

The difficulties which international students face



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Introduction:

This article is about the difficulties which international students face, especially for Asian students, including thinking styles, learning attitudes and writing and presenting styles. In spite of its publication date, it is still helpful for us to understand the international students' situation abroad. In the text, the authors argue all the issues are rooted in traditional culture. In general, the authors' arguments are reasonable, but to some specific cases their views are no longer suitable. The reasons involve the development of education within the approximate twenty years and their limitations of visual views. In this paper, evaluations about every main idea are presented. About the situations which the authors' ideas are not suitable, some suggestions are indicated. As for the applicable arguments, more evidences are provided to back up.

Background:

In this day and age, quite a few of Asian students go abroad to study. However, there are some typical difficulties they must overcome because of their innate tendency. In Ballard and Clanchy's research, the innate tendency totally stem from oriental tradition, which is a typical viewpoint in the past. Some subsequent research taken by David Kember and Lyn Gow indicates that the issues result from the curriculum and teaching environment [1]. With the development of the education system in Asian countries, the issues seem to be fade away during recent years. Asian international students become more and more familiar to western culture, and they can cope with the assignment from their lecturer more smoothly.

This makes investigations in past time become unsuitable, so some updating surveys are necessary to cover new situations.

Summary:

The title of the article is “ Cultural Variation: Difficulties for Student Studying Abroad”. It is from a book named “ Study Abroad: A Manual for Asian Students” written by Ballard and Clanchy (1984).

In this article, the authors argue three main difficulties that Asian international students face in their studying process. Further, the authors suggest Asian students adjusting their studying style for successful study abroad.

The first main idea in the text is about variations of thinking styles. As the authors say, different thinking and learning purposes lead to different results, which stem from varying cultures. A particular example of a Japanese student who adjusted his purpose and adapted his essay structure to meet his lecturer`s requirement is utilized to support the main point.

The variation in learning attitudes is argued as the second main idea. In the authors` opinion, different educational traditions create different learning attitudes. Then different learning approaches, including reproductive, analytical and speculative, are presented in particular education levels, although they are not separated totally. The authors quote three Asian students` words and describe an Indonesian postgraduate`s situation to back up their main idea.

The other main idea concerns differences in writing and presenting styles. Five distinct writing patterns, including English, Romance, Russian, Semitic and Oriental patterns, are described in the text (Kaplan 66: 1-20). As indicated, a typical example of a Thailand student whose thesis was crossed out by his Australian supervisor suggests that different writing styles differ widely.

As the authors` suggestions, a more analytical and critical learning approach is expected for Asian international students to succeed in their study.

Critique (general):

Generally speaking, the three main difficulties pointed out in this article are reasonable. Although this article was published in 1984, the problems still exist in current international students. The influence stemming from traditional culture is significant, which cannot be eliminated within about twenty years. The thinking and writing styles which are trained during their studying process imperceptibly, still influence international students.

Something different, however, has happened in these twenty years.

Internationalization has been an unstoppable tendency, for which relationships between countries has become more and more closed. In the trend, education internationalization is a representative one. Compared with the situation in 1984, much more students go abroad to study, especially for students from developing countries. With the number of international students increasing, abroad studying is no longer mysterious or unattainable. Most students who are ready to go abroad can get much useful information from internet and relevant agents. As the result of this, students

are relative familiar to the education environment abroad. Additionally, they usually can get experiential knowledge from forthgoers. Thus, they are able to adjust themselves to the expectations of foreigner universities more easily, In addition, a series of language tests and record examinations are developed to ensure that students who are admitted by foreign universities can survive in another country.

Critique (specific):

As the statement above, the main ideas argued in this article is still reasonable at present, however, the situation has changed. So to a certain extent, the descriptions in the text are no longer suitable.

As the authors` assertion, the variations in thinking styles stemming from traditional cultures, made the Japanese student fail in his first year.

Considering the source of variations, it must be true, but this example should be an extreme one. Normally, the thinking style of oriental students is implicative. They always make effort to avoid evaluating topics directly.

When they are considering a topic, they usually think over the influence of background firstly. With the introductions of western educational culture, however, most students are likely to compare the views and evaluate the topic, although they may describe the background at first. In Chinese secondary school, many assignments are to conclude the main ideas of prepared texts and evaluate these main ideas from your own viewpoint.

Through training like this students obtain the capability to assess the relative merits. So the description as the text presented, only may happen in extreme case. With the increasing of the familiarity to western thinking pattern, the similar extreme case should be less likely to happen.

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About the different learning strategies mentioned in this article, the authors claim that it is needed to develop a more analytical and critical learning style for many Asian students. It should be a believable recommendation at that moment. However, in today`s school, not only universities or colleges, but also secondary schools, it is paid attention to analysis ability. Basically, the teachers and lecturers encourage students to ask questions and think more deeply. In this way, students are required not only to remember the knowledge points, but also to understand how the process is going. In addition, many universities in China establish funds to support undergraduates to take experiments. Then, students who want to do some research in particular fields are encouraged to apply them. In this way, students` speculative capabilities are cultivated. Furthermore, according to relevant research, there is no significant difference between Australian and Asian students [2]. As reported, Asian students are not rote learners. In other words, the reproductive learning strategy is not directed towards Asian students. Then, for Australian students, the best way to learn is also to remember and understand by heart. For these reasons, the authors` assertions about these three learning approaches are not in accordance with facts and suitable to the development of education.

Concerning writing styles, the authors cite Robert Kaplan`s theory to explain the varying writing styles successfully. For oriental writers, explaining the issue directly is a blunt way which lacks of ideations. In their views, a better way to express their ideas is to describe the background and the influence factors as implications. The end results should be obtained by readers themselves. As the authors suggest, this indirect writing approach is not

suitable to academic thesis in Australian universities. In western scholars' views, the "relevant descriptions" are not relevant at all. It is a real difference between western and eastern writing skills, while it is unnecessary to discuss which one is more advanced. Expect from the variations between different cultures, the differences between each academic discipline are also mentioned in the text. In this day and age, more and more interdisciplines are developed, for which flexible writing styles are required. Additionally, as a relatively objective writing style, science and engineering articles should be paid more attention to attract readers.

Conclusions:

In this paper, in connection with every main point mentioned in the original article, evaluations are provided. Generally speaking, the authors' main ideas are still applicable at present stage, although in this article there are some details should be changed to suit modern education. When the authors are comparing with Asian students' works and Australian lectures' expectations, extreme examples are cited. This is the biggest weakness, because it ignores the general status. Implications of this article are that student who study abroad should learn how to adjust himself to the requirement.

References:

1. David Kember, Lyn Gow: A Challenge to Anecdotal Stereotype of the Asian Student, 1991.
2. F. Sushila Niles: Cultural Differences in Learning Motivation and Learning Strategies: A Comparison of Overseas and Australian Students at an Australian University, 1995.