

The observed experience of cultural difference

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Describe an Experience of Cultural Difference, Positive or Negative, You Have Had or Observed. What did you learn from it?

Different kinds of thought were running through my head while I apprehensively waited for the airplane to land. I tried bottling up the anticipation I had by putting it aside; nevertheless, I felt the same as “ Alice in wonderland as she enters into a new dimension.” “ What will happen if the people I meet will not understand me? I impatiently wondered. I had traveled to America back in 2012 to study English.

The few times that we were asked by our professors to work in groups, it was very stressful. The American students would criticize me of my Chinese accent, how my eyes were small and my etiquette in regular conversation where I would bow in agreement while conversing. They continuously imitated my gestures in my practices of agreements and bowing while I spoke to them. Because I was a Chinese, they never asked me about my views regarding the topic we were discussing and I realized it was in relation to the issues of power distance. When I asked them for an assistant during the discussions, they would tell me that it was easy to understand but no assistant. This is very different as compared to our Chinese culture whereby we are taught to assist anyone in need of our assistance (Tocqueville, 2009). The teaching style was very different from how we are taught back in China, as we are taught to follow instructions. Nevertheless, the American way, we were taught to be creative.

However, I came to understand that it was not the Chinese culture that rooted in me, but my unwillingness to look outside my limitations and adapt to the American way. Regardless of the differences between the two cultures

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being challenging and overwhelming to overcome, it boosted my adaptive capability to change. Now I am able to observe from the vantage point; two unique, discrete cultures and embrace them. After all, we are different, yet very much the same.

Bibliography

Alexis de Tocqueville 2009. " Preschool in Three Cultures Revisited: China, Japan, and the United States." Chicago: University of Chicago Press.