

Study on the Adjustment Process of Chaoxianzu during Cross-Cultural Transition in South Korea

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Abstract

The research conducted an in-depth interview with seven Chaoxianzu who lived in South Korea for more than 10 years to examine the process of acculturation when they lived in South Korea. Among the Chinese immigrants in South Korea, Chaoxianzu are a special ethnic group. Chaoxianzu share the same culture and blood with Koreans, and, with the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea, they are the first Chinese immigrants to enter the Korean society. In the 25 years of Sino-Korean exchanges, the social relations and economic status of China and South Korea have also undergone tremendous changes. The cultural adaptation process of Chaoxianzu in South Korea has been profoundly influenced by the external social background, and has been quite specific and complex. The same language and cultural homology make them experience a cultural adaptation process which is different from that experienced by other immigrants in South Korea. Having gone through the period of hoping to find roots in the Korean peninsula and the frustration of being not really integrated into the Korean society, the Chaoxianzu in South Korea are now beginning to re-adjust their positioning in the Korean society, and their cultural adaptation process also changes from the crisis period to adjust, adapt, and readjust.

Keywords: *Acculturation, Cultural Shock, Chaoxianzu in South Korea, The U-curve Model for Adjustment*

1. Introduction

Among the foreigners in South Korea, Chaoxianzu are a special ethnic group, and, due to their sharing the same culture and blood with the South Koreans, they are the foreign immigrants who entered into South Korea the earliest when the country introduced labor immigration [1]. From the late 1980s, Chaoxianzu first visited South Korea in the name of the visiting relatives, and they began to flood into South Korea after the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in 1992. In 2011, the total number of Chaoxianzu in South Korea (58 million) exceeded 1% of the Korean population. According to the monthly report on the immigration and foreigner policy statistics announced by the South Korean Ministry of Justice in January 2017, Chaoxianzu (630,110) accounted for more than 30% of foreigners stranded in South Korea [2]. They have solved the problem of the shortage of labor force in the 3D industry, such as South Korean family nanny, construction workers, and restaurant waiter and so on. Chaoxianzu have become an important part of the South Korean community, and the South Korean media holds that Korean economy will be unable to work properly without them [3]. Though it is less than 30 years from Chaoxianzu's

Article history:

Received (December 22, 2016), Review Result (February 13, 2017), Accepted (March 28, 2017)

beginning to enter into South Korea to now, great changes have taken place in China and South Korea's social relations and economic status. This research tries to get an in-depth understanding of the cultural adaptation process of the Chaoxianzu in South Korea through the methods of in-depth interview.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Chaoxianzu

Chaoxianzu, also called as Korean Chinese or Koreans in China, is one of the minorities in contemporary China, who have ethnic origin as the South Koreans. The Korean people in China are mainly those who moved in succession from the Korean Peninsula in the middle of the 19th century. After the Japanese Empire annexed Korea, more and more Korean people who could not endure the imperialist brutal oppression and exploitation flocked into the northeast of China and settled down, and the number of such migrants grew to 360,000 in 1918[4]. Chaoxianzu mainly distribute in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture and other places in Jilin Province. Besides, they are also found in Heilongjiang, Liaoning, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and some cities in the mainland. Their population is 192.38 million (2000), with 1145688 in Jilin Province. Chaoxianzu speak the same language and enjoy the same customs as the South Koreans, and they are the ethnic group who preserved Korean Diaspora the best in the world. Most of the Korean people in China can speak both Chinese and Korean fluently.

2.2. U-curve model of acculturation

Acculturation is the process of cultural change and psychological change that results following meeting between cultures [5]. The process of acculturation is described by many scholars as a U-curve. Lysgaard (1955) firstly introduced the U-curve model for cultural adjustment. Lysgaard (1955, p. 50) stated: Adjustment as a process over time seems to follow a U-shaped curve: adjustment is felt to be easy and successful to begin with; then follows a "crisis" in which one feels less well-adjusted, somewhat lonely and unhappy; finally one begins to feel better adjusted again, becoming more integrated into the foreign community [6]. A similar account of cross-cultural adaptation was provided by Oberg (1960) in his description of "culture shock". Oberg (1960, p. 177) described culture shock as an "occupational disease of people who have been suddenly transplanted abroad." Culture shock is consisting of at least one of four distinct phases: honeymoon, negotiation, adjustment, and adaptation which can also be graphically represented by a U-curve [7].

3. Research method

Through conducting an in-depth interview with seven Chaoxianzu who lived in South Korea and by means of semi-structured questions, this research explores and analyzes the cultural adaptation process they experienced after their arriving in South Korea. The data were collected from December 2016 to January 2017. Each respondent was interviewed for about 120 minutes for the first time and the contradictions and vagueness appearing after finishing and recoding the first interview were confirmed for the second time. As the relationship between China and South Korea became tense in March 2017, the research does some follow-up supplements to the respondents' current state of life.

The respondents in this research are those who have lived in South Korea for a total of more than 10 years, of which five have the Korean nationality and two hold permanent

residence visa F5. Table1 shows the general information of participants. Since the respondents in the study have repeatedly entered into South Korea, the time they live in the country is calculated in an accumulated way. Their occupations are the current occupations they take. From the statements of their experience, it can be seen that most of the respondents have been engaged in a variety of work during their stay in South Korea. Though participant6 is currently a housewife, she is still engaged in activities like acting as a purchasing agent.

Table1. General information of research participants

Part.	Age	Gender	Time lived in Korea (Year)	Types of Visa	Current Occupation
1	67	F	20	K.N.*	Cleaning
2	44	F	19	F5	Chinese education
3	65	M	17	K.N.	Doorkeeper
4	46	F	15	K.N.	Restaurant server
5	42	M	15	K.N.	Trading
6	39	F	12	F5	Cosmetics company
7	36	F	11	K.N.	Housewife

*K.N.= Korean Nationality

4. Results

In the 25 years of Sino-Korean exchanges, the social relations and economic status of China and South Korea have also undergone tremendous changes. The cultural adaptation process of Chaoxianzu in South Korea has been profoundly influenced by the external social background, and has been quite specific and complex. The same language and cultural homology make them experience a cultural adaptation process which is different from that experienced by other immigrants in South Korea. Having gone through the period of hoping to find roots in the Korean peninsula and the frustration of being not really integrated into the Korean society, the Chaoxianzu in South Korea are now beginning to re-adjust their positioning in the Korean society, and their cultural adaptation process also changes from the crisis period to adjust, adapt, and readjust (Figure1).

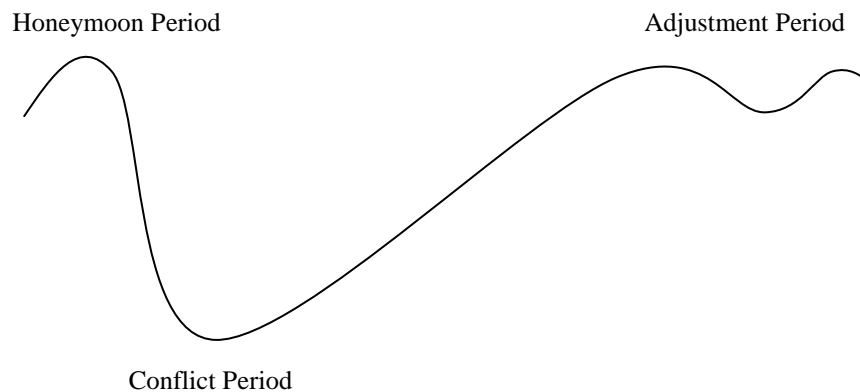


Figure1. The curving acculturation process of chaoxianzu in south korea

4.1. Honeymoon period: The road to finding gold and the journey of finding roots

At the end of the twentieth century, the level of economic development and per capita income in South Korea, known as one of the “Newly Industrial Economics”, were higher than that in many other Asian countries. And it was undeniable that most of the foreign immigrants who had come to South Korea then had come with the hope of finding gold. At that time, South Korea was facing with the problem of labor shortage in many companies, because of the aging population and that the locals do not want to engage in the 3D industry. This created many opportunities for foreign immigrants to work in South Korea, especially for Chaoxianzu who had no problem in communicating with Korean.

When people come to a strange new environment, the first stage of cultural adaptation process is generally honeymoon period, during which people enter into a different culture for the first time, and they are excited in and curious about the new culture, thus they are full of enthusiasm for new life [7]. Through the interview with the Chaoxianzu in South Korea, it is easy to tell that they have not had any crash with the new culture during the honeymoon period. They came to South Korea, a familiar and strange society whose economy developed better, as a “poor relative”, observing and contacting with the “hometown” while doing their roles loyally in the society.

4.2. Conflict period: Being differentiated and stigmatized and feeling lost

After 2000, the influx of labor from different countries had great impact on South Korea’s single national culture. Especially, the majority of the foreign immigrants in South Korea were migrant workers and immigrant women who married with South Korean men living at the bottom of the society. The Koreans with a sense of economic superiority and ingrained national consciousness instinctively discriminated and excluded foreign immigrants, and the intensified social contradictions made South Korea have to begin implementing multicultural policy which aims at social integration. Since Chinese Koreans share the same ethnic, linguistic and cultural ties with South Koreans, they had expected to be respected and treated equally by Korean society; however, a series of events, such as the “Overseas Koreans Act” issued by the Korean government, made them realized gradually that they had been discriminated. After the economic crisis in 1990s, the Korean government enacted the “Overseas Koreans Act”, giving overseas Korean ethnic groups the treatment similar to dual nationality. However, according to the Act, one of the conditions of being identified as the oversea compatriots is that one must once have the nationality of the Republic of Korea. Since most of the Chinese Koreans moved to China before the foundation of the Republic of Korea, the majority of them had actually been excluded [8]. Although the struggle has been resolved, Chaoxianzu felt they were hurt in inner heart and they were disappointed in the Korean society.

4.3. Adjustment Period: Assessing the situation and self-positioning

Since China officially became a member of the World Trade Organization in 2001, it has sustained economic growth and, following the United States, become the second largest economy in the world, narrowing the income gap between China and South Korea. The hope of finding gold by working in South Korea began to recede. In addition, bilateral economic and trade and investment cooperation has grown rapidly since the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in August 1992, with the total economic and trade volume surging to US \$ 227.4 billion in 2015, 45 times of that at the beginning of the establishment of diplomatic relations. China has now become Korea’s largest trading

partner with South Korea having a long-term trade surplus, which makes South Korea attach great importance to the cooperation and development with China in the more than 20 years after the establishment of the diplomatic relations. With the increase in trade between the two countries and the strengthening of cooperation in various fields between China and South Korea, the Chaoxianzu with bilingual ability in South Korea are no longer only engaged in coolies work in 3D industries to survive, and they have more opportunities for development. As China's role in regional and international economic, trade and diplomatic levels has become increasingly prominent, it can be seen that the Chaoxianzu in South Korea have begun to readjust their position in Korean society.

5. Discussion

Through this research, the curve process of cultural adaptation experienced by Chaoxianzu in South Korea can be seen. In the late 1980s, Chaoxianzu came to South Korea, a familiar and strange society whose economy developed better, as a "poor relative", and they observed and contacted with the "hometown" while they played their roles loyally in the society; as the Korean society with a single nation becomes more and more diversified, the different cultures got significant exclusions from the Korean culture in the Korean society, and during this process, the Chaoxianzu who have deepened into the Korean society have also been marginalized, which makes it difficult for them to form the identity of Korean society, leading cultural shock to the crisis period; and with China's role in regional and international economic, trade and diplomatic levels becoming increasingly prominent, bilateral activities between China and South Korea are more and more diversified, and Chaoxianzu play an important role in the bilateral activities, making them began to re-position themselves in the Korean society, and cultural adaptation in this period showed certain characteristics of getting rid of the crisis period. The social environment affects the cultural adaption process experienced by the immigrants in the foreign countries. Recently, the relationship between China and Korea has changed, and the respondents have expressed that they will pay close attention to the development of the situation and the changes of the surrounding environment. When the situation is not clear, what they can do is only to work hard to adapt to changes in the environment, and to be more cautious. Undoubtedly, new adjustment fluctuations will take place in the process of Chaoxianzu's adapting to the Korean culture.

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