

**CULTURE SHOCK: CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF  
CHINESE PEOPLE LIVING IN THAILAND**



**A THEMATIC PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MANAGEMENT  
COLLEGE OF MANAGEMENT  
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY  
2015**

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Thematic paper  
entitled  
**CULTURE SHOCK: CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF  
CHINESE PEOPLE LIVING IN THAILAND**

was submitted to the College of Management, Mahidol University  
for the degree of Master of Management  
on  
August 29, 2015



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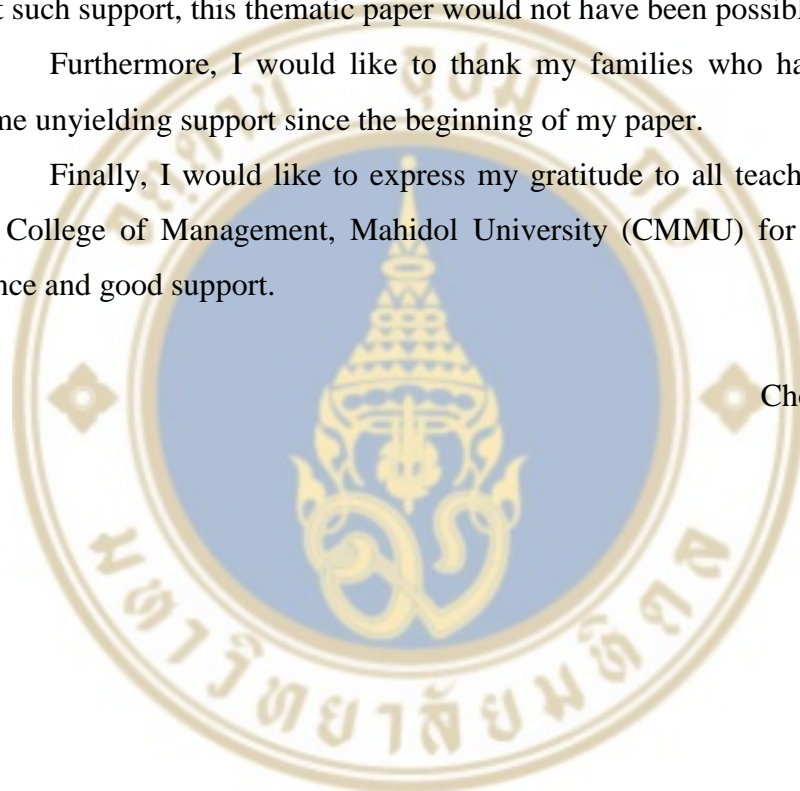
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Asst. Prof. Astrid Kainzbauer, Ph.D., my thematic paper advisor for her advice and encouragement throughout this thematic paper. Without such support, this thematic paper would not have been possible to complete.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my families who have always been giving me unyielding support since the beginning of my paper.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to all teachers, friends, and staff at College of Management, Mahidol University (CMMU) for such wonderful experience and good support.

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**CULTURE SHOCK: CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF CHINESE PEOPLE LIVING IN THAILAND**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research is to observe the adaptation of Chinese individual into Thai culture. The research also explores cultural differences between China and Thailand.

This paper use the theory of Cultural dimension and Cultural adaptation stage to identify the factor that affect Chinese's adaptation of living in Thailand in long term. The research is done by using in-depth interview focusing on cultural difference and adaptation. After such finding and analysis, both factors that support or hold back the rate of cultural adaptation have been identified, as well as the effects of the difference in cultural dimension. The result can be helpful for business in order to create better understanding and practical training for future Chinese newcomer.

**KEY WORDS:** Cultural Difference/ Cultural Adaptation Stage/ Culture shock

31 pages

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As we can see from nowadays events, we also have interactions with people from different cultures every single day, both at work, and personal life. And when it come the word cultures, many people would not know how to define such word as it has very broad meaning. Culture has been defined differently by several people; Hofstede (1984) clarified its definition as "Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another." meaning that culture is collectives; it requires many members that have certain shared category that is different in some aspect from others in society. One example for this statement could be Europe, even though they share the borders and European people have really been living together for very long time; people still retain certain differences which inherited from their own group.

However, Tyler (1974) had explained its definition of culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." Meaning that culture may not be only about a group of people acting distinguishably from the rest of the society, but the difference may include moral code, law, common behavior, certain knowledge, and even aesthetic taste for art appreciation, all of which could differentiate people not only from one country to another, but maybe one region from another within that country, for example, the art and music from traditional art and music of Northern and Southern region in Thailand, which by the look of them any observer can already distinguish them.

Kluckhohn (1945) "By culture we mean all those historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational, and non-rational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behavior of men.", which could mean that culture is anything from expression, behavior, understanding, and even daily

life working aspects, no matter if it is rational or not, it would be considered as culture as long as it have been done and accepted for a certain period of time.

Some people from different group may share certain cultures, or some may have even been living together for very long time. However, those situations do not justify that their cultures have merged and they do not feel different any longer. This research looks into two cultures that have existed nearby and have interacted and shared some of it aspects throughout history, which are Chinese and Thai culture.

Some may say that Chinese and Thai are neighbors with very extensive relationship. However, when it comes to living in different country with different cultural history, it does not mean that Chinese people who live in Thai or Thai living in China will not face any kind of problems relating to culture.

There are certain similarity and differences that could be easily noticed. One easily noticeable aspect is food, as Thai and Chinese do eat rice as the main part of the meal. However, the difference is Thai use spoon and fork while Chinese would prefer to use chopsticks. In term of religion, both countries have roots in Buddhism even though throughout economic and political changes Chinese nowadays have no religion in particular but there are many Chinese religious figures and temple in Thailand to signify its culture.

This research, however, will focus on deeper aspect of Chinese living in Thailand and will cover on what Chinese people have faced and taken as the obstacles for living in Thailand and also how those people have developed and adapted themselves to Thai culture.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

As culture is very broad, this research will focus mainly on Cultural Dimension Theory and Cultural Adjustment Stage. The first theory will be looking at the explanation for each cultural aspects from each country; China and Thai, and to observe the similarity and differences. The second theory, however, will look into the stage of interaction that people will face when going into new surroundings, in this case, Chinese people living in Thailand.

According to the Cultural Dimension Theory (Hofstede, 2001), there are 5 cultural aspects to be concerned of; Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism-Collectivism, Masculinity and Femininity, and Long term-Short term orientation.

Power Distance is the degree to which the society accepts the difference between employer and employees, or leader and subordinates. High Power Distance aspect means that formal authority with autocratic management style and high hierarchical structure are very usual practice while small Power Distance aspect means the opposite; decentralized authority and participative management style and provide more equality between leaders and subordinates

Uncertainty Avoidance is the measurement in acceptance level of risk and uncertainty of the future. Low Uncertainty Avoidance means that people tend to take risk and pursue uncertainty. This aspect also represent a sign of flexibility and ambiguous. For high Uncertainty Avoidance means that people tend to follow the formal rule as they do not want to take risk and confront with uncertainty

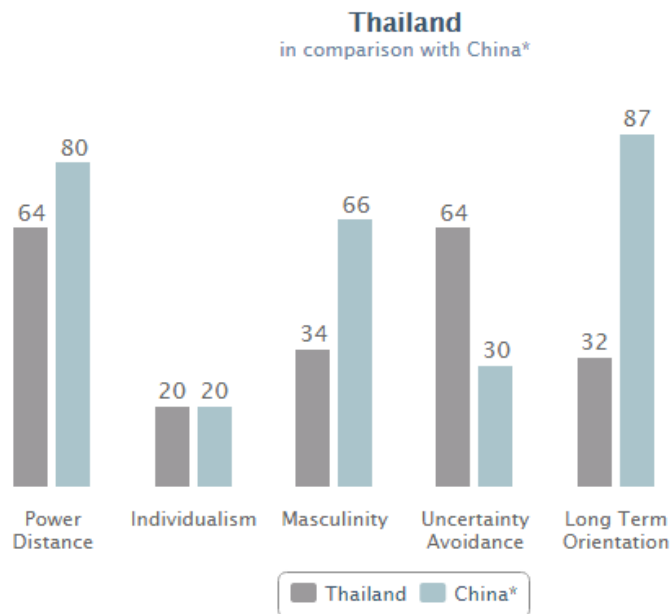
Individualism – Collectivism is the aspect of how member in a group work together or individually. Individualistic Culture usually value independence and usually place self-interests above collective interests. Collectivistic Culture tends to maintain harmony among members in group and is prepared to forgo personal interest for collective interests. This aspect also emphasizes harmony within group.

Masculinity and Femininity, Masculine cultures will focus more on value and performance. This is the culture of goal-orientation, expression of criticism, and focus on performance rather than age or seniority. Feminine culture tend to care for quality of life for people and focus more on people-orientation and maintain pleasant relationships by avoiding direct criticism.

Long-Term - Short Term Orientation is the aspect of how people emphasize the importance of things in life. This however, does not mean that people choosing one side will completely abandon another, but it is about different level of attention given to each aspect. Long-Term Orientation will focus more on relationship orientation for long term relationship rather short term goal. However, Short-Term Orientation will focus more on personal short-term goal instead of collective long-term relationship

## **2.1 Cultural Differences; Thai vs. Chinese**

According to the Cultural Dimension Theory (Hofstede, 2001) Thailand and China share certain similarity, yet some of the aspects are obviously different. Below are the analysis between Thai and Chinese culture in comparison in each aspect.



**Figure 1.1 Cultural dimension comparison in each aspect between Thailand and China**

### **Power Distance**

Power Distance means the range or how far or close of employees within an organization to their employer; The power distance is considered low when the power is distributed equally, or having less gap between employees and employer, or employees have high empowerment supported by employer. On the other hands, the power distance is usually considered high when the power is not distributed equally, meaning that employer holds most or all authority in the organization.

According to the Cultural Dimension Theory (Hofstede, 2001), The website had explained that as China is at 80 percent in Power Distance Indicator, “At 80 China sits in the higher rankings of PDI – i.e. a society that believes that inequalities amongst people are acceptable: The subordinate-superior relationship tends to be polarized and there is no defense against power abuse by superiors.”, which would mean that there could be an obvious sign that people will be strictly following formal authority and do not usually aim for the goal beyond their current occupation. For Thailand, this scores 64 on PDI index. It is also a society in which

there is certain present inequality. It also explains that “a strict chain of command and protocol are observed. Each rank has its privileges and employees show loyalty, respect and deference for their superiors in return for protection and guidance. This may lead to paternalistic management. Thus, the attitudes towards managers are more formal, the information flow is hierarchical and controlled.” These aspects of Thai and Chinese are very similar, meaning that there will less likely to be cultural obstacles in term of power distances

### **Individualism/Collectivism**

This dimension interprets the degree of individuality among members of each society or organization. It could be interpreted that people in individualist society are taking care of themselves and their small, nucleus family. However, people in collectivist society look after many relatives or friends as an extended family or a big group.

According to Hofstede, 2001, Thailand and China have both been considered as collectivism societies, meaning that both members behave according to social norms that are designed to maintain social harmony, meaning that they emphasize hierarchy and harmony within group and can also be very concerned about members and are indifferent or hostile toward out-group members. Moreover, the influence of the group has higher impact on their lives than individualists. They also share resources and are usually ready to sacrifice personal interest for the interests or the advantage of the group. Favor certain in-groups (e.g. family, friends). The Chinese culture, for example, believes that one’s self esteem and future are tied to one’s in-groups such as parents, siblings, and friends.

According to the Cultural Dimension Theory, the explanation for China is that Chinese and Thai both have collectivist culture where people act in the benefit and interest of the group rather than themselves. The collectivist culture promotes strong relationships where everyone should be concerned for other members of the group. Trustworthiness and allegiance to the in-group is the most important, and usually take priority over most social rules and regulations

### **Masculinity/Femininity**

Masculine aspect indicates that people within such organization or society will focus more on competition, achievement and success. However, Feminine aspect will be more relationship-oriented than Masculinity; people tend to care for others and look for quality of life. As such, being successful will be rewarded and recognized more in Masculinity society than in Femininity society.

According to the Cultural Dimension Theory, the explanation for Chinese, which score 66 in this index, is that China is a Masculine society which is goal-oriented and success-driven. It is usual for many Chinese to sacrifice leisure time to prioritize working. Chinese also care very much about their performance evaluation as this is the measurement whether they have achieved success or not.

Thailand, on the other hand, scores 34 on this aspect and is thus considered a Feminine society. It states that “Thailand has the lowest Masculinity ranking among the average Asian countries of 53 and the World average of 50”. This score has indicated that Thai culture has low competitiveness.

### **Uncertainty Avoidance**

Uncertainty Avoidance expresses the level of acceptance of the unknown future; how people could risk or protect themselves in any unknown or unclear situation. The high uncertainty avoidance indicates that people will be less likely to take risk. On the other hands, people with low uncertainty avoidance will pursue the uncertainty, which could be a sign of ambiguous.

According to the Cultural Dimension Theory, the explanation for China, which achieved low score as 30 in this index, show that The Chinese people are adaptable and used to being uncertainty and vagueness; it also state that Chinese language has lots of ambiguous meanings that can be difficult for other people to follow.

Thailand scores 64 on this index, which indicating a preference for avoiding uncertainty. As a high Uncertainty Avoidance culture, the society does not willingly and readily accept change and people are very risk adverse.

### **Long Term – Short Term Orientation**

This dimension describes how every society has to deal with the challenges of the present and future. Society with short-term orientation prefers to uphold the value of time, being efficient and goal-oriented. However, those with a culture of long term orientation will take more balanced approach as people would not rush or strict to time, and they would encourage thriftiness as well.

According to the Cultural Dimension Theory, it explains that Chinese culture in this aspect, which scores 87 in this dimension, is the culture with more pragmatic orientation. It said that “people believe that truth depends very much on situation, context and time.” The explanation also states that Chinese people have more ability to easily adapt and change. While in Thailand, with low score of 32, this indicates that Thai have relatively small tendency to accumulate for the future, and focus more on achieving immediate results.

## **2.2 The Difference in Cultural Dimension**

### **Masculinity vs. Femininity**

From this point, we can see that Thailand and China are distinguishably different. As in China, the exam scores and competition is highly competitive and valued as we can see from news every now and then, showing the emphasis of goal-orientation and performance. However, in Thailand, people are relationship-oriented as they always try to maintain harmonious relationships by avoiding direct criticism and restrain releasing extreme emotion, especially negative emotion, as it might create in-group conflict. Hakan (2000) also state that Thais are feminine as they are trying to avoid conflict and try to maintain harmony. Anusorn, et el (1994) said that Thai people always tend to focus on interpersonal relationships and carry burden to care for the weak. This show great emphasize of people to people beyond normal duty for the sake of harmony in society. For the Chinese society however, there are some who look at the different aspect. Ying Fan, (2000) has stated in A classification of Chinese culture, as quoted;

*“Confucius defined five basic human relations and principles for each relation, called Wu Lun: Thus, relationships are structured to deliver optimum*



*benefits for both parties. For each relation, certain behavior principles must be followed to ensure a harmonious society.” “Among these five basic human relations, a) three are family relations, which clearly show the importance of family in Chinese society and account for its paternalism; b) the first two relations, filial piety and loyalty, are generally deemed the most important; c) when they are applied to management, the first and last relations stand out, leading to the birth of a paternalistic management style in both China and Japan.”*

This shows even after the significant economic and cultural change, the Chinese still maintain the respect for seniority and upkeep personal relationship, it does also show that Chinese appear to be feminine culture as they try to preserve harmony in all basic human relationships both in personal life and in business, moreover, as these principles will encourage people to take care of others that are not in their family (friends and friends, master and followers), thus creating the sense of family. Liu (2013) also confirm the previous statement by saying that Chinese people highly rate Happiness, belonging, harmony, achievement, efficiency for their importance cultural value. This indicates that the Chinese still place importance on happiness, belonging, and harmony even after the change in economy in recent years, putting it in diffuse relationship. Moreover, as there are only minor difference of value between men and women, we could theoretically further indicate that Chinese culture is still feminine. Yau (1988) has pointed out a very interesting idea that Chinese people would always carry their tradition and culture with them. And even though they may have different cultural influence and preference in their life, they would eventually, they tend to be embraced by their Chinese culture and appreciate their social status as they grow old as people still pay respect to elder even though they may not have significance roles in term of business but they statuses are still be recognized, which show the combination of both Masculinity and Femininity.

### **Uncertainty Avoidance**

Another difference that we can see is that as the world has its attention on China; Chinese people are able to adapt itself and ready to take risk to do business. However, in Thailand, people would likely have risk avoidance attitude and have high respect for authority and promotions based on seniority or age rather than pure

performance. Morakul and Wu (2001) have experimented on the cultural value which shows that in collective society, which people are much familiar to each other, the rate of uncertainty avoidance is very high, while those who are unfamiliar with people around them, or having been in individualistic society, and are more acceptances to the change, confirming the interpretation of Hofstede's cultural dimension. This also shows that Thais are risk-averse type and collective as they try to stay with the same person and the same team that they feel comfort with while also resisting the change in system procedure that could bring an uncertain outcome. However, the Chinese people are collective with low uncertainty avoidance, which could potentially due to the sudden change in economy and culture in modern times. Yau (1988) have shown that Chinese are also highly adaptable to fit in new culture and still carry on their tradition. This could help the Chinese to adapt well in Thailand with the necessity to completely change their culture.

### **Long-term Orientation**

Another different point is the short-term/long-term orientation. Thailand, as according to Hofstede, is in short-term orientation, which means that Thai people would look for quick results, emphasizing personal stability. China, as a long-term orientation society, is focusing more on persistence, thriftiness, and relationships based upon status. Chinese people may find it uncomfortable when it comes to coping with different aspect in work; Chinese may look for a greater, long-term approach, while Thai may look for an immediate reward.

### **Religion**

Guotu (2012), said that both Thailand and China have Buddhism as the major religion in their country, and both have been influenced by Buddhist teaching ever since. This similarity of value between Thai and Chinese in term of religion could help Chinese people to adapt well when living in Thailand in terms of beliefs and religious value. However, due to recent political change in history, Chinese people tend to become more non-religious, with being more neutral, but not hostile, towards Buddhism. Wang (2009), has shown that Chinese have difficulty to understand Buddhism in Thailand due to the lack of cultural and religious knowledge, which led

many Chinese to feel uncomfortable as Thailand have many events, festivals, and holidays with connection to Buddhism

### 2.3 Four Stages of Cultural Adaptation

When facing new culture, different people tend to perceive new things differently and may have different problems dealing with that culture even if those people share the same background, some may face the problem about food taste, some may find language as a great barrier to get them what they want, and some may not even understand things people in new surroundings do in daily life.

The Culture shock dimension by Oberg (1954), as cited in Winkelman's (1994) has stated that there are 4 stages that an individual may face when leaving his/her own cultural society to another that does not contain the same culture, for example, an American goes to work in Japan.

- Honeymoon phase
  - Exciting with new culture, feeling positive, eager to learn new things
  - Minors problems are usually overlooked in this stage
- Culture shock
  - Start to detect significant differences between host and home culture
  - Disappointment occur which could lead to stress and disorientation.
  - May start to reject or express negative feeling if the problems are overwhelming.
- Recovery
  - Start to accept that reality is different from expectation
  - Seek to compromise between extravagant expectations and reality
  - Start to accept and participate more into the culture to create positive, practical attitude.

- Adjustment
  - Working effectively
  - Knowing limitations
  - This is where they will feel at home and become involved in activities and may enjoy some of that countries customs.

To give an example for how people would go through each stage. The Honeymoon phase means that people have high level of enjoyment and sense of excitement in new surrounding environment and cultures. However, the next stage second is Cultural shock stage, meaning that people start to express their negative response or even refusal to new things in the new surrounding which do not make any sense to them, third phase is Recovery phase where people begin to adjust themselves by learning to understand the new culture in deeper aspect, and last phase is Adjustment phase people have developed strategy and have greater knowledge and understanding to deal and live with new cultures

From the literature review, the following research proposition has been derived:

- Cultural similarities and differences are likely to influence the culture shock experience and cultural adjustment by either increasing or decreasing the rate of adaptation.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

In order to obtain the greater information for each respondent, the method of collecting data is One-to-one interview. Since the culture shock pattern has 4 stages; Honeymoon, crisis, recovery and adjustment, which will occur continuously and the current stage will instantaneously fade as any individual reaches the next stage. To meet with all 4 states would require certain amount of time. Therefore, the sample is any Chinese residents in Bangkok, who have been living in Thailand between 4 - 6 years. This selection is that this Chinese group would have enough experience living and facing many cultural differences in Thailand, and able to adapt in one way or another to get along with Thai culture. However, this group does not live in Thailand for too long that they would eventually be unable to recall the time they spent on adapting to Thai culture.

As this is a qualitative research, the interview questions are aimed to be an open-ended, which would give a chance to interviewee to freely talk their idea, story, and attitude out, including any experience that they have in Thailand, which can be in any aspect. The interviewer will be giving certain starting point, such as problem do they face and how they cope with it, and the interviewer will also seek an opportunity to probe some of the interviewees' reply in order to get even better information.

All interviews will be recorded by writing and video. Length of Interview is uncertain, as this interview is open-ended interview with the intention to have all interviewees retell their whole story from the beginning of their stay in Thailand, so the approximate time is set at about 30 minutes.

After interviews, interviewer will summarize the collected data to interpret and understand respondents' story of their progress of cultural adaptation.

## **3.1 Interview Questions**

### **3.1.1 Demographic Background**

This part will only focus on interviewee's demographic information and length of staying in Thailand, the questions will include Name, Occupation, and Length of stay in Thailand.

### **3.1.2 Interview Questions on Process of Adaptation**

This part will focus on interviewee's experience in each culture shock stage, including the pre-arrival stage as well to determine the attitude of each respondent. These questions are to measure the change in attitude, behavior, and other relevant aspects toward each impression, struggle, or cultural conflict that each interviewee has faced in each stage. This part will also include interviewee's method to overcome each struggle and to adapt to Thai culture.

Examples of the questions are as followed;

- Before arrival, what do you know and understand about Thailand?
- Why did you want to come to Thailand?
- What is your first impression when you first arrived?
- What is the most wonderful thing that had happened to you on your first couple months of stay?
- What culture shock that you have faced those have caused your attitude or perception about Thailand?
- How do you cope with those problems? What methods are you using?  
Is it effective?
- How do you adjust yourself to fit to Thai society?
- What do you know and understand about Thailand now? Is it a lot different?

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDING AND ANALYSIS**

According to the research methodology, the researcher interviewed 4 respondents, which by this research will be called as interviewee A, B, C and D, who are Chinese that have currently been living in Thailand for approximately 5-6 years, interviewee A, B, and D have been working in private sector in Thailand, working with both Thai and international colleagues within the company, and interviewee C has been studying fashion in order to get into designer industry. This finding will explain and analyze each stage of culture adaptation and to find if the theory could be applied in practical setting.

#### **4.1 Pre-arrival**

Most of the respondents gave the reason to come to Thailand as because of their family decision. All respondents held little knowledge about Thailand before arrival. The same thing that all respondents pointed out is that in China, Thailand is known for travel and tourism. Three of the respondents said their parents chose Thailand for their study in higher education and they respected that decision, while another respondent had always wanted to live in Thailand and his family agreed to the idea.

#### **4.2 Honeymoon Phase**

##### **Preparation**

All respondents had not decided to come to Thailand on their own it was their parent's decision for them to study and work abroad. Interviewee A said that "I was good in English in high school, so my parents thought it would be a good idea to continue improving the language" and the reason for choosing Thailand is "My parent

think since Europe would be too expensive and Thailand's neighbors such as Cambodia and Myanmar is not quite acceptable for them, and Malaysia and Singapore have many Chinese-speaking native and my parents believed I would not get a chance to improve English so Thailand is a good choice". Interviewee D said about his motivation in living in Thailand that "My father has some business here in Thailand, so I wanted to come and do business here as well". Interviewees B and D, however, didn't ask the reason for their parents' decision. At the time, all respondents had either not made decision about the place to study yet or, as interviewee C pointed out that she had no intention to study in higher education at all as she would prefer to work right away. Interviewee A said "Before I came here I bought a book about Thailand, but I never read it" and interviewees B and D stated that they didn't prepare at all. Due to this reason, they were not fully prepared to live in Thailand, however they were not against coming to Thailand as this was their parent's choice and they had no other options at the time. Therefore, they were neutral toward Thailand.

So despite the theory of cultural adaptation, all interviewees had experienced very short honeymoon phase before transition to the next phase; the common thing Chinese are impressive about Thai people are the nature of Thai friendliness, in which all respondents confirmed that such thing are unfamiliar to Chinese culture. Interviewee B gave an example that Thai shopkeepers are often smiling and friendly, which is beyond the usual Chinese service mindset. Interviewee D described the Chinese style as "just get the job done". Interviewee C pointed out that Thai people like to help out others. However, due to language difficulty, the impressions are limited, Interviewee C gave example when she was looking to buy something from the store in her early year in Thailand, she said that the staff was friendly and tried to help but the staff couldn't speak English well so the staff couldn't really help her. She also said that this scenario happened many times. Interviewee D had started a goal to learn Thai at this stage as he knew that he had to live in Thailand for many years

We could point out that the lack of preparation could potentially lead to a very short enjoyment during the Honeymoon stage. However, we could see that there is one difference that we can find that might be the result of cultural difference as all respondents had also experience new and fresh things such as service mindset to be



very surprising things even though Thai people would usually perceive it to be normal practice. This could potentially be the result of different cultural dimension; when Chinese is more goal-oriented, focusing on performance and result, while Thai is more relationship-oriented, which largely include being friendliness toward the others.

### **4.3 Culture Shock Stage**

When facing with culture shock, some interviewees had felt and reacted in similar, pessimistic way. Interviewee A's reaction is quite refusal as he said that he felt as if he could never understand and accept Thai culture because he is not used to such differences at all. Interviewee A said that it is very strange and confusing when it comes to working together with Thai "Thai people are really, really nice, so nice that they don't like to make decision and I can feel that in Thai language, that, in order to be nice, it means you don't make any decision. You always leave the decision making power to someone you respect" The other three interviewees have experienced the same. Interviewee B said that he felt "weird" that Thai people have quite too much respect for someone are older by just a few years "If the person is just like one or two or three years old differences then we do not care that much and there is no need to do something extra just because of that". However, he also said that "I know that I am in different country that has different culture. So I can't judge what people do, I just have to know what people do and get along with them". Interviewee C had expressed her dislike toward Thai culture in term of collectivism. She said that "Thai people always tell me to make friends, they always tell me to stay in group but I don't think that's my way to live. I used to do everything on my own". However, she also said that she just needs to observe what people do and try to understand them. Interview D has stated that what made him felt odd about Thai people is also Thai collectivism. He said that "Thai people are too much collective, they always stay in group. No matter what you're doing; studying, eating, or going out, you always have to do it together". However, Interviewee D also said that "If you want to do business in Thailand then you need to understand Thai culture".

### **4.3.1 Factors to Increase Culture Shock**

#### **Language Difference**

When respondents started their works and studies in the first couple years, the difficulties for working with Thai began to take place and Honeymoon phase had faded out. The difficulty began with language differences. All respondents were not good at speaking English, and none could speak Thai at the time. Interviewee A said “when I was working on group project and I am the only foreigner in the team, many times Thai people are just talking to each other and don’t really let me know what happened, and it’s frustrating”. Interviewee C said “Sometimes I want to try Thai food but I can’t go without my Thai friends because many Thai restaurant do not speak English at all” Other main obstacles that all respondents were frustrated about were the time orientation and the tendency for Thai to not speak out their feelings or opinions. It was at this stage that the rest of the respondents had decided to learn Thai in order to have better communication and understanding.

#### **Time orientation**

For Time orientation, this is something that is quite surprising that all respondents had pointed out that this is the huge frustrating things. All said that Thai is not fixed to the time; Interviewee A gave an example that if he called for a group work at 9 in the morning, he could expect all Thai to be there by 9:30 to 10:00. Interviewee B said that it took him some time to adjust his mindset about time orientation so that he could work along with his Thai friends without feeling upset every time his friends are not following the timeline. Interviewee A also said that he could not understand why Thai would not follow the time that they have agreed upon even though they set the timeframe themselves.

#### **Expression**

Another cultural difference is that all respondents said Thai people do not really speak out their opinion or feeling, which could be good if Thai don’t want to hurt other feelings, however, it could have another effect as well. Interviewee A pointed out that respecting elders or hierarchy is different from not speaking out. Interviewee B gave an example that when he was having work discussion; Thai tend to

stay quiet most of the time, which made him frustrated because work discussion in team require a lot of idea to make a good decision. He also pointed out that sometimes his colleagues just go along with what the seniors said even though they have better ideas because they do not want to be seen as rude or disrespect toward seniors if they express their idea that are different. Interviewee D said that sometimes you need to ask for Thai's opinion directly in person in order to get the opinion.

### **4.3.2 Factors to Decrease Culture Shock**

#### **Religion Similarity and Tolerance**

Even though majority of Chinese people nowadays hold no belief in religion, Buddhism in Thailand does not create pressure for them. All respondents have agreed that Thailand hold great belief in Buddha but still feel more intolerance toward other religion and non-religion. One of the respondents pointed out that maybe because of many Chinese temple that has been located here in Thailand for very long time making Thai people feel familiar toward Chinese that do not go to Thai temple. Another respondent, who stated that he does not believe in any religion, said that many Thais are happy to introduce him to go to Thai temple but they will not put pressure on him to change religion as they also respect others' belief.

#### **Cultural Similarity**

All respondents had no other major problems getting along with Thai people in Thailand, one of the reasons is that many Chinese living here, along with many Chinese restaurants, temple, and many Thai people can speak Chinese. The daily life for Chinese is not so difficult. Two respondents, interviewee B and C said that Thai people do not act strange toward Chinese people as much as their western counterparts. Interviewee D said that many cultural similarity does help, such as power distance and relationship-oriented culture, that even though the Chinese seem to change due to faster economic change, which demand performance, it is still making Thai feel familiar to Chinese

## **4.4 Recovery Stage**

It is in this stage that all respondents had started to really adjust themselves. Interviewee A said that even though he cannot change Thai people's culture, in which he would honestly want to, he could at best try to work with Thai people in a way that will not contradict both cultures. He had given an example that he would start to ask for other's opinion to encourage them to speak out, and he would stop telling people to be strictly on time for work as he knew that it is part of the culture.

Interviewee B said that he knew there are some differences in culture, and what he could do best is understand Thai culture as much as possible. He said that it is almost impossible for him to change his behavior to be like Thai but what he can do is to accept the way things are. He also pointed out the same things as the first respondent about time orientation. However, the difference is he never wants to change the culture as he stated that at work he would still be very strict about time himself but he understands that others may not and he does not seek to change others. He feels that this is the way Thai culture is and the best way to get used to it.

### **4.4.1 Factors That Help To Accelerate Recovery Language**

All respondents had one factor that helped them recover from the culture shock stage; increase in English and Thai language efficiency. And also it was in this stage that respondents had decided to continuously improve their Thai language skill. Interviewees C and D said that it is usually much easier to communicate with Thai in Thai language. Interviewee D said that speaking Thai while working with Thai gets him to understand his colleagues more than before. Interviewee B said the similar things to interviewee D but also added that more Thai colleagues are willing to approach him at work for a talk, even during a break. Interviewee A pointed out that by learning Thai language he understand more on Thai culture, which actually make him admire Thai people and understand their way of life.

### **Cultural Similarity**

One respondent speculated that maybe due to the shared history and mixed culture between Thai and Chinese that have been taken place in Thailand for very long time; he is more welcomed to do lots of things like Thai people, such as going to Thai temple. Another respondent gave the similar opinion, and also said that when his Thai language got better that he could use in daily basis, he felt that his learning and understanding about Thai culture were surprising increased as he could approach more people and have more activities with Thai people.

### **4.5 Cultural Adjustment Stage**

After many years in Thailand, two respondents said they are now understand the way of Thai life, even if they know that it's different from Chinese culture but it's preferable to them, and both of them have plan to settle down in Thailand. Another two said they know Thai life style, however they do not yet to fully understand the reason behind and they hope to learn more as their Thai language skill improved further.

Interviewee A is the first respondent that has planned to settle down in Thailand said that after all those years of living with Thai people; he feels more content and starts to love Thailand. He said that Thai people are friendly unlike the Chinese counterpart and living in Thailand is quite peaceful compared to living in china. He also state that his parents are still in China. He had a plan in the future to bring his parents to Thailand after he settle down, however, he said that it is his parents' decision whether they want to come over or not. He still respect their opinions, as they are still his parents, if they decide to stay in China then he will occasionally visit them but he will live in Thailand.

Interviewee D also said that Thai people are friendly and he also wanted to live in Thailand as he loves the country and the people. He also said that Thai lifestyle is much more relaxed than in China, which is not always a good thing but he said he would prefer to live in this way. Two other respondents said that they have no plan about the future but they still continue living in Thailand as they get used to Thai people and the culture.

**Table 4.1 Each aspect of each interviewee on personal data and experience on culture shock**

	A	B	C	D
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Male
Reason/goal to coming to Thailand	To further improve English skill	No personal reason/ Parent's decision	No personal reason/ Parent's decision	Wanted to do business in Thailand
Length of stay in Thailand (years)	6 years	6 years	5 years	5 years
Job industry	Private Hospital	Inbound Tourism	No job, studying fashion	Trading (Export-Import)
Impression about Thailand	"Thai people are friendly"	"Thai people are friendly"	"Thai people are friendly"	"Thai people are friendly"
Main Culture shock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time orientation</li> <li>- Expression of opinion</li> <li>- Language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time orientation</li> <li>- Expression of opinion</li> <li>- Language</li> <li>- Collectivism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time orientation</li> <li>- Language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time orientation</li> <li>- Expression of opinion</li> <li>- Collectivism</li> </ul>
Recovery method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language learning</li> <li>- Adaptation into new culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language learning</li> <li>- Acceptance and learning of new culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language learning</li> <li>- Acceptance and learning of new culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language learning</li> </ul>
Future plan	Live in Thailand	Continue working in Thailand, no plan to go back to China	Continue her study in Thailand	Live in Thailand

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The purpose of the paper is to understand the change in cultural perspective and understanding of Chinese people who live in Thailand as they progress through each stage of cultural adjustment. This research will utilize information regarding development in cultural adjustment and perception on cultural differences to gain maximum knowledge to understand the right idea and to develop the right knowledge and understanding for both Thai and Chinese people in Thailand so they would understand each other's cultural perspectives. The research result includes

#### **5.1 Recommendation**

The main factors that affect culture shock are preparation, cultural differences, and Thai language. Chinese people need to be prepared beforehand and to understand some differences in culture and also need to learn Thai language.

This research shows that lack of preparation have greatly affected the early stage of cultural adjustment; Honeymoon stage, as people from different culture will be confronted by such difference right away without prepared, and this research shows that the Chinese newcomers may not be as impressive about Thailand as the theory suggests.

Cultural differences, especially Individualistic/Collectivism, Time Orientation, and Masculinity/Femininity are the main sources for culture shock as Chinese people are struggling to understand the differences and to adjust themselves to get along in this new culture. However, these new cultural perspectives are the factors that keep them in Thailand and make them admired Thai culture in later stage

The research clearly show that the Chinese's goal-oriented approach in totally contradict Thai's relationship-oriented style. Due to Thai being collectivism,

which value the strength of the team relationship so Thai people will avoid criticism and not to counter other's opinion in public but Chinese being individualistic, which focus more on performance and success, will be requiring direct opinion as they believe that the open discussion and flow of idea will help to bring about the best strategy for business.

Masculinity/Femininity and time orientation are the another thing that separate Chinese and Thai culture. While Thai style is more relaxed and not strictly on time, the Chinese, on the other hands, which is Masculinity, might be very frustrating and perceive Thai culture to be somewhat irresponsible as Thai people are not really following rules and time agreement

Contradicting cultural aspects may not always be negative things. The research shows that Chinese perceive Thai to be friendly, which is according to Femininity aspect, and it is also what most Chinese like about Thailand. This could be used as an aspect to help Chinese to learn, understand, and appreciate Thai culture quicker as the Chinese prefer friendly culture than the cultural aspect they have at home.

Despite the cultural dimension Theory, some similar cultural aspects could also be used for better synergy between Thai and Chinese. For example, even though Chinese value more on performance, as according to Chinese being Individualistic, they still have value and respect on elders, which is the same as Thai. This could represent that the change in certain cultural dimension might not mean the total elimination of the previous cultural aspects.

Thai language may act as the barrier in the early stage and contribute high undesirable effect in culture shock stage due to limitation in cultural learning and understanding, has actually accelerated the adjustment progress in the later stage as learning language help removing cultural barrier and create more understanding.

However, religion does not play significant role in culture shock stage due to cultural and religious similarity shared between Thai and Chinese for very long time and also Thai's tolerance toward other religion, including non-religion, which the majority of Chinese is, help Chinese to adapt better into Thai culture.



## **5.2 Managerial Implication**

To implement this knowledge into practical business setting, this research shows what Chinese people would look for when they come to Thailand. To prepare for Chinese expatriates that plan to live here very long, they may not have certain understandings about Thai culture, and it is very usual if they cannot speak Thai. What the company can do is to provide “buddy program” by using Thai or Chinese colleague that has been living here before to help provide the basic understanding and give certain knowledge about the differences between Thai and Chinese culture. As the research show that there are certain respect in age and seniority, the company could find a buddy that has more experience and understanding about living in Thailand, which could earn more respect and the Chinese newcomer could be more obliged to cooperate. Moreover, Thai language training is a must for Chinese new comer in order to accelerate the process of cultural adjustment. The objective of these implementations is to decrease the culture shock and to increase adjustment so the Chinese expatriate will not get stuck in culture shock for very long, which could potentially impact on overall performance, and to create better coordination and working condition for the firm as a whole.

## **5.3 Contribution of the study**

Cultural factors are always subjective and always in the verge of changing, hence unpredictable. Cultural dimensions theory and Cultural adjustment theory are to help create more understanding on the cultural differences and cultural changes, respectively. People that are going through each cultural adjustment stage are affected different factors, this research show that even culture which seems to be obviously similar, such as Thai and Chinese, there are still some differences and culture shock can always occur for all Chinese coming to live in Thailand.

## **5.4 Limitation**

There are some limitations. First of all, the limitations of the sampling size and frame as the research have focused on few respondents with specific qualification of all respondent as they have to be Chinese people who have been living in Bangkok, Thailand for 4 to 6 years, meaning that Chinese visitors and new comers will not fit into the category. Time is also a limitation as the interview and data analysis are needed to be done within one month

## **5.5 Future Study**

To develop greater understanding on the cultural adaptation, future research may choose people from other cultures in the same region as Thailand that may seem to have very similar culture, such as Laos and Burma for the same research to identify any potential difference and the development of cultural understanding throughout each stage of Cultural adjustment. Other potential study could focus on early stage of Cultural Adjustment by focusing on foreigners who visit Thailand or the newcomers who plan to live in Thailand for long time but have been in Thailand only recently, in which they will still have fresh experience toward first impression of Thailand and early culture shock

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