

## ความสะเทือนใจทางวัฒนธรรมย้อนกลับในหมู่นักเรียนแลกเปลี่ยนไทยโครงการ AYC (2561-2562) The Reverse Culture Shocks Among Thai Ayc Exchanged Students (2018 - 2019)

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### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาความสะเทือนใจทางวัฒนธรรมย้อนกลับหลังจากกลับมาจากต่างประเทศของนักเรียนแลกเปลี่ยนไทย ในโครงการ AYC ปี พ.ศ. 2561 ถึง 2562 และตรวจสอบว่านักเรียนแลกเปลี่ยนไทยในโครงการ AYC มีปฏิกริยาอย่างไรต่อสภาพแวดล้อมของประเทศไทยเมื่อพวกเขากลับมา และวิธีที่พวกเขาก้าวข้ามความสะเทือนใจทางวัฒนธรรมย้อนกลับ กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนักเรียนแลกเปลี่ยน 99 คน โดยใช้วิธีการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลทั้งเชิงปริมาณและเชิงคุณภาพ กลุ่มตัวอย่างประสบปัญหาความสะเทือนใจทางวัฒนธรรมย้อนกลับ โดยส่วนใหญ่มาจากโรงเรียนและครู เพื่อน สมาชิกในครอบครัว การขาดเสรีภาพในการแสดงออกและการขาดความมั่นใจ เนื่องจากความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมกลุ่มตัวอย่างจึงมีปฏิกริยาต่อสภาพแวดล้อมทั้งสองต่างกัน กลุ่มตัวอย่างรู้สึกชอบวัฒนธรรมของประเทศอุปถัมภ์มากกว่าและต้องการย้ายออกจากประเทศไทยอย่างถาวร ซึ่งสะท้อนถึงทัศนคติเชิงลบที่มีต่อสิ่งแวดล้อมในไทย อย่างไรก็ตามกลุ่มตัวอย่างก้าวข้ามความสะเทือนใจทางวัฒนธรรมย้อนกลับได้ด้วยการสื่อสารและแสดงความรู้สึกกับคนรอบข้าง มีการติดต่อกับครอบครัวอุปถัมภ์ ใช้พื้นที่ส่วนตัวในการระบาย พยายามทำกิจกรรม ไม่เข้าเรียน พยายามไม่เปรียบเทียบประเทศไทยกับประเทศเจ้าบ้าน และพยายามติดต่อกับครอบครัวอุปถัมภ์และยอมรับสภาพแวดล้อมแบบไทย แต่ครูไม่ได้ให้ความสนใจเพียงพอกับปัญหาความสะเทือนใจทางวัฒนธรรมย้อนกลับของนักเรียนแลกเปลี่ยน

**คำสำคัญ:** ความสะเทือนใจทางวัฒนธรรมย้อนกลับ, โครงการแลกเปลี่ยนวัฒนธรรม, นักเรียนแลกเปลี่ยน

### Abstract

This mixed-method research aimed to study the reverse culture shocks of Thai AYC exchanged students from 2018 to 2019 after returning from overseas and examine how Thai AYC exchanged students reacted to the Thai environment when they returned and how they overcame such reverse culture shocks. The study sample was 99 exchanged students who experienced reverse culture shocks mostly from school and teachers, friends, family members, lack of freedom of expression, and lack of confidence. The sample reacted to both environments differently; the cultural differences prefer their host countries' cultures and would like to move out of Thailand permanently. This reflects the negative attitudes towards the Thai environment. Still, they overcame their reverse culture shocks by communicating with people around them and expressing their feelings, keeping in touch with a host family, using personal space, trying to do activities, skipping classroom and school, trying not to compare Thailand with the host

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country, and trying to contact the host family and accept the Thai environment. Unfortunately, teachers did not pay enough attention to the students who suffered the reverse culture shocks.

**Keywords:** Reverse culture shocks, Intercultural Program, Exchanged Students

## 1. Introduction

The goal of exchanged students was to accumulate relationships and understand society with different backgrounds such as religion, languages and school systems. In addition, the exchanged students improved themselves, enhanced their attitudes and enhanced their visions. The exchange students will also get to learn to deal and adapt to the new environment. AYC Intercultural program aims to provide opportunities for young people who had been selected to be ambassadors. Those who have been selected to be ambassadors will be given an opportunity to travel and live with a host family for one academic year in various host countries around the world. The program was established in 1998, and had a great experience in implementing student exchange programs. While staying in the host country, exchanged students experienced the phases of culture shock. The culture shock was combined with the challenges of adapting to new cultures within their host country (MacLachlan, 2015).

Culture shock generally had four different stages: Honeymoon, Negotiation, Adjustment, and Acceptance. The Honeymoon phase was overwhelmingly positive. The Negotiation stage was a frustration and anxiety phase. The Adjustment phase often reduced the frustration as it begins to feel familiar and comfortable with the cultures of new environments. The Acceptance stage did not mean that new cultures or environments were entirely understood. The cultures and environments were accepted and understandable in this stage (McCluskey, 2020).

Unfortunately, most students may prepare for culture shock to enter the host country, but they never prepare about what will happen when they return to their homeland. After a long time overseas, these students had been changed and already adapted to the host country's culture. When students stayed in another culture, they absorbed some of the host country's culture and incorporated it into a new version of themselves (Rybol, 2016).

The main difficulty of the reverse culture shocks mentioned by Szkudlarek was "those which arise upon returning home, are largely unexpected" (Szkudlarek, 2010). For others that did not have the same experience, it was difficult to understand the massive effect of staying abroad. The reverse culture shock has phases of adapting to the homeland culture. The reverse culture shock started with excitement when exchanged students returned home and saw familiar places and people in the Honeymoon stage.

After the Honeymoon stage, conflicts began when cultural differences began to cause adapting to be rough. After that, the exchanged students got to recovery from the home environment and soon to be adapting (adjustment) to the Thai environment (Martin, 2019).

In the exchanged students' viewpoints, they experienced the reverse culture and were not always open-minded and accepted in the homeland's schools. If the teacher would understand and help the exchanged students with a supportive mindset, the exchanged students would overcome the reverse culture shocks then adapt to the homeland environment soon and be productive in learning and living their lives. Also, Thai schools' environments and host countries' schools were different. Host country's schools mostly focused on active learning, which was not the same with Thai schools. It was a learning-centered teaching activity that included reading, writing, reacting, and issue analysis, and it encouraged students to generate knowledge for themselves through proactive and active learning. In order to be able to produce innovations and creativity, students should apply advanced thinking processes such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Songart, 2020). This made the students preferred the schools of their host country more than Thai school. When students felt different or unfamiliar with their homeland's school environment, students were not focusing on studying and had a lack of knowledge. The students that got treated with the proper support had enhanced happiness and were willing to study more. It was because emotion modulates nearly every part of cognition (Tyng, Amin, Saad, and Malik, 2017). The exchanged students could also bring the ways they learned from the host countries and applied to be used by teachers in homeland's school. They might have better ways to learn and have better performance in receiving the knowledge from what they knew if the exchanged students got treated with proper support from teachers.

## 2. Research Objectives:

2.1 To find the reverse culture shocks of Thai AYC exchanged students from 2018 to 2019 after returning from overseas.

2.2 To examine how Thai AYC exchanged students reacted to the Thai environment when they returned and how they overcame it.

## 3. Research Methodology:

The total number of exchanged students in the AYC'17 Facebook group was 131 students and was the population for this research. The sample was selected by using Taro Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967), and 99 came out as the sample for this research.

The research instruments were an online questionnaire and an online interview; the online questionnaire and the online interview questions were verified using the Index of Item - Objective Congruence (IOC) by three professors in Suryadhep Teachers College, Rangsit University. The online questionnaire was in the form of Likert's five-rating scales (Likert, 1932) and used a stratified sampling method to select 15 sample for the structured interview. The result calculated for the validity of the questions by IBM SPSS Statistics 23 software (IBM, 2015) was 0.89. The Cronbach's Alpha value of higher than 0.7 indicated an acceptable internal consistency (Taber, 2018). The reliability test calculated by IBM



SPSS Statistics 23 software (IBM, 2015) showed that  $\alpha$  equaled to 0.859 and meant that the questions were valid and reliable to be used in the data collection process.

The researcher analyzed the data from the online questionnaire using the IBM SPSS Statistics 23 software (IBM, 2015) supported and licensed by Rangsit University's Library to find Mean and Standard Deviation (S.D.) and analyzed the structured interview using MAXQDA trial version 2020 and content analysis.

#### 4. Research Results:

There were 99 exchanged students involved in the online questionnaire, and 15 were involved in the online structured interview. The gender of the sample was female more than male (63.6% and 36.4%, respectively). The ages of the sample were 18 years old the most, followed by 19, 20, and 21 years old (32.3%, 27.3%, 20.2%, and 20.2%, respectively). The sample lived in Bangkok more than other provinces (53.5% and 46.5%). The sample's current level of education was at undergraduate more than high school (70.7% and 29.3%). The ages when the sample was exchanged students were 17 years old the most, followed by 16, 15, and 18 years old (35.4%, 31.3%, 20.2%, and 13.1%, respectively). The host regions of the exchanged students were North America the most, followed by Europe and Asia (81.8%, 13.1%, and 5.1%, respectively.)

The results analyzed and summarized based on the objectives of this study to answer the research questions were as follows.

**Research Question One:** What are the reverse culture shocks of Thai AYC exchanged students from 2018 to 2019 after returning from overseas?

From the online questionnaire, most of the Thai AYC exchanged students from 2018 to 2019 experienced reverse culture shocks at a high level (Mean = 3.44, SD = 0.612) in anxiety, education and living after returning to Thailand. From the structured online interview, exchanged students experienced reverse culture shocks mostly from school and teachers, friends, family members, lack of freedom of expression, and lack of confidence.

**Research Question Two:** What are the reactions of Thai AYC exchanged students to Thailand's environment when they returned, and how they overcame their reverse culture shock?

From the online questionnaire, most Thai AYC exchanged students from 2018 to 2019 reacted to the environment between Thailand and the host country differently (Mean = 2.12, SD = 1.106). In addition, it appeared based on the structured online interview they reacted negatively towards the Thai environment. Also, from the structured online interview, the sample would like to move out of Thailand permanently due to their negative reaction towards the Thai environment. The sample stated that they liked the environment and systems of the host country more than Thailand. They felt more confident during their stay at the host country. They felt that Thailand was harder to live in, and the host country

was more supportive of human rights and freedom of expression. Most of the Thai AYC exchanged students from 2018 to 2019 overcame the reverse culture shocks at a high level (Mean = 3.16, S.D. = 0.641) by communicating with friends, communicating with exchanged students' friends, keeping in touch with host family and communicating with family, and using personal space, such as diary, social and media, etc. The sample neither understood nor got the teachers' assistance for the reverse culture shocks. This showed that the teachers had not properly contributed to the Thai AYC exchanged students from 2018 to 2019 to overcome the reverse culture shocks. The sample neither understood nor got the teachers' assistance for the reverse culture shocks. This showed that the teachers had not properly contributed to the Thai AYC exchanged students from 2018 to 2019 to overcome the reverse culture shocks.

## 5. Discussion:

Thai AYC exchanged students from 2018 to 2019 experienced reverse culture shocks due to the host country's environment influencing the exchanged students' culture and social situation. The host country environment was a factor that led to an expectation in behavior and can conceive the violation of the expected behavior (Burgoon, 201).

The results were related to Aamir (2010) that the returnees usually suffered from reverse culture shock, Jandová (2014) even though some participants confirmed that they were very familiar with reverse culture shocks, Le and LaCost (2017) participants found it more difficult to acclimatize to Vietnam more than the US. The majority had not anticipated reserve culture shock and had made significant efforts to reintegrate into the Vietnamese surroundings and culture.

This research results were consistent with Becker's (2013) study in terms of growth and identity changes while studying overseas; the returnee reentered higher self-confidence and tended to pay attention to international events. They also have a new way of identifying reality in line with Talawanich, Jianvittayakit and Wattanacharoensil (2019) who illustrated that the Thai youth tourists who returned from overseas had negative emotions after returning and were willing to leave Thailand. The studies by Jantachum (2015) stated that humans are content when they and society are in tune with one another. Individuals can do things like adapt to the environment, adapt society and environment to themselves, improve both themselves and society in harmony, and avoid living in a society that is incompatible with themselves. In this case, the students wanted to move out of Thailand because they were happier staying in their host countries. Thai AYC exchanged students from 2018 to 2019 who overcame the reverse culture shocks were in line with Aamir's study (2010) that the returnees usually suffer from reverse culture shock but will adjust to their problems and overcome them.

The ways to overcome the reverse culture shocks were addressed; by communicating with people around them and expressing their feeling, keeping in touch with a host family, using personal space, doing activities, skipping classroom and school, and trying not to compare Thailand and the host country. The ways to overcome the reverse culture shocks were related to Moonsup's (2017) findings that



the returnees shared their problems among Thai AFS returnees' friends, host families, and other foreign AFS returnees and used emotion-focused coping strategies to decrease emotional issues increase life satisfaction.

While the teachers did not understand the AYC exchanged students' year 2018 to 2019's reverse culture shocks symptoms, it was not a factor that helped the AYC exchanged students from 2018 to 2019 overcome their reverse culture shocks. Arthur (2003) suggested that the international student services should examine student's reentry experiences, provide re-entry education and assist in developing expected coping strategies. It concluded that schools and teachers should provide student service to manage and help the exchanged students and enhance a closer relationship. This will also help the students before and after attending the program.

## 6. Conclusion:

Most Thai AYC exchanged students from 2018 to 2019 experienced reverse culture shocks in anxiety, education, and living after returning to Thailand. The reverse culture shocks mainly were from school and teachers, friends, family members, lack of freedom of expression, and lack of confidence. Most of the Thai AYC exchanged students from 2018 to 2019 reacted to the environment between Thailand and the host country differently, which led the researcher towards the supported factors through a structured interview that the sample reacted negatively towards the Thai environment.

The sample mentioned the cultural differences and tended to prefer their host countries' cultures and stated the reasons:

- i) More supportive educational environment,
- ii) Flexible, friendlier, and more comfortable environment,
- iii) Different cultural etiquette in the seniority system,
- iv) Felt more confident in the environment of the host country, and
- v) More supportive of human rights and freedom of expression.

Also, they would like to move out of Thailand permanently. Still, they overcame their reverse culture shocks by:

- i) Communicating with people around them and expressing their feelings,
- ii) Keeping in touch with host family,
- iii) Using personal space,
- iv) Trying to do activities,
- v) Skipping classroom and school,
- vi) Trying not to compare Thailand with the host country, and
- vii) Trying to contact the host family and accept the Thai environment.

Unfortunately, the sample neither understood nor received the teachers' adequate assistance. The results also revealed that teachers did not pay enough attention to the students' suffering in reverse culture shocks.

## 7. Suggestions:

- 1) Further researchers can research other programs of Thai exchanged students to find different results or prove the results related to reverse culture shocks.
- 2) Further researchers can research the recent academic year towards the reverse culture shocks due to the more efficiency and update of the results.
- 3) Further researchers can research related reverse culture shocks in different research fields.
- 4) Further researchers can research based on the specific host country or regions to focus on the particular cultural dimension within that country or region.

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