Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
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Culture shock of Vietnamese students in Germany

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Abstract

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The purpose of the thesis was to examine various angles of Vietnamese students' experience with culture shock in Germany and suggest possible methods to manage it.

The thesis's theory includes different scientific definitions of culture shock, description of culture shock's development, causes, symptoms and management. Besides, the theory covers a comparison of German and Vietnamese cultures on the basis of Geert Hofstede's dimensions of national culture and the Lewis model. The empirical data for this thesis was collected and analysed by using qualitative research method. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Vietnamese students who had previously participated in a sojourn in Germany. The set of interview questions was divided into four themes and used as a framework for all of the interviews.

The results of the thesis show a range of common types of culture shock that Vietnamese students experience in Germany. The interviewees also revealed how their psychological state changed during the encounter of culture shock. Furthermore, a few factors that led to the occurrence of culture shock were identified. Finally, the respondents suggested various ways to prepare for and overcome culture shock based on their own experience. The thesis is beneficial to Vietnamese students who plan to choose Germany as their study destination.

Keywords: culture shock, German culture, Vietnamese culture, intercultural competence

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1   Introduction

The last decades have witnessed a significant growth in student mobility. From 1987-1988 to 2013-2014 academic year, there have been a total of 3.3 million Erasmus students going abroad and studying at a higher education institution or training in a company. Among the most popular destinations, Germany ranked in top three countries for Erasmus students on studies and work placements. (European Commission 2015, pp. 6-8.) Therefore, it is not surprising that around 5,500 Vietnamese students chose to study at German universities in the 2014-2015 winter semester (Federal Foreign Office n.d.). Going abroad inevitably benefits students with openness, adaptability and flexibility, or enhancement of language learning, intercultural skills, self-reliance and self-awareness (European Commission 2014, p. 63). However, in order to achieve those skills, students have to overcome a number of challenges in the foreign country, namely culture shock.

Culture shock can happen to anybody. Each sojourner encounters negative effects of culture shock to some extent. The author's experience with culture shock during her exchange in Germany motivates her to study it. Most of researches on culture shock focus on businessmen and are written from a business perspective (Skierlo 2007, p. 12), although all types of sojourners are vulnerable to culture shock. Besides, there is no proper research about cultural clashes between Germans and Vietnamese. Thus, the author would like to conduct a research on culture shock of Vietnamese students in Germany with both theoretical and empirical parts. The thesis is beneficial to not only students but also sending and host institutions in helping Vietnamese students integrate better with German culture.

As the title has clearly stated, the thesis aims to identify and analyze different aspects of Vietnamese students' experience with culture shock in Germany during exchange/double degree/placement. Accordingly, the main research question is:

- What kinds of culture shock do Vietnamese students typically experience in Germany during exchange/double degree/ placement?

In addition to the main research question, there are three sub-questions to examine the causes and consequences of culture shock, as well as to find solutions to it. These questions are as follows:

- What are possible explanations for culture clashes between German and Vietnamese cultures?
- How does culture shock affect Vietnamese students?
- How can Vietnamese students overcome culture shock and integrate?

The thesis is written from the viewpoint of students, specifically Vietnamese students who participated in an exchange/double degree/placement in Germany. Moreover, the thesis does not aim to generalize Vietnamese's students' experience with culture shock in Germany.

2 Culture shock

2.1 Definition of culture shock

The term "culture shock" was first introduced by Kalvero Oberg (1960) (as cited in Skierlo 2007). He defined culture shock as "the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse". Familiar signs, such as words, gestures, facial expressions, or customs, are removed completely or substantially when a person is exposed to a foreign culture. This condition is compared to a fish being out of water. Similarly, according to Shelley (1993), as cited in Skierlo (2007), "culture shock is the stress and anxiety that occurs when your physical surroundings and the people around you change." This kind of stress results from the nervous energy expended to manage change. Another definition of culture shock by Pedersen (1995) in Skierlo (2007) describes culture shock as the lack of reference points, social norms, and established rules to guide the actions of sojourner. (Skierlo 2007, pp. 51-54.) After carefully examining a variety of definitions, Taft (1977) summarizes that culture shock is a sense of powerlessness induced by the incompetence to cope with the surroundings due to u nfamiliarity with cognitive facets and role-playing skills (Winkelman 1994, p. 121).

2.1.1 Disease theory of culture shock

There have been various theories and models of culture shock. Disease theory was a common approach in the past, which associated culture shock with a disease that caused permanent or temporary disability. In disease theory, culture shock is regarded as mourning for lost relationships back home. Moreover, it is assumed that culture shock is unavoidable for all sojourners. Unrealistic expectations by sojourners and negative life events that have negative effects on the daily routine were claimed to be the causes of culture shock. Other reasons for the culture shock disease were a clash of values, a social skills deficit and a lack of social support. Nowadays, the majority of characteristics of culture shock stated by disease theory have been invalidated; hence disease theory is considered out of date. According to Pedersen (1995), contemporary literature prefers a positive-educational description to negative-pathological ones. Because the consequences of a culture shock experience may be positive and negative, they must be described in a balanced perspective. (Skierlo 2007, pp. 54-55.)

2.1.2 Stage theory of culture shock

Acculturation to new cultural environments develops alongside mood changes. Maletzke (1996) (as cited in Skierlo 2007) claims that there is considerable variation in sojourners' level of satisfaction within a certain span of time. Stage theory divides culture shock into a number of stages. The number of stages changes depending on where an author emphasizes. According to Bochner & Furnham (1994), as cited in Skierlo (2007), these stage theories are more or less comparable and are likely to overlap to a certain extent. In Oberg's 1960 stage theory (Skierlo 2007), there are four stages of culture shock: Honeymoon stage, Crisis, Recovery, and Adjustment. The Honeymoon stage is identified as "an initial reaction of fascination, enthusiasm, and enchantment." "During the first few weeks most individuals are fascinated by the new", states Oberg (1960). The duration of Honeymoon stage may vary from a few days to six months in different situations. Sojourners have superficial, yet cordial and friendly relationships with hosts. After that comes the Crisis stage, when sojourners begin dealing with the real life. Feelings of anxiety, frustration,

anger, and inadequacy are precipitated by dissimilarities in concepts, values, language, familiar symbols, and signs. Thus, an aggressive and hostile attitude towards the host country is formed. As a result, sojourners and their fellow countrymen tend to band together and blame the host culture. The decision whether to stay or leave the country depends on the degree to which the Crisis stage affects sojourners. If an individual fails to survive the second stage, he or she will rather leave to avoid a nervous breakdown. Conversely, if the person succeeds at this stage, he or she will stay and supposedly move on to the next stage. As sojourners become familiar with the host country's language and culture, the Crisis stage may be resolved and the Recovery stage sets in. Not only do sojourners recover, they even develop a superior attitude towards the local. Finally, the Adjustment stage is when sojourners are able to enjoy the foreign culture, although they may still feel anxious and strained sometimes. Sojourners are no longer bothered by the host country's customs. In fact, some of the customs might follow them back to their home countries. (Skierlo 2007, pp. 55-57.)

The stage theory of Peter S. Adler (1975), as cited in Skierlo (2007), attempts to depict the acculturation process in a slightly different way. Despite having similar concept to Oberg's, Adler introduces five stages of culture shock: Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Autonomy, and Independence. The Contact stage focuses on first contact with a foreign culture. While remaining functionally integrated in one's own culture, the sojourner perceives the foreign culture "from the insularity of his or her own ethnocentrism." However, the Contact stage is mostly filled with excitement and euphoria. The resemblances between the new culture and the sojourner's may validate his or her own cultural status, and encourage the sojourner to keep behaving in his or her cultural way. In the Disintegration stage, confusion and disorientation are highlighted. The attention of the sojourner shifts from similarities towards the differences between host and home culture, since they appear more notable. As a result, there is an increase in sense of difference, isolation, and inadequacy. Adler adds, "Bewilderment, alienation, depression, and withdrawal give rise to disintegration of personality as confusion over individual identity in the new cultural 'scheme of things' mounts." Next is the Reintegration stage, in

which rejections of cultural differences and similarities are a distinguishable characteristic. These rejections happen through stereotyping, generalization and judgmental behavior. In the third stage, the individual may search for relationships solely with fellow compatriots. In spite of being referred to as a negative behavior, rejection, as a form of self-assertion and developing self-esteem, actually generates positive effects. Both cultural awareness and the ability to act on feelings advance. The Reintegration stage is an important phase for the sojourner because of its ambiguous effects on him or her. Depending on the severity of individual experiences, the sojourner may either return to the superficial behavior of the Contact stage, or move forward to difficulties resolution. Additionally, Adler suggests, "returning home may also be an alternative to the dilemmas posed by stressful experiences in the second culture." The Autonomy stage demonstrates the enhancement of intercultural sensitivity, followed by the acquisition of both understanding and skills of the new culture. Much as the sojourner is confident of his or her expertise in the host culture, the actual depth of these skills and understanding is not as noticeable as it seems. Furthermore, the sojourner is able to justify differences and enjoys being an "insider" in two different cultures. Last but not least, in the Independence stage, the sojourner entirely welcomes and appreciates social, psychological, and cultural differences and similarities. He or she has the capability to put meaning into situations and recapture the whole spectrum of emotions, behaviors, and attitudes in earlier stages. Besides, attitudes, emotionality, and behaviors of the sojourner "are independent but not undependent of cultural influence". The individual is able to perform experiential learning, while allowing values, assumptions, and attitudes to be challenged at the same time. (Skierlo 2007, pp. 57-59.)

The stage theories of Oberg and Adler gave inspiration to many other authors. For example, Elisabeth Marx's model was developed from Kalvero Oberg's theory. While Oberg's model is linear, Marx's one emphasizes "a rather dynamic and repetitive cycle of positive and negative phases of adaptation". There are seven stages in Marx's model: Honeymoon phase, Culture shock, Recovery, Culture shock, Recovery, Culture shock, and Breaking through. Marx's definition of the stages is similar to that of Oberg. The original model is

broadened by repeating the stages Culture shock and Recovery, as well as adding the last stage Breaking through. Paul Pedersen proposes another model deriving from Peter S. Adler's. As a result of being a combination of Adler's and Oberg's models, Pedersen's model consists of these five stages: Honeymoon, Disintegration, Reintegration, Autonomy, and Independence. According to Bochner & Furnham (1994), as cited in Skierlo (2007), "one of the more interesting consequences of these stage-wise theories is the debate on the U- or W-curve." (Skierlo 2007, pp. 59-60.)

2.1.3 U-curve

The U-curve was introduced the first time by Sverre Lysgaard in 1955, and was amplified later in 1960 by Kalvero Oberg. Hofstede (1997) also claims that the acculturation process is often depicted by sojourners in a u-shaped form. The U-curve underlines four stages, or phases. The first phase is marked by euphoria and excitement of traveling. This phase is often called the Honeymoon stage. The second phase is when the real life in the new culture begins, hence the period of culture shock. In the third phase, the sojourner has adapted to the new conditions, i.e. he or she has learned some local values. The final phase comes when the sojourner eventually achieves a stable state of mind. It is obvious that the U-curve model can demonstrate the stage theories of Kalvero Oberg and Peter S. Adler without changing the label of stages much or affecting the shape of the curve. Only adding entirely new stages can influence the curve's shape. (Skierlo 2007, pp.60-61.)

2.1.4 Growth model of culture shock

Even though "the experience of acculturative stress is not necessarily negative", argues Pedersen (1995) as cited in Skierlo (2007), potentially positive aspects of change and adaptation have not been stressed by many writers. In the growth model of culture shock, a rather good perspective of adaptation is emphasized, which claims that the individual's acculturation might be stimulated, motivated and enhanced by culture shock. Therefore, Pedersen concludes that "the experience of culture shock can be deemed a form of learning and educational growth." An intercultural exchange offers sojourners a

chance to discover themselves. Sojourners are able to understand themselves better during the progress of handling new and unfamiliar dimensions of human diversity. Thus, Adler (1975) encourages people to exceed the boundaries of culture, ego, and thinking. (Skierlo 2007, p.63.)

2.2   Stages of culture shock

In this subchapter, the stages of culture shock are defined in the manner of Paul Pedersen's stage theory, since it is the advanced combination of the two most relevant stage theories: Kalvero Oberg's and Peter S. Adler's. Another important point is that the order of the stages is not rigid. The sojourner possibly returns to previous stages occasionally. This subchapter is adapted from subchapter 3.4 of the book "Avoiding Culture Shock" by Armin Skierlo (2007, pp. 69-75).

2.2.1   Honeymoon stage

The Honeymoon stage, also known as the Tourist stage, is marked by a high degree of fascination, adventure, optimism, or excitement. Nevertheless, these feelings may have negative effects on the sojourner's perception. He or she tends to be too absorbed in the new environment to observe all of its aspects. Therefore, the sojourner is possibly lured into an unsafe situation unconsciously. Moreover, one can accidentally cause offence to the host culture for not knowing the rules. The native identity of the sojourner is still so strong that it prevents him or her from integrating with the foreign culture. The span of the Honeymoon stage cannot be measured exactly, because the adjustment ability of each individual is different. This stage probably happens regularly, or even lasts for the whole sojourn.

2.2.2   Disintegration stage

After an uncertain amount of time, the sojourner's life begins to be influenced by the host culture unexpectedly and uncontrollably. As the positive feelings in the Honeymoon stage fade, contrasts between the foreign and native culture appear more obvious. As a consequence, the sojourner may feel frustrated, tensed, anxious or feel like a failure. The Disintegration stage is best

characterized by a severe feeling of disorientation, confusion, or even profound loss. The sojourner is aware of his or her alienation, which depresses him or her more than before. These feelings can cause a complete disintegration of personality in extreme cases, meaning the sojourner removes his or her native identity because of its unsuitability, while he or she has not yet developed a new identity. Pain and helplessness are the typical symptoms of sojourners during this second stage. Other common reactions are depression, withdrawal, avoidance of contact, and self-blaming. "The second stage of culture shock highlights the disintegration process when persons going through culture shock tend to blame themselves for everything that is going wrong around them", states Pedersen (1995). This stage is considered agonizing, at least for people encountering self-blame.

2.2.3 Reintegration stage

According to Pedersen (1995), the Reintegration stage is not only "the beginning of recovery" but also the most volatile stage in the culture shock process". The beginning of the Reintegration stage is accompanied by a strong refusal of the host country and a heavy usage of stereotypes and prejudices to assess incidents in the host country. Sojourners tend to criticize other people for misunderstandings in the new environment. "The individual will perceive herself or himself to be under attack and will be likely to defend herself or himself and take a self-protective position toward the host culture", explains Pedersen (1995). In this stage, reintegration is set up by the outward-directed anger together with the increasing knowledge of the host culture. Moreover, a new identity is formed, based on the refusal of the host culture. Cognitive and emotional experiences with the foreign culture are the foundation of this identity. The extremity of emotions, the level of stress, as well as the chance and eagerness to adjust things determine the decision of the sojourner to either go back to the superficial tourist phase or move forward to higher-degree integration and equitable settlement of conflict in regards to perceived external threats. The third stage is different from the second stage in the way sojourners place their criticism for problems. In the third stage, instead of blaming themselves like in the second stage, sojourners choose to blame local people so as to defend themselves. Additionally, there is a possibility that sojourners

stop at the Reintegration stage without progressing to the next stage. A few of Pedersen's students are reported to be "indeed stuck in this third stage of hostility toward unfamiliar cultures as being consistently inferior to the more familiar back-home cultures." It is usual for sojourners to feel unlucky, angry, exploited, misunderstood, insulted, and humiliated during the Reintegration stage. (Skierlo 2007.)

2.2.4 Autonomy stage

After going through the first three stages, sojourners are ready to create a new viewpoint between their native identity and the host culture. A fair and neutral perspective of the entire situation is built, i.e. both negative and positive aspects of the host culture are taken into consideration. Therefore, sojourners no longer blame themselves or the host culture. The urge to protect oneself decreases and "there is a new sensitivity resulting in skills and understandings about the host culture and the person's new identity." With the decrease in dependence on other people, and the increase in intercultural competence as well as self-awareness, sojourners might even be so overconfident of their level of adjustment that they think they are now experts on the host culture. Nonetheless, it is still possible for sojourners to behave improperly in spite of their achieved understanding of the host culture. Self-assurance and relaxation are the feelings of sojourners in this stage. They also improve independence and self-confidence in making the right decision. Pedersen (1995) concludes, "There is little of the illusion of the first stage nor the pain of the second stage nor the anger of the third stage but rather a synthesis in a more complex but also competent role for the student in the host culture." As mentioned above, not all sojourners can reach the Autonomy stage, yet those who can give positive description of it. These sojourners characterize themselves as sensitive, experienced, independent, important, courageous, aware, and accurate. Besides, the host culture generally receives a positive viewpoint from students.

2.2.5 Interdependence stage

"The last stage in most descriptions of culture shock aims at the goal of bicultural or multicultural identity", claims Pedersen (1995). The sojourner evolves from alienation to a new identity. He or she enjoys both the native and foreign cultures in spite of numerous differences between his or her home and host cultures. These differences no longer irritate the sojourner, thanks to the recently developed identity. Furthermore, the degree of sensitivity and trust has been improved greatly. Eventually, sojourners are able to understand the cultural context around them. On the other hand, the Interdependence stage is difficult to reach. According to Pedersen (1995), a bicultural or multicultural identity is only accomplished by a handful of sojourners. As a reward, these people achieve a variety of insights about the cultures in contact. (Skierlo 2007.)

2.3 Causes of culture shock

Rhinesmith (1985) as cited in Winkelman (1994) explains culture shock on the basis of two major problems faced by sojourners when living abroad: the difficulty of a foreign cultural environment and the absence of intimate home surroundings. Winkelman (1994) specifies these two problems by introducing four factors that generate culture shock: Stress reactions, Cognitive fatigue, Role shock, and Personal shock. (Winkelman 1994, p. 122.)

2.3.1 Stress reactions

Guyton (1986) as cited in Winkelman (1994) adds that numerous physiological reactions caused by stress include "mass discharges of the sympathetic nervous system, impairment of the functioning of the immune system, and increased susceptibility to all diseases". Thus, the occurrence of stress induced by physiological and psychological factors is a typical result of adaptation process to a foreign culture. In a psychosomatic interaction, the physical health and responses are influenced by the psychological conditions. Consecutively, a variety of negative feelings, namely stress, anxiety, depression, and uneasiness, escalates. (Winkelman 1994, p. 123.)

2.3.2 Cognitive fatigue

Guthrie (1975) as cited in Winkelman (1994) claims cognitive fatigue to be a crucial feature of culture shock. Gaining knowledge about the host culture requires a lot of effort because of the complexity of culture. Not only meanings of the language but also non-verbal, behavioral, contextual, and social communications need to be interpreted. In one's own native culture, the sojourner processes these elements automatically, unconsciously, and effortlessly. Nevertheless, in order to understand these elements of a foreign culture, the sojourner must endeavor consciously with great attention. This adjustment tends to exhaust and overload the sojourner with information, which causes cognitive fatigue. (Winkelman 1994, p. 123.)

2.3.3 Role shock

An individual's well-being is supported by social roles through structuring social interaction, based on which individual identity is preserved partially. When cultural surroundings change, the majority of former social roles and interpersonal relations are removed and taken over by unaccustomed roles and expectations. As a consequence, role shock occurs when individual social position becomes ambiguous, usual social relations and roles are missing, as well as new roles develop incompatibly with prior self-concept. (Winkelman 1994, p. 123.)

2.3.4 Personal shock

Another facet of culture shock, described by Winkelman (1994), is personal shock, deriving from various alterations in personal life. The sojourner develops and preserves psychological temperament, self-esteem, identity, sense of well-being, contentment with life in his or her native culture. When moving abroad and exposing to a foreign culture, the sojourner is no longer supported by his or her cultural system; hence a degradation in sense of well-being and pathological symptoms. (Winkelman 1994, p. 123.)

Furthermore, the level of social support sojourners receive while living abroad also changes. Social support is described as the availability of beneficial

relationships. Bochner & Furnham (1994) as cited in Skierlo (2007) emphasize the importance of "support provided by interpersonal relationships" in "determining a person's general adaptive functioning and sense of well-being". (Skierlo 2007, p. 65.) Besides, Hammer, Gudykunst & Wiseman (1978) as cited in Ward, Bochner & Furnham (2001) highlights that the lack of social support is connected with higher likelihood of physical and psychological problems during cross-cultural sojourns. One of various sources of social support is family, friends, and acquaintances. (Ward et al. 2001, p. 85.) This source is substantially reduced when sojourners are in the host country, leading to negative effects on their physical and mental health (Skierlo 2007, p. 65). Social support also comes from members of the host country. Klineberg and Hull (1979) as cited in Ward et al. (2001) propose that having a comfortable and satisfying relationship with the host citizens increases general satisfaction of foreign students (Ward et al. 2001, p. 87). Unfortunately, this ideal situation does not happen to all sojourners. Therefore, a number of foreign students suffer from culture shock caused by the absence of support from the host culture.

During a sojourn, "one's personal and cultural sense of basic morals, values, logic, and beliefs about normality and civility" can be disrupted by happenings in the host culture, leading to personal shock. Moreover, the occurrence of value clashes generates a feeling of disorientation and unreality. (Winkelman 1994, p. 123.) Hofstede (1997) as cited in Skierlo (2007) believes that differences in cultural values contribute to culture shock. Unlike other visible features of culture such as rituals, heroes, and symbols, cultural values are so subtle that most foreigners easily miss them. In order to adapt to the host culture, sojourners must try to understand its basic values. However, because most people possess basic values of their culture in their mind unconsciously, having to learn the simplest values, this time of another culture, over again may make them feel upset, incompetent and belligerent towards the new culture. (Skierlo 2007, p. 67.)

2.3.5 Perceived discrimination

Sojourners perceive discrimination when they are held in low regard by the host citizens. Perceived discrimination is accountable for decreased willingness to accept host culture identity. Other adverse consequences of perceived discrimination are increased stress, identity conflict, depression and social skills deficits. Nonetheless, the intensity of psychological, social and cultural effects of perceived discrimination depends on various factors. (Ward et al. 2001, p. 115.)

2.4 Symptoms of culture shock

Experiencing culture shock affects sojourners both psychologically and physically. These effects last until sojourners are able to adapt to the new environment. Moreover, according to Skierlo (2007), Oberg (1960) states that "individuals differ greatly in the degree in which culture shock affects them". Culture shock is characterized by Hofstede (1997) in Skierlo (2007) as a state of distress, resulting from being in an unfamiliar environment. The distress is counted as one of psychological symptoms of culture shock, which may be followed by physical symptoms. There is possibility that sojourners cannot complete the sojourn due to extreme symptoms of culture shock. Oberg's list of psychological symptoms consists of the superfluous hand washing; illogically great worries over drinking water, food and dishes, bedding. Other symptoms such as the alarm of physical contacts; and the absent-minded stare, also known as the "tropical stare" are included. Besides, sojourners can feel helpless and dependent on their compatriots. The list is extended by Maletzke (1996) in Skierlo (2007) with these symptoms: an exaggerated angst of being cheated, robbed, or injured; big concerns over minor pains; acrimony over delays; and other dissatisfactions because of contradictory orientation towards time. Oberg (1960) also adds that culture shock may appear under the form of homesickness and yearning to return home. (Skierlo 2007, pp. 63-64.) It is critical for sojourners to pay attention to significant and acute symptoms of culture shock recommended by Kohls (1979) as cited in Winkelman (1994), such as withdrawal and inordinate sleeping; uncontrollable eating and drinking; exaggerated irritability and animosity; ineffective work performance; and

inexplicable crying. The stress burden to which sojourners are exposed diminishes the operation of immune system. (Winkelman 1994, p. 123.) Therefore, in addition to psychological symptoms, sojourners may experience these physical illnesses suggested by Hansel (1993): headaches, stomachaches, insomnia, diarrhea, and loss of appetite (Skierlo 2007, p. 64).

2.5 Managing culture shock

2.5.1 Predeparture preparation

The readiness to deal with difficulties caused by culture shock, and the willingness to change to acculturate are different from one sojourner to another. Therefore, individuals are suggested to assess how well they can adapt to a foreign culture prior to their departure. It is essential for sojourners to react realistically to fundamental changes and recognize unavoidable obstacles while living abroad. Culture shock can be reduced by preparation for trouble and usage of resources that boost coping and adjustment. Sojourners are advised to face the fact that culture shock is responsible for inducing or aggravating all unusual issues during cross-cultural adaptation. Furthermore, the increase in common negative reactions of sojourners should not be denied. Only by doing so can individuals tolerate better and carry out problem-resolution strategies. According to Black & Mendenhall (1990) as cited in Winkelman (1994), cross-cultural training promotes the adjustment process by assisting alteration, skills enhancement, performance, and effectiveness in a foreign culture. Specifically, thanks to cross-cultural training, sojourners are able to acquire skills and cultural knowledge; hence improvement in behaviors and the decrease in misunderstandings. As value differences are one of major causes of culture shock, it is useful for sojourners to gain knowledge about basic value clashes which they are likely to experience in the host culture. Self-awareness is strongly supported by value evaluations, since an individual cannot be prepared to deal with possible conflicts without knowing one's own values. Studying the host culture's natural social behavior helps sojourners get ready for reacting to the types of behaviors in the new environment. Sojourners should keep in mind the ethnocentrism of cultures, meaning members of the host culture usually hold their own cultural ways in high regard. Thus, it is important to be

psychologically ready for alienation, rejection, prejudice, and discrimination. Besides, sojourners are advised to keep a positive attitude towards the host culture instead of criticizing or comparing it with their native culture. (Winkelman 1994, pp. 123-124.)

2.5.2 Transition adjustments

The more available essential transition resources there are in the host country, the more conveniently sojourners adapt. Thus, these resources are vital for successful adjustment. For example, one cannot work effectively or develop social relations, self-esteem or other personal aspects if one's needs of physical well-being, e.g. food and security, are not satisfied. Besides, sojourners have more freedom to concentrate on the cultural adaptation matters when they receive help with basics, namely food, housing, and transportation. Walton (1990) (as cited in Winkelman 1994) proposes another crucial feature of cross-cultural adjustment, adaptation, and effectiveness: stress management. He claims the decline of ambiguity through awareness of the cross-cultural process; evolution of precise and practical expectations; and tolerance to promote adaptation. In order to manage stress effectively, an individual should be able to not only acknowledge and comprehend general and cultural particular forms of stress; but also discover anti-stress lifestyle activities. Moreover, according to Wengle (1988) (as cited in Winkelman 1994), stress management and preservation of individual well-being requires both maintenance and reparative behaviors. Maintenance behaviors are continual activities that support preserving personal identity and well-being. Reparative behaviors are activities that help rebuild lost essential features of one's self in the host culture. Examples of maintenance and reparative behaviors are: communicating in one's native language, having one's native cuisine, reading books and newspaper of one's country, interacting with one's compatriots at home, contacting home through letters or phone calls, extra sleeping, dreaming and fantasizing, or concentrating on tasks that strengthen one's self. Despite benefits that maintenance and reparative behaviors offer, they may prevent sojourners from accepting changes essential for adjustment to the foreign culture. (Winkelman 1994, p. 124.)

2.5.3 Personal and social relations

Prime relations, e.g. family or friends, support sojourners in growing self-esteem as well as satisfying personal and emotional needs in the new environment. Thus, sojourners are advised to preserve or rebuild a network of these relations so as to deal with culture shock effectively. (Winkelman 1994, p. 124.) Shelley (1997) recommends sojourners to write a diary for the purpose of releasing personal feelings and reassessing their activities and reactions periodically. This promotes observation and introspective skills. (Skierlo 2007, p. 79.) According to Adelman (1988) as cited in Winkelman (1994), social support provides "affirmation, acceptance, and assurance; and opportunities for venting emotions leading to understanding of stressful situations". Thus, Cohen & Syme (1985) state that social support networks alleviate numerous sources of stress. Furnham & Bochner (1986) also claim social support to help settle culture shock and boost cross-cultural adaptation. (Winkelman 1994, p. 124.) Social support from friends and acquaintances is divided into two categories: co-national versus host national support. Adelman (1988) as cited in Ward et al. (2001) declares that co-national relations or "comparable others", i.e. people encountering similar issues, do not only advise sojourners how to integrate with the host culture but also encourage and help let out the stress of adaptation process. According to Ward et al. (2001), Church (1982) extends the list of benefits co-national relations offer with the improvement of psychological security, self-esteem and sense of belonging; and the mitigation of stress, tension, feelings of impotence and isolation. On the other hand, host national support comes from good relationships with the host citizens. Sojourners who have pleasurable host national relationships are more likely to be mentally healthy. A number of researchers approve that the more frequently sojourners interact with the host members, the higher the chance that sojourners feel satisfied and adapt better is. Cultural-specific skills are acquired more easily through host national contact. (Ward et al. 2001, pp. 86-87.) Additionally, sojourners should join organizations such as "clubs, social groups, sports teams, artistic and theatrical productions, social concern groups" to receive organizational support. Social relations network can expand through activities

related to nonverbal communication channels, for instance "dances, concerts, sporting events, festivals". (Winkelman 1994, p. 124.)

2.5.4 Cultural and social interaction rules

In spite of the great importance of language skills, understanding a new culture requires more than just learning the native language. Sojourners should also educate themselves in diverse patterns of nonverbal communication, such as "paralinguistic conventions; social interaction patterns; kinesics and proxemics; behavioral communications including gestures, gaze, and postures; emotional communication; interpersonal behavior patterns and rules; and patterns of social reasoning". In other words, it is essential for sojourners to learn how to relate, communicate, reason, manage, and negotiate in the host culture's ways. Furthermore, cognitive flexibility (receptiveness to novel ideas, beliefs, and experiences) and behavioral flexibility (ability to behave in the host's styles if necessary) enable sojourners to justify the logic in the host culture and the behaviors of its citizens, even though sojourners cannot comprehend them. Individuals should make effort to perceive the host culture from its member's viewpoint so that they feel less stressed and welcome the new culture more easily. Publications about the culture are useful to gain cognitive mastery, which Copeland & Griggs (1985) (as cited in Winkelman 1994) consider the "best antidote for cultural shock". Sojourners are also encouraged to join the daily life of the foreign culture to observe, question and practice social behavior patterns, which is beneficial to cultural adjustment and adaptation. (Winkelman 1994, pp. 124-125.)

2.5.5 Conflict resolution and intercultural effectiveness skills

The occurrence of problems in the host country is not abnormal; thus, sojourners should admit it and find out how to solve those issues. Winkelman (1994) suggests a procedure for easier adjustment to culture shock as follows. Firstly, individuals should predict challenging social circumstances. Then, conflicts are examined to determine problems. Next, possible resolutions are taken into account and finally, sojourners undertake actions to fix the problems. Similarly, Harris and Moran (1987) (as cited in Winkelman 1994) introduce

another process of resolving cross-cultural problems. The initial step is depicting, studying, and diagnosing the problem from viewpoints of the two cultures. After that comes the establishment of a synergistic strategy. Last but not least, the effectiveness is evaluated in a multicultural way. Hammer et al. (1978) (Winkelman 1994) recommend that generating a third cultural viewpoint which is separate from both host and home cultures is advantageous to improving the patience with ambiguity and essential disengagement to prevent being dragged into conflicts. Moreover, it is vital that sojourners avoid being judgmental when cultural conflicts occur, and exercise cultural relativism by "recognizing that cultural behavior is reasonable in the context of the cultural individual who produces it". Since the lack of intercultural competence is one of major causes of culture shock, enhancing intercultural communication and adaptation skills is crucial to alleviate stress reactions, communication difficulties, and hindered interpersonal and social relations. A sojourner is regarded interculturally competent if he or she is able to manage mental pressure; communicate effectively; build interpersonal relationships; interpret and adjust to a new culture; and cope with various social structures. According to Cui and Van den Berg (1991), as cited in Winkelman (1994), intercultural effectiveness consists of three elements, which are communication competence (language skills; the capability to start, set up and preserve relationships), cultural empathy (tolerance; the recognition of cultural distinctions; an empathy for the culture), and communication behavior (suitable social behavior; display of respect). In addition to support culture shock management, intercultural effectiveness is confirmed to promote cultural adaptation. (Winkelman 1994, p. 125.)

3 German versus Vietnamese culture

3.1 Geert Hofstede's dimensions of national culture

The National Culture research of Geert Hofstede studies the value differences between groups of nations and/or regions by surveying over 100,000 employees of IBM, a multinational company with subsidiaries in more than 60 countries (Lustig & Koester 2006, p. 115; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010).

The research first started with four independent dimensions: Power Distance (large versus small), Uncertainty Avoidance (strong versus weak), Individualism versus Collectivism, and Masculinity versus Femininity. On these four dimensions, 40 countries were positioned using a scale of 0-100 points. Nowadays, the number of analyzed countries has increased to 76. The fifth dimension Long Term versus Short Term Orientation and the sixth one Indulgence versus Restraint were added in 1991 and 2010 respectively. Scores for these two dimensions are available in 91 countries. (Hofstede et al. 2010.)
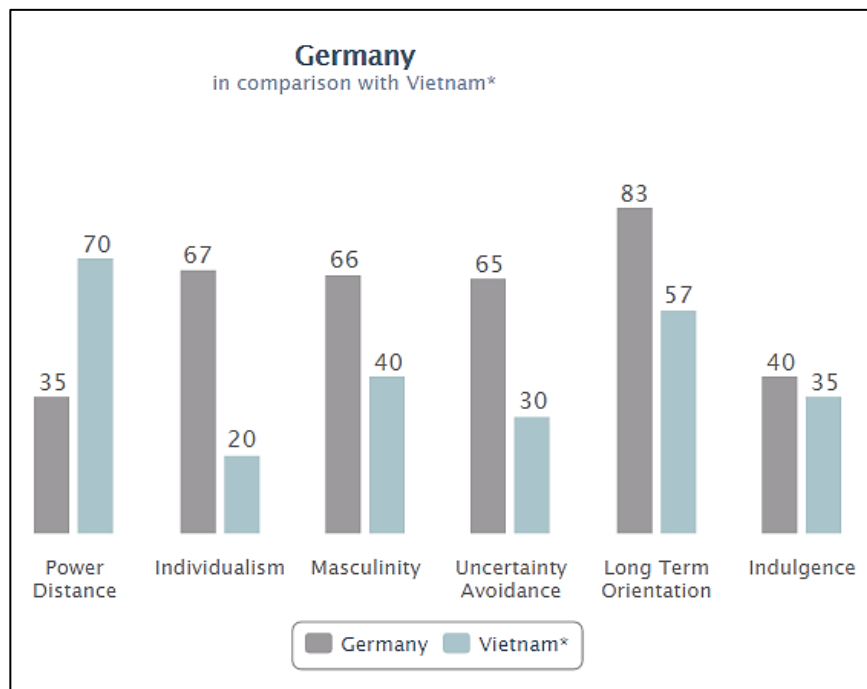
Figure 1. Germany in comparison with Vietnam (Geert Hofstede n.d.)

3.1.1 Individualism versus Collectivism

Some cultures favor individual uniqueness and independence; others prefer individual conformity and interdependence. These differences are reflected by Hofstede's Individualism versus Collectivism dimension. (Lustig & Koester 2006, p. 115.) This dimension focuses on "the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members". In other words, it indicates whether people view themselves as "I" or "We". People in Individualist societies are alleged to be responsible for themselves and their immediate family exclusively. In contrast, members of Collectivist societies are looked after by "in groups" to

which they belong; and in return, they express loyalty to these groups. In this dimension, Germany scores 67, meaning German society is definitely an Individualist one. On the other hand, Vietnam only scores 20, meaning Vietnamese society is inevitably a Collectivist one. (Hofstede et al. 2010.) Individualist societies value freedom of the individual the most. Thus, personal attitudes and opinions are what Individualists endeavor to preserve (Neuliep 2015, p. 50). Typical traits of these cultures are "independence, privacy, self, and the all-important I". Since Individualists consider themselves as the prime source of motivation, they make decisions on the basis of their own benefits. Individualists choose to devote loyalty as well as sense of duty and responsibility to people they prefer (Hofstede et al. 2010). Conversely, in Collectivist societies, an absolute loyalty to the group is demanded. "Obligations to the group, dependence of the individual on organizations and institutions, a "we" consciousness, and an emphasis on belonging" are fundamental values of Collectivist cultures. Moreover, Triandis (1995) claims that group harmony is another value which members of numerous Collectivist cultures emphasize (Neuliep 2015, p. 52). Benefits of the group are always prioritized over individual benefits when decisions are to be made. Because of the group-orientation, collectivists are likely to treat in-group and out-group members differently. While loyalty, strong relationships and support are promoted within the in-group (Lustig & Koester 2006, p. 117; Hofstede et al. 2010), the out-group are nearly triviality to Collectivists. On the contrary, to Individualists, the gulf between in-group and out-group members is not significant. Another major difference between Individualists and Collectivists lies in the way they deal with problems and conflicts. In order to resolve interpersonal issues, confrontational strategies tend to be used by Individualists, while Collectivists try to avoid or use third-party intermediaries as well as other face-saving techniques. "In collectivistic cultures, offence leads to shame and loss of face" (Hofstede et al. 2010). In classrooms, it is common for individualistic students to raise questions, yet collectivistic students are often silent (Lustig & Koester 2006, p. 119).

3.1.2 Power Distance

Human inequality exists to a certain extent in every culture. The acceptability and significance of status differences and social hierarchies vary from one culture to another. (Lustig & Koester 2006, p. 122; Neuliep 2015, p. 82.) Hofstede's Power Distance dimension measures how much the unequal distribution of power is expected and accepted by the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country. In this dimension, Vietnam has a high score of 70, meaning power distance in Vietnamese culture is large. In contrast, Germany has a low score of 35, meaning power distance in German culture is small. (Hofstede et al. 2010.) Members of large power distance cultures anticipate and favor human inequalities. People with less power should depend on those with more power. Conversely, members of small power distance cultures strive to minimize human inequalities and believe that interdependence should be maintained between less powerful and more powerful people. (Neuliep 2015, p. 82.) The level of power distance is reflected in family, classroom, organization and other aspects of social life. Parents in large power distance cultures teach their children to be obedient and not to challenge or question them. On the other hand, in small power distance cultures, equality and democracy are emphasized among family members (Neuliep 2015, p. 82). In countries with large power distance, compliance with the wishes and requests of teachers are mandatory. Students are also taught to conform. Consequently, learning by rote is very common, yet asking questions is not encouraged as questions are regarded as a threat to the teacher's authority. On the contrary, education in small power distance countries is student oriented; hence students are encouraged to use their initiative and interact with teachers (Neuliep 2015, p.82). Moreover, students often learn by asking questions, finding innovative problem solutions, and challenging information they receive from teachers. Since students value their independence, they do not stress the conformity with teachers' expectations. While large power distance cultures favor positional power (power that is based on formal authority), small power distance cultures prefer earned power (power based on achievements, hard work, and effort of an individual) (Neuliep 2015, p. 83). As a result, autocratic or centralized decision-making style is adopted by

managers in cultures with large power distance; and close supervision is anticipated by their subordinates. In contrast, in cultures with small power distance, consultative or participative decision-making style is widely used by managers; and their subordinates prefer working independently with a considerable amount of autonomy. (Lustig & Koester 2006, p. 125.)

3.1.3 Uncertainty Avoidance

There is always a part of the future that cannot be predicted. The level of tolerance for the unpredictability is different between cultures; hence the variation of their means chosen to manage change. (Lustig & Koester 2006, p. 119.) Uncertainty Avoidance dimension created by Hofstede evaluates "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these". With a score of 65, German culture belongs to uncertainty avoidant group, although the avoidance is marginal. In comparison with Germany, Vietnam has a relatively low score of 30, meaning Vietnamese culture is not likely to avoid uncertainty. (Hofstede et al. 2010.) Members of high uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) cultures believe that it is a must to continuously fight against unpredictability. Thus, they often feel pressed and anxious, resulting in a stressful life. Conversely, members of low UAI view uncertainty as a usual part of life and accept each day as it comes. (Neuliep 2015, p. 89.) In high UAI countries, consensus about goals of the society is emphasized; yet dissent or deviance from social norms is not tolerated. A broad set of rules, regulations and rituals is used to guarantee certainty and security. People in these countries are also more likely to resist change and innovation. In contrast, in low UAI countries, it is acceptable for cultural members to dissent and deviate from social norms. (Lustig and Koester 2006, pp. 119-120.) Only essential rules are maintained, whereas ambiguous or dysfunctional ones should be discarded or adjusted (Hofstede et al. 2010). Innovative ideas are highly tolerated even if they may clash with the norm. High UAI cultures highly value time, punctuality and precision. On the contrary, low UAI cultures see time as a guide instead of a master. "Precision and punctuality are learned because they do not come naturally." (Neuliep 2015, p. 89.)

3.1.4 Masculinity versus Femininity

Another value difference between cultures is shown in the preference for achievement and assertiveness or nurture and social support (Lustig & Koester 2006, p. 125). This value difference is characterized in Hofstede's Masculinity versus Femininity dimension. According to Hofstede, the major point of this dimension lies in "what motivates people, wanting to be the best (Masculine) or liking what you do (Feminine)". While the desires in Masculine society are competition, accomplishment and success; Feminine society emphasizes caring for others and quality of life. Moreover, in Feminine society, success is measured by the quality of life; and being outstanding is not commendable. (Hofstede et al. 2010.) In Masculine cultures, assertiveness is associated with men and nurture is associated with women. Men and women also have separate roles. Sexual inequality is considered as advantageous. On the contrary, in Feminine cultures, it is possible for both men and women to be nurturing. Sexual equality is the norm. Accomplishments appeal less to men in Feminine cultures than men in Masculine cultures. (Lustig & Koester 2006, p. 128.) In this dimension, Germany scores 66, meaning it is a Masculine country, whereas Vietnam is a Feminine country with a score of 40. Germans value and demand performance at an early stage. This is shown through the fact that children are divided into various types of schools when they are only ten. Besides, German people "live in order to work". Self-worth is gained from tasks. In business organizations, managers are anticipated to possess decisiveness and assertiveness. Germans are likely to show status with cars, watches and technical devices. Conversely, as a Feminine society, Vietnamese "work in order to live". In business organizations, consensus is important to managers. Equality, solidarity and quality in working life are emphasized. Well-being is also central. Therefore, favorite incentives of Vietnamese people are free time and flexibility. When conflicts occur, Vietnamese people compromise or negotiate with each other. Unlike Masculine cultures, Feminine cultures do not show status. (Hofstede et al. 2010.)

3.1.5 Long Term versus Short Term Orientation

The fifth dimension is based on data from Chinese Value Survey, conducted by Michael H. Bond and his team of researchers from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Michael H. Bond himself has lived in Asia for thirty years. Therefore, this dimension can avoid the Western bias that the previous four dimensions have since they were carried out by scholars from Europe or the United States. Long Term versus Short Term Orientation analyzes time orientation of cultures. (Lustig & Koester 2006, p. 128.) According to Hofstede, it expresses "how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future". For Normative cultures (cultures with a low score), time-honored traditions and norms should be preserved; whereas societal change should be considered with suspicion. In contrast, Pragmatic cultures (cultures with a high score) tend to get ready for the future by promoting thrift and efforts in modern education. In this dimension, Germany scores 83 and Vietnam scores 57, meaning they are both pragmatic cultures. However, German culture is much more pragmatic than Vietnamese culture because the score of Germany is near the extreme, while the score of Vietnam is only slightly higher than the average. In pragmatic societies, "truth depends very much on situation, context and time". As conditions change, traditions will be adjusted to fit new situations. People incline to save and invest. Results are accomplished with thriftiness and perseverance. (Hofstede et al. 2010.)

3.1.6 Indulgence versus Restraint

The sixth dimension is developed on the basis of Michael Minkov's analysis of the World Values Survey data. According to Hofstede, Indulgence versus Restraint dimension measures "the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses". This value difference results from the socialization of cultural members. Cultures with low control are indulgent, whereas those with high control are restrained. In Indulgent societies, members are free to satisfy their basic and natural impulses connected with enjoying life and having fun. Conversely, in Restrained societies, needs of members are suppressed and regulated by strict social norms. Germany scores 40 and Vietnam scores 35 in this dimension. Thus, they are Restrained countries. Cynicism and pessimism

are typical among cultural members. Leisure time is unimportant to Restrained cultural members. The gratification of desires is controlled; and indulgence is discouraged. (Hofstede et al. 2010.)

Germany	Vietnam
Individualist ▪ "I" consciousness ▪ Independence ▪ Responsible for oneself and one's immediate family ▪ Autonomy ▪ Protect personal attitudes and behaviors ▪ Decisions based on personal benefits ▪ No difference between in-group and out-group members ▪ Confrontation is typical ▪ Students often ask questions	**Collectivist** ▪ "We" consciousness ▪ Interdependence ▪ Take care of in-group members ▪ Group loyalty and obligation ▪ Maintain sense of belonging, group harmony ▪ Decisions based on group benefits ▪ The in-group are more important than the out-group ▪ Confrontation is avoided due to loss of face ▪ Students are often silent
Small Power Distance ▪ Minimize human inequalities ▪ Democracy among family members ▪ Students value independence ▪ Students learn by creative thinking ▪ Students interact with teacher ▪ Earned power	**Large Power Distance** ▪ Favor human inequalities ▪ Children are taught to be obedient ▪ Students comply with teacher's requests ▪ Students learn by rote ▪ Students are discouraged from asking questions ▪ Positional power

▪ Managers prefer consultative or participative decision-making style ▪ Subordinates like to work independently	▪ Managers prefer autocratic or centralized decision-making style ▪ Subordinates like to be supervised closely
High Uncertainty Avoidance ▪ Uncertainty must be fought ▪ Societal consensus is emphasized ▪ A broad set of rules, regulations and rituals ▪ Resistant to change and innovation ▪ Time, punctuality and precision are extremely important	**Low Uncertainty Avoidance** ▪ Uncertainty is a normal part of life ▪ Dissent and deviance is acceptable ▪ Only essential rules are maintained ▪ Receptive to change and innovation ▪ Time, punctuality and precision are less emphasized
Masculine ▪ Prefer assertiveness, achievement ▪ Separate roles for men and women. Men are assertive, women are nurturing ▪ Gender inequality ▪ One must be the best ▪ Live in order to work ▪ Managers are expected to be assertive and decisive ▪ Performance is demanded	**Feminine** ▪ Favor nurture, quality of life ▪ Both men and women can be nurturing ▪ Gender equality ▪ Being outstanding is not admirable ▪ Work in order to live ▪ Managers value consensus ▪ Equality, solidarity, quality of working life, well-being are emphasized

▪ Confront to solve conflicts ▪ Status is shown with cars, watches and technical devices	▪ Negotiate or compromise to solve conflicts ▪ Status is not shown

Long Term Orientation (Pragmatic)
- ▪ Truth depends on situation, context and time
- ▪ Traditions are adjusted to fit changed conditions
- ▪ Inclination to save and invest
- ▪ Thriftiness and perseverance in achieving results

Restraint
- ▪ Needs are suppressed and regulated by strict social norms
- ▪ Cynicism and pessimism
- ▪ Gratification of desires is controlled
- ▪ Indulgence is discouraged

Table 1. Summary of Hofstede's six dimensions of German and Vietnamese cultures

3.2 The Lewis Model

The Lewis Model was developed by Richard D. Lewis, a leading British linguist, in the 1990s. It stems from Edward T Hall's typology of monochronic (participating in one thing at a time) and polychronic (participating in multiple things at the same time) cultures. Data was collected from 50,000 executives and more than 150,000 online questionnaires in 68 countries. According to Lewis, regardless of geographical boundary or religion, cultures can be classified, on the basis of their behaviors, into three categories: Linear-active, Multi-active, and Reactive. (CrossCulture 2015.) Linear-actives are people who "plan, schedule, organize, pursue action chains, do one thing at a time". Multi-actives are animated, talkative people who love multitasking. Their priorities are arranged based on the relative thrill or significance attached to each appointment. Reactives are people who value courtesy and respect. They are quiet and calm listeners with careful reactions to the proposals of their partners.

(Lewis 2006, pp. xviii-xix.) Linear-active cultures include North America, Britain, Australia and New Zealand (the English-speaking world); together with Scandinavia and Germanic countries (Northern Europe). Reactive cultures exist in all major Asian countries, except the Indian sub-continent. Multi-active cultures are located in various parts of the world: Southern Europe, Mediterranean countries, South America, sub-Saharan Africa, Arab and other countries in the Middle East, India and Pakistan and the majority of the Slavs. (CrossCulture 2015.)
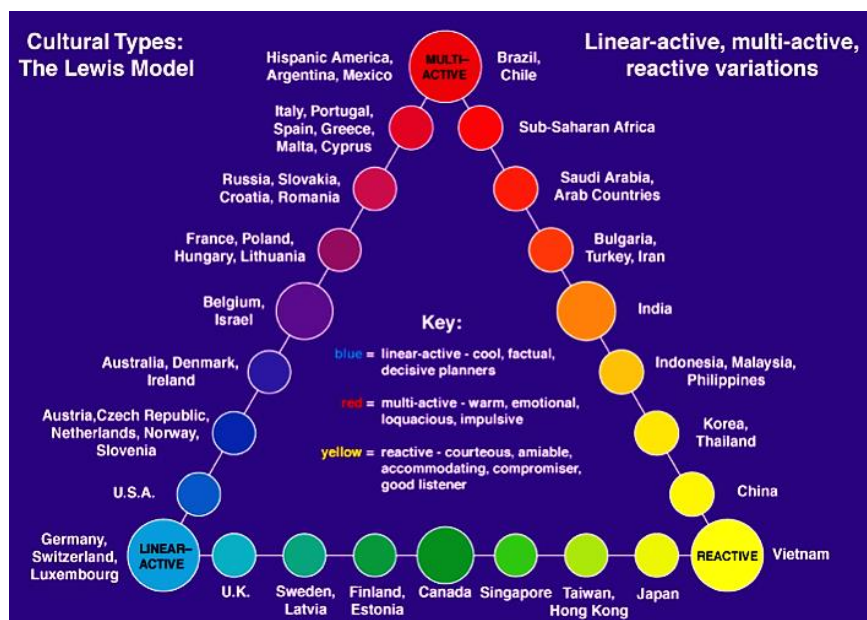
Figure 2. The Lewis Model (CrossCulture 2015)

3.2.1 The use of time

Germany belongs to Linear-active group, whereas Vietnam is Reactive country. Although Reactives get along quite well with Linear-actives (because "they react rather than initiate"), these two types still possess opposite traits that can lead to cultural clashes. The first difference is in the use of time. Germans are famous for being time-dominated. Time is so invaluable to them that they believe people are wasting time if they do not make any decisions or perform any actions. Besides, Germans prefer to be monochronic, meaning they focus on one task at a time and finish it before moving to the next task (Lewis 2006, p. 223). Time in Linear-active countries is "clock- and calendar-related, segmented in an abstract manner for our convenience, measurement and disposal". (Lewis

2006, pp. 54-57). Germans rigorously monitor schedules, action plans and deliveries. Therefore, punctuality is extremely important in Germany. A two- or three-minute delay is regarded as "arriving late"; and late-comers are seen as unreliable. (Lewis 2006, p. 225.) Unlike Germans who view time as Linear, Vietnamese perception of time is Cyclic (Lewis 2006, p. 482). This perception is typical in Eastern cultures. Cyclic time is described as a curved road which next year will take us through "scenery" and conditions resembling what we experience at the present. Cyclic time is supposed to be plenty and unlimited. Moreover, it is believed that time cannot be managed and that people should adapt to the laws and cyclic events of nature. Thus, planning in cultures with Cyclic time perception is less strict than in those with Linear time perception. Changes can be made if necessary. (Lewis 2006, pp. 57-61.)

A consequence of German linear time versus Vietnamese cyclic time is reflected in the way they plan and implement projects. Germans strictly follow a linear procedure. Firstly, project analysis is conducted. Then, Germans compartmentalize the whole project into separate sections. After that, problems are solved one by one and each segment is focused on. In the end, a near-perfect result is desired. (Lewis 2006, p. 32.) On the other hand, Vietnamese approach a project in a cyclic manner. They prefer viewing a project as a whole. Furthermore, Vietnamese take their time to reflect upon problems "instead of tackling problems immediately in sequential fashion". This way, they are able to recognize which tasks should be done and which tasks should be discarded. It is possible that the most significant task is the one that has been neglected at the beginning. (Lewis 2006, p. 58.)

Germans, like other Linear-active nationalities, work fixed hours. They prefer to complete all tasks within working hours. After going home, they do not like to be bothered with work as their leisure time is valuable (Lewis 2006, p. 225). Conversely, Vietnamese working hours are flexible. (Lewis 2006, p. 33.) Thus, it is common for them to stay late at the workplace or bring work home. In Vietnamese culture, this behavior shows hard work; yet in German culture, it can be misinterpreted as inefficiency and weak time management.

3.2.2 Communication pattern

Another difference between German and Vietnamese cultures is their communication styles. Germans have a reputation for their frankness, openness, directness and loudness. "Truth comes before diplomacy". When making a speech, Germans are usually serious, unsmiling and repetitive. They speak half of the time and spend the other half on listening (CrossCulture 2017). Confrontation with logic is typical. (Lewis 2006, p. 225.) Arguments are built on facts and figures from reliable sources (CrossCulture 2017). Germans accept criticism as long as they are constructive (Lewis 2006, p. 228). On the contrary, Vietnam is one of those listening cultures. They hardly ever start the conversation first but prefer to listen most of the time and react to their partners. (Lewis 2006, p. 32.) Vietnamese communication style is indirect. "Diplomacy comes before truth". (Lewis 2006, p. 40.) Very little of what Vietnamese actually mean lies in their remarks. The majority of the true meaning depends on "*how* it is said, *who* said it and what is *behind* what is said". It is possible that the core of the message is the part that Vietnamese do not say at all. (Lewis 2006, p. 37.) Besides, Vietnamese tend to express their attitudes and opinions through subtle body language. They also avoid confrontation to protect face of others. Especially, Vietnamese "have a great sense of pride" and never want to lose face; thus, they are very sensitive to criticism (Lewis 2006, p. 483). Vietnamese may use emotional factors in their arguments (Lewis 2006, p. 482). Reactive cultures, like Vietnamese, favor monologue as their mode of communication. They possibly allow their partner to speak first, listen to it attentively without interrupting; then take their time to contemplate it in silence before beginning with their monologue. Silence is not only tolerated very well by Reactives but also has a special meaning to them. It is used to indicate appreciation from Reactives to their partner for their excellent arguments or comments. Nevertheless, the silence of Reactives often confuses Linear-actives like Germans because they communicate in an opposite mode, which is dialogue. Linear-active people show their interest in their partner's speech by politely interrupting with comments or questions. After a person finishes speaking, the other starts his/her turn right away. This reflects how weak Linear-actives tolerate silence. (Lewis 2006, p. 35.)

Germany Linear-active	Vietnam Reactive
The use of time	
▪ Linear time ▪ Time is invaluable ▪ Time is managed strictly ▪ Plan, organize, schedule ▪ Fixed plans ▪ Compartmentalize projects ▪ Pursue action chains ▪ Work fixed hours	▪ Cyclic time ▪ Time is plenty and unlimited ▪ Time cannot be managed ▪ Adapt to the laws and cyclic events of nature ▪ Slight changes are possible ▪ View whole picture ▪ Perform tasks in a flexible order ▪ Work flexible hours
Communication pattern	
▪ Direct, frank ▪ Truth before diplomacy ▪ Speak half of the time ▪ Limited body language ▪ Confront with logic ▪ Facts and figures ▪ Criticism is acceptable ▪ Dialogue ▪ Silence is embarrassing	▪ Indirect ▪ Diplomacy before truth ▪ Listen most of the time ▪ Subtle body language ▪ Avoid confrontation ▪ Emotions ▪ Sensitive to criticism ▪ Monologue ▪ Silence is meaningful

Table 2. Typical differences between German and Vietnamese cultures based on the Lewis model

4 Qualitative research method

4.1 Overview

Wilson (2003) as cited by Mirola (2015) defined qualitative research as "research undertaken using an unstructured research approach with a small

number of carefully selected individuals to produce non-quantifiable insights into behavior, motivations and attitudes". Qualitative research is good at describing people's experience with a given research issue in an intricate textual way. Moreover, the research problem or topic is studied based on the viewpoints of the local population involved in the qualitative research. Therefore, qualitative researchers are able to collect cultural specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations effectively. The primary differences between quantitative and qualitative research methods are analytical objectives, types of questions, means of data collection, forms of data and flexibility in study design. Table 3 is a summary of these significant differences. Among all of the above, the degree of flexibility is the biggest difference between quantitative and qualitative research methods. In general, qualitative research methods are more flexible than quantitative ones. Quantitative methods such as surveys or questionnaires require a uniform list of closed-ended or fixed questions asked in the same order for all participants. This inflexibility is beneficial to making meaningful comparison of responses across participants. In contrast, qualitative methods offer the researcher the more spontaneous and adaptive interaction with the participant through open-ended questions varying from one participant to another. This flexibility allows participants to give more complex and detailed answers in their own words. Additionally, based on the information provided by participants, researchers are able to adjust following questions promptly. (Family Health International n.d., pp. 1-4.) Even though there may be a lack of statistical rigour of more representative studies in the sampling process of qualitative methods, the selection of respondents is carried out thoroughly. Especially, researchers spend great time and effort on researching the view of each respondent. Besides, qualitative research focuses on understanding things, instead of measuring them like quantitative research; hence the data is not quantifiable and statistically valid. (Mirola 2015, p. 5.) Therefore, it should be noticed that the level of flexibility indicates in which way the researcher seeks to understand the problem by using the method, rather than reflecting the degree of scientific rigour of that method (Family Health International n.d., p.4). In addition to the flexible data collection process, the sample required in qualitative research is small and does not necessarily represent a larger

population. By choosing qualitative method, researchers are able to attain deeper and more penetrating insights into their research topics. (Mirola 2015, pp. 4-5.)

4.2   Semi-structured interview

According to Kahn and Cannell (1957) as cited in Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), "an interview is a purposeful discussion between two or more people". Personal interviews, when used appropriately, generate higher response rate than questionnaires. Participants are reported to prefer being interviewed to filling in a questionnaire, especially where the questions are open-ended or complex, because they do not need to write anything down. Besides, in personal interviews, participants are able to know the recipient of the information they provide (the interviewer) and how the information will be used, hence the higher level of trust. The interviewer can also help clarify unclear questions, meaning that the accuracy of the interviewee's answers is ensured. In semi-structured interviews, a list of themes and questions is created by the researcher. However, the content of the list may vary from one interview to another, meaning the researcher may omit or add some questions in particular interviews. The order of questions may also change depending on the flow of the conversation. Audio-recording the conversation is essential for recording the data. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to "probe" answers where it is necessary for interviewees to explain or build on their responses. Furthermore, probing the meanings of words or ideas used by interviewees will add significance and depth to the obtained data. There may also be a chance that interviewees lead the researcher to important areas that have not been previously considered. The result of semi-structured interviews should be a rich and detailed set of data. (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009, pp. 318-324.)

4.3   Data collection process

4.3.1   Formation of interview questions

On the basis of the literature review of culture shock and the comparison of German and Vietnamese cultures using Geert Hofstede's dimensions of

national culture and the Lewis Model, a list of themes was defined. These themes are essential for the researcher to stay focused and avoid being distracted from the right direction and purpose. Moreover, they provide participants an overview of the interview. They also make the reporting of the results more organized and logical. From this list of themes, twelve initial interview questions were formed. Additionally, in order to acquire further information from initial responses of participants, the researcher created optional sub-questions or "probes".

4.3.2 Sampling method

According to Henry (1990) (as cited in Saunders et al. 2009) and many other researchers, it is possible that the general precision of using sampling is higher than a census for the following reasons. Firstly, sampling reduces the number of cases required to be collected, giving the researcher a chance to dedicate more time to planning and testing the data collection instruments. Secondly, the researcher can attempt to acquire more detailed information from each case and to get access to remote cases. Last but not least, fewer cases proportionately enable the researcher to spend more time on inspecting the accuracy of collected data. (Saunders et al. 2009, pp. 212-213.) Specifically in this research, the limited access to the whole population, as well as time and budget constraints created a need for a suitable sampling method that can generate results quickly. Moreover, since "Culture shock" is a sensitive topic, it is important to target people who feel comfortable to share their experience about it wholeheartedly. That way, the author's purpose of gaining a rich and quality set of data can be ensured. For the above reasons, self-selection sampling method was employed. The advantage of this method is that targeted individuals can base their decision to participate in the research on their feelings or opinions about the research questions or objectives. The target group includes Vietnamese university students who have joined an exchange, double degree or placement in Germany.

4.3.3 Recruitment process

The recruitment of interview participants was done by postings on Vietnamese student unions as well as through personal contacts. Interested individuals were asked to provide their emails so that the researcher could send a formal interview invitation together with an interview schedule. The invitation consists of basic information about the researcher; the research topic, purpose and sponsor; the interview's estimated length; the confidentiality and anonymity of responses; when and where the interview results will be published. The invitation was written carefully so as to gain credibility and persuade individuals to join the interview. The participants confirmed their participation and chose a suitable time slot from the interview schedule. In some cases, the participants could not match their time with any slots from the schedule. They were asked to contact the researcher to arrange another convenient time for both parties.

4.3.4 Data documentation and analysis

There was one interview conducted face-to-face, while the rest of them were done through Skype. All of the interviews were audio-recorded with the agreement of the interviewees. Each audio-record was named with letters and numbers representing the interviewee's name and the date the interview was carried out, in order to protect the interviewee's anonymity and avoid data mix-ups. The next step is transcribing the verbal data into text for interpretation. There have not been any established standards for a transcription system yet. However, the preliminary assessment of a transcription system for spoken discourse can be conducted using these four general criteria, which are: "manageability (for the transcriber), readability, learnability, and interpretability (for the analyst and for the computer)". In other words, "a transcription system should be easy to write, easy to read, easy to learn, and easy to search". (Flick 1998, pp. 288-290.)

5 Results

5.1 Overview of the collected data

Altogether there were ten Vietnamese students who agreed to be interviewed. Eight of them are from universities of Finland and the other two are from universities of Vietnam. There is one student who participated in a double degree program. The rest of the students participated in an exchange study. It was unfortunate that the researcher could not recruit any students who participated in a work placement as planned initially. The locations of the universities in Germany in which the participants used to study are diverse, ranging from big cities like Munich and Berlin to smaller towns such as Würzburg, Heilbronn, and Wenigerode.

5.2 Results

5.2.1 Theme 1: Types of culture shock that Vietnamese students encounter in Germany

5.2.1.1 Language barrier

Language barrier is inevitable when the host country's language is different from the sojourners'. Prior to the exchange to Germany, none of the interviewees had had good German proficiency. Unfortunately, Germans take pride in their language and many expect foreigners to communicate in German instead of English. Therefore, it is not surprising that 8 out of 10 interviewees reported to have experienced language barrier in various situations, from doing group work at the university with German students, grocery shopping at the supermarket to registering at the town hall.

"Well I would say that there are in the group work probably language barriers. It is quite obvious when you have a group of German and international students that German students speak German all the time."
Interviewee T.L.

"(…) And some people demand foreign people to speak German, because when I asked them if they can speak English, then they show that they are quite

unhappy with that. And they just keep talking in German so I think what they want to say is that "when you come to German you need to speak German. We don't speak English" something like that."
Interviewee T. D.

Language barrier makes it difficult for Vietnamese students to understand and communicate smoothly with the host citizens, causing uncertainty, misunderstanding, diffidence, annoyance, dependence and limited interactions with the locals.

"(…) there are so many difficulties like going to the supermarket, and they have no English label, so I bought the wrong stuff sometimes. And it's really hard for me to find something. And the second thing is when doing the documents, the German people just love their language and they don't want to use English, so I really had some problems with that. There are some documents that have German only, and I have to ask my friend to translate for me, so that I don't misunderstand any important documents, especially when doing my bank account."
Interviewee L.D.

Unlike in Finland where Vietnamese students hardly have any difficulty if they do not know Finnish, being unable to speak German when living in Germany might cause them a lot of problems.

"(…) I mean like in Finland, if you don't know Finnish, it's okay. Well you can just, you talk English, and everyone understands it, and there's no problem not knowing, not knowing Finnish. But in Germany, (…) If you don't know the language, it might be difficult to even go shopping, (…) And I think in small cities, if people intend to go to small universities in, like university in small cities, it might even be more difficult not knowing German, because of the locals."
Interviewee K.T.

5.2.1.2 Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy was reported to be a common practice in Germany that frustrated many interviewees. From getting a local phone number to opening a bank

account, applying for a visa, registering at the university or at the town hall, they had to deal with complicated, time-consuming procedures and excessive amount of paperwork. Bureaucracy brought significant inconveniences as it prevented the students from the basic necessities and cost extra expenses in the host country for a long period of time.

"Yeah at the beginning like I need to complete every single paper to get my Internet, to get my phone number, to get my bank account open so yeah, consume a lot of time at the beginning. (…) Yeah I think that with the paperwork like it's quite a heavy bureaucratic system. And it took me like quite a long time to get all the paperwork done. And all the papers were done in German."
Interviewee T. L.

"(…) for the SIM card I spent like five days actually to have the SIM card. (…) there is a very big problem with the bank in Germany at that time with my bank card for the Deutsche Bank that I didn't know why they didn't help the students. They just okay you just email or fax them. But they didn't resolve my problem. And I spent like more than three months to get the bank account number and then make the visa."
Interviewee H.P.

"(…) So the school made us to buy the insurance every month to (get) the student card. And I think that is unnecessary because we already have the international student insurance, but they do not accept it. They just want us to buy the insurance from the school or something like that, or the insurance from Germany I don't really remember. And then they make us to, how to say, to do again and again that our insurance isn't valid in Germany. And from that time we don't have a student card, so we cannot use the student card to, to use the bus and the tram to go to school. We have to pay for it by ourselves so it's quite costs a lot at the beginning."
Interviewee T.D.

5.2.1.3 Disciplined and competitive study environment

When participating in an exchange or double degree study in Germany, Vietnamese students have to adapt to the new education system and study

environment. Major changes and differences at the university might make them feel uneasy and even stressed.

The first challenge is strict time management. According to interviewee T. L., being late to class is a taboo because punctuality is highly important in Germany:

"(…) German they are super punctual. So if there are some students that went late to the class, then all the rest of the class will knock on the table."

Another example was shared by interviewee K.T. that at his university, students were required to enroll for courses and exams punctually because deadlines would not be extended once missed:

"(…) Well like it's actually in the system of the German universities that, for example if you want to enroll for a course or you want to enroll for the exam, you have to do it on time. If you pass the deadline, it means you are not able to attend the exam at all. I'm not sure about other universities, but in my university it's really strict that everything has to be submitted, has to be applied on time. Otherwise, there's no chance."

The second obstacle for Vietnamese students at the host university in Germany is the hectic schedule consisting of long study hours, intense block courses and exam period. The busy timetable can be overwhelming for students who are not used to planning their study in advance and coping well with pressure.

"So in Germany the education system is quite different with Finland. And actually more difficult than in Finland. (…) in Germany they have very strange things to study that they study even on Saturday. And they get started at 9 am till 6 pm. And oh Jesus I never understand why, but when I had that class it's just like oh gosh, like two or three days continuously. (…) And yeah they just spent only three days for that and (after that) we had a very big exam actually."
Interviewee H. P.

Interviewee K. T. pointed out the significant difference in workload distribution between universities in Finland and Germany which affected his performance. While the workload at Finnish universities is evenly distributed throughout the

semester, all the important reports, presentations and exams at German universities are focused at the end, meaning students have to manage a huge amount of work at the same time.

"(…) in Finland we have a lot of assignments in between, so you don't have everything at the end of the semester. Sometimes you have like a mid-term test, and you have like deadlines, I would say every week, or every two weeks every month. And then at the end you have really less work to do, only learning for the exam. But in Germany, I think most of the courses we have some group works and discussions but they are not like graded. So the only thing which is graded is the test at the end. And if you do some project, it's only the presentation and the report in the end. So it means that there is a lot of work at the end. So people really have to get used to dealing with stress, dealing with a lot of work for a limited time, which I wasn't used to at the beginning."

In addition to the problems mentioned above, some Vietnamese students may find German professors very demanding, especially the students coming from Finland where lecturers are more flexible and easy going. The students could be irritated or stressed with the professors' high expectations, difficult grading criteria and strict requirements.

"(…) And just when I started studying, it's quite a big problem that the, especially about the professors, they are very very like strict. They are too strict also sometimes that they require so many things. They need everything just like be perfect and on time, of course perfect and carefully. And if you didn't go to the class, you could not pass the exam anyway. (…) For example like if you ask them [German teachers] after the time that they had a class, like their free time or any way they never answer you. They'll say like "Okay it's my free time I don't want to answer you". But like in Finland, the teacher can even just send you back email immediately after you send them. (…) They like always want to follow the rules. But the rules are sometimes just strict like, too difficult so yeah, the people didn't like it."
Interviewee H. P.

"(…) But I think I have problems with the grading in Germany. I don't know if it is hard or somehow but like the presentation, the criteria for the presentation I think really different from the Finnish standard. Like I got only like two for one presentation, like on the scale from zero to five of Finnish, so it was two over five. I didn't expect that although I spent a lot of time doing that presentation but the standard I mean it is (completely) on a different level."
Interviewee D. N.

Not only German professors but also German students are highly demanding and competitive. They are serious about studying and strive for the best grades. In projects, they are very organized, meticulous and concerned about time management. Moreover, German students do not like small talk when working and focus on the tasks until they are done the way they want. Some interviewees shared that although it was reasonable to try one's best for excellent results, they still occasionally felt stressed when cooperating with German students because they could be aggressive and extreme.

"(…) for the German student the result, I mean the mark is very very important. And they can even argue with the professor why they got that score. Even if it is quite high but they still ask why is that, and they still demand something higher. It's, it's a good thing but…yeah that is a very good thing that you very concentrate on your studying, that you very care about the final result, but it's, it's very very serious about the score."
Interviewee T. D.

"(…) And when you work with the German it's also a difference that the German people they are like too much concerned about the things, so like they are really into the project, they want everything to be the best, and like they hurry and are very stressed about the projects like all the time, because they want the good grade. But on the other hand for Vietnamese people in Finland we don't have to study very hard like that."
Interviewee D. L.

"(…) Germans are quite serious when it comes to the work and overall or even daily life a little bit, that they don't really like small talks. Like when it comes to

the work, they talk straight to the work. They do not speak "How are you today?" "What did you eat?" or "Yeah I've just been eating something". Yeah it's kind of "What do we have to do now?"
Interviewee M. L.

Working in a team of international students is indeed a wonderful experience at the host university. However, the group harmony can be hindered by a number of factors. For example, interviewee H. T. claimed that her team had trouble with division of tasks and group discussion. The communication and cooperation between team members were so inefficient that they ended up working individually.

"I just make teamwork one time in the Tourism class. And the first difficult is how to divide the work for everybody. And so at that point we don't really make the teamwork together, but everyone make their own part. And our discussion about the teamwork is not very good too. Like we met and we discussed, but the topic is not finished. Like we have to like just meet each other and then divide the part, who do what and then we do it at home. And when we meet, we cannot come to the end of the discussion."

Another reason that affects the efficiency of teamwork is different study attitudes. Some team members make effort to achieve good results while the others do not, leading to dissatisfaction and conflicts in the team.

"(…) And with international students, for example from France, I experience a few times already that they are here studying but they are not really studying. It more, for them, I think it's more that they experience the city, getting to know…I don't know the clubs and the culture and traveling. That is actually what I experience in my class at the beginning. And yeah maybe it's a difficult to cooperate with international students, especially from France or from Spain."
Interviewee K. T.

Interviewee T. D. also shared her problem with teamwork due to the dominance of German students. The opinions of international students were not respected because the German students were too confident about their own ones.

Besides, the host students adhered to their usual ways of working and expected the foreign students to follow.

"Yah and in the group, usually the German student they just want to make their own decision. (…) they got their own experience and their own opinion, and they don't use, they don't actually listen to international student. I meant they just ask, but the decision is already made. And they may change it a little bit or may not change it, and it's still the same. And the other thing is that they, what they mean is that when people come to German, they should do as they way German do. They will say that okay we usually do that, we usually do this, so your idea is not necessary right or something like that. And then they just do in the same way.

5.2.1.4 Other difficulties

It could be observed from the two interviewed Vietnamese students coming directly from Vietnam without any experience of studying abroad that they suffered from the difficulty of making friends with foreigners at the beginning. They were shy and diffident to start a conversation with the international students. Additionally, big cultural differences formed a gap between the interviewees and the Western classmates.

"(…) it's quite difficult to make friends with the other student. Because like I said, they have very different thinking, and they like to make a group with people who are like them. And I am a little bit silent, and not so confident at that time."
Interviewee H. T.

"(…) about the difficulty, I think it's about the making friends with other classmates, (…) we are so different, so I often feel a gap between me and them. (…) I cannot be with them, you know when they gather together, I just sit somewhere else and experience myself. I'm not confident enough to talk to them. And at first I didn't have any friend when I go here as there are only two Vietnamese people here."
Interviewee L. D.

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5.2.2 Theme 2: The development of culture shock's psychological and physical effects on Vietnamese students together with its symptoms

5.2.2.1 Honeymoon stage

Honeymoon stage, mostly at the beginning of the sojourn, is when Vietnamese students are happy and excited to start a new journey and explore new things such as surroundings, sceneries, people, lifestyles, culture in Germany. They enjoy the uniqueness of the host country, hence their positive attitudes on everything.

"First when I arrive in Germany I feel very excited to explore a new culture, a new country. Also excited when I meet the new classmate. They come from all around the world."
Interviewee H. T.

"Well actually I was so excited to start my new life in Berlin. Everything is very new to me, and everything's just so interesting. So at the beginning I was so excited. (…) the weather was so nice like in the summertime you know it's sunny shining. Yah and Berlin is some kinds of international city. Then I feel like, kinda like welcoming, because I'm kinds of international student."
Interviewee T. L.

"The first positive feeling is that I'm in a new country. And for me, it's very nice. (…) when it's come to the, like the orientation day, I went to meet with the, like German people, it's quite…impressive because they are quite friendly, not like everyone else said that German is usually very strict and stuff, but the student is very friendly, and they speak very good English. So yeah, the school is also very nice."
Interviewee D. L.

"Well my first feeling was that in Germany everyone will be very willing to help you when you need your help. (…) I was really happy when I come there at first time. (…) it's [the weather is] very nice, quite windy, but the weather is quite nice. And the city is also very beautiful. It's have a lot of monument for you to

see like the two castles, and I was very, how to say, my feeling at that time was, I was very happy and excited to explore the city."
Interviewee T. D.

However, it is possible that Vietnamese students who unfortunately have to face difficulties right at the start might not experience the honeymoon stage like the others. Instead, they may proceed to the next stage which is the disintegration stage.

5.2.2.2 Disintegration stage

After living in Germany for a while, the positive feelings in the honeymoon stage wear off and the host culture begins to influence Vietnamese students in various aspects. At this stage, the students more or less have to cope with difficulties at the university and in daily life, which makes them recognize the significant differences between the host and their native culture.

The interviewees' reactions towards challenges and cultural clashes were diverse, depending on a number of factors such as the intensity of the problems, the level of experience in living abroad, the level of optimism and adaptability. The majority of the interviewees who had studied in Finland before coming to Germany did not suffer from severe stress, depression, disorientation or self-blaming for a long period of time. They managed culture shock well and adapted quickly. For example, interviewee K. T. shared that although he was stressed and frustrated because of the heavy workload at the university, he focused on dealing with the study challenges and getting over them instead of blaming himself or the host culture.

"For the first semester, it's not really like serious. But yeah I was a bit stressed. And whenever the exam period started, and then I don't know. I think that was also the reason why I didn't do really well in some tests at the beginning (…) I realized that, for example after hours of studying in library, I was just frustrated with the content. And I just wanted everything to be over, and I just wanted to give up maybe but like at least I didn't. But still I notice that it's, it is some kind of frustration that people have to, you know, get over with. (…) I think I didn't really blame myself or anything. I just, I think I didn't blame anything because

it's just, it's just different. And I understand why it's different. So what I did was just to overcome the difficulty, not, like instead of blaming myself or blaming the facts, I think it's more important to just overcome it, and just to get over and, I mean to deal with the, the situations."

The case of interviewee A. H. was slightly different. She experienced the disintegration stage without going through the honeymoon stage before. Due to the lack of social relationships and support, she felt lost and homesick when setting up her new life in Germany. Nevertheless, these negative effects did not last very long thanks to her previous living abroad experience in Finland.

"The first few days I was here is a little bit difficult for me because I did not know anyone around, and I did not know where to shop this or that. (…) So the first few days I did not have those necessary things, so it was quite difficult the first few days. (…) In the first week I think that I felt terrible and I really miss Finland. (…) I did feel a little bit stressed at first. But I think it was because I went to Finland first, the culture shock was not as much if I go from Vietnam to Germany straightly."

In contrast, the two interviewees who moved to Germany directly from Vietnam showed more serious alienation and intense reactions. Interviewee H. T. reported her diffidence and feeling of being held in low regard for her background and education. Thus, she was shy to talk to and make friends with foreign students. Besides, she compared the mentality and communication of her international classmates to those of hers.

"At first it was like depression or unconfidence. I feel like I come from a small country and my education is different with the other. So I'm like unconfidence when I talk with them. Maybe sometime I sit and I think of the other person and maybe I compare a little bit about what they think and what I think, what they talk and what I talk."
Interviewee H. T.

For interviewee L. D., in addition to alienation, she suffered from stress, sadness, loneliness and homesickness. Especially, these negative feelings became stronger when she saw her Vietnamese friends enjoying their sojourns

in other cities. Her physical state was affected by her unhealthy psychological state, leading to the loss of enthusiasm, retreat into her own shell and tiredness.

"First I feel very, at first I feel very separated from that community, because they are so different from me. (…) I did feel stressed. Actually when I see my friends at another city who travel a lot and have many friends, I feel kinda stressed you know, a very Vietnamese feeling when you see that others people do a lot of thing but you are still there (doing) nothing. (I'm) lonely and sad, I feel very homesick you know. I miss my time when, back in Vietnam when I have many friends and I hang out with them every day. Maybe because when I'm sad, I'm less energetic. I just don't want to do anything. I just wanna stay home, and I want, and when I stay home all day, my body just stops and I feel really tired."
Interviewee L. D.

5.2.2.3 Reintegration stage

In reintegration stage, Vietnamese students still struggle with the negative effects of culture shock but started to take actions to protect themselves from the host culture's influence. They direct disappointment and anger towards the host culture instead of keeping those feelings inside. It was surprising to observe that not many interviewees went through this stage. Nevertheless, there are a couple of interviewees sharing their experience during reintegration stage. The disappointment in cooperation with the host students made interviewee T. D. stop contributing too much to teamwork and shift her focus on other indulgent activities rather than studying.

"At first I have to say I was very excited and enthusiasm when working with the new student, new culture. But then I was very, how to say, disappointed. And I don't even wanna try harder or more than demanded. I just do exactly what the task is and then that's it. I spend more time to enjoy my own life, hanging out with friends or traveling rather than studying more."

Interviewee T. D.

For interviewee L. D., the feeling of being discriminated and isolated resulted in hostility towards foreign students as a mean of self-protection. Additionally, she envied them for having excellent language skills and amazing social life.

"(…) At that time I feel, I kinda hate the foreign students you know. I feel that they are so discrimination, discriminated about me, about people. So at the beginning I don't, I didn't like the foreigners, because I think they are kind of discriminated against me. Besides that, I feel jealous with them because they speak English and German so well, and they have a good social life while I have nothing in comparison to them. (…)"

5.2.2.4 Autonomy stage

After having experienced the previous stages of culture shock, Vietnamese students move on to the recovery phase. During autonomy stage, the students become less extreme, depressed, lost, stressed, angry and disappointed as they have gained more intercultural awareness and skills in the host country. They are able to make neutral judgements and willing to change in order to adapt.

For example, interviewee T. D. realized the benefits of Germans' competitiveness and considered it as a good thing to learn. She tried harder so as to catch up with her classmates. She also learned to be more straightforward and confident to tell her thoughts.

"(…) I think from that experience I understand why, maybe I understand why German is the best, maybe, maybe why they are at the top of Europe, because they are very competitive. And you got to, you got to try the best, you got to work very hard to be successful. But I think it's a very good thing to learn also. (…) in Germany, the environment will force you to do your best. So when I study in Germany, I learn a lot even though it's, it seems quite tough, but I really think, I think the time I spent in there is very valuable. (…) And because you know German people they are quite straight, like they say whatever they think, so I'm so more and more confident to say what I think."

Interviewee H. T. recognized the purpose of her exchange and made effort to be more open and active in building relationship with her classmates. Moreover, she prepared well for the lectures so that she could be confident to give her opinions in class. She also complimented her lecturers on their good teaching skills.

"But at the end I found out that this exchange journey's like to gain more experience. I feel like I must learn more and be more open, be more active to other people. (…) I become more active to talk with them. And I invite them to coffee or lunch, and then also invite them to activity outside class like outgoing trip with the school. (…) And for the contributing of opinion in class, I prepare my lesson at home. I read it before and then I make a mind map of what kind of idea I may have about this, and then I can contribute to the lecture. And the lecturers are also friendly and helpful. And they deliver really funny and easy to understand lecture."

Interviewee L. D. succeeded in breaking the ice between her and the international students. They could eventually find common topics to talk about. In addition to making new friends, L. D. found happiness in little things. She was grateful to her friends for helping her get out of culture shock and enjoy her life in Germany.

"But it turn out like not that bad. Yah if I can, if I want to talk to them, they will be like willing to talk to me, and very friendly actually. (…) we all love traveling. So when we talk about the traveling thing so there are many things to share. (…) I'm kind of a positive person, so I always find things, the small things, I try to find ways to cheer myself up every day so I don't feel too negative you know. I'm still happy for most of the time of the day. And besides that, my friends helped me a lot. (…) they just asked me to go out and, and show me some tips when living in Germany. And when I have friends and they like me, so I feel more confident, I feel more happy so that's my friends who helped me to get out of that feeling."

5.2.2.5 Interdependence stage

Interdependence stage is the most successful stage when Vietnamese students can form a new identity which allows them to be comfortable with both German and Vietnamese cultures despite differences. When reaching this stage, the interviewees felt proud of what they had achieved throughout the journey of overcoming culture shock.

Interviewee T. D. shared that the competitive environment of Germany urged her to be more active, ambitious and skillful at time management. Thus, she managed to achieve outstanding study results while spending time on traveling and enjoying other entertainment. Furthermore, the relationship between her and the German team members improved after they worked together for a while. The German students became more open, tried to speak English more often and took her opinions more seriously. At the end of the course, T. D. had a good friendship with her teammates.

"After a time I spend in Germany, I become more active. And the way that the, the, how to say, the competitive environment make you want to do more and more, make you want to get the best score but not the good one only. And I think they arrange the time very, how to say, efficiently, and everything is quite in exact the time. So that is also a thing I can learn from them. (…) when we have more time together, when we get to know each other, German students tend to be more open. So they try to, as I say, they try to speak in English, they try to ask and listen to my opinion and they try to work with me as good as they could. And I think it's a very, how to say, good improvement. And at the end of the course, we seem to be very good friend."

The happy state of interviewee L. D. made everything seem colorful, lively and joyful. She also felt positive about the local people. Furthermore, she became more responsible and punctual in her lifestyle and working style. Being able to overcome culture shock and adapt to the host culture gave her more self-confidence and open-mindedness. She was also proud to share about her home country and believed she improved herself a lot over the past six months.

"(…) everything changed. When I'm happy so everything looks so colorful, lively, happy to me. I feel good about every people, they, I feel that they are so nice, so kind, so good, this is such a wonderful country and stuff like that. (…) I'm more responsible about my lifestyle and, as well as working style. And I'm more punctual too because German they hates when you go, be late. (…) After I go through many culture shocks, like I am much more confident now. When I talk to foreigners, I feel, I believe more in myself and my…like I'm more confident, and…confident to share with them about my country that I'm proud of, and to make friends and more open-minded. I think I grew a lot after the last six months."

5.2.3 Theme 3: Factors that lead to the occurrence of culture shock

5.2.3.1 Cognitive fatigue

When moving to Germany, Vietnamese students face major changes in cultural environments. As they are no longer in their familiar cultural setting, they are exposed to a huge amount of new cultural knowledge they must comprehend such as language, education system, communication style, social etiquette, and so on. This leads to cognitive fatigue.

For example, interview L. D. shared her difficulty in English communication with foreign students. It was not easy for her to fully understand them and their sense of humor, from which a barrier between her and her classmates were formed.

"Even though I'm confident about my English, English skills, but there are still things that I don't really understand when they, when talking to them, like the slang or the, that I, I'm not used to the talking to real foreign people with the, the normal speed you know. So I find it hard to understand everything they say. There are something for me that they all laugh at but I cannot get it. So there is a big distance between me and them."

In the case of interviewee D. N., she claimed the differences in education system between the home and host universities to be the cause of culture shock.

"I think it happens because of the difference in education system and also criteria, what they demands. It is different than in Saimaa university compared to Hochschule Harz that I've been to. And I also notice that German students study quite hard when it comes to exams it is I think more serious compared to the Finnish students and well internationals."

Cognitive fatigue can also occur when the native identity of Vietnamese students are still so strong that it influences their capability to perceive German culture.

"I think maybe because I lived in Finland but not for a long time so I, like my behaviors and my mindsets are still more like Vietnamese way. So I would say that maybe, like how people actually behave and how people actually do things in Vietnam, like in my case, different would affect the, would cause the difficulty of perceiving the differences in Germany."
Interviewee K. T.

5.2.3.2 Cultural clashes

It is obvious that cultural clashes are one of the main causes of culture shock since they create confusion, misunderstanding and conflicts between Vietnamese students and German citizens. From the interviews with the ten Vietnamese students, the author can observe some significant contrasts between German and Vietnamese cultures. The first one is individualism versus collectivism reflected through teamwork. The fact that German students are willing to sacrifice group's harmony for better personal performances might make Vietnamese students think they are rude and selfish team members.

"(…) Because they want the high score, so they asked that if we don't really need the high score then can we give it to them. You know five members of the group then we will grade from the first then, like who will get the highest score, and then the next, and then the next. So they want to get the top score. No matter how was the group is but they just want to get the top score."
Interviewee T. D.

Besides, interviewee H. T. pointed out that unlike the international students who were confident to express themselves and dared to be different, she was concerned with other people's thoughts about her. As a result, she was not always comfortable to give her opinions.

"I'm not open enough because I think like when the foreign student talk they really don't care about what the other think about them. But I really care about what they think about me."

Another possible cultural clash comes from the different perceptions of time. As clearly explained in the theoretical part, Germans view time as a limited resource, hence their strict time management. On the contrary, Vietnamese believe time is unlimited and are more flexible with their schedule. This explains why Vietnamese students are overwhelmed by how time-dominated Germans are in their study and daily life shown in previous chapter. Some Vietnamese students who fail to keep up with deadlines can be judged as lazy and disorganized.

Also in previous chapter, many Vietnamese interviewees were shocked by the competitiveness and aggressiveness of German students when it comes to individual performance and accomplishments. That is because German culture scores high in Masculinity, meaning it is important for Germans to work hard and achieve outstanding performance. In contrast, Vietnamese culture has a high score of Femininity, meaning being the best is not as crucial as maintaining life quality and sense of well-being.

"(…) And when I come there and I work with them, I think it's very hard. And you must be very good, very impressive, so that they will consider your idea and what you're talking about seriously. (…) In Germany, the environment will force you to do your best. If not, you are nothing in the society I think so, or even in the group."
Interviewee T. D.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Suggested ways to prepare for and cope with culture shock

5.2.4.1 Predeparture preparation

Interviewee T. D. advised students to prepare themselves with basic German proficiency in advance to minimize language barrier in Germany. It is an advantage in communication because the local tend to be more open when students make effort to speak German at the beginning of the conversation.

"I think every student, before they go to German, they should know at least speak kind of basic German, so it will be easier for them to communicate with the local people. Because at the beginning when you speak some German, you say hello and they you ask them can I speak English or something like that, they will be more open for you than you just speak English at the beginning with them."

In addition to the language skills, students should gain knowledge of German culture such as the norms and taboos. It is crucial for them to know what culture shock is, how it influences their lives and how to deal with those effects. Underestimating culture shock would cause more serious consequences than students could imagine.

"Well I think that it's good to do some research about the culture, like the norms and the behaviours of the people and be prepared for that."
Interviewee T. L.

"They should be well-prepared that they will be, they will encounter culture shock when they come here. (…) Before I go, come here, I, I didn't think that culture shock is, is a big deal. I think that well I don't mind that. But when I come here, it has really…you know very much effect that it will have negative, it will make you have negative feeling if you are not prepared for that. So after this trip, I think culture shock is something that you should be aware of, you should be well-prepared for that. Just don't underestimate it."
Interviewee L. D.

Students are suggested to build relationship with people who have already had experience in the host city prior to the sojourn for social support, guidance and advice, especially at the beginning when everything is new and unfamiliar. Furthermore, improving background knowledge and traveling experiences allows students to have more common topics to share with international friends.

"(…) I think that they need to make some connections before they come here so that the person can give them some advices. Yeah like where to go or what to buy, something like that, what to do, especially when you don't know the language it's always better when you have friend to help you deal with the paperwork."
Interviewee A. H.

"So I think the first thing I want to say, tell them is to travel a lot and get to know things so that you have stories to talk to your friends so that you can make friends. That would be a big advantage for them."
Interviewee L. D.

5.2.4.2 Coping with culture shock

Students should keep in mind the possibility of cultural differences and culture shock. Moreover, students are recommended to have an open attitude and willingness to adapt to the host culture.

"They have to be ready that there will be differences and culture shock. And they have to be ready that they will be open to all the differences between them and the other student, and think about the way how to adapt quickly"
Interviewee H. T.

It is unnecessary to be stressed about encountering culture shock because it can happen anywhere and to anybody when they are in a new environment. Therefore, students should be confident that culture shock can be managed gradually. The key point is that students need to share their problems with the right people who are able to help and make them feel better. These people can be friends, classmates, roommates, neighbors, tutors, international coordinators, or Vietnamese communities. Alienation will be reduced

significantly when students know that they do not suffer alone and there are people who are willing to support them.

"Wherever you go, it's always have difficulty, culture shock and stuff, then you didn't need to worry too much about that. But you need friends, so you need to talk to your friends, your classmate, your roommate, flatmate or your neighbor about your problem. And they will be willing to help you. You shouldn't, how to say, face it alone and then you got depressed about that then it's not good."
Interviewee T. D.

"Like for me I would say thanks for the sharing, don't blame yourself because the culture shock is about to happen to everybody who comes to new country. And it is absolutely something that you can handle like time by time and with the communication with people. Don't keep it for yourself. So share your experience and you'll get something back."
Interviewee D. N.

"I think one of the best ways is to go to the Vietnamese student forums and share with them, because I believe that everyone had that before, so when you see that many other people have the same problems, so you will feel a little bit better, that you are not the only one. And they can give you some good advice. (…) And to make friends, like just go out a lot and make friends and they will feel much better. Don't just stay home and cry, it doesn't work."
Interviewee L. D.

"Actually, there are always tutors and international coordinators at the university, so I think that they can always come to those people to ask for help or advices. Yeah, I think that they are always willing to help."
Interviewee A. H.

Last but not least, although culture shock can cause many problems, it offers a great opportunity for Vietnamese students to practice and develop intercultural knowledge and skills. Thus, it is important to recognize and focus on the positive side of culture shock in order to not only overcome its negative consequences but also to make the best out of it.

"For me when you already been to different culture, you know about different culture, you know how people acts, and then you can adapt quickly, more quickly because you know there is a difference, and you know you have to adapt it anyway. So and also like in the school, there's a very international exchange group, so that's like one of the benefits for you to learn, and also to apply what you learn in school about intercultural stuff into real life that you feel better. Like for the first month maybe it's very difficult for you but then after that I think you will enjoy it if you know how to adapt it and you know to tolerance with the differences."
Interviewee D. L.

"Be open, be curious, be positive, be optimistic because definitely like the students will experience some difficulties, some challenges, something that they don't want to experience, but be open about it. Think of it as a positive thing, think of it as a chance for you to improve yourself, to get to know different aspects of culture, to get to know the people, totally different environment."
Interviewee K. T.

6   Summary and Discussion

Culture shock is an interesting and useful topic to know in this modern world where we very often study and work in multicultural environments. From her own experience with culture shock while studying in Germany, the author is passionate to write her thesis about this subject so as to make culture shock more comprehensive and accessible for students of her age with the analysis of real cases. The thesis can also provide helpful information for students who are going to study in Germany.

At the beginning of the theoretical part, the author introduced various definitions of culture shock. In general, culture shock can be explained as stressful feelings that sojourners experience when being away from their familiar cultural setting. The author then examined different theories from past to present in order to show how researchers have changed their viewpoints of culture shock throughout time. It is obvious that the misconception about culture shock in the past which depicted it as a disease has become irrelevant, giving space to more

modern and positive perceptions. Among those theories mentioned, the author decided to base her thesis on Stage theory by Paul Pedersen because it is considered the most advanced theory available.

Stage theory illustrates the development of culture shock over a span of five stages: Honeymoon, Disintegration, Reintegration, Autonomy, and Interdependence. A chapter is dedicated to describing these five stages in details so that the readers can see clearly how a sojourner experiences culture shock. The sojourner first feels happy and excited to be in a new country. However, when the positive emotions fade, the sojourner starts noticing significant differences between the host and native cultures, leading to confusion, conflicts, frustration and depression. The sojourner may blame oneself for any negative incidents. After enduring passively for a while, the sojourner shifts to criticizing the host culture so as to defend oneself. This is when the sojourner gains knowledge about the host culture and forms a new identity. Next, the sojourner is able to achieve fair and neutral judgements of which both good and bad sides of cultural contrasts are carefully examined. Eventually, the sojourner can fully adapt and enjoy the foreign culture. In reality, the order of the five stages is not always fixed as above and not the same for everybody. Some sojourners may skip or stop at any stage, depending on many internal and external factors.

After describing stages of culture shock, the author continued identifying its possible causes on the basis of Winkelman's research. Stress reactions, cognitive fatigue, role shock, personal shock and perceived discrimination were suggested to be the roots of culture shock. Additionally, a short chapter listing a variety of culture shock's symptoms such as homesickness, excessive worries over minor issues, insomnia, abnormal eating or drinking habits, mood swings, self-isolation is included.

Last but not least, the author studied a number of methods to manage culture shock so as to provide in-depth information for sojourners. Before moving to a foreign country, sojourners are advised to be realistic and well-prepared. They should assess their level of adaptability and be aware of inevitable changes and possible conflicts with the host culture. Gaining as much knowledge about the

host culture as possible through cross-cultural training and self-research is crucial, as it will help sojourners navigate through cultural complexity and resolve problems better. During the transition adjustment process, sojourners should accept the existence of culture shock with a positive attitude and willingness to adapt. Moreover, it is highly recommended that sojourners focus on the good aspects of the host culture, respect its unique cultural mindset, as well as avoid any superficial comparison, biased judgements and exaggeration. Another useful way to deal with culture shock is building good personal and social relations, e.g. making new friends, joining a wide range of social activities and communities. It is scientifically proved that sojourners who have good relationship with the host citizens are less vulnerable to culture shock. Furthermore, simple things such as meeting one's compatriots, communicating in one's own language, enjoying one's national cuisine or keeping in touch with one's family and friends in the home country can help to ease the negative effects of culture shock. Lastly, sojourners should continue improving their intercultural competence while being in the host country.

The author found it necessary to compare German and Vietnamese cultures for two purposes: providing the audience basic understanding of the two cultures and highlighting the main cultural differences which are one of the major causes of culture shock. The comparison was written following Geert Hofstede's dimensions of national culture (Individualism versus Collectivism; High versus Low Power Distance; Masculinity versus Femininity; Indulgent versus Restraint; Long-term versus Short-term Orientation) and the Lewis model (Linear-active versus Reactive). By using these two studies, the author was able to identify diverse cultural contrasts and summarized them in two tables. On the other hand, the comparison should be used as reference only because of some limitations. The audience may subjectively find some Hofstede's results of their native cultures not relevant. It is because Hofstede's research uses quantitative research method which analyzes a great number of answers to form the most representative results. Therefore, the results may not apply to everybody.

Semi-structured interview is a suitable method to collect the empirical results for the thesis. It allowed the researcher to be flexible with her set of questions and customize each interview to gather as much information as possible. At the

beginning of each interview, the interviewer included a brief introduction of the interview. In addition to the interview's purpose and content, the interviewer mentioned the interviewee's right to refuse any question they found unsuitable, encouraged them to ask questions if there would be anything unclear and guaranteed to preserve the anonymity of the interviewee's information. The interviewees seemed to be comfortable and interested in this type of interview thanks to the high level of interaction and trust. Therefore, they were open and happy to share about their study experience in Germany even though culture shock can be a sensitive subject. The process of transcription and interpretation took a lot of time and effort to ensure precision, yet the final results were rewarding. All of the interviewee's answers remain original without much editing unless very necessary. The biggest difficulty while conducting the interviews was explaining terminology and unclear questions to the interviewees without subjectively leading their answers because the majority of the interviewees were not familiar with culture shock subject.

The interview results were reported in four themes. The first theme reveals typical cultural challenges of Vietnamese students in Germany such as language barrier, bureaucracy, disciplined and competitive study environment, teamwork problems and strict time management. Moreover, Vietnamese students who had not studied abroad before claimed to experience difficulty in building relationship with foreign students at the beginning, while those who had already studied in Finland blended in more quickly.

The second theme describes the development of culture shock following Paul Pedersen's five-stage theory. It was quite challenging for the author to analyze and break down the answers of the interviewees into different stages because the interviewees reported their experience as a whole without clearly indicating each stage. Besides, in reality, most of the interviewees did not experience all stages of culture shock and in the same order. Each individual experience was unique, hence the difficulty in generalization. Overall, the acculturation of the interviewees happened rather fast. The Vietnamese students who had studied in Finland for a certain period of time stated that the cultural challenges did not result in severe and long-lasting effects with tremendous symptoms. On the other hand, the Vietnamese students who came to Germany straight from

Vietnam went through almost all stages of culture shock and in an identical order as the theory. This shows the importance of intercultural competence in dealing with culture shock.

The third theme identifies factors that lead to culture shock. This is the hardest theme for the interviewees to answer for two reasons: either the culture shock experience of the interviewees was not serious enough for them to notice or they lacked intercultural knowledge to find out the causes. Since most of the interviewees did not give detailed explanation, the author had to refer to their answers in the previous two themes and the related theory written above to identify the possible roots of their culture shock experience.

The final theme is where the interviewees suggest various methods to prepare for and cope with culture shock based on their own experience. Prior to the sojourn, the interviewees advised Vietnamese students to gain basic German language skills to reduce language barrier and do thorough research on German culture to avoid unrealistic expectations and shocks. Additionally, Vietnamese students should try to get some local contacts in case they need support in Germany and improve their background knowledge as well as life experience for more confidence in communication with foreigners. When encountering culture shock, the interviewees highly recommended that Vietnamese students try their best to be open, optimistic and active because culture shock is unavoidable and people can eventually overcome it. Moreover, Vietnamese students should share their experience with trusted people to seek for good advice and reduce stress. They would feel better when receiving sympathy and directions because they know they are not isolated. Last but not least, the interviewees agreed that although culture shock may give students a hard time, it still has a positive side of which provides students an opportunity to improve their intercultural competence from real life experience.

In conclusion, the thesis should be able to show the audience both theoretical and empirical insight into culture shock, which encourage more people to change their viewpoints and explore this topic for their own benefits. The author had a chance to review her own experience with culture shock in a more

scientific and professional manner as well as improved her knowledge of culture shock and intercultural competence.

Figures

Tables

7 List of References

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Interview Questions

❖ **Theme 1: Types of culture shock that Vietnamese students encounter in Germany**

1. What kind of difficulties did you experience at the host organization (university/ workplace)?

2. What kind of difficulties did you experience in your daily life in Germany, e.g. in contacts with local residents, authority, etc.?

❖ **Theme 2: The development of culture shock's psychological and physical effects on Vietnamese students together with its symptoms**

3. How did you feel at the beginning of your sojourn in Germany? Please describe in details.

   • Probe 1: What factors gave you such feelings? / Why did you have those feelings?

   • Probe 2: At the beginning, did you notice any similarities between Germany and your home country? If yes, please specify. How much did those similarities influence your feelings?

   • Probe 3: At the beginning, did you notice any differences between Germany and your home country? If yes, please specify. How much did those differences influence your feelings?

4. How did you react to the difficulties at the host organization (university/ workplace)?

   • Probe: What were the consequences of your reactions?

5. How did you react to the difficulties in your daily life in Germany?

   • Probe: What were the consequences of your reactions?

6. How did the difficulties at the host organization (university/ workplace) affect your psychological and/or physical state? If possible, please describe the effects in chronological order.

   • Probe 1: Does this effect come with any symptoms? If yes, please describe them.

   • Probe 2: How did you feel about yourself?

   • Probe 3: How did you feel about members of the host organization (university/workplace), e.g. teachers/managers, classmates/co-workers

7. How did the difficulties in your daily life in Germany affect your psychological and/or physical state? If possible, please describe the effects in chronological order.

   - Probe 1: Does this effect come with any symptoms? If yes, please describe them.
   - *Probe 2: How did you feel about yourself?*
   - *Probe 3: How did you feel about German culture?*

8. How did you learn to deal with the difficulties at the host organization?

   - Probe: How did your attitudes towards yourself and members of the host organization gradually change throughout your adaptation?

9. How did you learn to deal with the difficulties in your daily life in Germany?

   - Probe: How did your attitudes towards yourself and German culture gradually change throughout your adaptation?

❖ **Theme 3: Factors that lead to the occurrence of culture shock**

10. Can you identify the causes of the difficulties at the host organization, e.g. which cultural difference(s) is/are the cause of a specific difficulty?

    - Probe: Apart from cultural differences, are there any other reasons for the difficulties at the host organization?

11. Can you identify the causes of the difficulties in your daily life in Germany, e.g. which cultural difference(s) is/are the cause of a specific difficulty?

    - Probe: Apart from cultural differences, are there any other reasons for the difficulties in your daily life in Germany?

❖ **Theme 4: Suggested ways to prepare for and cope with culture shock**

12. How would you advise students who intend to go to Germany for exchange/double degree/placement?

    - Probe 1: How could they prepare themselves for culture shock?
    - Probe 2: How could they minimize the effects of culture shock?