

Intercultural Adaptation of Chinese Students Studying in Thailand: A Case of a Thai Private University

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Abstract

This study aimed to 1) explore whether Chinese students' English and Thai language proficiency has an impact on their intercultural adaptation in Thailand; 2) explore whether the length of time of Chinese students study in Thailand has an impact on their intercultural adaptation; and 3) explore whether daily life culture and classroom culture have an impact on Chinese students' intercultural adaptation. A mixed methods approach was adopted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data through the use of the 33-item questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. A private university in Thailand was selected as the case study. 148 Chinese students at the university were selected as the survey subjects. These students were aged between 18-24 years old and studied at the private university ranging from four months to two years. For semi-structured interviews, nine students were purposely selected and divided into three groups based on the length of time they stayed in Thailand: six months, one year and two years. The questionnaire data analysis showed that the overall mean of the impact of the students' Chinese and English language proficiency was at the 'Agree' level ($\bar{X}= 3.67/SD=0.87$). Secondly, the overall mean of the impact on the length of time needed for adaptation was also at the 'Agree' level ($\bar{X}= 3.45/SD=0.91$). In addition, the overall means of the impact of daily life and classroom culture on their cultural adaptation were both at the 'Agree' level respectively ($\bar{X}= 3.41/SD=0.85$; $\bar{X}= 3.53/SD=0.94$). The analysis of the semi-structured interview data revealed that the language proficiency affected Chinese students' intercultural adaptation. At each stage of studying abroad, Chinese students faced different intercultural challenges. Daily life and classroom culture also had varying degrees of impact on intercultural adaptation. This study recommends that schools provide more assistance in life and study to Chinese students during their studies, and that Chinese students should continue to improve themselves to better adapt to studying and living in Thailand.

Keywords : *Intercultural adaptation; Language proficiency; Daily life; Classroom culture; Length of time needed for adaptation.*

1. Introduction

In recent years, due to Thailand's beautiful campus environment, international curriculum, and relatively low cost of studying abroad compared with other countries, more and more Chinese students have chosen to study in Thailand. The main reason students choose to study in Thailand is the demand for future employment and the opportunity to enhance their foreign language skills. (Thailand Study Aboard News,2021). Nowadays, many parents and students are increasingly rational when considering studying abroad. They begin to contemplate on the true significance of studying in Thailand for students, rather than blindly following the trend. This also means that the trend of Chinese students studying abroad has started to develop in a positive way.

However, as the number of Chinese students in Thailand increases, the issue of intercultural adaptation has become a growing concern. Although China and Thailand are geographically close to each other, the differences in economy, history, culture, politics, and beliefs make it necessary for Chinese students to undergo a new cultural adaptation process when they enter a new learning and living environment in Thailand. The research site, a Thai private university, accredited by the Chinese government, has approximately over a thousand Chinese students studying at various faculties. Thus, it is important that Chinese students should be properly taken care of in their learning achievement. Byram (1997) emphasized that learners need to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and cultural awareness to make objective judgments in intercultural communication.

Although many scholars have conducted extensive research on intercultural adaptation, the scope of research is still broad and focusing on people wishing to settle down in different cultures. There are few studies on acculturation of international students at university level in Thailand. Currently, Chinese students have become the predominant group studying in Thailand, and the matter of intercultural adaptation among Chinese students has garnered growing attention. This article aimed to conduct an empirical study on the intercultural adaptation of Chinese students at a private University in Thailand. Emphasis was placed on Chinese students' English and Thai proficiency (These Chinese students in the study needed to know English too because it was a medium of instruction in their programs), length of study abroad, daily life, and classroom culture to enhance empirical research in the field of intercultural adaptation.

2. Research Objectives

2.1 To explore whether Chinese students' English and Thai language proficiency has an impact on their intercultural adaptation in Thailand.

2.2 To explore whether the length of time of Chinese students study in Thailand has an impact on their intercultural adaptation.

2.3 To explore whether daily life culture and classroom culture have an impact on Chinese students' intercultural adaptation.

3. Research Questions

4.1 Does the English and Thai language proficiency of Chinese students have an impact on the intercultural adaptation of Chinese students in Thailand?

4.2 Does the length of time that Chinese students study in Thailand have an impact on their intercultural adaptation?

4.3 Does daily life culture and classroom culture have an impact on Chinese students' intercultural adaptation?

4. Literature Review

Cultural adaptation is one of the most crucial aspects of contemporary intercultural education. Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima (1998) divided sojourners' intercultural adjustment into two dimensions: psychological adjustment and Social-cultural adjustment. Psychological adaptation refers to an individual's mental health and subjective well-being in a different culture. Ward & Kennedy believe that sociocultural adaptation refers to an individual's acquisition of appropriate cultural knowledge and skills in a foreign culture. When a series of changes and conflicts occur in the educational culture, educational system, and environment, students will inevitably undergo certain psychological and behavioral changes. The trend and extent of this change are crucial for successfully completing intercultural learning. To investigate the intercultural adaptation of Chinese students in Thailand, it is essential to comprehend the theory of intercultural adaptation and the evolution of intercultural adaptation theory both internationally and in China.

4.1 The Relationship between Language and Intercultural Adaptation

A number of previous studies found that Chinese university students commonly encountered difficulties in adjusting themselves to new languages locally used in and out of the class, especially Thai and English. Peng and Wu (2017) found that Chinese college students studying in Thailand generally had low cultural knowledge, intercultural communication skills and intercultural cognitive abilities. Among them, the intercultural communication ability of college students were extremely weak. This shows that Chinese college students were still at a disadvantage in terms of language in intercultural communication. Shi (2021) found through research that Chinese students in Thailand tend to study business because it was beneficial for their future career development; therefore, the learning of English was quite important. However, due to a lack of a solid foundation or positive attitude towards learning English, some students dropped out of school and needed to re-enroll because they struggle to comprehend the lessons and become weary of the learning process. Alternatively, some transferred to specific universities that exclusively admitted Chinese students and conduct classes in Chinese. Chen (2016) emphasized that in Thai language learning, some Thai language teachers focused more on the practical application of the language and less on developing cultural communication skills. Under this traditional teaching model, even students who performed well in their

studies were not be able to communicate appropriately and effectively with Thai people using the Thai language they had learned.

4.2 The Impact of Length of Time on Intercultural Adaptation

By sorting through previous research literature, it was found that the research directions can be roughly divided into two categories. Firstly, this study examines the intercultural communication barriers faced by exchange students and undergraduate international students studying in Thailand for a short period of time. For example, Prommin (2018) found that Chinese students encountered cultural difficulties and adaptation issues due to cultural differences, varying cultural communication and interpretation methods, as well as an incomplete understanding of Thai culture. The most critical issues affecting their cultural adaptation process were insufficient knowledge of English and Thai languages and cultural norms. Thailand's academic environment and Thai cuisine were also considered to have an impact. An important factor in their ability to adapt. Secondly, the research objective is to investigate the intercultural communication barriers encountered by exchange students and undergraduate international students who have studied in Thailand for an extended period. Si and Shi (2020) found that undergraduate students in the Sino-Thailand cooperative education program at Hunan High-speed Railway Vocational and Technical College face two main obstacles when studying in Thailand. One barrier is the language barrier, and the other is the cultural adaptation barrier. Lin and Worapinya (2014) found that several cross-cultural stressors such as communication, language barriers, cultural and religious differences, lack of local information, loneliness, and homesickness are the main stressors for Chinese students.

4.3 Differences Classroom Culture between China and Thailand

According to Wang (2018), classroom culture refers to the values and behavioral norms established by teachers and students through long-term classroom teaching practices, as well as the practical activities that ensue, primarily rooted in spiritual culture. Zhang and Yao (2020) argued that research on China's intercultural competency should be grounded in the Chinese context, focus on talent development, and be integrated into classroom instruction. Proposed is a "four-three-two-one" theoretical framework for the development of intercultural abilities, which comprises four perspectives, three levels, two contexts, and one platform. Based on this framework, the model was initially verified using experimental teaching methods to describe the development of Chinese students' intercultural skills. The appropriateness and effectiveness of classroom instructional design. Sun and Pradtana (2020), the factors that mainly affect the intercultural adaptation process of Chinese students include "not accustomed to campus life", "difficulty in understanding the curriculum", "no good job prospects" and difficulty in integrating into Thai society

In summary, Ward's dual-model theory of intercultural adaptation is relevant for examining the intercultural adaptation of Chinese students in Thailand. From Ward's Theory, psychological adjustment and social-cultural adjustment theory were applied to this study to examine Chinese international undergraduate students at a Thai private University. The study aimed to investigate the influence of language proficiency, length of time, daily life, and classroom culture on the intercultural adaptation of Chinese international students. The findings would provide valuable insights and propose practical recommendations to help Chinese international students overcome intercultural challenges and enhance their academic experience at a Thai private University.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

A mixed methods approach was adopted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data through the use of the 33-item questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. For semi-structured interviews, nine students were purposively selected and divided into three groups based on the length of time they stayed in Thailand: six months, one year and two years.

5.2 Population and Sample

This study selected undergraduate students studying at a private University as the survey population and sample.

From 2022 to 2023, a total of 235 Chinese students chose to study in English-taught programs at Rangsit University. These students were aged 18-24 years old and study at Rangsit University for 4 months to 2 years. These students could serve as the research group to study whether Chinese students' language proficiency, length of study abroad in Thailand, daily life culture, and classroom culture have an impact on Chinese students' intercultural adaptation. The sample of 148 was calculated according to Yamane's (1967) formula and 9 students were purposely selected based on voluntary basis to do the semi-structured interview.

5.3 Research Instruments

This questionnaire was a modified version of Su's (2019), which mainly consisted of 33 questions. The following table shows the component sections of the questionnaire.

Table 1: The Structure of the Questionnaire

Dimensions	Location
General Information	Q1-Q4
The impact of English and Thai language ability on intercultural adaptation of Chinese international students.	Q5-Q13
The impact of length of time on intercultural adaptation of Chinese international students.	Q14-Q20
The impact of daily life on intercultural adaptation of Chinese international students.	Q21-Q25
The impact of classroom culture on intercultural adaptation of Chinese international students.	Q26-Q33

The questionnaire was designed in a bilingual format, presented in both Chinese and English. For the primary analysis, researcher calculated descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and two-tailed test) for the questionnaire data. The means were interpreted as table 2 shows.

Table 2: The 5-point Likert Scale

Likert Scale Description	Likert Scale	Likert Scale Interval
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00-1.80
Disagree	2	1.81-2.60
Neutral	3	2.61-3.40
Agree	4	3.41-4.20
Strongly Agree	5	4.21-5.00

This study utilized semi-structured interviews for qualitative analysis. The used of semi-structured interviews allowed interviewers to express their views and ask questions, encouraged participants to provide more useful information for the qualitative study, including their perspectives on sensitive issues. That was more conducive to understanding the intercultural adaptation issues of Chinese international students.

Table 3: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

No.	Prompt Questions
1	How are you adapting to studying and living in Thailand when you first arrive?
2	How long did it take for you to adapt to study life in Thailand?
3	Does your language proficiency have an impact on your life of studying abroad?
4	Do you think learning English and Thai well can help you integrate into Thai culture?
5	What do you think is the difference between Chinese classroom culture and Thai classroom culture?

No.	Prompt Questions
6	Do you like Thai classroom culture?
7	How did you adjust yourself to life in Thailand while studying abroad?

5.4 Validity and Reliability

The basic rule of thumb has it that the item congruence index (IOC) for both individual items and the entire questionnaire by three experts should not be less than 0.67. The three IOC experts were lecturers at government universities in Thailand. One of the expert used to work at an international school before moving to her current university. Two of them had their Ph.D from Chinese Universities and taught Chinese. The items were revised and modified based on the remarks and recommendations of the experts to make sure that the items matched the objectives. Two items were deleted because they were lower than 0.67. The average of scores of the test items in this study was 0.89, which means that the items were valid for data collection in this research.

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot test were conducted. Before distributing the formal questionnaires, the researcher selected 30 Chinese international students from different schools to test the reliability of the questionnaire. Based on the pilot study with 30 students, the Cronbach's Alpha was 0.933. The higher the reliability value, the more reliable the measurement. Hence, the questionnaire is reliable.

The research was approved for research ethics by the Research Ethics Review Board of Rangsit University before the data collection process began. The research ethics number is No.RSUERB2024-087. All the data collection procedures were carefully and strictly performed to ensure that all the research participants were treated ethically.

5.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis based on the 3Cs of data analysis by Lichtman (2013). After obtaining the interview content, the researcher coded the interview questions, organized the code content into categories, and finally conduct further analysis and explanation based on the categories. Researchers move from these categories and concepts to higher-level theories. The image below illustrates how to analyze qualitative data.

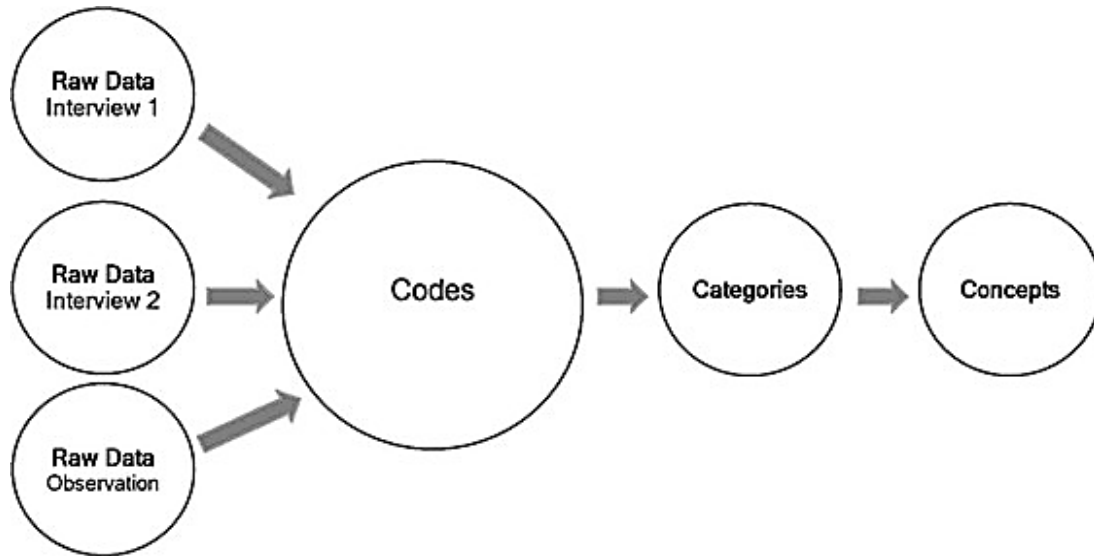


Figure 1: Data Analysis Process based on Litchman’s(2013) Three Cs process

6. Results

This study had three objectives and the responses to these objectives were derived from the two instruments used: the 33-item questionnaire and seven semi-structured interview questions.

6.1 Responses to Research Objective 1 (To explore whether Chinese students' English and Thai language proficiency has an impact on their intercultural adaptation in Thailand)

Items 1/2/3/4 of the questionnaire were personal information of students which were consisted of gender, age,length of years, and the proportion of international students for more than 2 years is smaller.

Table 4 below presents the questionnaire items (No.5-13) that revealed that Chinese students' English and Thai language proficiency had an impact on their intercultural adaptation in Thailand

Table: 4 English and Thai language Ability on Chinese Students Intercultural Adaptation

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
5	I can communicate simply in English.	3.58	0.91	Agree
6	I can communicate simply in Thai.	2.49	1.13	Disagree
7	I often find it difficult to integrate into local life due to language issues.	3.83	0.86	Agree
8	I would be troubled by not being able to understand what the teacher was teaching in Thai.	4.19	0.67	Agree

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
9	I use English more than Thai in my daily life.	3.75	0.96	Agree
10	I think learning English is more important than Thai in Thailand.	3.42	0.74	Agree
11	In college I improved my Thai language skills by taking a minor in Thai language.	3.75	1.04	Agree
12	I have continued to improve my English and Thai language proficiency through my own efforts.	3.89	0.78	Agree
13	My language skills have improved after I came to studying in Thailand.	4.15	0.72	Agree
Average		3.67	0.87	Agree

Though Item 5-13, it could be seen that the highest mean in this study was Item 8 ($\bar{x}=4.19/SD=0.67$), which means that Chinese students would be troubled because they couldn't understand what the teacher taught in Thai. This showed that language ability was one of the important factors affecting the intercultural adaptation of Chinese students. We could also see that the second average was Item 13 ($\bar{x}=4.15/SD=0.72$), which means that Chinese students' language skills had improved after coming to Thailand to study. This also showed that when studying in Thailand, because of the language environment, the language proficiency of Chinese students had improved. However, the item with the lowest mean was Item 6 ($\bar{x}=2.49/SD=1.13$). This means that most of the students in this study could not use Thai well and it could be assumed that language proficiency levels in both Thai and English were closely related to the students; intercultural adaptation ability.

Similarly, qualitative interviewed data confirmed similar findings which revealed 3 main aspects of language proficiency on Chinese students' intercultural adaptation: 1)English Proficiency, 2)Thai language Proficiency, and 3)Personal experience. See the interviewees' actual words below.

“When I first took the class, because the teacher’s English had some accent, it was difficult for me to understand the content of the teacher’s class. I also didn’t know what the assignments assigned by the teacher were. I often had to ask my classmates.”(Interviewee 2, personal communication, June, 4)

“When I go to a restaurant to eat, the menu is all in Thai. I don’t know how to order, and I don’t know how to speak Thai to the waiter.”(Interviewee 9, personal communication, June, 4)

“Because of the language barrier, I don’t dare to go to places too far alone, and I don’t dare to travel alone.”(Interviewee 8, personal communication, June, 4)

Through interviewing some personal experiences of interviewees, due to poor language skills, interviewees could not order food when going to a restaurant. In class, some interviewees said that they could not understand what the teacher said in class, so they felt frustrated and did not dare to ask the teacher questions after class. However, all interviewees said that their language proficiency improved after coming to Thailand to study.

6.2 Responses to Research Objective 2 (To explore whether the length of time of Chinese students study in Thailand has an impact on their intercultural adaptation.)

Table 5 below presents the questionnaire items (No.14-20) that revealed that Chinese students' length of time needed for adaptation had an impact on their intercultural adaptation in Thailand.

Table 5: Length of Time Chinese Students Needed for adaptation

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
14	I felt anxious when I first came to Thailand to study abroad.	3.96	0.87	Agree
15	I can adapt to studying and living in Thailand very quickly.	2.54	1.11	Disagree
16	The longer I study in Thailand, the more I like Thailand.	2.75	0.97	Neutral
17	When I studied in Thailand, I tended to make Chinese friends rather than Thai friends.	3.78	0.75	Agree
18	I think the length of study abroad is an obstacle to my integration into local study life in Thailand.	3.83	0.83	Agree
19	I feel that the culture of Thailand is very similar to the culture of my city.	2.34	0.94	Disagree
20	After graduation, I have long-term development plans in Thailand.	2.46	0.88	Disagree
Average		3.45	0.91	Agree

According to the results of the questionnaire, the highest mean in this study was Item 14 ($\bar{x} = 3.96/SD=0.87$), which means that Chinese students felt anxious and depressed because they had not adapt to the new environment. The lowest mean in this study was Item 19 ($\bar{x} = 2.34 /SD=0.94$), "I feel that the culture of Thailand was very similar to the culture of my city." Although this item got the lowest score, it means that the students were still affected by the Thai culture even after staying in Thailand and Item 20 ($\bar{x} = 2.46 /SD=0.88$) indicated that students did not have long-term development plans in Thailand. Item 15 ($\bar{x} = 2.54 /SD=1.11$), shows that students could not adapt to the Thai culture in a short time.

Along the same line, the time needed by the Chinese students to adapt themselves was also discussed in the interviews as shown below.

“I’m not used to Thai food. Thai food is mainly spicy and sour. Many dishes are raw and the portions are small.”(Interviewee 1, personal communication, June, 3)

“Because I was not used to Thai food, I started to learn how to cook Chinese food. Originally I didn’t know how to cook, but after coming to Thailand, I started to learn how to cook the Chinese food that I like.”(Interviewee 1, personal communication, June, 3)

“I like Thai charcoal grilled pork neck very much, as well as Thai barbecue and chicken oil rice. I eat them almost every week.”(Interviewee 4, personal communication, June, 4)

“In May of this year, I went to a Thai friend’s house in Chiang Mai alone. The Thai friend taught me how to cook Thai food and took me to see the elephants in Chiang Mai. I really like the life in Chiang Mai and it feels like More comfortable than Bangkok” (Interviewee 7, personal communication, June, 4)

“Nowadays, there are frequent economic and trade exchanges between China and Thailand, and there are many opportunities. I want to start my own business in self-media.”(Interviewee 7, personal communication, June, 4)

It could be seen from the interview data that when the Chinese students first came to study in Thailand, they were not accustomed to Thai eating habits and did not know how to buy daily necessities. Most of the interviewees also felt homesick from time to time. After studying in Thailand for half a year, the interviewees have a Thai restaurant they often went to, and they also cook Chinese food in the dormitory. However, some interviewees still miss home often. One year after coming to Thailand, the interviewees became accustomed to Thai food and could speak some simple Thai. They would go back to China once every semester, twice a year. Two years after coming to Thailand, the interviewees could travel independently, could understand some Thai, and could handle emergencies in life. When came to future plans, most interviewees said they want to do work related to their major.

6.3 Responses to Research Objective 3 (To explore whether daily life culture and classroom culture have an impact on Chinese students' intercultural adaptation.)

Students needed to know and understand Thai daily life and classroom culture culture to live happily and succeed in their studies. Table 6, which presents quantitative data of the questionnaire followed by the interviewed qualitative data and Table 7 with the quantitative data and the interviewed qualitative data below revealed that students found these two dimensions of culture had an impact on their intercultural adaptation.

Table 6: Daily life adaptation

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
21	When I first came to Thailand, I felt that the living habits of China and Thailand were very different.	3.73	0.83	Agree
22	I'm not used to Thai food.	2.67	1.12	Neutral
23	I can adapt well to cultural differences in life.	2.34	0.81	Disagree
24	I have been constantly adjusting my living habits to better adapt to life in Thailand.	4.17	0.79	Agree
25	I think the difference in living habits between China and Thailand is an obstacle to my ability to integrate into local life in Thailand.	3.84	0.72	Agree
Average		3.41	0.85	Agree

According to Item 21-25 the results of the questionnaire, the highest mean in this study was Item 24 ($\bar{x} = 4.17/SD=0.79$), it showed that in the face of differences in daily life habits, Chinese students have constantly adjusted themselves to adapt to life in Thailand. The second a mean was Item 25 ($\bar{x} = 3.84/SD=0.72$), It showed that most Chinese students believe that the difference in living habits between China and Thailand was an obstacle for them to adapt to local life. In the question "I can adapt well to cultural differences in life.", the answer was "disagree", indicating that Chinese students still had obstacles in adapting to local living habits.

The findings from the semi-structured interviews reveal 4 main aspects of Chinese students' daily life in Thailand: 1) New environment, 2) Making news friends, 3) Personal Experience and 4) Self-survivability.

"I have a friend from Myanmar. Her English is very good. I often learn English from her and she learns Chinese from me."(Interviewee 6, personal communication, June, 4)

"Once I bought an autographed photo of a celebrity on Facebook. I paid according to the account number, but the seller did not deliver the goods. Later, I could not be contacted. Only then did I realize that I had been cheated."(Interviewee 7, personal communication, June, 4)

"I like the pace of life in Thailand very much. It is relatively slow, unlike China where everyone is in a hurry."(Interviewee 2, personal communication, June, 4)

Most of the interviewees didn't have the habit of taking a shower in the morning. The weather in Thailand was too hot, which make them reluctant to went out and only want to stay in air-conditioned rooms. The interviewees also said that the transportation in Thailand was not convenient and it is difficult to go out to the city. It took several train transfers. Most of the interviewees' friends were Chinese friends and have their own social circles. Most of the interviewees had the experience of being detoured by drivers when traveling far away, and they also believe that spending money in Thailand was very high. Most of the interviewees could plan their own lives and have a positive attitude towards the problems they encounter.

Table 7: Classroom Culture Adaptation

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
26	I chose to study in Thailand because I like the educational environment in Thailand.	3.97	0.96	Agree
27	I think there is not much difference in classroom culture between China and Thailand.	1.83	1.10	Disagree
28	I like the classroom culture in Thailand.	3.95	0.88	Agree
29	I like the way that Thai teachers teach.	3.91	0.95	Agree
30	I prefer the Thai classroom culture to the Chinese classroom environment.	4.12	0.90	Agree
31	I can get along well with my teachers and classmates in class.	2.66	0.80	Neutral
32	I think the cultural differences in the classroom are an obstacle for me to integrate into local study life in Thailand.	3.81	1.13	Agree
33	I have been constantly adjusting my living habits to better adapt to the Thai classroom culture.	3.96	0.76	Agree
Average		3.53	0.94	Agree

According to Item 26-33, the highest mean in this study was Item 30 (\bar{x} 4.12/SD=0.90), indicated that Chinese students preferred Thai classroom culture to Chinese classroom culture. The second mean was Item 26 (\bar{x} = 3.97/SD= 0.96), indicating that the reason why most Chinese students chose to study in Thailand was because they like Thailand's educational environment and teaching methods.

The findings from the semi-structured interviews reveal 4 main aspects of Chinese students' daily life in Thailand: 1) Get along with classmates, 2) Get along with teachers, 3) Class schedule and 4) Personal learning ability.

“In my spare time after class, I like to study in the study room, because learning is endless and knowledge changes destiny.”(Interviewee 5, personal communication, June,3)

“There are no clear documentation for course selection and transfer of credits, the course selection process is unclear, and the procedures are complicated.”(Interviewee 2, personal communication, June,4)

“My grades this semester have been very good, and I haven’t failed any class.”(Interviewee 2, personal communication, June,4)

“ In my spare time after class, I like to study in the study room, because learning is endless ,knowledge changes destiny.”(Interviewee1, personal communication, June,3)

According to the qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interview, most of the interviewees could get along well with their classmates and like to discuss problems with them in class. If they encounter problems they didn't understand, their classmates would help them. Most interviewees felt that teachers in Thailand were gentle and easy to get along with. Teachers often encouraged students to make more friends. However, many interviewees felt that the course schedule in Thailand was too tight, with very little lunch break time, and that there were many procedures for selecting courses and transferring credits. In terms of course study, all interviewees did not fail the course and took notes in class.

7. Discussion

Through the questionnaire survey and semi-interview structured data, it can be seen that the English proficiency and Thai proficiency of Chinese students affected the intercultural adaptation of Chinese students at a private university in Thailand. Regarding the intercultural adaptation of language proficiency in this study, the results showed "agree". It shows that students' English and Thai proficiency have an impact on students' intercultural adaptation. These are similar to previous research (Zhang & Cao, 2019; Ye, 2015; Jia & Rui, 2020). Sociocultural adaptation is measured based on the number of difficulties an individual encounters in daily life. The main variables were: language level, cultural knowledge, cultural distance, length of stay and degree of acceptance of foreign cultures (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000). Shi(2021) found through research that due to the lack of a good English learning foundation or attitude, some students chose to drop out of school and needed to re-enroll because they could not understand in class and felt tired of learning. That was also similar to the findings of this study. Because students couldn't understand the content of the teacher's class, they would feel bored or frustrated. Yan and He(2020) pointed out that Chinese international students commonly worried about encountering insurmountable difficulties during their studies due to poor language communication and lack of understanding of study rules. This also illustrates the importance of language ability in intercultural adaptation.

In this study, it was found that after studying abroad in Thailand for a period of time, students' language proficiency has improved. Jia and Rui (2020) also found that for Chinese international students, mastering strong foreign languages, oral language skills were beneficial to shortening the adaptation period of intercultural communication and improving the effectiveness of intercultural communication. Based on the interview data, it was found that although some students have poor language proficiency, they have very cheerful personalities. They had stronger adaptability in cultural adaptation, and there were relatively few relevant studies. Through questionnaire survey and semi-interview structured data, it could see that the length of time affect the intercultural adaptation of Chinese students in a private university in Thailand. The average data page of the questionnaire shows "Agree". This shows that the length of study abroad has a different impact on each process in the intercultural adaptation of Chinese international students. This is similar to previous studies (Prommin, 2018; Lin & Worapinya, 2014; Dao & Cao, 2018)

Many students said that the length of study abroad had an impact on their intercultural adaptation. Lin & Worapinya (2014) also found that language, cultural and religious knowledge, local information, loneliness and homesickness were the main stressors for Chinese students. In addition, the pressure of studying, working and graduating, food, living conditions, friendships, and loss of identity were also sources of stress for Chinese students. This study also found similar findings through surveys. When Chinese students entered a new environment to study, their feelings at each stage were different as the learning time progresses. Si & Shi (2020) found that when Chinese students were studying in Thailand, they had to adapt to the language, and Chinese students needed to adapt to the learning culture, interpersonal culture, and social culture of Thai universities. In this study, it was also found that when Chinese students first entered a new environment to study until two years after studying in Thailand, they encountered setbacks in adapting to the environment, personal experiences, and planning for personal life and study., but there were also those who had improved their adaptability through the experience of setbacks. However, research had also found that some students who had been studying in Thailand for two years are still unable to adapt to Thailand's food and climate.

From the questionnaire survey and semi-interview structured data, it could be seen that daily life and classroom cultural had an impact on Chinese students' intercultural adaptation. In terms of daily life, Chinese students needed to adapt to the basic necessities, food, housing, transportation and weather when entering a strange environment. They also needed to adapt to interpersonal interactions. That was similar to the study of Babiker, Cox & Miller (1990), External factors that affect intercultural adaptation include life changes, such as eating habits, rhythm of life, climate, etc. These changes can bring stress to people. Xu & Wang (2019) found that in terms of life, the most difficult thing for Chinese students to adapt to is Thailand's climate and food. In terms of transportation. Most Thai students almost rely on motorcycles to travel. As for classroom culture, in this study, Chinese students like the atmosphere of classes in Thailand, which similarly with Wang (2019),

Thai students had a relaxed classroom atmosphere. But in terms of curriculum, students think that some teachers had accents in class, and there were also issues with unreasonable curriculum, which is consistent with the survey by Li (2020). There are unreasonable curriculum arrangements in Thai schools, arrangements and management problems such as the impact of teachers' non-standard pronunciation, speaking too fast, and boring teaching content.

8. Limitation of the Study

This study investigated the factors that affected the intercultural adaptation of Chinese students studying in Thailand, mainly from the factors of language level, length of time required to adapt, life and classroom culture. This study only focused on one private university in Thailand. Since the sample of the study came from a private university in Thailand, the results of the study can only be used for similar contexts (a small number of Chinese students at a private university), but not for other contexts.. Future research participants can expand the sample size and study more private universities, or the intercultural adjustment of Chinese students in public universities.

9. Recommendation

9.1 For university, before students enter the university to study, can issue a freshman handbook to students to let Chinese students know more about Thai culture, customs and habits. Provide pre-entry training to students and guide them on what they need to prepare before entering university, so that they can adapt to life in Thailand in advance.

9.2 For students, when entering a new campus environment to study, will inevitably encounter frustration. At this time, students must communicate with classmates and teachers around in a timely manner and constantly adjust and adapt. During studying at Thai university, students must work hard to improve language proficiency and actively integrate into local life. If students encounter problems in study or life, maintain a positive attitude. If students cannot handle something happen in daily life, should promptly provide feedback to family, friends or school teachers.

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