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MODELS OF CULTURE SHOCK AND ADAPTATION

Интернационализация современного высшего образования актуализирует проблему адаптации иностранных студентов к чуждой им действительности высшей школы незнакомой страны. В статье дается краткий обзор изучения проблем адаптации иностранных студентов.

Students who attend universities in an unfamiliar culture have to face new social and educational structures, patterns of behaviour and outlooks – at the same time coping with the difficulties of adaptation common to all students. Even if the newcomer foresees the differences beforehand it is difficult for him/her but it is more frustrating when the newcomer mistakenly assumes that the new social environment operates like their home country. According to modern American phsychologist Steven C. Hayes novices easily become 'lost in translation' [12]. The influence of such unfamiliar experiences on newcomers in general has been termed 'culture shock'. International students are examples of such cultural travellers and their number is increasing in many English-speaking countries. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in their 2009 World Conference on Higher Education report, Over 2.5 million students were studying outside their home country [25].

The experience of this large group of people is essential in promoting global intercultural understanding. No wonder, the scientific papers have been concerned with students' adaptation difficulties. International students are evidently the best-studied group of cross-cultural travellers, as they sre comparatively easily accessed as research participants.

This article makes a review of theories of culture shock.

Historical perspectives on culture shock

Contemporary literature on migration includes a large number of extensive cross-national studies related to mental health. More recent studies on international students tend to be smaller. Overseas students became in the focus of systematic research only after the 1950s, when there was a stream of research set out to describe their social adaptation and psychological problems [24].

In describing and analyzing the impact of the new culture on the sojourners, the traditional perspectives on migration and mental health have influenced researchers in the first place. In the past, two general explanations dominated to account for the association between migration and psychological problems. The first approach argued that such predisposing factors as various characteristics of individuals, grief and bereavement (movement as response to loss and possibly resulting in further loss), fatalism (abandonment of control or, in contrast, a reactive attempt to seize control), and selective expectations of enhancement of life quality (that might be more or less realistic) could be responsible for selective migration. The second claimed mental health changes might be a consequence of migration experiences, including negative life experiences, lack of social support networks and the impact of value differences. The bulk of early research in the student sojourner literature was clinically oriented and considered the negative aspects of cross-cultural contact [24], but by the 1980s, a different approach had come up that treated sojourning as a learning experience rather than a medical nuisance. Hence it followed that appropriate positive action would involve preparation and orientation, and the acquisition of skills relevant to the unfamiliar culture [3]. Under this new perspective sojourning was regarded as a dynamic experience, both for students and the host culture.

Contemporary perspectives on intercultural contact

The study of 'culture shock' has got benefit more from social psychology and education than from medicine. 'Culture learning' and 'stress and coping' models have become well established [10], and 'social identification' theories have become

more significant. The contemporary theories in question are more in-depth, considering the different elements of response – affect, behaviour and cognition (ABC) – when student sojourners are exposed to an unfamiliar culture. Table 1 summarizes their differences in theoretical origin, conceptual structure, factors that affect adaptation and implications for intervention. Student sojourners in cultural transit are seen as proactively responding to and tackling problems that are a resultant of change, rather than being passive victims of trauma stemming from a noxious event. The notion of 'culture shock' has been transformed into contact-induced stress accompanied by skill deficits that can be handled and improved, and terms such as 'adaptation' and 'acculturation' have been increasingly applied instead.

Table 1 - Three contemporary theories of intercultural contact

Theory	Theoretical origin	Conceptual framework	Theoretical premise	Factors affecting adjustment	Intervention guidelines
Stress and Coping (Affect)	Social psychology – stress, appraisal and coping (Lazarus & Folkman 1984); life events (Holmes and Rahe 1967)	Cross-cultural travellers need to develop coping strategies to deal with stress	Life changes are inherently stressful	Adjustment factors involving both personal (e.g. life change, personality) and situational (e.g. social support)	Training people to develop stress-management skills

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Culture Learning (Behaviour)	Social and experimental psychology – social skills and interpersonal behaviour (Argyle 1969)	Cross-cultural travellers need to learn culturally relevant social skills to survive and thrive in their new settings	Social interaction is a mutually organized and skilled performance	Culture-specific variables such as: knowledge about a new culture, language communication competence, cultural distance	Preparation, orientation and culture learning, especially behavioural-based social or skill training
Social Identification (Cognition)	Ethnic, cross-cultural and social psychology – self (Deaux 1996; Social Identity Theory, e.g.	Cross-cultural transition may involve changes in cultural identity and inter-group relations	Identity is a fundamental issue for the cross-cultural travellers	Cognitive variables such as: knowledge of the host culture, mutual attitude between hosts and sojourners, cultural	Enhancing self-esteem, overcoming barriers to inter-group harmony, emphasizing inter-group similarities

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	Phinney 1990)			similarity, cultural identity	

Culture learning

Furnham A. and Bochner S. [10] support the social skills/culture learning model because it led to training methods. This approach developed into modern 'culture learning' theory. It is based on social psychology, targeting mainly behavioural aspects of intercultural intercourse and referring to social interaction as a skilled and mutually organized performance [2].

The phrase culture shock has been attributed to the anthropologist Kalervo Oberg, who in an article in 1960 used it to illustrate how people react to strange or unfamiliar places [24]. According to Ward C., Bochner S. and Furnham A. 'shock' is regarded as the stimulus for acquisition of culture-specific skills that are necessary for getting engaged in new social interactions. The impact on the process of adaptation is produced by the following variables, including: general knowledge about a new culture [24]; length of residence in the host culture [24]; language or communication competence [10, pp.91-109]; quantity and quality of contact with host nationals [3, pp.5-44]; friendship networks [4, pp.277-297]; previous experience abroad [13]; cultural distance [24, pp.129-147]; cultural identity; temporary versus permanent residence in a new country [24] and cross-cultural training [9, pp.295-310]. This model gives practical guidelines preparation, orientation and behavioural social skills training.

Stress, coping and adjustment

The 'stress and coping' approach was studied in early psychological models of the influence of life events by American scientists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe [10].

'Shock' comes from inherently stressful life changes, that is why individuals who are engaged in cross-cultural contacts need to be resilient, adjust, and develop coping strategies and tactics. Adjustment is considered as an active process of handling stress at various systemic levels – both individual and situational. The variables under consideration include degree of life change [14, pp.955-961]; personality factors [24] and situational factors such as social support [1, pp.183-204]. Whereas the culture learning approach studies the behavioural aspect, stress and concentrates mostly on psychological well-being – the affective component.

Social identification theories

Social identification theories center on the cognitive components of the adjustment process. During cross-cultural contact, individuals consider themselves in a much broader context – 'little fish in bigger ponds'. This can possibly lead to anxiety-provoking change in perceptions of self-identity, especially if identity was previously based on local social interaction. Perceptions and relations with in-groups and out-groups can change radically [8]. As a result two major conceptual approaches are applied in social identification. The first is 'acculturation', and the second is 'social identity theory' [18, pp.499-514].

Acculturation and identity

American researchers consider acculturation as a state rather than a process. They differentiate three models of acculturation: uni-dimensional, bi-dimensional and categorical. The uni-dimensional model implies assimilation – the way immigrants gradually give up identification with the culture of origin and move towards identification with the culture of contact [16]. This concept regards home and host cultures as opposing rather than counterbalancing. On the opposite, the bi-dimensional model is a balanced concept of acculturation and identity – immigrants

and international students (sojourners) and refugees develop bicultural identity [19, pp.77-94]. Moreover, some sojourners can synthesize both cultures and accumulate bicultural or multicultural personalities [17].

The categorical concept consideres the most complex acculturation strategies of how people see home and host identities – integration, separation, assimilation and marginalisation. Integration implies that sojourners regard themselves high in both host and home culture identifications; separation means that they consider themselves high in home culture identification but low in host culture identification; assimilation presupposes that they perceive themselves high in host culture identification but low in home culture identification; and marginalisation implies that they see themselves low in both home and host culture identifications. Identity is influenced by a number of factors, such as age, gender and education, permanence of cross-cultural relocation, motivation for migration, cultural pluralism, prejudice and discrimination.

Social identity theory

The second componet – 'social identity theory' stems from social psychology. It studies how group membership influences individual identity and puts into focus two aspects. One is the impact of social categorisation and social comparison in relation to self-esteem [22, pp.7-24].The other deals with varied effects of specific cross-cultural diversity on group perceptions and interactions [6, pp.327-342]. All these factors underline the importance of knowledge of the host culture, attitudes toward hosts and host attitudes toward international students, and extent of cultural identity [11, pp.40-64].

Strategies that cross-cultural sojourners may apply to reinforce self-esteem and get rid of barriers to inter-group harmony embrace raising awareness of the potentially negative aspects of the process, underlining inter-group resemblance rather than

differences, and making people imagine themselves in the role or identity of other persons – 'walk a mile in their shoes'.

All in all, the cognitive (C) perspective of the social identification theories adds to the behavioural (B) analysis furnished by the culture learning approach and the affective (A) aspect in the stress and coping framework. These three aspects provide the basis for an all-embracing model of cultural adaptation.

Traditional and contemporary approaches

So, what are the differencies between contemporary and early approaches? Thus, the main four strengths of the ABC model: first, it is more comprehensive than previous models; second, it considers acculturation as a process that occurs over time, rather than at one time; third, it proposes an active process, rather than passive reactions to a negative event; fourth, it addresses the characteristics of the person and the situation, rather than only those within the individual, taking culture shock from the medical field into education and learning. Thus the ABC model is comprehensive and systemic.

Contrary to this, none of the early explanations put forward an all-embracing theoretical formulation predicting culture shock, although some could explain some aspects of culture shock. However, most of the early explanations can be incorporated into the contemporary models. For example, previous studies on attitudes, values and expectations influenced social identification theories. One more example is Oberg's [15] description of 'culture shock', which put forward a number of affective consequences of psychological reactions to situational stress.

Nevertheless, contemporary theories have their problems. So, the ABC model is rather complex, and theories on the psychology of intercultural intercourse have not

been well integrated with reference to different groups of cultural sojourners. Much work is still needed to integrate theories into one framework.

Acculturation model

As it was described above, the modern theories are especially concerned with adaptation and adjustment and are placed within a broader context of acculturation theory [24].

Acculturation deals with the process of intercultural adaptation. Nonetheless, Ward and his colleagues finally proposed to divide intertercultural adaptation into two categories: psychological, mainly situated in a stress and coping framework, and sociocultural adaptation, dealing with the culture learning framework [21, pp.449-64].

The acculturation model by Colleen Ward connects the stress and coping framework with the culture learning, distinguishing psychological, sociocultural and cognitive outcomes at the same time putting emphasis on their interaction [24].

This interactive and dynamic model regards cross-cultural transition as a dramatic life event involving adaptive change. The main challenge facing individuals in cultural transition is the development of stress-coping strategies and culturally relevant social skills such as responses in affect, behaviour and cognition and should lead to psychological adjustment and sociocultural adaptation. The model includes a wide range of micro and macro level variables. Micro-level characteristics of both person and situation are essential. They include such variables as personality, language competence and cultural identity, and situational factors such as length of cultural contact, cultural distance and social support. The macro-level incorporates society of origin and society of settlement, social, political, economic and cultural factors.

This model is quite relevant explaining the acculturation process. But the relationship between psychological adjustment and sociocultural adaptation is still not quite evident. For example, how can we explain the state of a student who fits successfully into a different system of teaching and learning, but at the same time doesn't feel good about the transition? Moreover, according to Ward, Bochner and Furnham's model the cognitive aspects of acculturation do not seem well integrated into the whole acculturation process. In conclusion, the relationship between learners' pedagogical adaptation and their psychological and sociocultural adaptation needs further research.

Application of the acculturation model to international students

As the affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects of adaptation are very much interconnected, they are studied in sequence below, with particular reference to the literature on international students.

Social and behavioural adaptation

Stephen Bochner's functional model of friendship networks is still effective in modern studies of intercultural contact for international students. Bochner presumes that such students are likely to be members of three different social networks, and each is responsible for a distinct psychological function. The primary network is revealed through the possibility of connections with their compatriots in the host country and due to long-distance communication with those remaining in the home country; thus, studernt sojourners might maintain their original cultural behaviour and values. Secondly, they also have interactions with host nationals, such as home-based students, teachers and counsellors, which give them an opportunity to learn culturally relevant skills to ease their academic success. Thirdly, they are likely to have friendships with other non-compatriot foreign students, with whom they can enjoy some social recreational activities. These three are classified as mono-cultural, bi-cultural and multi-cultural friendship networks. [24].

Foreign students can benefit from interaction with host nationals socially, psychologically and academically. Such contacts can facilitate fewer academic problems, fewer social difficulties; improve communication competency, and better general adaptation to life abroad. International students participating in peer-pairing programmes are generally found to better social adjustment than those who did not. Moreover, contact and friendships with local students are connected with emotional benefits such as satisfaction, lower levels of stress and predict better psychological adjustment [19].

Despite the benefits of host–sojourner interaction, the extent of this interaction is often limited. International students are most likely to report that their best friend is from the same culture, which makes some researchers use the concept of cultural distance in order to interpret weak host – sojourner interaction [4]. For example, the study in a midwestern American university revealed that, among 644 international students, British, European and South American students were the best integrated, while Korean, Taiwanese and South-east Asian students were the least integrated. Fortunately, positive results also stem from compatriot relationships and ties with non-compatriot foreign students. Greater co-national interaction is linked with stronger cultural identity and quantity and quality of interaction with non-compatriot foreign students is associated with perceived quality of social support [24].

Affective adaptation

Social support also influences affective outcomes, although research on friendship networks puts greater accent on the quantity and quality of real support than the number of networks. Social support from both host and compatriots can facilitate the enhancement of students' psychological well-being. Social support also eases 'homesickness'. Nevertheless, the relationship between psychological adjustment and academic adaptation is not very clear. For example, how much do communication skills learned in friendly interactions with host students contribute to effective formal communication with host teachers? Further studies into how the

psychological well-being and sociocultural adaptation of student sojourners decrease or increase their academic success are required [23].

Cognitive adaptation

The literature on cognitive aspects of acculturation in international students has concentrated on inter-group perceptions and relations. Many international students come across prejudice and discrimination during their contacts with host nationals. According to some studies increased contact can in some cases lead to worsening of inter-group stereotypes over time.

Michael Bond's study of local Chinese and American exchange students in Hong Kong discovered fairly positive inter-group perceptions. His research studied the consideration of auto-stereotypes (in-group perceptions), hetero-stereotypes (out-group perceptions) and reflected stereotypes (how the out-group is perceived to view the in-group). According to Bond the stereotypes accurately reflected important differences in the behavioural patterns of the two groups. Both Chinese and Americans considered Chinese students as conservative and obedient, while both also considered American students as questioning and independent. Such stereotypes might considerably influence interactions. In America teachers are viewed as facilitators who promote learner autonomy, while in China students regard teachers as authority figures, and are accustomed to accepting academic assertions without questioning them. It appears that cross-cultural stereotypes (cognitive aspects) are likely to have particularly important influence on the culture of learning, a concept proposed by Cortazzi and Jin. The concept takes into consideration cultural beliefs and values about teaching and learning, and expectations about classroom behaviours [23].

Culture synergy and pedagogical adaptation

Cortazzi and Jin [7, pp.79-90] considered that Chinese and British students may have different assumptions about student and teacher roles. According to Chinese

students, a good teacher is to be a knowledge model who teaches students what and how to learn guiding them as well as a moral model who sets an example for students to follow and takes good care of students. A good student in China is expected to respect teachers and learn by receiving instead of criticising what teachers say. But from the perspective of British teachers, a good teacher should facilitate and organise, helping students to develop creativity and independence. Students should participate in dialogue, and engage in critical analysis instead of just absorbing what the teachers say.

Cortazzi and Jin reasoned against expecting international students to absorb host nation behavior patterns, as these aspects of culture were deep-rooted, and change might be seen as a profound threat to identity. On the contrary, they put forward a process of 'culture synergy', requiring joint efforts from both (host) teachers and (international) students to understand one another's culture.

The put forward concept of culture synergy has vivid advantages. First, a lot of learning-related problems in intercultural classrooms are likely to stem from mismatched expectations between teachers and students. Second, the introduction of the concept of culture synergy presupposes a mutual and reciprocal process – teachers may learn from students by understanding the students' cultural traditions. But only asking for mutual understanding is not enough without understanding the processes involved. Recently, since there is a rapid increase in the number of student sojourners, both students and host teachers are becoming more aware of pedagogical differences in one another's culture. Further study is needed to make clear current teacher and student expectations in order to learn how mismatches occur, and to begin to explore how they might be settled.

The process of mutual adjustment by both teachers and students towards a maximised academic result may not necessarily occur to the same extent in both directions. In some cases, Chinese students are likely to adapt more to the host way of teaching and learning, and in other cases it is likely to be the other way round. This process of adjustment might be influenced by a number of factors, such as individual peculiarities in both teachers and students, and situational factors such as

Chinese students coming as a group or as individuals. This approach implies the possibility of preparations by teachers and students to make mutual adaptations easier both before and after departure.

Conclusion

The pedagogical adaptation of student sojourners in higher education is a set of the 'culture shock' experienced by a wide number of cultural travellers. Early models of 'culture shock' dealt with medical aspects and focused on mental health issues. Later models were based on wider social, psychological and educational theories and studied such aspects as 'culture learning', 'stress and coping' and 'social identification'. They took into consideration the affective, behavioural and cognitive (ABC) aspects of adaptation. Together, they offered a more complex but a more powerful model, and practical actions that could be delivered on a large scale. The match/mismatch of pedagogical expectations leads not only to interesting research possibilities, but also to implications for the pre- and post-departure preparation of both teachers and students that is likely to lead to more productive adaptations by each.

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