

**A STUDY OF CULTURAL ADAPTATION IN TEACHING IN A
DIFFERENT CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT – EVIDENCE FROM
THE COLLEGE OF MUSIC, MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY**



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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author describes the efforts of foreign teachers in the College of Music, Mahidol University (Salaya campus, Thailand) to utilize cultural knowledge to refine and develop their teaching styles and strategies. The author gathered data on this paper by qualitative methodology through in-depth interviews face-to-face in semi-structured format with selected foreign teachers.

The discussion in this paper based on the concept of cultural intelligence and the Thai context. From the research data, the author identified four main cultural differences aspects in Thai context where foreign teachers felt that they need to adapt their existing teaching strategies and styles to Thai culture. These aspects are: hierarchy; concept of time; collectivism; and passiveness. Also, this paper provided cultural knowledge for teaching in Thailand.

KEY WORDS: Cultural Intelligence/ Teaching Adaptation / College of Music, Mahidol University/ Thai Classroom/ Thailand

26 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the world is changing rapidly. We are increasingly exposed to various cultures. Living in a multicultural society is a key feature in this globalizing world. As foreigners, we cannot only expect others to adapt their way of life to us, but we need to understand in a new cultural context, cultural differences and become culturally intelligent. In other words, to deal with people from different cultures we need to have an ability called cultural intelligence.

This paper focuses on the efforts of foreign teachers in Thailand to utilize cultural knowledge to refine and develop their teaching styles and strategies. The specific context of this research is Thai undergraduate music classes in the College of Music, Mahidol University. Teachers require adaptation skills much more than others as they have the role of building society. A teacher is a person who is responsible in teaching students about principles, knowledge, thinking, reading, as well as the practices and guidelines. Therefore, teachers are highly venerable and important in the Thai culture. For foreign teachers, there is the need to make sense of the Thai context and have the ability to deal with Thai students in their teaching. During the development of the research, the author expected that the results might come out with the similar or close to other research in the same area, but when the sample changed to music students which have different learning behavior from other field, so there are some different factors that come out. This paper is dedicated to provide another view of cultural differences in Thai education for those who want the new aspects about this.

In this paper, the author takes insights from two relevant literatures which are the Thai context (Komin, 1990; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001; Prpic & Kanjanapanyakorn, 2004; Kainzbauer & Hunt, 2014) and cultural intelligence (Thomas & Inkson, 2004; Thomas, 2006)

The Question of this Study

How foreign teachers adapt themselves to the Thai culture and Thai education environment and adjust their teaching styles and strategies to Thai students?

Research Scope

This research focuses only on foreign teachers who are currently teaching in the College of Music, Mahidol University (Salaya campus) which is located in Nakhonpathom, Thailand. The College of Music, Mahidol University, is the first music conservatory in Thailand offering various degree programs, including Pre-College, Undergraduate, Master and Doctoral programs in many areas of music.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

To explore this paper's topic, the author introduced the concepts of cultural intelligence and Thai context as frameworks to examine the results of this study. These two concepts are meant to illuminate both sides. The first is foreign teachers' cultural intelligence and the second is Thai classroom environment which is explained in the Thai context.

Cultural Intelligence

Thomas (2006) defines that cultural intelligence is “the ability to interact effectively with people who are culturally different”. The work of Thomas (2006) describes three consistent elements of cultural intelligence (CQ): knowledge, mindfulness and behavior. Similar to Earley, Ang & Tan (2006) which defines that cultural intelligence is “a person's capability for successful adaptation to new cultural settings that is for unfamiliar settings attributable to cultural context”. In this study, the author chooses the CQ framework from the work of Thomas (2006), which described that there are three components of cultural intelligence; the first component is “knowledge”. For the meaning of knowledge, Thomas (2006) defines that ‘knowing what culture is how cultures vary and how culture affects behavior’ (p.81). The second component is “mindfulness”, which is an internal state that has awareness as a fundamental aspect of consciousness, increased attention and sensitivity. Hence, mindfulness is the “key mediating link between knowledge and behavioral ability” (Thomas, 2006, p.86). The third component is “behavior”. According to Thomas (2006), behavioral ability is related to ability to adapt behavior in the situation where culturally different.

The graphic representation of the components of cultural intelligence is shown in Figure1. This model shows the interrelation of each element with the other

(Thomas & Inkson, 2004, p.15). Thomas (2006) also mentions “These three components combine to produce the ability to interact effectively across cultures”.

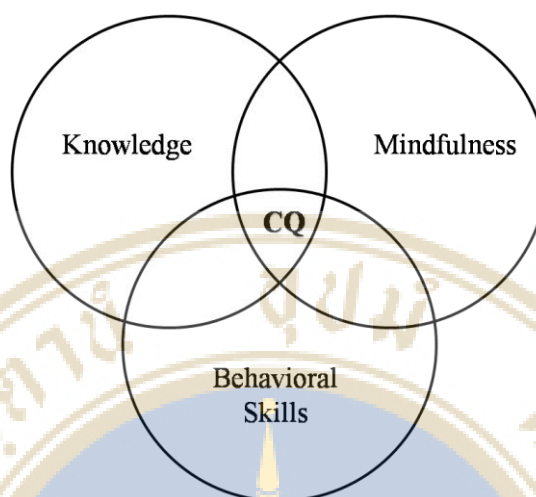


Figure 2.1 Components of cultural intelligence (CQ)

Knowledge

Thomas (2006) proposes the knowledge’s definition as the first component of cultural intelligence: “First, CQ requires knowledge of culture and of the fundamental principles of cross-cultural interactions. This means knowing what culture is, how cultures vary and how culture affects behavior” (p.81). To apply with the study, teachers with cultural intelligence need to have the knowledge about the culture of the country in which they teach plus the knowledge of the practices through effects on social behavior and cultural habits. Cultural knowledge mentioned herein does not include the knowledge that will be taught in the classroom.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the second component of cultural intelligence which means “the ability to pay attention in a reflective and creative way to cues in the cross-cultural situation encountered” (Thomas & Inkson, 2004, p.15). According to Thomas, mindfulness includes awareness, noticing, sensitivity, empathy, open-minded perspective, attention to the context of situation, creating new mental maps, and new categories and also re-categorized them (p.52). Culturally intelligent people need to

practice “the *mindfulness* in order to observe and interpret particular situations” (Thomas & Inkson, 2004, p.20).

The literature on teachers’ mindfulness and cultural sensitivity in teaching which focuses on how teaching experience develops the teacher’s teaching style and strategies plus classroom engagement. The teachers consider the perception of their students about their teaching. Kainzbauer & Hunt (2014) also explored that to empathize with Thai learners, a willingness to see a classroom situation from a different perspective helps the teachers.

Behavior

Thomas (2006) proposes a definition of the third component of cultural intelligence which is a behavioral ability as follows: “based on knowledge and mindfulness, people who are culturally intelligent develop a behavioral capability that allows them to become competent across a wide range of situations”. Also said in the work of Thomas & Inkson, (2004) “These skills involve choosing the appropriate behavior from a well-developed repertoire of behaviors that are correct of different intercultural situations”. The literature on culturally responsive teaching suggests many methodologies about how to be a culturally responsive teacher and how to set a culturally responsive classroom. Gay (2002) defines culturally responsive teaching “as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively”.

The culture of a country in which the teacher conducts his work is a variable that must be taken into account. To explain the Thai education environment, the Thai cultural context is critical in determining how the teaching style is adapted.

The Thai Context

According to Prpic & Kanjanapanyakorn (2004), “Thai culture exhibits a high power distance (seniority is important), is collectivist and feminine in nature and practices high-context communication”. To link this study with the work of Kainzbauer & Hunt (2014) who identified aspects of Thai culture where foreign teachers need to adapt their teaching styles; “These aspects are: fun; hierarchy; authority with kindness; group-based activities; and localized class content”.

In this study, the author chooses Hofstede's framework to analyze the Thai context.

Power Distance

Power Distance expresses the degree of how society handles inequality among peoples. In the society of high power distance, people accept a hierarchical order without further justification (Hofstede, 1983). Hallinger & Kantamara (2001) proposed that "The impact of high power distance on leadership and school improvement processes in Thailand is enormous and is shared, to a large degree, by other Asian cultures. This dimension, perhaps more than any other, creates the most difficult and unique challenge for Thai school leaders today: fostering participation and gaining the whole-hearted commitment." (p. 391)

Kainzbauer & Hunt (2014) propose that kreng-jai is one of Thai value which is related to the power distance. It is an attribute that support the hierarchal nature of Thai society.

According to Komin (1990) "Kreng-jai attitude and behavior is observed by all Thai, superiors, equal and inferiors, even in more intimate relationships as a basic social rule". Kainzbauer & Hunt (2014) define kreng-jai as "an unwillingness to disturb others, especially people more senior". Another related Thai value is a 'face-saving value'. Komin (1990, p.691) mentions that "face-saving is the first criterion to consider in any kind of evaluative or judgmental action. To make a person 'lose face', regardless of rank, is to be avoided at all cost, except in extreme necessity". To support the face-saving, Prpic & Kanjanapanyakorn (2004, p.5) point out that "Thai students do not ask questions in class, firstly not to bother the lecturer, and secondly, to avoid the situation where the lecturer may not know the answer and hence lose face."

Due to the fact that the cultural norms of Thailand are influenced by differences in power and status so people expect to be told what to and how to do. By being heavily ingrained to a particular set cultural norms, Thai students, parents, teachers and principals exhibit the kreng-jai attitude to people of higher status. For example "principals must greng jai or show deference to their supervisors: teachers and parents must do the same to the principle; students act accordingly with their parents and teachers" (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001). In a high power distance

culture, teachers are supposed to be strict in classroom and are treated with respect. Moreover, only invited student can speak up in class because all communication in the classroom is expected to come from the teacher initiative (Monthienvichienchai, Bhibulbhanuwat, Kasemsuk, & Speece, 2002).

Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV)

The second dimension in Hofstede's framework is the contrasts of individualism and collectivism. Individuals are expected to care only about themselves and their immediate families. On the contrary, collectivism is preferred to cohesive in-groups. In other words, this dimension is reflected "I" or "we" in terms of definition. Hallinger & Kantamara (2001) point out that "Thailand, like other Asian nations, is a highly collectivist culture". The cultural characteristic of high collectivism is associated with being together as a group because the "group spirit is a fundamental prerequisite to individuals gaining confidence" (p.395).

According to Prpic & Kanjanapanyakorn (2004) "collectivist cultures value interdependence, social harmony, selflessness, obedient and conforming behavior, and 'pleasant' relationships". When individuals are asked a question about their personal experience or opinion, a third person view answer would often be given. In Thai classrooms, most of the group work allow students to choose their group members and students prefer to choose people that they feel comfortable with in order to avoid the fear of losing face (*sia naa*) from sharing their opinion in front of others. Also, there is more willingness to share when Thai learners are getting together (Kainzbauer & Hunt, 2014).

Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)

Masculinity represents a preference for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material reward for success in society. On the contrary, femininity prefer cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life (Hofstede, 1983). For Thai culture, social relations are valued more than productivity, caring people and act on feelings more than logic and trying to understand other's heart (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001). "The Thai people exhibit many feminine qualities – politeness,

quietness, caring for others, to name but a few. They even have many descriptions of themselves that contain the word *jai* (heart)” (Prpic & Kanjanapanyakorn, 2004).

Kainzbauer & Hunt (2014) defines ‘jai-dee’ as an authority with a kind heart and also point out that the way to cope with the Thai students is having a caring-attitude because Thai learners appreciate kind strictness. Another evident shows the femininity of Thai culture is “Thai culture proscribes loud aggressive behavior (*jai ron*, literally hot heart). This sort of behavior is regarded as ill-mannered and uncouth. In Thai culture, *jai yen*, (cool heart = calm, easy-going) is the social demeanour to be emulated” (Kainzbauer & Hunt, 2014, p.18)

Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)

Uncertainty avoidance reflects the degree of uncomfortable feeling with ambiguous and uncertain situations. Strong uncertainty avoidance cultures preserve rigid codes of believe and behavior and do not tolerate unconventional behavior and ideas. In case of weak uncertainty avoidance cultures, the society maintains a more relaxed attitude in which practice counts more than principle (Hofstede). Hallinger & Kantamara (2001) point out that Thailand ranks high on uncertainty avoidance. According to Hofstede, Thailand scores an intermediate 64 on this dimension so the result of this high uncertainty avoidance shows that the society does not readily accept change and is very risk adverse.

In education aspect, because of high uncertainty avoidance culture, most Thai students feel comfortable with a structured environment and teachers are supposed to have a right answer (Monthienvichienchai, Bhibulbhanuwat, Kasemsuk, & Speece, 2002). Prpic & Kanjanapanyakorn (2004, p. 6) also point out that “Learning in Thailand is perceived as acquiring and retaining a body of knowledge. The learning environment is very teacher-centered. There are no tutorials, little on-line delivery, and not many references to international literature.”

High context/ low context communication

Another cultural dimension which is useful for explaining Thai culture is the terms of high context and low context presented by Hall (1976). This concept is used to describe the cultural differences among societies. The high context represents

an indirect and formal communication. People from high context cultures usually communicate with both verbal and non-verbal messages to express the whole meaning. On the contrary, low context cultures communicate with direct words with a precise meaning because people from the low context culture prefer clear communication and tend not to emphasize nonverbal communication.

The concept of high context/low context communication is also discussed in Thai culture. Thai culture is said to be high context communication due to polite communication, Thai language itself and a social harmony (Prpic & Kanjanapanyakorn, 2004). Another key value is 'Criticism-avoidance', this also related to face, "is the idea that it is difficult to separate ideas/opinions from the person holding those ideas. Therefore criticism particularly strong criticism is usually taken personally. Criticism of whatever type is a social affront, an insult to the person. When necessary, indirect means are used." (Komin, 1990, p. 691). Conflict is avoided by having *Gumlung Jai*, *Sia Naa*, and *Sanook* norms therefore the direction and disagreement are hidden then replaced by harmony (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001).

To summarize, the background literature above provides significant frameworks in order to discuss about the cultural adjustments teachers need to make in order to adapt their teaching styles and strategies to match with Thai culture.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this investigation, a qualitative methodology has been used. To answer the research question, in-depth interviews face-to-face in semi-structured format with selected teachers were conducted as the data collection approach. Participants were all foreign instructors in the College of Music, Mahidol University who had spent more than four years living and teaching in Thailand. All of the participants teach music courses at an undergraduate (bachelor's degree) and graduate (master's degree) level. The participants were selected from the recommendation of their students. The recommendations are based on the likability of the participants' teaching performance towards the students. This seemed to indicate that instructors were experiencing some cultural adjustments to their learners. (See table1: Profiles of Interviewees).

During the data collection process, at first, the author sought for biographical details reference to her participants' background and their career as educators from the website of the College of Music, Mahidol University and asked for suggestions from current students. The actual interviews could be analyzed as a series of critical events questionnaires. In the last stage, each participant was asked to give advice to newcomers to teaching in Thailand. (Please see the appendix for a list of interview questions).

The reasons why the author selected to use interviews as a part of the data collection methodology because it allows for in-depth answers to detail the ways teachers adjust to teaching in a foreign environment. Wengraf (2004) proposes these features as follows;

- *“The interview is a research interview, designed for the purpose improving knowledge”.*

- *“It is a special type of conversational interaction: in some ways it is like other conversations, but it has special features which need to be understood”.*
- *“It has to be planned and prepared for like other forms of research activity but what is planned is a deliberate half-scripted or quarter-scripted interviews; its questions are only partially prepared in advance (semi-structured) and will therefore be largely improvised by you as interviewer. But only largely; the interview as a whole is joint production, a co-production, by you and your interviewee”.*
- *“It is to go into matters ‘in depth’ ”.*

Open-ended questions are used because the author expects to investigate the diversity of data. The answers may match with several theories because the interviewees may intuitively use more than one teaching strategy. A list of open-ended questions is developed because the researcher would like to explore the participants' view of their teaching in Thailand. Reflective note taking is also used to record observed data because while interviewing there are cultural differences in terms of communication. Participants can show the way they transmit their messages through body language. Then author could take it into account. The sample is convenient as interviewees are four instructors who are willing to participate and fit the purpose of the study.

After collecting data from interviewees, the author synthesized the data using a content analysis approach in order to analyze all data (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This method attempts to identify the similarities and differences between data, then categorized them in groups. In order to synthesize the data, we have to transcript what each interviewee was saying. Next, the author identified the main key factors from the themes of each interview and grouped statements that have the same or similar meaning together. The author then grouped together relevant statements for each theme from individual interviews. Lastly, the author compared and found a connection or correlation between the literature in cultural intelligence and Thai context.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

From in-depth interviews with interviewees, the author identified four main aspects of cultural differences in the Thai context where foreign teachers felt that they need to adapt their existing teaching strategies and styles to Thai culture.

These aspects are: hierarchy; concept of time; collectivism; and passiveness. In the interview, the author asked interviewees about adaptations that they had made to their teaching styles and strategies in order to make Thai students understand the content of the instructors' teaching. Therefore, these aspects are related to Thai culture which focused on Thai study environment in particular. In all of the interviews, the interviewees specifically mention about the guidelines on how to make teaching and learning in Thailand become smoother. Moreover, by adapting these aspects to Thai classroom, the interviewees felt that these aspects would help to create better results for Thai students.

Hierarchy

All interviewees agreed that Thai students are very respectful to their teacher; i.e. *wai* (do Thai greeting) teachers when greeting or leaving, speak with teachers in a polite way, show respect and honor. Thus, the Thai's nature is supported by the attitude of *kreng-jai* (not cause discomfort to others, especially people of higher rank or age). Interviewees found out that *kreng-jai* behaviors occur normally in the classroom in several situations. For example, when students have great hesitation to criticize or even ask their teacher which may cause their teacher to lose face, look bad or affect teaching. Respondent P mentioned this characteristic of Thai students: "*they might be a little quiet or little concerned that they do not want to offend the teacher-student's relationship ... they may not be comfortable offering a criticism*". Respondent V made a similar observation: "*The students here usually don't argue with the teacher*". By asking for suggestions to deal with this situation, the respondents

suggested several ways to handle this issue. Respondent A explained his method: *“I try to meet them personally and check that they understand what I teach by giving them individual practices or exercises, then make them come to test with me personally ... and it works”*. This method is somewhat similar to the Respondent V’s: *“I spend more time with the students, like after class I asked them to come to see me if they have some questions”*. There are several respondents who discussed about the method to reduce the gap of hierarchy or kreng-jai behavior. Teachers should give an extra help after class or create a good relationship with their students.

Respondent V pointed out that *“Thai students are more respectful ... mostly”* which is another aspect of hierarchy in Thai culture. A more respectful demeanor creates a more kreng-jai atmosphere, because the students are not willing to give any feedback or comment to teachers. Respondent P explained how he gets feedback from his students: *“One thing I do is to have a blank sheet to get feedback from them on what works or what’s not working or what they want to make things better, as an anonymous feedback... just give them secrecy so that they can voice opinion without tracing to them. So I hope that they will be more open”*.

Another method found in the interviews in order to solve the problem of fear for losing face is to ask the students who understand to translate or explain to the students who do not understand. Respondent V suggested his method: *“if you see students that don’t react it means they don’t understand so I try to explain it again and sometimes I ask to another student to explain to them in Thai because if they are shy to talk to me they are not so shy to talk to their friends so I ask other students to explain”*.

Concept of time

Another aspect of cultural differences is the concept of time. In the Thai context, people do not pay much attention to exact due dates or time of appointments, but show a lot of flexibility, which is completely different from Western cultures. All of the respondents mentioned that Thai learners were not punctual which could affect the class’s timetable. Thais prefer to take things slow and easy, these attitudes relate to the word *‘mai pen rai’* (no worry, it is fine or never mind) which makes Thai people sometimes over flexible, lack of discipline and not strict with rules. Especially for

Thai students, they feel that there is no need to rush to go to school because they perceive that is 'better late than never'. Hence, in Thai students' perspective, if someone is late, it is not a big deal because everything will be fine. Respondent P described the situation that occurred in his classroom: *"If the class starts at 9 o'clock at the beginning but culturally, people show up at 9.10"*. Respondent V also supported about Thai students behavior in terms of the concept of time: *"They always come to the class late with many excuses"*. And Respondent also mentioned: *"They are lazy to come to school"*.

All respondents agreed that the only way to handle this situation is to enforce the rules strictly with a caring attitude. Respondent P suggested his method to solve this problem: *"For large classes, I would have a sign in sheet to have them write their name and then when I was just ready to start to teach I would then take a highlighter and highlight the signature for the students who were on time. So that way, if they came later they'd be signed in but I would know that they came a little bit later and that would reflect a small part of their grade ... not a large part but to let them know that I'm keeping track to slowly encourage them to come on the scheduled time"*. Respondent C also proposed his method that he allowed the student to sit in but : *"My students come ten minutes late then I say to the students... you can come late but I don't count your attendance score, but I don't get angry and I talk with them kindly"*. Similar to respondent V who also mentioned the same method: *"Of course I'm so strict with the rules... if the students come late, or didn't come I will check absent"*.

Due to the fact that Thai people are usually relaxed and flexible, they tend to not stress for any details including time. There is a relationship between the Thai concept of time and the Thai concept of waiting. Thais are so willing to wait because they do not stress about the time and perceive that the waiting time is the time to relax and prepare themselves. Thai students usually think that it is not important for them to come to the class on time because Thai classes never start on time and they believe that the foreign teacher would know and understand it.

Collectivism

All respondents noted that Thai culture is a collectivistic culture. Respondent C noticed that Thai learners are not independent and more comfortable when they are in the same group with their friends. Thai students tend to be shy to share their opinion in class and shy to ask questions to their teacher in class because they are afraid to lose their face (*sia naa*) in front of others. The concept of face in Thailand is a taboo that Thai people would be reluctant to break. Respondent A pointed out that Thai students always do something identical to what their friends do. They perceive that if they do something different they will be seen as the person who is a show off. Respondent V mentioned that Thai students prefer to do things in groups and like to do the same thing with their friends.

Another aspect of collectivism in Thai classroom is that the students always try to help each other in order to achieve their goals. They believe that to finish work together is very important because when one student helps others they will remember and try to repay by helping them back. This concept of helping is related to the moral support which Thais call ‘gum lung jai’. In other words, Thai culture emphasizes people’s feeling and group relationship, because they are taught to concern about such issues. Moreover, when their friends need help they would consider to help their friends first even sometimes it is not correct on the issue of morality. For example the copy behavior, respondent C said that in Thai culture it is acceptable to copy, because a majority of Thai students do copy their textbook, homework or even exam paper. Respondent A also mentioned this situation: *“there is always a problem with the written exam, the students always have some way to copy and sometimes I don’t know which one is the original”*.

To adapt to this situation, all respondents agreed that they would give an individual assignment which students need to perform in front of them one by one or show the results in person to them in order to force the students to generate good individual results.

Passiveness

Passiveness is the characteristic of Thai students that all respondents have emphasized. Passive learners are students who only do what is required of them and

they do not participate in class activities. In other words, high percentages of Thai students are not willing to ask questions in class and expect teachers to tell them about what they need to do. For example, Thai students try to keep quiet, because they do not want to bother their teacher and they want to avoid the situation which may cause them or their teacher to lose face. Respondent A has described his feeling about this situation: *“Students here are very passive... I don’t know if the students understand me or not because they don’t ask. Even if I ask they don’t react”*. Respondent V mentioned: *“They are not that active so I need to carefully observe their reaction”*. Therefore, all respondents mentioned that the passiveness of Thai students is one of the most serious problems for foreign teachers.

All respondents pointed out that it is very important for foreign teacher to understand the nature of Thai classrooms which are full of passive learners. The teachers are expected to be responsible for the learning result of their students. Moreover, a strong teacher-centered environment requires more teaching skills and communication skills in order to effectively run the classroom. Several respondents suggested that the best way to handle this problem is to ‘be patient’. As respondent A suggested to the newcomer who will come to teach in Thailand: *“You need to be very patient because you cannot change them”*.

Comparing Research Findings and Literature Review

In conclusion, the author indicates four main aspects of cultural differences in Thai context and then compares theories and teaching methods mentioned by the respondents. The interviews asked respondents to show their teaching strategies and adjustment to their students in order to engage with Thai students. They seemed to put a lot of efforts to adapt their teaching styles with Thai students’ behavior. Moreover, the adaptation of interaction in the classroom is one of the most important factors as well as the understanding of students towards teaching and learning results. This result relates to the literature of cultural intelligence as defined by Thomas (2006) in the concept of mindfulness. According to Thomas, mindfulness is the ability to pay attention in a reflective and creative way to cues in the cross-cultural situation encountered which includes awareness, noticing, sensitivity, empathy, open-minded perspective, attention to the context of situation,

creating new mental maps and new categories and also re-categorized them. For example, from the interviews, respondent P reflected this concept: *“I understand that English is the second language for most of my students and I need to be careful how I’m talking. Sometimes when I’m excited about what I am teaching I may talk too fast and I just ask if the student could let me know if I’m too fast but I don’t reduce the complexity of my vocabulary in a graduate seminar. For the undergraduate courses, I will try to be a little more careful with some of the words and I will try to have more sentences with normal words. I know that it is a second language for them so I need to adjust my talking a little”*.

Kainzbauer & Hunt (2014) explored that to empathize with Thais’ learners, a willingness to see a classroom situation from a different perspective has helped the teachers. Various respondents mentioned that to observe the way that Thai people speak English is very important. For example, foreign teacher need to understand the vocabulary and the grammar that Thais use. As respondent C explained: *“if you can speak and listen following Thai grammar or following Thai pronunciation and vocabulary then you will do better but you have to really observe and you have to think about it a lot because it’s not easy for a lot of teachers.... at first it’s difficult because it takes time to adjust and adapt, for me probably a few months, and I can be much more effective at teaching because I speak in the way that Thai people could understand but then after that I spend years and years and years learning Thai so that I could be able to communicate”*.

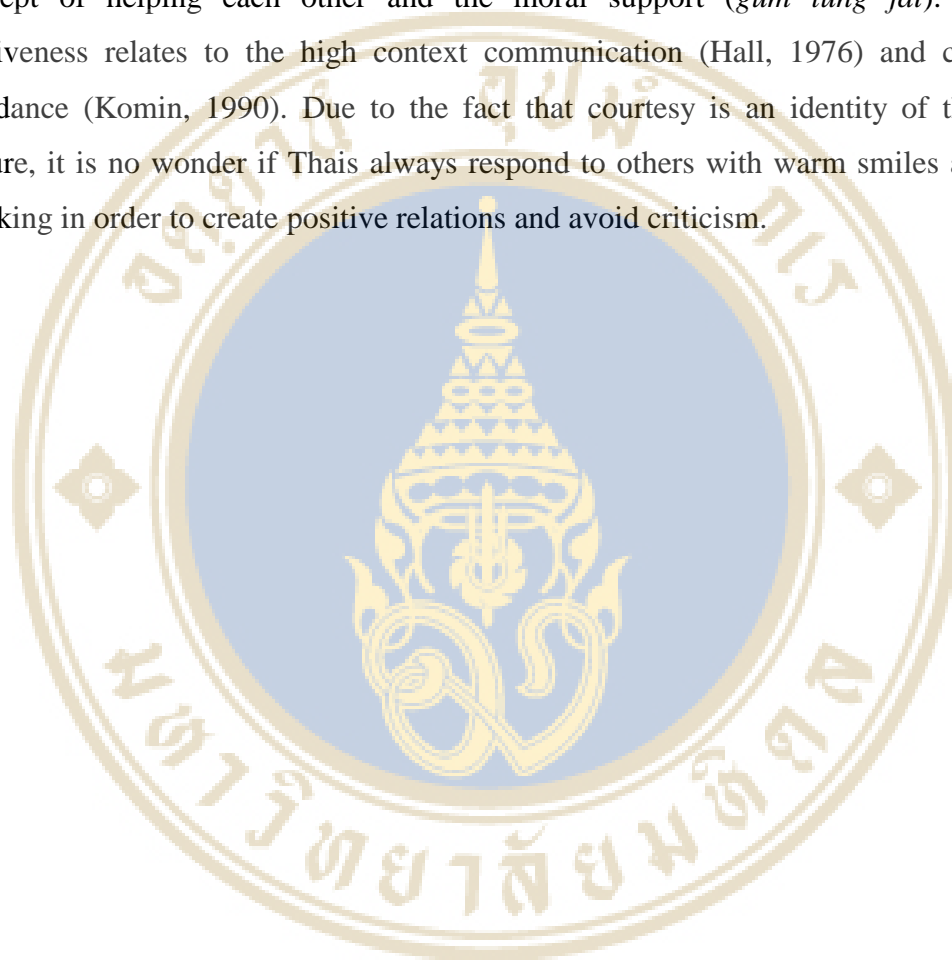
In addition to the mindfulness which is a part of three components of cultural intelligence, behavioral ability is needed to adapt in the situation where culturally different people interact. According to Thomas (2006, p. 87), “based on knowledge and mindfulness, people who are culturally intelligent develop a behavioral capability that allows them to become competent across a wide range of situations”. From the interviews, all respondents seemed to adapt their own behavior to fit with the Thai context in order to live and teach in Thailand. For example, to deal with hierarchy aspects, foreign teachers should create a good relationship with their students and give some extra help after class to reduce the gap of hierarchy. To understand the Thai culture and be patient are the best ways to handle Thai students. Another practical way to use for Thai classroom adaptation is to be strict with rules to

make Thai students aware of the international concept of time and get them to adjust themselves.

Culturally intelligent people need to have cultural 'knowledge' which is the first component of the cultural intelligence framework because it effects on the mindfulness of self and others (Thomas 2006). According to Thomas, knowledge is required for the CQ and "developing content and process knowledge helps individuals understand the interaction styles they observe in themselves and in others in multicultural workplaces and overseas" (p. 84). In this paper, the cultural knowledge from the interviewees comes from three main sources. First, by documentary research for example books and journals about Thai culture. Respondent C mentioned: "*there are many books and journals write about Thai culture or the kreng-jai attitude and it is necessary to read before you come*". Second, by inquiries from those who know or have experience for example talk to colleagues or Thai people. Respondent P described: "*I met with one Thai national for a few hours to get an introduction to what I might expect and then when I came here I talked with other teachers*". Third, by observation for example learning by doing or face it yourself. Respondent V illustrated: "*I am sure that foreign teachers will learn about Thai culture by themselves on how they should behave... like me*". Respondent A made a similar observation: "*I need to forget everything because I cannot change things. So I learned the culture from my students and my family (Thai students and his Thai wife)*".

Thai learning environment is strongly related to the Thai context, student behavior is shaped by the culture. The four aspects of cultural differences in Thai context reflect the Thai cultural norms for the students' actions in the class. First, the aspect of hierarchy relates to high power distance in Thai culture (Hofstede, 1983) which is expressed by kreng-jai attitude, which is considered as a Thai value (Komin, 1990; Kainzbauer & Hunt, 2014). Followed by face-saving and fear for losing face (*klua sia naa*) behavior. Thai culture is strongly divided into various hierarchical levels so it leads to different groups having to respect each other. For instance, respect among other things includes age, social status and wealth. In other words, hierarchy affects Thai manner, etiquette, relationship and the way to behave. Second, the concept of time relates to femininity culture (Hofstede, 1983) and *jai yen* (cool heart) behavior (Kainzbauer & Hunt, 2014). Thai people are quite flexible and relatively

gentle so they are not the time-oriented because they perceive that beginnings and endings are not important but to concern about people feeling is more important. Therefore, the attitude of *mai pen rai* (no worry, it is fine or never mind) is very essential for Thais. Third, collectivistic relates to the concept of individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 1983) and also links with collectivistic group-based behavior and the fear for losing face behavior (Kainzbauer & Hunt, 2014). For example, the concept of helping each other and the moral support (*gum lung jai*). Fourth, passiveness relates to the high context communication (Hall, 1976) and criticism avoidance (Komin, 1990). Due to the fact that courtesy is an identity of the Thai culture, it is no wonder if Thais always respond to others with warm smiles and soft speaking in order to create positive relations and avoid criticism.



CHAPTER V

RECOMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Thai education has different cultural norms from Western countries and it is quite obvious that the Thai context has a strong impact on Thai students' behavior. It is very important that foreign teachers need to adapt their teaching styles and strategies to make Thai students understand the content of the instructors' teaching. The study found that those foreign teachers need to have mindfulness which includes self-awareness, sensitivity, empathy, open-minded perspective, attention to the context of situation, creating new mental maps and new categories in order to adapt to teaching in Thailand. Moreover, not only the mindfulness is needed but also the appropriate actions to adjust their teaching styles and strategies are needed. Based on the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ), this paper also provides the cultural knowledge for teaching in Thailand.

Recommendations

First, foreign teachers need to know and understand the Thai context. Thai culture is vastly different from Western cultures. The four aspects of cultural differences proposed in this study are things to consider for newcomers to teach in Thailand. They also need to understand Thai values and behaviors that shape the Thai learning environment. Even though foreign teachers read or listen a lot about Thai culture or Thai students, the perceived differences will probably exceed their expectations. For example, undergraduate students may act like high school students, students will come to class late and a high percentage of students will try to copy everything such as homework, projects or even the exam papers. Newcomers need to consider the strategies for controlling for classroom discipline and dealing with all those problems since the beginning. The way to understand Thai students is to understand the culture. To spend as much time understanding the way that students

speak to each others, the way they speak to teachers and read about Thai culture. The best way to understand Thai culture is to learn Thai language because foreigners can really understand the way that people talk to each other and their perspective.

Second, to understand that English is the second language of Thailand is very important. Thai people have different English language skills, even in the international college. Some of them are very good in English, some of them are in the middle, and some of them are not really good in English. Foreign teachers need to understand how Thais speak English in terms of accent, vocabulary and grammar. It is very important to observe and really think about it a lot.

Last, to be patient is the most important attitude for teaching in Thailand. All of the recommendations that I mentioned above are processes and it takes time to adjust but if foreign teachers successfully adapt, it would be easy for them to teach Thai students or live in Thailand.

Limitations and Further Research

The paper has some major limitations. First is limitation in less time of researching period because the author has only seven weeks to accomplish this paper. Second, the research scope is limited by focusing on only music students. Third, the sampling is limited by interviewing only four foreign instructors from the College of Music, Mahidol University. The data of this paper only come from the interviewees' perspective it cannot be the representative of all foreign teachers in Thailand.

Conclusions

This paper proposes four main aspects of cultural differences in the Thai context where foreign teachers felt the need to adapt their existing teaching strategies and styles to Thai culture and the recommendations of how to deal with Thai students. The study is based on the perspective of recommended foreign instructors who had spent more than four years teaching and living in Thailand. These aspects are: hierarchy; concept of time; collectivism; and passiveness. The interviews drive respondents to show their teaching strategies and adjustment to their students in order to engage with Thai students. This study also finds out that, teaching in Thailand

requires motivation and patience as well as cultural intelligence for foreign teachers. Lastly, teachers need time to adjust to the cultural differences.



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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview questions:

Stage1: biographical details

Stage2: Critical events (classroom examples from Thailand)

1. Since teaching in Thai college, do you have any problem in communicating and teaching with Thai students, please give an example?
2. What kind of strategies do you use for solving these problems?
3. What teaching strategies have you identified as successful in Thai classrooms?
4. Which strategy is the most successful? And why?
5. What do Thai learners say they like about your class?

Stage3: Advice to others

6. From your experience, what advice and suggestions would you give to a teacher coming to teach in a Thai music college for the first time?

