



CHINESE LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF IRISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS STUDYING MANDARIN IN CHINA

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Research Methods
- Research Findings
- Discussion and Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents an original qualitative study on the cross-cultural adaptation process of Irish university students studying Mandarin in China. Factors that influence Irish students' Chinese language acquisition and adjustment to the host culture were examined. Findings from this research suggest that Chinese language learning and cross-cultural adaptation is a multifaceted process enlightened by complex, interconnected factors, enhancing our understanding of how to better prepare students studying-abroad.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Theoretical Approaches to Study Abroad and Second Language Acquisition
- Cross-Cultural Adaptation
- Intercultural Communicative Competence

STUDY ABROAD AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Study abroad has been credited as a major source of foreign language competence for language learners and plays an important role in the foreign language curriculum.

FACTORS IMPACTING SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

- Individual Differences (e.g., Cognitive Abilities, Motivation, Learning Strategies);
- Initial Proficiency
- Living Situation
- Quantity and Quality of Social Interaction
- Length of Study Abroad

(Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsburg, 1995; Dufon & Churchill, 2006; Magnan & Back, 2007; Rees & Klapper, 2007; Shively, 2013).

STUDY ABROAD AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

- Listening Skills
- Speaking Skills
- Reading Skills
- Writing Skills
- Communicative Competence (Grammatical Competence, Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic Competence)

CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION

Cross-cultural adaptation is the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (reestablish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments. (Kim, 2005:31)

CULTURE SHOCK AND CULTURAL DISTANCE

- Oberg (1958) defined “culture shock” as the distress that the sojourners experienced as a result of losing all familiar indications, signs and symbols from their physical and social environment .
- Researchers reported that international students who came from culturally similar regions experienced fewer social difficulties than students from culturally distant regions.

CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Cultural Dimensions Model (Hofstede, 2005)

- Power Distance
- Individualism
- Masculinity
- Uncertainty Avoidance index
- Long-Term Orientation.

INDEX SCORES FOR CHINA AND IRELAND BASED ON HOFSTEDE'S DIMENSIONS (SOURCES FROM HOFSTEDE 2001: 501, 502)

Country	Power-Distance Index	Uncertainty Avoidance Index	Individual Index	Masculinity Index	Long-Term Orientation Index
China	80	30	20	66	118
Ireland	28	35	70	68	43

ACCULTURATION

Strategies for Acculturation (Berry, 2008)

- Assimilation
- Integration
- Separation
- Marginalization.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Intercultural Effectiveness (Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven, 2001) :

- Cultural Empathy
- Open-Mindedness
- Emotional Stability
- Social Initiative
- Flexibility

RESEARCH METHOD

- Qualitative research
- In-depth interviews
- Journals written by the participants

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the facilitators of and hindrances to the cultural adaptation process experienced by Irish university students studying in China?
- What difficulties did these students encounter? What strategies did they employ to overcome these difficulties?
- What are their Chinese language learning experiences in China?

RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Students benefitted considerably from study abroad program, particularly regarding their oral skills, vocabulary, and sociolinguistic awareness.
- The majority demonstrated a significant increase in Chinese language proficiency, as proved by the results of their HSK (Chinese Language Proficiency) Exam.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table 6.1 Facilitators of and Hindrances to Language Acquisition and Cross-Cultural Adaptation Identified in the Current Study	
Facilitators	Hindrances
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Motivation• Prior cross-cultural experience• Preparation• Perceived support• Integrative attitude• Intercultural personality characteristics: openness; self-esteem and self-efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Culture distance• Bureaucracy
Facilitators / Hindrances	
Chinese language proficiency and use of modern technology can be both facilitators of and hindrances to cross-cultural adaptation and language acquisition	

RECOMMEND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE LANGUAGE LEARNING AND CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF STUDENTS

- Obtain as much information as possible about their chosen country;
- Assist the individual in understanding the new culture as much as possible.
- Actively immerse themselves in the target culture.

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