

A study on cultural adaptation of Chinese Students in Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received 2023-10-25

Revised 2023-11-16

Accepted 2023-12-11

Keywords

Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Indonesian

Chinese Students

ABSTRACT

As closer cooperation in education between Guangxi and Indonesia, the cross-cultural adaptation of foreign students in target countries has become a very important issue. In terms of society, psychology, learning and culture, the article studies the adaptation of international students who come from Guangxi University of Foreign Language in Indonesia by means of questionnaires and interviews. Their cultural adaptation is generally good, but there are many differences in gender, length of study abroad, cultural experience, etc..This thesis will analyze the factors that affect cross-cultural adaptation and the reasons for the differences, and provide relevant suggestions for further improving at training program.

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1. Introduction

Along with the trend of economic globalization, countries in the global village are more closely connected [1]. In recent decades, educational co-operation between China and other country has become increasingly close [2], including Indonesian. According to Antarnew in 2019, the number of Indonesian students in China reached 15,780, and some of them received scholarships from the Chinese government [3]. What's more, according to data from the Indonesian Embassy in Beijing, 13 campuses in China have opened Indonesian language departments, and a large number of Chinese students studying in Indonesia [4].

More and more students are learning Indonesian, and are interested in continuing their studies in Indonesia. So Chinese student university programs are their best choices which study Indonesian language and culture at a cooperating university. Deciding to study abroad is not an easy thing for a student [5]. As foreign students enter a new environment or host environment, there must be culture shock experience [6]. They will get to know people from different backgrounds, races, religions and countries. They will also feel sad, anxious, sensitive, depressed or helpless when living abroad [7],[8] For students from China, they will also face many difficulties, such as cultural differences, learning methods and Indonesian language skills [9],[10],[11]. Many people find it difficult to adjust to new environment or host environment. Therefore, it is necessary to cultivate the crosscultural ability of the students in oversea or internasional student di China [12],[13],[14].

So it is very interesting to discuss how the cross-cultural adaptation occurs among Chinese students studying in Indonesia. The reasons for this research are as follows: Firstly, because the cultures between China and Indonesia are great different; secondly, the most important reason is that makes this research interesting is that cultural barriers will result in foreign students failing to

complete their studies abroad. Adjustment is described as having an increasing level of satisfaction with being able to study effectively in a foreign country.

2. Theoretical Framework

The topic of cross-cultural adaptation has attracted more and more attention. Many scholars have studied the problems of cross-cultural adaptation, such as ethnic minorities [15], international students [16],[17],[18],[19],and expatriates [20],[15]. The earliest academic research on cross cultural adaptation was research on adaptation of Native Americans and peoples colonized by European governments. Redfield was the first to define the content and methods of cross cultural adaptation and laid the foundations for this research [21]. American anthropologist Oberg introduced the concept of culture shock, Oberg described culture shock as a feeling of disorientation, confusion, rejection, and even fear when one enters a new cultural environment or an unfamiliar culture [21]. According to Korean professor Young Yun Kim, there are three factors that determine successful cross-cultural adaptation: functional adaptability, psychological well-being and cultural identity [22]. In cross-cultural Communication Competence, R.L. Wiseman argues that cross-cultural adaptation is closely related to sociology and psychology, and that cross-cultural people need to learn in new environments and need to focus on improving verbal and non-verbal communication skills [23]. This study adopts the u-curve theory (UCT) of adjustment to better understand cross-cultural adaptation in university students [24]. This theory has been used to describe cross-cultural adaptation in university students in the host culture [18].

3. Method

This study uses a quantitative method through a questionnaire basis on model Ward [25],[26]. That scores each item from 1 to 5 to examine the state of cultural adaptation of students from China in Indonesia. This model includes two dimensions, sociocultural adaptation and psychological adaptation. Based on Black [27],[28], the cross-cultural adaptation of international students from three aspects: psychological adaptation, cultural adaptation and learning adaptation. This study collected 147 questionnaires, and 142 questionnaires were usable. The students studied were all from Zhuang Autonomous Region, and studied at several universities in Yogyakarta. Among them, 21 were male and 121 were female, and the average age was 18-23, and most of them studied in Yogyakarta for a year or two, but some only studied in Yogyakarta for three months to half a year [21]. Before studying in Yogyakarta, 13% of them had visited Indonesia through summer camps or excursions, while 64% of them had participated in activities organized by Indonesian student organizations. Through these activities, they were able to communicate with Indonesians directly, to taste Indonesian cuisine, enjoy the diversity of Indonesian culture, and also understand the differences culture between Indonesian Chinese. And among them 5 people received Darmasiswa scholarships from the Indonesian government. Students who receive scholarships do not have to attend universities that cooperate with Chinese universities, whereas they can choose universities that more famous or favored by themselves.

4. Results and Discussion

This research will discuss this issue from four aspects, namely adaptation of sociocultural, psychological, learning and cultural aspects.

4.1. Adaptation of sociocultural

The adaptation of all students studying in Indonesia is good in terms of adapting communication with the masses in Indonesia [25]. The average value of each item is above 2.8, and it means that the difficulties faced by students in adapting communication with the masses are not so great and can be overcome through their own efforts [29]. Some areas such as “adaptation to dealing with learning and administrative problems on and off campus”, “adaptation to on-campus and off-campus hospital and pharmacy services”, “adaptation of communication with school administrators”, average scores in below 3 and above 2. Compared to the other items, the students had more difficulty in adapting to this item, especially in adapting communication with cooperative school institutions [30].

To learn deeply, we conducted interviews with 20 students who shared their experiences. Participants said that they found it is difficulty to adapt at the beginning in Indonesia, because of the

difference in climate and food. There were students who were not used to cold drinks and spicy food. But after almost a month, most of them are used to the climate and the food in Indonesia, or adapt to life in Indonesia [7]. Two of the boys interviewed said that the difficulty in adapting to life in Indonesia was a problem of accommodation in Indonesia [15]. Universities in Indonesia usually do not provide dormitories for students. This is much different from universities in China. Students will have to find housing around campus, and they may not be able to live together, or have different hosts. One man said his host actually did not like renting his house to men. One woman interviewed said that some landlords in Indonesia were only willing to rent out their houses to female students, and they didn't mind visiting a male friend of the tenant. So it is really a disturbing things for them. In the beginning he was often afraid that he would have to find another place to live.

4.2. Adaptation in Psychological Aspect

The Psychological Adaptation Scale consists of two parts, mental health.

Table 1. Adaptation in Psychological aspect

NO. Item	Item	Average Value
B1	You tend to be nervous, anxious, and irritable in your daily life.	2.643
B2	You are constantly worried about your health.	3.324
B3	You tend to be low-spirited and unhappy.	2.643
B4	You don't feel like your mind is as clear as it used to be.	2.786
B5	During the study period, I once had the idea of returning to China halfway and not wanting to continue studying abroad.	2.167
B6	You are confused about study life in Indonesia.	2.714
B7	You feel like you are a burden to others.	2.357
B8	You find it difficult to get along with others and do not like to socialize.	2.286
B9	You become sensitive and suspicious, caring about how others treat you.	2.405
B10	You often feel lonely and miss my family.	3.252

Questions on psychological health status questionnaires are expressed in the form of negative descriptions. The higher the average value is, the worse is the mental health status, and vice versa.

From the table above, it can be seen that most of the students have good adaptation, but on three items such as B11, B2, B10, the average score exceeds 3. Even though students are mainly worried about the future, most participants who were interviewed said that Indonesian language skills greatly affect adaptation in the inner aspect. Students study Indonesian for two years before going abroad, but not all students can master the language well [31]. Students whose Indonesian language skills are not qualified will be embarrassed to communicate with Indonesians, and would like to prefer to stay at home. Over time, they are not active in learning [32]. But if students whose language skills are also not good but are more open, they will dare to associate with Indonesians and their language skills will be improved quickly. Such students will quickly adjust to life and the way of studying in Indonesia.

4.3. Adaptation in Learning Aspect

The learning adaptation questionnaire uses the positive description method, the higher the average value, the better the student adaptation situation, and vice versa.

Table 2. Adaptation in Learning Aspect

NO. Item	Item	Average Value
C1	In the process of studying abroad, abide by the rules and regulations of Indonesian schools and attend classes on time.	3.881

C2	After coming to study in Indonesia, your Indonesian language level will improve very quickly.	3.619
C3	You can adapt to the teaching methods of Indonesian school teachers and understand the content of the course.	3.167
C4	You actively participate in various learning activities in the classroom.	3.381
C5	You often communicate with Indonesian teachers or ask questions.	2.881
C6	After class, you take the initiative to communicate with the locals in Indonesian.	3.333
C7	You would love to take part in cultural activities organised by student organisations at the university.	3.452
C8	You often go to the school library to borrow Indonesian books, or go to the bookstore to buy Indonesian books.	2.948
C9	You often watch Indonesian TV, movie programs.	2.69
C10	You can find the information you want through the Indonesian website.	3.548

Based on the table above, the score of each item regarding student learning adaptation is on average above 2.5. This indicates that the learning adaptation is rather good, which means that they can adapt to the teaching methods of teachers in Indonesia, understand the content of the subject, and follow the activities class.

Compared to other items, some items such as C8, C5 and C9 have difficulties in adapting. These three items tend to be related to the nature of students who are passive or negative in terms of communication with Indonesian. Combined with in-depth interviews, it found that only a small proportion of students with good language skills or more extroverted personalities took the initiative to communicate with Indonesian teachers or students after class, read information from electronic media, and participate in school organizations. Most international students have little awareness or understanding of the importance of language and cultural strategies [28].

4.4. Adaptation in Local Cultural Aspect

The cultural adaptation questionnaire items were described in a positive way. The higher the average value of each item, the better the students' adaptation, and vice versa.

Table 3. Adaptation in Local Cultural Aspect

NO. Item	Item	Average Value
D1	You often follow the activities of the celebration of Indonesian holidays	3.357
D2	You very familiar with the history and geography of Indonesia	3.452
D3	You had a discussion with Indonesians about the differences between the cultures of two countries.	3.476
D4	You get to know the cultural differences of the Indonesian tribes, and when you hang out with them, you will respect each other	3.81
D5	You interested in the Indonesian way of life, customs, traditional Indonesian culture, etc.	3.714
D6	when communicating with Indonesians, try to avoid prejudice	3.524
D7	You know the difference between Indonesian and Chinese culture	3.476
D8	You realize that every culture has its advantages and disadvantages.	3.929
D9	You know customs, literature, Indonesia	3.333
D10	You can be aware of potential conflicts between Chinese and Indonesian cultures, trying not to touch them when communicating with Indonesians.	3.714
D11	You know Indonesian religious.	3.333
D12	You often travel around Indonesia with friends in your spare time.	3.619

Seen from the table above, the average value of each item fluctuated around 3.5, and this indicates that students adapt well in these items. Relatively speaking, three items such as D1), D11, D9 are not good.

This is because the culture of origin has great differences. Indonesia is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural country, and influenced by Indian culture, Islamic culture, Chinese culture and Western culture. Compared to Vietnam and South Korea, Indonesia is not included in the Han cultural circle, and the cultural distance between Indonesia and China is not small, so there will be great difficulty for Chinese students to adapt, especially in the cultural aspect.

4.5. Analysis of Adaptation Differences

Due to differences in factors such as gender, length of study in Indonesia and whether they have been to Indonesia, there are also certain differences in adaptation between cultures.

Gender: In terms of gender, compared to boys, girls can adjust better in terms of adaptation in the aspect of communication with the masses, adaptation in the learning aspect, and adaptation in the cultural aspect, but in terms of life satisfaction it is less good [33]. That's because female students' Indonesian skills are usually better than boys. This is also reflected in the test scores issued by universities in Indonesia. In addition to Indonesian language skills, women also have a lot of knowledge about Indonesian culture, and Indonesian history [34]. So when they first get to Indonesian soil, they can have a better adaptation [35].

Time of Study in Indonesia. As shown in the table below, with differences in study time in Indonesia, adaptation in communication aspects with mass life satisfaction, mental health aspects, learning aspects and cultural aspects are also different. This is in accordance with what was expressed by Lysgarrd [36]. In the early days of Indonesian cultural contact, with curiosity and enthusiasm, it was not difficult to adapt to different cultures. As time goes by, after the "honeymoon period" in Indonesia, they will experience a culture shock, so they will experience very difficult stages in their entire life in Indonesia [37]. Then they started to make contact with lecturers, Indonesian friends and residents in the neighborhood where they live. Their communication with Indonesian people usually will make them more familiar with Indonesian culture. They can see the cultural differences, so try to understand and make adjustments [32].

3. Have you ever been to Indonesia or participated in cultural experience activities before studying abroad? Among them, most of the students have never been to Indonesia, and a small number of students have been to Indonesia before going to Indonesia through a summer camp organized by the Indonesian university or sightseeing. Compared to students who have never been to Indonesia, these students can adjust better in terms of adapting communication with the masses, life satisfaction, mental health, learning abilities. This shows that being able to experience cultural experiences first does have certain advantages in cultural adaptation.

5. Conclusion

From the results above, it can be concluded that cultural adaptation of Chinese students in Indonesia is getting easy, but they also have to face various difficulties. With the development of Indonesian language departments in China, more and more students will study in Indonesia in the future, and their cross-cultural adaptation in Indonesia is also an issue that deserves attention. In universities' education, it is also necessary to pay attention to the problem of cross-cultural adaptation, to promote cross-cultural adaptability, and to enable students to better adapt to the different learning environment.

For universities in China, it is advisable to open courses on introducing Indonesian culture, sociology, religion and customs, as well as courses on cross-cultural adaptation theory, barriers to cultural adaptation, and cultural strategies etc. In this way, students can get to know Indonesian culture in depth, and will make adjustments actively when studying in Indonesia. For universities that have foreign students can provide activities that can build interaction between foreign students and local residents at the beginning of the foreign students' arrival in Indonesia. What's more, courses or activities that can get to know Indonesian culture more deeply should be also provided. For individual students, they should positively learn about Indonesia as much as possible, so as to know what they will experience in Indonesia, and what Indonesian culture and way of life are. They are encouraged to participate in activities organized by Indonesian universities, and communicate with local residents.

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