

Strategy of Cultural Adaptation of Foreign Teachers in Multicultural Classrooms at Springfield

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Abstract

The cultural differences between foreign teachers and local students in multicultural classrooms influence teaching methods, communication styles, student-teacher interactions, and teaching preferences, affecting learning effectiveness. However, studies on culture and educational communication in these settings are limited. This study examines the cultural adaptation strategies of foreign teachers in multicultural classroom environments at Springfield High School. Using Young Yun Kim's cultural adaptation theory framework, this research explores how foreign teachers at Springfield High School, an Indonesian school with an international curriculum, adjust to a collectivist educational environment. The study adopts a qualitative approach through interviews with three participants and direct observations, employing a descriptive case study method. Findings reveal that key factors supporting foreign teachers' cultural adaptation include empathy, openness, flexibility, and institutional support. The model of cultural adaptation identified in this research is acculturation. This study contributes to the field of cross-cultural educational communication by emphasizing the importance of foreign teachers understanding the cultural backgrounds of local students to foster positive and meaningful interactions that enhance learning. The implications of this research include guiding the development of intercultural training programs aimed at supporting foreign teachers and improving educational outcomes in multicultural classrooms. It also underscores the crucial role of cultural competence among teachers working in diverse academic settings.

Keywords: Cultural Adaptation, Multicultural Classrooms, Foreign Teachers, Intercultural Competence

INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, Indonesia's education system has undergone significant changes due to globalization. Many educational institutions have embraced international curricula and recruited teachers from abroad. These schools, referred to as *Satuan Pendidikan Kerjasama* (SPK), are mandated to have expatriate teachers on their staff. As a result, foreign teachers encounter the challenge of instructing students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and learning style backgrounds, and they must adapt to a different educational environment (Hasanah & Secokusumo, 2020 ; Hamid & Mulyati, 2020).

Culture is a collective phenomenon that includes unwritten social rules and the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group of people from another (Hofstede et al., 2010). Indonesia is categorized as a collectivist society, where speaking bluntly is considered impolite or even inappropriate, impacting the lack of encouragement for children to be initiative, independent, and expressive. As a result, students who are considered good are those who are intelligent, polite, obedient, and do not challenge the teacher's opinions (Mulyana, 2010). The cultural differences in expectations of student character pose a challenge that must be faced by foreign teachers, especially those from individualistic societies, where foreign teachers encourage their students to actively participate in class discussions, not just to ask questions, but also to express the opinions and thoughts of the learners. In this context, confrontations and open discussions about conflicts are considered to have a positive value in the learning process (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2022).

Foreign teachers face several challenges when teaching in multicultural classrooms. Studies on cultural adaptation have been conducted by Altaai & Kurt (2023) on the challenges and teaching strategies in Turkish classrooms, and by Nurhayati et al. (2022) on how Filipino teachers in an Indonesian international school negotiate their cultural identity. Both studies focus on adapting to different work cultures. Foreign teachers must overcome language barriers, unfamiliarity with the local education systems, cultural misunderstandings, and difficulties in building rapport with students. Nevertheless, they strive to adapt in various ways, such as acquiring proficiency in the local language, enhancing intercultural awareness, and seeking support from the management or organizations where they work. Studies by Kustati et al. (2020) on the barriers experienced by students and how teachers' attitudes affect student outcomes in multicultural classrooms, and by An et al. (2022) on the cultural adjustment characteristics of Chinese students in multicultural classrooms. Both indicate that cultural adaptation is necessary to successfully operate and contribute in different work environments. However, both studies specifically discuss the specific barriers and cultural adaptation strategies experienced by foreign teachers in multicultural classrooms.

Springfield School, which has been using an international curriculum since 1998, is one of the educational institutions in Indonesia that offers such a curriculum. Currently, it has over 2,000 students spread across four campuses in West Jakarta and Cibubur. Springfield provides education for various levels, ranging from toddlers to 12th-grade students. A portion of the teachers at this school are foreign,

coming from various countries (America, Australia, China, New Zealand, etc.), while the majority of the students are of Chinese descent.

The cultural differences between foreign teachers and predominantly Chinese students have implications for differences in teaching methods, communication styles, teacher-student interactions, and how students are treated in the classroom. Additionally, issues of stereotypes and ethnocentrism can hinder the learning process. Foreign teachers often adhere to an individualistic culture that values independence and focuses on personal achievement (Braje et al., 2019). The cultural differences between foreign teachers and local students create barriers to intercultural communication, particularly in the classroom. The low-context communication style characterized by frankness, being direct, and assertiveness is often interpreted differently by local students who tend to adopt a high-context communication style. Local students are more comfortable with an indirect and polite communication style (Fackler et al., 2020).

Another challenge encountered in multicultural classroom interactions is the difference in behavioral expectations, where foreign teachers may have different expectations of student behavior, such as prioritizing students' verbal engagement and classroom discussions, placing emphasis on active participation during lessons (Dong & Kang, 2022). Students from collectivist cultures tend to behave politely and avoid confrontation, which can be perceived as a lack of participation or an impression of low motivation. Another cultural difference is that foreign teachers tend to encourage their students to actively compete and focus more on academic achievement, while not all local students share the same value perception or views as their foreign teachers.

Considering these issues, this study will examine foreign teachers' cultural adaptation strategies in Springfield High School's multicultural classrooms. The perspective of cultural adaptation is deemed relevant because this study will link the processes and types of adaptations made by foreign teachers with the optimization of student learning. The focus is on examining the ability of foreign teachers to effectively adapt in multicultural classrooms and their ability to convey lesson materials to students with diverse cultural backgrounds. Foreign teachers from individualistic cultures expect a high level of student participation in the classroom, encourage competition, facilitate open discussions, and maintain time discipline. However, the more passive class participation culture of local students, and their lack of initiative in expressing opinions or ideas, can pose challenges for foreign teachers in meeting their expectations due to cultural differences.

This study employs the Integrative Communication Perspective in Cross-Cultural Adaptation. According to Young Yun Kim in Panocova (2020), cross-cultural adaptation is a dynamic process wherein individuals, after moving to a new cultural environment, strive to maintain stable relations with that culture to integrate and adapt effectively. The relationship between enculturation, deculturation, acculturation, and assimilation plays a crucial role in the process of cultural adaptation. When an individual enters a new culture, they bring behavioral patterns acquired during enculturation. In the adaptation process, the individual needs to shed some assumptions and habits from their original culture (deculturation) and adopt new cultural elements (acculturation). The interaction between deculturation and acculturation leads to assimilation, where the individual becomes part of the host society, which in this research context, refers to the multicultural classroom and school environment.

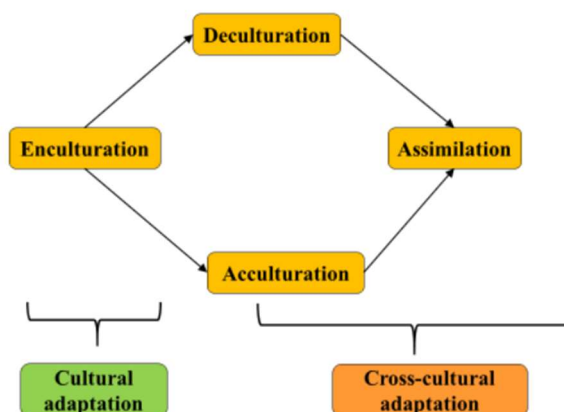


Figure 1. The interrelation among terms of cross-cultural adaptation from Kim
Source: Panocova, 2020

Samovar et al. (2015) explain that a multicultural classroom is an intercultural event where teachers and students participate in efforts to teach and learn from one another. In this situation, each individual has an interest in the outcomes achieved. Multicultural classrooms feature diverse ethnicities, religions, mother tongues, and cultures. Teaching in such environments requires special competencies in building positive relationships with students. Teachers' positive attitudes are crucial for motivational teaching, while negative attitudes and prejudices can be detrimental (Dubbeld et al., 2019). There is a need for ethnic sensitivity and cultural understanding to improve intercultural communication and reduce ethnocentrism,

xenophobia, prejudice, oppression, and conflict. Classroom becomes a bridge to understanding different cultures, learning to navigate unspoken rules, prejudices, and body language to avoid misunderstandings (Byram, 2020 ; Delante, 2020).

Multicultural classrooms call for instructors who embrace multicultural education with a positive mindset, showing respect and tolerance toward diverse cultures to provide equal learning opportunities. However, many teachers still lack the readiness to establish appropriate learning environments for culturally diverse students (Karacabey et al., 2019). For foreign teachers, cultural adaptability is particularly crucial in such settings. Successfully adapting to a new environment demands both an understanding and acceptance of the local culture. Multicultural competence is important to address differences and stress within various ethnic and religious communities. Intercultural education helps foster a deeper appreciation of other cultures, reinforces one's cultural identity, and promotes tolerance. It encourages individuals to embrace cultural differences with an open and accepting mindset (Wang, 2022 ; Murtiningsih & Veronika, 2022).

The challenge for foreign educators is the willingness and ability to perform cultural adaptations in multicultural classrooms in terms of language, teaching methods, and communication styles that match the learning styles, accommodating students' interests. Cultural adaptation skills are crucial for foreign instructors in multicultural classrooms because they enable effective communication, positive relationship building, overcoming cultural challenges, and achieving students' learning objectives. Cross-cultural adaptation is a communication process where individuals strive to establish and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and well-functioning relationships in a changing or changed cultural environment. This study aims to analyze the cultural adaptation strategies of foreign instructors in the multicultural high school classroom environment at Springfield High School, focusing on how foreign instructors from dominant individualistic cultures interact with students who tend to embrace a collectivist culture.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using a qualitative methodology and a descriptive case study approach to analyze the phenomenon of cultural adaptation among foreign teachers in multicultural classrooms. It utilized a single case study method, and data analysis was performed using pattern-matching techniques. Participants for the study were selected through purposive sampling. The research participants included three foreign teachers from United States and United Kingdom who had been teaching in Indonesia for a minimum of five years, with some having over a decade of experience.

Data collection involved two primary methods: semi-structured interviews and direct classroom observations. For the interviews, a set of prepared guiding questions was used to facilitate discussion, allowing participants the flexibility to elaborate on their experiences. Each interview session was recorded after getting their consent and transcribed into text for analysis. In addition to the interviews, direct observations were conducted during the participants' teaching sessions to capture observable behaviors and adaptations in classroom settings. These observations were aimed at identifying whether the adaptations aligned with theoretical expectations, such as increased empathy, openness, flexibility, and adjustment of teaching and communication styles to fit the collectivist cultural context, as proposed by Young Yun Kim’s cultural adaptation theory.

Table 1. Participants Profile

Participant	Gender	Country of Origin	Years of Teaching in Indonesia	Subjects Taught
ED	Male	United States	6 years	Business & FinTech
EB	Male	United States	14 years	English Language
JW	Male	United Kingdom	10 years	Business

Source: Researcher's interview, 2024

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Foreign teachers working in other countries need to adapt to the local culture to adjust to the new environment. This adaptation process affects their teaching effectiveness and their interactions with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Cultural differences can hinder communication between students and foreign teachers. At Springfield PB3 International School, foreign teachers use English as the medium of daily communication and classroom instruction. ED, of South Korean descent, has been teaching in Indonesia for six years. EB has been teaching since 2010 and is married to a woman of Chinese Indonesian descent. JW started teaching in 2014.

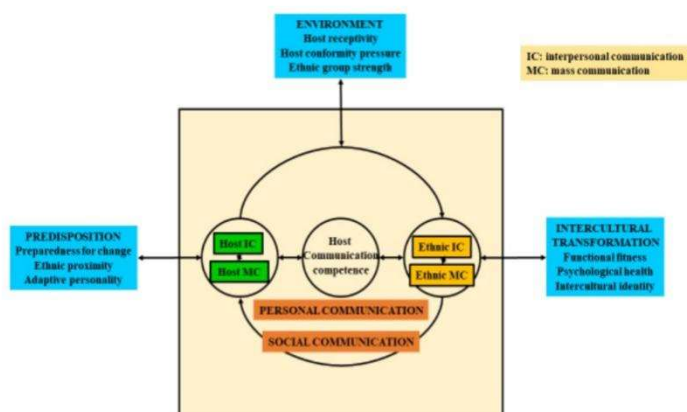


Figure 2. Structural Model of Cross-Cultural Adaptation according to Kim (2001)

Source: Panocova, 2020

The cultural adaptation process of foreign teachers is adapted from the structural model of cross-cultural adaptation by Kim. Figure 2 illustrates Kim's structural model of cross-cultural adaptation, emphasizing the central role of host communication competence, which includes cognitive, affective, and operational skills. Adaptation occurs through participation in host interpersonal and mass communication, while contact with ethnic networks can either support or hinder the process. The model also shows that adaptation is influenced by environmental factors such as host receptivity, host conformity pressure, and ethnic group strength, as well as personal factors like preparedness for change, ethnic proximity, and personality traits. These factors together contribute to the intercultural transformation of individuals over time (Panocova, 2020).

The success of the foreign teachers' adaptation is also determined by the communication competence of local students and the school environment, which are implemented through social interactions in the foreign teachers' environment. Interpersonal communication within this social context plays a crucial role, as explained by Bright (2022) who emphasizes that daily interactions within staffrooms, classrooms, meetings, and informal activities significantly shape foreign teachers' experiences and adjustment processes in adaptation settings. Here are the findings of this research regarding the cultural adaptation strategies of foreign teachers in multicultural classrooms:

A. Host Communication Competence

1. Host Interpersonal Communication of Foreign Teachers

Young Yun Kim, as discussed in Panocova (2020) states that interpersonal communication enables the exchange of cultural knowledge and the development of mutually supportive relationships between foreigners and locals. In this context,

the teaching situation in multicultural classrooms allows foreign teachers and students from various cultures to build mutual understanding, trust, respect, and cultural awareness through daily interactions.

The findings from the interviews illustrate that foreign teachers prioritize establishing personal connections with their students to foster a positive and inclusive classroom environment. One strategy consistently mentioned is the effort to learn and use students' names early in the academic year. For instance, a participant emphasized the importance of quickly memorizing students' names and consistently using them during class discussions to create a sense of belonging and individual recognition.

Additionally, teachers consciously focus on understanding students' interests beyond academics. As participant ED pointed out, investing time in learning about students' passions and clarifying classroom rules from the beginning helps lay a strong foundation for mutual respect and understanding. Moreover, foreign teachers adopt an encouraging communication style, particularly when dealing with students who require additional support. Participant JW highlighted the value of recognizing even small improvements to motivate students, suggesting that offering positive reinforcement is essential for building students' confidence and emotional well-being. Empathy and sensitivity to students' diverse emotional needs are essential qualities in teaching. A teacher who shows respect should be mindful of their students' sense of value and dignity, as this can significantly enhance their performance and engagement in the classroom (Alaei & Ameri, 2021 ; McKinley et al., 2019).

In a culturally diverse classroom, it's essential to maintain a friendly and attentive teaching approach. This involves acknowledging and addressing each student by their name, which helps foreign teachers establish trust and respect. This approach not only facilitates classroom management but also nurtures students' emotional well-being, fostering a positive learning environment. Effective communication and a genuine effort to comprehend each student's needs are key to building strong relationships in the classroom and inspiring students to learn more effectively.

2. Host Mass Communication of Foreign Teachers

Indirect interaction is a crucial form of mass communication and is useful for foreign teachers to understand the host culture. Foreign teachers often rely on social media or newspapers to gain deeper insights into the cultural environment of the schools where they teach. This helps them expand their understanding of the prevailing norms, values, and behaviors, thereby facilitating a more effective adaptation and interaction process in the new environment.

The participants in this study revealed that they strategically used digital communication tools, particularly WhatsApp and Instagram, to maintain and strengthen their engagement with students. Teachers reported using digital communication platforms flexibly to facilitate interaction and maintain engagement with students. WhatsApp was commonly utilized for urgent, immediate communication needs, such as coordinating competitions, sometimes extending beyond work hours. In addition, some teachers made their personal Instagram accounts accessible to students to build informal connections while still maintaining clear boundaries by responding to messages only within reasonable hours. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning systems such as Google Slides were integrated alongside WhatsApp to maintain the continuity of academic communication and lesson management.

These findings demonstrate that the flexible use of mass communication platforms by foreign teachers not only facilitates practical information sharing but also supports the building of relational trust and intercultural understanding. The use of diverse media by foreign teachers facilitates a deep understanding of the cultural context of their schools. This process helps teachers adapt to a new environment and enriches the students' learning experience, creating more inclusive interactions and respecting cultural diversity.

3. Ethnic Interpersonal Communication of Foreign Teachers

In the context of teaching in multicultural classrooms, interpersonal communication among foreign teachers is crucial for supporting their adaptation. Foreign teachers may require emotional support, useful information, and material support from the school to aid their adaptation process. This helps them build mutually supportive relationships, share experiences, and teach strategies, thereby creating an inclusive and effective learning environment. These interactions among teachers not only foster personal growth and professional development but also enhance their ability to manage cultural diversity within the classroom.

Several participants emphasized the importance of structured mentoring programs to ease the transition for newly arrived teachers. They suggested initiatives such as assistance in setting up bank accounts, obtaining SIM cards, and familiarizing with the local environment, alongside cultural orientation sessions to better understand student behaviors and expectations. As one participant reflected, it would be beneficial if schools provided a "*buddy program*" or training program covering practical matters and offering insights into Indonesian culture to help new teachers navigate initial challenges.

Similarly, another participant stressed that providing logistical support, such as access to communication tools and local navigation assistance, is crucial to ensure a smooth adjustment for foreign teachers unfamiliar with the environment. However, the need for institutional support is not uniform across all foreign teachers. One participant, who had personal ties to the local culture through marriage, indicated that he did not feel the need for formal support structures, stating:

"I don't believe we require support in this area. My situation is unique, as my wife is local, and I had been familiar with the culture even before we met." – EB, 02 April 2024

These varying perspectives highlight that adaptation needs are influenced by the individual's prior familiarity with the host culture. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective. Tailored mentorship and support systems that account for teachers' diverse backgrounds and levels of integration are essential to enhance both their personal well-being and professional effectiveness.

4. Ethnic Mass Communication

In the context of the adaptation process, it is crucial for foreign teachers to actively follow local media as a means to continually update their understanding of the culture and recent developments in Indonesia. As outlined in Panocova (2020), indirect interaction between foreign teachers and mass media related to specific ethnic groups within the school's cultural environment is essential. Media sources such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, films, art, and literature that focus on ethnic issues can help foreign teachers understand the culture, history, values, and experiences of specific ethnic groups. Therefore, this process not only contributes to the professional development of teachers but also supports creating a more inclusive and empathetic learning environment.

The findings reveal that foreign teachers strategically utilize a variety of media sources to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of their teaching. For example, some teachers regularly access English-language news outlets such as The Jakarta Post and Jakarta Globe, as well as forums like Reddit and publications like Indonesia Expat Magazine, to better understand local business practices and societal trends. This knowledge enables them to contextualize textbook concepts in ways that are more relatable to their Indonesian students, bridging the gap between global content and local realities.

In addition, teachers also draw on social media platforms such as TikTok to monitor popular culture trends among students. By staying attuned to the latest music,

dance trends, and viral content, they are able to incorporate culturally relevant references into their lessons, thereby making classroom interactions more engaging and meaningful.

The explanations from the participants demonstrate how they utilize media to understand and integrate local culture into their teaching through indirect interactions. Learning from local media by foreign teachers aims to integrate real and relevant examples for students to enhance the relevance and connection of the learning material to the students' daily lives. The use of examples from the student's local environment not only enriches the learning experience but also facilitates a deeper and more understandable comprehension of the taught concepts. This skill is essential in preparing students to become global citizens who are sensitive to cultural differences. By demonstrating a deep understanding of the local context, teachers establish themselves as trustworthy and competent educators, strengthening their relationships with the students and the school community as a whole.

B. Environment Factor

1. Host Receptivity

The level of acceptance and the welcoming attitude of the local community towards foreign newcomers, including how they receive, treat, and support the cultural integration of these newcomers, play a significant role. High host receptivity facilitates the adaptation and integration of foreigners into new environments (Kim & Kim, 2022). In a multicultural classroom setting, students, parents, and school staff with high host receptivity embrace foreign teachers by showing acceptance, fairness, and assistance. This receptivity assists foreign teachers' assimilation into a new culture, thus improving their effectiveness in the delivery of lessons within a friendly and inclusive classroom setting.

In the Indonesian context, particularly at Springfield School, foreign teachers are able to feel the love and warm welcome of the community, the parents, and the children. Also, foreign teachers have the freedom to execute the lessons without being overly stressed on the supervision aspect, thus allowing them to become effective and creative in teaching. These positive events not only improve the productivity or well-being of foreign teachers but also foster a dynamic, reciprocal learning environment.

The assistance of the host environment, in this instance, the school context, is important for the successful adjustment of the foreign staff. He is the same as the above practices as described by An et al. (2022), any environment's attitude towards newcomers and the degree of its concern indicate the willingness to

welcome them. However, societal factors such as racial and ethnic biases may dictate the level of host receptivity. With the open attitude of the teachers in the school as well as the host community, foreign teachers are able to acclimate and feel welcomed. This indicates that there exists a positive correlation between the welcoming culture and the provision of a conducive environment, with the adjustment of foreign teachers within the society.

2. Host Conformity Pressure

Foreign newcomers may experience the ‘push’ factor, which may make them more comfortable with the mainstream culture in their host society than the local culture when it comes to assimilation or functional engagement in that society (Kim & Kim, 2022). In this case, it needs to be mentioned that the research participants, foreign teachers at Springfield School, had some conformity pressure from society in terms of competitive culture management, promoting independence, and expediting performance among students. This pressure means that foreign teachers have to comply with some elements of the local culture to improve their acceptance and effectiveness in the society.

Participants described navigating these cultural expectations by adjusting their behaviors and communication styles. For instance, several foreign teachers acknowledged the challenge of adapting to a more fast-paced, competitive environment compared to their previous experiences, with one expressing a desire to adopt a more relaxed approach characteristic of Indonesian culture, though finding it difficult given their cultural background. Additionally, incorporating local slang humorously into classroom interactions was mentioned as a strategy to build rapport with students while maintaining clear boundaries regarding appropriate academic language. Others emphasized cultivating patience—an attribute they admitted did not come naturally—to effectively manage diverse classroom dynamics and cultural differences.

In multicultural classrooms across Asia, humor and patience play pivotal roles in creating effective teaching dynamics. Humor helps build an inclusive, friendly, and egalitarian atmosphere, making learning more enjoyable and boosting student engagement (Han & Han, 2019). Patience, on the other hand, is essential for navigating cultural differences and addressing diverse student needs. These qualities enable teachers to adapt more effectively and manage their classrooms better. By using humor and patience, teachers can smooth over potential conflicts and misunderstandings that arise from cultural disparities, ultimately fostering a more positive educational experience for everyone involved (Tong & Tsung, 2020).

3. Ethnic Group Strength

The status and collective strength of ethnic groups of newcomers reflect the extent to which they have influence and support within the host society. Larger and more influential ethnic groups can facilitate adaptation for newcomers, but they can also impede it by promoting the maintenance of their native language and culture, especially if they have political aspirations. Such strong groups can shape the adaptation process of foreigners in specific ways (Panocova, 2020). Research findings indicate that this influence is also evident in the way foreign teachers adjust to cultural differences, particularly in terms of communication style. Research shows that this influence is evident in how foreign teachers adjust to cultural differences, particularly in communication style.

At Springfield High School, the communication culture is high-context, indirect, and less assertive, whereas foreign teachers tend to use a low-context, direct, and assertive style. In this context, foreign teachers must still adapt to a different communication approach. This adaptation process is closely related to the findings of Bright & Heyting (2024), which highlight how foreign teachers, over time, develop a deeper understanding of the local culture. They learn to adjust their teaching methods and expectations based on this understanding. Teachers, particularly those with more experience, become more selective when choosing schools that align with their teaching philosophy. This shift reflects a growing awareness of the importance of cultural adaptation in international teaching, underscoring the need for flexibility in response to local cultural norms and values.

C. Ethnic Group Strength

1. Preparedness for change

Being ready to embrace change is crucial for thriving in a new environment. Foreign teachers who come prepared can more smoothly adjust to different school cultures and teaching methods, adeptly handling cultural differences and various communication styles. According to Kim in Panocova (2020), explains that readiness for change includes having the right attitudes, knowledge, and skills to tackle new cultural challenges effectively. This preparation helps them navigate and adapt to the complexities of a multicultural classroom. Research shows that foreign teachers often understand local cultural nuances, such as differences in views on time. Students typically follow a polychronic time culture, emphasizing group cooperation, high-context communication, interpersonal relationships, and formalities in interactions.

The findings reveal that foreign teachers often encounter communication barriers initially but adjust their approaches to bridge these gaps. For example, one teacher recounted experiencing difficulties with students' comprehension due to accent differences during the early months of teaching. Recognizing this, the teacher

adapted by simplifying language, rephrasing questions, and increasing movement around the classroom to better engage students and confirm understanding. These strategies demonstrate a proactive adjustment of communication styles to meet the needs of students in a classroom environment that emphasizes group cooperation and indirect communication.

Adaptation also extends to changes in classroom content in response to shifting cultural sensitivities. Another participant noted that, although discussions on topics like gender issues and transgender matters were initially part of classroom debates, growing sensitivity around these subjects prompted a shift away from such topics to maintain a respectful and inclusive environment. This reflects the flexibility and cultural responsiveness necessary for sustaining positive relationships with students.

As Samovar et al. (2015) explain, cross-cultural adaptation is a communication process in which individuals strive to establish stable and functional relationships with a changing cultural environment, achieving a match between the individual's internal conditions and the new environment. This adaptation involves self-adjustment and a deep understanding of the norms, values, and behaviors of the host culture.

2. *Ethnic Proximity*

The extent to which foreigners have ethnic proximity or distance from the ethnic groups in the host environment reflects cultural, linguistic, or ethnic background similarities. Close ethnic proximity facilitates adaptation due to a better understanding of the local language and culture. Conversely, greater ethnic distance makes adaptation more challenging due to significant differences in language and social norms (Panocova, 2020). Cultural adaptation capacity highly depends on an individual's skills in adjusting to a foreign language. To adapt, individuals must identify significant cultural differences, especially in terms of language and values. Language is a major cultural dimension and the most fundamental form of expression that constitutes the identity of a country (Şafak-Ayvazoglu et al., 2021).

Foreign teachers teaching at Springfield do not face language issues, as the primary language used in the school is English. This allows them to easily and comfortably interact with everyone, including local teachers and particularly with students who are accustomed to using English as their everyday language. The presence of English as the main medium of instruction helps eliminate the communication barriers typically encountered in multicultural settings, allowing foreign teachers to focus on teaching and cultural adaptation without worrying about language barriers.

3. Adaptive Personality

Foreign teachers from individualistic cultures tend to value personal achievement highly, leading these educators to also have high expectations for their students' development and achievements (Su, 2022 ; Karadag, 2019). To avoid stressing students, foreign teachers must adapt by understanding the local cultural context, which may be more collective and focused on communal well-being. By adopting a more balanced and sensitive approach to the pressures faced by students, foreign teachers can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. This, in turn, helps students reach their maximum potential without experiencing excessive pressure. An adaptive personality refers to an individual's tendency to adjust to the demands and needs of their environment. Individuals with adaptive personalities focus on maintaining a good fit with their surroundings, being flexible, quick to learn, and optimistic about change (Bajaba et al., 2020).

Adaptability is critical when navigating the challenges that come with working in culturally diverse settings. By recognizing the unique needs of their students and being mindful of the local context, foreign teachers can balance their expectations, ensuring that students are not overwhelmed while still being encouraged to reach their full potential. One of the participants emphasized that the classroom environment should not be solely focused on academics and hard work. They suggested that incorporating humor or engaging in enjoyable activities can contribute to a more balanced and pleasant learning experience, thus preventing burnout while maintaining academic standards. This approach reflects the importance of adapting one's personality to foster a positive and productive learning environment, where both intellectual and emotional well-being are nurtured.

Another foreign teacher shared a similar perspective, highlighting the importance of setting high expectations while also understanding the diverse motivational levels of students. They noted that while they have high expectations for all students, they recognize that not everyone can meet them. To address this, they ensure that the classroom includes activities that challenge high achievers while also offering opportunities for those who may struggle academically. Additionally, they pointed out the value of showing grace and understanding when students are less motivated, suggesting that a flexible and compassionate approach can promote a more inclusive atmosphere.

This approach aligns with the findings of Braje et al. (2019), who explained that countries like the United States and the United Kingdom are considered individualistic cultures, whereas countries like China are collectivist. In the context of foreign educators from individualistic cultures, high expectations often translate into a strong emphasis on not just academic achievements but also extracurricular

success. For instance, foreign teachers in individualistic cultures may encourage their students to participate in competitions, not only to excel in the classroom but also to compete at the inter-school or even international level. These foreign teachers, however, must be mindful of balancing these high expectations with an understanding of students' varied motivations, ensuring that their approach is both challenging and supportive for all.

D. Intercultural Transformation Factor

1. Functional Fitness

The level of a person's ability to function effectively in everyday communication contexts in the host environment includes the ability to communicate fluently, understand and use appropriate language, and interact with residents properly. For foreign teachers at Springfield, this ability is evident when they use the Indonesian language while interacting with students' parents, ordering lunch online, or leaving school. Good proficiency in Indonesian allows them to establish better relationships with the local community, show respect for the local culture, and facilitate adaptation in daily life.

2. Psychosocial Health

The level of an individual's mental and emotional well-being during the process of adapting to a new cultural environment. Colleagues, students, and school leaders are integral to the teacher's work environment, with the most significant work experiences stemming from interactions with students, collaboration with colleagues, and workplace conditions directly linked to these interactions (Imants & Van Der Wal, 2020). When a person experiences cultural change and adaptation challenges, they may experience stress, anxiety, or feelings of alienation. Foreign teachers at Springfield often find it stressful to interact with local teachers who rely on indirect communication styles. Fackler et al., (2020) found that communication styles from Western cultures are typically direct and explicit, whereas those from Asian cultures tend to be more indirect and subtle to avoid causing offense.

This approach often leads to messages that feel vague, unclear, or incomplete, leaving room for misunderstanding. Ambiguity in these interactions can significantly affect the mental and emotional well-being of foreign teachers, leading to frustration and feelings of isolation over time. As Wang et al. (2021) explain, emotional well-being plays a crucial role in helping teachers manage these stressors. When teachers have a strong emotional foundation and resilience, they are better equipped to stay composed and continue teaching effectively despite the pressures of cultural adaptation. This resilience becomes even more critical in a multicultural classroom, where navigating cultural differences and managing the

emotional challenges associated with them can greatly influence a teacher's success and mental health.

3. Intercultural Identity

For foreign teachers, this journey involves understanding and integrating their own culture with that of local students. By developing an intercultural identity, they can interact more flexibly and openly, fostering an inclusive and adaptive learning environment. This approach allows them to combine teaching methods from their native culture with local norms and values, effectively meeting students' needs and building stronger connections within the school community.

"I wish I could be more 'santai'. Like I said, they're very warm and welcoming." - ED, 04 April 2024

"When they try to troll me in the classroom, similar to online trolling, I don't overreact. I just roll with it, and it doesn't become a big issue." - EB, 02 April 2024

"Quick adjustments between back-to-back lessons, such as reconfiguring the room or freshening the air, can significantly impact the learning experience." – JW, 04 April 2024

The adaptation of foreign teachers to local students is based on aspects of host receptivity and host communication competence, which includes host interpersonal communication and host mass communication. The cultural adaptation form of foreign teachers is acculturation, where they blend elements from their native culture and the local culture into their teaching practices. This includes developing empathy, openness, and flexibility, supported by an inclusive school environment. This process not only adjusts teachers to the social norms and local culture but also maintains some aspects of their original culture, allowing for the creation of a supportive and inclusive learning environment for students with diverse cultural backgrounds.

In the context of multicultural education, foreign teachers accept the learning styles of students who tend to be independent. Students need support, assistance, and guidance from their teachers. However, on the other hand, foreign teachers require students to be actively involved in class. Considerations in multicultural classrooms include the interaction protocols between students and foreign teachers. Students from different cultures will have varying attitudes towards their teachers. Foreign teachers from individualistic cultures often do not emphasize hierarchy. Meanwhile, students from collectivist cultures tend to see their teachers as high-status authority figures who interact formally. This scenario closely aligns with the

findings of Soemantri et al., (2021), who highlight that students, particularly in hierarchical and collectivist cultures, often feel compelled to respect authority figures, including their teachers and senior professionals. Students may experience a sense of inferiority within the hierarchy, which leads them to avoid showing disagreement, even when they encounter situations that conflict with their values and conscience. In such cases, foreign teachers adapt to the students' cultural expectations.

CONCLUSION

Foreign teachers from individualistic cultures often encounter numerous barriers in delivering effective and meaningful learning pedagogy that includes transitioning teaching styles and communication to suit students of the dominant collectivist culture of Indonesia. By adapting themselves through strategies such as acquiring knowledge of social norms, understanding cultural values in education, and practicing effective inclusive communication, teachers facilitate greater student participation and comprehension.

This research indicates that foreign teachers can work more effectively in multicultural school environments if they possess empathy, openness, and flexibility. Schools are encouraged to utilize these findings to design comprehensive orientation and training programs that go beyond administrative aspects to include cultural training, ensuring that all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, have equitable opportunities to learn and succeed. Effective programs can enhance the integration of foreign teachers in multicultural classrooms and promote a more constructive approach to addressing cross-cultural differences in teaching and learning.

Given these practical implications, future research could explore how orientation and training programs might be structured more effectively. For example, programs could incorporate workshops on local cultural norms and communication styles, role-playing sessions to simulate classroom interactions, and mentorship schemes pairing foreign teachers with experienced local teachers, thus fostering both administrative and cultural competence.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by the small number of participants, involving only three foreign teachers, and its focus on teachers from Western countries, specifically the United Kingdom and the United States. Future studies should expand the participant base to include teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds and geographical regions to better capture the wide range of cross-cultural adaptation strategies.

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