
The Cultural Shock Phenomenon of Chinese People in Indonesia: A Case Study of Cross-cultural Communication

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ABSTRACT

Cultural exchanges between China and Indonesia have also begun to increase year by year. More and more Chinese companies and people are coming to Indonesia to invest and work. Due to differences in values, social norms, cultural norms, and customs between China and Indonesia, Chinese newcomers to Indonesia will feel a cultural shock. This research, hence, aims to present the psychological pain points that exhibit in the cross-cultural communication among Indonesian Chinese people through case studies by analyzing the language and cultural differences between China and Indonesia. The results have revealed a number of differences in language and culture between China and Indonesia. Finally, it is expected that these findings help both Chinese and Indonesian people to avoid cultural conflicts, better engage in cultural and educational exchange activities, and increase the probability of success in cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: Cultural shock, Cross-cultural communication, cultural exchange

I. Introduction

With the increasing frequency of cross national and cross-cultural exchanges, cultural exchanges between China and Indonesia have also begun to increase year by year. More and more Chinese companies and people are coming to Indonesia to invest and work. Due to differences in values, social norms, cultural norms, and customs between China and Indonesia, Chinese newcomers to Indonesia often feel lost in their unfamiliar environment and find it difficult to adapt to their current environment. At this point, there will be a so-called "cultural shock". So what are the typical scenarios in which Chinese people working and living in Indonesia experience "cultural shock"? Based on this issue, the author interviewed 20 friends and colleagues who work and live in Indonesia, and presented the psychological "pain points" exhibited in cross-cultural communication among Indonesian Chinese people in the form of case studies, analyzing the language and cultural differences between China and Indonesia.

II. Research Method

This article belongs to qualitative research. Qualitative research is the process of obtaining a comprehensive and profound understanding of things through in-depth, detailed, and long-term experiential investigation and analysis in the interactive relationship between researchers and subjects. "(Chen Xiangming, 1996) Generally, it uses methods such as on-site experience, open interviews, participatory and non-participatory observations, literature analysis, and case studies to conduct in-depth, detailed, and long-term research on social phenomena in a natural environment. By analyzing cases, this study aims to address the issue of cultural shock among Chinese people living and working in Indonesia. The method of data collection in this study is deep interview. Through communication with 20 Chinese people who have lived and worked in Indonesia, real stories of their experiences are recorded to understand the cultural shock problems they have encountered, as well as the "pain points" they are not accustomed to and adapt to psychologically, and to summarize the differences between Chinese and Indonesian cultures.

III. Discussion

Culture shock is a term coined in the mid-20th century. The creator of this term, Kalervo Oberg defined it as: "Cultural shock is caused by the anxiety resulting from losing all our familiar signs and symbols when we move to a new environment". (Oberg,1960) Based on Oberg's research, William Samlley believes that the symptoms of cultural shock are emotional disorders caused by inability to adapt to a new cultural environment. The cause is the loss of familiar scenes and meanings in social life and communication (Smalley, W. A., 1963). Cultural shock is characterized by a series of psychological or physiological problems such as depression, headaches, irritability, homesickness, loneliness, fear of socializing, unfamiliarity, and refusal to learn a new language. (Duan Jifang, 2018). There are some symptoms of cultural shock, such as "excessive concern over cleanliness and the feeling that what is new and strange is 'dirty' ; feeling of helplessness and a desire for dependence on long-term residents of one's own nationality; irritation over delays and other minor frustrations out of proportion to their causes; delay

and outright refusal to learn the language of the host country; excessive fear of being cheated, robbed, or injured; great concern over minor pains and irruption of the skin; and finally, that terrible longing to be back home, to be in familiar surroundings, to visit ones' relatives, and, in general, to talk to people who really 'make sense'" These symptoms can be cured throng adjustment day by day.

3.1 Cultural shock caused by language barriers

Language is a tool for communication and a carrier of culture. If one person wants to integrate into a new culture, he/she must first learn its language. Chinese belongs to the Sino Tibetan language family, while Indonesian is the Austronesian language family. Chinese people are accustomed to using Chinese characters for thinking, while Indonesian is an alphabetic language that can be read directly. The pronunciation systems of Chinese and Indonesian are very different. For example, the letter R is pronounced in Chinese[z] but [r] in Indonesian. Chinese people find it difficult to pronounce this sound. For example, in Indonesian, the two different consonants b and p have the ability to distinguish meaning, while in Chinese, they do not.

Here are two interesting things that happened while learning Indonesian. The first one is the story of Anjing(Bahasa Indonesia).

During her mandarin class, Teacher Li saw the students making a lot of noise, so she said “安静(ān jìng)”. The students suddenly stopped speaking. Teacher Li thinks that they understood Chinese. The fact is actually not. 'Anjing' in Indonesian language means 'dog', while in Chinese language it mean 'quiet'. The students didn't understand Chinese, they just heard the teacher say it was a dog and felt strange, so they stopped speaking. Later, teacher Li told the students that the Chinese explanation this story made all the students laugh. From this story, we can now that some word with the same pronunciation has completely different meanings in Chinese and Indonesian. This fact makes Chinese people who have just learned Indonesian feel interesting and helpless.

The second story takes place at Lokon Middle School which located in Tomohon city, North Sulawesi province, where Teacher Zhang named this story ' ramput' (Bahasa Indonesia). There is a lot of grass in the yard where Teacher Zhang lives, and she wants the school to find workers to help hoe the grass. He said

to the principal, 'pak, bisa bantu potong rambut?'. The principal was confused, and the principal thought she was going to have her hair cut. Later, teacher Zhang said, 'di halaman belakang, ada banyak rambut'. This time, because the principal heard the word 'halaman' which means yard in Indonesian language, he has just realized that teacher Zhang wants to hoe the grass in the yard. Finally, teacher Zhang knows the reason and feels blushed and shy.

Chinese people who first arrive in Indonesia may experience feelings of joy, surprise, loss, embarrassment, and helplessness during the process of learning Indonesian language. These 'symptoms' of cultural shock caused by language barriers. After one to two years of learning, this state will become better and better. The language failure will be replaced by cultural and customary discomfort.

3.2 Cultural shock caused by different eating habits

Although both China and Indonesia are located in Asia, there are significant differences in food culture. In addition to differences in food and etiquette, the most obvious difference between Chinese and Indonesian cuisine lies in whether the dining methods are "separate meals" or "shared meals". The banquet space in Indonesia is similar to that in the West, with mostly narrow and long square tables (excluding Chinese restaurants), making it difficult for diners to access food from the far end. Therefore, it is necessary to divide the food into smaller portions in advance and then provide them to diners. So the dietary organization model in Indonesia is 'individual', with diners having relatively independent control over their own food. In contrast, China uses round tables or old-fashioned square table for eight people, where the distance between each individual and the dishes in the middle of the table is equal, this type of dinner table makes eating more "fair". In addition, the feeding process is a "sharing" process, which connects the entire table of people's bodies through the division of food. Therefore, "co eating" can also be seen as a metaphorical behavior of intimate interpersonal relationships, reflecting the Chinese people's emphasis on a harmonious and lively eating atmosphere, and their emphasis on the "whole" in the dietary space. It should be said that the two different dietary methods are actually close to the dietary customs of their respective dietary subjects, and there is essentially no difference between high and low. (Lin Haicong, 2015)

The most important difference between China and Indonesia in their dining habits is the difference in tableware. Mr. Lin described such a story: My Indonesian friend invited me to have grilled chicken. I still remember the name of the roast chicken restaurant --- Ayam Goreng Sulawesi. At the restaurant, grilled chicken, chicken soup, and rice were all served, but there were no chopsticks. He asked his Indonesian friend, "How do we eat it without chopsticks?" The Indonesian friendly said, "Eat it with your hands." "Ah? Eat it with hands? How can we do it?" The Indonesian friend patiently taught him how to bring his four fingers together to pick up the rice. After a meal of learning, Mr Li finally got it. This is his first time eating with his hands, she felt particularly uncomfortable, but in order to integrate into the local community and make friends with Indonesians, they still worked hard to learn and adapt.

Chinese people use chopsticks in the eating process, and what they need is the coordination between a pair of chopsticks, physicist Li Zhengdao once said, "These two simple things utilize the lever principle of physics. They can do anything that the hand can do, it can be said to be an extension of their fingers. They are not afraid of high temperatures or cold. It is truly amazing!" Eating food with hands is also a way of life and a culture, and Indians believe that human hands are cleaner than external objects. Most people in the Arab Islamic culture and Indian cultural circle eat with their hands. In the words of the Indian poet Tagore, it is a personal experience of nature, and one must have a firsthand experience of nature. Only by directly using a part of the body to touch nature can one feel intimate. (Zhai Haichao, 2018)

3.3 Cultural shock caused by different hospitality customs

This is my own personal experience. In November 2010, I went abroad for the first time, and Indonesia was the first country I visited. A friend and I took a plane from Guangzhou and passed through Jakarta to Makassar. At that time, the person who received us was Dean of the faculty of Literature, Hasanuddin University. The first meal he took us to eat was at 'Rumah Makan Padang'. When the dishes were stacked one by one, I was stunned. I thought to myself, 'do Indonesian people treat like this? Can they finish eating so much? Later, after the dean's explanation, I just realized that customers can take whatever they want and as much as they want.

The restaurant only counts the cost of what they have eaten, and food they haven't eaten will not be counted.

This is completely different from treating people in China. In China, if you invite people to eat, you must choose a good restaurant and order a lot of dishes. The table is full of chicken, duck, fish, and meat, and the quantity of food is more than the quantity consumed. This is all determined by the Chinese people's ideology of saving face. Chinese people can be frugal towards themselves, but they are quite generous towards customers and friends. In terms of the custom of inviting guests, Chinese usually order the food as much as possible, which is wasteful, while Indonesian just order meals as they needed and not waste the food.

3.4 Cultural shock caused by different time concepts

Chinese people have a strong sense of time. There is an ancient Chinese saying that goes, "An inch of time is an inch of gold, and an inch of gold cannot buy an inch of time". If there is an appointment with someone, Chinese people also like to arrive early and on time. But in Indonesia, it's different. There is a case where a Chinese teacher Mr Fang came to the classroom according to the class schedule, but he found that the students were not there. He waited in the classroom for half an hour. At that time, he was very angry. He told the students to be on time in the next time, but when the next class came, some students still couldn't arrive on time. The students also felt that the teacher's requirements were too strict, and other Indonesian teachers wouldn't demand them like that. A semester has passed, and Mr Fang has started to adapt to this situation. When he comes to class, he deliberately arrives 15 minutes late, waiting for these students.

In such a cross-cultural communication case, at the beginning, Chinese people followed China's punctual time view, while Indonesian people followed Indonesia's relatively punctual time view. Both are correct, but misunderstandings only occur when people from two different cultural backgrounds come into contact, causing both parties to feel anxious and uncomfortable. It wasn't until both parties understood each other's time perception that they began to slowly adapt to each other and make changes in their actions.

3.5 Cultural shock caused by different pace of life

The different pace of life between China and Indonesia can also make Chinese people who come to Indonesia feel confused and helpless. A teacher named Mr. Zhao described that when he first arrived in Indonesia, he didn't know the pace of life. He would continue to use the Chinese pace of life - that is, fast pace, and everything he did was about efficiency. If you ask an Indonesian colleague about something, Chinese people hope to get a quick answer; If documents need to be issued, Chinese people also hope to receive them immediately. He once needed a document to apply for a visa, and he counted with the local staff many times, but the document was not produced. It wasn't until the last day of his visa that he went to the staff again, but the document was not ready yet. So, he was very nervous, afraid that he would be judged as overdue. He waited in the office for the staff to issue the document, and soon the document was ready. He immediately took the document to the airport and bought a plane ticket to Malaysia. At that time, it was only half a day before his visa expired. He said that later, after a few days, he gradually realized that the pace of life and work in Indonesia is not as fast as in China, and they prefer to get things done in a leisurely manner. With the deepening of Indonesia's internationalization, the pace of life in Indonesia has gradually become faster.

This case tells us that in terms of the pace of life, Indonesia has a slow pace of life, while China has a fast pace of life. Chinese people often forget to enjoy the life due to life pressure, human resource competition. When coming to a country with a slow pace of life like Indonesia, Chinese people generally cannot adapt immediately, cannot accept it psychologically, and cultural shock phenomena such as unhappiness and anxiety are also common.

3.6 Cultural shock caused by different tipping habits

Xiao Li, who had just arrived in Indonesia, impatiently described to me, "I'm really not used to spending money everywhere. I have to tip for parking, helping with luggage, cleaning, and tour guides. Why are there so many tips? It's completely different from China

Tip is a form of compensation in the service industry where customers thank service personnel. Tipping first emerged in London in the 18th century. At that

time, due to the large number of diners and the small number of waiters in London restaurants, there was a bowl placed on the table, and there was a note on the edge of the bowl that read: "To Insurance Promptness" means to ensure fast service. This means that if you want to tip a little bit into the bowl, you may prioritize serving, just like market competition, where the higher bidder gets the first offer, Since then, the habit of tipping has become popular.

In Indonesia, the nature of tipping is defined as a reasonable remuneration given by customers to service personnel, which is polite and reflects customers' respect and gratitude for the labor achievements of service personnel, as well as their own good cultivation. It is a manifestation and inheritance of social civilization.

Chinese people usually believe that since the service industry takes the money indirectly paid by consumers, they should provide good services to consumers, so they usually do not pay tips. Chinese waiters may even feel that the tip you give them is a financial insult and are unwilling to accept it. (Wu Baoqin, 2016)

The different tip cultures make Chinese people living and working in Indonesia feel uncomfortable, mainly due to coming into a new environment and being exposed to new values.

In addition, the other Chinese respondent also stated that when they first arrived in Indonesia, they would feel very lonely, without anyone to talk to, and sometimes feel very homesick, wanting to chat with friends and family.

IV. Closing

This article takes Chinese people who work and live in Indonesia as the research object, and uses their personal experiences as the research material. It truthfully reproduces the special psychological reactions and cultural shock of Chinese people when facing different customs and cultures in Indonesia from the aspects of language barriers, dining habits, hospitality customs, time concepts, pace of life, and tip culture, and try to reveal the differences in language and culture between China and Indonesia. These differences are of great significance for participants in cross-cultural communication between China and Indonesia, as they will guide them to consciously avoid cultural conflicts, better engage in

cultural and educational exchange activities, and increase the probability of success in cross-cultural communication. This will also provide reference and guidance for future cultural exchanges between China and Indonesia, eliminate misunderstandings caused by cultural differences, and enhance mutual learning between the two civilizations.

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