Communication between cultures: West meets East

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Abstract

This paper analyzes how cultural differences affect level of satisfaction of information provided by the organization to the new entry. In order to get the best results I have chosen to analyze international students from China level of satisfaction of information provided by Aarhus University. Aarhus University was chosen. Because it is one of the biggest universities in Denmark and it was growing number of international students every year. International students were chosen from China, because Chinese culture differs in so many ways when compared to Danish. Due to the fact that chosen method for this thesis is qualitative method, the appropriate technique was chosen. To be more precise, technique that was chosen was interviews. From the literature review I have found out that this technique will be most suitable, because it would help to get all information needed.

The results were provided by five interviewees, which gave very interesting and useful points. The information collected from interviews helped to answer problem statement. The main issue that came up from interviews was language, most of the participants found it hard to adapt to the Danish society without the language. This also affected communication with the representatives of Aarhus University. All of the interviewees concluded that cultural differences affected their expectations not only about the information, but also about people and communication. At first their expectations were high, and most of the times they were not met, after some time, when interviewees got familiar with the culture they adapted their expectations and most of the cases they were met.

This bachelor thesis was focusing upon the cultural differences and how those differences affect satisfaction of information. In the conclusion it is evident that cultural differences have a great impact on satisfactions and can make even negative attitude towards the new culture. However, as it is visible from the findings, that it is very important for new entry to get familiar with the new culture, by doing
this new entry will get familiar with the culture and will be able to set expectations that can be met.

Key words: Culture, communication, expectations, differences.
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Introduction

“Today, effective global leaders believe that cultural differences, if well managed, are resources, not handicaps. All business ultimately comes down to transactions or interactions between individuals. The success of the transaction depends almost entirely on how well managers understand each other” (Moran, Harris, & Moran, 2007).

With the change from local to a globalized economy that has occurred in the last 50 years, the interest in understanding the complexities when individuals enter a new culture become evident for organizations. Nowadays it is more likelihood that people will move to study or work abroad in their lifetime. For example, according to “Danmarks Statistik” in 2010 there were more than 18 thousand international students at higher education in Denmark, a 34% increase from 2008. Thus, cultural differences are very important when it comes to international students/employees entering new culture. Some of the research that has explored why expatriates (i.e. anyone living in a country different that their own for the purpose of work or study) return home early from abroad suggest that personal and family adjustment problems account for 37% of the reasons for returning (Insch & Daniels, 2002).

Research suggests that there are different stages that individuals go through when individual arrives to new culture (Oberg, 1960) The Honeymoon stage – this is the first stage when individual arrives to new culture. During this stage individual is excited and curious about new culture. Individual feels energetic and enthusiastic. The second stage, the culture shock stage represents the time in which the individual focuses on differences between home culture and the new culture and the conflicts that arise from the differences. During this time it is likely for conflicts to arise due to perceived differences. Some examples include: talking in foreign language, how to interact with authorities, differences in educational system, and difficulties interacting with people, just to mention a few. These differences are often accompanied with feelings of anxiety, homesickness, confusion, anger, and feeling insecure. The recovery stage occurs after some time has been spent in new culture. During this time, individuals solve some of the conflicts that arose during the culture
shock stage and sense of appreciation recovers. By this time the individual has learned more about the new culture and has better understanding of internal and external resources, which help to deal with conflicts. Finally, the adaptation stage represents the time in which individual develops an understanding of similarities and differences between home country and the new culture. During this time most of the people become bicultural. This means that the individuals are able to value both cultures and learn to include both cultures in their life. During this stage individuals start to feel confident, mature, flexible and tolerant.

Although there is research exploring how individuals adapt to a new culture, there is less exploration of how students adapt to a new culture when they study abroad. In particular, how their culture of origin affects the expectations that they have regarding the information that the university should provide to make it easier for them to succeed in the new context. This study focuses on understanding international students in Denmark and, in particular, international students at Aarhus University. As can be seen in Appendix 1 of this document, 71% of international students in Denmark come from Scandinavia or Europe, 14% of the students come from Asia, and 15% come from the rest of the world. In this paper I argue, that culture affects the expectations that international students have about the information that the university needs to provide to them so they can succeed in the new context. Therefore, organisations need to take these expectations into account when developing their communication efforts with international students.

With the previous rationale in mind, this Bachelor’s Thesis will be outlined the following way. First I will explain what is culture in general and how it has been studied. I will then turn to explain how culture influences expectations and why it matters, when understanding how students interpret communication efforts from the university. Following this an explanation of how cultural differences affect the level of satisfaction with the information from the organization is provided. Then the methodology of this study is discussed followed by the results and implications of these results. For this study, I have chosen one-on-one interviews with international students at Aarhus University.
My research question is: How cultural differences affect level of satisfaction of information provided by organisation to the new entry.

Literature review

Understanding culture

According to Oxford dictionary culture is excellence of taste in arts, customs, social institutions and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group. On the other hand Shiva Naipaul says, “Culture can mean everything and therefore constantly runs the danger of meaning nothing”. So what is the culture, does it describe actions that affect people and their behaviour? What it is for sure, culture helps to rank what is important; moreover, it forms values, attitudes, and behaviour. Attitudes are people’s feelings that are based on values; therefore it is high likability that attitudes will change, this will happen because values change over the time. People’s behaviour is based on attitudes and values, all these three dimensions of culture are related, and therefore it is impossible to distinguish any of them as the fundamental one. During the years definition of culture has changed, but the essence of it stays the same, there is no culture without a man, there is no man without a culture.

Cultures are very complex and subjective. It is common understanding to think that one’s own culture is logical and “right”, and if other culture looks different, the differences often are described as illogical, negative, and even ridiculous. For example, in Aarhus University (or any other university in Denmark) it is two-way communication, this means that it is acceptable for student to disagree with the teacher and say one’s opinion, on the other hand in Shanghai University it is one-way communication, students do not have such a freedom, and it is not accepted to disagree or correct the teacher. Therefore, student who is used to say one’s opinion to the teacher can conclude that culture with one-way communication is wrong. It is high likehood that “different” and “wrong” are equal for many people when it comes to cultural differences. However, according to Hofstede (1991) the
main cultural differences among nations lie in values, thus it is very important to analyze and understand culture before making any judgements about other cultures.

**High context vs. low context**

According to anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1969) culture (is) those deep, common unstated experiences which members of a given culture share, which they communicate without knowing, and which form the backdrop against which all other events are judged. It is almost impossible to separate culture and communication; communication includes verbal and non-verbal behaviors, which are affected by the culture. There are two dimensions of culture high and low context cultures. The context of culture gives supplementary information, which is needed in order to understand the communication.

Low context culture communication relies on words, while in high context culture communication is based more on non-verbal communication. People in high context culture tend to use less written communication; it is mostly about building trust rather than signing the contracts. Furthermore, there are strong boundaries, clear roles of authority and value of different status. People in high context culture value face-to-face formal communication, and they are focused on relationships. Examples of high context cultures are China, Japan, Mexico, Brazil, and India.

People in low context culture tend to be more approachable, experience and knowledge is valued more than status or authority. It is task oriented, rather than relationships, communication is informal and direct. The structure of relationships is loose, people use wide networks, tasks are more important than relationships. To enter low context culture is relatively easy, because environment contains plenty of information, furthermore, it is fairly easy to form new relationships. Examples of low context cultures are Germany, United States, Denmark, Norway, and United Kingdom.

All cultures use both, high and low context, however, culture always have preference for one over another. Communication between high and low context people often brings impatience and irritation, this happens because people from low
context culture provide more information than it is necessary, while people from the high context culture may not provide enough information.

**Individualism and collectivism**

Collectivism stands for “society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong cohesive groups, which throughout lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestionable loyalty” (Hofstede, 1994). Collectivist cultures think more in terms of “we” rather than “I”, moreover loyalty and harmony is very valued. In collectivist culture it is not accepted to disagree with one’s opinion in public. This has to be done in person, in order to protect person from “loosing face”. Fai Ho, a Hong Kong social scientist defines “Loosing face” as: “Face is lost when the individual, either through his action or that people closely related to him, fails to meet essential requirements placed upon him by virtue of the social position he occupies.” (Hofstede, 1994) This can be compared with “self-respect” in individualistic cultures.

There is no direct confrontation in the collectivistic culture; expressions or phrases are used to express disagreement or negative attitude/statement instead of saying directly no. Direct disagreement “no” can destroy the harmony in the group. Relationships are based on trust, deep understanding of moral values, and harmony.

Individualism is the opposite of collectivism; therefore these two streams create dimensions of natural cultures. “Individualism stands for society in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his/her immediate family only” (Hofstede, 1994). Individualistic cultures are more self-centered and emphasize mostly on their individual goals. People from the individualistic culture tend to think about themselves as individuals and distinguish from other people. People prefer direct communication; they say what it is about and explain only afterwards. In individualistic culture, success is measured by the ones personal achievements rather than ones age. People emphasize on private wealth and aim to reach better job position; this can be done by climbing up hierarchy ladder. Aim is the most important and one does not care about people left
behind. In business people try to improve the connections and gain as much value as possible, this does not include building good relationship, but getting more convenience from it.

**Power distance**

According to Geert Hofstede there are five dimensions that can describe culture: Power distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation. These five dimensions help to understand and evaluate different cultures. Therefore, taking into account differences between high and low context cultures, I have chosen to describe the power distance. “Power distance is the extend to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.” (Hofstede, 1994).

Power distance measures how much culture values or not hierarchy and authority. There are two kinds of power distance: it can be either high or low. In high power distance culture authority openly demonstrates its rank, furthermore, subordinates do not get important work and cannot work without clear guidance from above. In high power distance culture it is common that subordinates take the blame if something goes wrong, therefore relationship between authority and subordinates is strictly professional. There are clear divisions between classes in the society.

In low power distance culture authority does not demonstrate its rank openly. Furthermore authority treat subordinates with the respect, and they are trusted with the important assignments. In low power distance culture blame is either shared equally or the superior accepts it, because it is his/her responsibility to manage the tasks. Relationships between superior and subordinates do not exclude socialization. There are no divisions between classes in the society.

“Intercultural communication occurs when two or more cultures interact” (Varner and Beamer, 2011). Communication between cultures is very important, because it helps to understand how people with different cultural background adapt to the new culture, perceive, and live in it. Therefore, before entering new culture it
is very important to analyze it, this will help to avoid misunderstandings, and improve the communication.

**Culture and communication**

“**Intercultural communication occurs whenever a minimum of two persons from different cultures or microcultures come together and exchange verbal and nonverbal symbols**” (Neuliep, 2006).

Culture and communication are bonded with very strong and intimate connection. Culture is created through communication, this means that communication creates and shows cultural characteristics; it can be roles, rules, laws, rituals and etc. However, this does not mean that people create culture every time they interact, but rather that culture is an outcome of many social interactions. Without the communication it would be impossible to spread the cultural characteristics through time and places. Therefore, claim can be made, that culture is shared and learned through communication, however, communication is shaped by culture as well.

According to Stella Ting-Toomey’s Face Negotiation Theory there are three dimensions that affect intercultural communication: cognitive constrains, behavior constrains, and emotional constrains.

Cognitive constrains describe the way person views the world and how new information is observed and inserted into the world. Behavior constrains explains that every culture has rules about behavior, which has impact on verbal and nonverbal communication. This includes how people are talking, if one makes eye contact with another; how close people are standing while they have the conversation; does one says exactly what one means, or talks in general and hides the meaning between the lines. These are only few examples of courtesy, which are different in various countries. Emotional constrains explain that various cultures display their emotions differently. In some cultures it is accepted to show one’s emotions while debating, one can yell, cry, show anger, anxiety, frustration, and
other feelings openly. Other cultures tend to keep their emotions hidden; only the reasonable or factual emotions are exhibited.

All these differences can lead to communication problems. People who are involved into intercultural communication have to be aware of the likehood for this kind of problems. In order to master these problems and make a successful communication people have to be aware of upcoming problems and study new culture before entering it. Shwarz suggests that communication between people from different cultures requires co-operation, which can be followed by the rules.

There are requirements for speaker and the receiver. Speaker should be coherent and comprehensible; give enough information; be relevant; produce the message that fits to the context, communicative purpose and circumstances; and assume that receiver follows the rules of communication as much as possible. On the other hand, receiver should be determine the speaker’s communication purpose; take the context and circumstances into account; pay attention to the message and be prepared to receive it; try to understand the message and provide the feedback for the speaker, in order to show for the speaker that message was understood.

In communication between cultures it is very important that speaker and receiver understand cultural differences in communication. Therefore, it is essential that those cultural differences will be taken into account and will create cultural awareness.

**Expectations**

According to Vroom’s Expectancy Theory, person decides to behave or act in a certain way, because one is motivated to select particular behavior over the other behaviors due to what one expects result of that selected behavior to be. This means that motivation for the behavior is ascertainable to the desirability of the outcome. Vroom’s theory can be easily adapted to a communication between cultures. Before entering a new culture every individual sets certain expectations that expect to be met.
“The attitudes someone has about a particular other (sub)culture or other (sub)cultures in general create expectations about experiences in interactions with different ones” (Guirdham, 2005). Furthermore, stereotypes also affect expectations that one has while interacting with others. The one, who is open to new cultures and has positive attitude towards new culture and positive stereotypes about people probably will have positive expectations about the experience, and vice-versa (Guirdham, 2005). Negative expectations can be created by the negative stereotypes and attitudes. As Guirdham claims, expectations themselves are a function of knowledge, beliefs/attitudes, stereotypes, self-conceptions, roles, prior interaction and status characteristics. Figure 1 below shows the relationship between these elements.

According to Vroom’s Expectancy Theory there are different ways to gain information about new culture. The first is called passive strategy, because one can collect information by watching TV (however this strategy might lead to over-reliance on stereotypes), or the one can observe new culture directly, but do not participate or interact with anybody. Other way to get information about new culture is the active way; questioning people from the same culture about the new culture can do this. And the third is an interactive strategy; the one meets people from the new culture and interact with them, asks questions and distinguishes

differences by self. The last strategy seems to work the best, however, in order to gain precise information it is very important that members from different cultures meet under conditions, which do not increase the prejudice.

**Expectancy Violations Theory**

The founder of this theory is Judee Burgoon; the main point of this theory is expectancies. Expectancy in the communication sense denotes an enduring pattern of anticipated behavior (Burgoon, 1993). Expectancies can be divided into two groups; the first group is general expectancies – it is adapted to all members of society, all norms are grounded by societal norms, which is called typical and appropriate behavior. The second group is particularized expectancies – it is referred to an individual, the individual incorporate knowledge into one’s interaction style, which can differ from the social norms. These expectancies create primary interaction structure that should be active in all human interactions. The significant role of expectancies in expectancy violations theory is predicting and explaining social interaction phenomena.

Expectancies of communication emerge from three different aspects: communicator, relationship, and context characteristics. Characteristics of communicator are fundamental features of the person, such as communication style, physical appearance, personality, demographics, etc.; these features describe how one will interact with others. Characteristics of relationship describe the relationship between communicators, such as status equality, liking, attraction, similarity, and differences between them. Context characteristics describe environment and definitions of situation that communicators are in, it can be privacy, formality, or task/relationship orientation, and these characteristics help to define certain communication behaviors.

Those three factors indicate expectancies of a given culture. For example, in all cultures there are certain expectancies about attraction to opposite sex and pleasant interaction. In Western cultures it is acceptable to show sympathy to opposite sex in public, or make some flirtatious routine, however the same behavior
would not be accepted from the same sex acquaintance or the one, who is unattractive.

Expectancies help to describe and shape interpersonal interactions. “People plan and adapt their own communication according to the kind of encounter and communication style they anticipate from another actor” (Burgoon, 1993). Expectancies influence the way people interact, impression of the other person, and outcome of interactions; however, violations of expectations shift the attention to the violator and the meanings of violation itself (Burgoon, 1993).

**Intercultural Learning Model**

“*Culture is learnable; all cultures are equally valid in the way they organize and explain human experience; and the interculturally competent communicator acknowledges that cultural bias always exists*” (Beamer, 1992).

This model provides five levels of learning: acknowledging diversity; organizing information according the stereotypes; posing questions to challenge the stereotypes; analyze communication episodes; and generate new culture messages. This model gives the ability to decode signs that come from members of new culture and to encode the message. The process of the model can be described as cyclical, because all patterns are bonded by cyclical patterns. This indicates that none of the level can be left behind after it was achieved. Therefore, variety of cultural differences can be experienced, even though one becomes familiar with the new culture, there will be constantly new differences to discover.

The first level of the model is acknowledging diversity, in this level one learns to be aware of the new culture and notice the differences. At this point the one learns that unknown and unrecognizable signs were sent. When one becomes open for new signs, “definitions of basic concepts for discussing diversity are important, such as bias, stereotype, value, and culture” (Beamer, 1993). The most obvious difference between cultures is linguistic. Learning a new language is very valuable,
however, this does mean that by learning a language one will become expert of a new culture.

The second level of the model is organizing information according to stereotypes; in this level one learns certain characteristics that help to differentiate new culture and its members. Consequently, Danes do not like any kind of interaction, usually Danes do not stop and help, but if you ask for a help they will do it very willingly, they have a forward thinking sense about gender equality; Chinese are very traditional and conservative, they do not express themselves, they emphasize a lot about women’s purity, and most of them do not have beliefs. These examples are just few stereotypes of two different cultures. Stereotypes can be helpful and accurate to some degree, however it is very important to remember that stereotypes are only limited insights, displaying only a small part of the entire culture. Getting to know stereotypes of the culture does not mean that one understands particular culture. Therefore it is significant that one goes beyond the stereotypes and keeps finding out new facts about the culture.

The third level of the model is posing question to challenge the stereotypes, in this level one starts challenging the stereotypes. One starts to ask questions about new culture in order to confirm or deny the stereotypes. Questions can be about how members of the culture can describe their relationship to other people, how they position themselves in the society, organization. Questions will help to reveal the attitudes that are important; it will give information about status and role, obligations in relationships, responsibility, and etc. “Since cognitive understanding of another culture may be the key of intercultural communication competence, this is the strategy for increasing knowledge of a particular culture” (Beamer, 1993).

At this point model shifts the attention to the cultural differences in behavior and attitudes that affect intercultural communication. It presents five areas of value orientation: Thinking and Knowing, Doing and Achieving, The Self, Social Organization, and the Universe.
The first category of questions discusses how members of the new culture receive, arrange, and communicate information about the culture. Questions are: does knowing come from concepts or experience; does learning come from asking questions or mastering received wisdom; how do people reason. The second category is doing and achieving, this category helps to understand how members of different cultures understand their actions and achievements. Questions of this category are: is doing important or is being important; are rules to be followed or bent. The third category is the self; it helps to set the value orientations about the individual person. Questions of this category are: what is more important age or experience; how important is personal competitiveness; does one’s sex have influence for a particular job. The fourth category is social organization, this category helps to explain cultural context in the particular situations. Questions of this category are: is group membership is temporary or permanent; is social organization horizontal or hierarchical; is the authority approached directly or by using mediating link. The last category is the universe, in this category relationship between members of the culture and the universe are revealed. Questions of this category are: does man dominate nature or nature dominates man; are human or the divine powers at the center of the events; is change good or bad. One can use these questions as a guidance to see the differences between one’s own and new culture. By using these questions one can get deeper understanding of new culture and find the explanation for actions made by members of the new culture.

The fourth level of model is analyzing communication episodes. “Once the learner has actively sought to understand a culture through posing questions to challenge stereotyped categories, the understanding can be used to analyze communication episodes in actual cases” (Beamer, 1993). Those episodes can show successful, failed (in some cases both) communication. Since one has tools to analyze the episode of communication, new meanings for communication behavior will appear. At this level the vocabulary of signs of the new culture is expanded, on that account one has increased the competence in encoding and decoding intercultural messages.
The last level of the model is generating other culture messages. So far the one became interculturally competent, the one is able to encode and decode the message and respond to new culture successfully. “When communicators achieve this level of intercultural competence they are constantly evaluating messages against the repository of signs they have stored in their mental data bases” (Beamer, 1993). One becomes flexible and is able to recognize the signs and messages from the new culture, thus one is able to manipulate with the information and make connections between levels of understanding (Beamer, 1993)

Learning intercultural communication competence requires acceptance to unexpected differences from the new culture. Furthermore, it requires readiness to accept the stereotypes of the new culture. Furthermore, it includes identifying establish questions, to ask about the new culture, that will help to reveal fundamental values and meaning of the culture. Next one has to be able to analyze the communication behavior within the values of the culture. Conclusively, competence means, that one will be able to generate and respond to the messages from the new culture, and one will be able to use this competence to more than one culture.

**Methodology**

**Sample**

The practical part of this study is analysis of cultural differences and how those differences affect satisfaction of information provided by Aarhus University to its students. Analysis is based on interviews with students, who came from China, the culture that differs from Danish culture significantly. There are number of important factors which have to be taken into account and discussed.

The participants were chosen from Aarhus University, Business and Social Science, all in age range of 23-24 years old. There were no special requirements for participant’s age, however from the results it is obvious that young people tend to travel more than the older ones. All participants’ home country is China. This is very
essential for the analysis, because the objective of research is to analyze how cultural differences affect satisfaction of information provided by Aarhus University.

It was relatively hard to find people, who would be willing to give interview on their experience in Denmark, even though the number of International students increases every year, only minority of them comes from China. All of the participants are enrolled in Bachelor, Master or Exchange study lines. Students, who were interviewed, had a strong point of view about Denmark, differences between cultures and communication, thus they participated in the interview very willingly and were open to the questions. Furthermore, method of the research was attractive for the participants, because if they did not understand the question, I was able to elaborate, and explain it.

Number of students interviewed was five: one male and four females. I decided to interview 5 people, because it takes considerable amount of time to interview them, make the transcripts, analyze the data, and interpret it. Furthermore, the method of the research is qualitative, the quality matters more than the quantity.

Process

Research sample is interview guide. Interview guide is made of four sections: demographics; differences between country of origin and Denmark; expectations and satisfaction with information; and communication differences. Interview consists 24 questions in total, with sub questions, such as, “why”, “why not” in order to get deeper understanding. Questions of the interview are included to the appendixes (see Appendix 2) As I have mentioned earlier, interview is divided into four parts, this was done in order to be able to follow the flow of the interview and do not jump from one theme to another, and to keep interviewee calm and concentrated.

Interviews were made in Aarhus University, Department of Business and Social Science. For conducting interviews I have booked a classroom. Interviews were recorded and afterwards transcribed. After welcoming student to the class,
he/she was introduced to the topic, and the process of the interview. The introduction process took approximately 5 minutes. To make sure that participant feels comfortable I provided water set informal atmosphere by making a small talk before the interview, furthermore, I informed interviewee that interview would be recorded.

After the introduction I would start interview. Every interviewee had one-on-one conversation with me. Interviews included my questions and answers of the interviewee, sometimes interviewee needed broader explanation of the questions, but generally all participants understood questions and shared their experience and thoughts willingly. Each interview began with the demographics and was followed by other three sections. Some interviews took 20 minutes, and some up to 1 hour.

After the interview, I would thank for the participant’s time and efforts; by doing this I showed that I appreciated their time, dedication, and input to the research.

**Analysis**

All interviews were recorded; after I was done with all interviews I made transcripts. Since the interview was divided into four different sections different themes emerged: cultural differences between Denmark and China; expectations and satisfaction with information; and communication differences between Denmark and China.

Themes that emerged through the interview will be analyzed in order to see what are cultural differences and how those differences affect (or not) satisfaction of information provided by Aarhus University to international student from China.

**Results**

In this part of the paper, I will summarize the results of the interviews and will describe them shortly.
Demographics

All participants came from China. Age range was between 23 – 24 years old. Four females and one male. Duration of time spent in Denmark varied from 4 months to 5 years. For two of the participants this was the first time abroad, other two lived before abroad once (United Kingdom, 1 year), and for one it was forth foreign country that she was living, before she lived in Malaysia (6 months), Spain (3 months), and Poland (1 year). One of the interviewees speaks almost fluent Danish, other four know only basics of the language, such as, thank you, hello, bye, excuse me. All interviewees came to Denmark as exchange students, two of them as an exchange student and afterwards continued to the Master program. So far, all five participants are satisfied with their experience in Denmark

Differences between Denmark and China

Since all interviewees came from a different culture than Danish, they mentioned quite a lot of differences. Main differences were: food; traditions; language (also the alphabet); mentality; habits, way of communication; distance between employer and employee (student and teacher); attitude to life; living pace; way of thinking in a way that people tend to keep their own opinions after listening to another; people are very open-minded; the educational system; weather; view of ocean. All of these differences did not affect their communication with other students, because mostly all of them interacted with international or Chinese students.

All of the participants mentioned that they had problems communicating with Danish students, because they seemed to be distant and passive in sense of communicating with foreigners.

Expectations and satisfaction with information

Before coming to Denmark some of the interviewees collected information on the Internet, some of them tried to get into the contact with people, who already have been to Denmark. All of them had to do some paper work (visa) and save money for the trip. The information that was given before coming to Denmark was
basic study programme, and about the accommodation, however, some of the interviewees expected more information about living expenses, more information about the studies and some tips before coming to Denmark. Two interviewees were not satisfied with the information and expected more information from the Aarhus University before the arrival to Denmark.

After the arrival to Denmark, most of the interviewees still get the information from Aarhus University. The information is about changes in the studies (if any), exams, holidays, internships, academic workshops, and events. However, some of the students feel like they are lacking of information.

**Communication differences**

Taking into account communication differences, Denmark differentiates from China in many ways. All of the interviewees mentioned that it was hard to hug somebody when meet or shake hands. Furthermore, all of them agreed that in China they have fewer gestures; people are more polite. All of the participants agreed that Danes do not like if the person stands too close. One of the participants said that it is very hard to compare the communication between Denmark and China, because languages are so different. Communication in the university is very different as well, teachers do not differentiate themselves among the students; chat with them during the breaks; do not respond when called “professor”, prefer to be called by first name. All these differences affected interviewees communication with other people in Denmark, they had to get use to shake hands, be hugged, and use informal communication in the university with teachers.

All of the participants agreed that it is very important to learn language in order to adapt to the society. One of the interviewees speaks good Danish, and she agreed that learning language and using it helped her a lot. Some of the participants thought that language is not necessary in order to adapt to the society, since all Danes speak English.

All interviewees were very satisfied with their experience in Denmark and had some recommendations for someone, who is planning to come to Denmark. All
of the participants recommended to get familiar with the weather, prices, main topics of the newspapers, learn basic phrases in Danish (such as, hi, hello, goodbye, thank you, excuse me). Furthermore, interviewees encouraged to be open-minded, stay positive and open to new experience.

**Discussion**

In this part of the paper I will compare theories and findings of the interviews to see what are the main cultural differences between Denmark and China, and how those differences affect satisfaction of information provided by Aarhus University.

**High context vs. low context**

Communication consists much more than words. When people speak words are accompanied with gestures, eye contact, facial expressions and posture. Experts say that in communication only 7% is what people say, 38% is how people say it, and 55% is body language. This shows that 93% of communication is nonverbal.

Nonverbal communication is different in various countries. Denmark is considered as low context culture, this means that Danes tend to put emphasis on verbal communication rather than nonverbal. In Danish culture it is not vitally important for two people to create a relationship in order to understand what they are saying to each other. When it comes to the personal space, the average distance for a Danish person is approximately an arm’s length or further. Danes like to keep their personal space and they respect personal space of others, which includes no informal touching.

Danes also follow monochromic time, which is “having a laser-sharp, intense, narrow focus on one thing at the time” (Hofstede, 2010). Therefore, Danes tend to complete one task at the time as well as stick to the precise schedule. Danes do not like to have multiple tasks at one time and delay deadlines.

China is considered as a high context culture; this means that Chinese people put emphasis on nonverbal communication, such as facial expressions, eye contact,
gestures, and body language. In Chinese society it is very important to form a relationship between two people in order to understand the real meaning of the message. In every day interactions, Chinese tend to stand very close to another.

Body language of Chinese people can be very misleading; they like to use nonverbal means of communication, which can be implied meanings, nonverbal cues, indirect statements, and symbolic language. Furthermore, Chinese are considerably comfortable with silence during the conversation. Since high context comes from a long history among group members there is no need to repeat the information, which was built over time. Therefore, people, who join group latter, have problems in terms of getting information, because other group members assume that there is shared understanding of knowledge among the members. Nonverbal communication is very important in terms of face and social harmony. In order not to offend person or destroy the harmony Chinese will turn to indirect and nonverbal signs.

Chinese follow polychromic time, which “has open focus on several aspects of the present moment” (Hofstede, 2010). This means, that Chinese are able to concentrate on more that one task at the time, however this also means that Chinese do not follow strict schedule and often do not meet deadlines. Leaving open questions often causes this; Chinese managers will never push their employees to get “yes” or “no” question. Instead of directness, Chinese are more likely to be polite but vague.

For Chinese students it is hard to adapt to Danish society. According to the findings of the interviews it is evident that all of the participants had to learn how to communicate to teachers and the representatives of Aarhus University. All of them had to learn to use direct communication, which was hard, since up till now they were used to communicate indirectly and by using a lot of nonverbal signs. Few of them up till now have difficulties to call their teachers by name or to disagree with them. In terms of deadlines some of Chinese students tend to have problems as well. In China it is acceptable not to meet the deadline, therefore sometimes students do
not deliver their assignments on time. This is not the case in Danish society; Aarhus University has strict deadlines, which cannot be bent.

**Power distance**

Professor Geert Hofstede conducted studies, which help to analyse culture. He described five dimensions that represent different cultural values. According to these studies culture exist only by the comparison. To compare Danish and Chinese cultures I will describe two of the dimensions: power distance, and individualism versus collectivism.

Power distance copes with the fact that people are not equal in the society, therefore it helps to demonstrate attitude of the culture to those inequalities among people. “Power distance is the extend to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 2010). To illustrate fundamental differences between Denmark and China see the figure² bellow. Even though all five dimensions are very important I have chosen to describe first two: power distance index (PDI) and individualism (INV), because those dimensions fit the best with my research question.

² Source: http://geert-hofstede.com/denmark.html
Power distance index of Denmark is 18 points; it is a very low point, which means that Danes do not lead, the employer coaches the employee, and employee has full autonomy. So far, Denmark has the highest autonomy rank among European Union countries. Danes believe in independency, equal rights, and access to superiors that is able manage and empower the employees. Power is decentralized; therefore everybody counts on experience rather than age. To be respectful among Danes it is important to show hands-on experience. Working atmosphere in Denmark is very informal, with direct communication, and people are called by their first names.

Power distance index of China is 80 points; it is a relatively high point, which means that Chinese society believes in inequalities among people. The employer and employee relationships are polarized; therefore employee has no right to defence against power abuse from employer. Power is centralized; place on the hierarchical ladder is more important than the experience in the field. Individuals of the society are influenced by the authority, and sanctions, and “are in general optimistic about people’s capacity for leadership and initiative” (Hofstede, 2010). People in this kind of society cannot have desires above their rank. Working atmosphere in China is very formal, with indirect communication; people are called by their last names.

From the findings it is clear that Denmark and China differ in terms of power distance. Also taking into account findings of the interviews it is obvious that students, who came from China to study in Denmark, had problems calling teachers by their first names, and using informal and direct communication with Aarhus University representatives. From the findings of the research it is evident that Aarhus University prefers informal and direct communication. Majority of the teachers prefer to be called by their first names, university representatives and teachers use informal and direct communication when talking with the students.

**Individualism vs. collectivism**

This dimension shows the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its member (Hofstede, 2010). This dimension deals whether people refer to
themselves as “I” or “we” in the society. Members of individualistic societies look after themselves and their direct family only. Members of collectivistic societies belong to the group and take care of that group in exchange for loyalty.

Denmark, which has score of 74 points, is an individualistic society. This means that individuals of the society are expected to take care of themselves and their direct family only; furthermore, they have loosely-knit social framework. In terms of doing business with Danes, it is fairly easy to start doing business; this is because there is no need for small talk and no need for building relationships. Danes prefer to use a very direct communication.

China, which has score of 20 points, is a collectivistic society. This means that individuals of the society belong to groups and act in the interest of the group, instead of themselves or their direct family. Group decision affects considerations of hiring and promotions within the group. Employee commitment to the organization (but not to people in the organization) is relatively low. Relationships with people from out-group are cold or even hostile. Personal relationships are more important than tasks or organization.

Taking into account that Denmark is individualistic society it is comprehensible that representatives of Aarhus University have loosely-knit social framework. This means that students do not have any difficulties to interact either with teachers nor representatives of university. However, this social framework of Aarhus University is hard to adapt for students from China, which is a collectivistic society. This is because, students are used to call teachers by their last names, use indirect communication, and start to communicate with the lowest-ranking representatives of the university.

**Culture and communication**

Taking into account theories about culture and communication, and findings of the interviews it is noticeable that culture has a great impact in communication. Moreover, these cultural differences affected level of satisfaction of information, which was provided by Aarhus University. Even though, China is a high context
culture and it is common to “hide” meaning of the message between the lines, most of Chinese students in Aarhus University were lacking information about the studies. Information that was received in the beginning was not enough, and new students were expecting more information along with the studies. Furthermore, some of the participants were expecting more information about accommodation, living expenses. All of participants said that since they were going to a low context culture, which is reasonably easy to enter and adapt, had problems communicating getting information.

Stella Ting-Toomey’s Face Negotiation Theory can explain unsuccessful (in some cases) communication between Chinese students and Aarhus University. According to this theory there are three dimensions that can affect intercultural communication: cognitive, behavior, and emotional constrains. In order to explain why expectations of Chinese students were not met cognitive constrains will be taken into account. Other two constrains are not very vital when it comes to a communication between international students and Aarhus University representatives, this is because behavior and emotional constrains mostly affect every day, outside the university interactions. Denmark and China have different cognitive constrains, in Denmark it is usual to provide all information, in China it is opposite, it is common to say the meaning with the help of nonverbal signs. However when Chinese students arrived to Denmark they were expecting all information to be provided by Aarhus University, but university gave only the basic information, which meant that students had to look for further information by themselves.

Aarhus University tends to treat international students in the same manner as Danish students. University provides only necessary information, gives tips how to find information and more or less leaves them on their own. However, when it comes to international students, more information should be provided. Aarhus University has to take into account that international students come from very different cultures, with very different points of view. Those differences affect the expectations and reflect in communication. Therefore, it is essential, that university
provides all necessary information in the beginning and keeps providing information through the semester.

**Vroom’s Expectancy Theory**

According to this theory, there are three different strategies to collect information: passive, active, and interactive. Most of Chinese students before coming to Denmark to study in Aarhus University used passive and active strategies to collect information. Some of them read articles on Internet, others asked their fellow students. After the arrival students used interactive strategy to collect the information, they started to interact with other Danish, international and Chinese students, representatives of Aarhus University. Communication with people, who had different cultural backgrounds, helped the interviewees to learn and adapt to Danish society. For all of the participants the last strategy seamed to work the best, because they were already in the new culture and had the possibility to experience culture by themselves.

All of the participants had positive attitude about the experience in Denmark, therefore, they were open to differences and instead of fighting them they tried to understand and accept them. All interviewees agreed that it is very important to be open-minded when it comes to entering new culture. Open-minded students were able to experience and explore new culture without any negative expectations or attitude, which could influence experience in Denmark negatively.

**Expectancy Violations Theory**

According to this theory expectancies emerge from three different aspects: communicator, relationship, and context characteristics. In this particular case, communicator is Aarhus University; relationship is between Aarhus University representatives and international students from China; context characteristics are formal, informal, and information oriented. Aarhus University representatives send information by mail, or inform about changes in the study plan with the use of formal communication. Informal communication is used for face-to-face interactions, and for posting information on campusnet, which is a communication
platform where students get the information from the university, view schedule, write messages to teachers or other students, and etc., or other websites of Aarhus University. Communication is information oriented, because Aarhus University attempts to give all compulsory information for students.

Before coming to Denmark Chinese students had expectancies that Aarhus University will give all necessary information in order to make their stay more convenient, so they could adapt to the new culture faster. However, Aarhus University provided only the fundamental information, such as time and date when the semester starts. These expectancies were based on the assumption that Denmark is a low context culture, which provides all information needed. However, Aarhus University provided only the basic information and left international students from China to find information by themselves. Expectations of international students from China were violated, this was because Aarhus University did not meet the expectations and provided less information than expected.

Since the former expectations were not meet, international students from China had to reduce their expectations in terms of information from Aarhus University. After the arrival all of the international students from China lowered their expectations and realized that, if they are in need for additional information they have to be the ones, who will initiate the conversation with the representatives of Aarhus University.

**Intercultural learning model**

Putting findings of the interviews into the intercultural learning model will help to see how students from China understood Danish culture, and if they were able to decode the messages sent by Aarhus University representatives.

The first level of the model is acknowledging diversity. All of the participants came from China, which is a high context culture, which means that they had limited experience of cultural diversity. They had to become open for new sounds, gestures, facial expressions, etc. At this stage all of the participants understood that language is the biggest stumbling block to adaptation into the society. Majority of Danes speak
English, still it is very hard to enter the society without Danish language. However, one of the participants said that even though she can speak almost fluent Danish she still does not feel part of the society, because Danish and Chinese people are different in so many ways.

The second level of the model is organizing information according to stereotypes. At this stage interviewees learnt that Danish and Chinese differ in many ways. They were able to compare stereotypes, which they brought from China, with the experience in Denmark. Some of the stereotypes were valid, such as their private space, or strictly following the schedule. However, all interviewees agreed that learning few stereotypes does equal to an understanding of Danish culture. Thus all of them are in the “learning process” of Danish culture and challenge signs with their repository of meanings.

Third level of intercultural learning model is posing questions to challenge the stereotypes. At this point interviewees discovered new facts about Denmark and its culture; therefore they were able to analyze those facts and question the stereotypes. At this point model shifts the attention to the cultural differences in behavior and attitudes that affect intercultural communication.

Interviewees were able to ask questions and distinguish Danish culture from Chinese. It was evident that in Danish society experience is more valuable than age; interviewees had a possibility to validate this by working with young, but very professional teachers, meeting young people, who have high positions at work. Furthermore, interviewees learnt that in Denmark knowledge comes by asking questions, not only by mastering the knowledge, they have learnt that students in university are encouraged to ask questions and discuss with the teacher. In terms of doing and achieving interviewees learnt that doing is more important that being, in Danish culture man proves his existence with the work that has been done. Furthermore, interviewees learnt that Danish follow the rules and do not accept to bend them for any reason.
In terms of self, interviewees learnt that in Danish society gender does not play any role. Males and females are equal and both genders have the same possibilities for a particular job. In terms of social organization, interviewees learnt that organizational structure in Denmark is horizontal. Student has a right to communicate with any required representative of Aarhus University.

In the third level of model one is able to ask questions and learn new details about new culture. At this point all interviewees claimed that they have learnt sufficient information about Danish culture, structure of Aarhus University, therefore they were able to set expectations that will be met in the future.

Fourth level of intercultural learning model is analyzing communication episodes. After the interviewees distinguished main differences between Denmark and China, they were able to analyze the communication episodes. This means, that interviewees were able to describe communication as successful, or failed. In most of the cases they described communication with Aarhus University as a successful one, because representatives of university were willing to help and were open to any counseling.

The last level of the model is generating other culture messages. So far the interviewees became interculturally competent and are able to decode, encode the messages and respond to the Danish culture successfully. At this point some of the interviewees felt integrated into the society, because they learnt the language, which helped a lot. Others do not feel completely integrated into the society, but it does not matter that much, since they are planning to leave Denmark after the semester ends. After the interviews it was evident that international students from China had higher expectations about the information provided by Aarhus University. At the begging all of the participants felt that their expectations were not met. However, after some time, when they got to know Danish culture and society, they were able to set new expectations that were fulfilled completely by representatives of Aarhus University.
Conclusion

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to analyze how cultural differences affect level of satisfaction of information provided by organization. For an analysis I have chosen to analyze international students from China expectations of information provided by Aarhus University. Aarhus University was chosen due to the fact that it is one of biggest universities in Denmark and have significant amount of international students. As for international students, I have chosen students from China; this was done, because cultures in China and Denmark differ remarkably.

In order to support problem statement several theories were chosen. In the beginning it was important to describe what is culture, how it was studied, further which theories will be used to analyze the problem statement. From the findings it was comprehensible that Denmark is a low context culture and China is a high context culture. These findings were major for the research, because it was possible to analyze how cultural differences affect satisfaction of information. Further in the analysis other differences emerged. Danish culture was described as individualistic, with low power distance, and Chinese culture was described as collectivistic with a high power distance.

After the comparison of these two cultures findings of the interviews and theory were compared. In order to get best results I have chosen to use intercultural learning model. This model shows that every culture is learnable and that every individual is able to become culturally bias. From the findings of interviews it became understandable that expectations can be influenced by the culture. However, after person becomes familiar with the new culture expectancies changes according to the new culture.

Further studies

All in all, if I would be given more time, space and resources it would be interesting to test more people, which would give better results. In addition it would be engaging to compare more theories, since field of communication and culture is
so broad. Further, it would have been appealing to interview more people and analyze the data as this could change the conclusions and provide better understanding how culture affects satisfaction of information.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1 – Statistic from Danmarks Statistik

**Flere internationale studerende i Danmark**


**Internationale studerende på videregående uddannelser i Danmark**

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**Korte videregående uddannelser er i stigende grad populære**

De korte videregående uddannelser har haft den største procentvise fremgang i antallet af internationale studerende med en stigning på 74 pct. fra 2008 til 2010. For de lange videregående uddannelsers vedkommende er der sket en stigning på 24 pct.

**Flest fra Europa**

71 pct. af de internationale studerende kommer fra Norden eller EU. Vores nabolande har flest internationale studerende i Danmark: Norge har 2.430 studerende, svarende til 13 pct., og som nummer to kommer Sverige med 1.902 studerende, dvs. 10 pct. Det tredjestørste antal udgør de studerende fra Tyskland med 1.318 (8 pct.). Island og Finland står for hhv. 1.184 studerende (7 pct.) og 167 (1 pct.).

Internationale studerende i Danmark – topt lande/områder. 2010

Samfundsfaglige studier mest tilrækkende

De samfundsvidenskabelige uddannelser, herunder særligt de merkantile uddannelser, er mest populære med 35 pct. af de studerende, 22 pct. læser på de tekniske uddannelser og 11,7 pct. på de sundhedsfaglige uddannelser. 50 pct. af de svenske studerende og 29 pct. af de norske studerende læser på de sundhedsfaglige uddannelser.

De samfundsfaglige uddannelser er hyppigst valgt af de studerende fra Tyskland (44 pct.), Rumænien/Bulgariet (42 pct.) og Kina (42 pct.).

Internationale studerende i Danmark

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Mere information
Der findes ikke tal i statistikbanken i øjeblikket.

Kilder og metoder
Se nærmere beskrivelse af metoden på www.dst.dk/varedeklaration/713371.

Næste offentliggørelse
Internationale studerende i Danmark 2011 udkommer uge 35 i 2012.

Henvendelse
Leo Ilmbirk Jensen, tel. 39 17 37 58, lji@dst.dk
Erik Christiansen, tel. 39 17 37 49, ech@dst.dk

Nyt fra Danmarks Statistik udkommer dagligt kl. 9.00 og kan læsles på www.dst.dk/nyt
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Appendix 2 – Interview guide

Demographics

1. What is your country of origin?
2. Age
3. Sex
4. How long have you been in Denmark?
5. How long do you plan on being here?
6. Have you lived in other countries? If yes, where?
7. Do you speak Danish?
8. Why did you come to study here in Denmark?
9. Are you satisfied with your experience in Denmark?

Differences between country of origin and Denmark

10. From your point of view what are the differences between your country and Denmark?
11. How have these differences affected your experience in Denmark?
   a. With people outside of the university
   b. With other students at the university
   c. With university representatives

Expectations & Satisfaction with Information

12. How did you prepare to come to Denmark?
13. What where your expectations when you came to study in Denmark?
   a. What type of information did you expect from the university before you arrived and when you arrived?
14. What type of information did you receive before coming to the university?
15. Where you satisfied with the type of information that the university provided?
   a. Why?
16. Were you satisfied with the amount of information the university provided?
   a. Why?
17. Were you satisfied with the way the university gave you information?
   a. Why?
18. What type of information do you currently receive from the university as an international student?
19. Are you satisfied with the information the university provides you as a student?
   a. Why?

**Communication differences**

20. What are the differences and similarities between the way people communicate in Denmark and in your home country?
   a. Verbal, non-verbal, gestures
21. How have these differences affected how you communicate with others in Denmark?
   a. Why?
22. Do you think you have adapted to the Danish society?
   a. Why?
23. Do you think it is necessary for international students to learn Danish in order to adapt to society in Denmark?
   a. Why?
24. How would you recommend for someone who is planning on coming to study here to prepare before they arrive?
Appendix 3 – answers to the interviews

Interview 1
Demographics

1. China
2. 23
3. Female
4. Since 1st February.
5. Till 5th July.
6. No, it’s my first time abroad.
7. A little.
8. Because of an exchange program between my university and Aarhus University.

Differences between country of origin and Denmark

10. It shows in several ways. First, there are far less people than that of china. The living pace here is slower than that of china. Second, the unique view of ocean, as an island country, is another characteristic attracting me. Third, I’d like to say the way of thinking. People here tend to keep their own opinions after listening to others’. For example, Students here prefer to make brainstorm to speak out their opinions individually while we’d like to think of certain opinion before discuss one certain topic till make a final agreement in china.

11.

d. It didn’t really. Mostly I communicate with international students, or with students from China.

e. Sometimes I feel that Danish students don’t like me, but after some time I understood that they are distant and prefer Danish company instead of international.
f. In the beginning I was surprised that University representatives are almost the same age as I am, and that sometimes talks with them can become friendly chat about almost everything.

Expectations & Satisfaction with Information
12. By collecting information through Internet.
13. The information of renting, living expenses, visa application, weather, language, service provided.
14. Limit information of renting, living expenses.
15. No, I wasn’t satisfied with the limit information of renting, which provided no choice but one company, which provided a contract sounded like an inequality.
16. No, I wasn’t. They didn’t provide very useful information but only did a job.
17. Yes. It’s convenient to get information through Internet.
18. So far do not receive any.
19. Just so so.

Communication differences
20. Well there are many differences, but one, that is most obvious for me is gestures. In china, we have less gesture language.
21. Well, sometimes, I felt embarrassment when guys gave hug to me.
22. No yet, at least. Because I know just a little Danish.
23. Yes, it is. I met many people here can’t speak English but Danish.
24. Language is the most important skill, which should be prepared at first. And some heavy coat is necessary, too. Well, remember to bring a heart open to learning.
**Interview 2**

**Demographics**

1. China
2. 25
3. Female
4. Around 3 years
5. I am leaving this summer
6. Malaysia – 6 months, Spain – 6 months
7. Little
8. I always wanted to go to Scandinavian country, I applied for Sweden and Denmark, and I got accepted in Aarhus University
9. Of course, definitely

**Differences between country of origin and Denmark**

10. People are very open in terms of communication; they can speak about any topic even if you are not such a close friends.

    In Denmark teachers like critics and they appreciate when students tell them some new solutions.

11.

    a. I got friends very fast, cause Danes are open and like partying.
    
    g. You can say they are wrong and they will improve instead of being angry at you.
    
    h. I could tell them openly they did something wrong.

**Expectations & Satisfaction with Information**

12. I had a lot of paper work, also I saved some money.

13. To learn a lot.

    a. Before: about accommodation, costs. After arrival: nice places to visit, information about studies.

14. I got letter with description of University and where to find accommodation and also about costs connected with studies.
15. Yes, it was information I expected to achieve.
16. It was enough to feel comfortable about moving to Denmark.
17. YES. They send it in letter, so it was already printed and I could take it everywhere with me.
18. None
19. No, they don’t give any more information.

Communication differences
20. Definitely language, it is so strange, before coming to Denmark I expected their language to be more understandable, but it is so difficult, and all Danes expect you to speak their language.
21. In some cases it affected in negatively, because some people would constantly speak with me in Danish, even they knew that I don’t speak any. At the beginning it was funny, but after some time it got annoying.
22. Not really, because I didn’t learn the language
23. Yes, even though everybody speaks English this doesn’t mean that they will accept you in the same way as if you were speaking Danish.
24. Save money, collect as much as possible information about Denmark, take a raincoat, it rains a lot here.
Interview 3
Demographics

1. Hong Kong, China
2. 23
3. Female
4. 2 years
5. As long as I can
6. No
7. Little
8. Started with my exchange program in my bachelor, then continue as a master student till now
9. So far it is okay

Differences between country of origin and Denmark

10. Weather is colder, food is more boring, and people are not as passionate.
11.
   a. It didn’t really, because I only know people outside university from work, and they are also Chinese.
   b. It is difficult to be close friends with Danish students.
   c. They are very friendly, which surprised my in the beginning.

Expectations & Satisfaction with Information

12. Saving money, also did small research about Denmark
14. Not that much... it was very basic information, which I already knew
15. Yes, cause they provided the most needed information for me (like where I live and what transportation take to school and something similar)
16. Yes, cause it should be part of my experience to find out the information I need myself, and the school did give me the most basic information (like the way to school, school facilities and so).
17. Yes, they gave introduction days and leaflet to me where I can find most of the stuffs I wanted to know about.

18. About my internship, and academic workshops/events related to my studies.

19. Yes, but I also think they can give a bit more than those they give us now. E.g. sometimes there is an event that I am interested in, but I only know it after it happened and the school didn’t send out any information to us. Or sometimes it is mainly only in Danish.

**Communication differences**

20. I don’t know how to compare...since Chinese and English are so different...

21. No, because I communicate mainly with people from China.

22. Not totally, since I cannot speak fluent Danish.

23. Yes, cause if you don’t, you cannot understand what they say, which Danes loves to talk in Danish more than English, even they speak good English.

24. Depends where they are from. But mainly be ready for a lot of parties and drinking as the majority of the students’ social events.
**Interview 4**  
**Demographics**

1. China  
2. 24  
3. Male  
4. 3 years  
5. A year, or more  
6. United Kingdom, 1 year.  
7. No  
8. At first exchange program, than I came to study Master  
9. Yes, of course.

**Differences between country of origin and Denmark**

10. Language, food, people, their behavior, traditions, nature, lifestyle and pace.  
11.  
   i. It was hard to become friends with Danes since they are so distant but I didn’t have any problems with international students.  
   j. My study mates are very nice to me, but mainly it is because all of them are international, I don’t have that many Danes study mates.  
   k. They are ok, very helpful and nice people.

**Expectations & Satisfaction with Information**

12. Preparation took some time, the biggest issue was paper work and money.  
13. I liked here when I was on my exchange program, so I was excited to come for Master. I like this country and people, also I like study methods. These things are the most important for me  
   a. I got all information that I needed, communication before coming was very good. After I came they explained everything very clear, no misunderstandings. Study mates were very helpful as well.  
14. The basic one, about the study program, subject description, student life, accommodation.
15. Yes, because everything I needed I could find on the web, and if I had any questions representatives of university always answered them.
16. Yes, because they gave us all basic info. Any additional information I was able to find on the web, or I would just ask somebody.
17. Yes, because it was very clear.
18. Mostly about student life, events.
19. Yes, because it is easy to reach.

**Communication differences**

20. There are particular differences: non-verbal, tones of voice, gestures, and facial expressions. We are very emotional and sometimes we express that.
21. Sometimes we look funny, and people laugh from us, even if they don’t talk with us. But I don’t think about it as a negative impact. That’s what makes us unique.
22. Adapted, but not 100%, I still don’t speak Danish and I look like an Asian.
23. Yes, because it seems to me that Danish are a little bit conservative, not everybody speak or want to English, and they are very happy if I say something in Danish. In my opinion you have to know language of the country that you are accommodating at that moment.
24. Prepare for some difficulties, because it is not the same, it is European culture, many things are different and you have to get used to that. You have to have good attitude.
Interview 5

Demographics

1. Hong Kong, China
2. 26
3. Female
4. Since 2007 September
5. I’m planning to stay
6. England 1 year
7. Yes
8. Good education, influence from family
9. Yes, very much

Differences between country of origin and Denmark

10. People mentality, habits, way of communicating, distance between employee and employer, general attitude to life

11.

   I. I had to learn to adapt to working atmosphere in my working place. Though I was just a student-worker, I was accepted as equal as my boss. That is not usual in China.

   m. I had troubles to finding way of communicating with Danes. From my point of view, they seemed to be distant and passive in sense of trying to communicate with foreigners

   n. It was hard to get used to call my teacher by name or make jokes or even get teased

Expectations & Satisfaction with Information

12. By trying to get in contact with other Chinese already living in Denmark and by reading forums about Denmark in the internet

13.

   a. I expected them to give me more information about the level of studies and required amount of hours of studying
14. I received information about the events during first day of school
15. No. I wanted to know what is going to happen further in the semester
16. No. it was app. One page information sheet
17. Yes. I received it by post rather than email and that let me feel like I matter
18. Right now I receive information about activities in school, changes in various offices working time, information about events, guests visiting our school, etc.
19. Yes. I get to know all I need

**Communication differences**

20. There is big difference. In China people communicate in very different way than here in Denmark.
21. There few, I am not used to hug people for greeting and sometimes I still can’t get used to giving handshake to a man here in Denmark
22. Yes. I adapted to climate, food, and the tempo of living, language.
23. Yes. Danish people do act and talk differently in their own native language than in English
24. Get familiar with weather forecasts, prices, and main topics in the newspapers, get to know main topics of chats, learn basic words.