



LUND UNIVERSITY

Experience A New Academic World

Chinese Female Students at Swedish Universities

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Abstract

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This paper presents the outcomes of an applied cultural study carried out during spring semester 2010 with more than 10 Chinese female postgraduate students in Swedish universities. The aims of this research were to investigate Chinese female postgraduates' decision-making process, to understand university lives in Sweden with the main focus on their learning experiences and social activities, and to explore the differences of students' university lives between Sweden and China. This study will reveal students' expectations, difficulties, comments, and needs of their studying lives in Sweden. This study will not only be contributed to getting a better understanding of Chinese female students' studying experiences at Swedish universities for potential Chinese oversea students, but also provide an extra window for Swedish universities to know Chinese female students' studying intentions, to hear their real voices and to see their actual studying lives in Sweden.

Keywords: culture shock; cross-cultural adaptation; decision-making process; everyday university life.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction the Internationalization of Swedish Universities

Swedish universities have been promoted in the gateway website *Sweden.se* that they offer world-class academics, high-quality higher education, peaceful foreign relationship, and one of the best natural environments to study abroad students in a global context. It is true that more and more Chinese university graduate students have chosen Sweden as their preferred study abroad destination nowadays. During the studying year between 2006 and 2007, there were more than 28,000 foreign students studying in Sweden with 9% annual increase over the previous year, but only 25,600 Swedish students chose to obtain their education outside of their country¹. Swedish government also found that more than one third of international students were from non-European countries. Since the current Swedish higher education is free for everyone, the local government has to pay the expensive bills for both national and international students' tuition fee yearly. In 2007, Denmark became the first Nordic country to charge tuition for non-European countries' students. From 2011, non-Europeans have to pay tuition fees for getting their higher education in Sweden. This change has made Swedish university representatives worry a lot about losing international students from non-European countries. In this sense, understanding Chinese students' decision-making process and their university lives could bring valuable insights for promoting Swedish higher education abroad in a global context.

1.2 The Scope of the Project

During the 15th China International Education Exhibition Tour (CIEET), Zhang Xiuqin, the director-general of International Cooperation and Exchanges at Ministry of Education in China, announced that China exported more than 229,000 Chinese students to the worldwide universities in 2009 with 27.5% annual growth over the year of 2008, and more than 210,000 belonged to self-financed students abroad². It is true that there is an upward trend in the number of oversea students in China recently. Even though Australia, America, England and Japan are still the hot destinations of studying abroad for Chinese students, Sweden with a good reputation for the higher

education also attracts more and more international and exchange students to study there in recent years. Chinese student is one of the largest overseas student groups in Sweden, so it becomes quite important to get a better understanding of international students' needs, expectations, and difficulties toward Swedish universities.

1.3 My Background

I am a Chinese female student myself who has studied in Sweden more than 5 years in two different universities to complete both bachelor and master's degree. The long learning experiences offer me plenty of time to get a better understanding on overseas students' university lives at Swedish universities. I am currently a second-year student in a two-year master program called Applied Cultural Analysis at Lund University of Sweden. According to my interest in the field of education, I decided to work on an applied cultural analysis on Chinese female postgraduate students' studying lives in Sweden for my master thesis. I am both familiar with Chinese and Swedish studying lives and social activities. Obviously, my special experiences become an advantageous factor for me as a cultural analyst to carry out the mission of investigating Chinese female postgraduate students' university lives in Sweden, since I could review the issues and situations from both insider and outsider perspectives.

1.4 The Structure of This Thesis

In order to have a general overview of my study, chapter 1 offers the background information of Swedish higher education, the scope of my project, as well as my personal information to readers. In chapter 2, project aim, research questions, methodologies, data collection and limitation of my studies have been presented to provide the ideas of my project design to viewers. Chapter 3 to 5 serve as the core parts of this study, which contain selected theories, empirical materials, and analysis in each chapter. In Chapter 3, my main focus is to investigate Chinese female students' decision-making process of choosing a Swedish institution. Learning process is the title of Chapter 4 and presents how students cross the cultural diversities and experience shocks to adjust into the new surroundings. In Chapter 5, the differences of Swedish and Chinese students' living and eating conditions, as well as the language environment will be shown to readers. In order to investigate all my studying questions of this study, I will introduce relevant theories and present empirical materials at first in each chapter, but my main task as an applied cultural

analyst is to apply the selected theories into the materials for conducting an applied cultural analysis.

2. Project Design

2.1 Project Aim

The main target of this study is to explore Chinese female students' decision-making process of selecting a Swedish institution, and to investigate Chinese female master students' university lives at Swedish universities. In ancient China, the thought has been promoted that ignorance is a woman's virtue. Even though some people still hold this silly thinking in their subconscious minds, many Chinese families believe that women should receive higher education equally as men in order to gain their independence within this highly competitive real society. Thus, lots of female university graduates join the group of Chinese oversea students nowadays, and they also become one interesting group to study about. In this study, I focus on studying female students' university lives in Sweden, since it is much easier for me as a female researcher to follow, observe and interview their studying lives at different locations such as their accommodations, classrooms, libraries and so on.

The ethnographic methods have been utilized as the tools to collect empirical data from the field. The aim of this study is to reveal Chinese students' expectations, difficulties, and comments on Swedish higher education. This study will not only be contributed to getting a better understanding of Chinese female students' studying experiences at Swedish universities for potential Chinese oversea students, but also provide an extra window for Swedish universities to hear their Chinese female students' real voices and to see their actual studying lives in Sweden.

2.2 Research Questions

In order to meet the project aim of this project for investigating Chinese female postgraduate students' university lives in Sweden, I intend to explore the following questions:

- *The Reasons for Choosing Swedish Universities:* As female students, how did they make up their mind to choose Sweden as their studying abroad destination and what were the attractive factors of Swedish universities that got their

attentions? What kinds of discussions did they have with their parents and friends about Swedish universities before studying here?

- *Culture Shocks*: How were these students' first month of studies and their first course learning experience in Sweden? Did they experience any culture shocks? How did they adjust themselves into the new studying system?
- *Difficulties and Confusions*: As female students, what kind of difficulties and confusions did they encounter in their learning process in Sweden? How did they manage to overcome these difficulties? After studying in Swedish universities more than a year, how do they today think about the difficulties they first experienced?
- *University Life in China and Sweden*: What are the general pictures of university life in China and Sweden? What about Chinese students' relationship with their professors and classmates in the two countries? How about the differences between Chinese and Swedish student lives such as lectures, seminars and examination and so on?

2.3 Research Methods

In this study, I have investigated 10 Chinese female master students' university lives in Sweden. They come from various disciplines, such as Humanity, Social Science, Law, Engineering, and Economics, and they have all been studying in Sweden for more than six months. The reason why I chose this group of students is because that these informants have had some time to understand their Swedish university lives, and to compare the differences between the two countries. My personal studying experience will also be contributed as the supplementary material into this study. In order to gather qualitative data, I mainly applied the following ethnographic methods to my fieldwork:

- Auto-ethnography
- Ethnographic individual and focus group interviews
- Participate observations
- Photo ethnography

2.4 Data Collection

I collected data primarily through the above mentioned research methods. Five individual interviews and two focus group interviews have been completed during the spring semester of 2010 at Lund University. All the interviews were implemented in Chinese with semi-structure formats. I started with open-ended questions designed to obtain informants' narratives about their learning experiences and social activities during their studying period in Sweden, as well as their decision-making process of choosing a Swedish university for pursuing their higher education. Participant observations were carried out within various locations such as informants' accommodations, lecture rooms, libraries, students' parties, etc. The main purpose of doing participant observations is to seek for their real studying situations within Sweden. I also collected more than 5 photos from each informant to present their universities and studying locations, as well as their own studying situations.

2.5 Limitation

Even though my informants came from different disciplines, they all studied at Lund University of Sweden. The reason of choosing one location to complete my fieldwork is because of my limited researching schedule and inconvenient geographic distance to other institutions. In general, this study could not illustrate a panoramic picture of all Chinese female students' studying lives at Swedish universities. However, to a large extent these informants' personal experiences may present a large group of students' university lives in Sweden, and their decision-making processes of choosing one Swedish university.

2.6 Presentation of The Informants

Before presenting selected theories and my fieldwork materials, I will provide a brief background for my informants.

No.	Name	Age	Academic Discipline	Studying Duration in Sweden
1	Huang Lei	26	Film Production	1 year
2	Lv Li	25	Water Resource Management	2 years
3	Yao Yao	24	Political Science in Global Studies	½ year
4	Li Man	24	Social Studies in Gender Studies	½ year
5	Yan Xiao	26	Maritime Law	½ year
6	Tang Xin	25	Economics	2 years

7	Zhu Xiaoxi	25	Branding and Marketing	2 years
8	Du Wu	25	Geographic Information System	2 year
9	Bai Ling	26	Information System	2 years
10	Zhou Le	25	Mechanical Engineering	2 years

3. Decision-making Process

According to a statistic report³ of *Education at a Glance* released in 2007, 1.4 percent of world's international students chose Sweden as their tertiary education destination. Although Sweden is not as popular as Australia, America, Canada and England, more and more students come from all over the world to study at Swedish universities. Chinese students have joined this trend. In this Chapter, I will focus on discovering different students' decision-making processes of choosing a Swedish institution, and investigate the "pull" and "push" factors that influence Chinese students' choices. In this sense, decision-making models and push-pull factors will be introduced within the section 4.1 before bringing empirical materials and analysis of the research questions.

3.1 Decision-making Models

To select an institution for studying abroad is not a simple and unilateral decision to make for many students in the world. Thus, questions, such as what kind of processes these international students have to experience and what kind of factors could influence their choices when choosing an overseas institution, become vital to be answered here. These answers could assist me to understand Chinese students' decision-making process of being an international student at a Swedish institution.

In the study *"Push-pull" Factors Influencing International Student Destination Choice*, Mazzarol (1998) suggests that there are at least three distinct stages that every international student has to go through when he or she makes the decision process of selecting an overseas studying institution. Mazzarol also claims that "push" and "pull" factors exist and also influence students' choices among the following three stages.

Stage 1: The student has to decide to study abroad rather than locally.

Stage 2: The student needs to decide a host country as his or her studying abroad

destination.

Stage 3: The student has to select an institution.

In a more recent study of *Decision Making Process of Community College Bound International Students*, Bohman (2009) developed Mazzarol's three stages of selecting an abroad studying institution into an incremental four-step model based on the quantitative analysis, even though students' decision-making process was repeatable and complicated. The four-step model contains: (1) Preliminary, (2) Destination, (3) Institutional Types, and (4) School Selection. These four steps sketch international students' inescapable process of how they make their decisions to choose their overseas schools, and the unavoidable questions that students have to ask themselves before selecting a studying abroad institute. This four-step model of decision-making process of selecting an overseas studying institution could be presented as the following *Figure 1.0*.

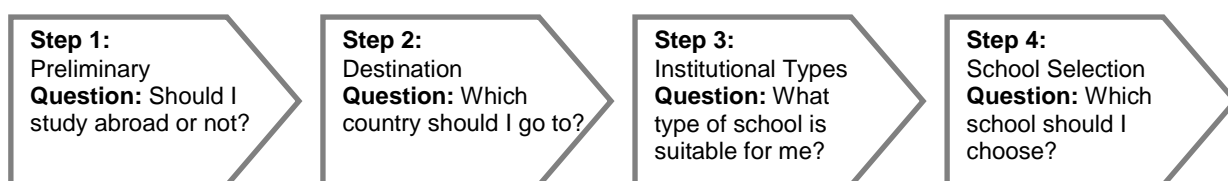


Figure 1.0

This model will be used in the discussion of Chinese female students' reasons of choosing Sweden as their destination. It could be also applied to analyze the process of how these students select a Swedish institution to get their higher education from having the intention of studying abroad rather than locally. As noted in both Mazzarol (1998) and Bohman's (2009) studies, "push" and "pull" factors affect the student's decision of selecting a studying abroad destination. These two factors will be integrated into the coming discussions for revealing the hidden reasons why so many Chinese students choose to study their higher education abroad and how they select a Swedish school to attend eventually. Thus, it is necessary to clarify the definitions of "push" and "pull" factors in this study.

3.2 "Push" and "Pull" Factors

The theory of push-pull was originally applied in the field of migration studies by

Everett S. Lee in 1966. In the article *A Theory of Migration*, Lee defines that “the conceptualization of migration as involving a set of factors at origin and destination, a set of intervening obstacles, and series of personal factors is a simple one which may perhaps be accepted as self-evident” (Lee, p52). In this sense, the push factors can be understood as the force or reasons that drive people away from one place, and the pull factors are the force or reasons that attract people to a new location.

The application of push-pull theory to the study of international students’ mobility has been started from Rao’s research work *Brain Drain and Foreign Students* since 1979. By following the studies of Agarwal & Winkler (1985), Bohman (2010), Chen (2005), Hung (2000), and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), it has shown that push-pull theory has been massively applied in the field of education. According to Mazzarol and Soutar’s (2002) research, “push” factors are those that operate within a country and initiate a student’s decision to undertake study abroad. These include economic, social, and political forces within the source country. “Pull” factors are those that make another country attractive for students. Therefore, being aware of the “pull” factors could assist host countries to have a better understanding about the reasons why foreign students choose one studying abroad destination and how they select an overseas school to attend for pursuing the higher education from their home countries.

Before selecting a foreign studying institution, students have to decide whether they should study abroad or locally. Thus, that is necessary to know what kind of factors could pull the students to choose one specific host country as their studying abroad destination. More precise, this is a way to study about students’ intentions of studying abroad. In the study by Mazzarol and Soutar (2001), four main “pull” factors have been introduced to explain the reasons why students decide to study abroad:

- (1) The student’s perception that an overseas course of study will be better than a local one.
- (2) The student’s opportunity to gain entry to a particular program.
- (3) The student’s desire to improve their understanding of foreign societies, particularly Western ones.
- (4) The student’s intention to migrate after graduation.

When students decide to study abroad rather than locally, they have to select a

destination. Selecting a studying abroad destination is still not an easy task. So what kind of factors could influence students' decisions about selecting a studying abroad country? Drawing on the studies of Bass (2005), Bodycott (2009), Hung (2005), Mei Li (2007), Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) and Zhao and Guo (2002), I have collected eight common "pull" factors as my answer that could affect a student's choice of selecting an overseas studying destination:

- (1) Knowledge and awareness of the destination country in the student's home country.
- (2) Positive attitude of supporting international education in the destination country.
- (3) Recommendations by relatives, parents and friends.
- (4) Tuition fees, living expenses, social and travel costs in the host country.
- (5) Environment considerations including climate, lifestyle, crime, safety and racial discrimination.
- (6) Geographical proximity to the home country.
- (7) Social or educational links to family or friends living in the destination country, or family or friends studying there.
- (8) Perceived higher standards of education and employment prospects.

3.3 Chinese Students' Decision-making Process of Choosing A Swedish School

In order to investigate the Chinese female students' reasons for choosing Swedish universities to continue their higher education, push-pull theory and Bohman's four-step model of international students' decision-making process play quite important roles in guiding the informants' stories. They are contributed as my researching framework, which will assist me to reach a deeper understanding about the empirical material, to analyze the process of how Chinese students make up their minds to attend a Swedish university from having the intension of pursuing higher education, and to seek for the factors that attract these female undergraduate students to become international students in Sweden. The four questions below will be answered by combining my empirical material with theories, and it will reveal the hidden reasons why and illustrate the process how Chinese female students made their minds to select a Swedish school eventually.

3.3.1. Why Study Abroad?

At the 15th China International Education Exhibition Tour (CIEET) of 2010, Zhang

Xiuqin, the director-general of International Cooperation and Exchanges at Ministry of Education in China, claimed that more than 90 percent of Chinese overseas students went to study abroad in 2009⁴. In fact, it is almost impossible for an under 30-year-old Chinese student to save enough money by himself or herself for affording the costly overseas education fees of America, Australia, England, etc. Thus, the majority of Chinese overseas students have to rely on their parents' incomes to pay their abroad expenses. In addition, more than 70 percent of the Chinese population, around 0.9 billion people, comes from rural areas, who mainly relies on farming the limited land for a living. Thus, not many Chinese students have the opportunities to get overseas studying experiences, and many are all dependent upon their parents' wishes in choosing a studying destination on a large scale. It makes it interesting to investigate Chinese students and their parents' expectations on the host countries and foreign schools.

The fact is that more and more Chinese value a university degree, since qualifications are an essential requirement for getting the chance to enter more attractive jobs in China. Obviously, a higher education background will increase students' competitiveness inside and outside the country. From my interviews, most of the informants showed that they would like to get higher degrees after completing their university studies. As the number of Chinese undergraduates increases year by year, both students and their parents always hold the idea that the higher degree as a kind of "life insurance" could bring the younger generation more job opportunities and better economic incomes in their future. The belief that a good education will guarantee a better future has been deeply planted in many Chinese parents' minds (Ashley and Jiang, 2000).

Li Man, who has studied in a Swedish university for more than half a year, said that there was a hidden message always existing in her unconsciousness that getting a master degree seemed to be an already set target with her parents. She and her parents believe that higher education is beneficial for her in the search of a better occupation. Thus, that is a clear aim for her to study for gaining a higher degree after her university study. Studying abroad could not only bring her one foreign master degree but also improving her English's communication

capability.

Many Chinese parents have the similar opinion with Li's parents on the issues of children's education, and they are eager to arm their children with knowledge to be more competitive. However, Chinese universities cannot provide sufficient places for the constantly growing number of graduate candidates at present. Thus, it becomes quite common that lots of Chinese students are sent abroad by their parents for pursuing the higher education. There are several reasons explaining why so many parents in contemporary Chinese society set the higher diploma as their children's studying targets.

Firstly, the idea that a good qualification is a prerequisite for getting a better job has been inveterately planted into most of Chinese students and parents' minds. A look at the famous job hunting websites in China reveals a certain of qualification is a precondition. Thus, both Chinese parents and students trust that the higher education background is one of the most important elements to establish a firm foundation for students' future development.

Secondly, our generation's parents in China, who were born between the year of 1950 and 1960, suffered the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. During these ten years, Chinese university entrance examination was abolished. This meant that many of the parents' of today's students had no choice to achieve higher education during the ten years. When the Chinese reform and opening-up policy was executed at the end of 1978, lots of them unfortunately faced the crucial unemployment situations in the 1990s. From their generation's difficult life experiences, they realized the power of knowledge and learned the importance of qualifications. Therefore, they do not want to let their children meet with the same fate as they did themselves, and are eager to arm their children by knowledge to make sure they become more competitive candidates in this fast developing world. This is another reason that makes Chinese parents attach great attentions on their children's education in recent years.

Thirdly, Chinese universities could not fulfill all students highly demands for pursuing higher education after undergraduate studies, and oversea schools become additional choices for Chinese students. The data below in *Figure 2.0* presents the

annual growth rate and the number of applicants enrolled in the Chinese postgraduate entrance examination between 2001 and 2009. It indicates the fact that more and more Chinese undergraduate students choose to pursue the higher education after their graduations in the recent decade.

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of Applicants	460,000	620,000	797,000	945,000	1,172,000	1,271,200	1,282,000	1,200,000	1,246,000
The Annual Growth Rate of Applicants	17.3%	35.7%	28.0%	18.3%	24.0%	8.4%	0.8%	-0.6%	3.8%
Number of Students Enrolled	110,500	195,000	270,000	330,000	324,940	402,800	364,000	390,000	475,000
The Ratio of Applicants and Enrolled Students	4.2 : 1	3.2 : 1	2.9 : 1	2.9 : 1	3.6 : 1	3.2 : 1	3.5 : 1	3.0 : 1	3.3 : 1

Figure 2.0⁵

Zhang Xiuqin, the director-general of International Cooperation and Exchanges at Ministry of Education in China, announced that the number of Chinese overseas students reached to 229,000 with the annual increasing rate of 27.5% annual growth over the year of 2008, and more than 210,000 of them are self-financed students. It is not hard to figure out that a majority of the Chinese overseas students needs to prepare their own expenses on overseas education by their parents and themselves. However, for a university graduate student in China, it is hardly possible to earn and save such a huge amount of money to afford the high tuition fee within a short term. Thus, parents play the decisive roles in decision-making process of whether their children should study abroad by considering their families' economic capability and social awareness of overseas studying experiences.

In this sense, the question is addressed to why Chinese parents put so many efforts in children's education. Influenced by the ancient philosopher Laozi, many Chinese parents believe that give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, and teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime⁶. Thus, giving knowledge to their children is considered as the best way to inherit wealth by many Chinese parents. This also reveals the reason why so many Chinese families do not spare in investing almost one-third of family income to fund their unique child to gain higher education abroad

(Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002).

Many Chinese students have high expectations on higher education to bring them more competitive power, and an overseas studying experience is seen as a plus. Chinese students are not only satisfied with just learning academic knowledge in their own subjects, but also value overseas learning experiences as choices of expanding their horizons outside their own country. Therefore, most of my informants showed that their parents supported them to get higher education abroad from economical, substantial and spiritual aspects. That is because that a Chinese graduate with a foreign degree is perceived by parents and society to have better skills and employability prospects on returning home (Gareth, 2005).

Huang Lei has already studied at a Swedish university for more than one year. She said that she did not have any deep conversation with her parents about the reasons and expectations of choosing to study abroad, since all the information that their parents knew was from her. Even though her parents cannot offer her so many suggestions, they supported her from an economic perspective and considered overseas studying experiences as a good way to diversify their child's educational background.

Huang's parents mentioned that overseas studying experiences could diversify Huang's education background, and could also become bonus points of achieving one certification in the home country. The differences and the diversities of the studying experiences are evaluated as treasures and more valuable elements than the academic knowledge for Chinese students' parents to some degree. Thus, I would argue that not only student's desire to improve their understanding of foreign societies but also their parents' hope to enrich their children's education background become one of "pull" factors to explain why more and more Chinese students choose to study abroad.

To sum up, the extremely high competition for postgraduate studying places within China, parents' high expectations on higher education, and students' desire of enlarging their horizons to a global context, are the "push" factors that drive more and more Chinese students to pursue an academic experience abroad rather than locally.

Considering the higher expenses on overseas studies, Chinese parents play vital roles in the decision-making process of choosing studying destinations.

3.3.2. Why Choose Sweden?

Was Sweden the first choice, when the informants chose their studying abroad destination? If not, how did they make their final decision to select this country? A majority of the informants mentioned that they knew Sweden had good environmental conditions with high welfare, and low crime rate. Most informants also presented that The Nobel Prize was one of the most influential elements which they connected Sweden to a country with the good reputation in an academic world. Since the report⁷ showed that the majority of Chinese overseas students chose America, Australia, and England as their studying destinations in 2009, it was not surprising to learn that four of ten informants initially did not put Sweden as their preferential choices.

When Yao Yao decided to study abroad, she minimized the range into the European countries, because she thought that Europe had diversely cultural heritage compared with America, Australia and Canada. After evaluating the language issues, she selected England as the first destination for her master studies. However, when she heard information about Swedish higher education from one of her previous high school classmates, she decided to send her extra application documents to the Swedish higher education application organization *Studera.nu* as her second choice. Even though she got several admissions from England, she finally decided to enroll in a Swedish university. Yao Yao explicitly said to me during the interview that the free tuition fee was one of the most influencing factors driving her far away from England to Sweden, since both countries owned good reputations in education with English as the tuition language. In her opinion, the application process was also quite simple, because she just needed to select programs at the website *Studera.nu*, send all her application documents to the organization, and wait for the results.

There are several things we can know from Yao's experience. Tuition language and good reputations in education are two important "pull" factors attracting her to choose

Sweden rather than her original choices. Free tuition fee shows Swedish positive attitude toward supporting international education to a large extent, which also becomes one “pull” factor affecting Yao’s final decision of selecting an overseas studying destination. Not only Yao got Swedish higher education information from her previous friends. There were also four other informants who became aware of Swedish higher education system through their previous classmates and friends, who had been studying in Sweden before. Their friends introduced the studying experiences related to their actual lives in Sweden, which directly or indirectly affected the informants’ choices of selecting an overseas studying destination.

Yan Xiao, studying at a law school in Sweden for more than half a year, initially intended to pursue her master degree in America after two years working at a law office in China. Her friend told her that several Swedish universities had good reputation in the world, and Sweden was a suitable studying country with a peaceful environment. Yan’s friend had told her that the life in Sweden was relatively boring to some degree and that most of the Swedish cities were tiny. But once she had moved to Sweden herself she found that studying life was more colorful than she expected after living in student corridor for half a year. She had classmates and corridor mates from different countries such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, America, Brazil, and India which offered her great opportunities to know other countries’ cultures and customs. After living in Sweden for six months, she realized her studying life is much more interesting than she had expected. Yan considered Sweden as one good studying abroad destination for these students, who have purely learning intentions, rather than plans for migration. Yan said that she was satisfied with her studying lives in Sweden, and did not regret the choice she had made.

Education is an abstract and intangible thing, which is not an actual object such as an apple or an orange existing physically in front of consumers that they could see, touch, taste or feel in person. Thus, this kind of direct and first-hand information from friends and relatives could easily convince the potential Chinese overseas students’ minds, and, to a considerable degree, affect these students’ choices of selecting a studying abroad destination. Students’ previous studying experience, as one of the “pull” factors, could also catch students to choose Sweden for pursuing their higher

education. For example, two of ten informants spent their last university year in the Swedish universities as exchanges students, and the previous studying experiences made them have the intentions to continue their master's studies within the same country.

Both Zhu Xiaoxi and Lv Li were exchange students in Swedish universities during their last university studying year, and they both chose Sweden as their oversea studying destination to pursue their master studies. Zhu and Lv thought that Sweden was one of the most suitable countries for them to continue their further education, and they concluded several reasons why they thought so. On one side, they had already been familiar with the studying lives in Swedish universities and the country, and they both enjoyed the environment and simple studying lives in Sweden. In this sense, when they decided to pursue their higher education abroad after university studies, they chose Swedish universities that meant, to some degree, that they preferred to keep a more stable and familiar studying life. On the other hand, Sweden as a studying abroad destination has several advantages over other European countries, such as academic environment, education languages, social security, etc. Consequently, both of them considered Sweden as their first choice of a foreign studying destination when applying for their master programs abroad.

It can be found that a friend could play an influential role in a student's decision of choosing a studying abroad destination, and the previous studying experiences could also affect students' future choices on a studying destination to a large extent. The "hope" is one factor that pulls students to stay in Sweden for achieving higher degree. Where does the "hope" come from? The "hope" could be established during their previous studying experiences, which may refer to the positive aspects of being an international student in Sweden. For instance, students could meet international students from all over the world in the friendly academic studying surroundings, and have less pressure on their studies.

Even though many Chinese students did not select Sweden as their first choice of studying destination, the easily accessible Swedish universities' application system that simplifies applicants' preparations before coming to study in Sweden and also

shortens the applying process time for both national and international students. To some degree, the convenient and free application system *Studera.nu* provides all students with an accessible gate to become candidates. Thus, the convenient application process could be recognized as a “pull” factor that attracts students to Swedish universities.

Huang Lei gave one example to me about different countries application system. For instance, there are several things Chinese applicants have to prepare when applying for American universities. Students need to send all the required documents to different universities separately, and they also have to pay the application fees to diverse schools firstly. Getting one professor’s permission as their supervisor in advanced from a chosen school is a must, which makes the application process even more complicated. However, applying for a Swedish master program, students just need enter into one website, make an order of their interested programs, and send all required documents to one location. Probably waiting costs the longest time during the whole process, and you just need a bit patient to welcome the arrivals of good news.

Nowadays, Chinese students are not only satisfied with achieving an abroad diploma in a short studying period but also intended to invest more time to collect cross-cultural communication skills and experiences within foreign countries. Thus, two-year master programs are more attractive for many Chinese students than one-year master studies, since it could offer more time for Chinese students to understand the cultural differences, to learn the cross-cultural communication skills, and to gain the academic and practical knowledge. In addition, Sweden, as one European country, could bring more opportunities to travel around the Europe during the studying vacations.

Li Man, who came to Sweden in September 2009, selected Holland and England as her preferential destinations. After being aware of Swedish universities’ higher education system, she also applied for Swedish universities. She compared the length of schooling in these three countries and found that the duration of most of the master programs in Holland and England was only one year. In contrast to these two countries, she learned that Sweden also offered its

higher education in English to international students, and supplied lots of two-year master programs that allowed foreign students to understand the local culture, and gained more academic knowledge from Swedish universities.

To be frank, many Chinese students considered the free tuition fee of Swedish universities as one of the most influential factors attracting their interests to Sweden. For instance, Tang Xin and her boyfriend completed their bachelor's degrees in Sweden's neighbor country Denmark before coming to study their masters at Swedish universities. They concluded several reasons why they made their decisions to switch to Sweden from Denmark. Firstly, both Sweden and Denmark are Scandinavian countries with quite similar cultures and living conditions. Secondly, Sweden as one of the most influential Scandinavian countries has the largest quantity of schools among the five Nordic countries, and also offers reliable qualities in education in a global context. Thirdly, the free tuition fee makes Swedish universities more attractive for them than the Danish higher education expenses. In a word, Sweden has become one of the most preferable overseas studying destinations among these Chinese students, who are eager to pursue their higher education in English within Europe.

In a word, there are several "pull" factors that I have found through my interviews that explains why Sweden is not the first choice but becomes the final decision of Chinese students' overseas studying destination.

1. Previous studying experience could attract students to stay in the country for pursuing further education.
2. Education free is an attractive factor that pulls the students to study in Sweden.
3. Language is one of essential factor compared with other countries.
4. Diversity is one key term should be considered as one advantage factor to promote Sweden as a new academic world.

3.3.3. Which Type of Institute?

After selecting a studying abroad destination, students need to choose which type of school will meet both their capabilities and expectations. In Sweden, there is no language school for teaching foreign students English before entering their master

studies. In this sense, international students have to prepare both requested English qualifications and previous international-recognized diplomas for applying their master's studies at Swedish universities or colleges. According to China's national Bureau of Statistics, a survey in 2001 presented that more than 60 per cent of Chinese families invest one-third of their income in their children's education (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). Chinese parents invest such a huge amount of money in supporting their children to collect higher degrees abroad. One of the most concerning questions, which Chinese parents and students often have in their minds, is whether the Swedish institutions' diploma will be recognized by Chinese and international enterprises, organizations, etc.

In order to provide a reliable platform for both national and international students to choose an internationally recognized institution and program within Sweden, *Studera.nu* as a unique gateway of applying to Swedish institutions was established in 2008 providing relative information to all international students. According to my personal experiences, I put one of the best Swedish universities at the priority position rather than other smaller universities or colleges when applying for a master program, since both my parents and I thought that the better and larger university that I can enter for studying a master degree, the more valuable experiences and diploma I could gain in the end. Thus, a large university was my first choice rather than colleges, and I believe that universities have larger resources than smaller colleges. It could provide me with more valuable education experiences to enrich my future curriculum vitae for getting a better occupation.

Generally, most Chinese parents are concerned about the good reputation of a school. They consider reputation together with teachers' qualifications as the most important factors when choosing a studying institution for their child, whether in other countries or within China and from primary school to university. I did a one-day participate observation in one supplementary school in Beijing, which provides teaching services for students from primary school to high school with the main aim to improve students' school knowledge. A student around 11 years old, who came from the 5th grade in primary school, spent his weekend in this school for completing his school assignments. When his father came to pick him up around 9pm on the Saturday, the father asked, "What are the previous teaching experiences of my son's mathematics

tutor? Which level is his qualification such as: senior, medium or junior? Does the tutor teach at a key school?" The father showed a great concern about the tutor's teaching ability by judging from the categories of school and certification, because most parents want to find one of the best tutors for their children. Most Chinese parents want a famous school and the best teachers to guarantee as good studying conditions for their children as possible.

Lv Li, who first came to Sweden as an exchange student, studied biological engineering as her major because her university had collaboration with a Swedish. However, she went to her first Swedish university for studying a program, which is relatively far from her own major. It was quite hard for her to follow the lectures because she lacked knowledge in the field and knew limited professional vocabularies. These are also the reasons why she decided to change to her current studying program at a larger Swedish university, when she chose to pursue her master studies after being Sweden for a year. She frankly said that two of the main reasons that drove her to switch a school were the good worldwide reputation university and the relatively sufficient stock of knowledge in her current studying program. She also said that her reason she chose the first program that was not close to her own major at beginning was because the first program was one year shorter than her current studying program. In her opinion, if she could shorten her studying duration, she would not delay her other future plans such as job-hunting, marriage, and so on.

From Lv's stories, we could know that she grasped her opportunity to study in Sweden, but she was not able to choose a more suitable program for herself at first. At that time and situation, she realized that choosing a good program was much more important than just choosing a famous university. Lv was a lucky student, since she had the chance to change her program and also went into a larger university, which has good reputation in the world. An important finding from my material is that many Chinese parents and students prefer to select a famous institution at first rather than a suitable studying program. The students as well as their parents are highly concerned about the university's world ranking.

3.3.4. Which School to Attend?

Finally, students have to select which school they will attend eventually by considering practical issues such as the education fees, school location, education reputation, studying programs, and so on. Since tuition in Swedish universities is free for all students, students probably pay more attention to select their future school in terms of school's reputation, studying programs, etc. However, Swedish higher education tuition will not be free for Non-European students from 2011. Thus, the factor of education fee will be considered when selecting an oversea studying institute in the end.

When Du Wu started to select her future school, she chose one big Swedish university in the southern part of the country. She believed that the weather in southern Sweden was warmer than the northern cities, and the chosen university was recognized as one popular school among both national and international students with high world ranking of the top 100 universities.

As for my own parents, they always worry about my living situation abroad, and also about the weather conditions of Sweden. Since there are plenty of news reporting on oversea fake schools and degrees, many Chinese parents, like my parents, are concerned with the universities' credibility first of all. If they know the university is an internationally recognized school, they will be more assured of sending their child there. However, many parents cannot give much advice on how to select a school, since they may lack knowledge on their children's studying field.

4. Learning Process

In this chapter, I am going to apply the theories of cross-cultural adaptation, culture shock and learning cultural shocks for analyzing Chinese students' learning process in Sweden. Cross-cultural adaptation theory presents the framework and evokes the process that many international students have to experience when coming into a new country. Culture shock as a key term will be introduced and used to define the experiences that some Chinese students had when they were new in Sweden.

4.1 Cross-cultural Adaptation

When moving into a new country people need time to figure out the differences, to

overcome the culture shocks, and to adjust to the new culture and life. “Since the beginning of the 20th century, the phenomenon of cross-cultural adaptation has been investigated extensively in the United States, a nation that throughout its history has dealt with a large and continuous influx of immigrants and sojourners” (Kim, 2001). Nowadays, researchers interested in the notion of cross-cultural adaptation have to make a wide search of articles and books to achieve a general understanding of this field. Y.Y. Kim’s theory of cross-cultural adaptation emerged from research on stress and adaptation, and provides insights into sojourner identity and adjustment processes making central the role of communication. The foundation of the theory is its stress-adaptation-growth model. The most vital concern of this theory is to gain an environment–individual ‘fit’. This is made possible through engaging in intercultural encounters, withdrawing to regroup in the face of an adjustment stressor, developing a more functional cultural perspective and/or interactional style, and then trying again, each time achieving a closer fit (Pitts, 2009).

Y.Y. Kim (2001) defines cross-cultural adaptation as “the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or reestablish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments” (p. 31). Communication, argues Y.Y. Kim, is the driving force behind this process of stress management and adjustment. Yet, the question remains about what kinds of communication should be investigated to gain further insights into the role everyday talk plays in sojourner adjustment.

The U curve model shown in the following *Figure 3.0* presents the mood changes of sojourners during the stage of honeymoon, culture shock, recovery and adaptation. These four stages have been sketched by Oberg (1960), when international sojourners move into a new country, face unfamiliarity and difficulties, and adapt to the new culture and society:

- (1) The honeymoon stage where the sojourner is enthusiastic about being in a new place.
- (2) The crisis where the cultural differences and unfamiliarity lead to culture shock.
- (3) The recovery where the sojourner gradually learns how to better function in the new culture.
- (4) The adjustment where the sojourner is comfortable and functioning well in the new

culture.

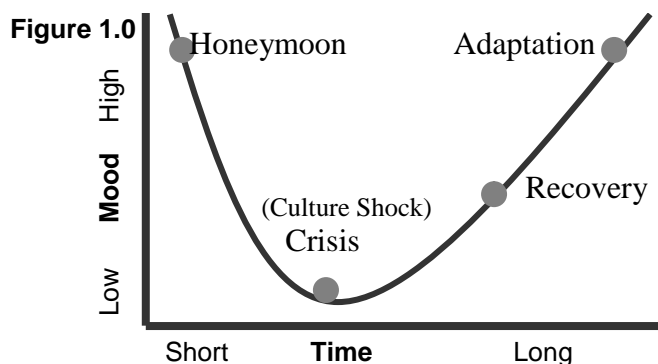


Figure 3.0

However, the above U curve is a general model and not every Chinese student has experienced a deep crisis stage when coming to a new country. Thus, this theory will be contributed to explain the adapting process of how some Chinese students integrate into the new university lives in Sweden. The following stories about students' personal experiences occurred at the beginning of their education, which could be good examples to illustrate the processes of these students' cross-cultural adaptation. In this process of adaptation into a new environment, the crisis period could be recognized as the most difficult period that many students have to encounter when coming into a new studying destination. Thus, it is necessary to know the notion of culture shock.

4.2 Culture Shock

According to the anthropologist Oberg (1960), the term culture shock is defined as a "disease" suffered by individuals living in a new cultural environment, results from the loss of well-known cultural signs and symbols, and may cause individuals to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration, and helplessness. It has been claimed in the book *Breaking Through culture Shock* (Marx, 2001) that "working in a new culture can produce a variety of reactions, such as confusion, anxiety, frustration, exhilaration, inappropriate social behavior, inability to get close to your business partner, and clinch the deal, feeling isolated and becoming depressed" (p. 5). It is true that these are possible reactions to culture shocks, when we are new and unfamiliar with the new surroundings. In this study, these reactions

could be found when the students just came into Sweden from China, and also exist even for a longer period.

Oberg (1960) also concluded at least six aspects of cultural shock:

- (1) Strain due to the effort required to make necessary psychological adaptations.
- (2) A sense of loss and feelings of deprivation in regard to friends, status, profession and possessions.
- (3) Being rejected by/and or rejecting members of the new culture.
- (4) Confusion in role, role expectations, values, feelings and self-identity.
- (5) Surprise, anxiety, even disgust and indignation after becoming aware of cultural differences.
- (6) Feelings of impotence due to not being able to cope with the new environment.

In the book *Breaking through Culture Shock*, the author Elisabeth Marx (2001) revealed a myth that “experiencing culture shock is a weakness or negative indication of future international success. Culture shock in all its diverse forms is completely normal and is part of a successful process of adaptation” (p. 5). I agree with Marx’s point of view, since people may have diverse educational backgrounds and grow up in different countries, and the habits and daily practices that they own from their everyday lives may be quite differently according to family, society, culture, and many other objective elements. In this sense, these Chinese students quite possible and probably have to experience culture shocks at the beginning of their stay in a new country and a foreign university. Even though not every Chinese student has to encounter a deep crisis during the cross-cultural process, many students may experience various culture shocks at beginning for adapting to the new environment.

4.3 Learning Cultural Shocks

In the book *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing*, Swedish anthropologist Orvar Löfgren (1999) claims that “tourism as a changing form of cultural competence, a process of learning and relearning, in which different kinds of holiday life and outlooks are produced in shifting social and historical conditions” (p.121). He also argues that “the history of tourism is to a great extent a constant process of learning and relearning, but it is not schooling within a given curriculum or a hidden agenda, it is rather a history of emancipation, of exploring new possibilities and changes”

(p.122). It is just as Löfgren's metaphor in this context that vocation landscapes with are laboratories tourists where they may explore new and creative experiences in their lives.

I want to use this approach from tourism in discussing how Chinese students learn to handle a new setting. In the context of moving into a new country as foreign students, even though the locations and universities are still the same as it was, students with different cultural and studying backgrounds may experience university life differently compared with local students. One of the main purposes is to investigate their integrating processes of learning to live in Sweden, learning to be a student in a Swedish university, and learning to communicate with Swedish professors and international classmates. As Lofgren stressed very much of this learning is often hard to put into words, it is often felt in the body rather than consciously registered in the mind.

4. 4 Experience Culture Shocks in Sweden

Empirical materials collected from the field will be brought here to present Chinese students' stories at their different stages of cross-cultural adaptation from China to Sweden. Cross-cultural adaptation, culture shock, and learning to handle culture shock will be integrated into this section. The main focus of this section is to discuss the culture shocks that most Chinese students experience when they were new in Sweden, and their learning process to adjust into the new environment. This section has been made up of two parts: [1] First impressions on Swedish Universities, and [2] Chinese students' culture shocks and difficulties.

4.4.1. First Impressions of Swedish Universities and Sweden

The honeymoon is a stage where the sojourn is enthusiastic about being in a new place. In this period, some students are curious to know the host countries, different cultures, unfamiliar surroundings, etc. From students' honeymoon period, we could gather more material about these Chinese female students' first impressions on Sweden and Swedish schools.

Zhou Le recalled that she had seen that pictures of some foreign universities before coming to Sweden, and she also read from books that universities in

Europe, America and many other countries did not have bounding walls. Chinese universities or colleges are surrounded by bounding walls and separated from the outside organizations or units. She found that Swedish universities or colleges were spread into one or several communities, and there were no clearly physical boundaries existing between city and schools.

The free style of Swedish universities is not only presented through its physical settings but also shown from faculty members and students' behaviors, wearing, and so on. Combining my own experiences with my informants' stories at Swedish universities, we figure out that many Swedish teachers like to wear very casual clothes such as jeans and sweaters during their lectures on campus. Many teachers also behave in a quite free style, and students could also find that many teachers are very forthcoming and approachable to their students.

Huang Lei remembered her first welcome dinner that was hold in their department's building at one evening. According to her observation, she noticed that all the dishes from cold to warm were prepared by her teachers rather than buying cooked food from restaurants or markets. Teachers took care of students like their own children and let students to eat food first. When her classmates and she finished eating, they focused on talking with each other and making friends. Since the setting was hold in their classroom, there were not waiters or waitresses to clean up the tables. She illustrated a picture, which had been fixed firmly in her mind, was that one professor with white hair came to their table and helped them do the dishes. She felt surprised and thankful for having such affable professors in Sweden.

Why did Huang feel surprised by her Swedish professors? Since almost every Chinese people heard the story of *Kong Rong Shares Pears*⁸, it meant to foster the Chinese national tradition of respect for the old, love for the young. Thus, in the situation like Huang had in her first welcome dinner, professors who were older than their students should be taken care of by the students. From Huang and most Chinese students' perspectives, students were younger than their teachers, so they were

supposed to clean the tables and to wash dishes rather than their professors.

Teachers' forthcoming behaviors are not only limited in such settings but also shown through the daily communication with their students. According to my studying experiences, I remembered that I used the "Dear Professor M" and tried to write in a formal way when I wrote an email to my professor in Sweden at the first time. However, I realized that many teachers in Sweden wrote in a rather informal way. For example, "Hi", "Hello" and "Hej"⁹ are normally used in teachers' emails to students, which are common to use for greetings between friends and seen as oral or informal English in China. The emoticons such as ☺ and ☹ could also be found in the emails between teachers and students in Sweden, which has been considered as an additional way to express the feelings and emotions. In the face-to-face situations, students could call teachers' names directly rather than adding a form of address at Swedish universities. For instance, if my Swedish professor's name is Lisa Engberg, I could call her Lisa rather than Professor Engberg. However, it is not polite to use teachers' names directly in China, and the respectful and polite way is to use Professor Engberg when writing emails or seeing each other in person. In this sense, Swedish teachers and students have different standards of the politeness and impoliteness from Chinese people. The differences are constructed by different cultural backgrounds and routines.

In China, it seems that the discipline in the classroom is one of the most important things that every teacher will announce to all their students from primary schools to universities. For instance, one of the most common rules in China is that students are not allowed to eat food and chewing gums during lectures. Therefore, it is rare to see teachers having something in their mouths during their teaching time at Chinese schools, and they are supposed to set good examples to their students.

Lv Li recalled that once she saw one of her professors put a small bag in his gum before one lecture, and she thought that was probably some pills for healing the hoarse throat. Finally, she figured out that small bag was a kind of chewing tobacco rather than any kind of medicine.

Sitting at a lecture at a Swedish university, it is quite common to see that students put apples or chocolate bars in front of them, and they are able to eat their fruit and snacks during lectures without making any noises. There is no clear statement to regulate these behaviors, and no one will be blame for eating small fruit or snacks in the classrooms at Swedish universities.

Du Wu told her first impressions on students' clothing in Sweden. In her mind, there are not distinct rules to control students' dress up at Swedish universities, and that is why people probably could see there are some students having very special dress up to their lectures with unbelievable bleeding puck make-ups or clothes. She said that could rarely happen at any Chinese university, since all universities' regulations normally include the rules to standardize students' clothing and apparel on campus. Too personalized dress is not allowed to wear during students' studying period at Chinese universities. If there are not specific written rules to formulate students or teachers' dress at Chinese universities, the public in China still has an invisible yardstick to measure what a student or a teacher's proper dress should be.

What is the "invisible yardstick" in Chinese people's minds? It was something that had already planted deeply in Chinese people's minds when they were young receiving from daily practices. It could be something that always influences their thoughts and opinions on a certain thing or behavior such as the proper dress for students. According to Fran Martin's (2003) book *Interpreting Everyday Culture*, he defines ideology is "our ideas and beliefs, the collective and common ideas and beliefs of the whole culture" (p.17) in cultural studies. Martin (2003) also points that "cultural studies understands ideology as the network of ideas and beliefs through which culture and its members order, represent and make sense of reality" (p.17). In the case of comparing the Swedish standards of a student's proper dress with Chinese ones, people from different countries have diverse ideologies and may understand the issues differently. Chinese people's "yardstick" of measuring a student's dress in their minds is highly influenced by their previous studying background and the awareness from their Chinese schools and society. For example, in many Chinese primary schools to high schools, students are required to wear their school's uniforms from summer to winter by their school regulation. Male students are not allowed to have

longer hair than two centimeters, students are not permitted to eat food during lectures, female students should not wear make-up during their studying period, and such rules are executed at many Chinese schools. In this sense, students always receive a message that obeying the rules is a necessary requirement of being a good student in China, and special clothing is to some extent not encouraged.

According to my personal experience, I also had one university classmate who had dyed all her hair in shiny pink just like a cartoon character after one summer vacation. She had kept her pink hair more than three months, but she did not receive any bad comments from our professors in Sweden. If we put aside the aesthetic point of view on this case, I personally would not be so brave to dye my own hair in such bright and special color when studying at a university, because I still hold the Chinese school regulation about students' dress and "the invisible yardstick" in my mind even in Sweden. However, there is not any rule formulating the proper students' clothing and apparel at Swedish universities, and students enjoy the freedom of choosing their favorite styles to dress up themselves. It also presents that Swedish universities offer greater degree of tolerance to students' dress and behaviors than Chinese schools. This forms a striking contrast to Chinese universities' strict clauses on students' dress that every student should obey for being a good student at Chinese universities.

Coming to a new country and a different studying environment, there are many rules and behaviors related to studying and living that international students need to deal with. Lacking knowledge about the common rules of the new school and city, it presents more problems for international students.

Bai Ling, who has been studies in one Swedish university more than a year, still remembered her first week after coming to Sweden. At beginning, she had to look for places to register into the school and her program. Thus, at her first free Sunday, she decided to explore the new city and to purchase some daily necessities. However, when she arrived at the city center around 9'o clock in the morning, she realized that most of the shops were closed and it was really hard to meet even one person on her way to the center. Luckily, it was a nice late summer day, and she could enjoy the nice sunshine on a bench while waiting for the stores' open. Finally, she found that most of stores were not open for

customers during Sundays in Sweden and she went home with nothing. In China, all stores always work from Monday to Sunday all the year around, and most Chinese people like to spend their weekends to go shopping.

According to the above information collected from my project's informants, not every Chinese student had experienced the honeymoon stage after coming to Sweden. Even though not all students could have joyful experiences at the honeymoon stage, many students started to learn the differences between Chinese and Swedish university lives, and collected impressions from their observations and personal experiences.

4.4.2. Chinese Students' Culture Shocks and Difficulties in Sweden

After such fresh impressions during the honeymoon stage, students start to learn how to fit themselves into the new surroundings after the crisis period. During the transition period students' studying lives are full of cultural shocks and difficulties, which sometimes could cause stress and depression. This is also the stage that every international student has to overcome when coming to an oversea studying country. From China to Sweden, from Asia to Europe, from developing country to developed country, from communism to capitalism, there are huge differences existing between China and Sweden from many different aspects.

Most Chinese students are taught at their home universities, and worry about language at beginning of their studies. However, many of my informants told me that actually they did not have so many problems to understand the lectures. Most of them also pointed out that group work's discussions were not as easy as listening lectures for them, because language was more informal in the groups.

For a Chinese student in Sweden, the student identity is a difficult role that they have to play during their studying period in Sweden.

Confusions and misunderstanding were always hanging around with Yao Yao during her first month lectures, seminars, and assignments. At her first course in Sweden, she remembered that she had to complete a one-page paper in the middle of the course before one seminar. In her opinion, it was the most hard-working time in her whole studying live, since she had read all the books from

their literature list and spent a whole week studying in the library. However, she felt that she had no idea what she should write, and nothing was written down before the last day. She had struggled with the confusions, anxiety, and distrust of herself, and finally she managed to complete this first paper on time. From then on, she told herself that she could overcome all other difficulties of her future studies in Sweden.

Li Man, who was studying in a social school, said that she usually did not have so many lectures during her studies. She calculated out that she normally did not have more than three lectures per week, and no more than six hours in total. At beginning, she did not know how lectures should be hold at Swedish universities, and even worried about how much knowledge she could obtain from such short lecture time. During her first studying month, she was seeking for the answers to her confusions, and finally got to learn from her observations on her classmates that they spent lots of time in libraries to read their literature. Gradually, she realized that self-study was a key method for mastering her studies at Swedish universities.

In this sense, students play even more important roles and are supposed to work hard by themselves to understand the terms, concepts, and theories from reading literatures in their spare time. Teachers guide the correct directions for students to investigate during limited lectures rather than providing really concrete contents and detailed texts in the field. Thus, reading, making notes and writing down summaries became even more important tasks for her to complete after lectures, and she also found that was really helpful for her studies and paper writing at the end of the courses. Learning means not only understanding the knowledge of a student's special subject but also learning the ways of being a student in Sweden.

At Swedish universities, there are many courses including various group work and group assignments, which means that individual grade can be influenced by other group members' work. Thus, how to collaborate with other students in a group to complete an assignment or a project is an inevitable studying process to deal with for almost all students in Sweden. Many Swedish professors found that students coming from the same region preferred to work together in a same group. For example, it is quite common to see that many Chinese students liked to work in the same group for

finishing school assignments. In my opinion, I believe that students from the same country could discuss a topic or an issue without any language and cultural barriers. However, students from different countries and studying backgrounds could inject new blood into a group, and may also bring new and diverse opinions and ideas. Thus, I suggest that students should choose to work in a more internationalized group to learn the different ways of thinking and thoughts rather than limiting themselves inside a small circle.

In one course's introduction lecture, one Swedish teacher sat in front of the class to explain the course information and studying modes to her international students, who came from different studying programs. According to the professor's explanation, the course contained lots of group work that required students to collaborate with each other for completing four presentations and one big assignment together in order to get the course studying grades. Thus, the teacher decided to let students to organize no more than three people in one group by themselves during 15 minutes' break. There were 6 students sitting in this meeting, and that was not surprising to see that the six Chinese students divided themselves into two groups quickly.

Why do these Chinese students prefer to work in the same group rather than join a more international group? What are the reasons behind this situation? In my program, we are around 20 students from different countries with diverse culture backgrounds. One fourth of the students come from China, and one fourth of students are Swedish students. Nearly half of the class comes from other European countries such as Germany, Finland, Bulgaria and Turkey as well as America. Our professors consciously divided us into a more internationalized group when we had group assignments, and their indicated that they did not want to see students with the same national background work in the same team, and they wanted us to collaborate cross cultural diversities and also contributed the different cultural aspects to the studies. Teachers can control students' studying behaviors at school, but they cannot influence with whom Chinese students hang around during their spare time.

Swedish universities' examination forms are also different from Chinese universities in general. Students are invited to participate into the studies through a whole course, since seminars and examinations are included within almost every course at Swedish

universities. In addition, working in groups encourages students to collaborate with each other for completing a topic or some questions related to the course. Thus, every student should play a predominant role in learning knowledge at Swedish universities, and teachers normally evaluate each student through their performances during continuous assignments, seminars, exams, course papers, or reports. However, at Chinese universities, many students from social science and language studies usually write course papers as their final assessments of a course; students from faculties of Science, Engineer, Economy and so on normally have one written exam at the end of their courses. Thus, students are mainly evaluated by an examination without considering their performances during the course-studying period. Thus, many students put more efforts and time to study before exams for getting good grades. Some Chinese students need to change their minds and switch their previous studying habits to fit the different evaluation system at Swedish universities, and the differences could also lead problems to Chinese students because of the unawareness and unfamiliarity of the local traditions.

Du Wu said that she was so familiar with Chinese examination forms, and written exam were full of her universities studies except her bachelor's thesis. At her Chinese university, she lived with other 3 girls in one student dormitory, and she usually crammed for her exams. The final exam of each course is the only way for her to pass their courses, so it is quite efficient to bone up on lecture notes and course literatures before exams in China. However, she noticed that the daily performances could also influence a course' final mark at her Swedish university, since her performances at seminars and presentations are also accounted into the final evaluations of every course. Compared with her studies in China, she found that there were more group work, discussions, and course papers to deal with at Swedish universities.

Studying at Swedish universities, some Chinese students thus need to switch their previous learning habits to fit into the new surroundings. There is a constant adaptation needed, but first of all the students have to find out what the often unwritten rules are in the classroom.

5. Living In Sweden

More stories and observation materials will be presented in order to compare the different university lives in China and Sweden in this chapter from three aspects: everyday life, food and language. Students, who studies abroad, do not only need deal with their own studies in academic field but also have to solve the issues of organizing their accommodations, food and social communication.

5.1 Different Living Conditions

In China, almost all universities and collages supply students' dormitories within the campus, and most of schools require their students to live inside the campuses rather than outside accommodations. It is necessary to sketch a picture of Chinese universities' student dormitories and Swedish universities' living conditions before comparing the studying conditions in these two countries.

Since most of Chinese universities and collages have bounding walls to separate campuses from city, thousands of Chinese universities students and postgraduates are required to live in their schools' dormitories. To some degree, many universities try to create a "small society" within their campuses in order to simplify students' studying lives. For example, students could find canteens, laundry rooms, supermarkets, the public bathhouses, and even cinemas on their campuses. Students are normally classified by genders at first, and male and female students are usually arranged into different buildings or different floors to live. Students are not able to have their individual rooms during their studying time at universities, and normally they have to share one room with other three or even more students from the same class or department. Thus, learning how to live with other students in a same room is a must that every student has to learn at Chinese universities.

This is quite different from the living condition at Swedish universities. Most Swedish universities do not have their own accommodations for their students to select. Since physical walls do not exist between Swedish universities and outside areas, the notion of a Swedish "campus" becomes different from the Chinese understanding. Even though many Swedish universities offer students' apartments and corridors for their stay in Sweden, almost all of these living areas belong to the local housing agencies

rather than one specific school. The students' apartments and corridors located at various places in different forms range from individual student corridors to four-bedroom apartments. The student corridor is probably one of the most common living ways during students' studying in Sweden. Living in one student corridor, students normally share one common kitchen with other 10 or even more students, who may come from different countries. In the common kitchen, every student has his or her own fridge space and storage cabinet. Common kitchen wares such as oven, microwave oven, knife, cooking pot, dining table, sofa, television, and so on are also provided to students by housing agencies. The good thing is that every student has his or her own individual room for living with a personal bathroom including 24 hours shower all the year around. This is a luxury in China to have an individual shower at Chinese universities' accommodations, and most students have to use the public bathhouses at their campuses or outside of their schools in China when they need to take a shower.

Chinese students do not need to deal with how to live with other roommates in one room during their studying life in Sweden, but sharing the common kitchen is a new thing to learn about.

Zhu Xiaoxi, who lived in a student corridor with other 12 students, said that she basically loved her common kitchen, where she saw it as one of the best locations to communicate with other corridor mates from different countries. However, she also pointed out that using one kitchen with other 13 people was not an easy thing to keep it neat all the time. Even though they have two students who are responsible for cleaning the kitchen each week, one or two people could really mess up the whole kitchen in few hours.

Kitchen is no longer seen as the pure notion of kitchen in Zhu's eyes. She gives one additional function to the kitchen, which is considered as a communication location. Students living in the same corridor could watch TV, drink tea or coffee, and make cakes together. The food becomes the bridge to connect different nationalities together, and the kitchen takes new functions more than just a cooking location. Not only did Chinese students give the additional function to the kitchen, most of students in Sweden also like to hold weekend parties during the night in their common

kitchens. In this sense, the kitchen is transferred into a space for holding social activities as the change of time.

Zhou Le, who has lived in one large student corridor area for two years, said that students' parties were almost everywhere during the Fridays and Saturdays in her corridor or neighbor ones. Most of the parties were hold in common kitchens rather than individual rooms.

5.2 Eating Chinese Food in Sweden

In China, students usually have to eat their three meals at canteens within their campuses. However, students and teachers are encouraged to bring their food to campuses in Sweden, since many universities provide kitchens and eating space for students and teachers in Sweden. For example, students could find micro ovens and even kitchens in libraries or teaching buildings at many Swedish schools. It is also common to see that students use these micro ovens to warm their food and eat in the eating space. Most of my informants had the experiences to bring their own food to school and ate in the dining room in libraries for saving time, since students normally could have one hour for lunch break between 12am and 1pm.

Li Man normally prepared her lunch in advance when she had lectures from morning till afternoon. She said that she did not have to think about what she should cook for the next lunch during her studies in China. However, preparing food by herself has become an additional and new thing that she has to think about and to conduct almost every day except studying when coming to study in Sweden.

“The new thing”, which Li has to think about every day, becomes her new daily practices after moving from China to Sweden. In the book *The Design of Everyday Life*, Shove, Watson, Hand and Ingram (2007) states the dynamic relationship between having and doing through the case of the “Restless Kitchen”. They illustrate a rather complicated figure to present the transition from the current practice to the future ones. They argue that there is a time line from the past, the present to the future, and the current practice is “organized by existing materials, and by prior modes of doing, forms of know-how, traditions, skills, etc” (p.35). Future practice is the

“conjunction of future materials and future modes of doing” (p.35). Both current and future practice is “shaped both by the past and by anticipations of the future” (p.36). In my study, I want to apply this approach to investigate the relationship of Chinese students’ eating habit in China and Sweden, and the “current practice” is considered as a relative concept of “future practice”.

I argue that informants’ eating habits in China are their past practices, and Chinese students’ new eating habits at Swedish universities are their current practices. Before coming to Sweden, Chinese students used to shop prepared food at schools’ canteens, because schools’ dormitories did not supply kitchen for students to cook, and eating at schools’ canteens was seen as a tradition. In another word, what Chinese students were eating at Chinese universities was organized by what was made available, and by the students’ eating tradition at Chinese schools. When Chinese students came to Sweden, the living conditions and school facilities had changed and became different from their previous experiences. Having the “new” common kitchens in their living space, micro ovens in libraries, and available eating space on campuses brought changes and new challenges to their previous eating habits at universities.

In Sweden, universities normally also contains canteens, but they mainly provide simple lunch rather than breakfast or supper to students. The most common food that all canteens offer are pasta, sandwiches, or few kinds of meat such as beef, pork and chicken with potatoes in Sweden. Thus, most Chinese students who are studying in Sweden normally shop their food from supermarket and cook for themselves. Even though the location has been changed from China to Sweden, Chinese students’ more than 20 years’ eating taste cannot be changed in a day. Shove, Watson, Hand and Ingram (2007), discuss the relation between “having” and “doing” and how the materials configuration shape and change people’s daily practice in kitchen. They argues that there are three routes by which persons might move from current practice to future practice: [1] “Realizing the future image of doing demands the acquisition of new materials” (p. 35) to achieve future practice; [2] Current practice and future practice are pretty much the same; [3] In which achieving future practice does not “require the acquisition of any more materials but involves making different use of what already exists, or doing things differently” (p. 36). In this sense, many Chinese students’ eating taste is pretty much the same in different countries. That is one of the

reasons why I found most of my informants usually cooked at home rather than eating outside or schools' canteens through my interviews.

Huang Lei said that eating became one of the big issues that she had to think about when moving to Sweden. As a Chinese student, she used to eat rice as their main food with some dishes such as fired vegetables or meat as her lunch, but she cannot find them at any restaurant in Sweden, and the Swedish food are so different from Chinese dishes. She said that she could not eat Swedish food for a whole week, and she could not understand how her Swedish neighbors could eat bread, butter, cheese and pasta all the time. She preferred to use her chopsticks to eat rice and noodles to fit her Chinese taste.



Photo 1: Chinese Dinner in Sweden. Photographer by Yan Xiaolu.

Eating Swedish food and tasting Chinese food is to experience two different categories of food. Eating, which is a central to sustenance of everyday life, is no longer referred to simply taking food and swallowing into a mouth machine. Eating is a daily practice that brings new cultural meanings to people, locations and situations. "Recent developments in cultural studies stress the relationship of food and eating to individual, local and global identities (Martin, 2003, P159)". As Alspeth Probyn

(2000) has argued, “as individuals, we eat into culture connecting with primary, natural, necessary acts, and we consume and ingest our identities. In some cases, there is a direct equation between eating and being, and in mundane way we also shift the lines that connect what we eat with who we are”. In Huang’s opinion, the rice here was no longer recognized as a kind of main food, and chopsticks’ function was no longer considered as a kind of eating tools. The concrete objects were now classified as symbolic materials for “Chinese way”, “Chinese food” and “Chinese taste” in the Swedish context. Although the rice students could shop in Swedish supermarket was probably not produced in China, the definition of the rice in this special geographic setting was connected to Chinese students’ home country and their eating culture. The food what students eat becomes a part of students’ identities as Chinese.

Living in one student corridor for almost two years, I have made many friends with my corridor mates who come from different countries such as Sweden, Finland, Iran, Italy, Germany, Spain and Lithuania. The common kitchen is the location where we usually gather together, and eating is one of the essential reasons why we appear there. Cooking for myself becomes a boring thing, since I always repeat my own simple and fast cooking recipes. For example, I frequently repeat the actions such as boiling some water in a pot, pouring in egg noodles, some other vegetables, and several meatballs in the boiled water for 10 minutes, and adding species such as salt, vinegar, and sugar into my noodles. In fact, I have no idea how to classify where this recipe comes from, but two Lithuanian girls and an Italian boy in my corridor have considered this noodle meal as the “Chinese noodle”, “Chinese food”, and “Chinese taste”. The different understanding of the same food reveals that food could be defined and classified in diverse ways related to people’s cultural backgrounds.

Roland Barthes (1961) suggests that “the whole world and its social environment is present in and signified by food. Food is a sign that produces meanings about the values of power and differences”. Mary Douglas (1975) used this metaphor in her study of British food and the calendar constitution of the meal. The calendar of eating reveals how meals are ordered through a scale of important through breakfast to supper, Monday to Sunday, Christmas to funeral. The analysis reveals that the meal is a physical event that classifies social and cultural boundaries, highlighting not only what constitutes food, but also how and where we eat it. This could be integrated to

understand the rituals that Chinese students hold in their special festivals such as the Spring Festival.

Zhou Le said that eating typical Chinese food was not easy in Sweden, since she could not find special species and food in normal supermarkets. For example, when she wanted to eat hot pot in Sweden, she had to buy the typical source from a Chinese store that was located far away from her city. Thus, she could only eat hot pot during some special occasions such as Chinese spring festivals, or friend's birthday. She celebrated the traditional festival together with her Chinese friends, and eating typical Chinese food such as hot pot or dumplings plays a vital role.

The hot pot in Zhou's mind has become one symbol of Chinese food, which has been classified as one important meal for the special events such as spring festival. If letting one Swedish or foreign students to eat the hot pot in one spring festival without knowing the background information, they probably will just remember the meal as a special Chinese food. For Zhou and her Chinese friends, eating hot pot in Sweden means more than the food itself, and could refer to something that connects them close to their culture and home country. To some degree, the meals of special days are so much connected to the emotions that are produced by the reflections on the time, the surrounding, and so on. Even such simple elements could produce feelings of homesickness, and eating a special dish becomes an emotional thing.

In the book *Handbook of Organizational Routines*, Markus C. Becker (2008) defines that "a routine is a generative structure of capacity within an organization, and routines are organizational dispositions to energize conditional patterns of behavior within an organized group of individuals, involving sequential responses to cues"(p. 25). Routines relate to organizations, and habits are connected with individuals. In this sense, celebrating Chinese traditional festivals in Sweden means that Chinese students still keep their habits and recreate their traditional routines. For instance, in China, people have lots of things need to prepare and customs to follow for celebrating Chinese traditional spring festival. For example, every family will clean their houses in order to sweep the dust. The "dust" in Chinese is "chen" (尘) that means old and past. Thus, clean the dust before the festival means sweep away the

bad luck in the past year. On the Chinese New Year's Eve, there is a tradition of staying up late, and every family will prepare a New Year dinner which is called "nian ye fan" (年夜饭) in Chinese. Making dumplings becomes a routine that almost every family has to prepare for "nian ye fan". Because of dumpling's shape is like gold ingot from ancient China, eating them means that people wish for money and treasures in the New Year. In addition, setting the firecracker is an important activity on the New Year's Eve for welcoming a prosperous New Year, since people use the sound of burning bamboo tubes to scare away wild animals and evil spirits in ancient China. These customs are the routines that almost every family follows to celebrate the New Year in China.

Zhou Le and her friends tried to keep some of the routines such as cooking dumplings and gathering with friends on the Eve to welcome their New Year in Sweden. Although that is impossible to find firecrackers in Sweden, they bought sparklers in substitution for firecrackers to welcome a prosperous New Year. In this case, Zhou Le and her friends are not only celebrating their own festivals, but also creating Chinese New Year's "routines" and trying to keep their traditional ones in Sweden.



Photo 2: Chinese New Year Eve in Sweden. Collected from Wang You.

According to my informants' narratives and my personal experiences, students' everyday routines had been also changed by the different living conditions and timetables. For instance, many Chinese universities offers breakfast between 6am to 9am in the morning, so students are encouraged to get up before 9'o clock for taking breakfast before lectures.

Huang Lei said that her Chinese universities offered studying rooms on their campus during the evening till 10pm, so she usually came to her dormitory around 10pm after self-studying time. Her school used to interrupt their dormitory's electricity around 11pm in order to control students' sack time. Thus, she had to wash up before 11pm, and she normally spent the one hour between 10pm and 11pm in preparing for sleep every day.

Huang had to arrange her daily timetable to fit these fixed rules at her Chinese universities, and the repeating behaviors had become a daily routine that Huang had to follow. However, the fixed schedule of eating and sleeping do not exist at Swedish universities. Therefore, students have more freedom to organize their studying timetable. In this sense, students' daily routine in Sweden could become different from their previous ones in China.

5.3 “Zero” Language Barriers

Sweden has their own language Swedish as their first language, but English as a second language has been widely utilized within the society. For instance, many programs are offered in English in Swedish higher education. Most of international students could use English as their communication language during their studying lives in Sweden, since students are not required to prove their Swedish language capabilities when applying for their studies in Sweden. Living in Sweden, is that necessary to learn Swedish? According to my 10 informants' information, nearly all of them have zero knowledge of Swedish.

Du Wu, who has been studied in Sweden for two years, has not learned any Swedish, because she thought that English is enough for her to study in Sweden.

Since her program's studying language is English, her professors and classmates all speak English during her studying period. At libraries, receptions, and canteens, she always could find someone to help her in English. Thus, Du Wu thinks that there is no need to study the local language during her studying period in Sweden.

It seems true that there is no need for international students to worry about knowing nothing about the local language when studying at Swedish universities. Since almost all the information is presented both in Swedish and English on campuses. However, studying in Sweden, students are not locked within universities, and they have to shop food, take the train, go to bank, and deal with many other issues with local people from outside of universities. In fact, most Swedish people have good knowledge in English, and it is hard to find someone do not speak English in Sweden. For example, bus drivers, supermarkets' cashiers, and conductors on the train could communicate with customers in English well. However, food's labels in supermarkets and indicator boards in the trains are only shown in Swedish rather than English. In this sense, the language could become a problematic factor that brings difficulties to these international students at beginning who have zero knowledge in Swedish language.

Zhou Le found that was not easy for her to figure out the price of some goods such as vegetables. She understood what kg meant, since kilogram is an international measuring unit. However, she felt confused about a common Swedish word "st", which widely was used on the food's labels in the supermarket. She did not ask for the workers in the market, because she felt embarrassing to ask such a simple question. The online translators helped her to understand the meaning of the word, and that is also a way that she dealt with her confusions when shopping food. It was also a moment when Zhou realized her location and studying country. Zhou also noticed there were barriers existing during her daily lives in Sweden.

I still could remember how nervous I was on my first journey from Stockholm to Karlskrona by train. One reason was that I had to transfer twice during the night with more than 30kg luggage; the second reason was that the indicator boards and the announcements on the train were only in Swedish, which I did not understand at all.

Thus, I had to check my ticket information with the conductor before taking the train and on the train. Even though the journey was not short and took me another ten hours after eleven hours fly from Beijing to Stockholm, I finally managed to reach my destination safely. In fact, you can always find someone to help you with English in Sweden, but you are not able to get necessary information easily in all the situations.

5.4 Living with Chinese in Sweden

Chinese students study in Sweden, but many of them spend a lot of their spare time online with their Chinese relatives and friends. According to my interviews, almost all informants showed that they usually use online chatting programs to communicate with their family members and friends in China during their studying time in Sweden.

Du Wu said that she spent more time on the Internet in Sweden than in China, since she needs the Internet for studying, entertaining, communicating, etc. When she use the online chatting programs, she usually choose the appear offline function to hide her attendance in the community. She always logs into the programs in her spare time at her own room, because she wants to inform herself that she is one of them, to create the feeling that she stay with her friends and family members in the same community, and to be included in the group.

In fact, Du uses the Internet to construct the sense of belonging, which connects her families and friends with her from different geographic locations. Even though she normally appears offline when using the online chatting programs in Sweden, she could feel that she still lives with them and belong to the group of people in China.

Yao Yao also mentioned that she often wrote about her studying life on her blog at *Renren.com.cn*, which was a Chinese version Facebook website where users could find their previous friends and classmates and share their experiences with each other. Yao also pointed out that many of her friends and previous classmates all used this website inside and outside of their home country. For Yao Yao, she did not have enough time to report her studying situation with her parents every day because of time difference. Thus, writing down her studying experiences and posting photos on her blog became a convenient way for her to inform her parents of her studies. Her blog, only open for her parents and close

friends, was also a space where she could document her own experiences.

Most informants also mentioned that the Internet is an essential thing for them to keep contacts with teachers, classmates, family members and friends. When students move to Sweden as a foreign student at beginning, it is very significant for these students to keep contacts with their parents, relatives and friends in their home countries. In fact, the oversea phone calls from Sweden to China are not cheap at all, which could cost around 25 Swedish kronas per minute. Thus, most Chinese students prefer to use the online low cost and even free chatting programs such as Messengers and Skype as their long-term communication tools to contact their families at home countries.

Zhou Le, who studied in Sweden for more than two years, said that she usually spends lots of her time studying in libraries and laboratories from Monday to Friday. However, she could be able to reach the internet easily from the libraries and laboratories to her living place, and it makes her life much easier to getting contact with her families in order to let her parents to know more about her studying and living situations in Sweden. She also said that she tried her best to keep an online video chat to contact her parents on every Sunday's afternoon, which has become one vital routine for her. In her spare time during the working days, she also uses Skpye to communicate with her parents in order to make sure they are well in China and also let them know her situations.

During my own studying period in Sweden, the Internet is my main communication tool to keep communication with families and friends in China. Before starting my oversea studying journey in 2005, I had always lived in the same city with my parents and spent almost of time living together with my parents. That is why they would become worried about me easily, if I did not give them a phone call for more than three days. Thus, in order to let my parents to acquaint with my near-term condition I always try my best to give them a short routine phone call.

Besides, the Internet as a vital media takes the irreplaceable function to sharing the universities' information between students and teachers. For example, students are able to observe their course information and schedules from their university's website from any angle of the world at twenty-four hours. In most of Swedish universities,

libraries do not offer printed books to their students but also electronic versions, so having the internet could make sure that students have accesses to their electronic libraries all the time. In this sense, the computer is obviously a necessity for students' studying lives in Swedish universities. According to my observations, all of my informants have their own laptops to assist their studies and communications during their studying time in Sweden.

6. Conclusion

In the study of Chinese students' decision-making process and their studying lives in Sweden, I made several important findings through my interviews, observations, and my own experiences.

6.1 Sweden: Not the First Choice But the Final Decision

Sweden as one European country offers many English programs and courses in its higher education to all over the world, and attracts more and more international students to choose to study there. Many informants showed that free tuition was one of the most influential "pull" factors that attract Chinese students to choose Sweden during interviews. However, the fact is that from 2011 tuition will not be free for students from non-European countries. Obviously, this change could affect Chinese students' choices of choosing their oversea studying destination to some degree, but tuition free was not the only reason for these students to study at Swedish universities. There are many other "pull" factors attracting Chinese students to study in Sweden that I have found through my fieldwork. These "pull" factors can be concluded as the following points:

- (1) Sweden as one of the biggest Nordic countries has the most universities and covers the largest academic areas in Scandinavia, so it provides the more choices for students who are interested to study in Northern Europe.
- (2) Even though Swedish is the official language in Sweden, English is widely utilized as tuition language in its higher education and people's daily lives. Compared with other European countries, Sweden shows its warmer welcome to international students.
- (3) Reliable application website *Studera.nu* simplifies the application processes, and provides easily accessible services and clear information for national and

international students.

- (4) Swedish universities' international and diverse studying environment also attracts more and more Chinese students.
- (5) These students' friends and classmates who had been studied in Sweden had given them more detailed and direct information of Swedish universities. The recommendations by friends and previous classmates influenced students' choice of selecting one studying destination to a large extent.

After deciding to study in Sweden, students have to choose the type of school and programs. According to my interviews and personal experiences, many Chinese students and parents pay more attentions to select the types of institution and to search schools' world rankings rather than programs' teaching contents and forms. In this sense, students could encounter more difficulties during their studying abroad, since knowing what and how to study in a program or a course is necessary for students to complete their education abroad. If the programs and courses that are far from students' previous studying background, it could be very problematic to handle in an oversea studying situation. Thus, I would suggest that selecting a suitable program is more important for students and should be considered before choosing the types of institution.

6.2 To Be “Good” is Different

There are different standards to measure how good a student is in Sweden and China. I found that students did not need to dress in a specific way to obey certain regulations when studying at Swedish universities, and students could eat snacks during lectures in Sweden, which was not allowed at Chinese schools. Thus, the definition “good” does not mean the same thing for Swedish and Chinese.

At Chinese schools, there are concrete rules to regulate students' clothes, dresses and behaviors on campus, so obeying these rules are seen as the ways that every good student should do. However, students could wear make-up to classrooms from even middle school in Sweden, so universities students have more freedom to choose their preferred dressing styles.

To be a good student in China, students have to put more efforts on passing the exams with good grades in the end of a course, since the written exam is the most used form to evaluate students' studies at Chinese schools. However, Swedish schools encourage students to work in groups, to do presentations in seminars, and to write down your own arguments by drawing on course literatures. In this sense, to be a good student in Sweden, students have to put more efforts on study by themselves, to work well with group members, to make enough book notes, to present your ideas clearly, and to have good argument with sufficient references, discussions, and analysis. Therefore, to be "good" is different at Swedish and Chinese schools.

6.3 The Same Student Identity with Diverse Studying Experiences

Even though informants still had the same identity as students, but the changes of studying country and school brought them different studying experiences and new habits in terms of eating and living issues. In China, students need to share a room with other classmates and to buy their three meals at schools' canteens. However, studying in Sweden, these informants have one more adjective word before their identity that is Chinese. Studying in Sweden, Chinese students have to learn how to live in Sweden as a student, to handle new issues such as arranging daily meals, living with international corridor mates, and so on. Creating new routines such as new ways for celebrating Chinese New Year in Sweden is seen as the way to carry on traditions abroad.

6.4 Indications of Further Researches

Sweden government will charge non-Europeans tuition fee to get the higher education from 2010, which may influence oversea students' number of choosing Sweden as their studying abroad destination to some extent. However, the peaceful, friendly and advanced researching environment will still grasp students' interests. This study will be useful to understand Chinese students' decision-making process of choosing Sweden universities, to hear Chinese students' needs, comments, and difficulties about Swedish higher education, and to see their real studying lives in Sweden from different locations.

Due to the limitation of this project's schedule, I chose Lund University as the only institution to find my informants. Thus, further research could be carried out in

diverse Swedish universities if time allowed. Charging the tuition fee in Swedish higher education do not only influence Chinese students but also many other countries' students outside of European Union. Therefore, this study could serve as one sample to conduct other applied cultural analyses of other countries' students' decision-making processes and studying lives in Sweden.

7. References

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8. Footnotes

¹ The data is collected from this URL: <http://www.liuxuehome.com/staticnews/28807.html>

² The data is collected from this URL: <http://edu.sina.com.cn/1/2010-03-12/1642186198.shtml>

³

⁴ The data is collected from this URL: <http://edu.sina.com.cn/1/2010-03-12/1642186198.shtml>

⁵ It is written by Laozi , who is a philosopher of ancient China and a central figure in Daoism.

⁶ The data is collected from the URL: <http://edu.sina.com.cn/1/2010-03-12/1642186198.shtml>

⁷ The data is collected from the URL: <http://edu.sina.com.cn/1/2010-03-12/1642186198.shtml>

⁸ Kong Rong Shares Pears' story:

In ancient China, Kong Rong was a smart boy who can recite many poems when he was only four years old, but he became well known for his respect and love for his brothers. He had four older brothers and one younger brother. One day, his father bought some pears home, and let him make the first choice. Kong Rong selected the smallest one. When his father asked why he took the smallest one, he answered, "Because I am a younger brother. The biggest one should leave for my eldest brother." His father asked again, "But you have one younger brother, and you are older than him." Kong Rong replied: "Yes I am older than he and should take care of him, so I should leave the bigger ones for him." On hearing these words, the father was greatly satisfied and smiled happily.

⁹ "Hej" is Swedish and means "hello" or "hi" in English.