

Adaptation of Cross-Cultural Values and Interpersonal Communication of Chinese Students Studying in English-Speaking Countries

Haoqing Zhang

Nanjing Jinling High School International Department, Zhongshan Road NO. 169, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China
zhanghaoqing0706@126.com

Keywords: Cross culture; Cultural Adaptation; Interpersonal Interactions

Abstract: Since overseas study programs for Chinese students lead to the adaptation of international students' cross-cultural values, cross-cultural interpersonal skills have become widely discussed and studied topics. Considerable studies have linked the main elements of cross-cultural adjustment to values and interpersonal interactions and this paper aims to analyze the adaptation of cross-cultural values and interpersonal communication based on a qualitative study of Chinese students studying in English-speaking countries.

1. Introduction

The advancement of network technology and the trend of globalization have brought about a significant increase in the popularity of international education. With this increase, a growing number of Chinese students are choosing to study abroad, leading to a heightened interest in cross-cultural adaptation and the development of cross-cultural interpersonal skills among these students. Chinese students studying in English-speaking countries often face language barriers, cultural differences, and difficulties in adapting to new environments. Language barriers can cause miscommunication and misunderstandings, which can lead to a lack of confidence and social isolation. Cultural differences, such as different attitudes towards time, personal space, and social norms, can cause confusion and misunderstandings. Furthermore, adapting to new environments can be overwhelming, leading to feelings of loneliness and homesickness.

This study aims to explore the process of adaptation among Chinese students who are studying in English-speaking countries. The research seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges these students face in adapting to new cultural values and communication styles. It aims to provide insights into the factors that contribute to cross-cultural adaptation and the strategies that these students use to overcome the difficulties they encounter in adjusting to a new culture.

2. Literature Review

The study of cross-cultural adjustment has been an active area of research in recent years, with several prominent scholars linking the main elements of this process to values and interpersonal interactions. Anderson's study, for example, proposes that the dominant picture of cross-cultural

adjustment is characterized by the process of recovery from culture shock or culture-related stress^[1]. Additionally, Cross's study examines the differences in the independent and interdependent self-structures of American and East Asian students studying in the United States, and finds that these differences, along with variables such as number of host country friends, relationships with fellow countrymen, language ability, and prior intercultural experiences, significantly predict international students' stress^[2].

Kim's structural model of integrative communication theory of intercultural adjustment emphasizes the importance of individuals' ability to communicate using host country cultural norms and practices, and active participation in interpersonal and mass communication activities in the host country, as the main drivers of the adjustment process^[4]. These communicative factors are further explained as being influenced by key cultural conditions of the host country's environment as well as the individual's value dispositions^[5].

Kealey's study examines the relationship between interpersonal and social behaviors and patterns of success and failure in cross-cultural adaptation. The interpersonal communication skills that are frequently cited as important for cross-cultural adjustment were examined: respect, interaction management, and tolerance for ambiguity^[3]. A field follow-up study was conducted to assess the impact, psychological adjustment, and professional and interaction effectiveness of these individuals. The comparisons of pre-test and post-test measures indicated that each of the focal dimensions predicted patterns of success and failure in adaptation with varying degrees of adequacy.

Overall, these studies by Anderson, Cross, Kim, and Kealey provide valuable insights into the various factors that influence cross-cultural adjustment and the importance of values and interpersonal interactions in this process^[6]. They also highlight the importance of understanding the unique experiences and challenges faced by international students, and the need for effective strategies and resources to support them in their studies.

3. Methodology

29 people (22 men and 7 women) participated in the study. They went to different English-speaking countries to study: the United States (n=19), the United Kingdom (n=7), and Canada (n=3). Participants included 1 high school student, 23 undergraduates, and 5 graduate students. The age range is 18-25 years old, with an average age of 20.31 years. The average length of these participants living abroad is 1.36 years, ranging from 0-7 years.

Data in the present study were gathered via self-designed questionnaires which refer to Kim^[5]'s studies.

All 4 independent variables are:

(1) Years, (2) majors, (3) countries studying in (4) English proficiency (valued by TOFEL/IELTS scores).

All 6 dependent variables are adaptability to local:

(1) Values; (2) non-verbal behaviors; (3) unique expressions (humour, memes, etc.); (4) respect; (5) knowledge about history; (6) friendship.

All the survey data were analyzed by measuring the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) using SPSS 20 to present a certain relationship between the experience of studying abroad and the personal cross-cultural adaptation values chosen by international students as *Table 1*.

The following section constitutes a portion of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Several inquiries included within the questionnaire

Questions1-4					
1. The English-speaking country where I went to study was					
2. My TOEFL/IELTS score is					
3. I have been studying abroad for					
4. The purpose of my study abroad is					
Questions5-8					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
5. How well I adapt to local values	1	2	3	4	5
6. I can understand some non-verbal behaviour of local people (e.g., body language, facial expressions, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
7. I can understand the unique expressions of local people (e.g., humour, subtext, stems, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
8. When dealing with local people, I can demonstrate a good understanding of the local culture Respect for chemistry	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have an understanding of the local history, culture, politics and economy What we know	1	2	3	4	5
10. Most of the local people were very friendly and often offered me help	1	2	3	4	5

4. Results

The results of the survey have shed light on the correlation between the experiences of studying abroad and the personal cross-cultural adaptation values chosen by international students. This study aimed to explore the impact of various factors such as major, country of origin, English proficiency, and learning years on the personal cross-cultural adaptation values of international students.

The data was analyzed using Pearson correlation, a statistical method used to examine the relationship between two continuous variables. Table 2 summarizes the results of the analysis. It is evident from the data that there is no significant correlation between major, country of origin, and English proficiency, and cross-cultural adaptation. This indicates that these factors do not significantly impact an international student's ability to adapt to a new culture.

However, a positive correlation was found between learning years and students' adaptation to local non-verbal behaviors, with a Pearson correlation of 0.440 ($p < 0.01$). This result suggests that the longer an international student spends in the host country, the more likely they are to adapt to local non-verbal behaviors. Moreover, there is also a positive correlation between learning years and respect for each other, with a Pearson correlation of 0.424 ($p < 0.01$). This finding highlights the significance of prolonged exposure in promoting mutual respect and understanding among individuals from different cultures.

Table 2: Pearson correlation between variables

	Years	Major	Country	English proficiency
Values	0.323	-0.041	-0.254	0.145
Non-verbal behaviors	0.440*	0.03	-0.089	0.342
Unique expressions	0.232	0.126	-0.027	0.133
Respect	0.424*	-0.052	0.005	0.158
Knowledge about history	0.068	-0.166	-0.243	0.118
Friendship	0.028	-0.122	-0.18	-0.172

5. Discussion

The experiences of studying abroad have a profound impact on the formation of personal cross-cultural adaptation values in international students. As students spend more time living and studying in a foreign country, they are exposed to different cultural norms, values, and beliefs, which inevitably shape their personal cross-cultural adaptation values. Cultural differences can lead to a sense of identity deviation, as international students attempt to reconcile their cultural identity with that of the host culture. The cognitive and behavioral differences between their original cultural identity and the new cultural context can lead to a psychological deviation. This deviation can help students broaden their perspectives and foster greater cross-cultural understanding. The growing trend of international student mobility has heightened the importance of cross-cultural adaptation values. As the international student community expands, the demand for intercultural awareness and understanding has also increased.

In conclusion, the relationship between the experiences of studying abroad and personal cross-cultural adaptation values is complex and multifaceted. The formation of these values is shaped by the interplay between cultural differences, identity deviation, and cognitive and behavioral differences. With the continued growth of the international student community, the need for cross-cultural understanding and adaptation is becoming more important than ever.

In the process of cross-cultural adaptation, this deviation is mutual, that is, in essence, there is an adaptation process for international students. This adaptation is self-centered and is a practical behavior in society. The embodiment of this behavior is the interaction between people. People will interact with people in their way or adapt to the environment. This kind of adaptive behavior may make us more positive, enthusiastic, and confident; it may also be negative, making us more negative and thus affecting ourselves. Therefore, changing this attitude is partly our control over our behavior and adapting to the influence of others and their culture on them. In this process, good cross-cultural ideology will inevitably play a positive or negative role. It is the reflection and application of cross-cultural theory to reality, and the specific behavior or culture embodied in negative theory is a direct cultural expression or form of behavior. It means that in the same cultural context, people are more likely to be influenced by each other and more likely to have conflicts. Therefore, we should learn to accept the differences between cultures and understand each other's values.

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