

A Survey of Foreign Students' Cross-cultural Adaptation in Chongqing Normal University—A Case Study of Sri Lankan Students

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Abstract—Cross-cultural adaptation research is an important part of study for foreign students. With theories of Searle & Ward and John W. Berry, mainly from two aspects: psychological adaptation and social-cultural adaptation, the research investigates Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation in Chongqing Normal University and analyzes the problems of Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation in Chongqing Normal University in four aspects: Chinese reading and vocabulary, communication and exchange, adaptation of learning and teaching styles and knowledge of Chinese culture. Combined with the survey and problems of Sri Lankan students' adaptation, the research will be used to give relevant suggestions to help Sri Lankan students adapt Chinese culture better.

Index Terms—cross-cultural adaptation, Sri Lanka, students, problems, suggestions

I. INTRODUCTION

The research of oversea cross-cultural adaptation firstly came from psychologist Oberg (1960) who put forward the notion "Culture Shock". Then, several representative theories such as U-Curve Hypothesis and W-Curve Hypothesis were put forward by Lysgaard (1995) and Gullahorn (1963) separately. After that, Bochner (1977) came up with Friendship Patterns of Overseas Students: A Functional Model. In 1936, Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits provided the first widely used definition of acculturation as: "Those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (p. 149-152).

Searle and Ward (1990) divided cross-cultural adaptation into two parts: psychological adaptation and social-cultural adaptation. Ward (2004) viewed that, cross-cultural adaptation process actually affects both two different cultures, thus, we should consider from two dimensions: keep the traditional culture & identity orientation and other cultural groups' orientation of the communication (p. 179).

With the development of globalization and the internationalization of higher education, China and Sri Lanka associate closely with each other in aspects of education. Recently, with the increasing numbers of foreign students studying in China, some researchers draw attention to their problems of adapting Chinese (e.g., Yulan Lu, 2000; Hui Chen, 2003; Longyun Lei, & Yiqun Gan, 2004; Leqin Sun, 2009). Under the requirement and development of "One Belt And One Road" strategy put forward in 2013, Chongqing Normal University has set up a Sri Lankan research center, aiming to broaden the channels of international education. By far, there are more than 80 Sri Lankan students studying in Chongqing Normal University.

While, there are few researches investigating Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation in Chongqing. Therefore, the survey takes Sri Lankan students in Chongqing Normal University as an example, aiming to analyze the current situation of Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation in Chongqing. The research mainly focuses on language learning and adaptation of cultural customs, which will enrich the research about Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation, especially in Chongqing. Through the analysis of the survey, the survey found some problems existing in the cross-cultural adaptation of Sri Lankan students in Chongqing and put forward relevant suggestions. It will strengthen the development of education for foreign students in Chongqing and help Sri Lankan students adapt to Chinese and Chongqing culture.

II. RESEARCH METHODS AND SUBJECTS

A. Purpose & Significance & Subjects of the Survey

The survey aims to analyze the current situations of Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation in Chongqing Normal University through a survey thereby finding problems existing in their cross-cultural adaptation, and then putting forward relevant suggestions to help them adapt better in Chongqing. The survey of Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation in Chongqing Normal University responds to the national strategy "One Belt and One Road", and enhances Sri Lankan students' understanding and recognition of Chinese and Chongqing culture. Sri Lankan students in Chongqing Normal University are subjects to be investigated in the survey. There are 80 Sri Lankan students, among which the youngest is 17 years old, the oldest is 28 years old and the average age is 21.5.

B. *Methods & Contents of the Survey*

The survey was mainly conducted by questionnaire. Comprehensive analysis method and statistical analysis are also used in the survey. Based on the social-cultural theory of Searle & Ward and John W. Berry, the questionnaire was designed as 20 single choices, which were divided into two aspects: language learning and cultural customs.

The study was carried out in the middle of October, 2016. The members of the research group were divided into three groups to do the survey. In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the survey, the research used on-site dispatch and on-site recycling in the process of issuing and filling in the questionnaires. With 80 questionnaires distributed and 80 valid questionnaires collected, the effective rate was as high as 100%.

The members of the research group made comprehensive and statistical analysis of the effective samples and then analyzed the current situations and problems of the cross-cultural adaptation of Sri Lankan students in Chongqing Normal University so as to put forward relevant suggestions to help them adapt Chinese culture better.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

A. *Basic Information*

Under the guidance of the instructor, the team members made the comprehensive analysis and statistical analysis and assessed the current situations of cross-cultural adaptation of Sri Lankan students in Chongqing Normal University. Among effective questionnaires which were recycled, the basic information of 80 Sri Lankan students in Chongqing Normal University is shown in table 1:

TABLE 1
BASIC INFORMATION OF SRI LANKAN STUDENTS

Item	Category	Number	Proportion (%)
Gender	Male	24	30
	Female	56	70
Chinese level before coming to China	HSK1-2	19	23.75
	HSK3	13	16.25
	Chinese training or optional courses	37	46.25
	Not at all	11	13.75
Career intention	Homeland	66	82.5
	Chongqing	12	15
	Undetermined	2	2.5

According to analysis of 80 valid questionnaires, the proportion of females studying in Chongqing Normal University is as high as 70%, which demonstrates the gender ratio is unbalanced. On the whole, the Sri Lankan students' Chinese language level is average. There are 16.25% of the students have passed HSK3 examination. And most of the students have participated in Chinese language training or Chinese optional courses before coming to China. However, there are 13.75% of the students whom said they have not learned Chinese before coming to China. It showed that the Sri Lankan students need further improvement in terms of Chinese language as Chinese language learning is critical to their cross-cultural adaptation.

Secondly, up to 82.5% of Sri Lankan students would like to go back to their hometown after graduation, which is beneficial to disseminate Chinese language and Chinese culture, deepen Sri Lankan's understanding of China and enhance the communication and friendship between Sri Lanka and China.

B. *Language Learning*

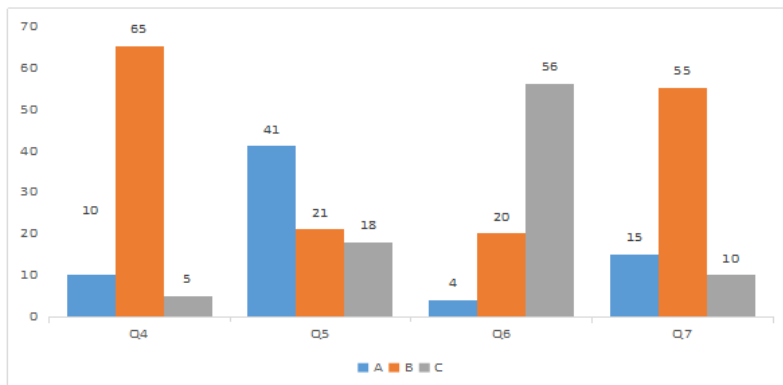


Chart 1 Language learning (Q4-Q7)

As shown in chart 1, up to 93.75% of them think poorly of their Chinese proficiency on question four: Self-assessment of Chinese level while only 6.25% of them consider that they can communicate with others in Chinese fluently. And regarding question 5: I've known () Chinese words, 48.75% of Sri Lankan students who come to study in Chongqing Normal University think they just have mastered 150-300 and 51.25% of them have a better mastery more than 600 Chinese vocabulary. In addition, the options of vocabulary are set strictly in accordance with the requirements of the HSK. Up to 81.25% of the Sri Lankan students are lack of Chinese reading on the seventh question: in daily life, the amount of my Chinese reading is. It can be deduced that Sri Lankan students' quantity of Chinese vocabulary and reading are not enough. However, vocabulary and reading are particularly crucial for language learners. Therefore, students should read more Chinese books and be encouraged to be confident.

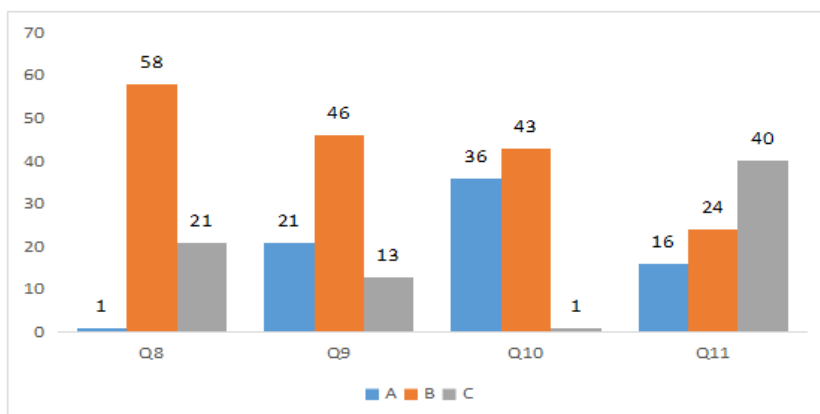


Chart 2 Language learning (Q8-Q11)

On the eighth question “ The knowledge of Chinese grammar()”, according to the survey, 72.5% of the students think that they can understand Chinese grammar in class and even 1.25% of them are completely understandable. Moreover, with regard to question 9: “I think Chinese grammar is ()”, 57.5% of students believe that Chinese grammar is not difficult, and even 16.25% of students believe grammar learning is very easy, which is different from our initial expectations. It reveals that Sri Lankan students grasp the Chinese grammar much better than predicted.

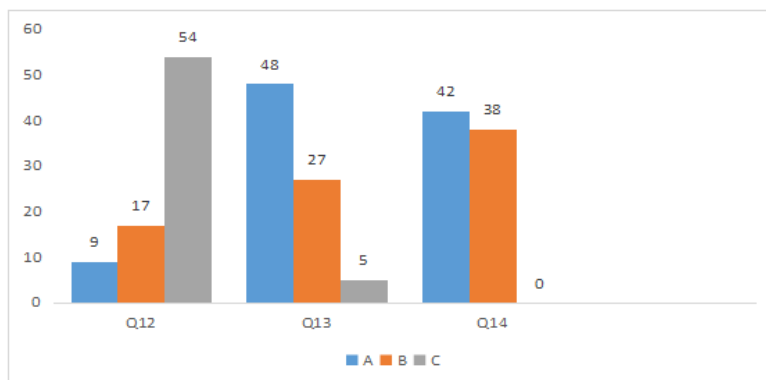


Chart 3 Language learning (Q12-Q14)

All of the students are satisfied with the teaching of Chongqing Normal University on the 14th question in the

questionnaire, “Regarding Chinese language teaching in CQNU, I’m ()”. Up to 60% of them hold that the study pace here is fast, while 6.25% of them take the opposite view that the study pace in CQNU is too slow. The reason may be their different paces of teaching and learning in their homeland before coming to Chongqing.

C. Cross-cultural Adaptation

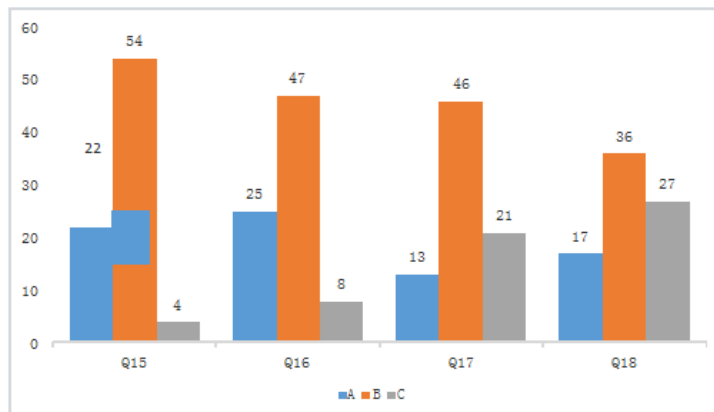


Chart 4 Adaptation of Chinese cultural customs (Q15-Q18)

Language is the carrier and a part of culture. Therefore, to adapt to the Chinese culture better, foreign students need to learn not only the knowledge of Chinese language, but also traditional Chinese culture. Regarding to question 15: Could you understand Chongqing dialect? There are 67.5% of Sri Lankan students who are able to understand some Chongqing dialect, only 5% of them totally don’t understand. It proves that most of Sri Lankan students’ language adaptation is relatively good. In regard to local food, there are 58.75% of the students who have tasted 4 to 6 kinds of local snacks, only 10% of the students tasted almost all kinds of local snacks. The reason for this may with respect to the frequency that they go out. Regarding Chinese traditional festivals and art, 57.5% of the students have knowledge of 4 to 6 traditional festivals, and 45% of the students showed their interests in traditional Chinese art, such as shadow play, drama, etc.

Generally, Sri Lankan students’ knowledge of Chinese cultural customs should be further improved. One of the reasons for this probably is teachers offer them few learning materials and make few interpretations of Chinese and local culture.

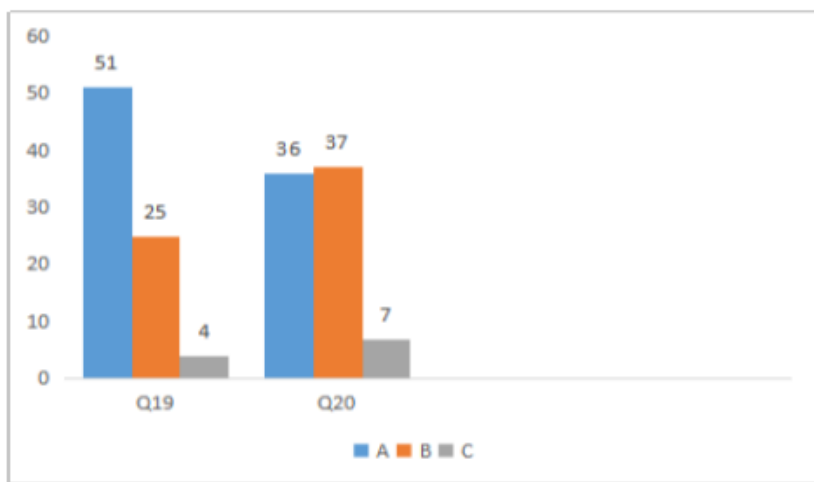


Chart 5 Adaptation of Chinese cultural customs (Q19-Q20)

According to chart 5, 63.75% of Sri Lankan students went to a few local tourist attractions, whereas only 5% of the students went to 6 to 9 or even more spots; Regarding local tourism services, only 8.75% of the students are not satisfied with the service and 45% of them are satisfied.

For the foreign students, learning Chinese is not only about the understanding of Chinese words, grammar and so on but also the knowledge about Chinese culture, customs, local conditions and other factors. Therefore, in Chinese teaching, it is necessary to increase the input of Chinese culture to enhance Sri Lankan students’ knowledge of Chinese and local culture.

D. Main Problems

After the above analysis, the author has found the following questions:

First, the Sri Lankan students don't have enough Chinese vocabulary and reading. Chinese vocabulary and reading are subject to the understanding and mastery of word meaning, collocation, grammar, rhetoric, pragmatic environment and material situations. Moreover, Chinese strokes and pronunciation are so complicated that they lack of confidence in learning Chinese as well as put a burden on their Chinese learning. At the same time, Chinese vocabulary and reading are difficult for them to overcome and difficult for teachers to teach, for instance, how to teach and help students to apply what they learn.

Second, Sri Lankan students are less likely to use Chinese in daily communication and interactive activities. Students can't adapt to communicate with local students in Chongqing. It shows that 50% of the Sri Lankan students are more willing to use their mother tongue to communicate with others and 30% of the students choose to communicate with others in English. Only 20% of the students will use Chinese to communicate. An Ran mentioned that the main reason could be the lack of a good environment and opportunities to use Chinese to communicate. Furthermore, there are too few specific activities for them to apply Chinese knowledge and culture they learned from classes (2015).

Third, students feel it is a little difficult to understand and adapt to the teaching styles and curriculum contents. Some factors may cause Sri Lankan students to fail to follow their study pace: differences in teaching styles between Chinese teachers and foreign teachers, the difficulty of contents of Chinese courses for foreign students. Therefore, they cannot digest the contents of Chinese courses well.

Fourth, the knowledge of Chinese culture and customs for Sri Lankan students is preliminary, and further comprehension should be made in many areas, mainly in the aspects of knowledge and understanding of Chinese traditional festivals and red tourist spots. Only 5% students know 6-9 red tourist attractions in Chongqing. Knowing little knowledge about Chinese culture may due to little involvement in Chinese culture in their learning. And in the aspect of teaching methods, it may lack of vividness and in-depth explanation. Regarding Chongqing Normal University, it has not organized enough activities of Chinese culture or promoted sufficient opportunities and platforms to get to know Chinese traditional culture.

IV. RELEVANT SUGGESTIONS

To solve the problems, the author gives the following suggestions:

First, the Sri Lankan students don't have enough Chinese vocabulary and reading. Suggestions: At first, set up special courses and lectures. Chinese vocabulary after thousands of years of evolution has a variety of forms, like polysemy, homonym and others. As for Sri Lankan students, their learning difficulties in this area can be imagined. Therefore, regarding these problems, the university should set up special vocabulary and reading courses and give academic lectures, teaching Chinese history and culture, simple lexical collocation and learning methods so that gradually expanding their interests in Chinese vocabulary and cognition of reading. Then, carry out plans of Chinese learning in each class. If Sri Lankan students lack an effective management, it will greatly reduce their Chinese learning achievements. According to this situation, each student should set up their own vocabulary and reading task weekly or monthly with teachers' direction. Having completed a stage of the plan, they will get reward which will arouse their interest in learning Chinese vocabulary and reading. Besides, Chinese teachers should also help the Sri Lankan students to summarize the classification of words so as to expand students' vocabulary.

Second, Sri Lankan students are less likely to use Chinese to communicate in daily life and in interactive activities. Suggestions: during the teaching process, teachers are supposed to encourage students to use Chinese to answer questions and discuss in groups. For example, after analyzing a poem in class, the teacher can ask students to express their own feelings by using Chinese. In the teaching design, there should be more games about Chinese and Chinese culture. For example, a game named Describe and Guess. The rule of this game is that two students are in one group, one describes the picture which is about Chinese culture in Chinese and the other should guess what is in that picture so as to attractive students to learn and speak Chinese happily.

As Lu Wei (2015) suggests, outside the classroom, there could be interactive activities between Sri Lankan students and local students. Teachers can organize some local students whose Chinese and English are good and set up a voluntary association to hold some interesting interactive activities between foreign students and local students. During the activities, there is only Chinese can be used except for explaining the rules. These ways can be used to encourage students to use Chinese to communicate with local students in Chongqing. There should be more Chinese communicative activities such as meetings where they can share some interesting things or experiences by speaking Chinese such as some travelling experiences. Moreover, teachers can organize and hold some Chinese language contests, such as telling Chinese stories, Chinese debate competition, singing Chinese songs and so on. In these ways, students will be encouraged to practice and use Chinese to communicate as much as possible.

Third, students feel a little difficult to understand and adapt to the teaching styles and curriculum contents. Suggestions: Based on the present situation and the problems, this paper analyzes the main courses offered by the Chinese Language Department of Chongqing Normal University, aiming at proposing better strategies for Sri Lankan students. The courses offered for Sri Lankan students include "Modern Chinese", "Selected Readings of Ancient Chinese Literature", "Mandarin", and "Calligraphy". And this paper mainly takes the course of "Selected Readings of Ancient Chinese Literature" edited by Xianhao Yu and Caimin Zhang for example to make an elaborate analysis.

Shipei Liu (2004) mentioned that, the aim is to make the students study the literary works easily and grasp the

essence and artistic characteristics of the works and the ancient literary achievements so as to improve the reading ability and appreciation of literary works and understand ancient Chinese culture better. As this course is much difficult for Sri Lankan students because lacking of Chinese knowledge. And teachers in the Chinese-style classes fail to help students understand contents of courses well, here are some suggestions for teachers' teaching and for Sri Lankan students' learning:

Teaching suggestions: First, the main textbook "Selected Readings of Ancient Chinese Literature of the first volume" could be ordered by development in Chinese literature in time order, writers and their works. Teachers can make the complex literary phenomenon systematic as much as possible so that Sri Lankan students can understand the literature from a macro level after a brief analysis of the contents and have much less learning pressure. Second, some of the courses which associate with this course are "Simplified Chinese Ancient Literature", "Ancient China" and "Introduction to Literature". If Sri Lankan students didn't study Chinese before, it must be difficult to learn the ancient Chinese literature. So in order to make them have a better understanding of Chinese literature, teachers can recommend students to read these relevant books mentioned before because after getting a full picture of ancient Chinese literature, it will be much easier for Sri Lankan students to understand and learn the textbook named "Selected Readings of Ancient Chinese Literature".

Learning suggestions: This course is more practical than other literature courses. Therefore, teachers can help Sri Lankan students understand the contents of the course from two aspects. The first one is "reading": Teachers can lead the Sri Lankan students to focus on reading the text aloud. When they encounter unknown words or make pronunciation mistakes, they can be corrected immediately. In this way, students can get a deeper and better understanding. If possible, some great poems and phrases articles are best to recite so that Sri Lankan students can ensure they can really absorb the contents. Second, teachers also need to focus on writing, in order to cultivate the habit of taking notes every day and help students learn to write more Chinese characters to help Sri Lankan students improve Chinese.

Fourth, the knowledge of Chinese culture and customs for Sri Lankan students is preliminary. Suggestions: Firstly, Li Guilin believes Chinese culture should be considered and taught in more materials and arrangements to upgrade Sri Lankan students' understanding of Chinese traditional culture from many aspects and angles (2014). For example, when celebrating the Dragon Boat Festival, Chinese teachers not only can tell the origin and the ways of celebration of the Dragon Boat Festival, but also can teach students to package traditional Chinese rice-pudding, which bring about an active atmosphere and improves students' interests in Chinese traditional culture and customs. In order to make students themselves understood the Spring Festival, Chinese teachers can hold a traditional arts party where some students perform on the stage while others sit around the desk to appreciate the performance with friends and get together to experience the cheerful, boisterous atmosphere of the Spring Festival. After the party, the teacher presents some couplets, teach some Chinese New Year blessings and then have an activity of role-playing called visiting relatives. For the sake of highlighting the biggest features of the Spring Festival, the teacher prepares some red envelopes with a four-word note before the class so that students feel more authentic atmosphere for the spring festival, which allows them to feel the happiness and sweetness of traditional Chinese festivals. Chinese teachers should create a light-hearted academic environment which is capable of promoting intensive comprehensible and interesting input, such as watching the famous Chinese movies, documentaries and drama to let students have a better understanding of the traditional culture. In addition, Chongqing Normal University can specifically set up a series of optional courses concerning Chinese traditional culture for them, such as paper-cutting course, dance course, Tai Ji course so that students fully feel the charm of Chinese culture, which attracts them to actively explore the profound culture. Then, Chongqing Normal University should organize students to visit the red tourist attractions around Chongqing. At last, the school should also conduct some traditional cultural activities and competitions, like ancient poetry contest, guess riddles games and costume play, whose activities and competitions aim to have a better understanding of Chinese culture.

V. CONCLUSION

With the increasing number of foreign students from Sri Lanka, the problem of cross-cultural adaptation is becoming more and more important. And cross-cultural adaptation research has been given more and more attention. The research mainly analyzes the current situation of Sri Lankan students studying in Chongqing Normal University from the aspects of language learning and cultural customs. The problems mainly include lacking of Chinese reading and vocabulary, less communication in Chinese, difficulty in adapting to the teaching in China, less understanding of cultural customs and other issues.

So this study aims to help improve Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adapting ability by establishing language self-confidence, developing Chinese communication activities, adjusting instructional design and increasing the content of courses of Chinese culture in these four areas. However, there are shortcomings, for example, it would be better if did the interview. We hope to make up for these shortcomings in future research and make the research more detailed, objective and accurate. In short, Sri Lankan students encountered a cultural conflict, but harvest a lot of useful experience for their own growth.

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