

SELF-TALK STRATEGIES FOR CULTURAL COMPETENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION LEADERS

Janat Blackmon¹

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Abstract: The objective of this research was to explore self-talk strategies for international school leaders and cultural competency. A mixed-methods approach explored the concept of self-talk of leaders and cultural competency with International Schools Association of Thailand (ISAT) leaders to understand their experiences and cultural competency. The research sought to determine the current self-talk of school leaders in ISAT schools in Thailand, determine their experiences of self-talk and cultural competency, explore the effects of self-talk on cultural competency, and develop self-talk strategies for cultural competency. Qualitative theme analysis found that leaders are using self-talk strategies mostly unconsciously. Findings indicated that participants' judgments, confusion, and frustration around the functions and systems in the new culture and negative experiences. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to study the variance of self-talk: constructive, instructive, destructive, and the cultural competency level of participants. Findings revealed significant associations between the scale scores for inverse relationships between constructive and instructive self-talk and cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, and cultural blindness. Destructive self-talk was significant at $F=.856$ $p=.039$, indicating that destructive self-talk may impact cultural competency levels. Cultural destructiveness and cultural incapacity had a significant relationship with destructive self-talk. Cultural competency and cultural proficiency only had a significant relationship with instructive self-talk, indicating that the type of self-talk and cultural competency levels affect each other. Based on these findings, self-talk strategies were developed to enhance cultural competency for international education leaders.

Keywords: Self-talk; International Education Leadership Effectiveness; Cultural Competency; Culturally Responsive Leadership; Acculturation

¹ Ph.D. Education Leadership, Assumption University, Thailand. janat.b.edu@gmail.com

Introduction

Education is a foundational framework of societies worldwide, and globalization has led to more and more people living, working, and going to schools in other countries than ever (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). International schools provide an education for those families working and raising children abroad and provide education options to local families looking for alternatives to the government or national education systems. Educational leaders are tasked to ensure value and quality in international education, and their leadership effectiveness influences student success. “Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.” (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 5) International education leaders must be culturally responsive in their leadership. Educational leadership then in a global setting requires an ability for the leader to be effective in a complex cross-cultural setting, navigate the acculturation process, and develop an identity in a new culture. The leader must be able to manage the processes of self-talk in navigating a leadership role in an international school environment as they also navigate the acculturation process in a diverse cultural setting in the international school.

As Shaw (2001, p. 275) states in his research, “Self-dialogue is a fundamental expression process; it mediates between self-image and social experience. It is regulated by ontological limits, cultural norms, and social rules. It serves as an adaptive mechanism for self-presentation, identity acquisition, stress management, health maintenance, and personal integration.” Self-talk mediates between the self and experiences. It is enculturated by ‘cultural norms’ and the ‘social rules’ in which society is indoctrinated. A leader must understand the ‘self-presentation’ and ‘adaptation mechanisms’ necessary in a complex cross-cultural environment to be an effective leader. Effective leadership in international education deals with complex diversity; administration, staff, parents, students, and the host country work with different perspectives, cultural backgrounds, and communication styles. If not managed well by school leadership, these divergent perspectives can impact and directly affect all stakeholders in a school.

The students, teachers, parents, staff, and the community may be impacted by decreased learning outcomes, negative perceptions, negative communications and interactions between cultural groups, and higher staff and student attrition rates. International educational leadership is a complex and divergent task; school leaders must learn to adapt, accommodate, and assimilate to use intercultural communication effectively. Leadership in schools with a complex and culturally diverse population poses unique challenges. They must

have knowledge, empathy, self-confidence, and cultural awareness to navigate communications with all stakeholders. Leadership effectiveness across cultures requires additional skills from leadership within the context of the leader's home country and the host country. Leaders must understand culturally responsive leadership, cultural dimensions, customs, communication patterns, hierarchical patterns and expectations, and culturally appropriate communication approaches. Leaders can use self-talk strategies to help them adapt, accommodate, and assimilate into a new culture. In the process of acculturation, there are potential changes in a leader's self-talk as they navigate the processes to construct meaning and identity in the new culture. This study is essential for international school leaders and leaders working in globalized, diverse contexts to help develop effective leadership abilities through self-talk. New leaders in international schools need to understand how cultural adaptation occurs and how their self-talk can help regulate this process. It helps leaders develop their strengths, discover their needs, derive goals based on effective performance, and distinguish growth, effectiveness, and adaptation in complex international education contexts.

Research Objectives

1. The main research objectives of the study are:
2. To determine the current self-talk used by ISAT school leaders in Thailand.
3. To determine experiences of self-talk and cultural competency of ISAT school leaders in Thailand.
4. To determine the effects of self-talk on cultural competency in ISAT school leaders in Thailand.
5. To develop self-talk strategies for cultural competency for international education leaders.

Literature Review

This research explored the intersection of self-talk theory from social learning theory/cognitive learning theory and cultural competency theory through the lens of international education leadership theory. The theories of self-talk are from the Social Learning Theory/Cognitive Learning theory of Bandura (1991). The Cultural competency theories are from Connerley and Pedersen (2005) and the cultural competency development of Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989). These main theories are the framework for analysis in this research.

Social Learning Theory and Cognitive Learning Theory

In understanding leadership effectiveness through self-talk, the theoretical foundation extends from social learning theory and cognitive behavior theory (Bandura, 2001). This involves self-influencing a person's cognition, motivation, and behavior. (Yun, Cox, & Sims, 2006) Self-leadership discusses leaders' thinking and behavior according to different strategies cognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally (Kraft, 1998; Prussia et al., 1998; Yun et al., 2006). Positive or constructive strategies can create positive habits in thinking, and negative or destructive self-talk can be changed to positive or constructive self-talk (Seligman, 1991; Neck & Houghton, 2006). Constructive thought strategies can change thinking patterns (Prussia et al., 1998) and positively impact outcome expectations (Boss & Sims, 2008). Several fields have utilized these theories as a foundation of conceptual analysis and synthesis: athletics, psychology, communications, politics, sociology, and education. (Rogelberg, Justice, Braddy, Paustian-Underdahl, Heggstad, Shanock, Fleenor, 2013). Self-talk mediates between the self and experiences. 'cultural norms enculturate it,' and the 'social rules' indoctrinated in society. In terms of the importance of self-talk, considerable research has found that constructive self-talk correlates to increased performance (Cohn, 1991; Eklund, 1996; Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1992; Gould, Finch, & Jackson, 1993; Johnson, Hrycaiko, Johnson, & Halas, 2004) and destructive self-talk correlates to decreased performance (Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1992; Highlen and Bennett, 1979; McPherson, 2000). Furthermore, cognitive self-talk interventions designed to decrease destructive self-talk or increase positive self-talk led to improved performance (Thomas & Fogarty, 1997; Wrisberg & Anshel, 1997; Johnson, Hrycaiko, Johnson, & Halas, 2004). A thorough review of self-talk research by Williams and Leffingwell (2002) indicates that self-talk has continuously been a central construct for improving performance. Research supports current sports psychology practice, suggesting an effective intervention to increase performance across various sports, competition levels, and countries worldwide. Self-talk can enhance performance, reduce anxiety, build confidence, and increase motivation and attention (Tod, Hardy, and Oliver, 2011; Zinsser, Bunker, & Williams, 2010). Constructive self-talk is an effective way of increasing self-efficacy and performance. (Abdoli, Hardy, Riyahi, and Farsi, 2018, Gould, Hodge, Peterson, and Giannini, 1989; Weinberg and Jackson, 1990; Weinberg, Grove, and Jackson, 1992). In light of all the research done in other fields regarding self-talk, it accentuates and highlights the critical need for the theoretical framework to be extended into research in international education leadership, where the stakes are much higher than that of a sport or game; educators and leaders are responsible for the education of the children and their success, future, and lives depend upon what is done in the day to day of educational

settings. Educational leaders in complex cultural settings are tasked with an even more extensive job of bringing diversity together. Research suggests that maintaining positive and constructive relationships between key players could significantly impact the school community.

Cultural Competency

Leaders in this diverse and changing world must have the understanding, skills, and ability to work and assess and adapt as necessary to best serve in their leadership role. There are three areas identified as a model for leadership practice. It is the “Knowledge-Skills-Awareness” model that (1) Knowledge implies that one’s thoughts and behaviors can be inconsistent, and people may be unaware of their inconsistencies; (2) Skills mean that one should be prepared to practice the skills necessary to attain cultural sensitivity and competency, and (3) Awareness means that leaders should be conscious of their reactions to people who are culturally different from them. (Diversity and Leadership, 2015) Leaders must be aware of diversity, develop their skills and understanding together, and effectively communicate and work within the organization’s culture and the culture of the society within which they reside. Cultural competency depends upon the leader’s skills, communication, understanding, appreciation, and willingness to learn, grow, adapt, and lead within a multicultural setting. There are six stages of cultural adaptation or development given by Chin and Trimble (2015). Cultural destructiveness, Cultural incapacity, Cultural blindness, Cultural pre-competency, Cultural competency, and Cultural proficiency. Developing a leader’s capacities from destructive to proficient will vary and depend largely upon the individual’s capacity to learn, respect, reflect, grow, and willingly engage in pluralistic behaviors, adapting open and fluid competencies within their leadership styles. Valuing differences, understanding, respect, and inclusion are key components for leaders to develop and understand leadership styles. Cultural competency is aligned behaviors, attitudes, and policies that work to facilitate professionals in an organization to work effectively in an interculturally diverse setting. Culture is the indoctrinated human behaviors, including thoughts, communication, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group. Competency can function effectively. A culturally competent leader is aware of the importance of culture, has the skills to assess intercultural communications, an understanding of the dynamics that result from cultural differences, the provisions to expand cultural knowledge, and the adaptation skills to meet cultural needs. Cultural competency, while idealistic, is a goal to help international education leaders work effectively in interculturally diverse and complex scenarios. Becoming culturally competent is a developmental process with room for continuous

learning and growth. It is essential to assess levels of cultural competency continuously.

The continuum and the characteristics that might be exhibited at each are: Cultural destructiveness would include attitudes, policies, and practices destructive to cultures and individuals. Cultural incapacity has extreme biases, assuming the dominant group's racial superiority and assuming a paternalistic posture towards the lesser groups. Cultural blindness represents beliefs that culture makes no difference; people are the same. Values of the dominant culture are presumed to be universally applicable and beneficial, with the non-dominant culture thought not to meet expectations. In cultural pre-competency, there is an awareness of the limitations of cross-cultural communications with a desire to be fair and equitable with appropriate cultural sensitivity. Frustration may come from not knowing what is possible or how to proceed. Cultural competency has acceptance and respect for differences, continuing self-assessment, careful attention to dynamics, and continuous expansion of cultural knowledge and resources with adaptations to belief systems, policies, and practices. Cultural proficiency is when culture is held in high esteem. One seeks to add to their knowledge by reading, studying, conducting research, and developing new approaches for culturally competent practice.

Acculturation and Cultural Competency

Acculturation paradigms can be examined through several lenses in research: psychology, sociology, education, international business, immigration, human resources, and anthropology. The success of individual acculturation adaptation to new cultures throughout the research looks at the ability of the individual to adapt to the new culture and challenge the adaptation process. Acculturation research assists in investigating how a person's personality traits, values, beliefs, and behaviors, affect adaptation to a new culture (Schiefer, Möllering, & Daniel, 2012). The acculturation process changes a person's experiences due to moving from their culture to a new culture. In reviewing research and literature, a disconnect from understanding has emerged in how most research has been done to understand acculturation. "Multiple disciplines have contributed to the understanding of acculturation with attempts to measure, conceptualize, and theorize this enormously complex phenomenon." (Skuz, 2003, p. 19) An issue with the research is employing phenomenological approaches to understand the profoundly human experience of culture and how each experience uniquely occurs in life. This is perhaps central to how a person may experience the acculturation process and adapt to their new culture, effectively developing cultural competency. Cultural adaptation depends upon successful integration and

certain adaptations for lowered stressors, higher self-esteem, more positive social behaviors, fewer anti-social behaviors, increased life satisfaction levels, and an increase in a positive workplace environment. (Berry & Sabatier, 2010; Scottham & Dias, 2010; Wang, Schwartz, & Zamboanga, 2010). The research examines “work-related attitudes regarding the acculturation orientations and work-related well-being” (Peeters & Oerlemans, 2009, p.5). Research indicates that integration may help the acculturation process. However, this is impacted by the country’s society, multicultural or monocultural (Berry, 2001). Multiculturalism is becoming increasingly frequent due to globalization and increased cultural flexibility in understanding cultural values, norms, and beliefs across cultures. In the acculturation and adaptation to living and working in a foreign environment with success, comfort, life satisfaction, and psychological adaptation to the new culture, impacts are found in personal and professional well-being. (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991). Successful navigation of this process impacts the affective domain, behavioral domain, and workplace performance. Empirical data indicates acculturation is essential to successful job performance in the new culture (Forster, 1997; Harvey, 1996), with maladjustment causing decreased performance, stress, negative personal and family consequences, and career consequences with failing to fail to adapt to the new culture. (Selmer, 2001).

Culturally Responsive Education Leadership

In the 21st Century, diversity in this world is rapidly increasing, as well as technological access to information, globalization, and new contexts for organizations, especially schools. “Diversity leadership is about how differences and inclusion are reflected in the paradigms used to define leadership and evaluate its effectiveness.” (Diversity and Leadership, 2015, p. 22) Leaders need to be responsive to change, culturally adept, understand their own identity, values, and worldviews, and continually seek to understand and develop the skills necessary to succeed in the ever-changing world. In some of the earlier research, Getzels, Lipham, and Campbell (1968) educational leaders examined how cultural values influence people’s perspectives, thinking, and behaviors within an organization—working within an international context and looking at effective intercultural leadership to understand the basis for developing a training model for educational leaders to increase effectiveness.

Leadership Theories

Many theories have emerged regarding underlying frameworks for effective leadership outside of education. Much research is borrowed from other fields such as Implicit Leadership theory, Value Belief theory of culture, Implicit Motivation theory, Culturally Endorsed Implicit Leadership Theory, Trait,

Situational, Leadership Styles, and Leader-Member Exchange. (Diversity and Leadership, 2015) The Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) studies looked at some of these theories to establish the shared dimensions for leadership across 62 countries in multiple industries to understand multicultural leadership skills/orientations to help facilitate effective leadership. (Leadership and GLOBE's Culturally Endorsed Leadership Theory (CLT), 2004). In multicultural leadership, dimensions emerged regarding people's values, beliefs, patterns, worldviews, and relationships. "The identified dimensions can be argued to predominantly fall within categories dealing with values, attitudes, or behaviors concerning human relations, power distribution, rules of behavior, orientation to time, rules for status ascription, expression of effect, orientation to nature, cognitive style, and norms regarding communication." (Burke et al. 2005, p. 5.) The extensive research in 2004 by GLOBE found differences in countries and eastern and western paradigms, and now increasing diversity within cultures, subgroups, and individuals with increased globalization. In the 2004 GLOBE study, "200 researchers from 62 countries studying more than 17,000 mid-level managers in the initial phases, the 2004 study is the largest and most prestigious study of its kind in the social sciences. In the latest 2014 study, more than 70 researchers collected data from over 100 CEOs and 5,000 senior executives in various industries in 24 countries. This study demonstrated the considerable influence of culture on societal leadership expectations and the importance of matching CEO behaviors to expectations for leadership effectiveness." The GLOBE study identified four of six dimensions of leadership that were overall seen as effective generally culturally with Implicit Leadership Theories: Charismatic/ Values-Based, Team-Oriented, Participative, and Humane, while Autonomous Self-Protective Leadership were seen as not effective leadership behaviors. Cultural competency depends upon the leader's skills, communication, understanding, appreciation, and willingness to learn, grow, adapt, and lead within a complex cultural setting. Interactions with the self-perception, self-efficacy, self-talk, and effectiveness of a leader's skills as they move through the stages of adjustment (cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural pre-competency, cultural competency, cultural proficiency) impacts self-leadership and self-efficacy. Developing a leader's capacities from destructive to proficient will vary and depend largely upon the individual's capacity to learn, respect, reflect, grow, and willingly engage in pluralistic behaviors, adapting open and fluid competencies within their leadership styles. Valuing differences, understanding, respect, and inclusion are key components for leaders to develop and understand leadership styles. Their leadership and social responsibility to implement a moral and ethical vision for education is the foundation for inclusive, pluralistic, and respectful societies. Leaders must

adapt to this new era and be dynamic, creative, and navigate the complexity of education to provide effective leadership.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is visualized in figure 1.1 to conceptualize the intersection of Social Learning Theory and Cultural Competency Theory through the lens of educational leadership theory, with everything underpinned by the acculturation of the leader. The Social Learning Theory, self-talk strategies, and cultural competency are the significant variables and influence each other to determine the leadership effectiveness in international education leadership. Self-talk strategies are the independent variable with the types of self-talk independent variables; constructive, destructive, instructive, and the resulting self-efficacy. Cultural competency encompasses the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and stages a leader will encounter with acculturation. These are the dependent variables. There is a cyclical pattern to these interactions. They can influence each other as each cycle changes for each area - for example, if self-talk becomes negative during acculturation, cultural competency may decrease, affecting leadership. These three concepts work in conjunction, and if one changes, the others are influenced. For example, cultural competency increases through studying the new culture, new understanding prompts metacognitive dialectical thought patterns to instruct behavior with the new knowledge, and leadership effectiveness increases. The self-talk strategies impact the leader's effectiveness in leading a diverse international school. The relationship between the leader's effectiveness, cultural competency, and acculturation from Cultural Competency Theory can potentially be impacted by the self-talk variables. The inverse articulation between acculturation and cultural competency can also affect self-talk and leadership effectiveness. The research examined the relationship between constructive, instructive, and destructive self-talk and cultural competency and acculturation within the context of international education leadership.

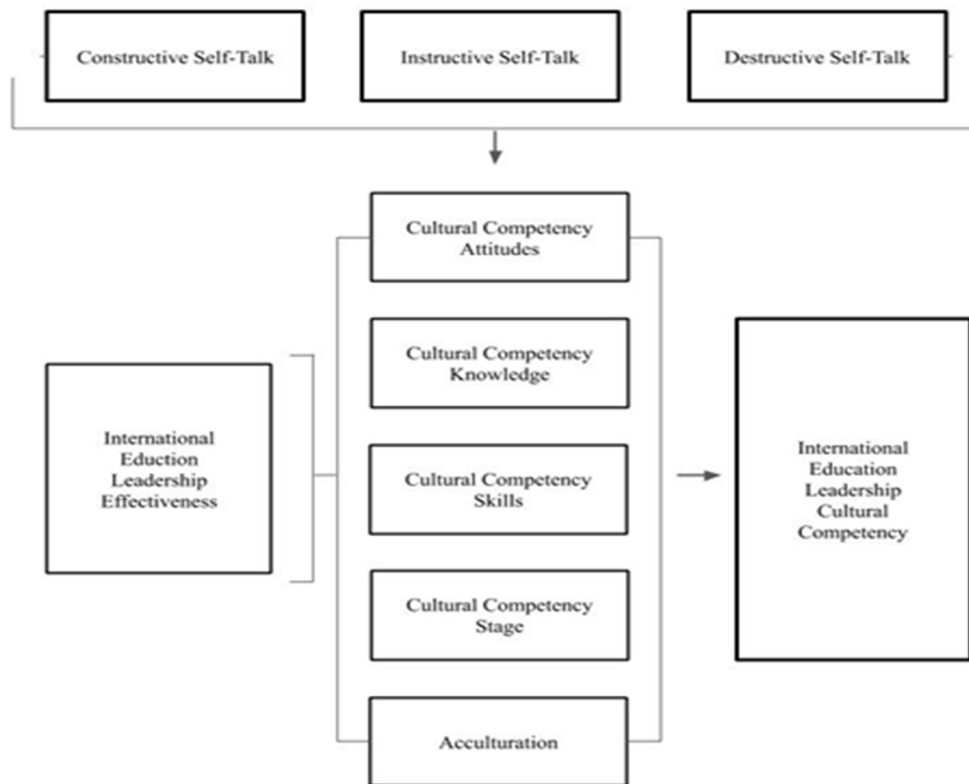


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This research was designed to explore international education leaders' experiences and cultural competency in Thailand, determine the effects of self-talk on cultural competency, and develop self-talk strategies for cultural competency for global education leaders. This research utilized a recognized mixed methods research approach, exploratory sequential design. The study was based upon a mixed-methods inquiry to explore current research, with interviews to develop the instruments, data collection, qualitative and quantitative analysis, and strategies designed from objectives one to three. The primary methodology was the qualitative research conducted first because the quantitative portion depended on the qualitative data. The primary purpose of the first phase was to gain understanding and explore self-talk: current use, perspectives, awareness, current strategies, if any, and feelings towards self-talk and the acculturation process. The second phase's primary purpose was to examine the standard practices and experiences with self-talk and acculturation among survey participants. The participants for the qualitative

interviews were 16 volunteer expert leaders from a list of 128 ISAT schools in Thailand. The experts were defined as ISAT international school leaders who have a minimum of a Master's degree in education or equivalent and direct experience in global education leadership. Interviews were conducted with volunteer interview participants with semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The transcripts from interviews were coded from the framework of constructive, instructive, and destructive self-talk, cultural competency, attitudes, skills, knowledge, acculturation, cultural competency stage indicators, and emergent themes. The transcripts were then analyzed for further emergent themes and coded to nodes to develop the surveys for objective number two and to utilize themes to develop effective strategies for self-talk and cultural competency. Next, selective coding was done to determine the core variables for the interviews and begin creating the surveys. The transcripts and articles were then selectively coded further for any information relating to self-talk and cultural competency and analysis of interviewee speech patterns for self-talk analysis. This thematic analysis of the content led to the development of research instruments for collecting data.

Further, multiple analysis of variance was then utilized from the survey to investigate the effect of self-talk on cultural competency. The research approach sought to develop an understanding of self-talk and cultural competency through observations and data analyses. This research study explored the experience and cultural competency of international education leaders in Thailand to develop self-talk strategies to increase cultural competency for culturally responsive education leadership.

Findings

Research Objective One

Research objective one was to determine the current self-talk used by ISAT school leaders in Thailand.

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted with 16 volunteer experts from 128 ISAT schools in Thailand. The interviewees had leadership experience of 2-36 years, a Master's in education or more, and were in a leadership position at their current workplace. The interviewees included a diverse cross-section of leadership specifically to include all levels of representation for school leadership and three education experts to ensure diversity and inform the survey instrument's development. There were six female leaders and ten male leaders represented. Three of the participants were from Australia, three from the USA, three from England, two from Canada, two from Thailand, and one each from Scotland and India to ensure distribution of perspective across cultures for a global perspective. Board

Executive/Experts, Directors, and Heads of Schools accounted for a total of 56.3% of the interview participants, with Principals accounting for 25% of the total interview participants, and then Vice/Assistant Principals and Curriculum Coordinators accounting for 18.9% of the participants interviewed. Overall, participants have worked in 2-12 different countries in education and had anywhere from 9-30 years of experience working in education. The final resulting themes from the interviews utilized are aggregated in table 1, with a final total of 23 nodes coded from the interview transcripts used to create the survey instrument.

The experts interviewed had an average of 4.625 countries they have worked in and had rich experiences to share on the acculturation process, what it was to them, beliefs and thinking that occurred, and examples of the challenges and opportunities encountered. The interviewees often described the acculturation process. The acculturation experience in Thailand and other countries is challenging and a real change from their home culture in terms of the environment, communication, personality, and leadership styles having to change and working with so many ambiguous situations. Most participants thought their outlook, worldview, and thinking had altered during acculturation by moving to a new culture. Some participants felt the conflict of understanding opposing values and systems potential found within a different culture and new country. Most participants responded that as they noticed things in the new culture around them, they questioned and used self-talk to “*figure out*” and reflect upon what to do and how to adapt. All participants felt a “*culture shock*” period and had difficulties adjusting to a new culture to understanding how to live in the new society. Participants frequently mentioned their self-reflection on cultural adaptations, cultural communications, and navigating the process of acculturation with all of the challenges and pitfalls.

Table 1. *Nodes and Sources Themes for Coding Interview Transcripts Developed a Priori from the Conceptual Frameworks*

Theme	Sources	References
Cultural Competency	14	926
Attitudes	14	163
Knowledge	14	152
Know Yourself	11	40
Skills	14	611
Communications	14	95
Leadership	12	151
Reflection	11	168
Relationship Building	10	69

Theme	Sources	References
Cultural Competency – Levels	13	153
Cultural Incapacity	12	73
Stereotypes or Bias	11	48
Cultural Competency	10	43
Cultural Blindness	7	12
Cultural Destructiveness	4	6
Cultural Pre-Competency	4	11
Cultural Proficiency	4	8
Acculturation	12	150
Strategies	12	64
Questioning	9	47
Self-Talk	9	102
Constructive	10	29
Destructive	10	25
Instructive	10	45
Thoughts	6	42

In understanding how shifts in perspectives and self-talk around core values, responses varied and ranged from accepting and understanding; they are guests in the country and new to the culture. They need to reflect and understand differences without judging the culture but have some moral dilemmas over some values they held essential to who they are. Understanding their identity was helpful for some participants, and they directly looked at how they needed to use their knowledge to help them navigate the process. Participants mentioned some critical theoretical components of essential skills and attitudes, such as flexibility, curiosity, open-mindedness, and patience. Participants said different time frames for feeling adapted to a new culture, and some participants thought they cycled through the acculturation phases, again and again, depending on experiences and circumstances. Some participants noted that they would never feel adapted and acculturated to some cultures due to the differences and backgrounds. Cultural communication during adaptation was mentioned as something to be emphasized even within “Western” teams. Still, they were all from different countries, so they did not share common understandings and communication styles. Leadership during this transition period was also mentioned as a reflection that understanding cultural competency would be something to consider for being a more effective leader. Participants reflected on how to navigate leadership effectiveness in a complex intercultural setting. Some, more than others, reflected upon what it meant to be an intercultural leader and how to navigate that process in a new country. Communicating effectively as a leader in a new culture came up with some participants being aware of how their

communications came across to others and other cultures and how they needed to change communication styles to be effective within their organization. Some evidence of changed self-talk was apparent in participants' responses. They had directly reflected upon and were aware of their current situations and how their past experiences in life either prepared them or not for a leadership position in a complex intercultural setting. Some respondents had done reflection, and some had done very little to none on how they had changed and developed with cultural experiences to add to their worldview. Cultural sensitivity during the acculturation process was mentioned again in the challenges found in standard school practices and events that brought up issues of values and understanding between cultures. Attitudes are an essential factor for international school leader effectiveness. The concepts of respect, openness, curiosity, discovery, seeking out cultural interactions to analyze cultural attributes without prejudice or criticism, and seeing ambiguity positively to work beyond the comfort zone are essential themes for analysis in relation to effective international education leadership. Overall, leaders reported self-talk to help them deal with leadership internally and process all daily interactions with diverse people in the school. The interviewees reported that it helped them work through decisions and responses and helped them communicate more effectively with people in different cultural groups within the school.

Research Objective Two

Research objective two was to determine the experiences of self-talk and cultural competency of ISAT school leaders in Thailand.

For objective number two, qualitative data analysis was done with open-ended questions from the survey. As a leader, respondents reported situations in different cultures that affected their self-talk. Some emerging themes came up in the survey: Communication, customs, values, language, judgment, and relationships. Respondents gave examples of situations that influenced their self-talk: staff meetings, parent meetings, cultural values surrounding traditions and beliefs, non-verbal communication, cultural concepts from different cultures; their role as a leader, and developing the ability to work effectively as a leader within the culture they are currently in. Some leaders responded that understanding critical feedback from a cultural misunderstanding and communication is complex in communication. Not understanding how to read or communicate has made them think more negatively. Learning how to plan for communications across cultural groups emerged as an essential task that influenced leaders self-talk: such as *"I plan for communication with our community, I have a script that I run through in my mind - who will attend, what culture will dominate, do I need to be*

prepared with translators, how many different translated conversations will be happening within the meeting, how long do I need to plan for the various languages used, what will the noise level be... Things of that nature.” (Participant M10) Or in working with diverse groups within the school and understanding how to change communication styles and how to read non-verbal communication cues across cultures. Some respondents indicated that their self-talk is negatively influenced by certain cultural factors surrounding cultural values, beliefs, and customs. Some respondents had several examples from different cultures. One of the themes that came up between different cultures is cultural communications between groups within a school and how they can negatively impact self-talk.

Participants mentioned the constant energy expended in leadership in different cultural settings. *“I have to watch everything I do in Thailand (and previously in Nepal, China, Sri Lanka) to make sure I am being understood correctly as there are verbal, non-verbal, behavior, linguistic, social, etc. issues surrounding leadership in a different culture that you have to think about.”* (Participant M1). Some respondents looked at cultural differences as a barrier to effective school operations. *“The culture of losing face and how it can impact operational efficiency. I need to talk my way through these situations to validate delays/frustrations.”* (Participant S14) Having these situations occur has changed their self-talk in a cognitive way that they are aware of in their leadership. Some respondents noted their frustration and judgments and how that has made their self-talk more destructive. *“The latter has also occurred in cases in which a personal pet peeve, partly derived from my own culture and upbringing, have caused annoyance and internal frustration.”* (Participant M1) Or in working with others within the school and having judgments arise about different communication styles. *“I find myself judging some staff members for not speaking up and then not agreeing with what we planned.”* (Participant K9) Finally, when situations respondents encountered included violations of personal cultural values, it negatively impacted self-talk. *“How there are major differences in the pay scale for different cultures and racism towards dark-skinned people has me wonder and question and sometimes negative.”* (Participant B4) Respondents found these situations challenging and created negative self-talk.

Research Objective Three

Research objective three was to determine the effects of self-talk on cultural competency in ISAT school leaders in Thailand.

Survey results were analyzed by analyzing variance (MANOVA) testing between multiple data variables. Further, the multivariate analysis of variance

was used to study the variance of self-talk: constructive, instructive, destructive, and the cultural competency level of the survey participants. The dependent variables were cultural competency levels of cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural pre-competency, cultural competency, and cultural proficiency. The independent variable of self-talk had three groups; constructive, instructive, and destructive. MANOVA was used to compare differences in cultural competency of leaders with reported constructive, instructive, and destructive self-talk levels among international school leaders in ISAT schools in Thailand. Pillai's trace was used to test the significance of self-talk effects on cultural competency. All tests used alpha = .05 for significance. The researcher was interested in comparing the following groups: constructive, instructive, and destructive self-talk and the effect on the cultural competency of international ISAT school leaders. A series of analyses was conducted with three groups: constructive, destructive, and instructive self-talk variables, with six cultural competency levels, cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural pre-competence, and cultural competence proficiency dependent variables. Findings revealed significant associations between the scale scores for inverse relationships between constructive and instructive self-talk and cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, and cultural blindness. The destructive self-talk was significant at $F=.856$ $p=.039$, indicating that destructive self-talk may impact cultural competency levels. Cultural destructiveness and cultural incapacity had a significant relationship with destructive self-talk. Cultural competency and cultural proficiency only had a significant relationship with instructive self-talk, indicating that the type of self-talk and cultural competency levels affect each other. The following were the findings for the MANOVA using Pillai's trace and F-statistic in Table 2 below.

Table 2. MANOVA Results for Effect of Self-Talk on Cultural Competency

	Value	F	P
Cultural Destructiveness			
Constructive Self-Talk	.436	4.704	.001
Destructive Self-Talk	.856	1.450	.039
Instructive Self-Talk	.283	2.876	.003
Cultural Incapacity			
Constructive Self-Talk	.782	2.337	.000
Destructive Self-Talk	.885	1.130	.043
Instructive Self-Talk	.264	2.667	.006
Cultural Blindness			

	Value	F	P
Constructive Self-Talk	.477	5.236	.000
Destructive Self-Talk	.654	4.176	.001
Instructive Self-Talk	.423	4.547	.000
Cultural Pre-Competency			
Constructive Self-Talk	.331	3.434	.001
Destructive Self-Talk	.803	2.065	.000
Instructive Self-Talk	.648	1.534	.138
Cultural Competency			
Constructive Self-Talk	.691	3.596	.006
Destructive Self-Talk	.200	1.977	.001
Instructive Self-Talk	.848	1.534	.023
Cultural Proficiency			
Constructive Self-Talk	.632	5.281	.071
Destructive Self-Talk	.370	4.704	.054
Instructive Self-Talk	.718	3.699	.0000

Research Objective Four

Research objective four was to develop self-talk strategies for cultural competency for international education leaders.

The interview transcripts were coded for strategies that the expert participants had discussed during the interviews. Emerging themes were then utilized to develop the strategy regarding the conceptual framework. The strategies were developed from the data analysis and using a framework for each strategy. An executive summary of findings was emailed to 20 education experts with a Ph.D. or master's in education and experience in international education leadership for validation. The summary of the self-coaching process for the strategies is in table 3 below.

Strategy 1: Awareness - record in journal self-talk for two weeks. Observe how often self-talk is used, when, why, how. Reflect on the self-talk utilized throughout the two weeks.

Strategy 2: Analyse self-talk from the journal for the two weeks. Categorize it into constructive, instructive, and destructive.

Strategy 3: Acquire the self-talk skills to apply to the goal. Reframe – what else could it mean? Reframe self-talk around the goal area. Refine self-talk to instructive and constructive and reduce destructive self-talk.

Strategy 4: Apply - explicitly practice the goal or target criteria for success. Script out what self-talk to use in the target goal area and then rehearse it mentally each day in the morning and evening. Create an if/then statement to help you activate the script in real-life circumstances. For example, *if* self-talk is _____, *then* I will _____.

Strategy 5: Assess - *evaluate* progress towards the goal through the success criteria. Assess how *effective* strategies 1-4 have been, what worked well, and what needs to be changed. Use the 5-step formula again to *continue the process or set* a new goal area to work on.

Table 3. Process for Self-talk Strategies for Cultural Competency

Self-talk Strategies	Awareness – observing, recording, reflecting on the acculturation process and cultural competencies
Coaching process for self-talk strategies for acculturation and cultural competencies	Analysis of self-talk – is it constructive, instructive, or destructive? What areas could be developed? Acquire – reframe, refine, reduce – change where necessary, awareness to reduce destructive talk.
Destructive To Constructive and Instructive	Apply – scrips, rehearse, activate – write, practice, and make habits for self-talk Asses – evaluate, effectiveness, engage – assess results, analyze areas, engage in the cycle again.

Conclusions

This research examined self-talk for cultural competency for international education leaders in ISAT schools in Thailand. The research revealed that self-talk is a concept that leaders utilize in education leadership. Some of the respondents used it in a structured reflective manner, while others used it in an unconscious automatic fashion. Leaders were aware of the challenges of acculturation and leading in complex intercultural environments. Thus,

reflected upon how to work the challenges and opportunities these brought forth. Acculturation may impact both social and psychological well-being, self-talk, and leadership effectiveness with cross-cultural communication and building relationships.

Some critical attitudes, skills, and knowledge were necessary for leaders to develop cultural competency. Attitudes are an essential factor for international school leader effectiveness. The concepts of respect, openness, curiosity, discovery, seeking out cultural interactions to analyze cultural attributes without prejudice or criticism, and seeing ambiguity positively to work beyond the comfort zone are essential themes for analysis in relation to effective international education leadership. Leaders need to understand how to build working relationships with stakeholders in their organization, acculturation, and working in a culturally complex and diverse organization. Leadership requires complex nuances of respect in cultural communications with different cultures to create an effective outcome. Participants mentioned the concept of contemplation and rationalization and stopping thinking or ruminating to maintain focus on the larger mission and vision of education as an essential habit for leadership effectiveness. Leaders should suspend judgment and be willing to learn about and experience other cultures to find out the differences and do a comparative analysis without criticism or reviews. Leaders need to role model this skill with all stakeholders in an international school and learn about everyone in the organization with open-minded regard for all.

Curiosity allows for cultural competency and helps build a solid foundation for cultural communication by assisting a leader in navigating the acculturation process more effectively. Curiosity enables a person to challenge beliefs, question understandings and thoughts, build relationships with others regardless of personal values. It helps in having difficult conversations when a leader must face issues. That curiosity allows for an open mind toward the dialogue and the involved parties. It is key in helping to bridge communication gaps and overcome barriers to engagement. Discovery is necessary for navigating the acculturation to a new country, developing cultural sensitivity, coming into a new school, and understanding how to develop appropriate ways of interacting in the new environment. Being able to tolerate ambiguity and not knowing, view things as a positive experience, look for growth in the situations, and understand how to move beyond the usual comfort zone. It is essential for leaders moving into a new culture to drive their internal leadership for ethno-relative perspectives and be flexible, adaptable, and reflective in discovering the new culture.

In terms of skills: listening, observing, analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, reflecting, resilience, valuing others' perspectives, and communication skills; both verbal and non-verbal, are very important for leaders to be effective in leading a diverse international school organization and to be able to navigate the acculturation process effectively. Self-reflection and analyzing causation, and correctly interpreting and attributing meaning is a critical skills for leaders to build trust and to be able to lead any organization and especially an organization with a diverse intercultural community. These skills overlap with leadership skills that a leader must develop to be effective, especially in an international complex intercultural diverse organization. Resilience is a foundation for learning and growing as a leader and having a growth mindset towards challenges. The acculturation process takes remarkable resiliency as a leader moves into a new organization and country. Resilience helps overcome the day-to-day challenges that leaders must handle and become adept at working through. One must, in essence, be able to lead themselves before being able to lead others. With perspective, this concept is critically important for leaders to understand how to move between stakeholders thinking and feelings and become aware of how the different groups view different situations. To be effective, a leader must identify and analyze perhaps culturally influenced perspectives and points of view and the interrelationships between culture and perspective. A leader must effectively communicate with all community members to share perspectives and manage the message for all stakeholders within the situation and organization. The challenges in communication with cultural diversity are another level to the complexity of their problems in an international setting. Essential for leaders are self-knowledge, self-awareness, and building relationships. Valuing differences, understanding, respect, and inclusion are key components for leaders to develop and understand leadership styles. Continuous growth and learning help leaders build competence, confidence, and capacity as a leader. A culturally responsive leader is aware of the importance of culture, has the skills to assess intercultural communications, an understanding of the dynamics that result from cultural differences, the provisions to expand cultural knowledge for all, and the adaptation skills to meet cultural needs for all. Cultural competency aims to help international education leaders work effectively in interculturally diverse and complex scenarios. Self-talk strategies can help increase cultural competency and leadership effectiveness.

Recommendations

1. International education leadership induction programs include self-talk strategies for cultural competency

2. Acculturation strategies are included in induction programs for international leaders, teachers, parents, and students to help the acculturation process in a new country
3. Professional Learning Communities online or in-person for leaders from international schools to find support
4. Ongoing blended learning professional development (online and in-person) training for leaders
5. Coaching for development - onsite coaching for leaders to help practice and gain proficiency with the self-talk strategies.

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