

The Effects of Culture Shock on The Cultural Adaptation of Overseas Students in Thailand at King Mongkut’s University

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Culture Shock,
International
Students, Cross-
Cultural
Adaptation

This paper aims to examine the phenomenon of culture shock experienced by international students studying in Thailand for their master’s degree and explore their strategies for adapting to Thai culture. This research employed a semi-structured interview with eight international students at King Mongkut’s University of Technology in Bangkok, Thailand. The participants completed the open-ended questionnaires and provided responses via a Google Docs link. The writer will use Kalervo Oberg's four stages of culture shock to better understand culture shock and the adaptation process of overseas students studying in Thailand. The research illustrates the causes behind international students' desire to pursue educational institutions in Thailand and their experiences with culture shock across the four stages, along with their adaptation process. The findings suggest that overseas students suffer from culture shock in relation to their surroundings, language, cultural norms, and academic areas.

Introduction

International education offers international students the chance to immerse themselves in diverse cultures, cultivate innovative perspectives and behaviors, forge new friendships, enhance their cross-cultural knowledge and skills, boost self-esteem and confidence, and foster personal growth by living independently in a foreign culture (Haisley et al., 2021). The increasing significance of English-based higher education in Thailand has led to a notable increase in the number of overseas exchange students coming to the country in recent years. According to the British Council's 2018 report, Thailand is becoming a significant study destination in the area (Council, 2018). It attracted approximately 12,000 students in 2017, as estimated by UNESCO, which was also mentioned by The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in 2019 (Education, 2019). One significant reason for this rise is the

deliberate and focused efforts by the government to promote Thailand as a leading destination for higher education in the region.

While several Asean nations may share cultural similarities in certain ways, residing in Thailand presents a significant contrast. Initially, international students in Thailand may encounter several cultural shocks, such as language barriers, unfamiliar cuisine, distinct communication techniques, and so on. These experiences might potentially result in feelings of stress, frustration, loneliness, and homesickness. Culture shock, as defined by Cameron and Kirkman, refers to the profound psychological change experienced by individuals when they are unable to utilize their familiar cultural framework to effectively interact with, understand, or interpret aspects of their new cultural environment (Helen Cameron & Catherine Kirkman, 2010). It is a fact that international students who pursue their education abroad could face several difficulties in various aspects of their lives, such as communication, financial budgets, academic performance, homesickness, and social interactions with peers (Furnham A, Bochner S, 1986). Culture shock is a profound phenomenon that occurs when an individual relocates to a new location and experiences feelings of homesickness, social isolation from unfamiliar communities, or difficulty in adjusting to strange customs (Fitzpatrick, 2017). It would lead to various negative consequences, especially pressure, anxiety, and physical or mental health problems (Martin & Nakayama, 2022).

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of culture shock on overseas students studying in Thailand and to compile strategies for surviving this challenging time. This means that the aim of the study is to analyze how international students can cope with culture shock and develop effective ways of coping with culture shock while studying in Thailand. Eight overseas students pursuing a Master's degree at Thailand's King Mongkut University will have their responses recorded through semi-structured interviews. Each participant had a particular time of residence in Thailand, ranging from one year to around three years.

Literature review

Advantages of education in Thailand

When students are deciding whether to study in their native country or study abroad, they should consider the benefits and drawbacks of each option. According to a survey, Gen Y students choose to study abroad in order to acquire additional experience, pursue personal development, and fulfill their potential (Pope et al., 2014). According to another study, students opt to study abroad in order to immerse themselves in a distinct culture and language. Additional advantages of studying abroad include the opportunity to reside and work in a foreign country and enhance one's curriculum vitae and the prestige associated with attending an international university. On the other hand, certain considerations must be taken into account, such as the expenses associated with living and the distance from loved ones (Doyle et al., 2009).

A study revealed that the primary determinants that have a beneficial impact on the influx of international students in Thailand are educational and economic incentives. In addition, the Thai Ministry of Education has established a reform strategy to facilitate the transformation of Thailand into a prominent educational center in the ASEAN area. The specific objectives of

this development plan are to improve students' proficiency in the English language and the languages spoken in neighboring countries, and streamline visa issuance regulations to facilitate the mobility of foreign teachers and students to Thailand. The objective is to cooperate together with other ASEAN countries to facilitate the free flow of skilled labor in seven specific areas, including engineering, architecture, surveying, nursing, medical, dentistry, and accounting services (Education, 2019). Thailand is not only more cost-effective than the prominent locations of Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US, but it also has lower tuition and living expenses compared to the leading Southeast Asian destinations of Malaysia and Singapore. When applying for a Thai student visa, students are simply required to demonstrate that they possess funds up to US\$360. This requirement serves as evidence of the country's affordability for living and studying. (In comparison, students are required to have a minimum of US\$20,000 in funds to cover both tuition and living expenses when applying for a study visa in Australia, Canada, and the US) (ICEF, 2024).

Number of international students in Thailand in 2022

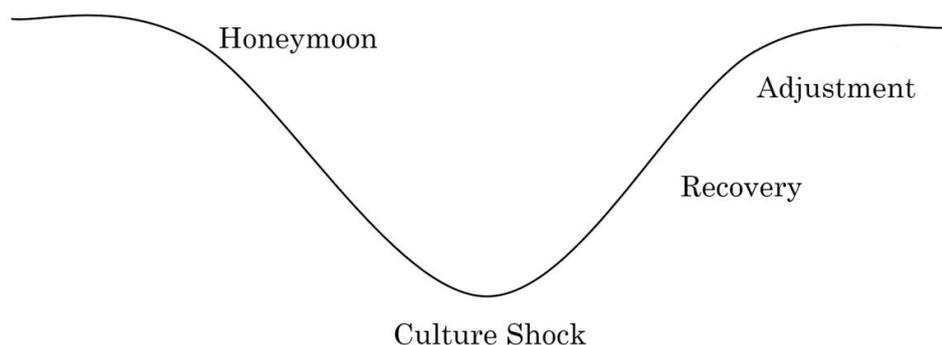
In 2022, the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation in Thailand reported a surge in the population of international students studying in Thai universities, reaching a total of over 30,000, compared to 25,100 in 2019. Since 2009, there has been a steady annual growth of approximately 2,000 foreign students enrolling in Thai universities, primarily driven by a surge in demand from China. According to University World News, the number of Chinese students studying in Thailand has doubled in the last five years, reaching over 20,000. Furthermore, reports indicate that Chinese students account for 60% of all international students in Thailand and Malaysia. Myanmar and Cambodia are Thailand's second and third largest student sources, respectively. However, in 2022, each country sent fewer than 5,000 students (ICEF, 2024)

Definition and the four stages of culture shock by Oberg

Multiple studies on international students indicate that those who are geographically distant from their families and friends frequently experience culture shock when residing in a different country. This includes challenges related to social customs, language, academic systems, dietary preferences, and housing arrangements (Hussain & Shen, 2019). A person's ability to adapt to a new culture decreases during culture shock, which might cause behavioral abnormalities or neurotic symptoms in response to stressful situations (Furnham, 2020). The term "culture shock" was first used by anthropologist Kalvero Oberg to describe the fleeting feelings of confusion and unease that people frequently experience when they move to a new country. It develops when a person realizes that their long-held assumptions and ways of behaving aren't working anymore (Oberg, 1960). Despite its frequency, it is an unpleasant experience that helps people gain confidence, learn about other cultures, and expand their horizons (Milstein, 2005).

Oberg likens the experience of coming into contact with a new culture to taking a fish out of its native water habitat. Irrespective of an individual's level of flexibility, they will still experience a sense of shock. Subsequently, feelings of irritation and anxiousness will arise.

Oberg's (1960) Cultural Adjustment Stages



First Stage: The honeymoon stage refers to the first period when individuals arrive in a foreign nation and still derive pleasure from the novel experiences and cultural aspects. The duration of this period may range from a few days or weeks to a maximum of six months, contingent upon the particular circumstances. They could choose to stay at a hotel where the staff members are fluent in their language and display courteous behavior towards foreign guests. Their overseas experience will inspire them, but if they stay longer, they will encounter real-life situations that will lead to the next phase.

Second Stage: As a result of the challenging encounters, individuals develop a heightened level of aggression and animosity toward the host nation. The initial stage of the visitor experience differs from this one. Rural residents exhibit a lack of empathy towards the individual's predicament. They begin to critique the host nation and exhibit stereotyped behaviors. If they can manage it, they will advance to the next phase. However, if individuals are unable to cope with the situation, it may potentially result in a nervous breakdown.

Third Stage: Individuals begin to navigate independently, acquire fluency in the language of the host nation, and strive to adapt to the unfamiliar cultural environment. They continue to face some challenges in their daily lives, but they possess a mindset of being open to accepting these challenges. In the second stage, individuals develop a sense of humor by utilizing their challenges to make jokes rather than engaging in criticism of others. They gain more self-assurance through verbal communication and navigating alone.

Fourth Stage: Individuals undergo a total transformation and readily embrace the customs and culture of the host nation. They may exist without experiencing anxiety and embrace the notion that this is an alternative way of life. They develop a greater comprehension of the intentions and messages conveyed by individuals in the host country and start to derive pleasure from their experience of residing in the host country.

Strategies for overcoming culture shock: According to the study, it is important for individuals to familiarize themselves with the local population by acquiring basic language skills. Additionally, acquiring knowledge about people's actions and their perspectives on money and time would be beneficial. Subsequently, this subject matter can be employed as a means to initiate a discussion with individuals. Additionally, participate in the endeavors of the residents

and gain insight into their reactions. Engaging in conversation might facilitate the individual's comprehension of the underlying causes behind their behavioral patterns (Oberg, 1960)

Thai Culture

Regarding Thai culture, specifically focusing on the concept of "Khwam-KrengJai" (KKJ), Empathy refers to an individual's level of concern for others' emotions, mental well-being, and welfare, which distinguishes it from mere politeness. Politeness mostly pertains to one's perception and self-value (Intachakra, 2012). Therefore, if individuals from other countries want to adapt to Thai society, which does not prioritize "Khwam-Kreng-Jai," it could result in culture shock and hinder their ability to assimilate into Thai culture. Additionally, another illustration of Thai culture is the concept of "saving face," which pertains to preserving one's ego and social status. Therefore, the act of losing one's reputation or social standing is actively prevented. By possessing this value, one can effectively evade criticism. An additional significant principle is reciprocal association, which entails reciprocating acts of kindness and acknowledging the benevolence demonstrated by others (Komin, 1990). Another Thai cultural value is "Sanuk," which refers to the pursuit of happiness and the avoidance of excessive seriousness. Thai individuals extensively employed this notion to evaluate their social status and academic journey. In a Thai classroom, instructors typically provide engaging and intriguing examples. Thai individuals anticipate that work and enjoyment will be intertwined (Kempner & Tierney, 2018).

Research Gaps

Although numerous studies have examined the experiences of international students and their confrontations with culture shock and the majority of this research concentrates on Western contexts or higher education institutions in more globally acknowledged countries, such as the United States, or United Kingdom (Furnham, 2020). However, Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand, has received minimal attention as an emerging hub for international education.

Despite the extensive discourse surrounding Oberg's (1960) four phases of culture shock, there is a paucity of research investigating how students from adjacent ASEAN nations, possessing specific cultural affinities with Thailand, experience these stages distinctively. Furthermore, studies on coping techniques for culture shock within the Thai setting remain limited for educators to help their international learners in their cultural adaptation processes.

This study seeks to address these gaps by examining the culture shock experiences of international students in Thailand, emphasizing their navigation of the distinctive cultural landscape, and identifying the most effective solutions. This research analyzes the distinct obstacles encountered by students from ASEAN countries and suggests tailored coping strategies, providing valuable insights for both students and educational institutions in Thailand.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey was seeking to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent does culture shock affect overseas students at King Mongkut's University in Thailand?

2. Which factors facilitate cultural adaptation for international students dealing with culture shock at King Mongkut's University?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

According to Oberg's earlier research, culture shock can be divided into four stages: honeymoon, crisis, adjustment, and recovery. The duration of each stage can vary based on individuals. The research framework is utilized to gather and examine data from every international student who has experienced living and studying in Thailand. Through conducting interviews, valuable insights can be obtained regarding the gradual adaptation of participants to different stages of culture shock over time. This paradigm enables researchers to investigate the specific types of culture shock that international students encounter, as well as the duration of each stage experienced by individual students. Additionally, it is beneficial to examine the process of cross-cultural adaptation experienced by the individual.

The sample is comprised of eight international students who are now pursuing a Master's degree at King Mongkut's University of Technology in Bangkok, Thailand. As a result, the interviewees might offer valuable insights into the cultural aspect of the research. Despite their shared status as students, they possess diverse backgrounds. Some individuals have resided in Thailand for an extended duration, although others have stayed for a comparatively shorter duration. Furthermore, each individual possesses a distinct proficiency level in the English language, which could potentially impact their living and learning experiences.

All of the eight participants are full-time students at King Mongkut's University of Technology in Bangkok, Thailand, for a Master's Degree in English Language. Their ages range from under 25 to 40, and the percentage of males and females in this survey was the same at 50%. The majority of participants were at the advanced level for English according to CEFR at 75%, and the proportion for intermediate and upper intermediate was the same at 12,5%. Half of these participants came from Vietnam (4 people accounted for 50%), while there were two learners coming from China (25%). Meanwhile, only one learner came from Korea and the same data for Myanmar at 12,5%. The proportion of learners living in Thailand for 1-2 years was 50%, whereas 37,5% was the data for learners living in Thailand for less than 1 year, and only 12,5% showed that one participant resided in Thailand for 3-4 years.

Design of the Study

The project aims to investigate the phenomenon of culture shock experienced by international students studying in Thailand, as well as their strategies for adapting to Thai culture. Thus, to address the research issue, a qualitative research approach will be employed, namely utilizing in-depth interviews. The research technique employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The data collection method involved conducting an interview consisting of five questions pertaining to culture shock and adaptability.

Data collection & analysis

Data collection is conducted through the use of an in-depth interview technique. Open-ended questions are employed to elicit more comprehensive responses from respondents, enabling them to provide additional details regarding their understanding and explanations of actions, feelings, intentions, and attitudes. The respondent has the freedom to answer without any constraints, which facilitates the discovery of novel and distinctive insights. A set of open-ended inquiries is formulated to ascertain the specific instances of culture shock encountered by the international student in relation to Thai culture, as well as the duration of each experience in accordance with Oberg's four stages of culture shock. Additionally, the questions aim to explore the strategies employed by the students to acclimatize themselves to the new cultural environment.

Open-ended question list

1. Could you tell me about your feelings before moving to Thailand (environment, people, language, food, economy)?
2. How did you feel for a few months in Thailand (excited, scared)?
3. Could you tell me about the effects of culture shock on your studies?
4. How do you manage to adjust yourself to the cultural differences? Were there any challenges?
5. What advice would you give to an international learner for moving to Thailand?

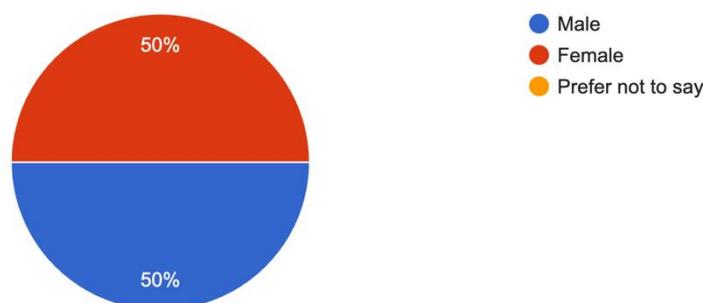
Results/Findings

Figure 1.

Background information of participants

What is your gender ?

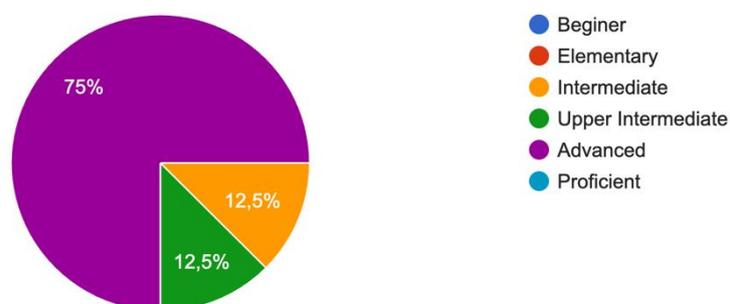
8 câu trả lời



Eight postgraduate learners at King Mongkut's University of Technology in Bangkok, Thailand, had engaged in this survey, and half of them were male while the other was their counterpart.

Figure 2.
English proficiency

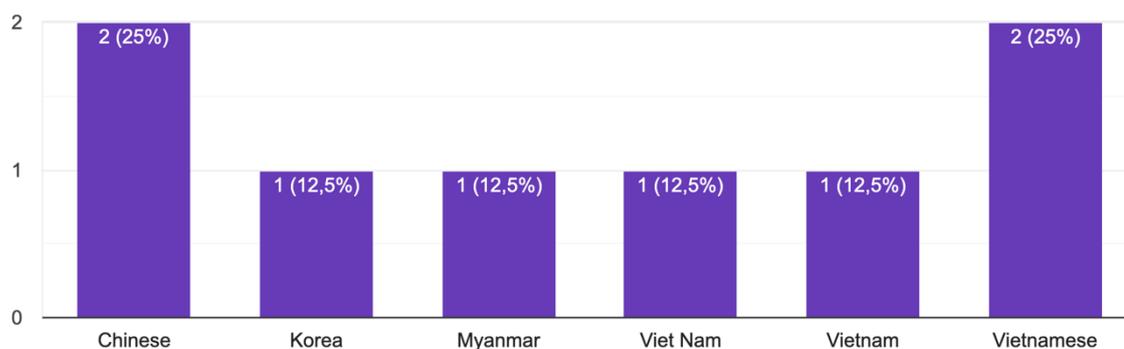
How could you rate your proficiency in English according to CEFR scale
8 câu trả lời



Both of them were ranked from Intermediate (B1) to Advanced (C1) according to the CEFR scale.

Figure 3.
Participants' nationalities

What is your nationality ?
8 câu trả lời



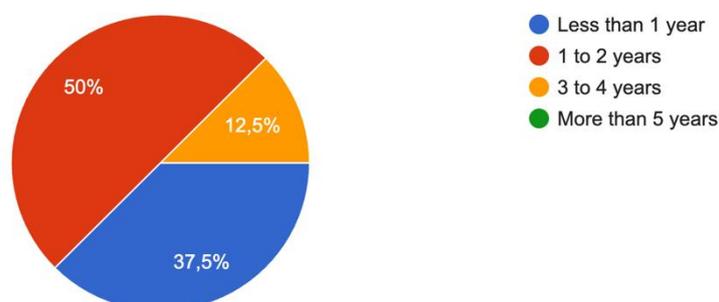
Eight postgraduate learners came from several nations, namely China, Korea, Myanmar, and Vietnam. Most of them came from Vietnam, which stood at 50%; China was the second-highest number at 25%. Korea and Myanmar shared the same percentage of data 12.5%

The amount of time living in Thailand.

The pie chart shows that 12.5% was the proportion of postgraduate learners living in Thailand from 3 to 40 years, while half of them had lived in Thailand from 1 to 2 years. The percentage of postgraduate students residing in Thailand for less than a year was 37.5%.

Figure 4.
Times to Thailand

How long have you been in Thailand ?
8 câu trả lời



Reasons to study in Thailand.

All of the interviewees have a good impression of Thailand. One of the students said “Thailand has several universities ranked under 1000 in the world and I am here on a scholarship” (student 5). This means that this student chooses Thailand because of its university rank and reputation. Another student agrees that the quality of education is also one of the important factors (student 2). Meanwhile, students 2 and 3 said that the reason for choosing Thailand as an ideal educational environment was Thai culture. Lastly, students 7 and 8 agreed that Thailand could help them have "a better future" and "gain more about life experience."

Feelings before going to Thailand

Four international students expressed their lack of concern about living in Thailand and their enthusiasm for residing there (excited feelings). Except for student number 2, those four students lack interest or consideration for food, people, and the environment. In addition, student number 5 anticipates his new academic path and looks forward to interacting with his classmates and lecturers. However, students numbers 3 and 6 showed that they were concerned about the weather being hot and student number 6 worried about the polluted environment. In detail, only one student, number 6 worried about food and people negatively "The people would not speak English well and the food will be too spicy and exotic". In contrast, student number 7 believed that "Thai people are friendly, open-minded, inclusive, and colorful and full of artistic vibe".

First few months of living and studying in Thailand (Honeymoon stage)

All of the students experienced excited feelings, and three of them especially felt very excited (student numbers 3, 5, and 8). Student number 5 shared that "I was mostly excited about new experiences such as new food, new places, and new friends "which means he had a positive feeling toward local food, places, and friends in Thailand. Specifically, student number 2 said, "Excited of new things happening both in life and in academics," showing his interest in the learning environment. However, only one student said that she also felt excited and lonely.

Cultural Differences and Culture Shock (Crisis Stage)

Several problems related to their daily lives and learning in terms of stress on the study, early morning, food, language barrier, left traffic system, the study, and Thai people. First of all, three students from the interview mentioned the language barrier in studying and daily communication; student number 4 said "Language Barrier as well when not all Thai can speak English and their accent is quite distinctive to me when I first listened to" and others shared that language is also an important factor which affects their daily life. Due to the fact that Thai people speak different English, their accents are not clear because of their mother tongue. Additionally, student number 2 showed that the language barrier also makes his study feel stressful and leads to a situation where he does not pay attention to work and assignments. As a result, student number 6 also demonstrated her effort to learn Thai faster so that she could adapt easily and more conveniently. Student number 1 considered Thai people to prevail because, in some situations, she found that Thai people are quite overwhelming; however, student number 3 had an opposite viewpoint about Thai people, saying that she found them friendly. When it comes to daily life routine, student number 5 mentioned the "early morning," which was significantly different from his homeland and led to several detrimental effects on his daily life, such as breakfast or shopping. Because he was originally from Vietnam, he had a habit of waking up early and having breakfast every day at around 7 to 8 in the morning, a practice that is not common in Thai culture. Regarding traffic, student number 5 expressed his fear of the left-hand traffic system in Thailand, citing it as a significant difference from his home country of Myanmar. However, he has since overcome this fear. Lastly, the last student emphasized the food, which is quite spicy, and he was the only one who showed his difficulty with local cuisine.

Adjusting to Thai culture (Adjustment stage)

The participants were asked about the approach they employed to acclimatize to Thai culture. All seven international students expressed their assimilation efforts by emulating the behavior and customs of Thai individuals, with the exception of student number eight, who believed he could easily adapt to Thai culture because food was the only issue he needed to manage. Most of them agreed that they should try their best to adapt themselves to Thai culture and people in numerous ways. To illustrate, student number 6 said, "I observe the people and ask a lot from my Thai friends. It was difficult because I had many questions, but it was fun and memorable." Thanks to asking and observing his peers, he could easily strengthen his bonds with his friends and get used to the new culture. Similarly, student number 3 also had the same idea as student number 6 about an effective solution to get along with Thai people in order to overcome cultural shock challenges. In an academic environment, student number 2 is supposed to talk to his close lecturers and peers and hang out with them after class so as to improve his understanding of Thai culture and level up their mood. In addition, both students, number 1 and 5, had the same idea about their behavior and belief that they should be nice, friendly, and open-minded about everything, which could easily help them gain in-depth knowledge about Thai culture and people. Moreover, student number 4 shared that he would learn how to cook to avoid dining out, and he would make an effort to learn the Thai language, such as several common phrases and words, to communicate effectively.

The international students' attitude towards Thailand (Recovery stage)

After the adjustment stage, international students often overcome various challenges from their previous stages by implementing effective methods. Students unanimously agreed that Thailand boasts a rich culture, and they held positive attitudes toward Thai people and food. However, after a few days in Thailand, they encountered numerous challenges in their daily lives and studies, including issues related to food, traffic, weather, and interactions with Thai people. Fortunately, they discovered a diverse range of solutions to their problems while studying in Thailand. They considered every factor leading to these difficulties and applied several remedies, such as asking Thai people for help, confiding them in their situations, and trying their best to adopt the cultural aspects of Thailand. Finally, international students explored these issues in various ways to determine the most effective solution to their problems. After the challenging period, they expressed a significant improvement in their attitude towards Thai culture and the development of positive beliefs in it.

The findings substantially enhance the theoretical framework derived from Oberg's model of the four primary stages of culture shock, with major consequences for educational institutions, legislators, and parents. Many international students opt to study abroad or under immigration in some specific nations like Thai Land, with the primary purpose of pursuing advanced education in a particular discipline. The behavior displays the audacity to embrace risks and investigate diverse civilizations. The reasons for culture shock are intricate and varied, with differing perspectives in the academic community regarding its origins. These participants hold specific perspectives regarding the new culture, resulting in uneasiness that then intensifies into culture shock. Upon entering a new cultural milieu, individuals frequently experience initial intrigue; nevertheless, after several months, they may succumb to feelings of despondency owing to the culture's foreign elements. Fortunately, they would progressively recuperate after completely acclimating to the new cultural milieu. From an individual standpoint, the factors contributing to culture shock encompass age, educational setting, language proficiency relevant to the destination country, and psychological resilience, among others. This research elucidated the diverse causes of culture shock and offered an in-depth comprehension of the elevated expectations of international learners. The biggest cause of cultural shock among international students is the language communication barrier. The intersection of several cultures will result in learners experiencing psychological distress over time, ultimately manifesting as cultural shock. Lifestyle disparities are considered the secondary source of cultural shock. Numerous international learners are unaccustomed to novel dietary practices, transit systems, legal frameworks, schedules, healthcare provisions, culinary traditions, and similar aspects.

After identifying several factors that contribute to culture shock among a diverse range of international learners, cultural adaptation is a dynamic and continuous process of transmission, in contrast to culture shock. Adaptation can be categorized into short-term acculturation, which is mostly individual-focused, and long-term acculturation, which predominantly pertains to immigrants and ethnic groups. Numerous international students frequently encounter varying levels of cultural shock due to shifts in their roles, lifestyle disparities, language communication obstacles, and other factors. Yan posits that individuals often perceive their cross-cultural maladjustment as a form of illness, believing they can only fully engage in other endeavors

until the adverse effects of this cyclical condition diminish (Yan, 2008). On the other hand, the majority of participants in this research expressed a positive attitude towards this process, as it provided them with valuable experience in overcoming culture shock. International learners in this research shared that they could also discover various effective solutions to overcome this phenomenon by themselves and then give useful advice to other learners.

However, educators, policymakers, and parents should consider specific courses and activities for their students to prepare for before moving to another country. This research provides educational institutions and policymakers with various opinions from particular international learners in Asia. Paul identified communication and social skills as universal challenges faced by students abroad (Paul, 1988). Prior to traveling overseas, learners should focus on acquiring an understanding of the target language's culture and explore different cultures through diverse media, including films, television, and the Internet, as this can effectively mitigate culture shock. By assimilating the culture of the target language, international students can more successfully identify cultural distinctions, enabling them to navigate various situations, temporal settings, and cultural artifacts of the target language, hence minimizing cultural interference in cross-cultural interactions. Cross-cultural communication facilitates the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of one's own culture through the exchange and collaboration of diverse cultural content. Cognitive competence and behavioral competence are the primary categories of intercultural communication competency. Cognitive aptitude in a cross-cultural context primarily pertains to the thorough comprehension and nuanced appreciation of the complexities and diversities inherent in the communication processes among various nations and ethnic groups. Behavioral competence denotes "the capacity to address diverse communication challenges, encompassing the ability to initiate and sustain reciprocal relationships and to effectively execute communication tasks (Bradford, 2003). To enhance cross-cultural communication skills, students should undergo cross-cultural training in physics prior to studying abroad, simulating real-world scenarios to develop their problem-solving abilities and experience the cultural differences of a foreign nation. TED talks were known as one of the most effective ways for EFL learners to improve their speaking skills and enhance their cultural understanding. Students have a chance to understand many subjects and acquire insights into other cultures and traditions, as well as the usage of the English language in different nations (Tran Ngoc Kim Cuong & Nguyen Thi Thu Hang, 2024). Simultaneously, psychological therapy should be provided to overseas students to ensure they comprehend the potential adverse consequences of culture shock and to assist them in preparing for their psychological responses in advance.

Students newly arrived in distant countries must maintain communication with their families, discuss their academic and living circumstances, and share local customs and traditions to mitigate homesickness. A positive self-concept aids pupils in mitigating self-doubt and enables them to engage in new experiences with reduced stress (Carley, 2006). Generally, individuals who exhibit optimism possess a distinct advantage in managing interpersonal issues and demonstrate superior academic success. International students ought to engage with cultural groups in the target language, including teachers, classmates, and host families, with a pleasant and optimistic demeanor, while addressing cultural shock, even if it occurs subconsciously. A positive mental state is essential to mitigate the adverse consequences of culture shock. Students

should endeavor to eschew native cultural consciousness that emphasizes national culture, ethics, and the value systems of language and culture, among other aspects deemed superior to those of other nations, particularly when engaging in conversations with strangers during their time abroad, in order to maintain a certain distance (Jin, 1980). This behavior will have significant negative consequences on an individual's life and may lead to a challenging assimilation into the target language culture. Students ought to approach the cultural disparities across various nations or ethnic groups in cross-cultural communication with an open and inclusive mindset while eliminating internal biases against unfamiliar cultures. International students and native speakers should maintain an open and inclusive mindset to recognize, comprehend, and accept one another's cultural concepts and differences. Cultural conflict and fusion are objective and interdependent phenomena akin to the diversity of global cultures that foster exchanges among many nations. They must acknowledge and adjust to the variances in cross-cultural communication to mitigate shock effects. When in a foreign nation, adhere to the customs of the local populace. It is essential to methodically enhance our cultural literacy and acclimatize to the host country's culture, while simultaneously refining our communication abilities for effective cross-cultural interaction, thereby mitigating culture shock.

Discussion

The aim of this study is to provide education advisers and international students interested in studying in Thailand with valuable insights into the experiences of international students who encounter Culture Shock when adapting to Thai culture. Before traveling to Thailand, the education adviser should actively promote the development of cultural awareness among their students about Thai culture. This will provide students with a more distinct understanding of the disparities between Thai culture and the cultures of their respective nations. Additionally, it is advisable to motivate students to acquire extensive knowledge about the culture of Thailand before their visit. This will enhance their understanding, thereby reducing the likelihood or magnitude of culture shock. It is crucial to acquire fundamental knowledge of the Thai language, as it cannot be assumed that every individual will communicate in English with the learner. Acquiring this fundamental language proficiency will be advantageous in everyday situations and minimize misunderstandings between Thai students or individuals and overseas students. During the Honeymoon stage, learners continue to derive pleasure and feel enthusiastic about their new surroundings. As a result, it is imperative for education advisers to closely monitor learners' behaviors in the midst of a crisis. They may have challenges in their daily lives, experience significant stress, feel isolated, and long for their home. Hence, it is recommended that counseling services be offered to students and that they be aware of having a dependable source of support, both in terms of their physical and mental well-being. Thus, they could additionally assist students by promoting a favorable mindset and adaptability. During the adjustment stage, students may find it helpful to investigate cultural differences on their own. Academic advisers can facilitate independent learning and encourage students to take risks while also emphasizing the availability of counseling services at all times. This means that international learners should increase their autonomy in learning a language by significantly taking control of their learning process and avoiding over-reliance on native teachers or peers

(Hanh et al., 2024). In order to train learners to become independent, it is necessary to consider them in all of their dimensions. If students begin to depend less on the academic advisor, it indicates that they have reached the recovery stage. The student can fully assimilate into Thai culture.

The findings essentially conform to the previous research publications concerning experiences in an overseas culture. Similarly, Anita Safitri identified that culture shock and communication adaptations caused foreign students to experience these things, such as differences in language, customs, culture, weather, and the mindset of local people (Anita Safitri et al., 2024). However, foreign students at Sumbawa University of Technology need quite a long time to be able to deal with culture shock and adapt to a new environment, compared to international learners at King Mongkut's University, which is one of the biggest impacts felt by foreign students at Sumbawa University of Technology when they want to communicate or adapt to local society or local students. Moreover, Hassan Radwan Jamal and Saodah Wok described four stages of culture shock based on Oberg and found that the cultural stage of adaptation had a positive relationship with the cultural stage of honeymoon and the cultural stage of adjustment (Hassan & Wok, 2020). These findings are also related to this research about the way international learners overcome culture shock after the first period. Additionally, this research shared a similar perspective that culture shock and adaptation exhibited a tenuous, although notable correlation, which aligns with other studies that emphasize the difficulties faced by overseas students. Culture shock frequently elicits many feelings, including anger, irritation, and homesickness, when individuals acclimate to their new environment. Moreover, both participants from these researches also adapted themselves significantly between stage adjustment and adaptation by the time international learners started acclimatizing to their new environment. Lastly, Chatchawan Chaiyasat also emphasized the most important factor of culture shock: barriers leading to several misunderstandings for overseas learners at school and home (Chaiyasat, 2020). Many French respondents in this work noted that the inadequate English language proficiency of Thai students and teachers posed significant challenges, especially in the classroom setting where English was primarily utilized for learning, instruction, and assessment. Both researchers shared the same results about the limit of the English language of certain local students as a detrimental factor to the classroom environment.

Due to the limited sample size of students from King Mongkut's University, the study's findings may not be applicable to international students in other towns and universities in Thailand, as their experiences may vary. The manifestation of culture shock varies among individuals, as it is contingent upon their unique experiences. Thus, a more extensive sample size or quantitative research on this topic would enable us to better comprehend culture shock among overseas students. This topic can be further explored in the post-adjustment or post-graduation phase of students' lives, just before returning to their native country. They have already undergone a shift.

Conclusion

The research framework investigates the phenomenon of culture shock experienced by eight international students studying in Thailand and examines their strategies for adapting to Thai culture. This is achieved through interviews with current master's degree students at King Mongkut's University in Thailand. The study framework incorporates Kalervo Oberg's four stages of culture shock as the underlying hypothesis. In summary, all of them experienced excitement before moving to Thailand, and this feeling persisted even after the first few months, with the exception of one student who also experienced loneliness. In terms of cultural shocks or crisis stages, most of them shared the same thoughts about language barriers, food, and daily routines. However, they also learned how to adapt to this new life in Thailand in several ways, such as learning new Thai language words or phrases, adapting to the new daily life, and learning how to cook by themselves. Thanks to friendly Thai people and students, these participants could overcome their difficulties effectively and easily.

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Biodata

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