

## Research Article

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# Cultural Experiences and Successful Adjustment—A Case Study of Two Foreign Educators in Taiwan

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**Abstract:** Due to globalisation, Asian countries have been pressed to improve their English skills to maintain international competitiveness. Though foreign educators heeded the call to meet the high demand of English learning in Taiwan, their turn-over rate remained persistently high. Assuming cultural differences might be a crucial cause, this study inquired into the cultural experience and adjustment of two foreign educators in Taiwan from a narrative inquiry approach. In addition to an extensive review of local literature, the narratives of the participants revealed the following: (1) strong motives and low/inaccurate expectations might benefit cultural adjustment; (2) self-initiated relocation could imply more challenges than organizationally assigned relocation; (3) support and social network seem beneficial to cultural transition; (4) cultural differences were found in food, living environment, transportation/traffic, and social interactions; (5) required cultural adjustments include perseverance, trial and error, learning local language, acceptance, and contentment. Such findings not only shed light on Taiwanese culture but also bear implications for successful adjustments through the lens of foreign educators.

**Keywords:** cultural experience, cultural adjustment, foreign educator, narrative inquiry, Taiwan

## Introduction

Taiwan began its island-wide promotion of English education in 2001, as the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum policy began to take effect, it had two major impacts on English education: English education shall begin from the fifth grade (Luo), and its competency indicators clearly state that students shall possess English communication abilities to a certain extent (Taiwan Elementary and Secondary Educator Community).

Foreign educators heed the call for the high demand for English teachers, but the demand was from supplementary schools, also known as cram schools, rather than schools. Cram schools, derived as a product of the Chinese civil examination culture, date back to the Han Dynasty where Emperor Wu of Han began the forming of imperial examinations (Elman). Ever since credentialism has been widely embraced.

The presence of foreign educators in all types of schools and parents sending their children to learn from native English speakers were considered as a fulfilment of credentialism (Y. M. Chan). Even many kindergartens listed English as either their primary teaching subject or they provide full English education. Therefore, it becomes obvious that learning English has become the norm rather than a trend (Y. L. Wu, *Teacher-Pupil Participation* 79).

The Foreign Teacher Project from the Ministry of Education aimed to import 400 foreign educators before 2008 while offering a generous salary, almost three times as much as the average Taiwanese university graduate, but among the five foreign educators which were imported in the first wave in 2004,

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two left in less than one year and one left within a month due to maladaptation to the Taiwanese culture (S. H. Chen 147). The project ended with poor results, as nearly all of the 400 foreign educators left within or shortly after one year (Cheung 91; C. F. Chen).

Therefore, assuming that cultural differences affect foreign educators' decisions to relocate and adjust to Taiwan, this study addresses the following questions:

1. What were the motives and expectations of foreign educators towards relocating to Taiwan?
2. What were their cultural experiences and encountered cultural differences?
3. What were their cultural adjustments and how were the adjustments made?

## Literature Review

The English learning environment was highly influenced by the increase in family average income and development of the economy (Y. C. Lin and Chien H. C. 240). While Taiwanese parents perceive learning English as a priority for their children, English classes in cram schools became more popular than ever, resulting in a highly competitive market. An interesting fact supports this claim. There were slightly over 10,000 convenience stores in Taiwan, the highest density of convenience stores in the world (Department of Statistics), yet, there were 15,661 cram schools in 2015 (Short-term Tutorial Center). Foreign educators in cram schools soon became a significant indicator for the consideration of parents. Since the general preference of learning from native speakers was still dominant, it was therefore not surprising that seeking foreign educators had become a trend when it came to learning English. According to recent statistics released by the Ministry of Labour, an increase in the number of foreign educators was discovered, perhaps due to the Ministry of Education's attempt to narrow the gap of English proficiency between urban and rural areas (C. L. Huang; Sung).

Attracting foreign educators became a policy of importance. In 2003 to 2007, the Ministry of Education imported a total of 400 foreign educators, but the outcome was nowhere near successful (Cheung 91; C. F. Chen). Almost all of the foreign educators either left before or immediately upon the termination of their one-year contract. Several factors might contribute to the failure of this policy, such as a lack of work orientation for foreign educators in school settings, the language barrier which affects communication, social support and teaching, and the motives of those coming to Taiwan might not be fitting for the Taiwanese schooling environment (Y. C. Lin and Chien H. C. 253; Y. L. Wu, *Teacher-Pupil Interaction*). Contrary, Hsinchu City of Northern Taiwan conducted a successful attempt to import foreign educators. It was the first city to implement collaborative teaching among Taiwanese and foreign English teachers since 2002 (H. P. Chen). Regardless, the general turnover rate among foreign teachers in both school and cram school settings remains high and unresolved (C. F. Chen; M. Y. Chou; Lu; Wen), implying a difficult transition into the Taiwanese culture.

Foreign educators encountered a variety of challenges in Taiwan. Previous studies revealed that they might not only encounter differences in the use of language but also hygiene customs, eating habits, punctuality, communicating in the workplace and especially conflicting pedagogical beliefs (Y. M. Chan; Hsu; Pai; Tsai; Wang, *The Teaching Behavior*; Yang; Yeh). Some studies revealed that Taiwanese students and parents perceive foreign educators as being able to demonstrate appropriate English pronunciations, and integrate lively, humorous and playful teaching methods for the construction of a happy learning environment (Y. L. Wu, *Teacher-Pupil Interaction*; Xu). Also, up to 84.35% of Taiwanese parents believed that their children would benefit from learning English from foreign educators (Shi 4), and a recent study found that parents in northern Taiwan favour foreign educators to teach listening, speaking ability and pronunciation (Y. T. Huang). Such expectations from the host nationals were worth noting, as they reveal how Taiwanese society expects foreign educators to perform, but it was questionable whether the cultural context of foreign educators aligns with such expectations.

Since foreign educators come to Taiwan with different backgrounds and motives, if no considerations were made on their behalf, maladaptation might occur from encountering language barriers, cultural differences, social isolation, and even misinterpretation of local nonverbal expressions (Y. C. Chen; C. P. Chou

31; Chu). Also, based on the fact that the Taiwanese schooling culture was greatly affected by credentialism, authority among teachers was emphasized in teacher-student relationships. As foreign educators introduce a different pedagogical stance to the Taiwanese schooling environment, they also influence local teachers (Lee). Thus, adjustments had to be made by both parties.

Unfortunately, studies specifically focusing on cultural adjustments of foreign educators in K-12 and cram school settings were rarely conducted. To highlight the lack of awareness on cultural issues regarding foreign educators in Taiwan, I organised a list of theses and dissertations in recent years on related topics. By searching keywords connected with foreign teachers or educators in both Chinese and English on the National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations in Taiwan (NDLTD) database, the results from 2004 to 2014 were accounted. Since the Degree Conferral Law in Taiwan demands that all theses and dissertations must be stored in the NDLTD starting in 1994, the search results accounted for all of the theses in Taiwan. A detailed list and citations of the dissertations below will be available upon request, whereas the summarised results were as follows:

**Table 1:** Relevant Theses in Taiwan (2004-2014) (compiled by the author)

Topics	Authors
Foreign educators' teaching experience, classroom management, and collaborative teaching with Taiwanese teachers	Jiang, 2006; Lin, 2007; Wang, 2007; Pai, 2008; Yeh, 2009; F. C. Chen, 2009; H. P. Chen, 2009; H. W. Chen, 2009; Herbert, 2009; Lu, 2009; Chang, 2010; H. F. Chen, 2011; Hsiao, 2011; Lee, 2011; Tsai, 2011; Wang, 2011; Wu, 2014
Teaching attitude, beliefs and style of teaching	Huang, 2008; Huang, 2011; Hsu, 2013; Wang, 2008; Yang, 2013; Hsu, 2014
Cram school and/or governmental policies	Pan, 2004; Zheng, 2004; Chou, 2006; Lai, 2007; Lin, 2006; Hsieh, 2014; Lin, 2014
Work satisfaction and teaching quality	Lee, 2005; Hsu, 2007; Tsai, 2008; Chen, 2011
Cultural differences	Chan, 2008; Chu, 2008; Hu, 2010; Tsai, 2010; Teng, 2011; Chen, 2012; Liao, 2012
Parent perceptions	Huang, 2013

None of these studies directly addresses the cultural adjustment of foreign educators. The topics suggest an obvious lack of understanding of the experience and cultural adjustment for foreign educators. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by situating foreign educators and their experience as the subject, in the hope of shedding light on how foreign educators perceive their cultural experience and how they adjust into Taiwanese culture.

After introducing the context of English learning and foreign educators in Taiwan, an attempt was made to define the term “culture.” Yet, it was no easy task as it refers to a wide range of meanings. On the one hand, the culture was either constructed by society, a group of people, or even one person (Spillman 2-5). On the other hand, at the intersection of different ethnic groups and their dissimilar ways of life, a certain group might perceive another’s behavioural pattern or customs as incorrect or unacceptable, resulting in the formation of cultural conflicts (Wang). This was also known as “culture shock” or “acculturative stress” (Berry 13). As no single definition could define the term culture, and that the existence of cultural conflicts was seemingly persistent, a suitable statement on culture could be found in an extensive review of the terminology of culture by Kroeber and Kluckhohn:

It is true that any culture is, among other things, a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men. . . For cultures create problems as well as solving them . . . This is why all “functional” definitions of culture tend to be unsatisfactory: they disregard the fact that cultures create needs as well as provide means of fulfilling them. (57)

Since culture involves adjustment, problems and solutions, based on the assumption that humans have an innate drive and capacity to adapt to the challenges posed by the environment (Kim), making adjustments in response to problems and needs created while experiencing a host culture were required for successful cultural transition. According to the early work by Shaffer, an adjustment was defined as a process of

maintaining a balance between needs and obstacles which obstruct achieving satisfaction from fulfilling needs (4). Following the work of Shaffer, Sharma and Sharma discovered four elements for the process of adjustment: motive, non-fulfilling of the motive, response to obstacles, and adjustment as a solution (*Guidance* 131-32; *Advanced* 409).

When the process of adjustment was emphasised under the notion of culture, the idea of cultural adjustment emerged. There were several terms that have been used to refer to essentially the same idea. Assimilation often referred to emphasizing acceptance and internalization of the host culture (Kim); acculturation was the result when groups of individuals with different cultures continuously interact with subsequent changes in the original culture (Berry 6); and cross-cultural adjustment refers to the perceived psychological comfort, familiarity and interaction between the individual and the environment/new host culture (Arkoff; Black 283). From the perspective of stress as the main cause of poor adjustment, Hertz identified two main phases among migratory experiences: (1) the pre-migration phase with characteristics of high and positive expectations; and (2) a coping phase sub-divided into the impact stage; the rebound stage; and the coping stage.

Perceiving foreign educators as expatriates, abundant literature on expatriates' cultural adjustments could be found in the field of management. A recent study on cultural adjustments of expatriates in China found that the greater distance perceived by expatriates among them and their new host culture, the more difficulties they would encounter in general non-workplace daily environments and interpersonal interaction adjustments (Zhou and Qin 202). Another similar research on cross-cultural adjustments of British expatriates in the Middle East revealed that in addition to the expatriates' ability, successful cultural adjustment also depends on organizational support and assistance received prior and during their displacement abroad (Konanahalli et al. 47); whereas social support has also been identified as influential towards cultural adjustment (Adelman) and contact with the expatriates' ethnic community positively functions with their mental health (Banchevska).

Although studies on the relationship between motive for relocating and cross-cultural adjustment were not found, there were two approaches to address this lack of literature. The first was the indirect implications established in studies on self-initiated expatriates (SIE). SIEs were individuals who chose to work abroad without being sent by organisations in their home countries (Cerdin 59), and based on this definition, SIEs could be interpreted as those who choose to relocate to a different culture for work upon their own desire. Studies relevant to SIEs and expatriates who were assigned abroad (organizational expatriates, OEs) revealed that SIE academics were relatively well adjusted on general or work adjustment (Froese 1107), and were significantly better adjusted than OEs on interactions with host country nationals (Peltokorpi and Froese, *Organizational Expatriates* 1106; Froese & Peltokorpi).

The second approach was to perceive motive as motivation, and there are literatures in the field of psychology that provide a decent explanation on this matter. Collins stated that the transition to a Chinese environment would not be successful if a foreign educator chooses to teach for reasons such as leaving behind failed marriages, unsuccessful careers or financial worries. According to the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), autonomous motivation contradicts with controlled motivations (Ryan and Deci 72). Studies have shown that people whose motivation was autonomous have more interest, excitement, and confidence than those who have controlled motivation (Deci and Ryan 273), thus enhancing persistence and general well-being (Ryan, Deci, and Grolnick 629). Therefore, a self-initiated and autonomous motive for relocating might contribute to successful cross-cultural adjustments.

Personality also affects cultural adjustment, as studies confirmed that an open-minded personality trait positively relates to cross-cultural adjustment (Caligiuri 75; Peltokorpi and Froese, *The Impact of Expatriate* 744). It was crucial for the transition into the Taiwanese culture because of how it allows foreign educators to accept cultural differences and thus able to make adjustments under unfamiliar cultural contexts (Liu A4-15). Also worth noting was that having accurate expectations before departing into a different culture positively affects cross-cultural adjustment (Caligiuri et al. 366), and when experiences were more difficult than expected, higher psychological distress caused by divergence was found (Rogers and Ward 192).

## Methodology

This study was conducted from a narrative inquiry approach as to inquire in-depth cultural experiences. There were two participants in this study, and data collected from interviews was analysed with a narrative approach from the perspective of phenomenology, and presented in a chronological format.

To stimulate the production of data with context, the three stages for conducting narrative interviews as proposed by Flick (266) were referred to: generative narrative questioning, to stimulate interviewees' main story; narrative probing, the shift from narrative to questioning to probe selected fragments of the stories and further develop details and context; and a balancing phase, the shift from questioning to answering, where the interviewees were regarded as experts in their experiences and thus seek explanations or arguments to balance the stories. The narrative inquiry framework of Clandinin and Connelly was also referred to. This framework, based on Dewey's perspective on experience (situation, continuity, and interaction), proposed the concept of three-dimensional space, which includes personal and social (interaction); past, present, and future (continuity); and the notion of place (situation). The interview structure was first designed around the theories mentioned above, then refined by discussing with cohorts, educational experts and in-service teachers before being employed in interviews.

By purposeful sampling, two foreign educators were invited to participate in this study. As defined by the Ministry of Labour, foreign educators were foreigners who were hired to teach in schools or short-term cram schools. Considering the richness of cultural experience, work stability and background context, participants must meet the following conditions: have full-time English teaching experience in Taiwan for at least two years (already difficult to find given their high turnover rate); be certified English teachers by undergoing recognised teaching training; be native English speakers. Also, although both participants expressed to have adjusted well to the Taiwanese culture, their successful adjustments were unintentional findings.

**Table 2:** Background information of participants (compiled by the author)

Coding/Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Nationality	Years of Teaching in Taiwan
A/James	Male	39	American	2.5
B/Janet	Female	24	American	2.5

Data was collected from three sessions of in-depth interviews, among which were two sessions with James and one session with Janet. Nearly five hours of voice recordings were collected along with field notes taken throughout the interviews. The interviews were conducted in English, and the recordings were transcribed for analysis. As in all other qualitative research, the author would be the primary agent of data collection, therefore the skill, competency and rigour of the researcher involves the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Patton). The author of this paper has several identities: a doctoral student in education, an international student with a cross-cultural identity, a foreign educator teaching in language institutions, and had made his transition from Canada to Taiwan for over a decade. Such identities and experiences enabled the author to interpret their data and relate with the participants.

Thematic analysis was conducted to determine important concepts that could respond to the aims of this study. Findings were narrated in a chronological format for presenting the development of participants' stories. The coding in this study, take (B-010) for example, B refers to Janet, A refers to James, and 010 refers to the 10<sup>th</sup> sentence spoken by B.

## Findings

This section begins with an overview of James' and Janet's experiences, followed by narratives of their motives towards coming to Taiwan, expectations before coming, and their chronological development of their cultural experience and adjustment. Table 3 below presents a summarised development of James and

Janet's story, with short descriptions which were named according to the themes derived from the analysis.

**Table 3:** Overview of James and Janet's experience (compiled by the author)

<i>Before relocating</i>		<i>Chronological Development</i>			
<i>Motives</i>					
James	Experience Chinese culture				
Janet	Dream to teach and preach				
<i>Expectations</i>					
James	Go with the flow				
Janet	Fearing for the worst				
<i>Cultural experience</i>					
James		Rough landing	Cloudy skies	Knowing better	
Janet		Favorably convenient	Philanthropic spirit	Bundle of praises	
<i>Cultural adjustment</i>					
James		Keep trying	Unwelcomed eyes	Contentment matters	
Janet		Surprisingly lenient	Overcome language limit	Home beats all places	

Regarding motives for relocating, James describes himself as “a traveller, and I like to see new cultures (A-020).” He came to Taiwan to fulfil his dream of experiencing Chinese culture. “When I was studying Kung Fu . . . he (the master) used to always say ‘come to Taiwan or other countries to learn Kung Fu’ . . . so I kind of want to come to Taiwan and teach English, and learn a little Kung Fu (A-021).” He was also “very much inspired and influenced by the wisdom of the Chinese culture (A-026).” He initially landed in China, but his experience there was “very difficult . . . the agents usually take a lot of money, kind of telling lies about directions . . . finally I just gave up, plus it’s not as free of a country, the internet is kind of blocked . . . and I realised I should just go to Taiwan (A-048).” As for Janet, she wanted to teach and be a missionary, and “since I was a little girl my dream was to tell other people about Jesus and be a teacher (B-025).” A church organisation which she was affiliated with notified her regarding an opportunity to teach English as a missionary. She believed that “God was preparing me since he gave me many Taiwanese friends, and now that I have come here, I can visit them around the island . . . it is a good way to continue that friendship (B-024).”

Regarding their expectations before relocating, James reflected upon his previous expectations when he travelled and he “learned that they’re always wrong, and not only are they wrong, but they kind of tend to make you unhappy . . . I really try not to expect (A-054).” When asked to compare, he “kind of thought the living environment would be a little more friendly (A-056),” and also thought that students would be more respectful because “when I got to Thailand, at least in cram schools, I had a lot of respect (A-060).” As for Janet, she expected her first year in Taiwan “would be very stressful very difficult (B-048),” but “no matter how bad it is, I have to stay for a second year . . . they always say in first year you learn, the second year you start to teach. (B-048).” She had several worries before relocating. First, she “was afraid Taiwan would be very big and modern, because I’m a country girl . . . so I thought I would be in a big, big city and I would miss home a lot (B-027).” Second, she expected the weather “would be hot a lot, and I was a little nervous about that . . . I’m used to the cold (B-029).” Lastly, about traffic, “they said there are a lot of scooters in Taiwan, and I thought in India the scooters they just go in and out of the cars, and it’s very dangerous, so I thought the traffic would be very dangerous (B-051).”

In the following section, the events of James’ story will be presented in chronological order. The theme “rough landing, keep trying” was identified during his first year in Taiwan. He did not appreciate Taiwanese food when he first came, because “I really didn’t know where to go or what to order, and I couldn’t speak the language (A-136).” His method of adjustment was through trial and error, which eventually got him sick. However, he did find enjoyable food by following his father’s universally applicable advice: “you look for places with lots of people, go to restaurants that are very popular, it’s probably good food (A-137).” Referring to traffic, he noticed that drivers are much more dangerous than those in America. “People just pull out and

they don't look before they go . . . another time the guy next to me just decides to turn, and there's nothing you can do (A-129)." He learned two things from the traffic in Taiwan: "sometimes it's more dangerous to go through a green light than it is through a red light, ironically" and "about the cops, they don't care . . . here I see people driving the wrong way as a cop comes by, whatever, it doesn't matter (A-147)." Also, "one of the quotes I got from another foreigner . . . he said don't ever get into a situation where you need the police, if you need the police you will be in bad trouble, you're not going to get help (A-148)." Speaking of hygiene, James found it strange that "you can't even flush your toilet paper down, and when you walk outside it's always very stinky because the sewers are not very deep and exposed (A-152)," but he also thinks that "it is actually better than India or Nepal, at least they're using toilet paper (A-154)."

While interacting with the Taiwanese, James thought that "Taiwanese people are often shy . . . I would always walk down to a teashop . . . being myself, saying hello to everybody . . . for the first month or so people just kind of gave me dirty looks, like why are you saying hello to me I don't know you . . . then it slowly changed a little bit by about the third month, some of them even waved at me . . . they were just a little slow to trust a foreigner or somebody they don't know (A-124)." Perhaps the most shocking cultural experience for James was witnessing violent incidents during his first year in Taiwan. He "saw quite a bit of violence . . . probably within a month of moving here . . . I saw a bunch of kids on the street, I thought they were just practicing Kung Fu or playing, as I got closer it was pretty bad, it was like 10 to 15 people murdering somebody . . . then literally two weeks later from my apartment I saw the same thing happen (A-140)." He tried to seek help, "both times got the police, and the police don't care, they just couldn't care less . . . the whole time the police thought so your friend is getting beat up, my God it's not my friend . . . I guess Taiwanese people they don't care, and they won't help somebody, so they think if somebody helps then it's your friend, it's really sick . . . it happened in the first year probably eight times, nasty (A-141)."

The theme "cloudy skies, unwelcomed eyes" was identified during James' second year in Taiwan. James was obviously bothered from witnessing such violent incidents, "then at the time I was kind of tutoring a nurse . . . I of course called her, wanted her help, but I talked to the guard at my building, and they both said the same thing to me, they said it's okay it happens all the time . . . so if it's happening all the time why is it okay? I almost cried, seeing another guy getting murdered (A-142)." As the violent incidents continued, James encountered another disappointing experience involving discrimination. He noticed that "a lot of older folks, mothers and such, they don't want their daughter dating foreigners . . . some girls they don't even want to be seen out with me, maybe as a foreigner . . . but I think in Taipei . . . it's even the opposite . . . I've noticed a few situations where I really feel the woman really likes me . . . and her mother in one situation, one little vegetable stand, her mother basically ran me off, get out of here you know (A-172)."

Lastly, the theme "knowing better, contentment matters" was identified during his current year in Taiwan. Now, James found the environment had improved. "It's gotten a lot better, there's a lot of good people and families, but there are definitely elements that are not safe, a lot of loan sharking places, prostitution, that sort of thing (A-143)." The situation of James being given dirty looks also improved, "now to this day, even if I don't see them they would be very loud and make sure I see them, they say hello, very friendly (A-124)." He then began to realise that "in Taiwan you need to, at least as a foreigner the problem is to Taiwanese you got to make a real effort to make connections and not only make them, you got to follow up, build up on them (A-166)." After several years living and working in Taiwan, James discovered the importance of acceptance. He admitted that he "could probably do better, a lot better than when I first got here. A lot of it is acceptance, you need a lot of acceptance as a foreigner 'cause you can't change the situations here (A-171)." Contentment was also important, as he was "a Buddhist, I think that human nature if not trained or cultivated, it's kind of to be unhappy . . . there's always going to be things that are not perfect, not right, so you kind of got to have a sense of contentment (A-179)." It is obvious that James strived to adapt to the Taiwanese culture. It seemed that he encountered more negative than positive experiences, such as the language barrier, witnessing violence, and feeling discriminated. Even though James expressed that he was adjusting well to the Taiwanese culture at the end of our interviews, Janet appeared to have quite the opposite experience from James.

In the following section, the events of Janet's story will be presented in chronological order. The theme "favorably convenient, surprisingly lenient" was identified during Janet's first year in Taiwan. When Janet

first arrived in Taiwan, she was thinking “it’s like America, it’s not so bad . . . there were scooter lanes, so the cars and scooters won’t be mixed together, and for the most part the traffic is organized . . . the transportation is very, very convenient, with buses, trains, high speed rails, and they make it easy for English speakers (B-051).” She almost felt like in America, “because we have all the modern conveniences here, so I can take care of myself just like in America. (B-063).” As for Janet’s worry of residing in a big city, it turned out she “was really happy to be here because it is more country side, so I think it’s easy for me to stay for a longer time in Taiwan (B-027).” Also, she felt that “adjusting was easy, and the people here have made it easier because they’re so willing to help (B-071).” In terms of food, she “heard that in Taiwan it’s a lot of seafood, and at the time I didn’t like seafood very much because where I live we (they) do not eat seafood at all, but then when I got here I grew to love Taiwan food (B-028).” Despite falling in love with Taiwanese food, she “remembers in the first year I really wanted American food, I actually made a list of food for my mom to make for me when I go back (B-051).”

The theme “philanthropic spirit, overcome language limit” was identified in Janet’s second year in Taiwan. As Janet entered her second year in Taiwan, she found that “the biggest difference for me is the earthquake and typhoon . . . I ran down to the south where there was really really high mud, one weekend I volunteered to help there just realizing that people lost everything, and how Taiwanese people are willing to help each other, I think it’s really, really good (B-054).” Not only during catastrophic events, but also “just people you meet on the streets, you came across people who were very helpful if you need something, so I always thought people in Taiwan are so helpful (B-066).” Janet was very enthusiastic when it comes to learning Chinese. She felt “the more I learn Chinese the more I can understand your culture (B-069).” Besides, “when we order food, then we have to know Chinese . . . but on the other hand if you know Chinese it’s so much easier for you to communicate with your Taiwanese friends (B-072).”

Lastly, the theme “bundle of praises, home beats all places” was identified during Janet’s current year in Taiwan. After spending over two years in Taiwan, Janet gave two thumbs up in regard to Taiwan. Besides praising how friendly she found the Taiwanese to be, she also had several other praises, such as “the high regard for foreigners, in some countries if you are a foreigner they would make fun of you . . . or in different places, girls are not safe to be out by themselves, and in Taiwan I always feel very safe to be out . . . one thing I really like about in Taiwan is that I don’t have to fear about my safety (B-066).” “Taiwan really did a better good job in recycling than America (B-065)” and “as long as you have a job in Taiwan, it’s very easy to live in Taiwan, and the school makes it easy for me to be here (B-062).” On the other hand, regardless of how much Janet “would love to stay in Taiwan longer, but I also want to be married and have a family . . . a good family relationship like with my parents and family at home had made family very important to me (B-079).” While emphasising how important her bond with her family is, she thinks that “It’s hard being away from home and at the same time it’s so great being here, and as I’m gone longer I don’t miss it as much (B-080).”

Janet’s experience was a strong contrast to James’. How James felt unsafe, Janet felt secure; how he felt unwelcomed, she felt accepted; and how he struggled to adjust, she enjoyed. Both James and Janet expressed that they were adjusting well to Taiwanese culture. Janet obviously had more support from friends and co-workers, which could be because she lived in a safe and friendly environment: the campus of a religious school along with several foreign educators/missionaries.

## Discussion

Both James and Janet shared a seemingly autonomous motive and strong interest towards relocating in Taiwan. From the perspective of expatriates, James could be considered as an SIE and Janet as an OE, because Janet was offered the opportunity to relocate to Taiwan by her affiliated church organisation. While studies confirmed that SIEs generally adapt better than OEs (Peltokorpi and Froese, *Organizational expatriates* 1106; Froese 1107; Froese and Peltokorpi 1959), a possible explanation as to why SIEs adapt better might be their autonomous motive for relocating into a different culture. As suggested in the SDT, an autonomous motive enhances both persistence and general well-being (Deci and Ryan 273; Ryan, Deci, and Grolnick 629). In this case, both persistence and well-being seem likely to affect the willingness to engage in cultural adjustments.

This finding sheds light on the lack of empirical literature on the relationship between motive for relocating and cultural adjustment, but it does not imply that an autonomous motive plays the role of a definite factor for successful cultural adjustment. Although humans have an innate drive for making an adjustment to environmental changes (Kim), the cultural transition of James in China ultimately failed regardless of his autonomous motive and strong desire towards relocating to the Chinese culture. Regardless of relocating for positive reasons (Collins), James' demoralising experience in China seemed to have caused an overwhelming load of acculturative stress. Therefore, the implication here is that an autonomous motive into a different culture might contribute to increasing the willingness of engaging cultural adjustments.

Regarding expectations before relocating, the pre-migration phase proposed by Hertz could not interpret the findings, as neither James nor Janet held high or positive expectations, and in fact, their expectations were inaccurate. Caligiuri and colleagues proposed that accurate expectations positively affect cultural adjustment (366). A significant finding here is that inaccurate expectations do not necessarily negatively affect cultural adjustment. In the case of Janet, even though her expectations were inaccurate (expecting a modern city, unable to withstand hot weather and dangerous traffic), the situation, in reality, turned out to be a pleasant surprise. She landed in the countryside of Taiwan, she only mentioned the hot weather once throughout the interview, and she discovered the traffic in Taiwan is much safer than expected. When one compares the reality which one experiences with one's expectation, better than expected could generate a positive impression of the environment, and thus, such inaccurate expectations but better than expected reality might positively affect cultural adjustment.

As for the role of support in cultural experience and adjustments, Janet received much more support than James, and her experiences were much more positive. James mentioned that he did not get any assistance from other teachers at his workplace because of how small-scaled his workplace was (A-075), and he even experienced discrimination. The previous study revealed that foreign educators might encounter social isolation (C. P. Chou 31), and James might be the case. Whereas for Janet, she went through training with several other Americans who were also assigned to her workplace; she worked alongside with a group of missionary teachers of her ethnic community (B-033); frequently visited her friends in Taiwan (B-030); and her workplace is a large-scale private religious school. The difference between James and Janet regarding organisational support and having a support system of the expatriate's ethnic community further confirms the positive contributions of such support on cultural adjustment (Banchevska; Konanahalli et al. 47). The difference in social support and contact with host nationals further confirms their positive influences on cross-cultural transitions (Adelman; Y. M. Chen; Y. C. Lin and Chien H. C. 259; Y. L. Wu, *Teacher-Pupil Interaction*).

The differences in cultural experience and adjustments between SIE and OE will be discussed in this section. Perceiving James as a SIE and Janet as an OE based on their self-initiated and organization offered relocation, the findings of this study were deemed inconsistent with previous studies that SIEs were relatively well adjusted on general adjustment (Froese 1107) and better adjusted than OEs on interactions with host country nationals (Peltokorpi and Froese, *Organizational expatriates* 1106; Froese and Peltokorpi 1959). The negative experiences of James and positive experiences of Janet provide a logical basis for stating that Janet was the better adjusted one. In this case, Janet as a foreign educator and an OE experienced a smoother cultural transition than James. Three factors which seemed to contribute the most to the better adjustment were the high amount of organisational support, social support, and contact with host nationals as in the case of Janet. She received organisational support from her affiliated church organisation since her training before relocation, which later extends to social support from her affiliates at her workplace. On the other hand, James relocated to a small-scaled cram school in Taiwan alone, and without the aid of his co-workers, he had no support or relationship to build on.

Lastly, on making cultural adjustments, a potential explanation was discovered as to why Janet seemed to require less effort on making a cultural adjustment. Janet has a much greater social network in Taiwan, and to a certain degree, she was being protected from negative experiences by this network. Without a social network in the host culture, James was situated in an environment that often requires exploring on his own. This explanation might contribute to extending previous findings on the positive influence of open-mindedness (Caligiuri 75; Liu A4-15; Peltokorpi and Froese, *The Impact of Expatriate* 744) and sociability/

social initiative (Caligiuri 77; Van Der Zee and Van Oudenhoven 305) on cultural adjustment. It seems that open-mindedness motivates interacting with host nationals, and sociability facilitates connecting with others. Both James and Janet's experiences revealed elements of open-mindedness, whereas sociability could only be found in Janet. As such, the result of these two traits could lead to an expansion of the social network, and thereby positively influencing cultural adjustment. From searching for enjoyable food to speaking with seemingly unfriendly locals, James was persistently adjusting to the Taiwanese culture. He emphasised the importance of acceptance and contentment. Bearing a persistent, accepting and content attitude was how James adjusted to his perceived cultural differences. The notion of assimilation, which emphasises acceptance and internalisation of the host culture (Kim), seems to match the condition of James. As for Janet, not only did she have constant contact with host nationals, she was also enthusiastic towards learning about the local culture. By doing so, she narrows the distance between herself and the local culture, which is crucial for successful cultural transition (Zhou and Qin 202).

## Conclusion

Despite both James and Janet feeling satisfied with their life in the Taiwanese environment (A-179; B-074), their experiences were in many ways opposite from each other. James obviously required much more effort than Janet during the process of adjustment. Motives, expectations, and social support all seemed to contribute to their cultural adjustment. Motives with lifelong desires or strong beliefs; having lower expectations before coming, and gaining support from various sources are all factors worth considering for a successful transition into the Taiwanese culture. Strong motives seemed to support the determination to adjust; while low/inaccurate expectations seemed to lead to surprisingly positive experiences.

If the notion of successful cultural transition is interpreted as the expatriates resulting in staying or not having a strong desire to leave the host country, then the contributions of motives, expectations, and social support would become rather controversial from the findings of this study. Even though both James and Janet did not express a strong desire to leave Taiwan, as this study shows, it took Janet much less effort and time to adjust to the Taiwanese culture, which is likely due to the high amount of support she received. By contrast, James received a significantly lower amount of support, which has made it more likely for him to encounter negative experiences. In this sense, this study did not find that organisational support and social networking with host nationals contribute to successful cultural transitions. Instead, it seems more likely that these elements benefit the process of cultural adjustment. Also, an existing social network with host nationals before relocation has been found to benefit cultural transition.

This study indicates the need for making improvements in government policies for the attraction of foreign educators. While the foreign educators involved in this study were residing in the South of Taiwan, foreign educators residing in the cosmopolitan cities in the North could also be investigated in future studies. Also, exploring the experiences of foreign educators with poor cultural adjustments, namely those who returned to their countries due to maladjustment, might further contribute to the understanding of how potential foreign educators could better adjust to Taiwanese culture.

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