Session 3A Multiculturism & Education

Exploring non-local students' experiences of intercultural experiential learning: The case of Hong Kong

Yang Min, Tsui Kwok Tung, Yang Lan
Tam chung Hong Bernard, Song Baoru Lisa, & Chen Sisi

Education University of Hong Kong

This presentation

Aim of study

Theoretical background

Methods: data collection & data analysis

Findings

Conclusion

Aim of study

Aim of study – report on the qualitative research

- Objective:
  - This study investigates how non-local students at a Hong Kong higher education institution adapt to living and studying in Hong Kong

- RQs for the presentation:

1. How did non-local students adapt to living and studying in Hong Kong?
2. To what extent did non-local students' intercultural learning outcomes satisfied their expectations?

Theoretical background

Theoretical background

- *Intercultural competence:* the knowledge and skills for effectively and appropriately interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds other than one's own cultural origin (Bennett, 2009)

- *Intercultural learning:* the process of developing *intercultural competence*

- Intercultural experiential learning, informed by the *experiential learning theory* (ELT) (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb & Fry, 1979), is a core concept guiding our exploration of how non-local students:
    - *seek out cultural experience*
    - *explore ways of developing intercultural competence*
   - *adapt to living and studying in Hong Kong*

Theoretical background

- *Intercultural experiential learning* denotes any experiences allowing individuals to gain intercultural understanding and skills
- Intercultural experiential learning cycle depicts the process of individuals developing intercultural competence through:
  - (a) gain concrete experience of interacting with culturally different others
  - (b) observing the behaviours and communication style of culturally different people
    - *It's important to observe the consequences of others' behaviours in social interactions in intercultural settings*
  - (c) reflecting on the observation to generate knowledge and rules for interacting and behaving in intercultural situations
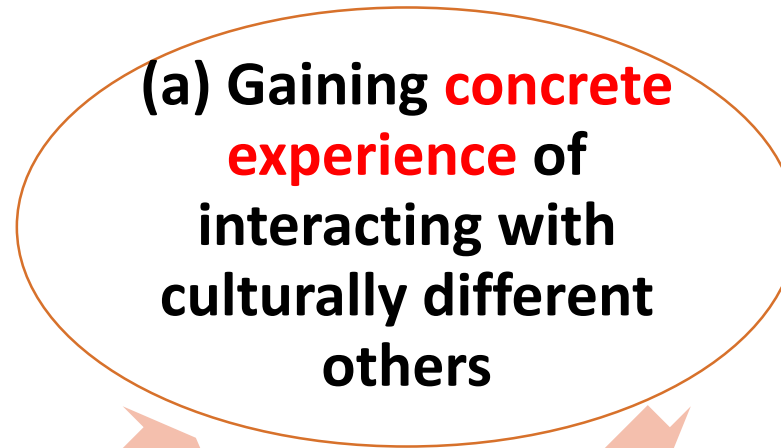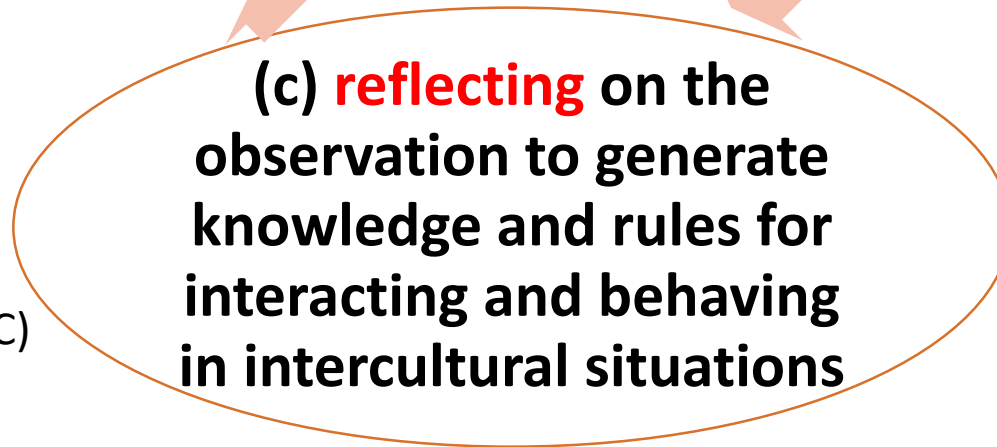 - (d) actively experimenting on the new knowledge and rules for intercultural interaction

(Yang, 2018; see also Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009; Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004)

Four recurring *stages of the intercultural experiential learning cycle:*

(a) Gaining **concrete experience** of interacting with culturally different others

Concrete Experience (CE)

Active Experimentation (AE)

(d) Actively **experimenting** on the new knowledge and rules for intercultural interaction

(b) Observing the behaviours and communication style of culturally different people

Reflective Observation (RO)
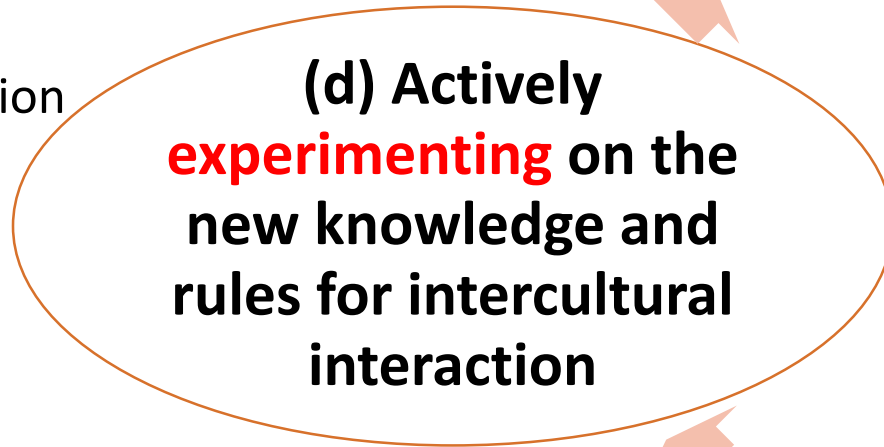
Abstract Conceptualization (AC)

(c) reflecting on the observation to generate knowledge and rules for interacting and behaving in intercultural situations

Theoretical background

Theories that have informed the study:

- *The theory of cultural intelligence (CQ) originated from theory of multiple intelligence of Sternberg and Detterman (1984)*

- individuals' intercultural competence that consists of four components
  - metacognitive CQ - ability to monitor and evaluate the process of gaining knowledge and skills for interacting with culturally different people
  - cognitive CQ - knowledge about the host country culture and rules for interacting with host nationals
  - motivational CQ – motivation to seek out intercultural experiences and construct cultural knowledge
  - behavioural CQ – ability to modify one's behaviour and communication style to suit the intercultural situation
  (Ang et al., 2007)

Theoretical background

- Importance of the theory of cultural intelligence (CQ):
  - recognition of the importance of self-regulation in intercultural learning (Bucker et al., 2014; MacNab, 2012; Ng, et al., 2009)

- Ng and associates (2009) proposed that individuals with high CQs are likely to engage in all *four stages* (CE, RO, AC, and AE) of the experiential learning cycle

Theoretical background

Theories/studies that have informed the study:

- Studies on *acculturation outcomes*:
- how successful individuals make adaptation to living and working/studying in the host culture
- This involves:
  - sociocultural adaptation: how one adapts to the ways of interacting with others and behaving in the host culture
  - psychological adaptation: the psychological state of adaptation, e.g. loneliness, anxiety, excitement

(e.g., Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Zeng & Watkins, 2010)
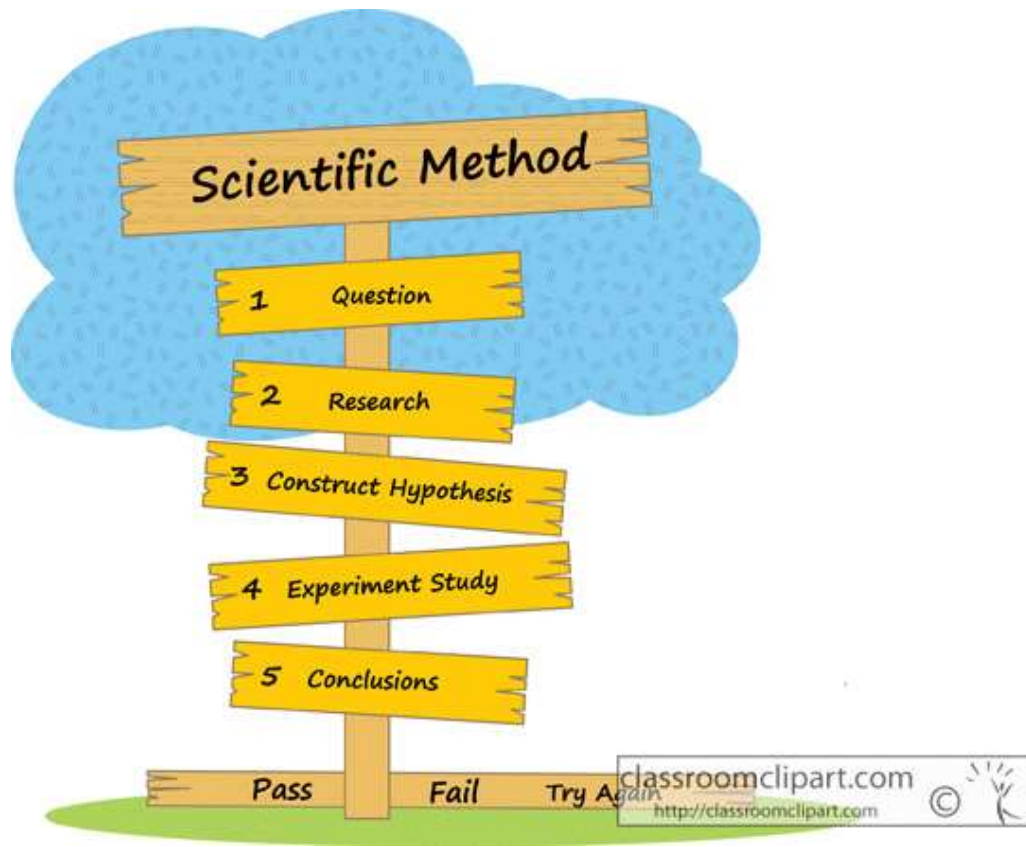
Methods

Methods: data collection

- Methods:
  - Interviews
  - Questionnaire (see Appendix) – results not reported here (about 160 students)
- Interviews conducted in May 2017, with assistance of two MEd student helpers
- Sampling strategies:
  - convenience sampling – initial invitation of students on FEHD courses
  - Snowballing – interviewees and student helpers inviting their friends
- Participants: 30 UG & PG non-local students (current & recently graduated) from
  - Mainland China, Taiwan, Macao, Bangladash, Malysia & Uganda
  - UG students: 11
  - Master's students: 12
  - PhD students: 7

Interview protocol: 6 parts

1. Demographic information (Self-introduction)

2. Perceived cultural differences

3. Academic and social experiences

4. Cultural experiences

5. Preferred learning style in developing intercultural competence

6. Overall experience: sense of belonging, whether expectations were met

Method: data analysis

- Two methods of analysis :
  - phenomographic analysis – identifying & examining qualitatively different categories of individual experiences/understanding
  - grounded theory analysis - generating theory through constant comparison

Snapshot of preliminary findings

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Findings:

- Observation of characteristics of 3 types of Intercultural Experiential (IE) learners
  - Type A: the active IE learners
  - Type B: the average IE learners
  - Type C: the passive IE learners

Preliminary findings

Type A:	An active IE learner is most likely to take initiatives	The IE learner adapts to cultural differences positively	The acculturation outcomes can satisfy his/her expectations
Type B:	An average IE learner is less likely to take initiative to adapt to the local culture	He/She may have positive or negative responses according to different situational factors	Only some of the acculturation outcomes can satisfy his/her expectations
Type C:	A passive IE learner is most likely to resist adaptation to the local culture	He/She adapts to the local culture negatively	The acculturation outcomes do not satisfy his/her expectations

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Preliminary findings
Type A - the active IE learner

- Taking initiative:
  - I attended some social volunteering activities, like visiting the villages… I also joined a Thai Boxing class in which most participants were locals.
  - I would suggest non-local students to attend more activities instead of staying in dorm or campus. There are many chances provided by school to attend activities outside

- Perception of positive adaptation
  - If you are willing to attend activities outside, then you would know people from different circles of life. Everyone has his own perspective, and the more people you know, the more you can see things from a broader perspective.

  (S27, UG Y-3, female, Malaysian Chinese)

Preliminary findings:
Type B - the average IE learner

- Somewhat reluctantly taking initiative:
  - For shopping or other activities I would use Mandarin or English. For other daily usage, I can still understand Cantonese, even though I cannot speak it.
  - Some people are inclined to reject people coming from mainland China. Hence, I think, as a new-comer, I ought to learn from and communicate with them as much as possible.

- Adaptation experience can be positive or negative
  - Once I eat outside alone, to a local restaurant…… I was speaking Mandarin and the waitress was speaking Cantonese. We could still understand each other, but I felt really strange. It was fine that we spoke different languages, as long as we got what we want.

- Some of the acculturation outcomes can satisfy his/her expectations
  - Since I study here and the environment, I need to understand some Cantonese. For example, I can only greet, and speak some simple words for daily use.

  (S17, Masters Y-1, male, Mainland Chinese)

Preliminary findings:
Type C - the passive IE learner

- Likely to resist adaptation to the local culture
  - I rejected (the local culture) too much at that time, and now as I've stay longer so I can accept that, I think I had many negative opinions and thoughts that were not necessary.

- Adaptation experience in the local culture was negative
  - I finished my bachelor degree in mainland China and I did my first master's degree in United Kingdom…. If you compare the atmosphere or quality of education here, this one is not good as my previous universities
  - My life here is so boring. It's just learning and eating outside.

- Acculturation outcomes not satisfying his/her expectations
  - I do not have much sense of belonging here. I would like to study in England rather than in Hong Kong

  (S7, masters Y-1, female, Mainland Chinese)

Conclusion

Tentative conclusion

- From the preliminary analysis, we try to find out:
  - If these types can be interpreted from the intercultural experiential learning and cultural intelligence perspectives:

    (1) Whether Type A (the active) IE learners demonstrate a full range of CQs, while Type C (the passive) IE learners demonstrate the least CQs

    (2) Whether the more effective cultural learners (Type A & Type B participants) engage more fully in activities/behaviours represented in the intercultural experiential learning cycle
    - To what extent the IEL cycle can represents effective intercultural adaptation experiences among non-local students
- These will be our next stage in the analysis

Appendix:
Sample survey questions

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