COMMUNICATION/SOCIAL DIFFICULTY OF THAI

STUDENTS IN THE PROCESS OF CULTURAL ADAPTATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the communication/social skills of Thai sojourners and the process of their cultural adaptation, focusing on the communication/social difficulty experienced in various communication situations. Subjects for the study were 266 Thai students and 300 American students. Both student groups completed a survey instrument assessing communication difficulty experienced in various communication situations. The Thais also completed an instrument measuring their level of cultural adaptation. The culture learning/social skills theoretical perspective provided a framework for the study.

The results indicated that the greatest area of difficulty for Thai students is experienced with interpersonal relationships and communication with members of the host culture. Analysis indicated an expected significant difference in the communication difficulty experienced between the Thai sample and the American sample. Further analysis indicated a significant relationship between the degree of communication difficulty experienced by Thai students and their level of cultural adaptation. The practical implication of the research is a sound, theoretical base for cultural training.

INTRODUCTION

The transition to a university educational experience is challenging for all students, particularly for the international student. The sojourner must combine the common challenge faced by all students with the difficulties presented by cultural dissimilarity and separation. This study is part of a collective effort by several researchers interested in intercultural communication who have been pooling their efforts toward increased understanding of the cultural adaptation of sojourners and immigrants from Thailand (Kunjara, 1982; Sakdisubha 1987; Thongprayoon & Hill 1987; Kunjara, Hill & Lakey 1988; Thongprayoon 1988).

According to the Institute of International Education, there were 6,940 Thai students in U.S. universities and colleges in 1985/86, which ranked 14th among places of origin of foreign students in the U.S. (Zikopoulos 1986). Thais are representative of the one region of origin (South and East Asia) still experiencing a relatively large growth rate (9.2%) among international students in the U.S. This study proposes a theoretical framework underlying the process of cultural adaptation which will facilitate understanding the adaptation process. The specific focus of this study is upon the cultural adaptation of Thai student sojourners in the U.S.

Bochner and his colleagues have approached the study of the adaptation of the sojourner from the perspective of culture learning with the emphasis upon the acquisition of culturally appropriate social skills (Bochner 1981; Bochner 1982; Furnham & Bochner 1982: Furnham & Bochner 1986; Furnham 1988). The culture learning/social skills (hereafter CLSS) approach conceptualizes the major task of adaptation as learning the salient characteristics of a new culture, especially interactional characteristics.

The prominence of communication in the CLSS approach is significant to this study of cultural adaptation and communication. Argyle (1982) and Bochner (1982) both conceptualize unsuccessful cross-cultural social situations as instances of failed verbal and non-verbal communication. Furnham and Bochner (1986) argue that an understanding of characteristic differences in communication patterns is prerequisite for a social skills approach to culture learning. Several researchers (Argyle 1982; Burke & Lukens 1979; Noesjirwan 1978) have demonstrated cultural differences in the manner people send and receive information, prescriptions (commands and wishes) and affect. Furnham and Bochner (1986) list some of the aspects of interpersonal communication which differ cross-culturally and contribute significantly to the effectiveness of information exchange: polite usage (etiquette),

non-verbal communication, and rules and conventions. Argyle (1982) would add language, social relationships, and concepts and ideology to this list.

In their extension of the social skills approach to cross-cultural misunderstandings, Furnham and Bochner (1982) refer to Argyle's (1979) intracultural research which posits seven specific social skills which can be developed: perceptive, expressive, conversational, and affiliative skills, assertiveness, emotional expression, and anxiety management. Significantly, all seven social skills are communication-oriented. Without question, therefore, communication is central to the culture learning, social skills approach.

Although research has demonstrated the feasibility of the CLSS approach for same-culture or subculture individuals (Pendleton & Furnham 1980; Trower, Bryant, & Argyle 1978), few studies have examined the communication difficulty encountered in everyday social situations interculturally. Rim (1976) administered the Bryant and Trower (1974) Social Situations questionnaire to a group of British and Israeli students in their own countries and found a number of differences. British students reported greater difficulty in several situations: approaching others, initiating conversation, going to parties, meeting people they did not know well, going out with or being in a group of people of the opposite sex, and getting to know someone in depth. Israeli students reported greater difficulty going into pubs, making decisions affecting others, and going into restaurants.

Furnham and Bochner (1982) investigated everyday social situations involving international students in England. The results indicated a positive relationship between culture-distance and social difficulty in the host country. The most difficult social situations were making British friends of one's own age, dealing with someone who is aggressive or cross, and approaching others to start up a friendship. Furnham (1983) found significant differences in reported social difficulty associated with everyday social situations between three matched groups of European, Indian, and African nurses in South Africa. The Europeans reported the least and the Africans the most problems. Due to the strict segregation in South Africa, black Africans have fewer opportunities to develop and rehearse dominant social skills and their ground rules. Thus, their social system lacks the coordination essential to achieve competence.

The social skills approach continues to attract the attention of a great deal of research which shows no signs of diminishing (L'Abate & Milan 1985). Furnham and Bochner (1986) expressed surprise that the social skills approach has not yet been extensively applied to the area of culture shock or cultural adaptation. As noted above, a few researchers have looked specifically at social difficulty experienced in everyday social situations involving people from different cultures.

Yet, no study has examined the relationship between the communication difficulty experienced by sojourners and their degree of cultural adaptation.

The theoretical framework advanced in this study provides a basis with which to understand more fully the process of cultural adaptation from a communication viewpoint. Specifically, this effort should increase the level of understanding of the cultural adaptation of Thai and American relations. The specific purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the communication/social skills of Thai sojourners and the process of their cultural adaptation, focusing on the communication/social difficulty experienced in everyday social situations.

This study raises three primary questions:

(1) What type of communication difficulties do Thai students experience in the U.S.? Are there some categories or clusters of difficulty common to Thai sojourners? How do these categories compare to the six factors found by Furnham and Bochner (1982) among foreign students in England (e.g., formal relations, managing intimate relationships, public rituals)? Specifically, is their factor structure generalizable to Thai students in the U.S.? An inspection of the data will also assess its consistency with the theoretical perspective of this study.

(2) How do the communication/social difficulties experienced by Thai sojourners relate to those of comparable American students? Is the nature and extent of difficulty faced by sojourners significantly different from that of American students? Specifically, are the difficulties experienced by sojourners related to differences between their native culture and American society or a result of the normal maturation process from adolescence to adulthood?

(3) What is the relationship between the degree of communication/social difficulty experienced by Thai sojourners and their level of adaptation to the new culture?

The findings from these questions should provide some insight to the area of communication and cultural adaptation; offer an exploratory study grounded in a distinctive theoretical perspective; identify particular social situations presenting the greatest difficulty and suggest directions for managing such difficulty; and contribute to mutual understanding between Thai students and their host country.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

One of the common problems in survey research of ethnic sojourners is obtaining a representative sample. In this study, student lists were obtained from International Student Offices, Thai student associations, and other Thai student

groups in several Midwestern and Southwestern universities selected because they had sizable Thai student populations. From these lists, a representative sample of this population was gathered. The sample size goal was a minimum of 260 subjects, because, as a rule of thumb, a minimum of 10 subjects are needed for each variable used in this study (Brislin, Lonner, and Thorndike 1973). Likewise, a minimum sample of 260 comparable American students was sought to compare Thai students and American students. The sample of American students was necessary to analyze research question two which compares communication difficulties experienced by the two groups. The total number of Thai students' names obtained from the above sources was 395. Subjects for the American student population were 332 students enrolled in courses at a major Southwestern university during the spring semester, 1988.

Procedures

The Thai students were asked to complete a questionnaire packet containing a cover letter, a 26-item Social Situation questionnaire measuring communication/social difficulty experienced, a 20-item Acculturation Scale, and questions regarding the student's background characteristics (age, sex, marital status, length of stay, educational level). Because the American students were not being measured on cultural adaptation, they received only the Social Situation questionnaire and questions regarding background characteristics. The questionnaire was printed in English. Since this study was conducted among Thai students studying in the American university educational system, a proficient level of English competence was expected. Additionally, a pilot test of the questionnaire with Thai students failed to nullify this expectation. Some of the language was modified, however, because the Thai pilot group felt that some of the language in the questionnaire failed to communicate clearly the intended meaning.

A total of 395 questionnaires was distributed to Thai students by means of mailing lists or through presidents or other representatives of Thai student groups at several universities over a period of six weeks. Of the 395 questionnaires distributed, 269 were returned for a 69% return rate. Of the 269 questionnaires returned by Thai students, three were unusable because they contained pages that respondents left blank. A total of 332 questionnaires were distributed to American students attending several different university classes. Of the 332 questionnaires distributed, 312 were returned for a 93.9% return rate. Because twelve questionnaires contained blank pages or were completed by international students, 300 questionnaires were usable for data analysis.

Among the Thai sample were 159 males and 106 females.   Among the American sample were 99 males and 201 females.   The average age of the Thai respondent was 26.42 compared to 22.95 for the American sample group

Variables

Communication Difficulty

Communication difficulty was assessed with the Social Situation questionnaire which consists of 26 statements referring to commonly occurring social situations identified as being potentially problematic for international students.   "Having difficulty" was defined as feeling anxious, uncomfortable, either because a person does not know what to do, or because they feel frightened, embarrassed, or uneasy (Furnham & Bochner 1982).   The list of situations was adapted from a scale developed by Furnham and Bochner who had modified an earlier instrument constructed by Trower, Bryant, and Argyle (1978).

In the Furnham and Bochner (1982) study, a principal components analysis with varimax rotation revealed six factors with an eigen-value of 1.5 or more, together accounting for 44 per cent of the variance (see Table 1 on next page).   The six factors were identified as: (1) formal relations/focus of attention; (2) managing intimate relationships; (3) public rituals; (4) initiating contact/introductions; (5) public decision making; and (6) assertiveness.   The 26 situations which produced the six factors comprise the questionnaire items for this study.   Consequently, the generalizability of the Furnham and Bochner factor structure to Thai students in the U.S. was assessed. The problematic nature of the social situations was confirmed by interviews with Thai students.

Cultural Adaptation

The process of cultural adaptation involves some level of accommodation to a new culture by a stranger.   This process involves some modification of a stranger's customs, habits, language usage, and life style.   One of the perplexing areas of adaptation research has been the development of an empirical means to assess the level of adaptation.   Y. Kim (1976) conceptualized acculturation as the degree of "perceptual complexity" of Korean immigrants to the U.S.   She later argued that immigrants who engage in interpersonal communication with Americans become more cognitively complex which enhances their comprehension of the new culture (1977).   However, Pearce and Kang (1987) suggest that "perceptual complexity" would be contaminated by individual variation in the cognitive complexity of subjects   and   diversity   in   types of   communication   experiences   subjects   had   with   Americans.   J. K. Kim (1980)   conceptualized   acculturation   as   the degree to which

Table 1

Social Situation Items and Factor Loadings
(Furnham & Bochner 1982)

Item	Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. Appearing before audience		.72					
28. Higher status people		.70					
27. Small group leader							.68
24. Seeing a doctor		.64					
29. Correcting a subordinate		.64					
22. Attending formal dinner		.61					
26. Being interviewed							.60
17. To know people in depth		.45					
23. Complaining in public		.44					
32. Understanding humor, sarcasm			.72				
18. Keeping conversation going			.70				
15. Approaching others			.55				
1. Making friends own age			.43				
36. Waiting in line				.76			
35. Using toilet facilities				.63			
11. Going into a full room					.76		
13. Meeting strangers, new people					.59		
4. Going to dances					.54		
14. Being with people not known well				.51			
38. Going into bars					.40		
2. Shop in large market						.79	
3. Going on public transport						.57	
16. Making decisions affecting others						.52	
10. Going to restaurants							.63
21. People staring at you							.62
33. Dealing with someone upset, cross							.57

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Eigen values	7.16	2.93	2.25	1.92	1.85	1.56	
% of variance	17.9	7.3	5.6	4.8	4.6	3.9	
Total variance accounted for						44.6	

Note: communalities were not reported by Furnham & Bochner

Korean immigrants responded like Americans and Koreans. However, this approach characterizes persons as monocultural, an untenable position since strangers are essentially straddling different cultures, learning how to do things in

two or more appropriate ways. Wong-Rieger (1987) developed a multicultural acculturation scale which attempts to take into account the multiculturalness

required of strangers in the process of adaptation. However, she failed to report on the reliability or validity of the instrument.

In the present study, the level of cultural adaptation was assessed with the Acculturation Scale developed by Szapoznick and colleagues (Szapoznick, Scopetta, Kurtines, & Aranalde 1978; Szapoznick, Kurtines, & Fernandez 1980) which consists of self-reported behaviors. The Acculturation Scale was developed with the best attention to psychometric aspects of any of the present scales. Two criteria were used to select the items for the acculturation scales: (1) a high loading (.50) on a variable and (2) discriminant item validity.

The final Acculturation Scale consists of 20 items which load on one factor (behavior) and which inquire about language, daily customs and habits, and idealized life styles (see Table 2 on the next page). Each question is followed by a five-point, Likert-type response. Responses to this instrument indicate the degree to which a student perceives his/her behavior as Thai or American with 1 indicating the highest degree of "Thainess" and 5 indicating the highest degree of "Americanness." Szapoznick et al. (1978) argue that the generalizability of the behaviors tapped by the items allow modification to make it applicable for use with other groups. They suggest that this modification can be achieved by deleting not more than five culturally inappropriate items and changing the anchors of the remaining items to correspond to the respective host and immigrant/sojourner cultures (e.g.. Spanish to Thai). Four items were deleted from the scale because they were either inapplicable or inappropriate to Thais by the pilot group (e.g.. "in what language are the TV programs you watch?"). In this study, total scores on the Acculturation Scale can range from 20 to 100 with a score of 20 indicating minimum cultural adaptation.

Analysis of Data

For this study, reliability for the variables of the Social Situation questionnaire was determined with Cronbach's alpha (1951). The Szapoznick et al. (1978) acculturation scale reported a Cronbach's alpha of .97. Up to five items were deleted from the questionnaire without substantially affecting the psychometric properties of the scale. Test-retest reliability was obtained by looking at a new

sample of 30 subjects on two occasions over a four-week interval. The test-retest coefficient for the scale was .96, p<.001.

Table 2

Acculturation Items

Acculturation Items

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1. Language preference
2. Language spoken at home
3. Language spoken at school
4. Language spoken with friends
5. Language of reading materials
6. Sort of music listened to
7. Sort of dances attended
8. Places you go out to
9. Recreation you engage in
10. Way of celebrating birthdays
11. Way of relating to fiancee/friend
12. Type of gestures
13. Preferred food
14. Preferred language
15. Preferred music
16. Preferred TV programs
17. Preferred reading   material
18. Preferred type of dances
19. Preferred radio programs
20. Preferred way of celebrating birthdays

The first research question inquires about the nature of communication difficulties Thai students experience in the U.S. A principle components analysis with varimax rotation was employed to assess the structure of the Thai sample and the generalizability of the Furnham and Bochner (1982) factor structure to the Thai student population in the U. S.   Identification of the factor structure was based on
the following criteria taken collectively as evidence that a factor exists: (1) the Kaiser criterion of an eigen value of one (Kaiser 1958); (2) a minimum of 5% of the variance explained by a factor (Rummel 1970); and (3) the Scree test (Cattell 1966, 1977) to determine the number of factors in the solution. Validity of the factor structure was assessed by reporting communalities (h^2) for each variable.

Because of the exploratory nature of this study, a subjectively-based comparison of the factors in this study relative to the Furnham and Bochner (1982) research was conducted. In general, the percentage of agreement of items loading on a factor between the two studies was reported. A chi-square test for independence of categorical variables was utilized as the basis of this comparison.

Research question two compares the communication difficulties of Thai students to comparable American students. Principal component analysis was used to assess the factor structure of the American sample which was compared to the analysis in question one. An Aspin-Welch t test which accounts for unequal sample size was used to compare the difficulty of Thais encountering a different culture to the difficulty of American students undergoing normal social adaptation.

The third research question of this study inquires about the relationship between the degree of communication difficulty experienced by Thai sojourners and their level of adaptation to the U.S. Step-wise multiple regression was used to analyze this question. The predictor variable was the level of cultural adaptation from the Acculturation Scale and the criterion variable was the communication difficulty factor from the analysis in question one.

RESULTS

Research Question One

What type of communication difficulties do Thai students experience in the U.S.? How do these difficulties and their structure compare to those found by Furnham and Bochner (1982) in their study of international students in England?

To assess the dimensions of communication difficulty in this study and compare them to those of Furnham and Bochner, the 26 items of the Social Situation scale derived from Furnham and Bochner given to the Thai sample were first subjected to factor analysis using a principal components solution. Only those items meeting the purity index criterion of factor loadings greater than or equal to .60, with no secondary loadings greater than or equal to .40, were selected for the final scale (Guilford & Fruchter 1978; McCroskey & Young 1979). The initial principal components analysis yielded a one factor solution with an eigenvalue of 8.74, accounting for 33.6% of the variance, and with 14 items meeting the purity index criterion. The eigenvalue for the second factor was 1.81, contributing an additional 6.9% of the variance. However, no items met the purity index criterion.

The initial factor extraction was followed by alternative structures and rotations. None yielded any contradictory information to explain the factor structure.

Table 3

Social Situation Items and Factor Loading
One Factor Solution-Thai Sample

Item		Loading	h^2
1.	Making friends own age	.45	.20
2.	Shop in large market	.34	.11
3.	Going on public transport	.49	.24
4.	Going to dances	.51	.26
5.	Going to restaurants	.56	.31
6.	Going into a full room	*.63	.40
7.	Meeting strangers, new people	*.70	.49
8.	Being with people not known well	.59	.35
9.	Approaching others	*.62	.39
10.	Making decisions affecting others	*.65	.42
11.	Getting to know people in depth	*.67	.45
12.	Keeping conversation going	*.70	.48
13.	People staring at you	*.67	.45
14.	Complaining in public	*.62	.38
15.	Seeing a doctor	.45	.20
16.	Appearing before audience	*.66	.44
17.	Being interviewed	*.67	.44
18.	Being small group leader	*.70	.50
19.	Dealing with higher status people	*.69	.47
20.	Correcting a subordinate	.59	.35
21.	Attending formal dinner	*.65	.42
22.	Understanding jokes, sarcasm	.54	.30
23.	Dealing with somebody upset, cross	*.62	.39
24.	Waiting in line	.20	.04
25.	Using toilet facilities	.23	.05
26.	Going into bars	.46	.21

Eigenvalue (rotated)	8.74	
% of total variance	33.6	

* Items identified in factor using .60/.40 purity index

Validity of the one factor solution is represented by h^2 values presented in Table 3 (see preceding page) which ranged from a low of .04 to a high .50. Summated raw scores from the 14-item Social Situation questionnaire were used in the data analysis rather than the factor scores because of their theoretic and applied utility.

The factor produced from the analysis of the Social Situation data clearly consisted of items representing students' concerns about interpersonal relationships and communication with members of the host culture. Based on the data, this factor was labeled interpersonal relationships/communication.

Furnham and Bochner (1982) reported six factors in their study of communication difficulty among international students in England. In contrast, this study found only one factor. The chi square test for independence of categorical variables was used to compare the factor from the present study with the factors from the Furnham and Bochner study, yielding chi square = 1.87, $\underline{df}$ = 1, $\underline{p}$=.17 (Yates correction). Thus, we can say that the present study offers evidence that the factor structures of this and the Furnham and Bochner studies are unrelated.

Research Question Two

How do the communication difficulties experienced by Thai sojourners relate to those of comparable American students?

To compare the dimensions of communication difficulty of the Thai sample to the American sample, the 26 items of the Social Situation scale administered to the American sample were first subjected to factor analysis using a principal components solution. The .60/.40 purity index criterion was also used to select the items representing any one factor. The initial principal components analysis yielded a one factor solution with an eigenvalue of 7.83, accounting for 30.1% of the variance, and with seven items meeting the purity index criterion. Alternative structures and rotations failed to yield any contradictory information to explain the factor structure or increase its parsimony with the exception of the solution generated when one factor was specified. This one-factor solution yielded nine items satisfying the purity index criterion. The eigenvalue remained 7.83 with 30.1% of the variance explained. Communality estimates ranged from .01 to .48. (See Table 4 on next page.)

Since research question two compared the communication difficulties of the two groups, the two factor structures were compared. Both analyses yielded one factor solutions with 14 items loading on the Thai structure and 9 items on the American structure. The two structures yielded eight items in common. The chi square (Yate's correction) test for independence of categorical variables yielded chi

Table 4

Social Situation Items and Factor Loading
One Factor Solution-American Sample

Item		Loading	h^2
1.	Making friends own age	.55	.30
2.	Shop in large market	.44	.19
3.	Going on public transport	.37	.14
4.	Going to dances	.53	.29
5.	Going to restaurants	.50	.25
6.	Going into a full room	*.69	.48
7.	Meeting strangers, new people	*.69	.47
8.	Being with people not known well	*.64	.41
9.	Approaching others	*.66	.44
10.	Making decisions affecting others	.56	.31
11.	Getting to know people in depth	.58	.33
12.	Keeping conversation going	*.66	.43
13.	People staring at you	*.61	.38
14.	Complaining in public	.44	.19
15.	Seeing a doctor	.46	.21
16.	Appearing before audience	.57	.32
17.	Being interviewed	*.63	.40
18.	Being small group leader	*.69	.48
19.	Dealing with higher status people	*.68	.46
20.	Correcting a subordinate	.53	.28
21.	Attending formal dinner	.59	.35
22.	Understanding jokes, sarcasm	.40	.16
23.	Dealing with somebody upset, cross	.56	.32
24.	Waiting in line	.10	.01
25.	Using toilet facilities	.21	.05
26.	Going into bars	.44	.19

Eigenvalue 7.83
% of total variance 30.1
Items identified in factor using .60/.40 purity index

square = 4.82, $\underline{df}$ = 1, $\underline{p}$ = .03 indicating the matched items exceeds the probability of their matching by chance.   We, therefore, assume that the factor structures of the two samples are similar.   Summated raw scores from the eight matched items were used in the data analysis to compare the two groups.

The results of the Aspin-Welch $\underline{t}$ test indicated a significant difference between the Thai sample and the American sample ($\underline{t}$ = 7.06, $\underline{df}$ = 515.5, $\underline{p}$ = .0001).   The omega square statistic measures the strength of the association between the independent variable and the dependent variable,   indicating   the   proportion   of variability in the dependent variable which is accounted for by the independent variable, taking the large sample size into effect (N=566).   The results indicated a significant but relatively low proportion of the variability of communication difficulty explained by Thai-American differences (omega square = .08).

Research Question Three

What is the relationship between the degree of communication difficulty experienced by Thai sojourners and their level of adaptation to the new culture?

To assess the dimensions of acculturation in this study, the 20 items of the Acculturation Scale were first subjected to factor analysis using a principal components solution. The same purity index criterion was used as with the other factor analyses. The initial principal components solution yielded a one-factor solution with an eigenvalue of 6.45, accounting for 32.3% of the variance, and with five items meeting the purity index criterion.   Three other factors met the purity index criterion.   The varimax rotated factor matrix yielded four factors with eigenvalues of 3.19, 2.87, 2.86, and 2.55. Because three of the four factors had only two items meeting the purity index criterion, this rotation was followed with alternative structures and rotations in an attempt to find a more interpretable and parsimonious structure.

A varimax rotated two-factor structure yielded two factors with eigenvalues of 4.71 and 3.97;   five items loading on each factor met the purity index criterion.   Both factors seemed readily interpretable (see Table 5 on next page).   The first factor accounted for 32.3% of the common variance in the acculturation items and consisted of five items concerned with preferred behavior: type of music, television viewing, reading of printed material, type of dances, and type of radio programs.   On the basis of these data, Factor 1 was labeled Preferred Behavior.   The second factor accounted for 11.1% of the common variance in the acculturation items and   was   made   up   of five   items   concerned   with   actual   behavior: language   spoken   with   friends, type   of   recreation,   way   of   celebrating   birthdays,   way   of

Table 5

Acculturation Items and Factor Loadings
Two Factor Solution -Thai Sample

Item		Factor 1	Factor 2	h^2
1.	Language preference	.47	.24	.27
2.	Language at home	-.07	.58	.35
3.	Language at school	.11	.57	.33
4.	Language with friends	.12	*.67	.46
5.	Language of reading	.52	.33	.38
6.	Music listened to	.48	.41	.40
7.	Dances attended	.53	.25	.34
8.	Places you go out to	.38	.51	.40
9.	Recreation engaged in	.25	*.61	.44
10.	Celebrating birthdays	.17	*.68	.49
11.	Relating to fiancee	.14	*.67	.46
12.	Type of gestures	.25	*.64	.47
13.	Preferred food	.24	.38	.20
14.	Preferred language	.57	.12	.35
15.	Preferred music	*.75	.24	.61
16.	Preferred TV programs	*.84	.04	.71
17.	Preferred reading	*.80	.08	.64
18.	Preferred type of dances	*.67	.10	.46
19.	Preferred radio programs	*.78	.09	.62
20.	Preferred way of birthdays	.14	.52	.29

Eigenvalues (rotated)		4.71	3.97	
% of total variance		32.3	11.1	
Total variance accounted for			43.4	

* Items identified in factor using .60/.40 purity index

relating to opposite-sex friends, and gestures used. As can be seen, this factor refers to Actual Behavior of Thai students in the process of adaptation. Communality estimates for the factors ranged from .20 to .71 (see Table 5).

Step-wise multiple regression analysis was utilized to examine the relationship between the degree of communication difficulty experienced by Thai students and their level of cultural adaptation (actual behavior, preferred behavior). A statistically significant relationship was found between the degree of communication difficulty and the level of cultural adaptation (R = .26, $\underline{df}$ = 2,262

p = .0001; R = .07). Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient ($\underline{r}$) for

Preferred Behavior and Actual Behavior was $\underline{r}$ = .37. Pearson's $\underline{r}$ for Preferred Behavior and Communication Difficulty was $\underline{r}$ = .03 and for Actual Behavior and Communication Difficulty was $\underline{r}$ = -.22.

Reliability Assessment

Cronbach's Alpha was used to check the reliability of the subscales resulting from the principal components factor analysis utilized in this study. The alpha coefficient for the one-factor Social Situation scale with its fourteen items was .90.

Since the varimax rotation procedure yielded two factors of acculturation, each was checked with Cronbach's Alpha. The alpha coefficient for the five items on the Preferred Behavior subscale was .86. The alpha coefficient for the five items on the Actual Behavior subscale was .76. Both the Social Situation and Acculturation scales produced reliability coefficients within the acceptability range of .60-.90 or above of the American Psychological Association (APA Committee on Psychological Tests, 1974).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

RQ1:   Types of Communication Difficulty

The greatest area of difficulty for Thai students is experienced with interpersonal relationships and communications with members of the host culture. The results of this study support other research in the area of intercultural adjustment and effectiveness which found interpersonal relationships and communication to be the areas of greatest difficulty for sojourners (Hammer, Gudykunst, & Wiseman 1978;   Abe & Wiseman 1983; Hammer 1987). The results are also consistent with the findings by Furnham and Bochner (1982) that the most difficult social situations encountered by foreign students in Britain centered on establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships with host nationals.

Even though this research confirmed the Furnham and Bochner (1982) conclusion that interpersonal relationships and communication with members of the host culture are the areas of greatest communication difficulty, the factor structures were different. The present research found only one factor comprised of 14 items compared to the six factors explicated by Furnham and Bochner's research. However, if Furnham and Bochner had applied the commonly accepted criteria for identification of a factor structure employed in this study, they would have reported at best a two factor structure. Additionally, the Furnham and Bochner factor structure is seriously questionable since they did not report the secondary loadings of the items indicated as loading on each item.

The culture learning/social skills (CLSS) perspective suggests that foreign students are often like strangers because they are unaware of the rules of social behavior that regulate interpersonal conduct in the new culture or, if aware, they are unable or unwilling to abide by them (Bochner 1982; Furnham & Bochner 1982, 1986; Klineberg & Hull 1979). Further, they describe the irony of international students who often tend to be highly skilled in the ways of their own society, thus finding their inadequacy in the new culture to be extremely frustrating.

RQ2:   Thai and American Communication Difficulties

When comparing the communication difficulties of Thai sojourners to those of comparable American students, we found a significant difference between the two groups. However, the amount of variance that contributed to the explanation of the relationship between the two variables was small. This suggests that communication difficulty, at least as measured in this study, offers an incomplete explanation of cultural adaptation.

Although the significant difference between the difficulties experienced by Thai and American students is moderated by the small amount of variance accounted for by Thai-American differences, the findings are consistent with the CLSS theoretical perspective. In particular, the contrasting cultures would contribute to an increased degree of strangeness and limited cultural knowledge for the sojourner experiencing difficulty. Had no significant differences been found, one could argue that the difficulties encountered by both Thai and American students were simply the consequence of normal maturation.

RQ3:   Communicative Difficulty and Adaptation

A significant relationship was found between the Thai student's communication difficulty and their degree of cultural adaptation. The amount of variance ($\underline{R}^2$) that contributed to the explanation of the relationship between

communication difficulty and cultural adaptation was, however, small. Thus, interpretation should proceed with caution.

The culture learning/social skills (CLSS) perspective would urge sojourners to grow toward a goal of becoming "mediating" persons (Bochner 1981) who can function in both cultures at a high level of competence. Cronen, Pearce, and Harris (1982) refer to this level as one of optimal competence. The difficulties experienced with communication situations arise when a sojourner's mutually organized, skilled performances break down or cannot be initiated, resulting in a reduced measurable level of cultural adaptation (Argyle & Kendon 1967; Furnham & Bochner 1986). The CLSS approach clearly describes the problems faced by Thai students attempting to comprehend and manage their communication difficulties.

Four conclusions can be drawn from the results of this exploratory investigation. First, the area of greatest communication and social difficulty for Thai students while in the U.S. culture is that of developing and managing interpersonal relationships and communication with members of the host culture. Greater emphasis should thus be directed toward development of social support systems, cultivating networks with members of the host culture who can facilitate the sojourner's learning, explicitly acquiring techniques and skills for developing interpersonal relationships and communication. Numerous researchers have both acknowledged the need for a social support system among members of the host culture and emphasized the reality that such a system exists minimally, if at all, for most sojourners (Furnham & Alibhai 1985a; Y. Kim 1986, 1987; Gottlieb 1981).

Second, greater attention should be directed toward reconceptualizing and generating better approaches and instruments to assess both communication difficulty and cultural adaptation. Evidence presented in this study suggests that the Social Situation scale used did not reflect the multidimensionality of communication difficulty as posited by its advocates (Furnham & Bochner 1982). Questions were raised regarding their methodology in developing their factor structure. The Acculturation Scale, developed by Szapocznik and associates (Szapocznik, Scopetta, Kurtines, & Aranalde 1978), yielded a bidimensional structure consisting of two factors comprised of five items each in this study, instead of the claimed unidimensional structure. More questions should be generated to better determine the dimensions of cultural adaptation. Third, the problem of communication difficulty warrants further investigation, particularly from the perspective of the theoretical framework advanced in this study. Communication difficulty is a significant and unrelenting problem for strangers. This study tapped into one area of difficulty, that of interpersonal relationships and communication. This investigation should stimulate more research aimed at increasing understanding and defining the difficulty experienced by strangers.

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Fourth, as an extension of theoretical implications justified in this research, the study has important practical implications. Communication difficulties in cross-cultural situations arise because strangers have problems negotiating everyday communication and social experiences. As knowledge of the relationship between communication difficulty in cross-cultural situations and cultural adaptation increases, culture learning and training opportunities can be improved specifically to help sojourners acquire bicultural interpersonal competence.

The most significant practical implication of this research is it provides a sound theoretical base for increasing cultural adaptation through culture learning. Several specific suggestions are proposed. First, the particular communication/social skill deficits of sojourners should be ascertained by an improved Social Situation questionnaire and interviews. Then, training opportunities with the involvement of members of the host culture should be provided. After a period of time, an evaluation of the degree of skill acquisition by the sojourners would be appropriate.

Given the limitations of the study, the conclusions are somewhat tentative. While effort was made to control for contaminating factors, several still affected this research and generated suggestions for future research. The first limitation involved the instruments selected to assess communication difficulty and cultural adaptation. Despite the care in their selection, the instruments need improvement. The Social Situation scale needs further development to give a clearer picture of the types of difficulties sojourners face in the new culture. A potential starting place could be to take the factors reported by Furnham and Bochner (1982) and generate more questions, particularly for those factors loading on only two or three items. The aim would be to obtain a better understanding of the types and categories of communication difficulty experienced by sojourners beyond the single factor reported in this study.

The design of the Acculturation Scale forced respondents to answer all questions ranging from "Thainess" to "Americannness" with no allowance for the inapplicability of a question. Missing data results when a respondent chose not to answer a question, and inaccurate data results when subjects marked an answer such as "Thai all the time" when confused over other alternatives. For example, several students commented on the survey instrument that they did not dance and left that particular question blank. Others marked "Thai all the time" when asked about celebration of birthdays even though they did not celebrate birthdays at all; they simply believed that to be the "Thai way." More items also need to be developed for this questionnaire, in order to develop a better scale which will more accurately reflect sojourners' cultural adaptation.

The instruments utilized in this study were the best available and these limitations clearly indict survey instruments employed in intercultural communication research. This field is still in the developmental stage, a reality reflected in the level of theoretical and methodological sophistication. Survey instruments tend to be weak psychometrically in such areas as reliability, questionnaire construction, and validity. Cultural variables tend to compound the already rigorous task of developing effective instruments. Researchers develop instruments for specific situations and then focus their attention elsewhere, instead of developing the level of instrumentation in the discipline. The bias against publication of replications discourages advancement in the understanding of communication across different cultures. Intercultural research often leaves inquirers with more questions than answers. Yet, each study contributes, perhaps in piecemeal fashion, to increased understanding of intercultural communication.

Another, rather practical, limitation of this study is its focus on sojourners, as accessibility of subjects and potential costs compelled this limitation. Insufficient attention was given to the interaction between sojourners and members of the host culture; and from the host perspective. Yet, a large degree of communication difficulty and cultural adaptation is in the hands of the hosts. Further investigation of communication difficulty and cultural adaptation should include an emphasis on the nature and content of communication interactions between sojourners and hosts.

A final limitation of this study is its use of subjects from one international group. Personal interest and a desire to continue an ongoing program of research led to the study of Thai students in order to expand knowledge about cultural adaptation among Thais gathered from several related studies. Further, time and resource restrictions also suggested the use of one cultural group. The use of several cultural groups would further the generalizability of this line of research and help to identify the problems, if any, unique to each cultural group.

Because the numbers of international students continue to grow and because of the unrelenting problems of communication difficulty which inhibit the cultural adaptation of these students, more research should and will be done. This study clearly concludes that sojourners in the American culture can be more effectively approached from a theoretical approach which encompasses the creative, sense-making nature of human communication underlying the process of cultural adaptation. Reasonable goals for future research are to identify the skills necessary for effective accommodation and to develop ways and means to teach the interpersonal skills necessary for effective accommodation.

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