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文化衝擊研究：

海外留學生華語習得期間之文化適應

When Culture Shocks or Not:

Acculturating while Acquiring Mandarin

in a Study Abroad Context

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study investigates exchange students from the United States (America) in the program of the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), in terms of their experiences during their process of acculturation while acquiring Chinese Mandarin language skills. Previously as a study abroad program student in National Chengchi University, Taipei, and currently as a graduate student in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language Master's Program, and Language Coordinator of CIEE, (a study abroad program on the same campus), the author proposes to do a case study on the program's students. The purpose is to understand the effects of cultural experience in second language acquisition by American students through ethnographic methods.

The author proposes that in order to effectively acquire Chinese Mandarin language, it could be important for tracking American students' acculturation process of 1. Anticipation, 2. Cultural Shock, 3. Disorientation, and 4. Adaptation. It is observed that although most people assume that East-Asian Americans experience less culture shock due to their Asian heritage, the study shows that their lack of 'culture shock awareness' in fact puts them at a disadvantage, which delays their adaptation, and impedes upon their success in Mandarin language training.

The study concludes that decreasing social distance and promoting social interaction through acculturation in classrooms may be effective methods for both East-Asian and non-East-Asian American students to become successful in acquiring Chinese Mandarin language. Thus, it is suggested that students and teachers should *increase their level of culture shock awareness* in the study abroad context in order to assist Chinese as a second language (CSL) learners.

Keywords: acculturation, Mandarin acquisition, culture shock, awareness, CIEE American students

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

What is the difference between studying a new culture and actually adapting to it?

The answer is parallel to the idea of knowing how our minds work and actually using that knowledge. Therefore, to simply study a new culture does not equate to truly being able to become accustomed to that culture. But according to Franz Boas, “language is culture and culture is language.” In order to completely understand another culture, one must also have direct access to its language because there is a complex homologous relationship between language and culture, which mutually influence one another in the language learning process. (Boas 1940) However, learning a new language and being accustomed to a whole new different culture is neither quick nor easy. In order to fully acquire and entirely accept a new language, along with familiarizing with a new culture, time and motivation is a must.

While understanding that it requires time to learn a new language, my strong interest in mastering Chinese language forced me to invest a great amount of time in proficiently acquiring it and adjusting to its culture. This later on led me to expand my education in teaching Chinese to others as a second language. As a Taiwanese-American, I grew up in an environment comprised of various cultures and languages. Consequently, the main focus of this chapter will be on how American and Chinese cultures influenced and shaped my way of life. I will first trace back to my Chinese-language learning experiences in America and in Taiwan (section 1.1). Then, I will describe my developed interest in researching the process of American students acquiring Mandarin in relation to culture in the study abroad context in Taiwan (section 1.2). In conclusion for this chapter, I will identify my purposes and my research questions for this thesis (section 1.3).

1.1 BACKGROUND

Who am I? I often asked myself this question when I was young. In America, many people asked me, “Where are you from?” My answer always ended up lengthy, explaining how I was actually born in Taiwan, but my parents are Burmese-Chinese, born and raised in Burma, but my grandparents are originally from Guangdong, China. Immediately, a blank look would appear on their faces and they would reply, “So ... are you Chinese, Burmese or Taiwanese? Who are you?” I couldn’t blame them for asking such an impolite question, because I, myself, was especially confused. I wanted to identify myself according to the culture that I understood myself as and to a culture that I associate myself with. However, there are too many cultures I felt I could relate to, and I could not exactly choose the appropriate one that truly represented ‘me’.

This identity crisis I had was finally resolved when I had the opportunity to study abroad in Taiwan during my senior year at the University of California, San Diego. In Fall 2007, I studied abroad through an international exchange program called, Council of International Educational Exchange (CIEE). As a CIEE study abroad student, I went on a mission to my birthplace, Taiwan, to not only improve on my Chinese language skills, but more importantly, to understand myself and search for my identity. In the end, my experience in Taiwan did not fail me. Unexpectedly, I went through different stages of adapting to the once-familiar culture I thought I was accustomed to, and from shock to confusion, I finally reached an understanding of the Taiwanese culture. The experience helped me to be able to fully identify with my own cultural background, and at the same time, advance on my Chinese language abilities. This understanding finally resolved my crisis and I was able to confidently identify myself as a Taiwanese-American, a person with various backgrounds and languages, but by and large more closely related to the Taiwanese and American cultures, and for that reason, it could not be any better than to classify myself as a Taiwanese-American.

During my time in Taiwan, I've made several important life-long friends, met influential people and encountered various obstacles that later on helped me grow as a person. The experience was so inspirational that I decided to return to Taiwan to continue my education in the Mandarin language, but this time in the field of Teaching Chinese as a Second Language. The person who influenced my decision most was the Resident Director of the CIEE Taipei Study Center. As our teacher and 'mother' in Taiwan, I was able to talk to her about my problems, share my joy and even discuss future career paths. One significant issue I discussed with her was about a potential continuation of study in a graduate program, which related to my future occupation. At that time, I was certain that I loved language and was willing to spend time to perfect it. In the field of Mandarin Chinese especially, I was eager to advance my language abilities and perhaps further my study in the field of teaching Chinese to second language learners. Having the passion for languages, I was already thinking about going into the career of becoming an interpreter, a translator, or a language instructor. However, making a decision to continue education and choosing a career path that is suitable for me was especially difficult. Up until now, I clearly remember the words of the resident director, who told me that she personally believed I am suitable to become a teacher and that she can definitely see me as an excellent teacher. After our meeting, I took her words, gave the idea some thought, and sincerely considered becoming a Chinese instructor as a possible career path. Even when I returned to the States, I continued to take into account that teaching Chinese may be a possible direction to take. As I worked part-time being an English tutor and a pre-school Chinese teacher, I soon realized through my experience in teaching and working with students that I truly do have a deep passion for education. In the end, it was the CIEE Taipei resident director's valuable advices and encouragement which inspired me to return to Taiwan and strive for something I enjoy, and which will help me to progress to becoming a qualified and respectable teacher.

1.2 CONTEXT OF STUDY: CIEE AMERICAN STUDENTS IN TAIWAN

Different people often come up to me and ask, “What is CIEE?” CIEE, abbreviated for Council on International Educational Exchange, is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that works to provide international education experiences for university students, faculties, and administrators. United States university students are able to study abroad through 60 different programs in over 30 countries. In other words, the program acts as a connection for American university students to gain the knowledge of the language, and also immerse themselves into the cultural sphere for understanding its diversity.

In light of what CIEE is, this research particularly focuses on American university students who travel to Taiwan to study Mandarin for either a semester or for a whole year. Established in 1993, the Taiwan CIEE study center locates in Taiwan’s capital, Taipei, which is a metropolitan city with high speed trains, highways, modern hotels, superb restaurants, and vigorous nightlife. Despite its modernity, Taiwan also preserves traditional Chinese and Taiwanese cultures in ancient temples, and the museums, etc. Likewise, extraordinary Taiwanese snacks, also known as, xiǎochī “小吃,” are most commonly sold at night markets. In addition to Taiwan’s industrial and habitual society, Taipei is also a place that preserves several beautiful natural reserves, such as the Yangmingshan National Park, the Guandu Nature Reserve, and the Sungshan Nature Reserve. These excursion places give students pleasure for enjoying natural and cultural sites, or to relax in hot springs while sipping a good cup of tea.

Located in an international city, the CIEE Taipei study center accepts approximately twenty to thirty American students each year and provides students with a unique opportunity in Mandarin Chinese language training, using traditional characters and the latest teaching pedagogies. The academic culture provided by CIEE Taipei enhances students’ Chinese language and research skills through their Intensive Chinese Language

and Culture program. Additionally, students take three courses that consist of a Chinese language class taught in Chinese, a Language Practicum and a core course, both of which are taught in English and organized by CIEE. The design of the program teaches students about modern Taiwan from both a social science and a linguistic perspective. Similarly, from academic culture to cultural activities, field trips are also integrated into the curriculum, either with the Chinese Language Practicum or with the CIEE core course. Students are able to not only learn about the culture in the classroom, but also have enriching experiences by attending several planned trips to temples, mountains, tea plantations, porcelain works, and museums around northern Taiwan.

Nonetheless, out of many other study programs out there, why was CIEE chosen to become a part of my research, and why Taiwan? Besides the reason that Taiwan is a beautiful island full of modernity and surprises, the actual reasons are simply because my personal experiences are very much influenced by studying and working through CIEE Taipei study center and notably, CIEE students studying in Taiwan are comprised of a homogeneous group that is suitable as a coherent group for research. Moreover, because CIEE is based in the United States and because one of its purposes is for American students to travel abroad, students who join the program are all Americans. On the other hand, it is also because CIEE students are a homogeneous group of people who are “Americans” that there are in fact differences among them due to the fact that diverse ethnicities make up what we call “Americans” today. Because this study investigates students’ process of acculturation to Taiwanese culture and their acquisition of the Mandarin language in Taiwan, it is even more fascinating to look into how this homogeneous, yet distinct group of American students adapt to Taiwanese culture while acquiring Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan.

1.3 PURPOSE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As a former CIEE student studying Mandarin in Taiwan's National Chengchi University, personal experiences and self-reflections concerning cultural shocks facilitated in accumulating useful preliminary data in the present study of acculturation and acquisition of the Mandarin language. Currently as a graduate student in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language on the same campus, I plan to further examine American students studying Mandarin in Taiwan, who perhaps experienced similar cultural and language related issues. Consequently, as the Language Coordinator for the CIEE Taipei study center, I am able to work closely with and supervise the CIEE students.

Having spent a great amount of time in socializing and communicating with them, I gradually noticed that among the group of CIEE American students, there are, in fact, different approaches in which specific groups of students choose to use in order to confront, understand and adapt to the cultural differences they perceive. "When culture shocks or not" is essentially questioning whether specific groups of students did or did not encounter any culture shock and if they are aware of the shock. As a result, I was curious as to how different groups of students are able to successfully adjust to the new environment of a new culture while attempting to acquire Mandarin. Taking this curiosity into consideration, the purpose of this study is as follows:

1. To observe CIEE students in the development of Mandarin language learning in National Chengchi University by means of ethnographic methods.
2. Acquire students' previous knowledge of Taiwanese/Chinese culture and their cultural backgrounds.
3. Determine if students experienced culture shock and how it affects their course of Mandarin acquisition.
4. With the analysis of the collected data, provide pedagogical advice and

considerations for teaching Mandarin to American second language learners.

Based on the four purposes, my research questions are:

1. What are students' prior knowledge of Taiwanese/Chinese culture and their cultural backgrounds?
2. Do students experience culture shock during their stay in Taiwan and are they aware of the shock?
3. How does culture shock impact students' Mandarin acquisition and how does the awareness of the culture shock assist students' language acquisition?
4. What are the possible implications of culture shock and awareness in a second language classroom and how can the teacher utilize the notion to better assist students' Mandarin learning?

1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

Recognizing the above purposes and research questions, the organization of the following chapters for my thesis will be in the following order. Firstly, chapter two will examine the conceptual framework of acculturation and culture shock, as well as how it is related to second language learning. Given that this is a qualitative and an ethnographic research, chapter three will introduce the methods of ethnography, the design of the study and my fieldwork. Next, chapter four will illustrate and analyze the observations taken as a participant-observer, an interviewer, and a collector. Following this, chapter five will discuss what it means to experience "culture shock" for different groups of Americans and how it affects students in acquiring Chinese as a second language. Finally, in chapter six, a conclusion for the thesis, as well as possible pedagogical implications on how to aid students to overcome some issues in learning Mandarin and its limitations, will be given.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 ACCULTURATION

Acculturation, a term that is widely used when discussing culture and language, is a process in which people are faced with a foreign culture in their surroundings and undergo various phases to embrace the elements. Acculturation may also be defined as the process in which someone learns a new culture that is other than their own and the culture includes different moral values, behaviors, customs, practices and language. To focus on the relation between language and acculturation, two things should be considered: the degree to which a person learns the language of the new country and the degree to which a person adopts the culture of the new language. Generally, the more the individual is willing to accept the other culture, the faster they learn the language. This is especially true in situations where the individual comes from a different culture into an environment with a new language and is acculturating to the target language's culture.

Although a number of scholars explored the study of acculturation and the effects of acculturation on second language acquisition, there is no research that focuses on the awareness of learners experiencing cultural shock during acculturation and how the awareness of the shock impact students' Mandarin acquisition. In the following, I will first examine former scholars' point of views in relation to acculturation while acquiring the second language and I will then point out the significance of my current research on American students acquiring Chinese as a second language.

2.1.1 ACCULTURATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The process of acculturation during second language acquisition typically occurs through a mixture of means, including both formal classroom educations as well as in the

course of informal social interactions. In spite of this, there are still individuals who are thrown into a target language's culture but fail to assimilate fully into the new culture, which in fact noticeably affects the learner's success in acquiring the target language. Hence, "Second language learning is often second culture learning." (Brown 1986:33) In order to learn a new or "second" culture, one must acculturate. According to John H. Schumann (1978), in each cultural situation, the notion of acculturation depends on the extent to which the two language communities adapt to each other. In his Acculturation Model, which is designed to account for second language acquisition (SLA) under conditions of immigration where learning takes place without instruction, Schumann suggested that success in SLA is inversely proportional to the social distance between the second language learning and target language communities. He realized "SLA is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the TL [target language] group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language." (Schumann 1978:34) In other words, acculturating to a target community's culture and custom may situate learners on a scale that ranges from social and psychological distance to social and psychological proximity with speakers of the target language.

Thus, depending on the degree of acculturation, the learner can successfully acquire the second language. Schumann's hypothesis proposed that despite many opportunities to acquire the dominant language of the city, a foreigner who had lived in the target language's communities but created a social distance between the target culture and of their own, will not be encouraged to acquire the language.

Similarly in past researches, the term acculturation was often brought up to discuss the relations between motivation in learning a second language and cultural embracement. Second language learning and the role of motivation is frequently placed mutually next to each other, thus becoming accustomed to a new culture is facilitated by consistency between motives and goals. (Rubinfeld *etal.* 2006) In Stephen Culhane's "Intercultural

interaction model,” he suggested that there are different functioning levels and usage contexts within formal and informal language learning for first language (L1) and second language (L2) learners. These functioning levels and usage contexts link with the motivational schema that characterizes the extent those learners allow themselves to undergo acculturation into new linguistic and cultural setting of a second language. The motivation models comprised of various types of motivations that may affect learner’s readiness in adjusting in a new culture. Hence, learners with strong instrumental motivations are more likely to make less effort to interact with people of cultural group who use L2. (Culhane 2004)

On the contrary, when given the opportunity, learners with a strong integrative motivation are likely to make more immense efforts to connect with culturally different members. Socializing with culturally different groups acts as a way of gaining the linguistic and cultural knowledge needed for socio-cultural competence. Given this proposal, interaction motivation conveys the learner’s concentration on integrating into the cultural context of an L2 to action during intercultural interactions. (Culhane 2004) This interaction based model not only showed the importance of goals and active motivations in learning a new language, but also emphasized the significance of gaining deeper connection with the target cultural communities in order to achieve learner’s linguistic ambitions in acquiring L2.

In a similar idea, American students who wish to study Mandarin are naturally motivated to travel abroad in China or Taiwan. Therefore, when focusing solely on students studying Mandarin in Taiwan, it is apparent that they also go through social and psychological factors that distance them from the Taiwanese culture. Thus, the only way to successfully acquire the language is to undergo the process of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns. For this reason, it is not only evident in ESL learner’s acquisition in

language that acculturation is necessary, and it is equally apparent in CSL learner's acquisition in Mandarin that this is true.

Although Schumann pointed out that acculturation requires two language communities to adapt to each other, and though Culhane mentioned the importance of motivation in acquiring the target language, they did not specifically examine the effects of culture shock within the acculturation process that American learners may endure as they acquire Mandarin as a second language. As a result, my present study focuses on American students' awareness of culture shock and the process of acculturation in relation to Mandarin language acquisition.

2.1.2 ACCULTURATION PHASES

Correspondingly, there are various studies that concluded stages people usually go through in acculturation. One research asserted by H.D. Brown's observation on sociological research in acculturation identified four stages of cultural adjustment that people experience while adapting to and learning about a new culture: the euphoric (or honeymoon stage), the culture shock stage, the culture stress stage, and the recovery stage. The honeymoon period of acculturation is when there is excitement about cultural novelties and enthusiasm about learning. The next is the culture shock period, when the shock emerges as the individual begins to realize more cultural differences, which soon will extend to a period of culture stress where cultural difference becomes intolerable. However, in the final period of recovery, the individual recovers from the shock and slowly adjusts to the new culture, heading towards adaptation and assimilation.

Moreover, other scholars also stressed that the acculturation process for immigrants to gradually become a part of the community typically undergo: a period of stereotypes, a period of shallow comprehension, a period of deeper comprehension, and finally a period

of empathy and permanent adjustment. (Scarcella and Oxford 1992) In Scarcella and Oxford's study, they based their analysis upon immigrants who had immigrated to America for a period of time. In order for them to be a part of the community of new customs and new ways of life, time and deep understanding are necessary for them to become permanently accustomed in the new country. These different views of acculturation stages are interrelated, yet distinctive. Various researchers name these four stages differently (Brown, 2000), and there are also different explanations on the crucial traits of the final stage. Consequently, it is noticeable that learners' attitudes toward a target culture may influence SLA in the process of acculturation and tolerance of culture shock.

Although Schumann's Acculturation Model for SLA supports the idea that SLA and adapting to a culture has deep relations, it does not account for language teaching and/or learning in a foreign country. Instead, it targets mostly immigrants in the United States who acquire the language without any instruction. Similarly, past acculturation researchers have also discovered that learning environments can influence individuals' accomplishment of learning a new language. However, very few to no researchers have done analyses that focus on the acculturation in relation to Chinese second language acquisition. As a result, it would be fascinating and helpful to understand the process and cultural adaptation in relation to Chinese second language acquisition; accordingly, this is exactly what my research will be focused on.

2.2 CULTURE SHOCK

“Oh my god, can I really eat this?” “Why are they looking at me funny and what should I do?” Normally, these reactions are what we call “culture shock,” which occurs when a person moves or travels to a new environment for a long period of time and experience anxiety when they encounter a culture that is different from their own. The

person may express the lack of direction, the feeling of not knowing what to do or how to do things in a new environment, as well as not knowing what is appropriate or inappropriate. Likewise, the feeling of culture shock can either become a physical or emotional discomfort for most people, but for those that overcome the shock and accept the differences in culture usually gain a significant learning experience.

(<http://www.englishintaiwan.com>) Consequently, culture shock usually entails going through different stages, thus it is important to see first what stages of culture shock people typically undergo, then explore into American learners' awareness of culture shock when they acquire Mandarin in Taiwan.

2.2.1 STAGE THEORY OF CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock also comprises of many stages, the majority of which are similar to the acculturation stages that were mentioned earlier, yet slightly different. Some scholars believe that the stages of culture shock are comprised of five stages, while others believe that there are only four. Each one of these stages can be ongoing or only appear at certain times. According to Professor Pierre Casse (1981), there are four stages of the culture shock process: First Contact, where the individual has an initial idea on how they will react when they join the new cultural environment and they are filled with excitement and high expectation. After the initial reactions comes the first attempt to adjust, where the individual attempts to integrate himself/herself to the new cultural setting but is confronted with problems. Later, confrontations create stress for the individual, which means that the new cultural setting may lead to some emotional reactions. These new reactions can become extreme enough to the point that they create tension. However, this tension can sometimes be moderate enough that actually develops into a remarkable experience. Lastly, individuals who experience anxiety will ultimately have to cope with stress, which means

they have the option to either recover or control the situation. Similar propositions suggested that there are four phases to culture shock: The honeymoon phase, negotiation phase, adjustment phase and mastery phase. Although each categorization is different in terms, the contents all contain similar implications.

While some scholars propose four stages of culture shock, there are others who believe there are in fact five stages: honeymoon stage, disillusionment stage, understanding stage, integration stage and re-entry stage. Likewise, in line with International Keynote Speaker, seminar leader and consultant, Deborah Swallow (2010), culture shock stages should be labeled as: honeymoon, distress, re-integration, autonomy, and independence (<http://www.deborahswallow.com>). The only difference the five-stage theory has compared with the four-stage theory is that the final stage of culture shock includes the shock that the individual undergoes when returning to his or her home country. These stages may have different labeling but they are parallel because arrival to a new cultural environment is always described as being overly excited and then gradually encountering distress, then, attempting to adjust and finally having confidence and assimilating to the new culture.

Despite the fact that there are different stages to culture shock, it would be valuable to explore into different groups of people's understandings and adaptations of another culture and how it can facilitate their language acquisition.

2.2.2 PSYCHOLOGY OF CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock: the term shock is usually used to describe the feeling of intense surprise or disbelief. In the medical community, to have shock is "a serious, life-threatening medical condition defined as an inadequate perfusion of tissues which is insufficient to meet cellular metabolic needs." (www.pharminfo.net) In any case, the expression of "shock" presents a negative sensation and when used along with the word

culture, it seems to suggest that having culture shock may be severe, even harmful to an individual's state of mind.

In Adrian Furnham and Stephen Bochner's *Culture shock: Psychological Reactions to Unfamiliar Environments* (1986), the author sets out to describe and explain the psychological consequences of cultural contacts to unfamiliar environments. Chapter two of their book describes the process of cross-cultural contact, or what is entailed when individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact with each other. It also describes the likely outcomes of such interactions. Furnham and Bochner (1986) brought up a cost-benefit model of cross-cultural contact which illustrates that inevitably, the process will have some positive and negative consequences. Accordingly, the model points out that exposure to unfamiliar environments consist of two conflicting outcomes, one that is of the pessimistic view and the other of the optimistic view. In terms of the pessimistic view, consequences of cultural contact include the core notion of culture shock in which evidence illustrates that exposure to an unfamiliar environment can be stressful and potentially harmful. Rather than enlightening the mind and providing a satisfying and interesting personal experience, it was hypothesized that unfamiliar environments, in fact, create anxiety, confusion, and depression in individuals who are overly exposed. (Furnham and Bochner: 4) Therefore, instead of creating mutual understanding, exposure to unfamiliar environments often leads to hostility and poor interpersonal relations among those involved in the cultural exchange. In extreme cases, a direct consequence, such as physical illness, may also be a result of culture contact.

In contrast, there is also evidence which supports the suggestion that culture contact can have beneficial effects. Furnham and Bochner assert that experiencing a different culture is held to be beneficial since exposure to new perceptions and traditions is said "to broaden one's perspective, promote personality growth and provide insight into the culture of origin through a contrast with other world-views." (*ibid.*:3) Additionally, second-culture

exposure is not only valuable in the education and entertainment aspects, it is also encouraged on the stances that it can reach better mutual understanding between the diverse people of the world. Moreover, reaching mutual understanding between the people of the world will in turn lead to better international relations and less inter-group opposition and disagreements. In general, the cost-benefit model of cross-cultural contact entails the notion of culture shock and its negative and positive psychological consequences.

Fifteen years after the first book, Colleen Ward, Adrian Furnham, and Stephen Bochner (2001) came up with a follow-up volume called, *The Psychology of Culture Shock*. Although the book proposes similar findings as the first volume—the original edition in 1986, the latter focuses on the assumption that people hold about experiences confronting a second culture, and describes the theories that have been proposed to account for the effects of intercultural contact. Due to growing psychological literature on different social and political trends and an increase in migration, travels, and such, research of intercultural contacts has increased. In view of that, Ward, Furnham, and Bochner's empirical research focuses on social psychology of the cross-cultural encounterance and seeks the causes and consequences of "culture shock" but also considered strategies that might be helpful in diminishing the problems correlating with intercultural interactions. Consequently, the role of individualism and collectivism in shaping the influencing intercultural interactions were given particular attention to as one of the reasons why intercultural encounters may be difficult.

By differentiating the four phases in which the process of intercultural contact can be understood, different types of groups were being studied (e.g., tourists, immigrants) to demonstrate the following inference: it is referred that social contact between culturally dissimilar individuals is difficult and often stressful. Likewise, according to theoretical principles that explain why culture contact is problematic, there are extensive bodies of

empirical evidences in support of that contention. One main theoretical principle used to bolster that the encounterance of culture difference may create anxiety is the similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne and Griffitt 1969). The hypothesis proposed that cultural identification is categorizing people according to their similar characteristics, thus people are more likely to enjoy, understand, want to work and socialize with people who share relevant characteristics with them. In the same way, when cross-cultural interactions occur between people who do not share these salient qualities, they are less likely to enjoy or work with them. Other theoretical principles implying that cross-cultural interaction is intrinsically complicated include the process of social categorization (Abrams and Hogg 1990). The process of social categorization refers to the inclination for individuals to sort out others as people of another group, specifically discriminate others and create an own group, in-group, out-group or some other groups. Furthermore, the psychology of culture shock is also analyzed as three major cultural syndromes, which were discussed as a source of difficulties in intercultural interactions (Triandis 2001). These cultural syndromes include cultural complexity, tight versus loose cultures, and individualism-collectivism, which refer to patterns of attitudes, beliefs, norms and behaviors. As a result, cultural syndromes can be used to contrast groups of cultures.

In relation to culture shock, the psychology of culture shock is basically the psychology of intercultural contact in which different cultures interact with each other. This implies that the studies of “culture shock” are deemed as intercultural contact and cross-cultural transition, which is within the wider context of and relating to the acculturation theory.

Given that American customs and Chinese customs are distinctively carried out, American students studying Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan must go through certain experiences that guide them into gradual acceptance of the target culture. In addition, American students studying Mandarin in Taiwan will go through social and psychological

factors that distance them from Taiwanese culture, and the only way to successfully acquire the language is to undergo the process of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns. Hence, it is important to note students' adaptation to Taiwanese culture, which facilitates their acquisition of the Mandarin language.

2.3 CONCLUSION

Summing up from previous discussion, the frameworks proposed by H.D Brown, Scarcella and Oxford have helped me create and carry out this study. As a result, I intend to propose that American students studying Mandarin in Taiwan typically undergo four phases of acculturation: anticipation, cultural shock, disorientation, and ultimately adaption to the culture. Although similar to H.D. Brown's observation of acculturation stages, I propose that because CIEE students are a group of students consisting of Americans with distinct ethnic backgrounds, the stages of acculturation they experience may vary depending on the individual's awareness of the cultural shock; additionally, I have observed that this awareness has affected students' abilities to adapt into their new environment as well as to effectively acquiring language. Consequently, I plan to apply the acculturation framework to analyze my data in the next few chapters.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND FIELDWORK

Generally speaking, *methodology*, unlike methods where specific techniques and given procedures are described, *methodology*, following a study, constitutes a constructive generic framework and is divided into sub-processes. Therefore, to conduct a good research, it is important to decide on an appropriate methodology for a research. During the course of my research and fieldwork, it was mentioned earlier that the methodology employed in this research is of the ethnographic methods. Likewise, it is essential to grasp a few concepts of the significance of ethnography research, as well as comprehend the ethnographic research. As a result, in this chapter, before presenting the research findings and analyses, conceptual framework of the ethnographic method employed in this research will first be discussed in section 3.1. Next, the design of the research as well as the approach of data collection of the fieldwork will then be described in section 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 respectively.

3.1 ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS

With the aim of observing American CIEE students in the development of Mandarin language learning in Taiwan, ethnographic methods are applied to study students' cultural understanding in second language acquisition. "Ethnography," the English prefix – ethno meaning 'people' in Greek, along with the suffix -graphy meaning either 'writing,' together is the type of research that describes a culture, in which according to Spradley, the goal of ethnographic research is "to understand another way of life from the native point of view" (1979:3). Spradley emphasizes that "rather than *studying people*, ethnography means *learning from people*" (1979: 3).

Based on the ethnographic approach, according to Nancy Bonvillain, the author of

Language, Culture and Communication, discusses that the ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1974) includes “descriptions of all explicit and implicit norms for communication, detailing aspects of verbal, nonverbal, and social parameters of interaction.” (Bonvillian 79) Therefore, the components of carrying out the ethnographic research are (1) participants (2) code used by interlocutors (3) channel (4) setting (5) genre (6) topics and attitudes. The ethnography method emphasizes that researchers should have personal involvement in the community by means of being a participant and an observer. Although the communicative events take place in informal interactions and may seem unconstructed, they are also limited by cultural norms of roles, rights to speak, and ways of speaking.

Since ethnography is a social science research approach that we all use in everyday life to make sense of our surroundings, it relies heavily not solely on observation, but on intimacy, personal experience and participation. Accordingly, ethnography’s crucial point may incorporate intensive language and culture learning for education implications such as understanding both the students’ and teachers’ needs in language learning and teaching. In addition, understanding such information like students’ experiences, viewpoints, and goals can enable teachers to generate practical and valuable instructional design and ultimately improve students’ language acquisition. As a result, recognizing that the ethnographic methods allow researchers to have contextual fieldwork and engage in the study group’s daily activities, applying the ethnographic approach to my research on American students’ process of acculturation and Mandarin acquisition in the study abroad context may be the most appropriate method for this study.

3.2 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This qualitative research comprised of American CIEE students who have had taken at least a year of Chinese language course in their home university and had studied abroad

in Taiwan in the semester of Spring 2010, Fall 2010 and Spring 2011. The study was largely focused on 27 CIEE students' involvement in the Language Practicum curriculum as well as additional cultural fieldtrip and social outings. Consequently, as a previous CIEE student, personal experiences in the process of learning Mandarin in Taiwan will also be included as part of the data collection. Personal data will be presented in two forms: one as a narration of personal encounterance in relation to culture shocks and adaption, the other from weekly journals of personal perspective on Taiwanese culture written in a blog during my study abroad period in Taiwan.

Furthermore, majority of the data will be concentrated on CIEE students' participation in academic and cultural experiences in Taiwan. Through academic courses, reflection journals and one-on-one biweekly meeting records from Language Practicum will be taken into consideration; written observational notes by participating in social outings, causal chats and cultural fieldtrips will also be taken into account to examine the various problems and questions American students encountered during their cultural and language learning experience in Taiwan. In addition, at the end of the study abroad program, CIEE students completed a background language questionnaire designed to better assist the understanding of their heritage, spoken languages and Chinese cultural understanding. The survey not only determines students' cultural knowledge of Taiwanese/Chinese culture prior to studying abroad in Taiwan and their ethnic backgrounds, it also evaluates problems CIEE students encountered while studying Mandarin in Taiwan. Such data is particularly helpful in analyzing American students from diverse ethnic backgrounds' motivation in language learning and influences in cultural acceptance as well as Mandarin acquisition. Ultimately, data collection derive from three sources: (1) direct, first-hand observation notes of daily participation from personal experience and with the CIEE students, (2) interview records from an academic course of Language Practicum, where the conversation took on different forms from small talk to long interviews, and (3) surveys that students

filled out at the end of the program that revealed student's own perspective on self cultural adaptation and language learning.

3.3 MY FIELDWORK

It is difficult, if not impossible, to provide a clear-cut set of rules and accurate procedures for an effective fieldwork. To efficiently conduct a fieldwork in fact depends on the situation, the purpose of the study, the nature of the setting, interests, needs, and point of view of the observer. Therefore, fieldwork is a highly personal experience with a blend of individual resources, multiple roles and situation variation. For an ethnographic research, the fieldwork employs three main types of data collection method: (1) participation-observation, (2) interviews and (3) documentation; all together the resulting data is of the narrative description. Relying on up-close, personal experience of participation rather than just observation, the researcher must take on many different roles for data collection.

During my fieldwork, as the CIEE students' friend, I was able to attend social excursions and partake in small talks to socialize and understand their everyday behaviors and emotions; as the language coordinator, I was able to conduct interviews with the students; as the graduate student of TCASL, I was able to not only observe their language learning performance but also collect related data and documents. In order to collect useful, unbiased and reliable data, there must be a clear distinction between the different perceptions of the multi-roles when participating, observing, collecting and even interviewing. In the following, three roles as well as the types of data collected for the study will be discussed.

3.3.1 THE PARTICIPANT-OBSERVER

In terms of method in an ethnographic research, engaging in a participant-observation is necessary in order to gain an insight into social practices, cultural adaptation and even the details of life of the group of people being studied. As a participant-observer, one may not merely be an outside observer, but simultaneously be an observer that joins the group being studied, experiences and shares understandings with the group. Under observation, the researcher must take on a role in the social situation and immerse oneself in the social setting. Often times, the roles are interchangeable and the goal of experiencing the events with the subjects under study is to discover the nature of social reality by understanding their perception and interpretation of certain social circumstances.

Having accepted the position as the CIEE Language coordinator, my job is to organize additional courses related to teaching the Mandarin language while supervising the CIEE students on their learning progress and assisting them in any problems they encounter. I was also able to advance on CIEE students' social contacts and observe their academic situation. Therefore, as a participant-observer, I have had participated and observed according to three settings: cultural excursions, social events and students' CIEE academic course. As the former CIEE student of Fall 2007, I had taken on the role as the students' senior and friend to better blend in and engage in cultural excursions arranged by CIEE program and social outings that was invited by the students. Accepting almost all the opportunities to join their social gatherings and intermingle with them whenever there is a chance, I was able to, as a friend, find out how they felt about life in Taiwan, what they thought about the cultural differences and notice their behavior and reactions due to their cultural experiences. These observations were then noted after each event in a cultural activity log and analyzed accordingly. Additionally, in order to observe students in their classroom setting, as a graduate student of the TCASL, I attended the CIEE core course bilingual discussion to lead students into further discussion on various Taiwanese social,

historical and political topics. Reflections on students' classroom performance were accumulated as a whole at the end of the semester course.

3.3.3 THE COLLECTOR

Besides participant-observation, the role of being the collector is also imperative in this field of research. In order to better grasp CIEE students' experience and impression of Taiwan, retrieving texts written by students and analyzing self-written blogs as a CIEE student are helpful in understanding American students' point of view in regard to their own awareness. Therefore, as the collector, CIEE study abroad newsletters, reflection journals from language practicum tutoring, acculturation surveys, as well as blogs I written during my study abroad experience as a CIEE student were collected for this research.

Considered documents for this research comprised of written records by students themselves and are collected from three phases during their stay in Taiwan: in the beginning, during and toward the end of the program. Therefore, written articles by the students are essential records because each semester, students were required to write two CIEE study abroad newsletters, one in the beginning of the semester and the other towards the end of the semester. In the first newsletters, students shared activities they were involved in and perhaps ups and downs during their experience. In the latter newsletter, which was towards the end of the program, students were able to express their opinion and conclude about their overall experience in Taiwan. Moreover, as mentioned before in the earlier chapter, CIEE students were also required to attend to three courses in which one of them was Language Practicum, where students had to complete a total of at least fifteen hours of tutorial with native Taiwanese speakers and type up reflection journals after every tutorial meeting. Those reflection journals articulated students' progression in Mandarin learning during class and during their meetings with their language tutor(s). Lastly,

acculturation surveys were given to students at the end of program in which students were given the opportunity to reflect back on cultural problems or issues they might have encountered during their stay in Taiwan. Nevertheless, the collected data are valuable documentations that included personal observations as past CIEE student but also from recent CIEE students themselves throughout their study abroad experience in Taiwan.

3.3.2 THE INTERVIEWER

Another important role as an ethnographer is the role of an interviewer. An interview may be strict, formal, and/or causal and relax, essentially it is a conversation between two people where questions were asked by the interviewer and answered by an interviewee. Thus, as Duranti points out, interviews could be considered as simply “a common form of interaction during fieldwork” since ethnographers are constantly asking all sorts of questions in the line of research. (1997: 102)

As the interviewer, the type of interview that was conducted is of semi-formal, where questions were answered by students during bi-weekly language practicum meetings and casual chats to gossips were carried out during social gatherings and cultural trips. Moreover, upon completion of the questionnaire that evaluates problems CIEE students encounter while studying Mandarin in Taiwan, the participants were asked if additional discussion on the topic was possible. Accordingly, a number of participants accepted further semi-constructed interviews concerning their acculturation process in Taiwan and further interviews took place either over online messaging or face-to-face chats in a casual setting.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, theoretical concepts of an ethnographic method research were introduced. I am aware that the approach to data collection is "unstructured in the sense that it does not involve following through a detailed plan set up at the beginning; nor are the categories used for interpreting what people say and do pre-given or fixed." (Genzuk 1999) However, this does not imply that the research method is unsystematic; instead the data collected for this study were gathered from a range of sources in which the main sources derive from participation- observation and relatively informal conversations. Nonetheless, to better understand the relation between culture adaption and second language acquisition, the variety of sources retrieved in the study is authentic, up-close first hand and personal. Consequently, to understand how American students adapt to Taiwanese culture, it is crucial that there is personal involvement and personal experience in order to fully comprehend American CIEE students' acculturation process while acquiring the Mandarin language.

CHAPTER FOUR: INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

“Taipei is a bit of a paradoxical place: full of life, color, and people, yet relaxed, unhurried, and regulated” (Marjorie Rivera, Spring & Fall 2010 CIEE student). How Taiwan is a place of contradiction is truly an interesting subject to ponder upon. It is a place of contradiction because it is a place where one can be surrounded by ancient temples, traditional festivals and even Taichi practitioners in parks; yet at the same time, it is also easy to be caught up in a modernized city of Taipei with high-end department stores, trendy boutiques and designer products from all over the world. Although Taiwan is a contemporary country, foreigners who arrive to a new environment such as Taiwan may still experience the feeling of culture shock.

To most CIEE American students, traveling to Taiwan was their first time traveling to Asia or even their first time to fly to another country. Consequently, besides being overwhelmed with people ubiquitously speaking the Mandarin language, there were many culture shocks students had encountered when they first arrived in Taiwan. In section 4.1: *Culture Shocks of Taiwan*, initial observation of personal cultural experience when studying abroad in Taiwan will be portrayed; in addition, reflection journals written by students themselves will illustrate a few Taiwan and American cultural differences, as well as culture shocks that they have personally experienced in three sub-categories of: (1) Taiwan’s values and beliefs, (2) social roles and “rules” of behavior, and (3) Taiwan’s climate, attire and food. Section 4.2 will describe the discoveries of students’ behavior and thoughts to cultural differences in the context of in the classroom and outside of the classroom. Moreover, section 4.3 will discuss findings obtained from semi-interviews from causal talks to survey follow-up interviews which will include students’ cultural adaptation in association with language acquisition.

4.1 CULTURE SHOCKS OF TAIWAN

4.1.1 PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Before jumping in to discuss the culture shocks of the 2010 and Spring 2011 CIEE students, it is necessary to recount the time when I was a CIEE student in 2007 Taiwan and the effects of culture shocks I had experienced. Having been raised in an Asian family as well as growing up in an American society, I was exposed to multiculturalism at an early age. Therefore, a few Taiwanese customs seemed familiar and not peculiar until I studied abroad in Taiwan and experienced unexpected encounterance as well as cultural misunderstandings. Having immigrated to the States at the early age of seven, I had long forgotten what it felt like residing in my place of birth. My return to Taiwan and the thought of living there for a longer period of time created a sense of nostalgic sentiment that surfaced along with enthusiasm. Previous glimpse of blissful memories from childhood unquestionably made me felt as if I was returning to a place I really belonged to. I was convinced that it would be of no difficulty to integrate into the Taiwanese social groups and finally converse with the younger generation about recent Taiwanese dramas, singers and general topics. All the same, I was eager to settle into the city I used to live in for seven years.

This excitement was then encountered with surprises as I entered the life of a university student in Taiwan. The narrow hallway, public showering stalls and restrooms occupied with a majority of squatting toilets seemed somewhat peculiar and uncomfortable. Even so, I entered my dormitory with better expectation. Disappointingly, the room not only felt confining, but the metal beds and unsupplied mattress seemed as if I was living in a downgraded motel. The tight, confined area barely allowed any walking space and the closed out dark room certainly created an aura of gloomy ambiance. As a result, my first impression of Taiwan university life was one that was depressing, obsolete and most of all,

it was different. Furthermore, it was noticeable that Taiwanese college boys and girls seemed much too concerned about their attire when attending lectures and going to school. The greater part of the college students in Taiwan embellish themselves as if they were going on a date or preparing for a party. It was quite apparent that most Taiwanese students doll up when attending school; in contrast, American students typically wear casual apparels, even pajamas to class. In other words, students in the United States care less about their outfits when attending classes in a university, while students in Taiwan express the importance of clothing as an act of respect to professors and to each other.

Coming upon various cultural American and Taiwanese differences as well as surprises that I never had thought I would experience, I eventually became hesitant about being able to become accustomed to the means of Taiwanese lifestyle. These anxieties involved confusion on carrying out the appropriate manners in a given situation, dubiousness of my own ability to blend in with the social norm and incapability of effectively performing habitual routines. I became self-conscious on the form of clothing I was supposed to put on in given circumstances and pondered endlessly on the idea of “acceptable clothing” for going to class and such. Likewise, I eventually realized that the younger generation of the Taiwanese was heavily influenced by the Japanese culture and fashion, hence, our mutual subject for conversation detoured. Therefore, it was not only difficult to find interesting topics we all shared; it was also sometimes awkward when we encountered different senses of humor.

Unexpectedly, I was truly not accustomed to taking out the trash every once in awhile when the music of “Für Elise” was played. Taking out the trash to a large garbage container whenever I had the time felt more convenient than to have to wait for the garbage truck to arrive on certain times. I recognized that Taiwanese people are friendly and welcoming, but I still felt as if I was detached from the world I once thought I was familiar with. Although the distress I experienced did not intensely disturb my attempt to assimilate

with the Taiwanese, I have had stumbled upon similar troubles as American students who had no Chinese background whatsoever. This produced a sensation of not really knowing what to do in this different environment and being puzzled on the uncertainty of what is appropriate or inappropriate.

Fortunately, time changed everything; the longer I stayed in the country the more I accepted the differences in practice, and at the same time learned to live with it on my own terms. After living a few weeks in the dorms, I quickly got familiarized with the squatting toilets and actually found it more convenient to use them compared to the sitting toilet. Strangely, I didn't find the restroom to be fetid-smelling anymore and the regular showering in the small stalls with tarnished doors was no longer a problem for me. Becoming familiarized with the living style and environment of the university dorms allowed me to realize that the living situation is, in reality, not at all terrible. I came to appreciate my living conditions in Taiwan and understood that there are worse situations than the ones I was in. I also began to see things on a wider prospect as well as acknowledge that it is only because of the cultural distinctions that caused my misapprehension. I no longer worried about the appropriate attire for clothing and simply dressed as how I felt was appropriate. With time, blending into the social model of Taiwanese/Japanese fashion was of no problem. Likewise, finding similar issues to discuss with the Taiwanese was also no longer an issue as I made a breakthrough by placing myself inside Taiwanese peoples' shoes and empathizing with their different ways of thinking. As a result, I found that it was much easier to intermingle with the community as long as we shared similar knowledge and understanding. Although at times, the American side of me emerges, I see it as a way of expressing my individuality and uniqueness, not a way of separating myself as an outsider.

4.1.2 VALUES AND BELIEFS

In order to talk about Taiwanese values and beliefs, it is imperative to first bring up the most influential religion in Taiwan. Although Taiwan respects other faiths and has a variety of religions including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Mormonism, and etc, the practices of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism are the most prevalent. For that reason, values and ethics of the people of Taiwan are based on the teachings of a Chinese moral and social philosopher: Confucius. Therefore, it is easy to see the values and ethics of the people of Taiwan by just observing the everyday life of peoples' daily routines.

Many CIEE students noticed the values and ethics of Confucian ideals when they utilize public transportation, such as the public buses and Taipei's Metropolitan Rapid Transit. They were aware that yielding seats to elders is common and ordinary, which demonstrates the instilled Confucian values of respecting the elders as part of the very foundation of being a "gentlemen." Moreover, it is also apparent that Taiwan is surrounded by small to large religious Buddhist, Taoism and even Confucian shrines and temples. One Spring 2010 student stated, "Almost everywhere we go, we either see a shrine or a temple, they are everywhere!" Students' acknowledgment of numerous temples and shrines in Taiwan does not necessary convey their shock toward another culture; instead it demonstrates their awareness of the cultural differences.

Some students also found it fascinating to see the practice of praying with incense sticks, as well as witnessing people burning a special form of paper money burnt as an after-life ancestral offering. Besides finding temples interesting, religious beliefs, or sometimes defined as "superstitions" that followed by religious rituals, were also something that the CIEE students were aware of. Another female CIEE student described, "I think for the living to send dead ancestor money in the afterworld is interesting. It explains how superstitious Taiwanese are about life after death, but I think it also shows how much the living still respects the dead." Although hell notes may appear as

superstitious items to other people, to the Taiwanese, these notes are very significant since hell notes are only given to the dead and the notes symbolize an offering to the death.

Besides traditions and rituals, Taiwan also uses a different system for numbering the years. Taiwan started counting from year zero when it was founded in 1911, and as a result, the year 2011 in the Western calendar is the year 100 in Taiwan. Many, if not all, CIEE students often get confused when telling Taiwanese the year they were born. They often either not know or will forget they had to subtract 1911 from the Western year and ended up puzzling the Taiwanese for a few seconds. Likewise, several public holidays in Taiwan are calculated according to the lunar calendar.

According to the Chinese, Chinese Lunar New Year is the most important holiday along with the Mid-Autumn Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Winter solstice and Tomb Sweeping day. Due to special holiday events that were carried out in the university, CIEE students were able to experience the festive ambiance of the traditional holidays in Taiwan. In particular, during the week of the Mid-Autumn Festival, NCCU's girls dormitory was giving out free moon cakes for students living in the dorms. One female CIEE student excitedly said, "I didn't know what a moon cake was until I heard about this event, I really liked how they (dormitory staffs) gave out free moon cakes to students and described a bit of the significance of this festival which allowed foreigners like us to experience what Mid-autumn festival is all about." In any case, values and beliefs of Taiwan are only some cultural distinction that are visible in everyday life of Taiwanese's daily routines and American students usually come into contact with them and become aware of them as they partake in the Taiwanese way of living.

4.1.3 SOCIAL ROLES AND "RULES" OF BEHAVIOR

In every society, every person has a social role. In order to be part of the member of a

social group every person engages oneself in a social part, thus with each role they adopt, they change their behavior to fit the social expectation. However, it is first crucial to understand the rules of behavior and the expectation each society puts upon to behave accordingly in certain social situations and take on different roles. In the case of Taiwan, three major factors must be pointed out to discuss Taiwanese social roles and behaviors: communication style, social phenomenon and etiquette.

It is apparent that Western ways and Eastern ways of communication is of the opposite: the former is more direct while the latter is indirect. Communication style of the people in Taiwan without doubt chooses to speak in the way that the main point is never really put across, but instead they speak around the main subject matter and assume the hearer will identify the main point. This type of communication method is closely related with the concept of "saving face", meaning the ability to maintain a positive reputation of others and of self. To have "face" is highly regarded by everyone in the Taiwanese society and implies that people should be careful to avoid embarrassing anybody under all circumstance. Often times, Taiwanese avoid dealing directly with a situation because only this way can they save everybody's face.

On the other hand, when foreigners are in a situation in which they had to communicate with the Taiwanese, direct communication from the foreigner and indirect communication from the Taiwanese may result in terribly awkward moments, even major misunderstandings. A similar situation once occurred with a male CIEE student of Fall 2010. One of his roommates complained to the dorm staff regarding his American roommate bringing a visitor overnight and was being extremely "noisy." This "noisiness" problem in fact was not the real issue; instead the Taiwanese roommate was only trying to use a euphemized term rather than saying they were having "sexual activities" in the room. Clearly, the encounterance of such communication problem brought confusion to our student because although he admitted that he brought a visitor overnight, he strongly

believed that he was not being noisy in the room. Afterwards, the situation went quite serious to the point that there was a major misunderstanding between the two. The roommate and the dormitory staff's method of explaining the problem by using euphemized words in order to not embarrass the American student resulted in a much more confusion than saving our student's "face". The CIEE student did not acknowledge the fact that he did anything wrong or broke any dormitory rules, instead this type of explanation led to misunderstanding and shock.

From this incident, it is evident that people in Taiwan have high regards for contextual understanding and considers brief, abrupt messages as rude and impolite. They would rather give and expect deep, broad contextual messages to gain better understanding of the core message, adding in gestures and facial expressions to give people hints to the main idea. Consequently, people from America and countries alike, where context is not given much importance have to be careful in their communication in this regard.

Despite differences in communication approaches, there are many social phenomenons visible in the city of Taipei. For example, the public bathrooms, traffic congestion and ecological issues are some of the observable facts that many CIEE students noticed about Taiwan. First, coming from a Western country, the chances of never used a squatting toilet is pretty close to zero. While most places have both squatting toilets and Western-style "normal" toilets available, some public places including the dormitories only have squatting toilets. Consequently, many CIEE students complained about the inconvenience and often puzzled on the accurate usage of this "eccentric" toilet. Besides the awkward usage of squatting toilets, toilet paper is often not provided for free at public restrooms, this sort of inconvenience where students had to bring their own toilet paper around was also another issue. One student stated that there are downsides to the country: such as the lack of garbage cans, toilet paper, and hand soap in the bathrooms, as well as being rushed at stores while paying.

Despite the inconvenience, students found these matters to be only minor downfalls. Second, Taiwan's traffic is bizarre with road full of zooming scooters, angry drivers honking, and countless careless drivers, causing crossing the streets to be hazardous and requires "skillful" pedestrians to successfully and safely cross the streets. Although Taiwan's traffic may be dangerous and need time to get used to, having spent a few months in Taiwan helped students to adjust to the societal conducts. One student described, "The trick to surviving Taiwan's traffic is not to make any sudden moves; for example, if you want to quickly cross a busy street, you don't want to run so that scooters see you and have time to avoid you." Another student added that although she has to be extra cautious when crossing the streets, as a whole, Taipei has proven to be quite the peaceful city because nobody ever seems to be in a hurry. In any case, it is fascinating to discover that American students are able to realize the trick to getting used to Taiwan's social phenomenon and is able to teach others about adjusting in Taiwan.

Furthermore, in order to take on social roles of Taiwan, etiquettes of the country must be lay out. It is true from Taiwanese beliefs that Confucianism emphasized on the obligations people had towards one another, along with ample emphasis on loyalty, responsibility, filial piety, respect for elders and etiquette of daily behavior; and through time, students quickly realized that it is common to use both hands when paying with cash or giving something to somebody or even when offering an item.

However, one small matter came up a few times when CIEE Taipei center was celebrating CIEE students' birthday with other Taiwanese cultural ambassadors. When the American students received gifts right away from the other person, they tend to want to open it right away to express their gratitude. Yet this show of gratitude allowed them to instead appear greedy as they open the gift upon receiving it in Taiwanese culture. To not make things worse, this type of misunderstanding was quickly clarified by a cultural

ambassador and students knew next time to either ask if it is fine to open the gifts in front of the giver or just to put it aside to open it later.

Similarly, as the birthday student blew out the candles and began to serve the birthday cake, some American students were offended that the first piece of cake was given to our resident director instead of given to the birthday person. Then again, students later understood that it was an act of respect to the elders; therefore, the first piece of birthday cake should be given to the oldest person, not to the birthday person. Nevertheless, CIEE students mostly first encounter social aspect culture shocks of Taiwan and it is usually the social behavior and the rules of behavior that cause these cultural misunderstandings.

4.1.4 CLIMATE, ATTIRE AND FOOD

According to Taiwan climate and weather guide, Taiwan's climate is marine tropical which also means the northern part of the island has a rainy season that lasts from January through late March and it also is a humid region that has warm and humid summer usually lasting from May to September. Compared to the climate in America, humidity rarely is an issue, however, for American students to study abroad in a country that is of tropical and humid, for most it can be somewhat of an inconvenience.

Most, if not all, CIEE students complained about the humidity in Taiwan. Under the bright sun and hot sticky humidity, besides noticing Taiwanese wearing t-shirts, shorts and sandals, they also noticed many scooter riders completely wrapped in long sleeved shirts or jackets despite the warm weather. They soon realized besides the fact that Taiwanese do not want to get sun burned, the most common reason for covering oneself even when it is hot and humid is because most Taiwanese girls are afraid of getting tanned, in others words, they want to stay white. For the same reason, the wide usage of umbrellas during the summer also serves for the same purpose. In most cases, most Americans' reaction to this

observation is that they found the usage of umbrella for women to avoid tanning to be strange and unnecessary and realized that the concept of beauty in skin color is different between the eyes of the Taiwanese and the Americans.

Humid as it is in Taiwan, Americans usually do not mind getting tanned. As a result, wearing lesser in clothing seems like a reasonable and natural thing to do for anyone when the weather is hot and humid. However, when CIEE female students began to put on short shorts, tank tops, spaghetti strap clothing and the likes, they attracted countless stares, glares and even criticisms from the Taiwanese. According to the Taiwanese, Americans exposed too much skin and revealing too much of the skin seem inappropriate, promiscuous even impolite.

Moreover, the conflict in the attire concept between the Americans and the Taiwanese is also evident on the University campus. Some CIEE students could not help but realized that Taiwanese males and females tend to dress up or look their best for classes. One particular male CIEE student described to me, "I didn't really have time today to chose what to wear to class because I woke up late, so I just grabbed the next closest thing: my sweater, a pair of slacks and flip-flops." He later explained that many of his Taiwanese friends that saw him on campus asked him several strange questions about his clothing. Although he didn't really mind their questions, he did realized that he was seen as out of place to dress as he was when he was in school because the Taiwanese students and the teachers took it offensively and found it to be disrespectful; thus the American custom of putting on just a sweater or even pajamas to school cannot be applied in Taiwan. Consequently, in Taiwan, attire acts as a significant symbol of respect to others and to self.

Another similar situation relating to the attire issue is the idea of removing one's shoes before entering homes and certain public areas. One particular incident occurred when CIEE students took a trip to the Hualian County for three days two nights. Since homestay hostel is popular in Taiwan, the whole CIEE crew were able to stay overnight at

a local residence's home and feel right at home with bed and breakfast service. However, when they all first arrived to the place, they were all asked to remove their shoes outside the house and when entering the home, they were given indoor slippers. Although removing the shoes was not a big problem for the American students, I have noticed that all of the American students preferred not to wear slippers when they entered the home. Since students felt uncomfortable and not used to wearing slippers inside the house, they would rather walk bare footed on the cold wooden floor than wear those slippers. From this incident, I have realized that wardrobe plays a considerable role in the Taiwanese society. Besides the fact that Americans and Taiwanese have different concepts for what is considered appropriate clothing, there are certain customs of the Taiwanese that the Americans are not familiarized with. Likewise they may need time to adjust to cultural customs that was as contradictory practices.

In addition to Taiwan's distinct climate and the perception of apparels, Taiwanese food is one that is unique and exotic. For people who had traveled to Taiwan, night markets and 'old streets' are one of the main areas travelers must visit and experience. There, unique Taiwanese cuisines can be one that is unforgettable or may create an awful memory for some. Some CIEE students find Taiwanese snacks such as Stinky tofu, mochi (pounded glutinous rice cakes), pork blood, snakes, quail eggs, snails and the likes to be exotic and delicious but some either reject them right away or has tried them but cannot stand the odd flavor. Quoting from one student in Spring 2010 “我愛台灣，但是台灣不愛我 (I love Taiwan, but Taiwan doesn't love me)” She was referring to everything she love about Taiwan including the food, but somehow the food she ate in Taiwan often gotten her sick to the stomach. Even so, many students who were willing to try new food usually immediately fall in love with Taiwan. Rice and soy are also widely eaten across Taiwan. As a result, many of our CIEE students who are vegetarian described Taiwan as, “heaven for the vegetarians” because a variety of vegetarian food made it easy for them to find food

and enjoy delicious vegetarian cuisines. In addition, Taiwan is also known to produce some of the best tea in the world. Famous Mao-kong tourist tea gardens are in fact close to National Chengchi University. CIEE students in Taipei were able to enjoy and learn about tea making industry in Taiwan, as well as the art and the standard of tea preparation during their free time. Taken as a whole, with the climate discomfort, contradictory attire assumptions and distinctive culinary culture of Taiwan, some CIEE American students experienced minor culture shocks while some simply acknowledged the dissimilarity and quickly acculturated.

4.2 PARTICIPATION-OBSERVATION

As soon as the CIEE students arrived in Taiwan, I involved myself in the orientation party that was held by CIEE Taipei center to welcome the new students. I took this chance to introduce myself to everyone and mingle among the students. My role as a participant-observer generally began in this way and my observation sets off immediately when they arrive in NCCU. Nonetheless, it is imperative to first discuss my cultural observations of students in the classroom in section 4.2.1, then in section 4.2.2, cultural observations of students outside the classroom will be exemplified through incidents from certain cultural trip.

4.2.1 CLASSROOM

As CIEE students begin to attend CIEE core course and Chinese class that were arranged by the Chinese Language Center, students typically stumble upon two major issues regarding the differences in the teaching system. The first main concern students came across was the accessibility of a course syllabus and subsequently, the difference in

the teaching style. As mentioned earlier in Chapter three, in order to observe students in the classroom setting, I also participated in the CIEE core course lectures and bilingual discussion. First from plain observation during core lectures, I have noticed that students always will have questions at the end of the lecture and are quite willing to inquire every guest lecturer for clarification or more information. However, during bilingual discussions, students seldom had the chance to express or further discuss about the related topic.

One of the major problems derived from the lack of an organized syllabus for the bilingual discussions. It was noticeable that graduate students like myself, who were suppose to lead a “discussion” relating to the prior lecture, in fact, created complete lesson plans for the students but did not inform the students ahead of time of the type of activities or the style of the discussion they will be involved in. As a result, every week, students often felt puzzled as they somewhat aimlessly follow the graduate students’ lesson plan. A few students from Fall 2010 suggested in the final discussion feedback that it would have been better if there was a course outline given to them before each discussion. She felt that it would have been more organized and they would have had better chances to participate more extensively in the discussion. Although the prepared lesson plan included discussion sessions and fun activities, most of the time students were given another set of lecture that involved students to just sit back and listen. This different set of teaching style where students were just given more information and not more learning through participating essentially bothered many American students. For the most part, with the lack of a syllabus for bilingual discussion and the difference in the style of teaching, CIEE students’ class performance considerably becomes poor because they seldom have the chance to express their opinions to form discussions and frequently felt lost without understanding what the main objective of the prepared lesson plan is.

4.2.2 OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

From sunshine to rain, then back to sunshine, then rain again. Such unpredictable weather has been known to be common in Taiwan. Despite long weeks of unstable weather, students continue to be enthusiastic in learning and exploring outside the classroom. Besides going to language class and CIEE's core course, students also had the opportunity to tour around Taipei as they participate in CIEE arranged events, and plan their own individual trips or activities.

Shortly after the students' arrival, the first CIEE activity they participated in was a scavenger hunt event where they had a chance to explore and get familiarize with Taipei's transportation, well known places and food. I was fortunate to also participate in the activity and was given the chance to be able to become acquainted with some students. During the scavenger hunt, one thing I noticed immediately was that students enjoyed the extra attention from the Taiwanese since they often were quickly recognized as foreigners. As it seems, Taiwanese tend to be extra friendly when they come across foreigners. The friendliness soon progressed to an approach to making friends with them and at times, random just met Taiwanese stranger would even volunteer to take CIEE students to explore other places in Taiwan. Although it may appear common for foreigners to receive disadvantages in another country, American students discovered that for the most part in Taiwan, Taiwanese are extremely friendly to foreigners. Realizing this fact, students deliberately spoke English to each other to gain attention from the Taiwanese. This unusual behavior is fascinating to observe because it does somewhat encouraged me to also bring out my American side.

On the other hand, for foreigners to constantly attract attention to one self to the Taiwanese may not always is good idea. Often times, problems such as miscommunication arise during shopping at night markets and ordering food in a restaurant. Although CIEE students do comprised of Asian-Americans who possess oriental appearances that perhaps

can blend in with the Taiwanese, once the store owner discovers that they are Americans, the Taiwanese most often like to attempt to speak English with them. This can be a problem to the students because they usually felt offended and looked upon as foreigners who cannot speak Mandarin; likewise, Taiwanese who force themselves to speak English to the students often times prevent students from practicing Mandarin with the natives.

Furthermore, several times as I joined students' social dinners, I have noticed that they often attempt to order in Chinese by themselves. However, sometimes when they use Mandarin to order food to the server, the orders seem to turn out to be something they did not expect. One time, two CIEE students of 2011 and I walked in to a dumpling restaurant. The female student was a vegetarian thus told the server, “我不要肉 (I don't want meat),” and asked the server to recommend something that does not have meat. Surprisingly, the server responded with “我知道, 我知道 (I know, I know),” but ended up giving her a plate of duck meat. I guess the server did not really know what she wanted. For some reason, there was misunderstanding and the reason probably was because the Taiwanese owner assumed that all foreigners probably want the same kind of dish in her store.

In addition to special treatments and miscommunication, there is one social phenomenon in Taiwan that puzzled and bothered a lot of the CIEE students. Students could not help but noticed that majority of the Taiwanese girls, especially customer service personnel, often spoke in a “cute” high-pitched voice. This high-pitched voice phenomenon appears annoying and fake to many American students and they often do not understand the purpose of elevating one's voice to appear ‘cute’ or to catch attention. When it was explained to them that the customer service personnel usually purposely elevate the pitch of their voice to appear polite and to show courtesy, students strongly agreed that it was not effective at all. Instead many of the CIEE students agreed that “cuteness” from the squeaky voice is in fact obnoxious and uncomfortable.

On the whole, students' unusual behavior, cultural misunderstandings and encountering social conundrum are the results of experiencing Taiwanese culture. I was able to, as a friend, find out how they felt about life in Taiwan, what they thought about the cultural differences and notice their behavior and reactions due to their cultural experiences. Being able to socialize with the CIEE students, I was also able to discretely ask questions about their cultural shock experience in Taipei and discover quite a few interesting responses.

4.3 SEMI-CONSTRUCTED INTERVIEWS

As mentioned earlier, students were required to meet bi-weekly with me to discuss their learning progress, cultural encounters and/or problems they have in Taiwan. The discussions were semi-constructed in the way that I was able to ask questions according to the issues or problems they had written in their reflection journals. Since the meeting was semi-formal, students were able to comfortably talk about their experience and cry out complaints if any. Moreover, near the end of the program, students were asked to complete a survey that inquired about their background, knowledge of Taiwan before arriving and cultural experiences during their stay. After the completion of the survey, a number of students were selected to have a follow-up informal interview to clarify responses that seem incomplete or need further questioning. Nevertheless, these semi-constructed informal interviews are mostly targeted at students' Mandarin language acquisition in relation with Taiwanese cultural adaption.

4.3.1 CAUSAL TALKS TO GOSSIPS

Certainly at times, speaking with students about their progress in Mandarin

acquisition every two weeks, developed into gossip talks in which various issues generate into concerns of how different cultural experiences and/or culture shocks influenced their Mandarin language learning. After a period of actively participating in planned activities by students and events held by CIEE, our interpersonal relationship became closer and students felt comfortable opening up to me.

Generally, CIEE students from the three semesters had two major cultural concerns that affected their mandarin learning: accommodation and socializing with the locals. Within the two major concerns, other minor issues such as anxiety from the climate, lack of personal space, overwhelmed from fast speaking Mandarin, and confusion about gender roles in Taiwan.

When students first arrive to Taiwan, their housing issue was already settled by the CIEE, Taipei study center. Students were arranged to stay in the university dormitory with three other native Taiwanese students, along with personal desk, bed frame and closets were all wiped and dusted before they arrived. However, due to the fact that CIEE students shared a room with three other people and the room compared to the States seems packed and old, students easily felt the lack of personal space as well as distressed in their sleeping environment. Since Taiwan climate usually consist of rain, humidity and hot sun, problems like stuffy room and again not having enough personal space arises.

One All Year Program (AYP) CIEE student of Fall 2010-Spring 2011 wrote in her reflection journal, “I was groggy and steeped in culture shock...It was raining, as per usual. When Christine asked me what was the matter, I initially offered my platitude of ‘I hate the rain’, then opened up a little about how difficult things were to consistently navigate my life in my second language.” After reading her journals and asking her questions regarding her status, she once more mentioned that she hated the climate in Taiwan and she wanted to go home. This serious culture shock she was experiencing not only caused her to become homesick, it also prevented her from facing the difficulties of learning the Chinese

grammar and has for a period of time influenced her to want to give up going to her language class.

Another interesting matter CIEE students came across was the attempt to socialize with the native Taiwanese. Having arrived in a place where the goal of studying in Taiwan is to practice speaking with the locals, students were eager to initiate conversation and make friends with people they have met from various places. In spite of this enthusiasm and strong motivation to meet new people, most students had told me that they felt overwhelmed from hearing only Chinese when they first stepped into the city. Likewise, when students had to communicate with a local Taiwanese, they often felt like the other person was speaking way too fast for them to clearly understand just one whole sentence of the conversation. One female student exclaimed, "I often need to remind myself that I am still adjusting to life here and it is okay to ask people to repeat themselves or to speak slower. Mostly, I just need to remember to practice patience with myself." Another student was more frustrated in her situation, she wrote in her journal, "My tutor, Gini, is very nice and I like her very much, but from the beginning I had the worst time trying to understand her. Any words she spoke I found myself having to ask her to repeat herself multiple times just to understand one sentence." Sometimes having the desire to speak and understand another language is easier than actually implementing it. Students often encounter similar difficulties when communicating with the Taiwanese and the difficulties usually involve the students attempting to understand the choice of words the Taiwanese are expressing and the speed of their speech.

It is also interesting to point out that several CIEE students discovered there is a significant disparity in gender role of guys and girls in Taiwan. To be honest, one of the reasons for some CIEE students to study abroad besides to improve their language skills is that they want to look for an intimate relationship. As a result, casual talks about their life in Taiwan typically turn out to be gossips about their love life or problems they had

meeting Taiwanese guys and girls. According to most female CIEE students, they agreed with each other that they find Taiwanese guys in general are more passive yet awkwardly initiative. What they meant was that Taiwanese guys typically are too shy to initiate any progress into their relationship but once the relationship is official, the males will glue to the female like no other. On the other hand, most male CIEE students agreed that Taiwanese girls are conservative and naïve, which makes it harder for “aggressive” American guys to approach the Taiwanese girls.

On the whole, American students perceived love relationships between males and females in Taiwanese as conservative, naïve and serious, yet individually they are not happy in the relationship. They realized that there seems to be a high percentage of couples in Taiwan, but also felt that most couples are only together for the sake of being together, not actually understanding what they want in a relationship. When students realized that gender roles between Taiwan and America appears to be the complete opposite, female CIEE students tend to be more aggressive by giving it all they got of their Mandarin language skills when speaking to Taiwanese guys. While, male CIEE students also learned to employ the Mandarin language in a more submissive manner in order to successfully approach Taiwanese girls.

4.3.2 SURVEY FOLLOW-UPS

According to the collected data from the survey, it is apparent that there is a differentiation of culture shock experience between two ethnic groups: East-Asian-Americans and non-East-Asian Americans. Of the East-Asian Americans, majority of the students felt they experienced little to no shock at all during their entire stay in Taiwan. While of the non East-Asian Americans, most students acknowledges that at one point they did went through culture shock in Taiwan.

In addition to reading the collected data, I met up with the two groups of students individually and asked them to elaborate on two questions: (1) Please explain why you did/did not experience any cultural shock in Taiwan? (2) Please describe a time you felt like learning Mandarin was too hard and bothered you.

When the first question was asked to the East Asian American group, all of their first response was that they did not experience any because Taiwan is part of their heritage, or since they are Asian, a lot of the cultures are similar to their own Asian culture; hence there was not much of a shock. Clearly, they felt that they experienced no shock at all, because they believed that they knew about this cultural difference beforehand and/or has expected this cultural differences; thus students believed that since they understood the disparity between the two countries in advance, the differences did not affect them so much. However, when students began to talk more about what actually bothered them in Taiwan, they in fact mentioned some cultural notes that they have noticed that annoyed them when they socialized with the Taiwanese. Interestingly enough, when East-Asian American students were asked to answer the second question, they immediately responded with a “not really, but the tones are so hard,” or “maybe when I can’t remember how to write Chinese characters on quizzes.” Their responses were usually regarded upon the uncertainty of if they felt learning Mandarin is difficult, but they do realize that it bothered them to not be able to acquire it quickly.

On the other hand, when non East-Asian Americans were asked the first question, all agreed that there was culture shock yet I received two explanations for their shock. Depending on the personality traits of the person, a more optimistic student responded that they experienced the shock but tried to oversee it and accept it as it is. For other non-East-Asian American students, who were more easily irritated, responded that at one point they really hated everything about Taiwan, the food, climate, people, even wanted to give up going to language class. It was also during that same period of culture shock that

students felt homesick and acquiring Mandarin at that point was thought as an impossible task. Clearly between the two groups, East-Asian Americans denied or did not realize that they experienced any culture shock, when in fact they did not realize that their language acquisition and social living were influenced by the cultural difference. In contrast, non-East-Asian American students visibly recognized the experience of the culture shock and openly acknowledge the fact that it affected their language acquisition.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have attempted to reveal various culture shocks from personal and CIEE students' point of view. From the initial observation of personal cultural experience when studying abroad in Taiwan, I admit that in the beginning of the semester, I honestly did not believe I was going through culture shock until I realized that it was causing anxiety and influencing my motive to learn Mandarin.

Likewise, from evaluating CIEE students' reflection journals, observing their social behaviors, and conversing casually with the students, it is believed that some American students who were visibly aware of the cultural differences either understood and accept them with no shock or deny that they experience any shock. However, in consistent with the collected data, it is true that all CIEE students indeed faced culture shocks, the only difference is that some did not realize the shock until they stumble upon difficulties in socialization or language learning. Moreover, I have also discovered that at some point during students' progress of Mandarin learning, all if not, most CIEE students became unmotivated or less motivated in learning Mandarin in Taiwan.

Even so, it is crucial to look further into the various stages of culture shock students underwent, as well as how enduring these culture shock influence students' Mandarin language acquisition. Consequently, detail analysis of the stages of acculturation and a

thorough discussion on how culture affects language acquisition will be presented in the next chapter.



CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

The goal of this chapter is to examine the various stages learners of second language undergo in the process of acculturation, as well as the degree of impact it has on Mandarin acquisition. Accordingly, it is essential to first explain the various acculturation phases CIEE students underwent, which is discussed in section 5.1. Additionally, in section 5.2, a deeper analysis of East-Asian Americans and Non-East-Asian Americans' awareness of culture shock will be discussed in relation to their motivation in continuing to learn Mandarin. Finally, in section 5.3, acculturation of the Taiwanese culture and Mandarin language acquisition will be discussed together to understand the importance of cultural adaptation towards effectively and successfully acquiring Chinese.

5.1 ACCULTURATION PHASES

In the course of learning a new language in a new cultural environment, CIEE American students typically are comprised of people from distinctive cultural backgrounds whose understanding of Taiwanese culture are of different levels. However, regardless of CIEE American students' range of cultural backgrounds, students studying in Taiwan naturally undergo a process of acculturation during the time of their language acquisition. It is believed that American students studying in Taiwan by large undergo anticipation, cultural shock, disorientation and ultimately adaptation to the culture. Due to the fact that Taiwan holds a culture that is distinctive from the multicultural surroundings of the United States, American students from diverse ethnic backgrounds more or less experience the aforementioned stages in the course of their language learning. These factors not only impede students from having the driving force to learn, but also help them successfully attain the language, if overcome. As a result, it is imperative to analyze the four phases of

acculturation as well as explore how acculturation can impact American students in the course of acquiring the Mandarin language.

5.1.1 ANTICIPATION

Before arriving in Taiwan, all CIEE students have undergone at least a year of Mandarin language courses at their home university. Likewise, most students have at least some basic knowledge of the Chinese culture or believe that they already understood the culture more than the other Americans due to their Chinese background. In spite of their assumptions, it is apparent that CIEE students were willing to take the initiative to advance their Mandarin by studying abroad in Taiwan because they possess the motivation and enthusiasm toward the language and its culture. Therefore, the initial stage that CIEE students came across is the anticipation stage in which they experienced excitement and eagerness to explore Taiwan, meet new friends, and improve their Mandarin language skills. In this short period of anticipation, it would be untrue to say that CIEE students did not detect any cultural differences; however it would be more accurate to proclaim that students tend to ignore the differences because they were more thrilled with enjoying their independence and freedom of exploration.

5.1.2 CULTURE SHOCK

In the next stage, the “culture shock” gradually creeps up to the students as they begin to realize more cultural differences in their daily life in Taiwan. Having spoken with the CIEE students, it can be deduced that in general, students experience culture shock in the areas relating to: (1) social values (2) social roles and (3) climate. However, culture shock in relation with Taiwanese social roles has the most effect on the students. As students

made an effort to conform to the “rules” of social behavior, communication issues and cross-cultural relationship problems took place which created stress and anxiety.

“They (the Taiwanese) just don’t understand me,” a common phrase that I often heard from CIEE students. Thus, trying to convey a point to another person can be difficult, especially when the language utilized is not their native one. It is significant to note that the majority of the time, American students generally encountered communication issues with the Taiwanese. One female student complained that ordering food at a restaurant where there was no English on the menu usually posed to be a problem for her. She would either attempt to order in Chinese or end up pointing at the menu. At times, she would even give up eating at that place because the server would misunderstand her and bring her a different order instead. Another communication problem occurred when another CIEE student was undergoing lessons with his language tutor. During the language practicum meeting, the student complained that he was constantly rushed to speak Mandarin faster and the tutor did not seem to understand what he really wanted from the tutoring sessions. After speaking to both parties of the story, it was discovered that the tutor thought of the tutoring session as a more formal teaching experience, whereas the American student expected a relaxed language learning session.

Another major culture shock that CIEE students complained most about was the social role or “rules” of behavior between males and females in an intimate relationship. It is from my observation that 50% of CIEE students who studied abroad in Taiwan have three main goals: (1) to advance their Mandarin language skills, (2) to explore Taiwan and experience Taiwanese culture and (3) to seek an intimate relationship with a Taiwanese guy or girl. Since the legal age for alcohol consumption in Taiwan is eighteen, which is three years earlier than the US regulation, coupled with the fact that CIEE students are university students between the ages of 19 to 21, CIEE students often feel liberated in Taiwan. The feeling of liberation often times gave students more self confidence in looking for

significant others, but this desire to look for Taiwanese companions usually ended up creating stress and disappointment. One of the reasons students experience stress is that Taiwanese males and females view relationships differently than American students. Many times, cross-cultural relationships that students were involved in usually result in break-ups because of differences in relationship beliefs and/or problems in communication. One male student complained, “My girlfriend expects me to call her and tell her what I’m doing all the time.” In another similar case, a female student explained about her breakup with her Taiwanese boyfriend, “I just couldn’t stand him expecting me to be with him 24/7. I have my own life you know ...” Generally speaking, American students felt that they lacked personal space when they are in a relationship with their Taiwanese partner. This over dependency upon each other did in fact place pressure on the American students.

5.1.3 DISORIENTATION

As students go through the stage of culture shock, the next stage to acculturation is the period of disorientation. The disorientation period essentially entails students suffering from cultural stress where cultural differences become intolerable. These stressful experiences from the previous phase created emotional and physical dilemmas. When communication with the Taiwanese does not work out, students begin to lack self-confidence and enthusiasm in learning Mandarin. As a result, students become emotionally unstable and doubt their own language abilities. One particular female student broke down in tears almost every night for a month and was emotionally unhealthy because she felt that nothing was working out for her. During this period of disorientation, she hated Taiwan, felt miserable and hopeless, which in turn negatively affected her daily routine. Correspondingly, some students also undergo emotional anxiety when they fail to find partners that they are satisfied with; thus cultural stress relating to intimate

relationship issues causes students to become desperate in looking for a partner and disappointed about their lives in Taiwan. One male CIEE student confided in me and told me about his problems with his Taiwanese girlfriend. He would constantly split up with her but a few days later, he would go back to be with her again. His reason for splitting up with her was because he felt that she could not understand him whenever he gets into a deep conversation with her. He viewed her as a boring person with no opinions of her own, but he would repeatedly return to her because he felt lonely in Taiwan and was desperate for a girl to be by his side. From my observations, almost on a daily basis, he would consume excessive alcohol in an attempt to escape from his emotional distress. However, drinking excessive alcohol essentially led an unhealthy lifestyle. Moreover, physical dilemmas stem from students' emotional tension, where students result in physical illness such as: loss of appetite, insomnia to even suffering from an imbalanced life-style.

5.1.4 ADAPTATION

Finally, the final stage: Adaptation. Fortunately, toward the end of the semester, all CIEE students were able to overcome their cultural anxieties and comfortably adjust to the different cultural life-style in Taiwan. In fact, time and a positive attitude play a major role for healing students' cultural distress. Typically CIEE students underwent disorientation either toward the beginning or middle of their program. Therefore, as time went by, students started to accept and settle into the once unfamiliar environment. However, the amount of time needed for a person to overcome the issues caused by cultural differences varies and depends on the attitude of the individual. Going in line with the communication issues mentioned earlier, understanding the cause of the problem typically is the first step CIEE students take. Students soon realized that the servers at the restaurants would mistake their orders in Chinese because of their incorrect intonations and/or grammar structure.

Thus, the next step is to make efforts in improving their speaking skills. Similarly, the CIEE student who disliked the Taiwanese method of communication disappeared as he made efforts to understand why there was a miscommunication when tutoring with the Taiwanese. Following the period of distress, CIEE students typically started with an attempt to understand the reasons for the language barrier and then work on ways to solve it. Furthermore, life in Taiwan became much more enjoyable as students stopped stressing about cross-cultural relationship issues and accepted the fact that the Taiwanese approach to intimate relationships is indeed different from that of in America. Therefore, CIEE students learned to either accept this dissimilarity or stop concerning about looking for an intimate partner. Overall, American students came to the realization that sulking does not solve problems, and that an optimistic mind-set is the way to understand the cultural difference and ultimately appreciate the Taiwanese lifestyle.

Although the examples given for each stage were extreme cases pertaining to certain CIEE students, I still believe all CIEE students more or less went through the acculturation process. However, even though the CIEE students all underwent the same phases, it is apparent that there is still a major difference in the process of acculturation between the two groups of American CIEE students: East-Asian American students and non-East-Asian American students. Nonetheless, how each person accepts and adapts to the Taiwanese culture can significantly affect a student's motivation in learning Mandarin. For students to study abroad and to learn to adapt into a new culture not only allowed students to effectively acquire new information about others, it also gives students a chance to learn about themselves. It nourishes patience, endurance and open-mindedness.

5.2 WHEN CULTURE SHOCKS OR NOT

“When culture shocks or not,” this section analyzes whether certain groups of

students face culture shock and if they are even aware of the occurrence. As mentioned earlier in Chapter one, one of the main reasons I have decided to do my research on CIEE students is that they are a homogeneous yet distinct group of American students studying Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan. Therefore, it is fascinating to look into how these diverse ethnicities of 'American' students adapt to the Taiwanese culture during their Mandarin studies in Taiwan. From observations, casual interviews and surveys, it is generalized that among the group of CIEE American students, East-Asian Americans tend to believe that they do not experience any culture shock because they are either of the heritage background or have a similar historical background. On the other hand, non-East-Asian Americans admit that they experienced culture shock. In any case, it is imperative to examine the differences in the acculturation process of both groups of American CIEE students and explore how the awareness of culture shock influences the advancement to cultural adaptation.

5.2.1 EAST-ASIAN AMERICANS

According to the Acculturation Process timeline for East-Asian Americans, the anticipation and culture shock stages overlap during the period of time that is before arrival and a little after arrival to Taiwan. This indicates that although East-Asian American CIEE students do not acknowledge the culture shock, they in fact, did undergo culture shock immediately after their arrival for an extended period of time.

Since East-Asian Americans are students of Chinese/Taiwanese heritage or other Asian background, most came to Taiwan with the belief that they are more familiar with the Taiwanese culture than any other non-East-Asian Americans. However, little did they realize that the once thought familiar culture eventually shocks them over time and results in physical and emotional disorientation.

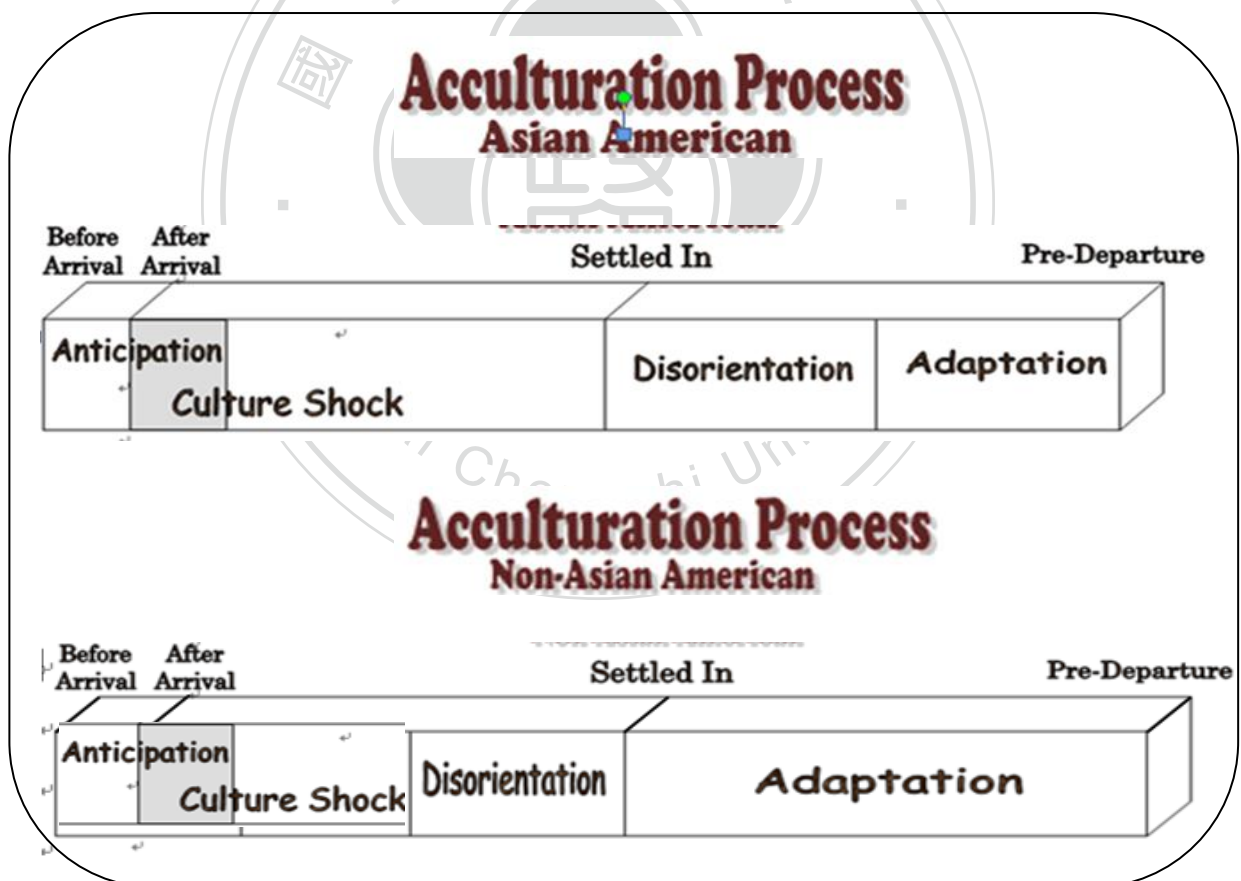
Over the course of the semester, I noticed East-Asian American CIEE students stressed about fitting into the Taiwanese crowd or cross-cultural relationships and listened to them complain about problems they had in language class or the difficulties they had learning Mandarin. Moreover, I am certain that East-Asian American CIEE students did undergo culture shock despite their constant denial at the beginning of the semester. Consequently, as shown above, because the East-Asian American CIEE students were not aware of the culture shock taking place, its duration ended up being extended. This implies that East-Asian American CIEE students were aware of the cultural differences between Taiwan and America but denies that it caused them shock. Nevertheless, due to the fact that the differences were detected, the intensity of shock experienced was weak to mild. Likewise, given that East-Asian American students were not aware of the culture shock until later on when they encountered disorientation or problems associated with culture difference, East-Asian American CIEE students essentially arrive to the adaptation phase at a later time during their stay in Taiwan.

5.2.2 NON-EAST- ASIAN AMERICANS

Looking at the timeline for non-Asian American CIEE students, it is apparent that they also experience culture shock immediately after their arrival in Taiwan. However, since non-East-Asian American students already expect Taiwanese culture to be different from their own, they were prepared to experience culture shock. Thus, it was easier for them to immediately acknowledge the shock. Being able to recognize the shock in fact, led non-East-Asian American CIEE students to experience a shorter period of culture shock. This earlier onset of the disorientation stage led to a quicker adaptation stage. This entails the notion that in order to quickly adapt to the Taiwanese culture, it is critical to be aware of the culture shock and understand the cultural differences in order to solve the problem

of disorientation and reaching the stage of adaptation at an earlier and faster pace.

It is also interesting to note that, although it seems more logical to believe that East-Asian American students should reach adaptation at an earlier time due to their similar Asian heritage, it is in fact the opposite since the non-East-Asian American students were aware of the culture shock at a sooner point in time. But, of course there are exceptions for both cases of East-Asian Americans and non-East-Asian Americans because ultimately, in order to quickly become accustomed to the Taiwanese culture, the individual must face the shock and disorientation stages with an optimistic, understanding and accepting mind.



Taking a closer look at both the acculturation procession timelines, it illustrates that both groups Anticipation before and after their arrival to Taiwan. However, East-Asian

Americans tend to experience a longer period of culture shock compared to non-East-Asian Americans simply because East-Asian American students lack the awareness for culture shock. Consequently, due to their denial to experiencing culture shock, East-Asian American students typically accept the fact that culture shock indeed exists when they encounter disorientation. Taken as a whole, it is the lack of awareness for culture shock that caused East-Asian Americans to reach the adaptation stage at a later time.

5.3 ACCULTURATION AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Culture and language comes hand-in-hand, and from observing the American CIEE students, it is apparent that within the homogenous group of American students, two distinct groups of American students underwent the stages of acculturation at different points in time. When the American students were divided into two groups of East-Asian Americans and non-East-Asian Americans, it is evident that East-Asian American students reached the realization of culture shock at a later time than non-East-Asian Americans, which resulted in the East-Asian American students reaching the adaptation stage earlier. However, it is also vital to explore how language plays an important part in this acculturation process to better understand the significance of cultural adaptation to effectively and successfully acquire the Mandarin language. It is suggested that while both groups went through all four stages, the key element for students to reach adaptation to the new culture and ultimately productively and happily acquire the Mandarin language is to become aware of the culture shock they experienced.

Therefore, section 5.3.1 will explore into the advantages and disadvantages of acculturating to a new culture and how it can ultimately benefit language acquisition. Furthermore, section 5.3.2 will go in depth to illustrate American CIEE students' progress and language related issues during their Mandarin language acquisition.

5.3.1 ACCULTURATION ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

“Language learning is shaped by the personal and political traditions that have been created by People.” (Scovel: 41) Therefore, I believe that all CIEE students go through the acculturation process and that the acculturation process in fact helps students effectively acquire a new language. However, the degree of influence from cultural adaptation differs according to each student’s attitude and motivation in continuing to learn Mandarin Chinese. When I say acculturation advantages and disadvantages, I mean how being accustomed to a culture can become an advantage or disadvantage to learning a new language. Likewise, in the idea of culture, the concept discussed is in the view of the culture shock encounter. Below, I have organized a few main culture shocks that CIEE students experienced into two categories: (1) Language related, and (2) Non-language related. Regardless of which categories students underwent, both categories contributed to building stress and disorientation to students as they encountered them. However, language related culture shocks typically instigated disadvantages for the students’ language acquisition, while non-language related culture shocks facilitated students in accepting Taiwanese culture and acted as an advantage for students to confidently acquire Mandarin.

Culture Shock

Language Related	Non-language Related
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bargaining● Taiwan-Chinese (台灣國語)● Language power struggle● Gossiping● Different interests in topics● Taiwanese people’s speech nuances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Countless scooters● Traffic congestion● Squatting toilets● Taiwanese food● Mosquitoes● Conservative culture

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Musical garbage trucks ● Openness of homosexuals ● Modern idea of female gender role ● Crowdedness ● Pervasive 7-11s and bubble tea stands ● University dorms ● Skinny girls (all the clothing sizes are too small) ● A whole duck or chicken on a plate ● Importance of dressing up for school
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According to Bates (2005), “Cultural shock is a state of disorientation that can come over anyone who has been thrust into unknown surroundings, away from one’s comfort zone.” When students came across the Chinese custom of bargaining and meeting with people who speak indirectly in what they want to express, they usually find it unfamiliar and do not understand why they speak in this manner. They are confused when the Taiwanese speak English to them when Chinese is spoken back to them. The constant gossip and not being able to find similar interests with the locals quickly became a problem as they settled into their Taiwanese surroundings. This disorientation can become a disadvantage to students learning a second language because it causes them to become discouraged, even skeptical about why they are learning Mandarin. Most CIEE students created a distance between the Taiwanese, which didn’t allow them to practice Chinese in a realistic situation. Moreover, going to class became just like going to a language class back in the States; there is no improvement and they were given additional stress. As a result, running into cultural differences created problems that not only affected students’ mentally and socially, but more importantly influenced their motivation and interest in effectively

acquiring the Mandarin language.

Nonetheless “Adaptation,” the final step CIEE students arrive in generally becomes an advantage for students. Shocks they stumble across can also be an advantage as long as they learn to accept cultural differences and adapt to the new culture. It is noticeable that students began to gradually accept the cultural difference when they sympathize and understand the history, sociology and economy situation of Taiwan. After taking another requirement course, “Topics on Modern *Taiwanese* Culture and Society,” and visiting well-known historic sites in Taiwan, students began to slowly understand and familiarize themselves with the cultural difference. The effect of understanding not only gave them knowledge of another culture; it also allowed them to discover that these differences are actually acceptable and not as nerve-racking as they once thought it was.

5.3.2 LANGUAGE ACQUISITION TIMELINE

In order to understand CIEE students’ course of Mandarin acquisition, it is important to take a look at the language acquisition timeline from students’ arrival to Taiwan, settlement in Taiwan, socialization with the locals, and finally acculturation. Via semi-formal meetings and participation-observations, students were able to comfortably talk about their experiences and anything else they had on their mind. Therefore, the timeline also illustrates the progress of their culture shock and pinpoints when they started to feel comfortable in Taiwan.

Arriving in Taiwan: First Impression

Students’ first impression of Taiwan usually begins with awe and disbelief. Although everyone’s level of shock differs, each student has something strange, unfamiliar and even unacceptable that they want to talk about. Examples of culture shock are listed in the non-language related section.

Settling in:

Settling in was a difficult task for some CIEE students. It created disorientation, stress and discouragement in learning Chinese. Students went from being overly excited about making new friends, to creating a social distance between them and the Taiwanese. Settling in took time and during that time, learning Mandarin became a burden which, made the students want to escape the problems they had encountered.

Socializing with the Locals:

After students settled into the environment that they first felt uncomfortable in, they gradually became accustomed to some Chinese norms and began to realize that accepting the differences in culture and blending in with the locals actually may help them in improving their Chinese speaking and listening skills which in turn assisted them in conversing with the Taiwanese with more ease. The shock they once had was lightened and taken care of with appreciation and tolerance.

Acculturation:

Acquisition of a language involves being able to intermingle with the locals and understand the cultural differences. Understanding the culture also helps in tolerating the new culture and eventually becomes a benefit for acquiring the language of the target culture.

Analyses of various types of culture shocks by dividing them into language related and non-language related gives a thorough illustration of how each of the two types of culture shock affected the students' Mandarin learning. Language related culture shock shows a more direct connection with the influence it has on the students' motivation in learning Mandarin. When they realized that bargaining in night markets was a common sight in Taiwan, it either frustrated them because they are not able to use the native language to perform the act or it encouraged them to speak. Similarly, while the non-language related section does not seem at all associated with language learning, it in fact plays an important

role in student's psychological adaption to the culture and ultimately influences the student's motivation and continuation in learning the target language.

5.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Learning a new language is neither fast nor easy. Thus, for the American CIEE students to study Mandarin in Taiwan for an extended period of time is beneficial for cultural understanding and language acquisition. In addition, it is proposed that American students typically experience the acculturation phases during their stay in Taiwan. Although the phases were experienced by all students, East-Asian American CIEE students go through the culture shock stage at a later time, which caused them to reach the adaptation stage at a sooner point in time. Moreover, while studying abroad in Taiwan, students were also faced with advantages and disadvantages influenced by culture shock. In this chapter, a few key culture shocks are organized and grouped into language related and non-language related; each affects students' language learning either directly or indirectly and ultimately is linked with acculturation.

Since acculturation is the work of minimizing social distance, in order to successfully learn a language, it is essential for any second language learner to adapt to the target culture in order to successfully acquire the target language. Due to misunderstanding and intolerance of culture differences, CIEE students studying abroad in Taiwan found stumbling across culture shock to be a disadvantage at first. However, as they took classes on Taiwanese culture and society, as well as visited historical sites, they became more understanding of the difference in culture and accepted the Taiwan way. The acceptance of a new and unfamiliar culture may be difficult at first, but time and appreciation of variations are not only beneficial for their mental stress, it also encourages and provides a stronger interest for students to productively learn Mandarin.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 BEFORE CLOSING

Just before leaving the country, the ‘shock’ finally ends. Leaving home and traveling to a new country to study can be stressful at first. However, if the individual stays aware of the shock, experiencing such shocks may transform into the birth of wonderful surprises and experiences which adds color to life. As mentioned earlier in chapter one, this ethnographic research has been exploring into influences of the many culture shocks undergone by American students of CIEE. Some strived to learn the exotic language of Mandarin because of interest, while others wanted to learn because it is part of their heritage. Nevertheless, despite their varied motives to acquiring Mandarin Chinese, American students of diverse backgrounds were compelled to discover the Taiwanese culture as they concentrate on learning the language. Throughout the three semesters of researching, analyzing and observing the American CIEE students, I had the pleasure of becoming one of their close lifetime friends. The fact is that I have very much enjoyed doing my fieldwork and learned a lot about the efforts of acculturation and language acquisition. Additionally, I am glad that by the end of each semester, all of the CIEE students ended up being in love with Taiwan, and even vowed to return to Taiwan.

On the other hand, toward the end of the ‘shock,’ it is imperative for me to offer conclusions and implications of my research, which will be presented in section 6.2. Following, in section 6.3, I will discuss the contributions and the limitations of the current study. At last, the final chapter of this thesis will end with a few closing remarks in section 6.4.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Time, as frequently mentioned before, is an essential key for anyone to become familiar with something that is non-native, and is especially necessary for those learning a new language. Therefore, many authors wrote books to assist foreigners on overcoming culture shock when studying or traveling abroad. Most agree that despite planned trips, anyone traveling to a new, foreign country will undeniably, more or less, encounter culture shock. However, in the case of studying abroad in Taiwan, after closely examining CIEE students' living conditions, habits and issues relating to culture shock I have come to the following conclusions:

1. Despite distinctive cultural backgrounds, American CIEE students, in general, underwent the following acculturation phases: anticipation, culture shock, disorientation and adaptation; this also carries the connotation that they all experienced culture shock, but the duration of the shocks differs.
2. It is apparent that non East-Asian American CIEE students come to the realization of experiencing culture shock immediately, whereas among the East-Asian American CIEE students, the realization of culture shock was delayed until they were faced with disorientation. This ultimately led the East-Asian American CIEE students to a later cultural adaptation, as well as a delayed success of Mandarin language acquisition.
3. Awareness of culture shock has impacted the advancement of American CIEE students' Mandarin acquisition. This implies that non East-Asian American students are able to concentrate and diligently learn Mandarin at an earlier stage, whereas East-Asian American CIEE students tend to complain about the difficulties of learning Chinese. At the same time, they were lacking the ability to focus, to quickly and effectively acquire the Mandarin language.
4. Although there are disadvantages to experiencing culture shock, those disadvantages

eventually adjust into advantages for students in acculturating in the Taiwanese culture while acquiring the Mandarin language.

Although these conclusions are only facts illustrating the course of American CIEE students' acculturation and language acquisition development in Taiwan, there are a few implications that can be obtained from the above conclusions. There are two implications that seem to be adequate for both students and teachers in the second language classroom: the first implication is more correlated to pedagogical implication, while the second applies to American students studying Mandarin in Taiwan, to appreciate the culture relating to the language while acquiring it. All the same, these implications offer suggestion for both teachers and students of Chinese as a second language to learn to understand each others' culture and language through awareness and tolerance.

The first implication is: both the students and teachers of Chinese as a second language should increase their level of culture shock awareness in order to assist the students to overcome cultural issues and effectively acquire Mandarin Chinese. It is already clear that American students in Taiwan encountered numerous issues involving cultural differences, and because of those issues, students often experienced physical and emotion dilemmas that hinder the success of Mandarin acquisition. For that reason, teachers must be able to at least attempt to understand the cultures students originally hold in order to decrease social distance and promote social interaction through acculturation in the classroom. A possible method is applying the cross-cultural understanding methods such as, culture comparison and cultural connection strategies in the language training classroom curriculums. For example, for a lesson plan that focuses on Taiwanese food, the teacher may compare eating celery with peanut butter and eating bamboo shoots with mayonnaises by allowing the students to try the food in class. Another lesson plan may be on traditional practices, where the teacher may describe the differences between Taiwanese and American weddings by allowing students to see video clips, or act out a skit to

experience it personally. These methods imply that teachers should utilize the notion of culture-learning in a second language classroom to better assist students in learning Mandarin. With the social distance between the two cultures minimized, the teacher and the students will be able to reach mutual cultural understanding, which in turn will help the teacher to assist students in effectively and cheerfully acquiring the language.

Finally, as more and more American students decide to study abroad in Taiwan, they should be especially advised to bring with them open-mindedness and positive attitudes. Likewise, students should also be prepared for the worst because they may be faced with “strange” cultural behaviors, unusual social ideologies and different points of view. Although different individuals hold various degrees and types of motivation, amounts of empathy, forms of anxiety, and the likes, it is vital that a person possess a flexible, tolerant and patient attitude toward culture shock. Thus, students should be informed that culture shock is normal, and that in order to quickly overcome the culture shock, possessing an optimistic mind is a necessity to be able to have fun, learn, acculturate, and successfully acquire language skills.

From the ethnographic perspective, it is suggested that tolerance and understanding during the progress of learning a new language and a new culture is a must. Because language and culture mutually influence one another in the language acquisition process, both the teachers and the students should be open-minded and eager to explore into the social and cultural differences to reach a mutual understanding.

6.3 CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

At last, it is important to mention the contributions and limitations of this thesis. Overall, the ethnographic research of this paper played an important role in helping Chinese teachers to comprehensively assist students in learning the Mandarin language in

the classroom, and allowing students to enjoy learning the language. Consequently, I hope to contribute to the educational field of teaching and learning Chinese as a second language. As an Asian American student who was and is still improving language skills in Taiwan, I encountered mixed feelings when working on to improve my Chinese in the classroom. I only wished that perhaps my teacher at the time was able to understand why I was feeling frustrated and discouraged at times. Currently, working toward becoming a Chinese language teacher in the States, I wish to create fun, beneficial and cultural comparative lesson plans to incorporate into the language classroom practicum, which would not only help American students learn the language, but to understand the culture as well.

On the other hand, since American students typically encounter stress and disorientation due to culture shock in Taiwan, I also wish to contribute to the issue of culture shock. Having stayed in Taiwan for nearly two years, I have to admit that, as modern and new as the Taipei city is now; it is still extremely different compared to the living conditions in America. Taiwan is a place of contradiction; where it is easy to spot traditional architectures and practices, yet it is also natural to notice fashion shops and designer products from all over the world. Although Taiwan is a contemporary country, foreigners who arrive to a new environment, may still experience the feeling of culture shock. For that reason, I hope that Americans who travel to Taiwan will learn to enjoy their stay, despite cultural differences that may cause inconveniences or stress. Additionally, I would like for them to realize that encountering culture shock is common and that the next step is acceptance and understanding the new culture.

Nevertheless, there are still some limitations to this fieldwork project. As a result, due to time restrictions, and a limited number of participants and survey responses, I was only able to infer my current theory about acculturation and Mandarin acquisition accordingly. Having been studying in Taiwan for two years, I was only able to carry out my observation on three semesters of CIEE students, and even though I had activity participated in many

CIEE events and students' own activities, I was unable to participate in the majority of the activities planned by the students. As a result, I was still not able to build closer relationships with all of the students, and when the surveys were given out for CIEE students to complete, only 70% of them were returned. Having noticed that the data collected is from a limited number of students, the findings were mostly based on East-Asian American students. Moreover, there are few researches that explored into the topics of culture shock relating to Mandarin language acquisition, thus I was not able to refer to other scholars' study that are similar to my topic.

Furthermore, it is important and beneficial if there are further researches on the pedagogical aspect of assisting American students in Chinese as a second language classroom. Topics that perhaps provide specific methods of combining culture learning and language acquisition would be something that may help teachers and students to effectively teach and learn a second language.

6.4 CLOSING REMARKS

The “shock” finally ends here with the end of my thesis and the end of an extraordinary Mandarin language learning experience for both the CIEE students and me. Yet on the contrary, the end of the study abroad trip is also the beginning of brighter journeys that broadens horizons. For this reason, studying abroad and adapting to an unfamiliar culture not only allowed students to effectively acquire new information about others, but it also gave students a chance to learn about themselves. Education abroad nourishes patience, endurance and open-mindedness, and thus the best weapons against culture shock in a learner's arsenal are patience, tolerance, and a good smile.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:

Sample Survey Questions

Mandarin Language Learning Survey

Part I

Name _____

Directions: Please answer the following questions that inquire about your foreign language background, traveling experience, and association with the Taiwanese.

1. What is your ethnic background?
2. Were any languages other than English regularly spoken in your home while you were growing up?
 Yes No
a) If yes, what are they?
4. Have you had any prior knowledge about the Chinese or Taiwanese culture before coming to Taiwan?
 Yes No
If yes, please explain.

5. How long did you study Mandarin Chinese for before coming to Taiwan? (Formal education: Chinese school/high school/university, etc)

a)

6. What was your motivation for learning Mandarin Chinese?

7. Why did you want to study in Taiwan?

Part II

Directions: Please select the best answer for each question.



	1	2	3	4	5
	Frightened	Nervous	Indifferent	Content	Excited
1. Before arriving to Taiwan, what were your feeling toward the thought of studying in Taiwan?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. How did you feel about meeting and interacting with people not from your home country?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. How did you feel about assimilating into Taiwanese culture?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

1. What were your reactions after arriving to Taiwan?

- Uncomfortable Confused Indifferent Integrated

2. Did you experience any cultural shock? Any at all?

- Yes No

a) If yes, when did you realize you are experiencing cultural shock? Beginning, middle or towards the end of the semester?

3. Did you suffer from confusion due to cultural shock?

- Yes No

4. What was the degree of Cultural Shock: weak, mild, strong?

- Weak Mild Strong

5. Did cultural shock affect your feelings toward Taiwan?

- Yes No

6. Please describe the type of cultural shock you had experienced during your stay in Taiwan.

Part III ↓

↓

Directions: Please answer the following questions that inquire about your language learning experience and adaption to Taiwanese customs. ↵

1. Have you ever had the thought of giving up learning Mandarin? ↵

Yes No ↵

a) If yes, what made you feel this way? ↵

2. What were your feelings toward Taiwanese culture after the studying abroad experience? ↵

Detached from the culture Uninterested Indifferent Fascinated ↵

Other _____ ↵

3. What do you think is unique or different about Taiwan? ↵



Thank you for your participation. Have a great day! ↵

APPENDIX 2:

Selected articles from CIEE Newsletter written by CIEE students



Orientation week has been a blur. I can't believe we have only been here a week. It feels like so much longer but it also seems like it went by so fast, probably because every day was packed with new experiences. I would say my time in Taiwan so far has been defined by meeting new people and trying new food. Among the things I have eaten for the first time include quail eggs, duck blood, stinky tofu, snail, and snake, which tasted surprising good and similar to chicken. It has been fun to explore Taipei. I like being in a city, which is a big change from the location of my college back home, in the middle of the wheat fields. There is so much going on here all the time, people are out and about and everything stays open late. My favorite thing so far has been visiting the various night markets. I love how crowded and exciting they are, full of inexpensive shopping and food, and an excellent place for people watching; three of my favorite things. It has been nice to get out of the city some as well, visiting the Maokong tea shop was peaceful and refreshing, and the streets of Jiufen were very picturesque with their cobblestone steps and strings of red lanterns. Everyone on my program has been very friendly so far. I am especially glad to have gotten to know our cultural ambassadors. They are super enthusiastic and funny, and have also been so willing to assist us in any way possible. I'm really grateful they have been here; it made the potentially awkward transition to living in a new culture much easier and even enjoyable. Overall, I'm pretty much convinced that living here is great. I'm already plotting ways to stay here for the summer and I look forward to many more adventures this semester.

-Mara



This first week (ish) has been a great opportunity to look at Taiwan through a different lens than I ever had before. I had studied in Xiamen, mainland China, where Taiwanese independence is seen as silly or dangerous, and reunification a foregone conclusion. I had heard that the two sides of the strait were culturally identical, the only difference being the political situation. This has proven to be less than completely true.

Certainly there are many cultural similarities.

The local language is the same, the temples are South Chinese in style, and most Taiwanese people are descended from South Chinese immigrants. But there are stark differences as well. In Taipei, Japanese kana are a very common sight. People dress more like the Japanese (that is, they are more concerned with fashion), and the city is much cleaner than even Xiamen had been.

I am excited to learn more about Taiwan and its cultural identity, something that the CIEE classes will hopefully cover in detail. I am very accustomed to mainland Chinese culture, so I hope to learn many new things. I know that it is premature to say as much, but I feel that Taipei is a city I could happily live and work in.

-Ryan

Hello everyone! Having heard my Taiwanese college friends praise Taiwan numerous times, I am finally here! The first week was challenging because I was not expecting toilets that require squatting and two inches thick mattresses. Fortunately, the NCCU's student ambassadors' welcoming and helpful attitudes lessen my discomforts. I am so grateful for their eagerness to assist each of the CIEE participants and the time they spent with us traveling to a number of different sites.



During orientation week, we visited several popular sites in Taipei, including Longshan Temple, National Palace Museum, Shilin, Maokong etc. Of all the places we went, my favorite is Jioufan, which is quite far from NCCU but definitely worth the long bus and train rides! Although it was drizzling and very foggy that day, I really enjoyed walking down the narrow streets and sampling food, especially sweets, from each stand or shop. There are a number of interesting shops in Jioufan and they offer unique

souvenirs, gifts, or just items that I have never seen before. That day, I, along with the other student ambassadors and CIEE participants, ate sweet rice balls of different colors, ice cream and peanuts wrapped in a thin wrap, gigantic sausages which supposedly came from mountain boars, different flavored corn-on-a-stick, yummy cream puffs, and a number of other dishes! Besides the amazing food I had, I really enjoyed the conversations I had with the ambassadors, who patiently answered my questions and taught me how to pronounce many words. Thank you student ambassadors!

Although only two weeks or so have passed, I have already saw, learned, and experienced so much. Yet, I know that Taipei has so much more to offer. So, I am eager to spend the next few months exploring Taipei and venturing into other regions of Taiwan and immersing myself into the Taiwanese culture!

-Chow, Wai Yan Anna

My first week in Taiwan has been amazing! It was definitely worth the excruciating flights to get here. The CIEE ambassadors have been great! I would have gotten lost so many times had it not been for their help. Orientation has been a lot of fun. In just a week, I have gotten to eat so much good food (with the exception of the betelnut☺), seen some incredible places like Jioufen and Shilin Night Market, and I have even seen the president of Taiwan in person! I am excited to start classes this week so I can improve my Chinese and maybe eventually be able to read a menu in a restaurant. I can't wait to see what the next 4 months have in store!



-Tom



Click to decrease the magnification of the entire page

if you take a look at the photo located conspicuously near this article you shall have a visual demonstration of my Taiwan Motto. Oh yes, the trip has been epic enough so far to deserve a Motto. Frankly, I'm a little undecided as to my experiences here so far. I visited Taiwan the year prior to studying abroad to have a rip roaring world adventure with a travel-companion of mine. I fell in love with this country immediately.

CIEE Orientation week has been a mixed bag. I'm glad to have met my peers, ecstatic to know the bus schedules and campus layout, pleased by the "free" food, and mightily impressed by our awesome student ambassadors. However, the most fun that I've had has been after the trips. Traveling around in packs of foreigners definitely garners a modicum of attention around here, even in Taipei where you see one (obvious) foreigner in about ten people. Orientation week exposed me to places that I have and will continue to visit again; it is fascinating to gauge the change in experience in the same settings when you become just another face in the crowd rather than a group of oddities. That is to say, it's fun to go from being the local entertainment to being a local! I'm diving right in to my Taiwan experience and I can't thank CIEE enough for making my dream possible!

-Courtney

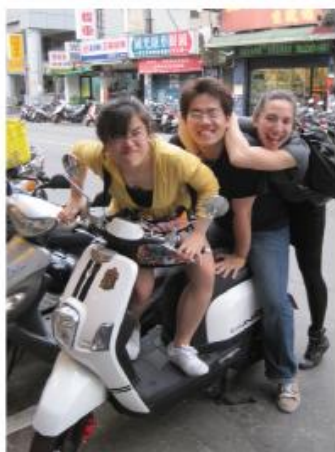
I've only been in Taiwan for less than two weeks and already I feel like I want to live here! The small and intimate environment of Taipei is appealing, the food is affordable and delicious, the people are hospitable and friendly and the CIEE staff and participants are amazing! I was initially very anxious about orientation week, simply because this was my first time in a country in which the native language wasn't English. I was nervous about meeting new people, navigating around the city and the intensive Chinese language class I am now taking. Fortunately, orientation week was much more than what I had originally expected...I simply can't imagine myself choosing elsewhere to study abroad.

I've ventured to so many places in just a little over a week, including several tea houses, Shilin & Shida Night Markets, Ximending shopping center, Longshan Temple, the National Palace Museum and the 228 Memorial Museum. I felt extremely lucky during my entire time here so far...not only was I able to sit in on a speech made by President Ma Ying-Jeou at the 228 Memorial Museum, I also had the chance to personally see my favorite 帥哥歌手羅志祥 outside a CD store my first time going to central Taipei ☺!

Everything has been going very smoothly for me in every way possible, but socially and academically. I have a very unique group of friends here whose friendship I'll treasure and I easily found a level-appropriate class that's taught by a fun and patient teacher. The CIEE staff here is amazing; they are more than willing to go the extra mile in helping us out and making us feel well-adjusted. Lastly, I want to give a shout out to the super awesome cultural ambassadors! Without them, I don't think I would've felt as welcomed and eager about the rest of the semester as I do now. They are understanding, crazy (in the most endearing and loving way possible) and super sweet, I really do hope we remain 好朋友 s forever!

Despite how tired I was from jetlag, I never felt like I wanted to skip out on anything during orientation week. Each day filled me up with bubbling excitement and I felt like there just wasn't enough time for me to soak in everything around me. I was and still am very curious about everything there is to see and do here and I can't wait for whatever awaits me the rest of this semester. I love the intensity of my cultural immersion so far and I still have so much more to look forward to, whee ☺!

-Cynthia Kuang 鄭丹娜



台
灣

**CIEE TAIPEI
NEWSLETTER**

2010 Fall

二〇一〇年秋季班





6

Marjorie Rivera (Wesleyan University)

I came to Taiwan with the subconscious expectation that it would be like the mainland. I waited for others to stare and shout at me. I anticipated being made to feel as though I was a source of curiosity. Instead, Christie, Sandy, and the rest of the CIEE team have done a marvelous job to make me feel welcome.

I'm so happy to be studying in a place surrounded by beautiful mountains inhabited by people who are polite and friendly. Our cultural ambassadors have been fearless and dedicated, trudging with us through the rain in Taizhong, dancing with us until 3AM, making sure we know our way around Taipei so we can reproduce the adventures we've had with them over the last two weeks. Taipei is a bit of a paradoxical place: full of life, color, and people, yet relaxed, unhurried, and regulated. I look forward to exploring Taiwan more over the course of this semester with my improved language skills and new friends.



Karan Rowe (The Pennsylvania State University)

Hello from the beautiful country of Taiwan! It has been a whirlwind of a time during these past two weeks with having seen and done so much. As I sat here contemplating what I should write, the thought of an ode had occurred. Not a day passes by without there being something that catches my eye and makes me smile and think, oh Taiwan, only you could pull this off. So, instead of boring you with an ode, I will instead tell of the many joys that have made my days here much more enjoyable.



Where to begin? The ambassadors are beyond gracious and I am truly grateful for such wonderful people. Having the opportunity to be able to call these people my friends is something I will never take for granted. They have graciously taken time out of their schedules to accompany us on our trips so that they could be there to make us feel more comfortable. It is such a huge sigh of relief to be able to ask them for help with anything because they go above and beyond the request. Even when I do not quite understand the words they are saying in Chinese, they are quick to make sure that I do understand. The graciousness of these people and many others in Taiwan is one thing that has given me a lovely impression of the country.

I cannot help but to say that there are so many cute things about Taiwan. There seems to be a trend of cute characters on everything. I cannot help but smile every time I see Hello Kitty, which is basically every store I walk into. Even the large parades of motor scooters makes me smile. Maybe it is because I am a small town girl, or maybe not, but the cuteness of Taiwan is what gets to me the most and makes my days more enjoyable.



Who can forget the food? I typically do not know what I am ordering on a day to day basis due to my lack of Chinese reading skills, but I have not yet had a dish that I do not like. There is quite the abundance and assortment of foods here. I fully enjoy my meals and look forward to what new things I can try here in Taipei. I also fully enjoy the fact that meals are typically under \$3US and the portions are generous. I think I left my worries of getting used to the food here back at home from the very first meal I ate here.

Of course there are downsides to the country such as the lack of garbage cans, toilet paper, and hand soap in the bathrooms, but they are all minor and are doable. There are also other things such as being rushed at stores while paying, and having to be extra cautious when crossing the streets, but once again, all are minor downfalls. In all Taipei has proven to be quite the peaceful city. At least for me, I feel quite relaxed here and at ease. Nobody ever seems to be in a hurry and even the traffic is never that busy. Of course maybe this is due to the heat, but nevertheless I feel Taipei is very laid back. The cleanliness of the city also adds to this tranquility. I am quite proud of my decision to come to Taipei. I do not feel like the course workload will be overbearing because of the atmosphere of the place here. The peacefulness of the city will actually enable me to study without stress. I look forward to what to future has in store for me here in Taipei!

Wing Lam (Whitman College)

Taipei, the Friendly City

There were two things I was repeatedly told before I left for my semester abroad in Taipei, Taiwan to learn Chinese. They were, "You need to go to the night markets!" and "Traffic will not stop for you to cross the street". Now that I have experienced the mouth watering smells that fill the night market air and figured out how to go to the nearby Seven Eleven across that street without the assistance of a local, I know what I would tell the



next person who decides to

study in Taipei in addition to the food and traffic. The people are, simply put, very nice.

I was nervous about going to an island where I did not know anybody or how to speak the local language very well. After spending my last two years in Walla Walla, Washington, where cars stop eight feet away from the intersection and the driver wave

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you across the street with a smile, I was uncertain about the large city. Taipei, with a population of 6,776,264 people, is the largest city in Taiwan and I expected a big city feel of fast paces. In general, people walk at a leisurely pace and the debarking and boarding of the subways is calm and orderly. Although a two lane street quickly becomes four vehicles wide, honking is surprisingly low compared to the bumper-to-bumper traffic of Los Angeles. Although the cultural ambassadors are always helpful in guiding us through everything we need to know to survive over the next few months, I can also rely on the friendliness of strangers. It is not difficult to find someone on the street that will enter in a quick game of charades so I can find my way to the MRT station. Most meals contain an exchange of confused looks between the waiter and me, but the waiter take the time out of her busy work load to combine a helpful amount of hand gestures and simple Chinese words for me to get my desired meal. Taipei has managed to correct my previous misconception of a large city.

However, Taipei still comes with all the benefit of the city. Most places are still open well into the night and there will never be a shortage of new places to eat or store to shop from during my stay. The options seem to be endless with store piled on top of store and prices low compare to the prices in America. The streets are roaring with people and the public transportation is very convenient. Landmarks we visited such as the National Palace Museum, Sun Moon Lake and ZhongTai Monastery have been both beautiful and great cultural experience. All in all, thanks to the ambassadors, the friends I have made here and the locals, I have had a great time discovering this friendly city over the past two weeks.



台灣



Taiwan

Matthew Rowett 羅鑫 (Student)

So far, Taiwan has been an experience. In the past two weeks that I've been here, it feels like I have done so much and met so many new friends. There are no words to describe how different everything is here

compared to my college experience back at home, and I am definitely still adjusting to all the changes. The first few days were filled with the overwhelming sense that I'll be living here for four months, which was both a scary and exciting prospect. But everyone here, and I mean absolutely everyone, has been extremely nice to me to help me out with my dose of

culture shock, and CIEE has made the transition a relatively smooth one. The Cultural Ambassadors have been essential for me in the past couple of weeks, I can honestly say that I have never made friends as fast as I have here. They have become like a second family here, and I know I can rely and depend upon them when need be.

In the past two weeks we have been to so many amazing places that it is hard to keep track of them all. Everything we have done has been a completely new experience for me, from the spectacular hiking in the Taroko gorge, to simply riding the MRT to Huashan Culture Park. I feel like I have never walked so much in my life, but usually the long walks have tasty food at the end. In terms of the living situation here, it has been hard going from my own room in a house to a dorm again, but all of my roommates are great guys and have showed me around the Zhengda area. The only issue I have with Taiwan so far: mosquitoes. As of now, my hand is still the size of a blimp, thanks to the vampiric bloodsuckers that roam around the dorms at night searching for unwary foreigners. But everyone here has been great in helping me combat my mosquito allergies, so much so that I don't think there are any more mosquitoes left in my room. I can't wait to get in a routine of some sort; these past few weeks have been tumultuous and exciting, and physically and mentally exhausting. I'm definitely excited for the adventures to come, and excited to spend more time with my new Taiwanese friends.



Annie Truscott 朱安娜 (Student)

The past two weeks have been a complete whirlwind—I can't decide if it feels like I've been here for a year or just two days. Today was the first day I had more than a couple of hours to myself and when reflecting about my journey to Taiwan and my first couple of weeks here, I realized just how much I am enjoying myself. I am a person that has difficulty dealing with change but the cultural

ambassadors and everyone on my program has made me feel so comfortable and excited to be here. Of course there have been moments of frustration—not

understanding a funny story or forgetting to bring toilet paper with me into the bathroom. However, the majority of my time spent in Taipei has been absolutely fabulous. NCCU is located in a really beautiful area of Taipei and I am glad to be surrounded by mountains again. I am also glad to be living in a big city—getting to the heart of the city isn't too difficult and the MRT train system is efficient and convenient. My home college is located in Walla Walla, an incredibly small town in Eastern Washington and being in a big city has been

wonderfully overwhelming. Walla Walla shuts down around 7. Unlike Walla Walla, Taipei is bustling late at night and has vast array of restaurants, night markets, clubs, and activities to partake in into the wee hours of the morning. I hope I am able to explore both the scenic and downtown areas of Taipei before my time here comes to an end. Classes start tomorrow and after a two-month winter vacation, I am feeling ready to be in a classroom setting and settle into a routine again. I am especially looking forward to gaining more confidence when speaking Chinese! My listening has already improved since being here but I think once I start class, my speaking will also seriously improve. I am incredibly grateful to be here, make new friends, and explore an amazing and progressive city!



Melody Chen 陳美樂 (Student)

Greetings from Taiwan! It's been about 2 weeks since my college life at NCCU began and I've definitely learned a lot about adapting to a different culture and different norms. One of the things that I've learned is that American college

students who live in dorms take things like comfortable beds with mattresses and dumping trash for granted. Here, there are no mattresses on the beds except for a thin futon or cushion that you have to bring yourself. So the beds here are quite hard to sleep on. The dumpster truck also comes every day and you are responsible for taking your own trash out to the

truck. Its little things like this that make me appreciate how comfortable we live in the United States. Our group has also been out to see different sights and attractions around Taiwan. We saw both the urban areas and the scenic areas and how people live in these different areas. One thing that has really surprised me is the amount of international students I see at NCCU and how international the city of Taipei is. Classes are beginning really soon and I hope to be able to make the most of this experience by practicing speaking and writing a lot of Chinese.



APPENDIX 3:

Original transcriptions of CIEE students' reflection journals

3/19

Cynthia and I went out to dinner with Angela, Zoie, and Zoie's new boyfriend. We spoke in Chinese the entire time. It was our first time meeting Zoie's boyfriend so we talked a lot about Taiwanese relationships. ~~But~~ We discussed how relationships in Taiwan are different from those in America. Cynthia and I were under the impression that a lot of Taiwanese girls our age seem much more innocent than American girls. We also learned about how Taiwanese people take relationships seriously and tend to think more in the long term, with possibilities of marriage. It was really interesting to get to discuss dating culture more in depth.

3/19/2010.

今天我跟 Mara 約了 Zoie 和 Angela 一起在四五大街吃晚飯，談了台灣方學生談戀愛的情況。我覺得台灣的方學學生比較天真，也對愛情持比較認真的態度。我有一點好奇，台灣方學學生談戀愛率有多高，也很好奇 relationships on average last for how long... hmmm.

DATE: 3/26/16

On March 26th, I spent two hours with Lynn practicing my speaking in Chinese. We discussed topics such as ^{possibly} a culture shock for an American student coming to Taiwan as well as the status of men and women in the US and Taiwan and how ~~their~~ ^{the} separation of genders here in Taiwan, prior to college, can be both advantageous and troublesome, ~~as~~ as well as the negative aspects of coed school life in the US. It was generally a discussion, in ~~the~~ Chinese, about the differing viewpoints we hold and how these viewpoints originated. Lynn helped to correct a few of my ~~incorrect~~ ^{incorrect} grammar patterns and tones, ~~on top~~ ^{on top} of teaching me a few new words to allow me to better express myself in Chinese.

4/28

Angela and I went to get my haircut at OCTI salon on campus. It was interesting to get a Taiwanese haircut, I was impressed by how well they washed/massaged my head as part of it and I felt like they ~~just~~ also included more styling and personal attention than in the States. It was also interesting because they only spoke Chinese so trying to describe how I wanted my hair to look was kind of difficult. But I learned a lot of new vocabulary about haircut, like how to stay "stylish" and to describe lengths, layers and cut. I also felt like it was a good cultural experience to compare getting a haircut in the States to getting a haircut in Taiwan. I'm not sure I really love what I ended up with, but the price was good and the experience was interesting.

3-20-2010 12:00-13:00 w/ Erin & Gwyneth

I had lunch with Gwyneth and Erin today, my two 台大 tutors. They also invited their friend "Rex", a 政大 student, to help us find somewhere to eat. I learned that all three are 大一學生。Erin is from Taoyuan and Gwyneth and Rex are from Penghu. We chatted about Taipei, my studies, tutoring, and life in Taiwan. Oddly, though we spoke all in Chinese, they originally seemed to be under the impression they'd practice English with me. I suppose sometimes English is called for... and if my level were lower - even when I was ~~that~~ two terms ago - they would have more need for English. ... However, sometimes my Chinese is really weird, and they didn't understand. But interestingly, everytime the two 外語系的女生 didn't understand, their friend Rex (中文系) did understand, and would rephrase it so they could follow. Made me feel that perhaps he should come everytime. (That way I could hear how the sentences I say ably SHOULD be pronounced... and do so without having anyone tell me I said it wrong - just the situation would tell me. I feel I'd learn quickly that way.)

1 hr 4/6/10 3:30-4:30

This week was mid terms and I especially needed to look at grammar and everything from our textbook. However, Victor brought an article that was very interesting and I gladly put off my homework for another time. I didn't know a lot of vocab words because the article was taken from a newspaper. As a result the article took our whole hour to read. Aside from this, I am not too satisfied with our meetings because I feel like Victor doesn't like to meet with me. I am not sure why but I think he is very busy and doesn't like to take the time to meet. I am not certain though. Nevertheless the pressure I get from him is not very appreciated. Reading the article today and trying to explain my point of view he was constantly saying "快一點". I do not want to inconvenience him or take his time and if he needs this tutoring time perhaps he could be a little more patient, as I am also very busy.

Ok. So the final exam is coming up and I want a final exam review sheet. I asked during class about the possibility of a review sheet and recieved an answer from the laoshi of "just look over Chapters 1-12 in the book". Not at all helpful.

I want:

1. A list of vocabulary/specific chapters of vocabulary she is going to test us on (we've learned over 350+ words- we need some direction).
2. I want a list of sentence structers or grammar we are expected to know WITH EXAMPLES. At least list what pages/chapters she wants us to focus on reviewing. Saying "Oh whatever we did for chapters 6-12" is not an answer and then adding "but some of them are strange and we don't use them" confuses me and does not give me an adequete review base.
3. A written sheet outlining the structure of the test. Saying "oh it's like the midterm" doesn't tell me anything. I failed the midterm and I don't remember it- I need a clear set of instructions.
4. A set of example questions for the essay/written section would be GREATLY APPRECIATED but not required.

I cannot pursue this with her any farther without sounding hostile so please mediate for me and find someway to help me understand what is expected of me on the Final Exam. And no, answers of "Whatever was in the book" or "What we went over in class" are not helpful and will only frusterate me further.

This is URGENT and something I would appreciate acted on sooner rather than later.

September 21, 2010 9:30-11:30am @ Chinese Language Center

This first meeting left me very frustrated. I know my Chinese speaking skills are not the best, and I went into this hoping to better my skills. My tutor, Gini, is very nice and I like her very much, but from the beginning I had the worst time trying to understand her. Any words she spoke I found myself having to ask her to repeat herself multiple times just to understand one sentence. She uses a lot of uncommon vocabulary that I am not used to, and her wording of her sentences is above my level. I really needed for her to speak easier Chinese for my sake. I was surprised by my asking her to repeat herself numerous times and frequently telling her I don't understand her words, that she didn't make it easier. I felt the whole meeting was unproductive and I left feeling very frustrated and upset. I did not know if I would be able to improve on my speaking at all while I was with Gini. I feel her Chinese is more so for an advanced speaker, not a beginner like me.

During our session together she asked me what I wanted to improve upon the most to which I responded with speaking. She asked for my homework and wanted to go over it but I did not need any help with it so we moved on to speaking. Our conversations were not very successful due to the aforementioned reasons. I felt like she didn't listen very well to me either. Anytime she used words I didn't know and I explained I didn't understand, she would try to explain the meaning in Chinese, but I still couldn't understand her explanation. She would continue to use the same word and I continued to get frustrated, feeling like I wasn't getting the practice I needed.

Before I even got to the meeting location, I actually was lost. We talked several times on the phone so I could try to find where she was, but I was unable to understand what she was saying in Chinese. I tried to use English but she persisted in using Chinese so it took me a long time until I finally figured out where she was. I was a little bit frustrated that she couldn't help me out when I said I honestly could not understand her over the phone.

October 13, 2010

Vaka and I went to the girl's dorm lounge again to get ready for my midterm. Because I have been having trouble on my tests with tones, she wanted to help me out, so she had taken my previous tests tone section and typed them up separately for me to review. After I went through the sentence and wrote the tones, she would correct them and I'd try again, sometimes with her reading out loud.

It ended up helping me a lot, I think, because she had me focus a little bit more on the more common words that were likely to show up more often.

September 24th, 2010 – Sabrina, 1 hour

I really feel like I am off to a great start in Taiwan. I haven't figured a couple of things out yet (like how to write this journal), but I can 慢慢來, right? Anyway, I've been finding the lectures very interesting, as they have opened my eyes to areas of East Asian culture that I haven't studied yet back in New York, having only selected my major (East Asian studies) last spring. I have found that being exposed to new ideas about Taiwanese culture while having the opportunity to live and immerse myself in Taiwanese society has been incredibly exciting and rewarding. Every day I am able to notice some piece of Taiwanese culture that one of our lectures somehow relates to, and it always makes me think more carefully about everything that is going on around me and its significance in the world of cultural studies.

October 3rd, 2010 – Maggie, 1 hour

Maggie and I met for lunch at the Malaysian restaurant outside of Zhengda today. Ellen, my assigned tutor, hates me and decided to neglect me! Consequently, I have sweet talked Maggie into tutoring me every now and then when she has free time. Maggie is such a good-hearted person, and it really brightens my day when I spend time with her, but she speaks *so fast* and I find it really difficult to understand her most of the time. I need to decide whether this is something I can get used to and will eventually help my Chinese, or if she is better suited to be a tutor for a more advanced speaker (i.e. not me) (i.e. her actual tutee).

On Thursday, November 4, I met with Christine in the cafeteria across the street from my dorm. I didn't go to Chinese class that day or the day before, so we went over the grammar that that lesson covered. We also went over some phrases from my speech that I had written for the speaking contest the next day. Neither of us was in particularly high spirits. I was groggy and steeped in culture shock, and Christine had a cold. It was raining, as per usual. When Christine asked me what was the matter, I initially offered my platitude of "I hate the rain", then opened up a little about how difficult things were to consistently navigate my life in my second language. She seemed to understand. "I think you need a break from Taiwan," she said. I suggested that the next time we met, that we did something fun, like go to the movies or shopping because I was sick of going over grammar. Christine was very amenable to that plan.

Friday, November 12. Christine and I met in front of Taipei 101. We decided to spend the afternoon window shopping and chatting. Christine is also interested in going to New York after completing her master's program. I told her about life in New York, and I told her what I really thought of Taiwanese culture during the three months I have been living here. It's been a mixture of good and bad, exciting and dull, and ahem, sunshine and rain. I've felt free to ask anything I want about Taiwanese culture in our bilingual classes, but I've tried to keep my true opinions closer to the vest. I don't want to make the cultural faux pas of causing my hosts here in Taiwan to lose face because I'm cranky about the rain.

Christine, however, seems to be thicker-skinned and more open-minded than most Taiwanese. She reminds me a lot of myself six months ago, when I was bored and irritated with my life in America and longed for something new. She laughed when I told her my observations about Taiwanese culture, and I fielded questions from her about my own. I almost broke down into tears when I saw a shop selling sandwiches made from Western-style bread. I've passed from acute culture shock to a resonating homesickness.

We wandered around the mall, looking at the overpriced merchandise and chatting. We walked for a very long time, and stopped and ate (well, I stopped and ate. Christine said she was on a diet.) when we got tired. I was relieved to find a place where I can walk around and have nothing expected of me. I also deeply enjoyed Christine's company, and I then understood that the term "cultural exchange" is a largely overused and poorly understood concept. It's an awkward term, largely because it implies that cultures are so different we will always have to keep exchanging to fully understand each other. But the human experience is a shared one. Boredom, frustration, love, loss, longing, desire, language, death, life and everything in between happens to all of us, no matter where we live.

I had to run to catch the bus back home, so I didn't have time to tell Christine how much I enjoyed talking to her, and that I hoped she would come to New York next year. It would certainly be interesting to see her the way she sees me now, homesick and culture shocked...but never happier and more satisfied.

It was just as well. Emotional goodbyes aren't really very Taiwanese anyway.

11/2

The speaking and listening is coming along. We based our conversation around a drink I got at 7/11 before meeting her. This drink was a fruit drink and we looked at the list of ingredients together. This conversation consisted of April telling me things and then me forgetting. Luckily the exact same word comes up again later on in our conversations. April

looks at me expectedly. She can tell by my facial expression that I am thinking of a word that I already know. After making various ahhh, buuu, xiii sounds I will finally give in to ask her for the word again in English. She grins with disappointment and nods as she tells me how to say the word one more time. Embarrassed, I quickly move on to finish my point and move on to the next fruit on the list.

11/4

I had a test today and we worked on tones. This was boring and I hate tones. I have already known this from the past, but April was very nice to me and said that she didn't think I was not that bad. She is lying because I get most of them wrong and her response is always 差不多對了! These is nothing much to report for this reflection because that was really it. Tones.

9/16/2010

Today, I met up with Molly after class. Because both she and I feel that I am able to do homework on my own and not have trouble with it, we decided that it is better if our tutoring sessions consisted more of lessons dealing with Taiwanese lifestyle and perfecting my speaking. Today, we had lunch together, and I learned how to order in Taiwan, which is very different from ordering food in America. I enjoyed being able to choose lunch from a tab and then taking the tab up to the counter. After lunch, we went to look through the student clubs fair on campus. Molly explained to me what each organization did and I found out that although some were similar to the organizations in the U.S., there were many clubs that I haven't heard of before at the university back at home. For example, I do not think that my university in America would allow a cocktail club, but there is definitely one on this campus. I also tried to learn Taiwanese from Molly today, but as it turns out, I have forgotten most of the phrases. However, I did do a lot of speaking today, and whenever I did not know how to say something or pronounced it incorrectly, Molly would correct me. By doing this, I think my Mandarin will improve a lot in time.

Day 2

I was late again because I thought we were meeting at a different time. Again, we went over different part of the texts that I didn't understand... so all in all, it was helpful. Afterwards, we talked about different places in Taiwan that are worth going to. Now, I really want to go to hualien, or the eastern part of Taiwan. It kind of seems that during the winter, however, it's not as fun to travel around Taiwan. We also talked a bit about the differences in culture in the east and west coast of the US, using different members of CIEE as examples (Marjorie as a New Yorker, etc). I feel like so far, all our tutoring sessions have been very academic. We've spent a lot of time on the textbook (because I need it, obviously). I do think, however, that I should work on some of my conversational

skills... but I guess it's hard to do both within one session. Perhaps I just need to do more preparation with the textbook before going to tutoring sessions.

Day 13

Something I recently realized that I'm very unused to is separation for recycling. I'm so used to just throwing things away, so when people tell me to take off the plastic coverings of my boba and throw it away separately from the cup, after I've already thrown away the two together, I always feel very embarrassed. Truthfully, I feel that recycling is a good thing. It's definitely something that we should emphasize more in the US. However, I'm not used to it, and I don't think I will ever get used to it, especially considering that my time in Taiwan is so short.

3/22/2011

Today I went over the last couple pages of idioms in my textbook with Alice. We then started talking about how Asian girls don't like to get tan and like to stay pale while American girls like to get tan. We also talked about the usage of cell phones among males and females. We also read more from the entertainment section in the newspaper.

May 10th – Spoke to Christine for an hour about boys. I was despairing that I would never find one suitable to my tastes in Taiwan. In spite of the late hour, we conducted the conversation (mostly) in Chinese.

March 16, 2011

During my tutoring session with Enni, we mostly covered questions that arose from my homework. It was extremely helpful to have someone explain the grammar points in English (my Chinese teacher only speaks to us in Chinese, which is good but sometimes I leave class feeling a tiny, tiny bit confused). My reading and writing skills are not too bad but I get really nervous when speaking so next time, I think it might be more beneficial to practice my casual conversation skills. I often need to remind myself that I am still adjusting to life here and it is okay to ask people to repeat themselves or to speak slower. Mostly, I just need to remember to practice patience with myself. I think for my next tutoring session it might be helpful to go out to a restaurant to practice ordering (and explaining that I'm a vegetarian).

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