Challenges and Solutions during Intercultural Adaptation Process —A Case Study of Four African Business Officials in China

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Abstract

The contacts between China and African economies are becoming increasingly close in which business officials play a crucial role. Due to cultural differences between China and Africa, African business officials are inevitably faced with many challenges during intercultural adaptation process. By adopting qualitative research method, this paper aims to investigate the challenges and identify solutions through close observation and in-depth interview. Meanwhile, this paper focuses on the construction, conflict and compromise of multiple identities of African business officials during intercultural adaptation process. The conclusion of the study can help relevant African business officials and Chinese staffs improve their intercultural adaptation competence, thus promoting cooperation between China and Africa.

Keywords

Africa; Business officials; Intercultural adaptation; Identity; Conflict; Compromise

Introduction

The impressive achievements of economic globalization have attracted great attention of people from various fields all over the globe. In the wave of economic globalization, China has played a key role in it since it has become the second largest economy.

The "Belt and Road" Initiative aims to develop economic partnership actively with countries along the belt and road and share interests, destiny and responsibility with political mutual trust, economic integration and cultural inclusion. With its advancement, China has attracted and established close ties with more and more countries from the rest of the world, among which African countries are important allies with China.

China-Africa relationship with sound development can date back to ancient times. The cooperation and communication between China and Africa have great significance for both sides. As for China, investment to Africa can help to expand overseas markets. Meanwhile, it is essential for China to transfer the industrial chain with surplus capacity to relevant African countries in order to effectively alleviate the cost pressure of the overall manufacturing industry. As for Africa, Chinese investment on infrastructure construction and trading helped to enhance economic growth potential of the countries concerned. It is conducive to improving the level of industrialization and urbanization in Africa, providing plenty of employment opportunities for workers, and promoting the improvement of living standards. In view of the complementarity of the economy between the two parties, economic cooperation between China and Africa is essential to accelerate the economic development of them.

In terms of the economic cooperation between the two parties, business officials' influence and impact can never be taken for granted. They are those officials working in government institutions. Their positions are related with cross-border activities such as international trade, international business, customs and so on. Many international business officials come to China to acquire knowledge about public management, human resources and more in the Academy for International Business Officials (AIBO), which is affiliated with the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM). Due to changes of cultural context and identity, challenges arise during intercultural adaptation process. It is essential to understand these challenges and find solutions to improve intercultural management so that it can contribute to the cooperation between China and Africa.
In this study, four African business officials are selected as interviewees. Throughout a case study, data were collected from observation and semi-structured interview. Framed by theories of identity and intercultural adaptation, this study attempts to analyze challenges during their intercultural adaptation process and provide constructive solutions for African business officials, intercultural training organizers and researchers related with this field.

Literature Review

A Review of Culture Studies

By definition, culture is "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morale, laws, custom and any other capabilities and habits as acquired by man as a member of society" (Taylor, 1924). But many scholars thought this definition lacked the material aspect. In 1952, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) made a systematic summary of 164 kinds of culture definition and claimed that culture represents the remarkable achievements of human groups.

As for culture theory, the basic and well-known theory is Iceberg Model of Culture. Its main focus is on the elements of culture as well as the dominant and recessive parts of these elements. This theory reflects how

difficult it is for us to understand people from different cultures since we cannot find the recessive parts of culture iceberg immediately. Although this theory cannot solve the problem, it serves as a starting point for further culture studies. In the following studies, the most classical theory is Hofstede's Model of Cultural Dimensions. His team conducted a large-scale investigation with two rounds of questionnaires about cultural values of employees in IBM. This research focused on differences in values of employees from different countries. With analysis, he classified cultural differences into four basic dimensions—individualism/collectivism, power distance, masculinity/femininity and uncertainty avoidance. With further studies and supplement of Michael H Bond, he added the long-term/short-term orientation and indulgence/restraint to his existing theory.

Based on these theories, some scholars paid their attention to analyzing cultural differences by contrastive study from various perspectives such as movies (Jiang, 2015; Xie, 2015), family education methods, website design, news reports (Xie, 2016; Ge, 2016; Wei, 2018) and so on. It was suggested that culture theories provided good framework for us to understand culture differences between China and other western countries (Zhang, 2017; He, 2015). However, culture undergoes the process of development, so it is of need to strengthen intercultural communications and interactions, and explore new perspective to understand the changing culture differences (Liu & Li, 2016).

In all, culture studies provide a solid foundation for researchers to understand culture differences and conflicts during intercultural interactions. But further studies need to be conducted to keep pace with the changing world and cultures.

Cross-cultural Adaptation

As for the studies of cross-cultural adaptation, there are mainly two strands, which are levels and models of cross-cultural adaptation.

Previous cross-cultural adaptation researches are at collective level. It is defined that cultural adaptation process actually affects both cultures that come into contact with each other, but the degree of impact is different. Generally, it has little influence on the group that has been living in the host culture, but much greater influence on the groups who are new to this cultural environment (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936). Recent decades, psychologists turn their focus on the individual level, emphasizing the impact on psychological process of individuals brought by cross-culture interactions. Kim focused on sojourners. He provided us with several principles concerned with cross-cultural adaptation. It is claimed that the cross-cultural adaptation process is a dynamic process of stress-adaptation-growth (Kim, 2001).

There are mainly four models of cross-cultural adaptation— recuperation model, learning model, dynamic tension reduction model and dialectical model. As for the recuperation model, Lysgarrd used U curve (Lysgarrd, 1955) to describe the development stages of cross-cultural adaptation. For a sojourner, he will experience the honeymoon stage, the crisis stage, the adjustment stage and adaptation stage (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). From the crisis stage to adaptation stage, it shows the trend that can help a sojourner become a multicultural person. Mansell (1981) divided the emotional experience of sojourners in cross-cultural adaptation process into four development dimensions: alienation, marginalization, acculturation and duality.

At last, the sojourners also achieved the recuperation during cross-cultural adaptation. Learning model holds that cross-cultural adaptation is a process of learning and acquiring the culture and customs of host culture (Triandis, 1986). It can be divided into three dimensions— premise, process and conclusion of transformation (Taylor, 1994). As for the dynamic tension reduction model, it regards cross-cultural adaptation as a dynamic process to reduce uncertainty or stress. The subjective adjustment model (Torbiorn, 1982) supposes that satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the cultural experience of the country of sojourners will change the relationship between their views, behavior and environment. A satisfactory experience will help to achieve cross-cultural adaptation, and vice versa. The dialectical model describes cross-cultural adaptation process as a cyclical, continuous and interactive process (Anderson, 1994). This model is an improvement of previous studies, regarding drive force or motivation as incentives for sojourners to learn to adapt to new cultures. With the cyclical problem-solving process, sojourners achieve self-development and rebirth to some extent (Kim, 2003; Chen & Starosta, 2005; Anderson, 1994).

To sum up, previous cross-cultural adaptation studies provide us with abundant theoretical foundations for further studies. However, some of the claims fail to update with the dynamic status quo in contemporary society.

Intercultural Management

Intercultural management study is an emerging marginal subject. Generally, intercultural management study mainly contains the following three aspects—cross-cultural conflicts and culture integration of multinational corporations, cross-cultural intelligence and training, and intercultural management practice.

It is found that about 30%-40% of multinational corporations are not successful due to intercultural conflicts (Liu & Jing, 2006). Scholars have explored the reasons of conflicts based on relevant culture theories. Corporate culture difference is one of the most important reasons (Ouchi, 1981). As a result, culture integration, culture innovation strategy and equal communication should be adopted (Lin, 2019).

Nowadays, talents with global leadership are in urgent demand in our country (Ready, 2008), so we need to cultivate talents with cross-cultural intelligence. However, this cross-cultural intelligence and intercultural working competence surly cannot be improved by working in multinational companies only (Selmer, 2002; Barham & Oates, 1991). Therefore, cross-cultural training should also be attached importance to. Some scholars come up with the cross-cultural training guidance system, including knowledge cognition and empirical skills (Fan & Zhang, 2003). Besides, foreign teachers and international student management is also one aspect concerned in China (Lu, 2019).

Management practice is also a perspective for scholars to study intercultural management. Management practices range from strategy planning, human resource management, to marketing and promotion. As for strategy, it is claimed that the essence of strategy can be divided into controllability and adaptability (Daft & Weick, 1984). As for human resource management, Fan thought that establishing performance management support system can effectively improve HRM (Fan, 2019). And for marketing, it is concluded that using various promotion channels and localization marketing strategy can effectively promote marketing quality for multinational corporations (Li, 2018).

In all, intercultural management contains various fields while lacking an integration model to analyze it. What's more, its focus is mainly on the natioanl and organizational level but lack the micro analysis of individuals.

Summary of Previous Studies

According to the above literature review, previous studies have laid a solid foundation for further intercultural studies. But at the same time, it is found some imperfections of previous studies.

First, most studies, especially cross-cultural adaptation studies, are long-term orientation. By long-term investigation, scholars tried to sum up general theories or principles that can be applied to real practices while ignoring people who study or travel abroad for a short term.

Second, few studies have turned their attention to Africa. Most studies are concerned about cultural differences between China and western countries or foreign students and teachers from western countries. But in view of the fact that Africa is becoming an essential force for global economy, it's significant to understand intercultural interaction challenges of Africa.

Third, in terms of research subjects, it is found that the majority are common employees, enterprise managers, consumers, sojourners and foreign students and teachers. Few studies have noticed government business officials, who will make great contribution to cooperation between countries.

Last, as for the research methodology, plenty of studies use quantitative analysis, lacking well-grained analysis, that is, qualitative research. Quantitative analysis can offer us a complete picture of current study direction, but the exploration of deep reason is what it lacks.

Therefore, this paper will focus on the challenges faced by African business officials, who experienced a short-term intercultural adaptation process. Through daily observation and in-depth interviews, the author intends to answer the following four research questions:

A. What experiences in China make them feel satisfied?
B. What experiences in China make them feel frustrated?
C. What's the reason of their satisfaction about their experiences?
D. What's the reason of their frustration about their experiences?

Reserch Theory

Culture, language and Identity

Culture is the total sum of material and spiritual properties created and handed down generation by generation. The culture context can influence one's daily practices and performance (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). For a person growing up in particular places and cultural or social contexts, cultural identity and

national identity gradually form under the influences of culture (Ai, 2017).

Language is the sound of transmitting information. It is the main expression way for people to communicate. Language is the carrier of information as well as culture and a tool of preserving and transmitting the fruits of culture. Language and culture are connected with each other (Mikula, 2008).

In essence, identity is to express our understanding about who we are and who others are, and others' understanding about themselves and others (Jenkins, 2004). It is also connected with sameness and difference (Barker, 2008), that is, people in the same cultural and social group have the same identity, but on account of personal reasons, everyone's identity is different from each other. Besides, identity construction is in the process of language learning and will change as cultural and social context changes. It's concluded that identity is "constructed, multiple and dynamic" (Ha, 2007). Given cultural and social context differences, for one person, each identity constructed in different cultural and social contexts may conflict with each other (Schwandt, 2001), which means we need to negotiate and make compromise sometimes, so identity work is an ongoing process (Ai, 2017).

Hybrid Identity Construction

Actually, the degree of intercultural adaptation is related with the degree of identity changes when moving to a new cultural context (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005). Between your own cultural context and the new cultural context, there exists "a third space" (Soja, 1996). This is a space in which identity tends to accomplish transformation and reconstruction (Bhabha, 1994). If one is familiar with new cultural context, identity change is likely to be easy, as a result, intercultural adaptation process may be shorter and easier, and vice versa. It is acknowledged that intercultural adaptation is not harmonious and smooth, which accompanies with challenges and conflicts. People moving to a new culture are likely to experience honeymoon stage, the crisis stage, the adjustment stage and adaptation stage these four stages (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Especially at the crisis stage, complex identity changes and crisis are likely to be experienced, since people tend to recognize the significance of identity when it is threatened (Lawler, 2008). To deal with them, people need to adapt to the changes during the process of negotiation and compromise, and then they will remake their identities and achieve hybrid identity construction.

Hybrid identity is the unity of different identities and cultural traditions (Martin & Nakayama, 2007). In the era of globalization, the common phenomenon of intercultural interactions emphasizes the significance of negotiating with one's multiple identities and sometimes making proper compromise, thus accomplishing hybrid identity construction when facing identity challenges and crisis.

Research Methodology

Qualitative Research Method

With the purpose of profound cognition of the challenges and solutions during intercultural adaptation process, this paper uses the qualitative research method. Qualitative research method is "the systematic

collection, organization, and interpretation of textual material derived from talk or conversation" (Malterud, 2001). Generally, qualitative research is considered to be well-grained and a robust tool for scholars when exploring deep reasons, like psychological factors, of existing research problems as experienced by individuals.

By definition, case study is one kind of qualitative research method, as analyzing and presenting data collected from a person or several individuals through observation, interview and narrative and so on. This case study intends to find challenges and solutions during short-term intercultural adaptation process, as a result of which this study selected four African business officials who studied in AIBO for about one month as the research subjects and collected data from daily observation and semi-structured interview, hoping to provide a systematic and rigorous analysis with the goal of offering constructive solutions.

Data Collection and Analysis

This case study collected data from daily observation and semi-structured interview. The most obvious advantage of observation is that we can obtain data and observe the phenomenon which is happening directly and timely, without any other intermediate link. Therefore, the observed data are quite convincing. Moreover, under natural conditions, vivid data can also be obtained. Besides, observation can collect some unspoken materials for further deep studies. When working with these four business officials, the researcher had daily interactions with them, so that daily observation turned out to be convenient and convincing.

Though observation can collect data, spoken mediums are the most common forms of data collection. This study conducted a semi-structured interview with the four business officials together. Different from structured interview, semi-structured interview use questions that is pre-determined, but the interviewer can raise some potential follow-up questions relevant to research theme according to present circumstances during the interview. This method offers enough and flexible space for interviewer to explore a topic deeply and comprehensively (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). And most of the interview questions in this study are open-ended, so these officials can express their opinions more freely. The interview data were recorded and transcribed after the interview for further analysis.

This study tries to analyze the data centering on the following questions: what experiences make them satisfied or frustrated? And what's the reason of satisfaction and frustration?

Analysis and Discussion

To protect the privacy of the four African business officials, they were given pseudonyms as A, B, C and D.

Satisfying Experiences in China

At the beginning, question that what do they think of China was raised to describe a general picture of their impression about China. They expressed their appreciation to Chinese infrastructure construction, Chinese people and so on. For example, in the interview, B and C recalled their experiences when they landed on

China, and the infrastructure construction has made great impression on them.

You know infrastructure is always, you know, amazing. ...I like Beijing. I like the city. So it's wonderful city and beautiful city. [B]

What seems, we landed on the airport about three weeks ago. What we saw optimal sixteen kilometers, just indicated that might all fear us that China is set of my countries, so amazing. China has unique scenery. [C]

As can be seen, both B and C expressed their affection for Chinese scenery and infrastructure. They felt curious and surprised when they first came to China, a country with different cultural context from theirs, which is what we call the honeymoon stage in the intercultural adaptation process. And at this stage, they also felt excited about their new identities as learners. Indeed, over the past decades, China has made impressive progress since the reform and opening-up policy was conducted. Generally, we have to acknowledge that these achievements mainly rely upon hard-working Chinese people. Here, B and D expressed their appreciation to Chinese people in the interview.

Certainly, China is a very good role model for developing countries, especially for African countries. Taken as a company science, find that very not easy. I have my studies in the United States that Chinese people are very hard-working, and compared to lots of Africans. You see that whatever job is being our conduct, so Chinese might insure that he does it to the best of his ability. [D]

Just as I said, I had the perspective about China, about coming over here. As you know, and what they are like about the Chinese people is their ethical principles towards life, hard work and the outreach to developing countries, wanting to share technology and help develop. [B]

Influenced by traditional culture and values, Chinese people are hard-working and serious about what they are doing. This cultural value has been handed down generation by generation, leaving a good impression on foreigners about Chinese people. Besides this, Chinese people are also willing to share with others to make mutual improvement. These spirits have been welcomed by foreigners like the African business officials. Since their current perceptions about Chinese people are not so different from their perceptions before, this intercultural adaptation process has become relatively easier for them.

For the program, they also held positive attitudes to the benefits they got from it.

I get to know about the program through my father. He introduced me to the program and he asked me to represent him here. So that was the reason I was able to get here. And when I got here, I found it was very interesting, and I really love to participate more, so can I get to know and get more experiences about that. [A]

It's beneficial to me and my company because very important program, I had the opportunity to meet the enterprises that are leading the electricity. [D]

This program is recognized as interesting and beneficial. Just as A said, this program can help her know and get more experiences. Moreover, as a communication channel between them and other business enterprises, this program provided sufficient opportunities for these business officials to meet and learn from entrepreneurs in China.

Apart from this, they also applauded for the excellent performance of interpreters when they participated in business meetings in Dezhou.

> *We were assigned an interpreter; actually each nation was assigned an interpreter. So they were close minded. And when they (other business men) gave their presentation, when we also gave our presentation, they (interpreters) came and helped us exchange discussions.*

Some organizers like Jane also obtained their appreciation for what she did for them.

> *She came and helped us out. ...So in my own estimation, I believe that it's a lively win-win. And I appreciate them very much. ...So to my estimation, it's really in good time all day. That is why even before we to the out to applaud them for what they did, and greet Jane to do more appreciative.*

In the intercultural communication and adaptation process, language, reflecting its own culture, is one considerable barrier, as a result of which the service of providing interpreters for them is appreciated by all of them. Through careful interpretation and suggestions of taboo, interpreters made it easy for business officials to learn knowledge and live in an unfamiliar environment. Meanwhile, when they encountered difficulties, organizers like Jane came to help in time. Intercultural adaptation process then became shorter and the transformation of identity can be easier with the help of interpreters and organizers. So this arrangement made them feel pleasant and satisfied.

Frustrating Experiences in China

This program served as a valuable platform for them to learn something, but the learning process was not always smooth, accompanied with frustrating experiences and challenges. Identifying what makes them feel frustrated can help to improve the arrangement of this program and promote intercultural communications.

For the food arrangement, A expressed her frustration in the interview.

> *If you can go through what I experience, like you say, some of us can eat the food, and some of us love the food, but some people are not like (get used to it). [A]*

In her interview, A expected that we could provide them with some African dish. Grown up in different countries, they have a different taste from Chinese people, which can show the influence of culture. Chinese food, as a reflection of Chinese culture, can help foreigners learn about our culture more comprehensively. However, only offering Chinese food may be improper since some foreigners may not like it. Providing them with Chinese food as well as African dish can not only provide a comfortable and satisfactory environment for them, but also show our principle of embracing differences and communications.

As for the hotel, I don't really know the reason why we keep moving if… Yeah, I want to ask this question why we keep moving from one hotel to the other. [A]

As for hotel arrangement, A also expressed her confusion. In Beijing, different meetings were held in different districts. Taking time into consideration, the organizer arranged hotels in different districts for foreigners so that they could come to the meeting on time and more conveniently. But frequent moving from one hotel to another may frustrate and annoy them subsequently. So for the hotel arrangement, organizers could conduct a survey about foreigners' attitudes to changing hotels in advance and then make a satisfactory plan.

D talked about the quality of hotels, hoping to live in hotels of higher quality.

I believe in life. It is better to stop to the home beginning and happy ending. In the sense, you take me to the hotel that is of higher quality when I start, or let's say middle quality like you want to be three. If I go to high quality hotels…[D]

D's answer shows the impact of identity change brought by cultural and social environment changes. In their home country, they are acknowledged as elites, and when attending meetings, five-star hotels are usually arranged for them. Besides, in some local provinces, five-star hotels are provided as well. But in Beijing, they are the learners. And in view of the budget for foreign-related receptions, the quality of hotels may not meet his previous expectations. This is an embodiment of his inadequate preparations for identity change.

As for the program coordinators, differences in the way they act resulted in these officials' frustration. For instance, A has complained the reason why they were late for a meeting.

If some of them are going to be late, it would be because of him. …if we save our time the more. So get the money is the purpose. Come on. It's just to change money and we are wasting time at that. [A]

A could not understand why the coordinator was unwilling to change the money at once to take the train, even though they were going to be late. In the eyes of A, time is valuable, and they need to change money immediately. The coordinator's way of action annoyed most of them because of being late. This reflected that program coordinators should be properly trained in intercultural communication skills under professional guidance. Program coordinators are people who have direct contact with those officials. Without competent intercultural communication skills, it is hard for them to work well with these foreign officials and promote intercultural communications.

And when talking about visiting Chinese companies, B pointed out one inadequacy.

I would like more information in time. …And you know I was very interested in just getting to know more about them. …They just would want us to see what they want us to see. And they just want us to know what they want us to know.

B explained that he wanted to know more details about the companies they visited in time and learn from them. But the company only showed the content they wanted to share while neglecting these officials' true

needs. So B expected the information offered by the companies could be more detailed.

Reasons of Satisfying Experiences

The satisfactory experiences left an important impression on those officials, which can contribute to promoting intercultural communications. To improve their level of satisfaction, we should learn from the reasons and continue to develop.

> *I'm very impressed, because in my mindset, China is like second class, Well, not compared to places like London, America. …as you know, I'm surprised. [B]*

> *I grew up watching Chinese movies. … It's all about the bad guy and good guy. I like the story line. The movie Forbidden Kingdom was based on Forbidden City. I was really looking forward to visiting the Forbidden City. [B]*

> *And the history of the places, it's really impressive, like having all those idle things for so many years. You can get to certain countries that you cannot find the history there. But this one has been there for thousands of years and it's like it's just been protected. [A]*

From the above information, there are mainly two reasons why they were surprised and impressed when they came to China. First, in B's mindset, China is the second class country. But when he came to China, he was surprised by the great infrastructure construction, which he hadn't imagined before. And A couldn't imagine that things with long history could be protected so well. This feeling is common at the honeymoon stage. Second, there is an identity change. Before they came to China, they knew about China from others or movies, and in this process, they were outsiders. Once they came to China, they were the insiders who experienced the real life in China. This change brings new feelings to them, making them feel satisfied and pleasant.

For the reason of participating in this program, they explained that learning a lot from this program can benefit them in the future.

> *It can benefit me to learn from China, because they so much, I think I can learn from your people, the culture, the well-off life, the living in all. I think I can learn a lot from it. [A]*

> *I didn't know much about the culture, about every foresight concerning Chinese. I was very curious, and wanted to know. And now I know a lot about the Chinese, that I can impart those who don't know much about the Chinese. [B]*

Based on these reasons, it can be found that they regard the program as a learning process, from which they get more knowledge of China, Chinese people and other practical skills. This shows that they have accepted their new identity as learners.

But for D, he regarded the program as not only a process of learning but also a process of doing and

expanding his business.

> *Of course, it's beneficial to me and my company because very important program, I had the opportunity to meet the enterprises that are leading the electricity. And I also have private company. I also made it enterprise that deals the same business and to establish in my country.[D]*

This shows that D has constructed his hybrid identity of learner and businessman. He could learn how Chinese entrepreneurs made their business and then apply what he learned to his own business to generate impressive money.

> *I also realized that Chinese people love themselves, because they love and appreciate themselves, they are obliged to extend their love to other countries. ...Because they are embracing, they are giving out open hands. They have been said into encourage other countries to come and see. I even believe that meaning is fully in Belt and Road Initiative. [D]*

> *And business ways, I would love to do business here with Chinese people. [B]*

As for their attitudes to Chinese people, it can be inferred that, on the one hand, they appreciate the spirits and values of Chinese people influenced by Chinese traditional culture, and on the other hand, they'd like to do business with Chinese people since this can bring a win-win situation for both parties. Their attitudes show that it is significant to inherit excellent traditional culture. Moreover, when they came to a new cultural environment as learners, they still took their previous identity as businessmen in mind. They have constructed a hybrid identity during intercultural adaptation process.

The service of providing an interpreter for each of them in Dezhou was welcomed by them, since they thought that:

> *The lectures are very fantastic. I think the only problem was the language, because when we want to have a Chinese lecture, and we have an interpreter. [B]*

> *Obviously, language is a barrier when it comes to business. That's my opinion. Just like you said that, people who are not well-educated, and those people who don't speak English, then when doing business with them, how do you communicate? [A]*

For them, language is a barrier in intercultural communications. Due to language differences, it was hard for them to understand Chinese lectures very well, and communicating with business people would also be difficult if they did not understand others' true meanings. As a result, providing an interpreter can help to solve the dilemma, bringing conveniences for them in the meantime.

Reasons of Frustrating Experiences

At the same time, knowing about imperfections can contribute to improving the level of satisfaction as well.

...like you can, include an African dish, because most people, you love to try new things for the first maybe for the second time. But you love to have what you used to. So if they come include an African dish. [A]

Not only for Chinese one, because what I observe is (that) each about the food provided is Chinese food. And you know Chinese foods are unique, even the food is not universal. So my suggestion is in the future, you can provide foods that are universal. [D]

As A mentioned, some people love to have what they used to, which is a reflection of culture influence rooted in one's identity, and it is hard to remove. Due to geographic and historic factors, Africans and Chinese have formed their identities with totally different food cultures, and it's hard to change in a short term. When at the crisis stage, these two different cultural identities conflict with each other. That's why A said people love to have what they used to. As for D, he has come to the third stage—adjustment stage. He wondered if there were universal foods that can suit most people. He tried to negotiate with his two identities and even make compromise to form a third identity for the purpose of living in an unfamiliar environment better.

For the hotel arrangement, D held a different attitude from A, he understood the intention of this arrangement.

I believe it is essential for us to move from one hotel to another, because look at the geographic landscape of Beijing, Beijing is so big. [D]

Besides, at first, D was not so satisfied with the quality of arranged hotels, but after hearing the explanation about arrangement difficulty, he showed his understanding as follows:

...What I believe in is that you can't compare capital city to provincial cites every in the country I come for. ...So it's that, it's not new, and it's certain not bad thing to me. I really understand. [D]

This indicates that he has learned to adapt to the cultural and social situation in China well. Intercultural adaptation process is also considered as a process of acquiring and learning the cultural elements of other countries. D, in the adaptation process, familiarized himself with the particular cultural and social context in China and applied his understanding to analyzing the reason of this arrangement. By contrast, A still held the identity as in her home country so that she couldn't accept the arrangement of changing hotels. She was still at the crisis stage. In the process of adaptation, D might do better than A.

Well, it depends…. Superior or inferior is not easy. But as far as I know, we are equal. [C]

I really want to talk to Miss Song, because she is the director here. So if she knows what is going on, I really want to know. [A]

This conflict between A and the program coordinators results from differences in their cognition of their identity position. As C said, in these officials' eyes, they and the working staff are equal, and they should talk with each other at the same level. Therefore, A tried to provide suggestions for coordinators of changing money quickly. However, coordinators treated them as trainees and only followed the guidance of their

directors. This is why A really wanted Miss Song to know about the situation. She wondered if it was Song's guidance. The conflict of identity position reflects the urgent need of providing coordinators with necessary cross-cultural communication training, since identity work is a complex and ongoing process, for which it needs to be treated carefully.

Conclusion

As the research result indicates, intercultural adaptation is a complicated process accompanied with challenges and conflicts. As foreign learners from Africa, the four business officials have encountered challenges brought by cultural differences and identity changes during intercultural adaptation process. To sum up, these challenges partially resulted from their own identity change work, and partially are caused by inadequacies of the organization by program coordinators.

First, some of them, like B and D, have constructed a perfect hybrid identity as both learner and businessman during intercultural adaptation process. But some of them may not get well prepared for learning in China when facing with different cultural and social context. They had difficulty in balancing their two conflicting identities—elite in Arica and learner in China. Therefore, it took them longer period to adapt to the new environment in Chinese cultural context. Second, inadequacy of organization by program coordinators is another reason. On the one hand, lacking of survey about officials' likes and dislikes in advance has created problems for training work. On the other hand, inadequate personnel preparation is also one essential part, which shows in the lacking of enough number of organizers and training of intercultural communication skills for program coordinators.

Based on the analysis, some solutions are provided as follows. For our country, attention should be paid to the inheritance of valuable traditional culture. Meanwhile, movies, books and other art works can also be used as tools of spreading Chinese culture. For foreign learners, they should strengthen their ability of intercultural adaptation. When entering into a new and unfamiliar culture, they should make thorough preparations first, which can shorten the adaptation process. By acquiring and learning cultural elements of other countries, they would gradually adapt to identity changes, balance their conflicting identities and establish their hybrid identities. For organizers, enough organizers should be provided so that every foreign learner could get timely help and guidance, since friendly relationship with people in an unfamiliar cultural context can release their stress and help to adapt to the context more quickly. What's more, it's important to train relevant coordinators in intercultural communication skills and strengthen their awareness of intercultural interactions. Besides, it would be better to provide enough bilingual teachers to avoid fragmented information provided by interpreters. At last, for researchers, active exploration of intercultural communication challenges and solutions is in urgent need, which meets the request of the Belt and Road Initiative, especially in today's globalized and changing world.

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