

A Malaysian Chevrotain Visit to New Zealand: An Autoethnographic Account of Cultural Variation

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Abstract

Different parts of the world are offering sojourners' with a variety of socio-cultural experiences. The inability to understand the variation triggers psychological, physical or behavioural difficulties, and maladjustment or misunderstanding. It is discovered that cross-cultural underestimation is the root of intercultural resistance, stereotyping, ethnocentrism and racism sentiments among sojourners. An ethnographic approach was employed through personal experiences during an overseas internship; this paper posited a cultural variation framework to steer a fruitful cross-cultural adjustment whenever sojourners get into a distinct cultural location. Basically, the manifestation of a self and other's affection, behavioural and contextual variations amplify the rationalisation and contradictory nature of cultural variation.

Keywords: International human resource development, cultural variations, autoethnographic

1. INTRODUCTION

International mobility challenged a person's physical, psychological, socio-cultural and financial fitness. Reported by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the number of international students was estimated around 4.5 million, has enrolled outside of their country of citizenship in 2011 (Epnuffic, 2015). As shown in Figure 1, Asian (especially China, India and South Korea) is the leading sources (53%) of international students, especially to the 'white' countries (UK, Australia and Canada). Notably, there are 63530 Malaysian studying abroad and about 3137 students reported enrolling in New Zealand tertiary institutions in 2011 (Epnuffic, 2015). There are substantial financial implications bonded by the Malaysian Government in sending students abroad (Latifah, 2015).

Apart from international students, expatriation gives some sojourning implication to the international mobility. The 2014 Transfer Volume & Cost Survey by the Worldwide ERC® indicated that an average of \$17 million was spent by a company to relocate the expatriates overseas; 37% is the new hires and the rest are current employees (WERC, 2015). The figure indicates that it has caused a financial implication to the international mobility. The return of investment (ROI) obtained by the company through sending expatriate overseas is worthy if the international missions are accomplished. The country benefits from those who have successfully graduated and returned home, especially those students who are government-funded and who have successfully brought home beneficial knowledge and expertise trained abroad.

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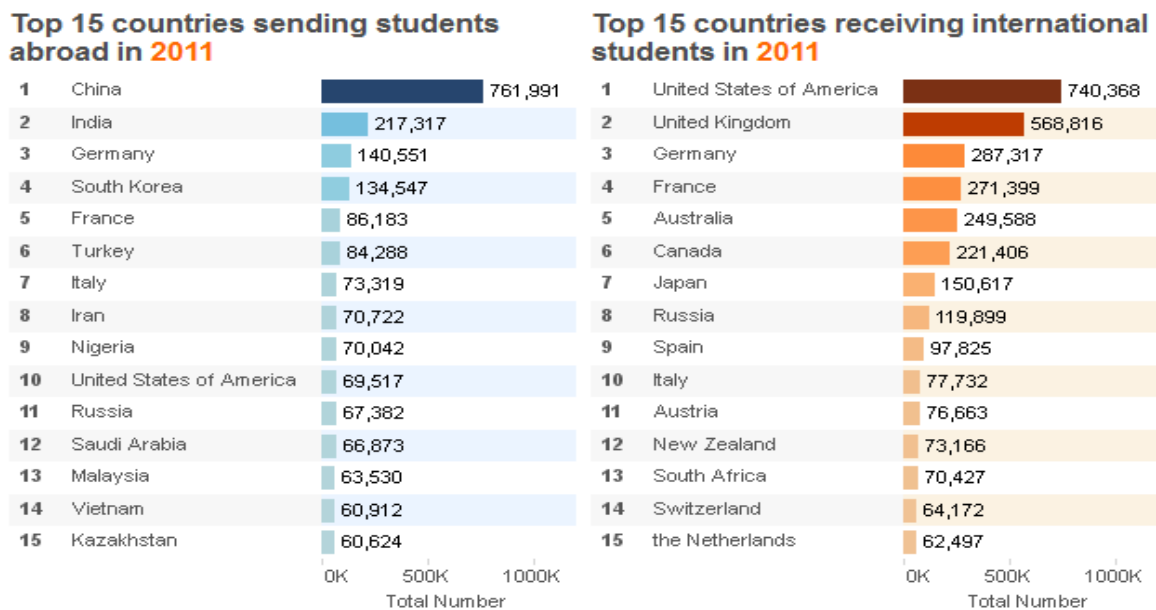


Figure 1: International students' mobility flows
 Source: OECD, 2011

Sojourning success depends on sojourner's personal competence in facing various politics, economics and socio-cultural challenges experienced overseas. Therefore, the purpose of this exploratory study is to empirically observe the socio-cultural influences on the sojourner's effective cross-cultural adjustment. In particular, cross-cultural adjustment refers to the successful adaptation and acculturation process, which encompass the psychological and behavioural responses to ecological, socio-political and cultural context (Berry, 2010). It is a reflection on sojourner's affective, cognitive and behavioural discrepancy to signify the changes experienced in different socio-cultural environment (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Sufficient rationalization and interactive adjustment are vital in reducing socio-cultural difficulties on sojourner's daily living, working and interacting with others' from the visited country. The present study is carried out through an ethnographic field-work methodology as to undergo a bare experience sojourning in distinct socio-cultural location of the first author. Self-reflection and others' observation have been a basis of inductivity of cross-cultural variation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cross-cultural difficulties, ethnocentrism, racism and stereotyping occur due to misinterpretation of the rigorous spectrum nature of the culture. In order to prove a beneficial international mobility, sojourners entail to make essential adaptation by integrating a micro- and macro-cultural appealing, and react towards the differences and changes. Sojourners as described in the expatriation literature (refer, Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Shafer & Luk, 2005) and international travellers include asylum seekers, expatriate managers, immigrants, missionaries, peacemakers, refugees, students, tourists and, visiting, high-skills or guest workers. Every international traveller is equipped with distinct cultural frame-of-references moulded in his home location since born. Those, cultural variations experienced by sojourners vary due to their international mobility destination, goals, length of stay and expectation. Thus, there are scholars' contributions empirically and theoretically which are relevant in guiding the studied issues. A study by Searle and Ward (1990) presented an empirical inclusion to the cross-cultural adjustment between Asian's (Malaysian and Singaporean) and New Zealand's socio-cultural context. Theoretically, an acculturation disposition from the ecocultural approach of Berry (2010) provides an effective socio-cultural context, which facilitates the understanding of diverse cultural variation.

2.1 Cross-cultural adjustment

A culture is not merely a physical or behavioural appealing, but also include a salient facet comprising attitude, belief, value and norm. Hofstede (1983) provides a renowned explanation of culture, interpreted as a system of mental programming of cumulative beliefs, values and norms, which is imitated, learned, taught, shared and descended over the generations by the group members. As a person, this mental system becomes a frame-of-references (Torbiorn, 1985) as the basis of judgment in response to the variations appearing in different socio-

cultural environment. In decision-making, sojourners who have unpleasant cultural discrepancy experience, getting rational reactions probe based on what's being taught is right, wrong, suitable, just or unjust. A rational justification is important to create a mental well-being, possibly reducing difficulties or problems interacting or dealing with others whose probably having contrast frame-of-references.

In a time of uncertain decision, significant adjustment and adaptation demanded a person to redefine appropriate affective, cognitive and behavioural move to take. According to Ward and Kennedy (1999), the ability to 'fit-in' into the distinct culture variation environment is crucial. It challenges a person's knowledge, understanding, experience and ability to negotiate physically and literally with all aspects hooked in their daily living, working and interaction with others especially in different socio-cultural location. Dennis and Stroh (1993) shared a study of American expatriates, who reported that an education system, language, lifestyles, racial, religious, ethnic groups and organizations internal rivalries are the contributing factors in the work-family difficulties experienced by the sojourners in Kuala Lumpur. In addition, transportation preferences in Kuala Lumpur were found unfavourable, thus causing the expatriates' frustration (Butler & Hannam, 2013). Basically, cross-cultural adjustment and adaptation involve a process of changing the perception into appropriate manners which determine the sojourners' psychological and socio-cultural composing in holistic views.

Disability to establish meaningful cross-cultural adaptation and adjustment contributes to the sojourning difficulties including a decreased productivity, drop-out among students, premature return, insufficient organizational and social support, intention to leave, learned helplessness and frustration, perceived uneven marginalization and discrimination, strain and stress, turnover or failure, uncertainty in future career development, and unsatisfactory performance (Bhaskar-shrinivas et al., 2005; Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen & Bolino, 2012). In addition, communication breakdown, intercultural conflict and, spouse's involvement (Laring & Selmer, 2010) and work-family conflict gives additional strain to the sojourners' international mobility difficulties. Discrepancy in international performance during sojourners' international mobility believed to be depending on their coping strategy, cultural knowledge and background, life experience and maturity, motivation, personality and styles of learning whilst dealing with socio-cultural uncertainty (Froese, 2012; Freeman & Lindsay, 2012; Harvey, McIntyre, Moeller & Sloan, 2012). Therefore, it does not merely concern in accomplishing assigned responsibility of an international assignment, but the ability to adapt and adjust appropriately in a socio-cultural atmosphere in host location which is essential in ensuring adequate sojourn mission.

2.2 Ecological approach

It is undeniably mentioned that the practical socio-cultural knowledge and skills are fundamental to the effective adaptation and adjustment in overseas. Sufficient pre-departure preparation is important to ensure adjustment readiness among sojourners (and family members) as to meet the physical and psychological expectation in the host location. An awareness to the cultural cues (salient message related to a cultural attitude, belief, norms and values) becomes a foundation to encounter socio-cultural surprises (reality below expectation) and acculturate with cultural differences (Berry, 2010; Sam & Berry, 2010). As experienced by Friedman (2007) and Friedman, Dyke and Murphy (2009), it is believed that the cultural history and the notion of the concept of *Mianzi* (face-saving) and *guanxi* (pride) among Chinese subordinates in Hong Kong aid her to avoid social separations and feelings of annoyance. Hence, international sojourning is not only about grasping the economic opportunities, but also to form mutual networking establishment with stakeholders in the host location.

According to Berry (2010), acculturation is found as important sources of social and psychological development cross-culturally. Ecocultural becomes a subject in studying cultural and psychological phenomenon on the view of human particularly, ecosystems which demand an adaptation. The human differences in cultural and psychological ecology indicated the patterns of shared ways of living in the social institutions and behaviours. The social life outside of local habitat is also perceived as socio-political influences which demand sojourners to accurately acculturate the cultural variations. Figure 2 shows an ecocultural framework by Berry (2002) which brings three identifications: (1) ecological and socio-political elements which shaped a contextual underpinning, (2) biological and cultural adaptation elements indicates an adaptation process and (3) psychological outcomes of the acculturation into a cultural phenomenon.

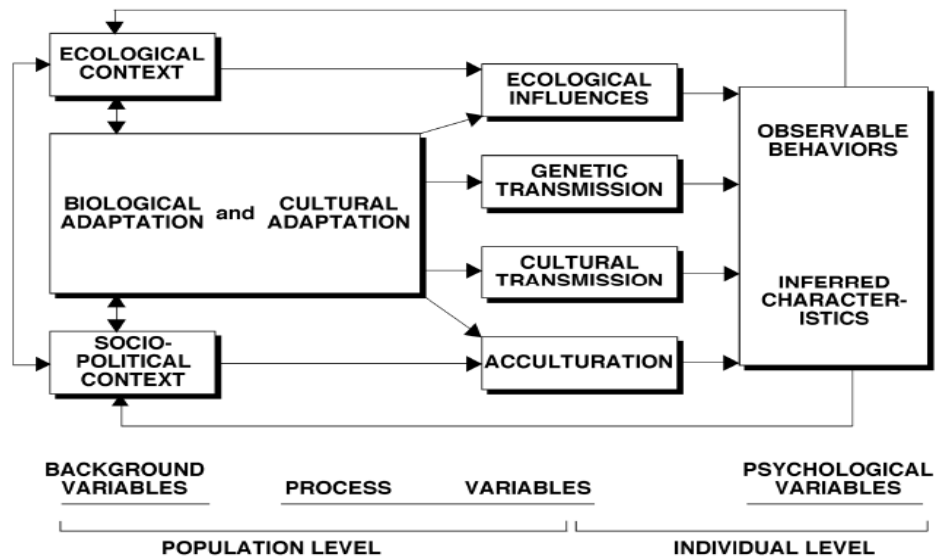


Figure 2: Eco-cultural framework
 Source: Berry (2002)

Berry's (2002) ecocultural framework provides a convincing approach in which situational factors are to be considered for acculturation when sojourners mobilise into the new cultural habitat. The ecocultural context provides complex interactions between sojourners and host environment which may cause affection (feeling, emotion and motivation) and interferences. Besides, observing the physical and environmental appearances in the host location gives new experiences or psychical challenges to sojourners when it may cause difficulties and dissatisfaction (Dennis & Stroh, 1993; Butler & Hannam, 2013). Lastly, others' behaviour in host location is viewed as complex sets of acculturation when elements are beyond expectation as compared to expected standards. Alas, Berry's ecocultural framework has signed some methodological issues which have perceived culture as national component and stability in characters. In particular, culture is a dynamic subject to the changes in socio-economic and political environment. There are some parts of the world (especially in Southeast Asia) which are homes for divine, distinct sub-cultures (ethnicities) that have given tonnes of mystification of acculturation among sojourners. Thus, Ward (2008) posited sediment to enhance the acculturation understanding and process by incorporating an ethno-cultural identity into the relationship between individuals and host socio-cultural habitat.

The following sections justify how the first author established his acculturation experiences due to cultural variations. The cross-cultural experiences were recorded through personal reflective autographic writing, which are presented in this paper to understand the effect of cultural variation while sojourning into new socio-cultural habitat in New Zealand.

3. METHODOLOGY

The ethnographic field-work took place in Wellington, New Zealand when the first author was awarded an attachment by the overseas research program which was funded by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) Malaysia. For the use of this study, the program is called an internship program, which also refers as an academic visit or post-graduate attachment. The purpose of the internship program is to meet a renowned scholar in cultural psychology studies, undertake research work in the world's prominent university, establish research networking and enhance the research horizons. The program ran for three months (beginning 28th February to 5th June 2012) and the author was attached to the Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research (CACR), Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. The observation and recorded experience began on the day the author touched-down at the Auckland International Airport, then continued with his daily working routine at the school and sight-seeing around Wellington and suburb town and cities.

The details and contextual description presented in the present study refers to the autoethnographic inductive writing by Friedman (2007) and Friedman et al. (2009) on sojourned experience in Hong Kong. This study was based upon a single case study and also an ethnographic field-work designed on an autobiographic (self-reflection and experience) and participation observation by the first author while going for an internship in Wellington New

Zealand. The data were presented in the reflective writing form where the first author used a notebook approach to capture the socio-cultural strange moments. The benefits captured through self-experience on ethnocentrically field-work gave a first-hand experience to the decrypted issues (Lauring & Selmer, 2010) on cultural variation as intended in the present study. Before joining the internship program, the first author has travelled to other neighbouring countries like Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam. Besides, it was the first author's first encounter working with non-Malaysians especially with the 'white' people. The bare experience gathered from the internship program provided the first author with his first in a lifetime opportunity of going outside of his culturally Southeast Asia socio-cultural habitat.

During any meeting and scheduled official gathering at the workplace (cross-cultural lab), a lot of observation and participation took place in order to understand the process and activities conducted. However, outside of working hours (9am – 5pm) most of observation work and participation depended much on the walk-in or invited activities. In addition, the presence of individuals, families or groups of other Malaysians in New Zealand at social gatherings or spare-time, especially over the weekends provided valuable information and assistance in dealing with issues pertaining to socio-cultural discrepancies. To supplement the official observation and participation, a visit to the national museum, extra reading at the library and participation in the local events, seminars and talks are parts of ways in enriching the socio-cultural understanding and facilitating the acculturation process.

Through the daily routine and participation in the official duties and Centre's meetings, the author physically, psychologically and behaviourally became passionate observing elements that home and host of socio-cultural environment similar or different. New Zealand is located in the South Pacific with a population of 4.471 million people in 2013 (World Bank, 2015). The interest in socio-cultural variation in New Zealand (as a chosen internship location) was due to the multicultural composition of the society and the magnificent natural environment as portrayed in the movie 'Lord of the Ring'. Other than the indigenous Maori tribes, New Zealand is also populated with other incoming Pakeha (immigrants) and Pacific islanders (Tongan, Samoan and Cook Islanders). However, the developed economic and political system with the preservation of historic Treaty of Waitangi (a cultural preservation agreement between the British Crown (the monarchy) and the Maori tribe) makes New Zealand as a unique multicultural habitation. The encryption of the selected experiences is briefly described in the following results section. Only few selected obvious variations were reported revealing based on tonnes of cross-cultural experience recorded between Malay and New Zealander socio-cultural phenomenon. Appropriate classification of the justification to the cross-cultural adjustment and acculturation is described in the discussion section.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Entering the freezer.

The temperature in Malaysia is ranged between minimum 22°C (night) to the most 40°C (day), so it was a shocked to feel a 16°C on the ground during midday when I walked out from the airport building in Auckland. It reminded me of my trip to Genting Highland, Cameron Highland and Mount Kinabalu back in Malaysia. Luckily, I have prepared myself well with coat-cutting jacket and boots. Back at home I would just simply wear my sandals or slippers while travelling.

4.2 Locating the Qibla.

While waiting for the connecting flight to Wellington, being a Muslim, I had to perform my prayer which I had missed due to the 16-hours flight from Kuala Lumpur to Auckland. So I started searching for the prayer room at the airport. However, I had difficulties reading the airport guide. I was really hoping that somebody could at least show me the direction of the Qibla (a direction heading to Mecca in Saudi Arabia) so that I could perform my prayer. Back in Malaysia, (when travelling in neighbouring countries), it is easy to spot a Muslim through his outfits and Malay-facial features as the majority of Malays in Malaysia are Muslims. In the end, I ended-up sitting at the bench (outside of the airport building) confidently facing to the West-North direction to perform my prayer. Before that, I was also surprised knowing there's no water tap or pipe available in the washroom for ablution. Hence, I only took a few compulsory washing steps. In Wellington, when lent by a Muslim friend with a Qibla compass, I felt relieved because I could relocate the right direction and perform my prayer confidently.

4.3 Sensitivity vs ignorance.

While looking for an apartment to rent, I greeted a guy who was smoking outside of the apartment. Trying to be friendly, I asked him "how much did you rent a room in this apartment?". I was shocked at the cynical reply "don't

you want to know how much I bought my pinkie undies too?”. I blinked my eyes unbelievably and explained to him that I was a newbie in town and was desperately looking for a place to stay or a room to rent temporarily. After sharing the incident with a Malaysian, she explained to me that my sharp question was rather ‘personal’ to the Western norm. Fortunately, the guy was rather helpful through as he ushered me to meet the apartment manager and explained about renting a studio-room at the apartment. However, I was shocked again after being informed that the rental rate would be counted on a weekly-basis, which would never happen back in Malaysia.

4.4 Jumper the parachute.

Set my feet in New Zealand during fall. The temperature got colder day-by-day. With an unpredictable weather, it was a struggle for me to find heat especially when it was raining outside. Standing outside of the building was the worst scenario ever for me as I was occupied with rain and Antarctica cold wind. Although the school’s building was heat-insulated (with removable heater units are available and switched-on) a lab-mate saw me trembling, looking cold; she suggested that I should wear a jumper. I replied “are you joking? You are suggesting that I wear an uncomfortable, bulky and an alien-looking parachute suit here in school?”. Looking blankly at me she replied “do you know what a jumper is?”. Then I answered “is a jumper a parachute suit, or is it a casual jumpsuit?”. Looking blush, she explained a jumper is actually a type of clothing thicker than a jacket, worn during cold days. Back in Malaysia, you hardly notice anyone wearing a jumper, even during the wet season at the end of the year.

4.5 Sunlight is life.

As mentioned earlier, I have been to New Zealand during the transition season of winter. I did not experience much sunlight; only during an outing or outdoor celebration that I experienced a little for a few hours. Back in Malaysia, shady area is targeted during a sunny day; fan and air-conditioning are much appreciated. I do believe other than a heater, New Zealand is obviously a wrong targeted business market for air-conditioning. The sun-heat at home gives me fantasies immigrating to cold countries with the beautiful pleasant snow. Thus, struggling with the cold weather was a great lesson for me to appreciate the sunlight back at home.

4.6 Time saving.

Come winter, people have to manually adjust their watches for the daylight saving time. The clocks were turned back one hour. Although I have heard of the official announcement, since it was never practiced, I took no action about it. It troubled me when one fine day, I came for a breakfast meeting an hour earlier, although my watch showed the promised time as scheduled. Passionately waiting for a friend, then he came with not guilty face being late seem nothing happened. Being bolded then I learned that we could adjust the time occasionally depending on the weather seasons.

4.7 Reading weather forecast.

Due to the unpredictable weather, I took the effort to learn reading the weather forecast daily in order to equip myself with accessories like thermal, gloves, jacket, jumper, pullover, raincoat, scarf or winter / snow cap in order to keep warm. Back in Malaysia, there are only two things of great concern when it comes to clothing, i.e. Official or casual.

4.8 Chocolate fish vs fish-and-chip.

When socially having ‘small-talk’ with lab-mates, I have been asked about the ‘chocolate fish’ (a fish shaped marshmallow covered / wrapped with chocolate). Chocolate fish is perceived to be a popular local confectionery item and in Kiwi culture, it is used as a common reward for a good job done. In great surprise, I thought it was just a kind of catching cold-water fish specially made for fine-dining or to make best fish-and-chip. With confident I answered the question and said “yeah, I like those fried dried and crunchy, served with sweet-sour thousand-island dressing”. My lab-mate gave a questionable smile and the following day with blue-face I had received a packet of chocolate fish for free.

4.9 Tight budget.

Having *Halal* food is not a problem in New Zealand. There are many Malaysian and Muslim restaurants available around the city. Even though New Zealand practices secularism philosophy of governance, the locals’ were highly

concerned about the food hygiene and practices of other religions. When having dinner in a local restaurant, the owner took the initiative to explain on how foods were prepared according to the Muslim *Halal* requirement. However, with a tight budget, home-cooking was a cheaper and better option. Unfortunately, lacking cooking talent I opted for bread and spread and fruits especially apples, kiwis and bananas for daily meals. Back in Malaysia, imported New Zealand's crunchy apples and kiwis are considered semi-luxury fruits which are of a similar price to when I bought double quantities in New Zealand. Other than being concerned about *Halal* logo printed at canned or packed food, I noticed I started spending hours reading the labels when doing my grocery shopping. Besides, reliable discount coupons for shopping and other life utilities (like dining, haircut, kitchenettes, and toiletries) become a survivor-kit especially for tight-budget sojourners. In addition, a website and shops for second-hand items are highly visited to find necessities within budgeted expenditures. All those practices and life-concerned are non-frequently apprehended issues back at home.

4.10 Protocol-less.

As a capital city of New Zealand, Wellington hosts many arts and cultural events occasionally. There are many exhibitions, events or campaigns organized around the cities, in which visitors receive giveaway food and gifts. However, it is also the peaceful sceneries that hinder visitors from fighting over the gifts. In an occasion, where the city Mayor was invited to officiate, the launching event only took half an hour, which might take hours with speeches and long itinerary program back at home. There was no guard, usherette or a special VIP table that served food and beverages to celebrate the Mayor. In another event, I had an opportunity to meet one of New Zealand's members of parliament (MP) in his caravan canopy on the Wellington's Harbourside Sunday market (beside the Te Papa Museum). He was not there to sell anything but to take initiatives to meet with taxpayers to show his representational duties and updated projects undertaken. This was considered a brilliant political initiative, as compared to most Malaysian MPs who could only be seen and approached through an official appointment or when they are attending events as an invited guest. While participating in an event held at the Te Herenga Waka Marae (Maori's meeting hall), I noticed from my observation that there are some similar protocols between the Maoris and Malays. It took hours of launching the events with some customary ceremonies taken place.

4.11 Other observable elements.

People were working hard on weekdays from Monday to Friday. Thus, to distress themselves after working hard throughout the working days, I was invited to join a chat at the bar or lounge on a Friday afternoon after work. As a Muslim, alcohol is prohibited and bar and lounge are synonymous with alcohol. Due to the social restriction, it is considered taboo for the Malays to visit bars and lounge in Malaysia. However, to please friends on their invitation, I got rid of my sinful fear, and I was surprised to be served with fruit juice and snacks, instead. Having memorable chatting with friends, I was able to establish friendship, exchange information and create a more meaningful understanding of their salient cultural preferences.

Other than those listed above, I also noticed that there were no wild dogs and cats scattered around unattended in New Zealand. This was because the cost of raising a pet is as expensive as raising children. It is free and safe to drink tap water. The classification of the domestic waste has also been regulated (it is differentiated by the colour of the waste bag: green and yellow plus glass-bin) which is a trial policy in Malaysia. Cashless to shop with highly depending on the debit card payment system called EFTPOS (Electronic Fund Transfer at Point of Sale) even at a small kiosk by the roadside, is brilliant in reducing pickpocket. A summon is issued if the driver carries more passengers than the number of seats available. For instance, five seated car can occupy a maximum of five passengers, including the driver; an infant should deserve the infant seat. Unfortunately, the number of passengers is not an issue to the traffic in Malaysia. The most interesting practice learned was that Kiwi's husband is doing most of the house cleaning, laundry and dish washing. Friendly greetings with the shop owners, public transport drivers and other ground cleaners could create a harmonious living. Internship in New Zealand was an eye-opening exposure to deeply understand the concept of trust and respect with others as to avoid feeling helpless while sojourning in a distinct socio-cultural location.

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the recorded reflective of observatories field-work of sojourning experiences as mentioned above, it has offered a foundation in understanding how the acculturative process takes place. Appropriate information about the socio-cultural fitness and psychological well-being is important for effective adaptation and cross-cultural adjustment. Winning cross-cultural adjustment supported by sufficient social learning and adaptation (Sam & Berry, 2010) is considered essential in finding an intercultural connectedness between home and the host socio-

cultural habitat (Berry, 2002). Notably, cultural awareness and sensitivity are two facets in acculturating the different socio-cultural habitation due to cultural variations.

5.1 Cultural awareness

As mentioned earlier, the individual's cultural composition is shaped by one's personal frame of reference (Hostede, 1983; Torbiorn, 1985). This frame of reference directs a person to think, react and act in certain behaviours and responses. Different forms of socio-cultural frames may be interpreted wrongly by others who may have different frames of preferences. Similarly, a person may interpret cultural cues wrongly based on his/her personal preferences. Social difficulties as discussed by scholars (example, Bhaskar-shrinivas et al., 2005; Harvey et al., 2012; Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Ward, 2008) are caused by the unawareness on the host country's cultural composition and disability in making appropriate social adaptations. Transition and interaction complications, reduce the quality of life and give insignificant impact on family and working environment and performance. Anxiety and uncertainty in intercultural encounters (Froese, 2012) caused by one's personal personality and ability are overshadowed by high expectation by the locals at the visited location. Lack of cultural skills turns sojourners into frustration and helplessness. The finding of the study has also shown how strange faces of people around caused the sojourner to be afraid of asking the direction of the Qibla. Similarly, the unawareness to perceived 'personal' issues during a conversation with others receives a cynical response instead. This scenario provides an additional support to the sojourning hardness as shared by scholars (refer, Butler & Hannam, 2013; Dennis & Stroh, 1993; Friedman, 2007; Friedman et al., 2009). As highlighted, understanding of cultural components builds consciousness to the cultural differences. In particular, the realization of self cultural elements assists the adaptation against cultural perspectives of others.

In reducing socio-cultural difficulties, the knowledge about the needs and expectation of others is important in obtaining a beneficial rapport. From one's own point of view, how we interpret socio-cultural encounter as relevant or irrelevant actually determines the ability to adapt to the different environment. In addition, it is critical to figure out on how people may react on our socio-cultural perspectives from their point of view. The findings of the present study show false judgement towards others who create annoyance, helplessness, social complication and cynical feedback which reduce the ability to integrate with the locals in the host's country. Reflecting on the self social norms and value of others helps to disclose the relationship which increases the effectiveness of intercultural message transmission.

Awareness of the heterogeneity of socio-cultural habitat is fundamental in cultural competence development particularly in multicultural location. Although originating from homogenous socio-cultural habitat, individual with adequate knowledge, skills and personality (Froese, 2012; Friedman, 2007; Friedman et al., 2009) are able to acculturate with others who display contrast social preferences. Acquiring substantial socio-cultural knowledge before departure is able to create a certain level of personal social competence. Significant socio-cultural skills as needed are built by having sufficient living knowledge, communicative proficiency and experiences. Possessing sufficient intercultural awareness; builds confidence in coping with socio-cultural habitat changes, especially with regards to the attitudes, beliefs, norms and values of others. Therefore, knowledge about self cultural elements and others' needs and expectations motivate sojourners to establish a fruitful cross-cultural adjustment and adaptation.

5.2 Cultural sensitivity

A posited issue presented in the present study is that an individual's socio-cultural is different due to the variety of socio-cultural frame-of-references. The initial socio-cultural habitat of a person has shaped his/her perceived acceptable affective, cognitive and behavioural justification (Berry, 2002; Sam & Berry, 2010; Ward & Kennedy; 1999). For example, it is illustrated in the finding that the 'personal' aspect discovered among westerners during an interpersonal interaction was perceived explicitly by Malays. Insensitivity to cultural elements are source for ethnocentrism, racism and stereotyping against those coming from the 'out-skirt' cultures. Difficulties, anxiety, uncertainty, annoyance or cynical looks were among situations experienced by sojourners due to their unexpected responses or underestimation of reasoning. Therefore, socio-cultural sensitivity is referred to not only about appearing in front of bare eyes but also those underlined implicitly. Observing similarity in differences of wider perspectives is time consuming, but having sufficient cultural awareness is able to support proper adjustment and establish beneficial adaptation.

Although with disparity of socio-cultural background, the adjustment is reached by probing the point of similarity. People may share same interests or cultural elements (attitudes, beliefs, norms and/or values) but they express

them from different cultural definitions. For example, sharing the findings of the present study, there are some similar traditional protocols between Maoris and Malays. By comprehending the similarity, communal respect is given which helps in reducing uncertainty due to variations of contexts. Notably, cultural similarity is found as bridging the relationship between people crossing from different socio-cultural habitat. In particular, disparity in socio-cultural clues and expressions is remarked as uniqueness of the groups' identity. Thus, being sensitive or alert to the salient social sign is important in capturing biasness of responses. According to Hostede (1983) the engagement between individualist and collectivist demands significant self-monitoring and motivation in order to have an acceptable attachment point. Hence, the institute requires respect and tolerance towards others' opinion, preferences, views and other ecological perspectives in different attachment context. Besides, attentive and empathic are elements of personality (Forese, 2012) which offer rewards for accurate socio-cultural impression. Identification of the differences creates significant confidence among sojourners to initiate the implicit and explicit connectedness.

By comprehending the similarity and disparity across cultures, mutual engagement among sojourners with others from different host locations creates beneficial commitment of affective attainment (emotional reaction), relationship continuity (interaction and relationship) and normative assigned (obligation and goals of international mobility). Appropriate engagement produces sojourning enjoyment and satisfaction (international mobility goal accomplishment). However, international goal attainment requires significant attentiveness in order to comprehend the transition and interaction process (Berry, 2002; Sam & Berry, 2010). Therefore, substantial pre-departure training, exposure, communicative proficiency and sojourning experiences will demonstrate adjustability and acceptable adaptation while sojourning abroad.

5.3 Cross-cultural adjustment

Socio-cultural habitat challenges the personal quality and the ability to establish appropriate acculturative capability (Berry, 2010; Sam & Berry, 2010) in order to encounter the differences and performances of social obligation. The mutual understanding on the cultural integration supports the cross-cultural adjustment process and establishes effective adaptation. The ability to make appropriate adjustment is crucial in order to reduce social difficulties. Coming with cultural variations, sojourners require deep understanding on the affective resonance, cognitive comprehension and acceptable behaviour. It is perceived that a culture comprises affective, cognitive and behavioural elements (Ward & Kennedy, 1999) of social habitat.

Firstly, affective resonance comprises emotions or feelings in response to social encounters. For example, with non-familiar faces, the sojourner felt distress looking for a direction of the Qibla; then cynically answered by the colour of the undies and feeling blue once he received a packet of chocolate fish. Socio-cultural disorder creates an annoyance and helplessness due to economic, politics and social system differences between home and host's country. Further supports given by the previous studies (refer Dennis & Stroh, 1993; Butler & Hannam, 2013); the differences in the country's physical facilities and social systems determine the sojourners' ability to reduce social expectation and in obtaining proper psychological adaptation. Therefore, it is important that sojourners find a point of adaptation between cultural sensitivity and awareness in reducing social shocked.

Secondly, cognitive comprehension is about knowledge concerning social system which regulates the daily living, work and interaction with others at home and the host's country. It is essential for sojourners to make necessary pre-departure cultural training in order to make appropriate estimation and socio-cultural expectation whilst sojourning in distinct cultural location. Having sufficient information on accommodation, facilities, immigration, traffic system, weather, population, ethnicity and other related daily living necessities, it is able to reduce discrimination, marginalised assumption, uncertainty or other strain and stress contributors (Bhaskar-shrinivas et al., 2005; Shaffer et al., 2012; Butler & Hannam, 2013). In addition, most of the information can be obtained through shared online public domain websites or other specific international mobility agents.

Lastly, appropriate and acceptable behaviour or manners portray in the host's country by sojourners depends on their attitudinal references back at home. Ability to cope with different social practices in the host's country affects sojourners' performances (Bhaskar-shrinivas et al., 2005; Shaffer et al., 2012) which are determined by the social acceptance of the locals (Freeman & Lindsay, 2012; Friedman, 2007; Friedman et al., 2009; Harvey et al., 2012). Effective learning-coping strategy played by sojourners depends on the amount of involvement, interaction and expectation between sojourners and the locals. Understanding of different cross-cultural practices is obtained through social involvement (Lauring & Selmer, 2010) with events hosted by the locals. It has been proven in the present study that the behavioural understanding was enhanced when the sojourner joined social activities and participated in official events. Self-involvement with activities is able to reduce stereotyping, false judgement or

assumptions against local practices in the host country. Therefore, appropriate manners displayed by sojourners have helped in establishing an effective cross-cultural adjustment in distinct socio-cultural location.

5.4 Limitations

There are some limitations accounted in the present study. The study was highly exploratory as the observation was only made by an individual who sojourned to New Zealand. Different sojourners may record different experiences and social-cultural encounters. Casualties faced by sojourners overseas are much depending on the economic, political and social background which have shaped his/herself frame-of-references. Different individuals may possibly face different causalities, difficulties or pleasure while sojourning to different socio-cultural habitation. The data were only derived from one location (Wellington, New Zealand). Different locations may offer different forms of facilities, hardiness, sceneries or attitudinal influences from the locals. Thus, the generalisation of issues from the present study could be limited. The results are possibly relevant to other sojourners with similar background and sojourning experience at similar setting in New Zealand, but it is quite difficult to extend the findings to other developed countries with different social systems. The climate change and dynamic nature of a country's economic and political systems could read the subjectivity of the findings for current socio-cultural habitation. Nonetheless, the present study could enrich the qualitative enquiries through auto-ethnographic exploratory field-work studies. The additional approach of qualitative enquiry may give supplementary understanding to the discussed issues as highlighted in the present study.

5.5 Implications

There are both empirical and theoretical implications of the findings obtained in the present study for future knowledge enhancement. Illustrated earlier, cultural variation between distinct group members has caused international mobility difficulties, anxiety, frustration or uncertainty. The inability to make necessary adjustment and adaptation is the result of sojourning failure, unsatisfactory performance, social breakdown and even family conflict. Based on the findings of the present study, it is an obligation for international visitors to establish harmonious transition and interaction in a different mobility context. To comprehend the implicit contrast of the host's culture is equally important in adjustment to physical appearances.

Empirically, an autoethnographic approach applied in the present study provides different perspectives in order to comprehend the cultural variation internationally. It may give an additional value to the local enquiry on ethnic diversity; connectivity among multicultural society, especially in the Southeast Asia's socio-cultural setting. For those organizations who plan in sending off staff and sojourners abroad, it is found important to incorporate precise elements of cultural awareness and sensitivity in their pre-departure training. In addition, language and communicative proficiency would also aid for effective international transition and interaction. Besides, the present study has proven that by giving them great exposure of the outer section of the initial socio-cultural habitation, it would help assist in widening their cultural horizon and understanding.

Theoretically, the present study also aids in giving additional support for the international mobility research by highlighting the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity. By blending those two aspects, it is able to strengthen habitual and ecological processes (Berry, 2002, 2010; Sam & Berry, 2010) and ascertain adaptation and cross-cultural adjustment (Ward, 2008; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Tapping cultural issues on socio-cultural variations is perceived important in connection with moral consequences, which are associated with religious perspectives, etiquette and social manners. Therefore, undertaking an appropriate acculturation is able to create a harmonious relationship with others in different socio-cultural location and reduce sojourning conflict and difficulties. The research implication of the present study possibly augments the importance of sojourners' social quality and ability to appropriately adjust and adapt to the different socio-cultural habitation.

6. CONCLUSION

Using a Malay analogy of "*rusa kampong masuk bandar*" (the village chevrotain entering the city), this study reflects on how a sojourner who was naive with the foreign-culture challenged himself to travel outside of his socio-culture habitation for the first time. Notably, the cultural variations have reduced the sojourner's excitement when encountering socio-cultural difficulties (physically, psychologically and behaviourally) in another country. However, the appropriate transition and adjustment processes have facilitated the sojourner to successfully acculturate and create a memorable adaptation. Moreover, an affective, cognitive and behavioural affirmation has helped in reducing inappropriate socio-cultural sentiments, which are crucial in strengthening the socio-cultural integration abroad. The connectedness between cultural awareness and sensitivity on cross-cultural adjustment is

vital in eliminating alienation among sojourners due to the cultural variations. In the other words, acculturation process can be difficult when there are too many personal restrictions for adjustment and adaptation. The key to success in the intercultural adaptation as demonstrated through autoethnographic writing in the present study is culturally **awareness** and **sensitivity** towards cultural variation.

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