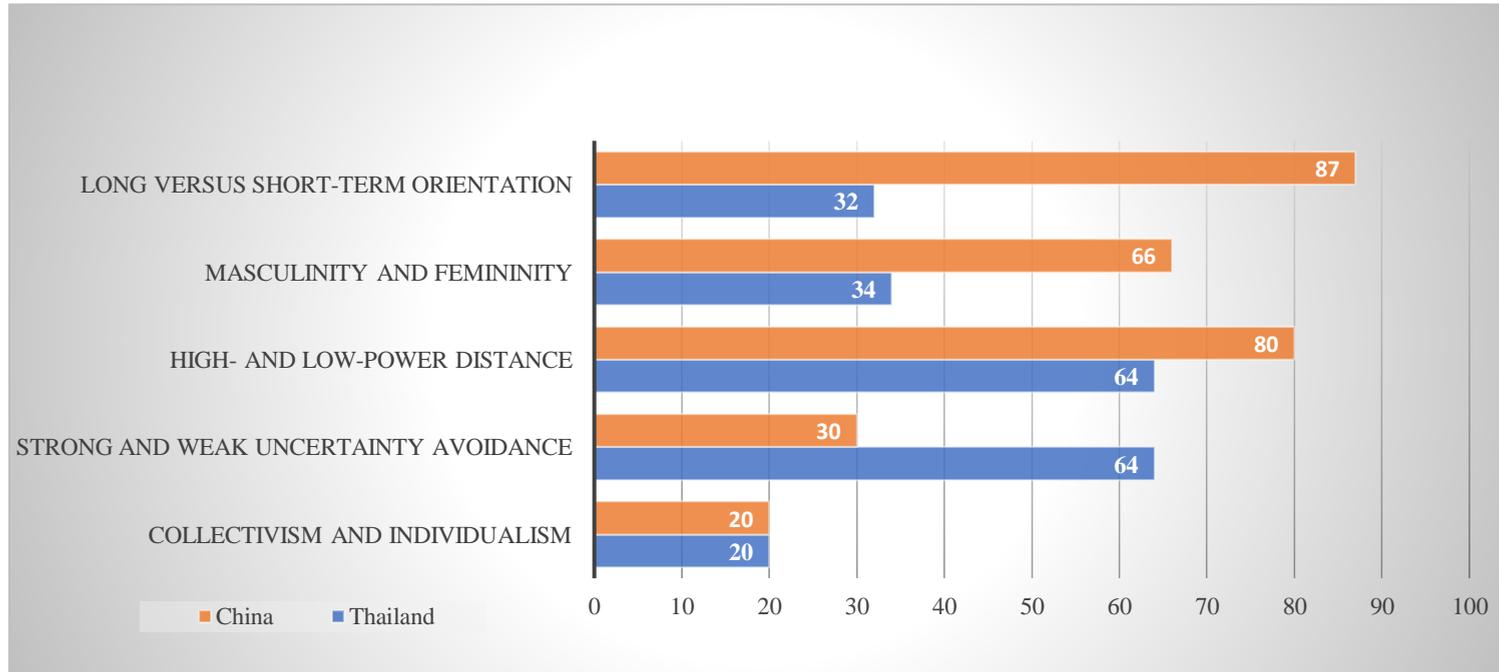
Figure 2: China vs. Thailand in Dimensions (Hofstede, 2001)

In addition, messages delivered from attire or facial expressions and other nonverbal communication, can sometimes be quite complex. As an example, Samovar et al. (2009) mention that feet in Thai culture, being the lowest of the body, should not be used to point at people. A loud voice is also considered impolite as elevating the speaker's volume tends to mean anger in Thai culture. As for the facial expressions, Samovar et al. (2017) mention that the famous Thai smile is not an easy nonverbal communication for new immigrants to understand since it is used to denote a variety of emotions. Zu (2017) mentions the standard of appearance of teachers also depends on culture. Teachers of many Asian countries with a high tradition of respect for their teachers tend to wear more formal attire, especially from the Sinosphere sharing a Confucian philosophy. In Thailand, female teachers are asked to wear shirts with collars and sleeves and with the skirt's length over the knees. However, Chinese teachers generally dress more casually. From Zu's research of foreign students studying in China, the Chinese teachers are considered to be too casual in the dress sense and demonstrate a lack of professionalism in the view of Japanese and Korean students. In contrast, European or American students don't share this view.

As for interpersonal and intergroup levels, Kim (2001) considers adaptation as a stress-adaptation-growth a dynamic experience. The acculturation model of Schumann (1978) claims smaller social and psychological distance contribute to a learners' success in second language acquisition. However, although the Chinese Thai relationship is considered similar, lack of motivation might be the key problem for Thai language acquisition.

Chinese volunteer teachers have been sent out by the Chinese government since 2003. Chinese volunteer teachers in Thailand are bachelors or master students or master graduates who mostly have no prior teaching experiences. About 3/4 of these students major in Chinese teaching as a foreign language or languages. These teachers normally return to China after fulfilling their duty in one year. Only 20% of their preparation course material before

leaving China is about intercultural training. Sociocultural support leads to good adaptation, so those who are sent to a school or university which is isolated geographically and with no Chinese speakers around, adapt poorly in comparison to those sent to schools with Chinese speaking teachers already there. Most teachers use integration strategies, but there are those who use the teaching experience simply as a stepping stone to something else or who already have future plans in China. Most take themselves as sojourners. Hierarchical concepts, being polite and considerate and conflict avoidance help interpersonal relationship. Chinese volunteer teachers therefore need to improve their sociocultural and psychological adaptation competences (Li, 2013; Yu, H. 2012; Chen, 2012; Wu, 2014). Teachers with more smiles in class and who wear suitable apparel, contribute substantially to the relationship with their Thai students (Yu, Q., 2012). An and Wei (2012) specify the characteristics of Chinese volunteer teachers who are the total of cultural production from China. They are typically aged 20 to 25 years old, mainly females, and under the direction of national policy of China. What influence their psychological acculturation process in Thailand are psychological expectations, others' expectation, social support, interpersonal communication along with Chinese cultural values, such as collectivism and filial piety. Their studies mostly focus more on sociocultural support (from other Chinese volunteer teachers, Thai coworkers, students or friends), with concern for sociocultural or psychological adaptation competences. However, the focus for sociocultural aspect of volunteer teachers do not reveal the aspects or cultural values of the Thai host, and where the nonverbal component is only limited in the classroom.

People from different cultures entering a new and different culture must undergo a process of acculturation which affects their own 'culturism' with input from interpersonal/intergroup and sociocultural influences. The process of intercultural adaptation is complicated and delicate. The delicacy of the dynamic aspects is not detailed. This study therefore hopes to reveal more insights in different cultural aspects that Chinese lecturers encounter in a Thai international university.

Methodology

The difficulties of intercultural adaptation within international universities for Chinese lecturers starting their career in Thailand, were explored herein by interviews and observation. The Thai host who plays an important role in Chinese lecturers' adaptation was investigated as well.

The participants intended to be studied were 6, however three are extreme cases; one is quite un-adapted since her arrival because of her personality and her personal relationship issue; one is an experienced teacher with Chinese ethnocentrism who looks down on Thai culture in many ways; one has already worked at a Thai high school before working at an international university. The participated lecturers chosen, while not statistically significant, were to present the phenomenon of intercultural adaptation. They were representatives of three age groups, with varied length of teaching experiences and of mixed gender. As Gao (2008) mentions, the participants (interviewees) describe and present the experience, meanings and feelings about the specific situation truthfully, as a process of constructing real meaning. The observation took place on the campus, including the dormitory, classroom and office. The study duration of 1.5-2.5 years covered all the detailed and delicate changes during their intercultural adaptation process. The richness allows outsiders to know and understand its complexity.

Participants

Three Chinese lecturers participating in this study had taught or were in the Chinese department. They had no prior intercultural training before coming to Thailand. Only one senior lecturer had previously taught Chinese in the USA. The other lecturers had not taught in a foreign country before coming to Thailand. Their teaching period in Thailand was from one and a half to two and a half years. The teachers were arranged into three categories: 25-30 year-olds with only a few months Chinese teaching experiences prior to coming to Thailand, 30-35 year-olds with 3 years of Chinese teaching

experiences in the language centers of Chinese universities, 40-45 year-olds with 13 years of Chinese teaching experiences, including five years in the USA. They all are master's degree-holders.

The administrative personnel are Thai teachers with ethnic Chinese backgrounds who have studied in the USA and China for their Master's degree and with intercultural experiences. One participant obtained her PhD degree from Thailand, and two were students from the Chinese Department, both are currently studying their Ph.D. in Thailand. Their administrative experiences are from five to 25 years. Their Chinese teaching experiences also range five to 25 years. One teacher lives in the dormitory, and has the most contact with Chinese teachers who live on campus. The age distribution is 30, 35 and over 50 years old.

Table 1: Chinese and Thai Participants

Participants	Chinese T1~3	Thai A1~3
Age	27, 31, 42	30, 35, over 50
Teaching experience	Before Thailand: a few months, 3 years, 13 years	5, 5, 25 years
Education background	Master's Degree	2 studying Ph.D., Ph.D.

Measures and Procedures

The design of the semi-structured in-depth interview guide was a long-term process: one year of frequent conversations with new incoming teachers, regarding their difficulties and/or problems encountered since the first day of arriving in Thailand in July 2015. The aspects worth exploration were narrowed down to a university and to nonverbal facets, as the Chinese lecturers live in the dormitory and spend every day on campus with their environment being a complete immersion into the university culture. Individual, interpersonal and sociocultural levels were included.

The interview guide took the reviewed literature into account. Four

experts in Thai culture, Thai higher education and Chinese teaching were invited to evaluate and assess the validity of the content. The evaluation results were detailed as: *very suitable*, *suitable*, *correct after modification*, or *delete*, and provided suggestions for amendment. The interview was finally carried out in November 2017. One participant had already finished teaching and returned to China and could not be interviewed face to face. Her interview was conducted using audio/visual link with social media.

The interview consisted of personal information, university culture and nonverbal culture. The second part related to the six different aspects of Thai culture, pertaining to both professional and social contexts. Within each aspect, there were four questions. The third part had 11 aspects that deal with nonverbal culture.

Observation of intercultural adaptation of Chinese lecturers was carried out before this research began in the school year of 2015, where participants' attitudes, reflections and thoughts were noted down. The related events witnessed by the researcher were part of the recorded observations as well.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were also used to investigate the Thai teachers and their experiences dealing with the intercultural adaptation of Chinese language teachers. These lecturers all have administrative work in the Chinese Department and as such have contact with Chinese language teachers throughout each teaching semester.

Data Analysis

For qualitative data analysis, the transcripts of the interviews towards Chinese participants were grouped with each facet. Transcripts of Thai participants interviews and observation were listed in different columns as a supplementary contrast. Then the reading of key responses was carefully underlined. Themes were located to compare with the reviewed literature. Credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability were assessed.

Results and Discussion

Six Facets of Culture

The six facets of culture examined are: Thai University administrative culture; Thai teaching culture; Thai interpersonal culture; Thai social culture; Thai eating habits and Thai daily habits. There are four subparts under each facet. Taking Thai University administrative culture as example, the four subparts are the way to communicate with supervisors, administrative attitude or behavior, administrative requirements and requested extracurricular activities.

In the Thai University administrative culture facet, Chinese teachers communicate differently with Thai supervisors. The older and the more experienced teacher is more direct and more expressive. The younger tend to be shy and obedient. As for administrative attitude or behavior, language can be problematic since Chinese teachers cannot speak Thai, and their English tends to be too weak for effective communication. What troubles Chinese teachers more is the perceived slower and less efficient administrative aspects of the job. For administrative requirements, punching in and out with a time clock for work has a different level of understanding for Chinese teachers compared to Thai, as they take it as a restriction or as an inconvenience in comparison to universities in China which do not require teachers to account for their time in the same way. Regarding service to the university and service to the community as extracurricular activities, if it takes too long or is an inconvenience or simply just not wanted, such as the 'mandatory' wearing of black clothes mourning for the late king, or an outfit in celebration of a special occasion for certain period of time, it seems quite hard for Chinese teachers to accept and adapt. Participating in a religious activity can also be considered a burden since most Chinese are atheists. Thai participants are unaware of these un-adapted cultural events for non-Thai staff, although in some aspects they believe an explanation, such as detailing the rules of punching in and out at the start and end of the day, can help.

In the Thai teaching culture facet, expectations of the teacher's role from

the Department are not demanding. What Chinese teachers find difficult adapting to is the percentage control of 'A' grade students bing kept under 30% and the percentage of failed students as well as the pressure of failing students. Without considering students' level and learning attitudes, teachers feel it unreasonable. The senior Chinese participant was also annoyed by being blamed indirectly by the Thai supervisor for failing students, which she believed was a 'student' problem. The way of assessing teachers might not be adequate at certain times, such as when the observation is too short and when some items are not evaluated.

Thai students seldom have expectations from their teachers since they are too obedient and dependent in studies. In addition, certain text materials from China which are unsuitable for the students' level are not updated and replaced, so the students can only memorize what's available and without a clear understanding - even the teachers find this material difficult when teaching. Teaching administrative tasks, such as the setting of exam papers, are not standardized and documented for Chinese teachers to follow. Teachers correct their exam papers under the subjective feedback of internal and external committee. Challengeable questions types are likely to be abandoned since students are not trained in that way. Although a Thai supervisor provides mentoring and explains grading according to the philosophy of Thai higher education, it is still hard for teachers to comprehend. Suitable teaching outfits and proper classroom language are reminded by the supervisor. Thai participants all acknowledge that the relaxed learning style of Thai students demotivates Chinese teachers.

As for Thai interpersonal culture, Chinese teachers tend to feel the distance with Thai teachers. There is very little contact after work among coworkers. Socializing out of work between Chinese teachers depends on their personality and ability to develop new friendships. It is hard to build friendships between Chinese and Taiwanese teachers if they have unpleasant experiences in working attitudes or cooperation. In addition, teachers who do not have the intention to stay long do not gain the notice from coworkers. However, the

senior Thai participant claims the distance is out of politeness, and the other Thai participants think there are no obstacles in communication. The senior Thai participant understands Chinese thinking with some negative opinions towards Thais, but it is observed that Thais generally have a friendly attitude towards the Chinese.

As for Thai social culture, Chinese teachers accept the royal supremacy but find it difficult to adapt to the lèse majesté as Thais are not allowed to discuss this topic. Their attitudes to transgender, unlike the curiosity of tourists, takes time to get used, especially for two young Chinese teachers who had never had contact with this minority group before. Restriction of selling alcohol or gambling in Thailand is unusual for most foreigners, and even playing cards themselves are hard to find in the stores. The young female Thai participant explains that the law prohibits the discussion of the royal family. Thai participants believe Chinese teachers can gradually and eventually adapt to the phenomenon of transgender people.

As Thai eating habits are concerned, Thais eat spicy food to stimulate the appetite and ice water or sweets to ease the spicy taste. However, there is a mutual agreement on poor adjustability of Chinese teachers with regard to the peppery tastes, spices, sweets and ice that form Thai eating habits. Further, the amount of rice provided by the restaurants is often considered too small for Chinese teachers. 2 out of 3 Chinese participants prefer Chinese food and they are not used to the herbs used frequently in Thai cuisine. As a consequence, they seem to never be able to adapt to Thai food. All of them are also more used to drinking warm water because of Chinese cultural background and the theory of Chinese medical science.

In the facet of Thai daily habits, the heat from the weather, since arrival in Thailand takes time to acclimatize. The temperature of the air conditioner in the classroom is set around 21 degrees Celsius and is considered too low for Chinese teachers which results in a big temperature difference between being indoors and being outdoors. Even in the office, Thai teachers are used to the air-conditioner being on full, whereas Chinese are not so inclined. Greetings Thais

using the wai gesture depends on social levels and can also be difficult to follow at the beginning. Other habits which are also un-adapted by the Chinese participants are having cold showers and taking shoes off indoors. Some habits are not even known by the Chinese teachers since their contact with Thais and their knowledge to certain habits are limited, such as using a deodorant and access to a toilet hose. It is observed that the guards and the cleaners, no matter young or old, wai to the teachers. The male participant feels uncomfortable when an old cleaner uses a wai to him since he is younger. Thai tend to use deodorant, but Chinese don't. Whenever male teachers sweat a lot, there is unpleasant smell which they are not aware of.

Nonverbal Facets

11 nonverbal facets are investigated, including kinesics, haptics, proxemics, chronemics and vocalics.

Regarding the nonverbal culture, the taboo of touching the head in Thailand is expressly stipulated, although the Chinese do not have such taboo, and are used to patting a student's head. The smile on the face and gentle eye contact give the impressions of a friendly Thai person, but the use of an extended gaze by Chinese is considered provocative for Thais. Unaware and used to a loud volume in talking, Chinese tend to think Thais speak too softly. A strong sense of dressing for the right occasions also brings inconvenience for Chinese teachers. Unpunctuality of Thais troubles Chinese teachers. Blurred line between genders complicates the social images for Chinese. Sending messages by mail and social media software without response from Thai can also cause inconveniences or confusion for Chinese teachers though the youngest Thai participant says it's a habit. Most of the time it takes a long time to receive a response. The young female participant is the exception since her father works in a Japanese company, so she is the only Thai teacher who is punctual and replies to messages right away.

Discussions

Values are the most inner part of a social culture. The following

discussion reveals how cultural values become a barrier to intercultural adaptation.

1) Distance with intimacy

From the *power distance* detailed by Hofstede (2001), the higher score represents a higher power distance environment. Although Thailand has a lower score, the power distance seems greater than China in many ways within the university environment even though it is an international university.

In a higher power distance culture, children are expected to obey parents, the elder brothers or sisters. This affects the rest of their lives, and similarly they obey the teacher in school and supervisor in work. In this aspect, Thai students show total respect, obedience and dependence to their teachers as they do at home, even though they are young adults and now university students. The senior Thai participant frequently mentioned that Thai students are like children who still expect the teachers to look after them in every way, from study to school activities. It makes Chinese participants quite unadapted. They think university students are not high school students, so teachers are not a nanny who should look after them from study to activities all day long. Physically, Thai students treat hugging teachers as naturally as hugging parents, but this kind of physical contact might be treated as sexual harassment or inappropriate in many countries and is considered improper in China.

Whenever students have questions or suggestions, they do not talk to Chinese teachers face to face since they are "afraid" to express their ideas. They tend to ask the chairperson for transmitting what they want to say. It also seems to apply to Thai teachers. Whenever they act, they always need to ask the supervisor for permission first and obey. If they have questions or problems with Chinese teachers, they tend to talk to their supervisor first. To retort or refute the supervisor is seen as disrespectful. The leader is quite influential in staff's attitude or behavior, such as asking teachers suggesting second thoughts of being a friend with someone with personal problems.

2) Absolute Harmony

China and Thailand obtained the same score in collectivism. Under the

collectivist paradigm, it's considered rude to have conflict with people. Thailand falls close to Femininity esteems harmony. However, Thai culture seems to avoid conflict in every way so as to keep harmony more than the Chinese. The supervisor tends not to criticize teachers' mistakes directly since she did not want to turn a minor problem into a major crisis. Even blaming teachers for failing students was said indirectly.

Another example is that the dormitory asked some lecturers to move to the teacher floor in the dorm, but a senior teacher knew that if one keeps ignoring their request, nothing will be done. Thai culture tries to avoid conflict and to be polite with foreigners, but they still have their comments and opinions. Not saying anything about the violation of rules does not mean that one can keep doing it.

Class teaching assessment is considered typical for individualism, however out of harmony, it turns out to be partial scoring which might be a problem. No action is taken afterwards even if one's teaching performance is considered poor. Public discussion of a poor result of someone which is taken as disharmony from the viewpoint of collectivism. In addition, privacy is not considered in collectivism, so what happened and what is said in the office among teachers is reported to the supervisor.

As a sign of harmony, Chinese participants all feel positive when receiving a smile from the "Land of smiles" without knowing the delicate differences. As Samovar et al. (2017) report, outsiders cannot read the smile of a Thai person as there are so many variations depending on the purpose and meaning. The young female Thai participant comments that the Thai smile does not really signify positive emotions all the time, and Chinese teachers cannot tell a "dislike" under the smile of students. In class, students smile when not knowing how to answer.

When teachers are too strict to smile in class, they force students away. One new teacher who just graduated had a high standard to students and was extremely strict and serious. Even the suggestions from the supervisor and feedback of students could not help. Students then avoided taking her class and

left the teacher frustrated. It echoes what Yu, Q. (2012) says about smiles in Thai class, which creates a harmonious environment for learning.

3) *Paradoxical politeness*

Thais regard politeness very seriously, from the right outfit for the right occasion, not touching the head, not pointing to people with their feet, and not speaking loudly, etc. Ironically, they may however take off their slippers or shoes and sit crossed legged while attending class, while taking exams, and even eating in the restaurant. Thai teachers or students can also pick their noses easily when talking with you. This in particular is a habit most non-Thai teachers find shocking.

As Zu (2017) reports that the Sinosphere has a tradition of respecting teachers, and as such teachers tend to wear more formal attire, but notes that Chinese from the origin of Confucianism, seem to dress more informally when teaching compared with their Thai counterparts. They believe Thai dress code for teachers is too strict, especially no pants option for female teachers. Although the formal dress code for teachers going to the office is necessary, according to the supervisor, those who live on campus wore casual clothes to the office or contacted the school staff on their day off and believed it should not be a problem. However, if it's still a weekday, then sometimes they might be blocked from entering the office building by the security guards simply because of their casual clothes.

4) *Rooted values*

Chinese teachers believe that everyone can improve by making efforts. However, Thai students' levels are believed to be steady without changes since the beginning. If one gets a B grade, then it is impossible to get an A grade in the future, as the young female Thai participant said. Though controlling the distribution of A students from Thai Higher Education is to show a good class distribution, manmade manipulation seems paradoxical since if someone is good, why should a teacher put him out of A level because of over percentage. Chinese teachers tend to have a hard time when facing such a dilemma and feel sorry for the students who are scored with a lower level. Providing mentoring

and explanation according to the philosophy of Thai higher education does not help much.

It was also observed that it was taking time for two young Chinese participants with fixed gender concept to adapt the phenomenon of blurred genders in Thailand. Facing students changing their gender and appearance and to have males with feminine habits, and females with male habits, seems difficult to accept, even though they were aware of the third gender before they came.

However, it's food that seems to be the hardest to adapt to if one cannot get used to it at the beginning. 2 out of 3 participants tried and disliked Thai food since arrival. Therefore, they use separation strategies by eating only Chinese food in the Chinese restaurants or cook Chinese food by themselves. Thai ingredients and herbs are hard to integrate with Chinese taste. This point confirms what Li (2015) asserts that immigrants use different strategies in various fields of life in a host culture.

For some, those who majored in teaching Chinese as a second or foreign language, insist their way of teaching is the most effective since they are used to this method or because this is the way they have been trained. They seem reluctant to modify their way of teaching to suit the reality of each class. One professor who taught his specialty in China refused to modify his material for Thai students when assigned to work here. The result was certainly negative.

Schumann' acculturation model (1978) mentions the social and psychological distance factors. However, 2 out of 3 Chinese participants were not motivated to learn Thai language and neither were they curious regarding certain aspects of life in Thailand. Not knowing Thai language might mean they do not know how their students make grammatical mistakes as a result of their Thai thinking and cannot experience and empathize how their students struggle in learning a new language. The Chinese teachers think it to be useless to learn a new language for themselves since their stay is short or they could just as easily go out with someone who can speak Thai, thus removing them from this interaction. To stay within the Chinese community's "comfort zone" also limits

language uptake, and stay in clique Chinese groups all the time means there is little or no chance to learn and observe how to think or act like Thais. When they take everything for granted and without curiosity, they won't be able to know why Thais have this or that in their culture. Like the toilet hose in Thailand, Chinese participants see it every day when using the toilet, but they did not ask and simply took it as a toilet washing tool.

Thailand is quite generous in accepting other cultures. Their smile and conflict avoiding attitudes win a good reputation. They accept you no matter if you integrate with them or not. In the university field, it is observed that the Thai host seem to have different attitude towards three Chinese participants with a realistic concern. Two female participants who taught in the program with high turnover rate of teachers received less attention from Thai or Chinese coworkers, and they were not asked to share some work in the department. They were seen as guests for the Thai host. The male participant, who is rare in Chinese teaching, was appreciated by the supervisor with his hardworking attitude. He therefore garnished more local support and psychologically acceptance from other coworkers. He was even asked to stay longer for the department. Even so, not knowing if staying or not, he too felt a distance with Thai coworkers.

Conclusion

Conclusion and Implication

From the perspective of culture distance, Thailand and China who are kith and kin seem to have a small distance. However, from our findings, Thailand appears to be distant in certain ways.

In a Thai international university field, what Chinese lecturers need to face in intercultural adaptation can be quite delicate and complicated. Thai university working values towards duties and requirements, sometimes depends on the government's decisions and bylaws, such as mourning garment for the late king who is adored and worshiped by Thai people. The slow administrative efficiency also has much to do with Thai time concept. Under the hierarchy, students obey teachers as children obey parents but the smile of teachers to

students is necessary; teachers obey the guidance of supervisor, and conflict avoidance is the lubricant in maintaining interpersonal relationship. Professional outfits and appearances for teachers are a must. Small volume contributes the harmony. Harmony is the ultimate goal in Thai culture. As a result, when Chinese's expectations, habits, behaviors or beliefs contradicts Thai's, Chinese need to adapt by themselves.

Thai host, as the three Thai participants interviewed, provided explanations to certain situations and became mentors for advice since they knew what might be difficult to adapt for Chinese lecturers. For some aspects, the Thai host cannot help at all, such as food and weather, and thus leave Chinese teachers to adapt on their own. Some aspects are not aware of by the Thai host, such as Chinese teachers' opinions, complaints and feelings towards the problems they encountered.

As Kim (2001) considers adaptation as a growth experience, our study reveals these insights about possible difficulties teachers encounter in a university field. Such difficulties are not always negative since they might provide a different way to look at things. However, ethnocentrism will stop the growth of such experiences. An example was an experienced Chinese teacher who was observed to look down his nose at Thailand in many ways, such as only this 'small' country uses the legal-size paper (not knowing that it is used exclusively in the UK, US) and thinking Thai tourist sites were not as historical as those found in China.

Values are rooted in one's mentality as one grows, so it might be hard to change one's cultural values and accept others' cultural values straight away. Chinese teachers should try to empathize and to put themselves in a Thai's shoes in order to understand how they behave, or it will be difficult to adapt to the way Thais act and do. As Byram (2017) suggests the dilemma of teachers with linguacultural is how much they want their learners to integrate into Chinese culture. We can suggest the same with regard to Chinese teachers in Thailand. A language teacher who teaches in a foreign country also needs to consider how much he/she wants to integrate into the foreign culture themselves, that is, one

can mediate between one's own culture and the foreign culture, a 'third space' between two cultures. Then one can understand the way of thinking, acting in the foreign culture, and be open to other behaviors, beliefs and values.

Limitations and Future Study

This qualitative research helps to report on some of the unknown and meticulous aspects of intercultural adaptation for Chinese lecturers. With limited time and effort, the aspects explored can only be made in the international university environment.

The content of interviews and observation might be helpful as intercultural training examples for future Chinese teachers, and as a prerequisite for those who want to teach Chinese in Thailand. It could be a reference for quantitative research for measuring which aspects affect Chinese participants the most in the future.

Acknowledgments

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