

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AND  
CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION  
EXPERIENCE AMONG  
EXPATRIATE TEACHERS IN  
NANCHANG, CHINA

LE ROUJIA

PhD

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**LE ROUJIA**

Thesis submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
**Doctor of Philosophy**  
**(Communication and Media Studies)**

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## CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS

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## ABSTRACT

The growing demand for foreign talent in China reflects the increase in global cross-cultural collaboration and exchange trends. In recent years, many individuals have increasingly relocated to China, driven by opportunities such as teaching. High demand for expatriate teachers offers significant benefits for individuals pursuing teaching careers in China. However, this rising demand presents a major challenge for China's colleges and education system in effectively managing and motivating the expanding expatriate teacher workforce. Research on expatriates in general has been reported extensively; however, studies focusing specifically on expatriate teachers in China and their cross-cultural adaptation-particularly regarding their motivations, challenges and coping strategies-remain limited. This qualitative study addresses this gap by exploring the cross-cultural adaptation of expatriate teachers in China, integrating perspectives from expatriate studies, cross-cultural adaptation and social networking site usage. The data for this study were obtained through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 11 expatriate teachers, supplemented by off-campus, in-class and online observations. This study found some interesting results by using NVivo 14 software for thematic analysis, guided by Berry's modes (2003) of acculturation as a conceptual framework. First, the reasons why expatriate teachers choose to work in China can be categorised into two main factors: personal and host country motives. Personal motives are influenced by their diverse life experiences and recommendations from others, while host country motives include the benefits of working in China, a strong interest in the country and abundant job opportunities. Second, the two most significant challenges faced by expatriate teachers in China are language barriers and cultural differences. Interestingly, when encountering difficulties in daily life or work, these teachers prefer to seek assistance from students, Chinese colleagues and locals rather than relying on technology or social networking sites. Third, while expatriate teachers use social networking services to communicate regularly and simplify their lives in China, they primarily depend on offline cultural interactions to achieve cross-cultural adaptation, while online platforms only serve as supplementary support. This research provides valuable insights and highlights the critical need for Chinese colleges to offer more effective support to expatriate teachers and facilitate their cross-cultural adaptation. It also informs Chinese policy makers, enabling them to better understand and address the needs of expatriate teachers working in China. Furthermore, the study offers practical recommendations for expatriate teachers to enhance their adaptation experience. Lastly, it advocates for multidisciplinary research to explore innovative solutions to the challenges associated with cross-cultural adaptation.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### **Abbreviations**

SNS	Social Networking Sites
U&G Theory	Uses and Gratification Theory

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The world has become increasingly interconnected due to globalisation, and countries are interdependent in politics, economy and trade. Various aspects of the globalisation process, such as goods, capital, talents and others, are advancing the whole world rapidly, and the trend of transnational mobility of personnel has become irreversible in the process (Wang & Miao, 2018b). As a result of the country's increased reform and opening-up, China's relations with other countries are growing closer, which has also accelerated economic development. China's rapid economic growth has also increased its efforts to attract international talent. According to the "Expatriate Explore: Broadening Perspectives Global Report" published by HSBC in 2017, as the world's economic powerhouse, China is currently ranked second in the world by HSBC's global career development ranking.

Expatriates who move to China can gain various career opportunities and income advantages (Wang & Miao, 2018a). 70 per cent of the 27,500 expatriates surveyed said strong job prospects were available in the Mainland (Wang & Miao, 2018a). The top three job sectors are education, services and financial services, which account for 31%, 17% and 9% of the job market respectively (Wang & Miao, 2018a). Lewis and Altbach (1996) suggested that academia, science and education have become more globalised in today's world, and national borders between academic institutions have gotten increasingly obscure. Expatriate teachers are employed to teach foreign languages at all educational levels, varying from kindergarten to tertiary. Most universities and colleges, especially those focusing on foreign language majors, have made foreign teaching a compulsory course. In the early 1950s, one of the first studies on the development of higher education in the former British colonies of West Africa and the Caribbean introduced the phrase "expatriate teacher" (Lewis, 1959). The phrase "expatriate teachers" in this study particularly refers to self-initiated

foreigners who use their expertise as a benefit to independently apply for teaching vacancies at colleges in China.

Nevertheless, during the COVID-19 pandemic, China's appeal declined as a location for talent and investment (Lee, 2022). Travel restrictions and border closures prevented a large number of expatriate teachers from entering China (Mouritzen et al., 2020). Even expatriate teachers who were already in China faced numerous obstacles, including trouble getting work visas or visas for their partners, parents and children, booking expensive flights home, risk of additional lockdowns, fear of being unable to return to China, extended quarantine periods and restricted access to infrastructure (BCOC, 2022; EURAXESS, 2021). Consequently, numerous expatriate teachers left China. A survey conducted on European expatriate teachers in China found that two-thirds of the country's expatriate teachers' community had gone (EURAXESS, 2021). However, China has completely reopened its borders. According to Chinese authorities, 711,000 visas were issued to foreign citizens in 2023 (Leahy, 2024). This number indicates that the attractiveness of China as an investment and talent destination has gradually recovered even though it is still lower than the pre-pandemic number of 846,000 in 2020 (Leahy, 2024), (Wang, 2024).

Just like workers in multinational corporations, academics from all over the world are increasingly included in the global labour market (Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2010). Working overseas has become a crucial component of career opportunities for many academics (Wang et al., 2019). Furthermore, worldwide talent competition has emerged as a significant factor contributing to the international migration of scholars (A. Isakovic & Forseth Whitman, 2013; Silvanto & Ryan, 2014). Colleges and universities are beginning to acknowledge and respect academics with global teaching and research experience (Jepsen et al., 2014). As academics possess a wealth of non-enterprise, specialised capital and valuable non-homogeneous abilities, their career advancement is not dependent on a single company (Jepsen et al., 2014; Richardson & McKenna, 2002). Past studies reported that academic migration surged significantly (Selmer et al. (2017); Romanowski and Nasser (2015), and over one-fourth of employed academics at various universities and colleges worldwide were foreign nationals (Trembath, 2016), with even higher percentage in international schools (Fielden & Gillard, 2011).

Many nations have developed initiatives to attract and retain international academic talents because of the many benefits that their expertise can offer the host

nation, such as access to global networks and information resources (Wang et al., 2019). Since opening up and reforming itself in 1978, China has recognised the importance of attracting international talent to advance the country (Zweig et al., 2008) and has consistently implemented a variety of national, provincial and institutional recruitment policies in an effort to attract international talent to further its scientific and technological advancements (Yang, 2020). These policies offer favourable terms and alluring packages for foreign talents (Li & Xue, 2021; Wu & Huang, 2018), such as high salaries, research funds, laboratories, research assistants, flights, free housing or tax-free living allowances, tax free, free child education, permanent residency or multiple entry visas, social security and insurance for expatriate teachers living abroad (Li & Tu, 2016; Li, 2020; Yang, 2020).

Many scholars have believed that international academic flows are beneficial and worthy of support (Li & Tang, 2019). First, mobility is seen as a process that fosters professional and academic growth as well as the opportunity for collaborative work, all of which contribute to organisational and social transformation in the global society (Suarez-Ortega & Risquez, 2014). Second, because of the social and human capital of academics, international academic mobility can support the growth of local academia while preserving ties with the global community (Wang et al., 2019). Third, although the output of scientific work, the degree of international cooperation and the personal traits of academics are correlated (Jonkers & Tijssen, 2008), it is generally accepted that international mobility has a positive impact on a number of aspects of academics' careers, including their scientific productivity, professional status, scientific impact, abilities and personality, access to research infrastructure and funding and scientific knowledge (Netz et al., 2020). For instance, there are numerous ways to improve professional competence, such as developing core discipline-related competence (like method skills), professional self-awareness, problem-solving abilities and the capacity to apply for external funding, shared publications and global networks (Pylvas & Nokelainen, 2021). Increasing the opening of international education, strengthening international communication and introducing high-quality educational resources in China are among the anticipated benefits of the growing number of expatriate teachers in China (Meng, 2017).

However, the increase in expatriate teachers in China has raised new issues for the country's education system and management model. Many expatriate teachers face physical and mental problems due to the environmental and cultural differences,

which hinder their ability to concentrate on teaching (Wang, 2012). Chinese universities and colleges need to deal with the issues faced by these teachers, such as emotional, dietary and health problems. More importantly, expatriate teachers, who are deeply rooted in their own cultures, must navigate the dilemmas caused by cultural differences.

Cross-cultural adaptation, according to Kim (2017), is an internal process that people go through in order to be able to function in a culture that they are unfamiliar with. Cross-cultural adaptation is a very challenging process. Language barriers, disorganised diets, different living habits and changes in weather are external manifestations of the mental pressure that expatriate teachers face when dealing with cultural differences (Cao, 2017; Duan, 2012; Ma, 2007; Wang, 2010). Other challenges include conflicts arising from different cultural perspectives on interpersonal boundaries, differing teaching methods and models, administrative issues within Chinese schools, as well as feelings of loneliness, isolation, homesickness and culture shock, which accompany their daily lives (Cao, 2017; Duan, 2012; Ma, 2007; Wang, 2010). Failure to adapt interculturally may lead to cumbersome career issues, with some serious cases causing mental illness. Hence, it is crucial to address issues faced by expatriate teachers in their cross-cultural adaptation.

In recent years, social networking sites (SNS) have offered sophisticated processing power and a wide range of capabilities through application software (Logan, 2017), as well as convenience and usability to modern users (GroB, 2016; Ozturk et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2013). Social networking sites (SNS) are "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Digital changes have been expedited by the COVID-19 pandemic (Priyono et al., 2020). During the COVID-19 epidemic, health codes posted on social media platforms highly impacted people's ability to travel inside and outside their hometowns. A group of Chinese digital titans, including Tencent, Alibaba, Baidu and Huawei, have grown due to national policy. Many mobile applications (Apps) with powerful functions for people's daily lives have also emerged. For example, Tencent's massive platform WeChat, which has over 1 billion monthly active users (Hou et al., 2021), has evolved from its 2011 inception into an integrated App that is necessary for daily living in China (Chen et al., 2018; Peng &

Wang, 2021; Plantin & De Seta, 2019). Another illustration is the extensive use of digital wallets like WeChat Pay and Alipay, which have led to a cashless society in Chinese cities (Chen et al., 2018). SNS are now widely used in China by Chinese citizens and expatriates living there. SNS are among the most extensively used digital solutions and have already grown in importance, altering expatriates' virtual and physical worlds and their interactions with their surroundings.

Until recently, only several studies have been conducted on expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation in China. Cao (2017) interviewed twenty expatriate teachers in Jiangsu province to study their acculturation of attitudes in Chinese universities and the main influencing factors. Meanwhile, Meng (2017) conducted qualitative research on three American teachers in China to understand their cross-cultural adaptation process. More recently, 10 foreign professors were interviewed to explore the experience of cultural and life adaptation in China (Yi et al., 2020). However, past studies on cross-cultural adaptation have focused mainly on international students, including overseas students in China and Chinese students in other countries (Meng, 2017). The few existing studies on teachers' intercultural adaptation were limited to the researchers' subjective experiences or quantitative assessments (Yi et al., 2020).

Therefore, to address the research gaps mentioned above, the current qualitative research explores the migration experiences of expatriate teachers working at colleges in China regarding difficulties, relationships with students and colleagues from local culture, off-campus life and how they adapt to the local Chinese culture. By focusing on the usage of SNS in expatriate teachers' everyday lives, this research explores the effect of SNS on cross-cultural adaptation experiences. In other words, this study intends to incorporate the various dimensions listed above into a more complete picture of the experiences expatriate teachers have with cultural adaptation based on an empirical and qualitative approach.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The rapid advancement of globalisation, along with the frequent movement of capital, technology and information on a global scale is encouraging transnational immigrants to increasingly participate, whether actively or passively, in the process of global production. According to a PWC survey, the number of professional

international work assignments is expected to rapidly increase twofold by 2020 (Hannan, 2019). Besides the objective condition, individuals also work abroad for various personal reasons.

Lachs (2018) outlines nine reasons why people work abroad. One of the most apparent advantages is the opportunity to become proficient in a second language. More importantly, working abroad allows individuals to travel while getting paid. They get to explore a new country while simultaneously earning a decent income and advancing their careers. Individuals can learn new working and communication skills through this opportunity. Also, starting a new job in a foreign country challenges individuals to step outside their comfort zones, which can help individuals gain new perspectives and grow personally. While working abroad, individuals can collaborate with locals and expatriates from other countries and different backgrounds, which may help expand their social networks and form friendships. Additionally, many people choose to work abroad to try out different jobs and new roles as well as give themselves a chance to learn about different cultures, which can lead to self-discovery. Through this experience, people can enrich their resumes and identify their real work interests and passions, which can finally lead them on a path to a new career.

The current global situation has made working in foreign countries a common trend. The phenomenon of expatriate teachers has generated growing interest within the academic community, as this group is rapidly expanding and plays a significant role in global mobility (Selmer et al., 2017); however, it is still poorly understood and understudied (Froese et al., 2012). Particularly outside of affluent countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, little is known about this group (Alpaslan Danisman, 2017; Tahir, 2023). According to Wilkins and Neri (2019), intellectual expatriates should be examined independently from other types of expatriates.

Moreover, working in a foreign country that practices a completely different culture can be challenging, and expatriates often encounter many obstacles. The cross-cultural adjustment process for expatriates is frequently fraught with unforeseen risks and setbacks that can result in negative attitudes towards their tasks (Bücker et al., 2016; Sit et al., 2017; Wang, 2024), feelings of alienation (Adler, 1981), reduced job satisfaction and performance (Naumann, 1993), loss of motivation and lack of control in managing their work (Black et al., 1992), negative attitudes towards their tasks, decreased effort, reduced ability to perform tasks effectively, increased job

burnout (Griffeth et al., 2000), and a higher intention to withdraw from their positions (Griffeth et al., 2000). Additionally, expatriate teachers face various differences related to language, student conduct, teaching load, career advancement and recruitment practices in universities across different nations (Jepsen et al., 2014). Consequently, just like other expatriates, expatriate teachers may encounter several issues that have major repercussions after acclimating to their new cultural surroundings.

Expatriate teachers may encounter challenges such as cultural differences, language barriers, different dietary habits, unsatisfactory living conditions, different weather, daily life obstacles, burdensome immigration and legal processes and diverse teaching concepts and methods upon arriving in China (Xu et al., 2022; Yi et al., 2020). The anthropologist Hofstede et al. (2010) carried out extensive research on cultural classification using five dimensions: Power Distance (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), and Long Term Orientation (LTO). Cultural models, as showed by Heimgartner (2013), can be used as a foundation for determining cultural distance between nations, as summarized in Table 1.1. The differences between nations indicate that expatriate teachers may encounter several cultural challenges after arriving in China.

Table 1.1  
Cultural Dimension between China and Western Countries

<b>Factor</b>	<b>China</b>	<b>Western</b>
Power Distance	High	Low
Individualism	Low	High
Masculinity	High	Medium
Uncertainty Avoidance	Low	Medium
Long Term Orientation	High	Low

Hofstede (2011) mentioned that China, after a period of relative isolation, and decades of unparalleled double-digit economic development that coincided with rapid global exposure and integration, needed to be validated. Over the past 20 years, the number of expatriates working in foreign representative offices, wholly foreign

subsidiaries, Sino-foreign joint ventures and foreign company branches has increased significantly as a result of the massive inflow of foreign capital into China, making it one of the most alluring destinations for foreign investment (Selmer, 2005; UNCTAD, 2019). However, out of all the exotic locations, China is perceived to be the most foreign. As one of the countries where expatriates encounter the greatest challenges (Lauring & Selmer, 2014), its culture, institutions and people seem completely perplexing—a matter of absolute difference, not of degree (Chen, 2001). These include the barriers posed by cultural (Chen, 2001; Lauring & Selmer, 2014; Makkonen, 2017; Selmer & Lauring, 2016) and linguistic differences (Lauring & Selmer, 2014; Selmer & Lauring, 2016) between many countries and China, as well as communication difficulties when speaking in English with the Chinese hosts due to their relatively low level of English proficiency (EF, 2024).

Although the body of research on expatriates in China is expanding, it remains quite limited compared to studies conducted in industrialised nations, and many questions about cross-cultural adjustment remain unanswered (Guo et al., 2021). The existing research conducted by domestic scholars mainly focuses on two areas: the cultural adaptation of Chinese people abroad, especially overseas students, or ethnic Chinese and the acculturation of minority groups in areas dominated by the Han nationality, often explored under the study of "culturalization" in the sociology field (Wang, 2011). However, due to very few studies providing perspectives on expatriate teachers' adaptation experiences in China, very limited information is found regarding the subject.

Meng (2017) interviewed and observed three American teachers to explore their cross-cultural adaptation process. They reported experiencing stress and disappointment due to the obstacles caused by cultural and geographical differences. Similarly, twenty foreign teachers working in universities and colleges in Jiangsu province were interviewed by Cao (2017) to analyse their acculturation strategies at their workplaces. The findings revealed that expatriate teachers encountered challenges related to different living habits, language barriers, feelings of loneliness and isolation and problems with the administrative patterns of Chinese schools. Moreover, ten foreign professors teaching at three Chinese universities were interviewed to understand their experiences of cultural and life adaptation in China (Yi et al., 2020). The result showed that they encountered multiple cultural challenges

and experienced a range of negative emotions such as frustration, embarrassment and anger (Yi et al., 2020).

The aforementioned studies provide information about the problems encountered by expatriate teachers employed in China. The researcher has observed similar situations in everyday teaching life. Expatriate teachers often encounter Chinese students and teachers on campus, yet few of them share smiles or greetings. In addition, Chinese schools typically have different hardware and software facilities compared to those used in foreign teaching contexts. When expatriate teachers ask for special hardware and software facilities, they have to endure a lengthy administrative approval process. Because many expatriate teachers do not speak Chinese, they primarily engage with Chinese news and movies through English-language sources. They also struggle to navigate Chinese social media, which mostly use Chinese interface. Such situations happen every day in colleges and universities in China. Differences in values, contrasting rights between Chinese and foreign individuals and dissimilarities in social media usage contribute to the problems faced by foreign teachers in the process of cross-cultural adaptation in China (Cao, 2017).

Moreover, as SNS greatly affect expatriates' lives and work, further research on digital solutions for global employment is significant (Selmer et al., 2022). One of the most significant resources available to sojourners during the process of adaption is media channels (Alencar & Deuze, 2017). By giving users access to pertinent information and social support throughout their time abroad, social media aids in the process of acculturation (Pang, 2020). Previous research indicates that engagement in new social groups may be improved by mediated intercultural contact (Ferguson et al., 2016). Particularly, SNS seem to promote intercultural communication, which affects acculturation processes (Ju et al., 2021). For instance, Forbush and Foucault-Welles (2016) demonstrate that Chinese students who utilized social networking sites (SNS) frequently while preparing for study abroad had larger, more varied social networks than students who used SNS less frequently. According to Yu et al. (2019), Chinese students use social media to ask their peers for assistance, which helps them adjust to their new surroundings and lessen "culture shock." But there are drawbacks as well. According to Hofhuis et al. (2019), foreign visitors to the Netherlands who use social networking sites from their home country are more likely to experience psychological alienation, which strengthens cultural maintenance. Research on the usage of SNS in expatriates' cross-cultural adaptation still remain very scarce (Bucher & Deller, 2021;

Farndale et al., 2017; Zhu et al., 2018), and global mobility management has not been effectively linked to these digital solutions (Hausberg et al., 2019).

Therefore, this thesis primarily aims to understand the motivations of expatriate teachers working in Nanchang, China, reveal the challenges they face during their cross-cultural adaptation process in Nanchang, identify the adaptation strategies they adopted and analyse the usage of SNS in expatriate teachers' immigration process to assist their acculturation in Nanchang. The research was conducted among expatriate teachers working in public colleges in Nanchang, emphasising the importance of focusing not only on the perspectives of expatriates but also the relevant practices of the mainstream cultural groups.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The main research questions of this qualitative study are as follows:

1. What are the motivations of expatriate teachers working in China?
2. How do expatriate teachers adapt to Chinese social culture and society?
3. How does SNS help expatriate teachers adapt during the adaptation process in China?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the cross-cultural adaptation process among expatriate teachers in Chinese colleges. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To explore the motivations of expatriate teachers working in China.
2. To understand the cross-cultural adaptation strategies of expatriate teachers in Chinese culture and society.
3. To analyse the usage of SNS in expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation process in China.

## **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the cross-cultural adaptation experiences of expatriate teachers in China, specifically among several colleges in Nanchang, Jiangxi province. Jiangxi is an inland province in East China. By the end of 2024, the permanent resident population of Jiangxi Province was 4502.01 million (JPBoS, 2025). Currently, Nanchang, capital city of Jiangxi, has 3,747 foreign permanent residents, of which 3,144 are international students, making up 83.9% of the total. They are from 83 different nations and areas (NPSB, 2024). The researcher's residence in Nanchang made it convenient for the researcher to choose the research sample and carry out the study, which is why Nanchang was chosen as the research site.

The sample of expatriate teachers was recruited from different colleges in Nanchang. A total of 11 participants took part in this study: four females and seven males, ranging in age from 31 to 53 years old, with three to twelve years of service at the college. China's general higher education system includes full-time doctoral students, full-time and part-time master's students (including academic and professional master's programmes), full-time undergraduates and full-time college students. College education is shorter than undergraduate education, but it is a part of China's higher education system and one of the academic education levels, alongside undergraduate and postgraduate education. This research does not cover expatriate teachers in all levels of higher education but only focuses specifically on those teaching in colleges. The researcher's decision to pursue this line of inquiry was prompted by her personal discovery of the challenges expatriate teachers in colleges face in adjusting to a new culture. As a result, the study decided to concentrate on expatriate teachers at colleges. Additionally, how expatriate teachers perceive mainstream culture may be influenced by students with varying educational backgrounds. Consequently, only one educational level—college—is the subject of this study.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study aims to explore the cross-cultural adaptation process of expatriate teachers in colleges in China. This research can benefit various stakeholders related to

expatriate teachers, including colleges, college students, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China and researchers in the field of cross-cultural adaptation to understand the cultural adjustment process of foreign workers. The following parties stand to gain benefits from the findings of this study:

### **1.6.1 Expatriate Teachers in China**

The purpose of this research is to explore the motives of expatriate teachers working in China, understand the challenges they face during their adaptation process, and identify the factors that influence this process. Cross-cultural adaptation occurs not only among expatriate teachers in colleges but also in other educational institutions, such as universities, middle and high schools, primary schools and even kindergartens. Every sojourner experiences cross-cultural adaptation process differently. Some may experience a relatively short time to adapt to the host country, while others may spend a long period to integrate into the local culture. Unfortunately, some may struggle to adapt unsuccessfully and have to finally return to their home countries.

The findings of this research can provide vital information for expatriate teachers in China, especially those teaching in colleges in less internationally connected cities in China. According to the "Expatriate Explore: Broadening Perspectives Global Report" published by HSBC in 2017, education ranks first in employment sectors for expatriates in China (Wang & Miao, 2018a). These findings may also help expatriate teachers in their preparations and allow those already teaching in China to learn from other teachers' experiences, adjust themselves and eventually navigate their cross-cultural adaptation. Effectively addressing the challenges associated with cross-cultural adaptation can improve teachers' work efficiency and enhance education quality.

### **1.6.2 College Students in China**

College students can benefit from this research by gaining a better understanding of expatriate teachers. These teachers are recruited to impart specialised knowledge, improve students' professional skills and share their teaching methods.

These goals will only be achieved with effective communication and mutual understanding. The research observes interactions in expatriate teachers' classes and the communication dynamics between students and teachers. Identifying the problems found through observations and expatriate teachers' opinions on student behaviour can promote greater understanding between students and expatriate teachers, which will eventually benefit students' academic experiences. In addition, this study may relatively help students to seriously think and reflect about problems encountered in the past during interactions in expatriate teachers' classes and challenges in communicating with them.

### **1.6.3 Government Policy Makers**

The findings from this research can inform the Ministry of Education about the need to formulate a series of measures to help expatriate teachers adapt to life in China. By understanding the challenges that expatriate teachers encounter during their adaptation process, Chinese colleges and universities can be better helped by policy makers to hire and manage expatriate teachers effectively, as well as improve the quality of teaching and competence of the college. This study provides the Ministry of Education with insights into the experiences of these expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation and the factors influencing their integration. With this understanding, the Ministry of Education can establish some regulations or orientation programmes to help expatriate teachers adjust themselves to their school life, which in turn promotes the effectiveness of colleges' management.

In addition, the Ministry of Education can educate the public on shifting policies away from assimilation (or exclusion) and towards a multicultural approach of fostering coexistence after they better understand the cultures of foreign professors. The advantage of a multicultural worldview needs to be explained and promoted widely in a manner that is comprehensible and acceptable to the public. It is particularly significant to highlight the claim that multicultural communities benefit and develop individuals' lives culturally, economically and personally (Berry et al., 2021).

#### **1.6.4 Researchers in Intercultural Communication Studies**

This study can also benefit researchers in cross-cultural studies for future research by giving a perspective on how expatriate teachers adapt to life in China. The main purpose of cross-cultural adaptation research is to help individuals in adjusting to local life when moving to a new land from their home country. While previous research has been mostly conducted in Western countries, this study offers valuable perspectives from the oriental world. Cross-cultural adaptation occurs in every city and country. Hence, this study can provide additional information to other researchers in the same field. Additionally, it can attract people's attention to cross-cultural adaptation.

#### **1.6.5 The Public and the Next Generation in China**

This study also benefits the public and younger generations in China by offering guidance on how to interact appropriately with expatriates and understanding the differing values of expatriates and Chinese individuals. It is no longer surprising to see foreigners in major cities across China and even in some small third and fourth-tier cities. Yet, the public in China has not been adequately introduced to expatriates' diverse living habits, values and ideologies, leading to challenges for foreigners during the process of cross-cultural adaptation in China and a lack of knowledge among the dominant cultural group on how to get along with foreigners. Hence, the study can provide relevant information that increases the awareness of the public and helps the next generation in China in understanding cross-cultural adaptation. In addition, it can promote greater acceptance and tolerance of foreign cultures among Chinese citizens.

### **1.7 Summary**

This study seeks to explore the migration experiences of expatriate teachers in colleges in China to help them better adapt to local life. Colleges must formulate a series of measures that expatriate teachers can follow to address the challenges they

may encounter. The findings from this study contribute to a mutual understanding among expatriate teachers, college students and school administration.

This study can benefit colleges in China because it enables them to understand the cross-cultural adaptation process of expatriate teachers, improving their management of such staff in the future. The findings from this study provide valuable information for achieving the purposes of this study. It may also serve as a valuable source of background information for future research works in this field. Moreover, the research adopted a combination of semi-structured in-depth interviews and observations, which can guide other researchers who wish to explore related areas for further development and improvement.

Subsequently, Chapter Two includes a review of the literature that has been compiled from numerous relevant researchers in the field of cross-cultural adaptation. The literature provides a thorough explanation to better comprehend this situation rather than merely summarizing the investigation. Most significantly, the content of the conceptual framework also emphasises the rationale for including both mainstream and vulnerable cultural groups in developing the cross-cultural adaptation concept framework.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the previous studies that closely endeavoured to explore the cross-cultural adaptation process to help individuals better adapt to their new surroundings. The literature review is imperative as it creates a ground for a framework targeted to critically focus on the critical studies as exemplified in this thesis. As this research is a study which integrates the domains of expatriate, cross-cultural adaptation and SNS usage, this chapter covers the relevant concepts of cross-cultural adaptation and SNS, examines different models of cross-cultural adaptation and reviews previous research on cross-cultural adaptation. This chapter also highlights previous research on the effect of SNS on cross-cultural adaptation process for expatriates, as it is the third aim of the current research. The chapter provides evidence that these reviews are fundamental in understanding the study's main objectives.

#### **2.2 Cross-cultural Adaptation**

This part enlightens and refines the crucial concepts of cross-cultural adaptation. The development and different levels of cross-cultural adaptation research are mentioned to give an outlook of the progress of cross-cultural adaptation research. Several prominent models linked within the current research affiliating with cross-cultural adaptation were analysed to introduce the framework of this research.

##### **2.2.1 Terms Related to Cross-cultural Adaptation**

Cross-cultural adaptation is expressed through various terms, such as "acculturation", "enculturation", "cross-cultural adaptation", "culture adaptation", and

"intercultural adaptation". This section reviews the concepts and definitions related to these expressions.

### *2.2.1.1 Acculturation*

The concept of acculturation was first introduced by anthropologists and ethnolinguists Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton and Melville Herskovits in 1936. They defined the term as "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns or both groups ... under this definition, acculturation is to be distinguished from culture change, of which it is but one aspect, and assimilation, which is at times a phase of acculturation"(Redfield et al., 1936, pp. 149-152). Later, acculturation was defined more specifically in another formulation as "culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Acculturative change may be the consequence of direct cultural transmission; it may be derived from noncultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modification induced by an impinging culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life" (SocialScienceResearchCouncil, 1954, p. 974).

The first definition emphasizes the distinction between and assimilation, framing acculturation as a component of the larger idea of culture change that affects "either or both groups." On the other hand, the second definition involves indirect, potentially reactive, and potentially delayed transformation. From the psychological perspective, Graves (1967) defined acculturation as alternations in an individual taking part in a scenario where there is a cultural contact, highlighting how this individual is being directly impacted by both the external culture and their own evolving culture. In summary, Berry (2006) described acculturation as a process of cultural and psychological transformation brought about by ongoing interactions between individuals from various cultural origins. Most of these contact scenarios lead to the establishment of multicultural communities, incorporating various cultures, languages and religions after the initial contact.

### **2.2.1.2 Enculturation**

Enculturation generally occurs during the early stages of an individual's life. Herskovits (1949) described enculturation as the process of assimilating into and upholding the key principles, values and conceptions of one's cultural heritage. According to Hoijer (1953, p. 556), "What the human learns, in the process of enculturation, is an organised set of ways of behaving, which he abstracts from and applies to situations of his daily experience as these arise". He believed that the acquisition of behavioural patterns is a key component of enculturation. Similarly, Spindler (1968) equated the acquisition of culture with enculturation, defining it as "the process through which the individual acquires the culture of his group, class, segment, or society. Since we assume an ideational definition of culture, the process is limited to the acquiring of patterns for behaviour, including language, meta-language, beliefs, values, and role definitions, among other phenomena of this order. Within the framework of this definition either the transmission of culture by cultural agents such as parents and teachers or the assimilation of it by the individual, including the response to such transmission, may be emphasised" (Spindler, 1968, pp. 326-347).

Linton (1936, p. 39) viewed enculturation as a potent conditioning mechanism that prevents cultural transformation in this context. Though he gave a more thorough definition, he still restricted it to cultural internalisation: "No matter what the method by which the individual receives the elements of culture characteristic of his society, he is sure to internalise most of them. This process is called enculturation. Even the most deliberately unconventional person is unable to escape his culture to any significant degree. ... Cultural influences are so deep that even the behaviour of the insane reflects them strongly".

Herskovits (1964, p. 326), on the other hand, perceived enculturation as a planned process of psychosocial transmutation. According to his more thorough and analytical definition of enculturation, socialisation is merely one aspect of the larger process in which "men adjust to their fellows in working with the total body of traditions ... to which they fall heir." The primary purpose of socialisation in a human group is cultural conditioning, which allows an individual to become integrated into his culture. Later, Chen (1998) summarised enculturation as a process of learning and adapting to the values and customs of one's parent culture in the early socialisation

process. Therefore, enculturation can be considered a form of acculturation or intra acculturation.

### *2.2.1.3 Cross-cultural Adaptation*

The idea of cross-cultural adaptation means the dynamic change process that people undergo when they relocate to a new environment (Kim, 1988). Cross-cultural adaptation is an evolutionary or ongoing learning process through which a person gradually improves their ability to function in an expatriate environment. The process of adaptation is a continuous process that evolves and becomes manageable with time and experience (Kim, 2000). According to Wang and Li (2004), cross-cultural adaptation refers to a conscious and inclined behaviour choice and adjustment based on the cognition and emotional attachment of two cultures after an individual's relocation from one culture to another heterogeneous culture that differs from the one he or she originally lived in.

A vast number of immigrants, refugees and short-term sojourners, along with domestic migrants, depart from the comfortable surroundings of their native culture and relocate for varied periods of time to a new cultural setting. While the situation for every new arrival may be different, they always need to build and maintain a somewhat steady working connection with the host setting. The dynamic of stress, adaptation and growth reflects how a person adjusts to a new culture. This process stems from the innate need of individual to maintain an internal balance when confronted with hostile external circumstances. Symptoms of culture shock, which can manifest as psychological and physical experiences of displacement and stress, usually mark the beginning of the adaptation process. With consistent engagement in new cultural learning activities, the majority of individuals can gradually achieve higher degrees of psychological and functional efficacy in relation to their host environment. The two interconnected experiences of acculturating new cultural habits and deculturating some of the old cultural habits form the basis of the process of cross-cultural adaptation. An internal shift towards integration into the mainstream culture often results from the combined experiences of acculturation and deculturation (Kim, 2017).

Kim (2017) further defined cross-cultural adaptation as an internal process that people go through to be able to function in a culture that they are not familiar with. In order to become somewhat effective in their new surroundings, immigrants must learn to adapt their native cultural practices. This often requires deculturating certain original cultural habits in order to assimilate new ones throughout the adaptive transformation process. Through communication interactions between the individual and the host environment, both processes take place. Successful assimilation into the mainstream culture of the host society may result from prolonged and intensive encounters with cross-cultural adaptation.

#### ***2.2.1.4 Intercultural Adaptation***

Intercultural adaptation was defined by Cai and Rodriguez (1997) as the process through which individuals alter their communicative behaviour in cross-cultural contacts in order to promote understanding. In other words, intercultural adaptation involves modifying one's communication style in order to reduce the likelihood of misinterpreting someone when communicating with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. The field of intercultural studies centres on the interactions between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Adaptation is defined as the "dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to an unfamiliar cultural environment, establish (or re-establish) and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with the environment" (Gudykunst, 2003, p. 244).

To address multicultural issues, the term "intercultural competence" has emerged. The ability to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds is referred to as intercultural competence. This ability has a significant impact on an individual's performance and ability to adapt to a new culture, which in turn affects how successful the stay of the expatriate is. The awareness, information and abilities required for productive collaboration across racial and cultural divides are embodied in the intercultural competencies (Reynolds & Pope, 1997).

The development of intercultural competencies involves a number of processes, including intercultural confrontation, the formation of intercultural experience, intercultural learning, intercultural comprehension and personality predispositions,

such as self-reflection, empathy, cultural sensitivity, curiosity, self-confidence and decreased anxiety. Teamwork skills, task performance and communication effectiveness are all enhanced by competencies (Govindarajan & Gupta, 2001).

### **2.2.2 The Development of Cross-cultural Adaptation Research**

Early cross-cultural studies primarily focused on the mental health of immigrants. The 1903 Census of the United States found that 70 percent of hospital patients were immigrants, although they made up only 20 percent of the population. This discovery had great significant social, economic, and political implications. This fact caught the attention of researchers, and subsequent studies were carried out in countries such as Britain, Australia and Canada. From the late 1970s, some researchers began to examine the adverse effects of cross-cultural contact. At this stage, most research was biased to theoretical explanation with limited experimental research. However, after the 1980s, research on cross-cultural adaptation entered a golden age, with research methods continuously enriched and research scopes continuously expanded. The focus of the studies shifted from group cultural change and cultural integration to individual intercultural communication and the various influencing factors. Scholars from multiple disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, linguistics, social psychology and communication science, have incorporated cross-cultural adaptation into their research horizons, demonstrating the rich connotation and diversified framework of multi-disciplinary and multi-perspective mutual learning and shared discussion (Yang, 2005).

### **2.2.3 The Level of Cross-cultural Adaptation**

The two categories of people who experience cross-cultural adaptation are long-term immigrants or refugees and short-term or temporary residents, collectively called sojourners, such as overseas students, businesspeople and scientific and technological personnel (Yang, 2005). Research on cross-cultural adaptation is divided into two categories: group adaptation research and individual adaptation research. The initial research on cross-cultural adaptation is conducted from the perspective of anthropology and sociology to examine how cultural communication

affects society at the group level. Then, the identification of inconsistencies between different cultures has become an increasingly concerning issue for psychologists. The study of cross-cultural adaptation at the individual level is mainly concerned with the psychological reaction and social integration of foreigners in the new cultural environment, focusing on the changes in personal values, attitudes and behaviours (Yang, 2005).

#### **2.2.4 Cross-cultural Adaptation Models**

Four broad models describing the process of adapting to another culture have emerged in the field of cross-cultural adaptation: the recuperation model, the learning model, the recovery model and the dynamic tension reduction model. Then, various factors affecting cross-cultural adjustment into three different dimensions were concluded as the factor model by (Black et al., 1991). Later, Kim (2000) and Berry (2003) concluded and developed models and modes of their own related to this topic.

##### ***2.2.4.1 The Recuperation Model***

The first and most dominant model is the recuperation model. This model views culture shock as its pivot point, holding recovery from the shock to be the mechanism for accommodation to life in new unfamiliar lands (Lysgaand, 1955). Culture shock was first described as a medical disease in the late 1950s by the anthropologists Kalervo Oberg and George Foster. The condition included emotions of disorientation after entering a new culture, which were often so powerful that they turned into physical symptoms (Oberg, 1954).

As we can see in Figure 2.1 on the next page, Lysgaand (1955) U-shaped curve illustrates the adaptation process, beginning with the honeymoon stage, during which expatriates enjoy the new cultural experience in the host country. When this stage is over, the crisis stage begins when sojourners experience culture shock. Once sojourners can overcome the crisis stage, they can move to the recovery stage and gradually reach the state of full adjustment in the host culture. According to this perspective, culture shock is typically shown as an abrupt illness that strikes a person as suddenly as piano falling on them (Anderson, 1994).

Honeymoon

/"Adjustment

Recovery

Crisis

Figure 2.1 Lysgaard's (1955) U-shaped Curve

In a more contemporary interpretation of the culture-shock recovery paradigm, recovery is seen as resulting from a crisis of identity or personality rather than as a disease or malady that causes mental or physical disintegration (Adler, 1975; Bennett, 1977; Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Pearson, 1964). Identity crises are typically seen in psychological crisis conceptualisations as an almost inevitable result of interacting with a foreign culture, where people claim that all of the traditional foundations of their sense of self have been taken away upon arrival in a foreign land, leaving them without familiar reference points that serve as both the substrate and the cues for their behaviour (Lewis & Jungman, 1986; Pearson, 1964). The phases in the process of creating new identities that combine both old and new selves are known as the transitional points of passage leading to full recovery.

Adler (1975) is arguably the most prominent supporter of this perspective, having clearly interpreted the process of cultural adaptation as a significant developmental experience. According to Adler (1975), the cultural crisis offers the catalyst required to pave the path for personality development and individual advancement. While this crisis may even cause a "disintegration" of the individual's personality when adjusting due to the shift in consciousness that the cross-cultural experience brings about, this disintegration is required to make room for the construction of a "better," more transcultural, and integrated self from the ashes of the old, incorporating elements of both previous and new identities.

#### 2.2.4.2 *The Learning Model*

The second model regards cross-cultural adaptation as a learning process (Byrnes, 1965; Ezekiel, 1968; Guthrie, 1975; Lee, 1979) which involves learning the communication skills necessary for effective social interaction in order to overcome both verbal and nonverbal communication challenges that arise when in a different cultural environment (Taylor, 1994). The three main factors involved in the process of achieving intercultural communication competence are intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness and intercultural effectiveness. According to this model, newcomers need to acquire the necessary verbal and nonverbal communication skills to interact more effectively with people from the new culture (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988).

Two proposed cultural learning courses are slightly distinct from one another and reflect different perspectives on the mechanisms of cultural adjustment. The first school of thought, which is mostly composed of communication theorists (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Gardner, 1951; Hammer et al., 1978; Nishida, 1985; Ruben, 1976; Ruben & Kealey, 1979), maintains that intercultural communication forms the foundation of cultural adaptation since effective communication determines a person's capacity to interact effectively in all spheres of life. Therefore, cultural adaptation is viewed as the process of acquiring both verbal and nonverbal communication skills required for successful social engagement in order to navigate the unavoidable communication breakdowns that occur when one is in a foreign country (Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

The other school of thinking, which differs from the communication perspective, places more emphasis on behaviour learning itself and maintains that effective adaptation is contingent upon the implementation of appropriate social behaviours. Researchers adopting this behaviourally-oriented approach (David, 1976; Guthrie, 1975; Mischel, 1973; Pedersen, 1983; Triandis, 1980) contend that effective cultural adaptation is a recursive process of operant conditioning. According to the social-learning theory, some actions are seen to lead to "reinforcing" occurrences, while others help to prevent "punishing" ones. The reinforcement contingencies that control proper social behaviours—that is, the system of rewards and punishments explicitly linked to the new behaviours—must also be learnt, primarily through observation and imitation. Proper social behaviours are those encouraged by society.

In summary, sojourners need to acquire both behavioural and perceptual rules-the guidelines for acting appropriately in a new environment-in order to adjust to a new culture (Anderson, 1994).

#### *2.2.4.3 The Recovery Model*

The third category of models, which is also linear, exists between cultural adaptation as a recuperative process and learning. These "journey" conceptualisations apply to both temporary sojourners and permanent immigrants. This model appears to combine the previous two models and view the process as a methodical psychological journey from the periphery to the core of a foreign culture, transitioning from a condition of denial or ignorance to a state of comprehension and empathy (Bennett, 1986).

Bennett's intercultural adaptation developmental model is a typical example, which is based on the principle of psychological dissonance. In his model, intercultural sensitivity development moves from an ethnocentric stage to the final stage of racial relativity (Bennett, 1986). The growth of cognitive "sensitivity" resulting from increased exposure to a culture serves as a metaphor for the journey; the different stages of sensitivity signify changing ways in which travellers react to cultural differences. Through achieving full "ethnorelativism," whereby the distinctions noticed in the new culture are incorporated into the sojourners' own worldview, their awareness progresses from what Bennet called the "ethnocentric" early days of adaptation, during which such differences are simply ignored (Anderson, 1994).

#### *2.2.4.4 The Dynamic Tension Reduction Model*

Although the U-curve and staged hypotheses remain dominant in describing the cultural adaptation process, a few investigators have proposed a homeostatic mechanism. These "equilibrium" models, the fourth models, frame cross-cultural adaptation as a dynamic and cyclical process of tension reduction (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988; Spradley & Phillips, 1972). The fundamental idea is mechanical: systems, including sojourners, function in "steady-state" mode until they are forced

out of balance by dynamic events, upheavals or disturbances. According to homeostatic theory, cross-cultural adaptation is the process of alleviating the internal imbalance-also referred to as tension, drive, need or uncertainty-that is caused by encountering a foreign culture. Once this equilibrium is achieved, the sojourner is free to return to their regular operating mode (Anderson, 1994).

Explicitly based on cognitive concepts, the most advanced homeostatic model builds upon physiological formulations (Grove & Torbiorn, 1985; Torbiorn, 1982). The shifting relationships between a person's behaviour, their (perceptual) frame of reference and the surrounding environment-all of which are assessed in light of the person's own criterion of adequacy-are seen as the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Progress through the four stages of Torviorn's "subjective adjustment" cycle is determined by changes in these tripartite relationships as perceived by the adjuster; the motivation or driving force is the person's degree of pleasure or unhappiness with their changing adjustments. Balance and imbalance are seen to be the achievement or non-attainment of the desired degree of functioning, whereas internal balance is seen as intrinsically pleasant and imbalance as intrinsically unsatisfying (Anderson, 1994).

This model considers cross-cultural adaptation as a dynamic process of reducing uncertainty or tension. It suggests that when sojourners encounter new cultural aspects of the host culture, their mental system's equilibrium state either starts to experience difficulties or becomes disrupted, leading to feelings of uncertainty and tension. As a result, the sojourners tend to resolve this tension by learning specific coping mechanisms to address their internal imbalance (Chen, 2009).

#### *2.2.4.5 Factor Model of Cross-cultural Adjustment*

Many researchers have dedicated themselves to examining the factors affecting cross-cultural adaptation, regarding it as a multidimensional conceptualisation instead of a unitary phenomenon. This builds upon the ground-breaking research into the process of cross-cultural adaptation (Adler, 1975; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960). Due to the numerous different and intricate aspects of cross-cultural adjustment, pinpointing every element that matters can be challenging.

The cross-cultural adjustment model developed by Black et al. (1991) represents the most popular and significant paradigm in this field (see Figure 2.2).

Black et al. (1991) covered two main factors of adjustment: in-country adjustment and anticipatory adjustment, building a concept based on their earlier frameworks (Black, 1988; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Black & Stephens, 1989). Several factors influencing adjustment were identified: individual factors included relationship skills, self-efficacy and perceptual skills; job factors included role discretion, clarity, novelty and conflict; organisational factors included social support, organisational culture novelty, logistical help, socialisation content and socialisation tactics; and non-work factors included family-spouse adjustment and cultural novelty.

Black et al. divided the concept of cross-cultural adaptability into three independent dimensions: 1) general adjustment, including health care, housing, food, transportation, weather and cost of living, representing the expatriate' psychological comfort in the host country's cultural environment; 2) interaction adjustment, including the frequency and intensity of social communication as well as feelings of interaction with locals in both work and non-work contexts, representing the expatriates' psychological comfort when interacting with local people in the host country and is considered to be the most challenging of the three aspects (Black & Stevens, 1989); 3) work adjustment refers to factors including the work environment, values, standards, expectations and duties that affect the expatriate's psychological comfort in their new culture.

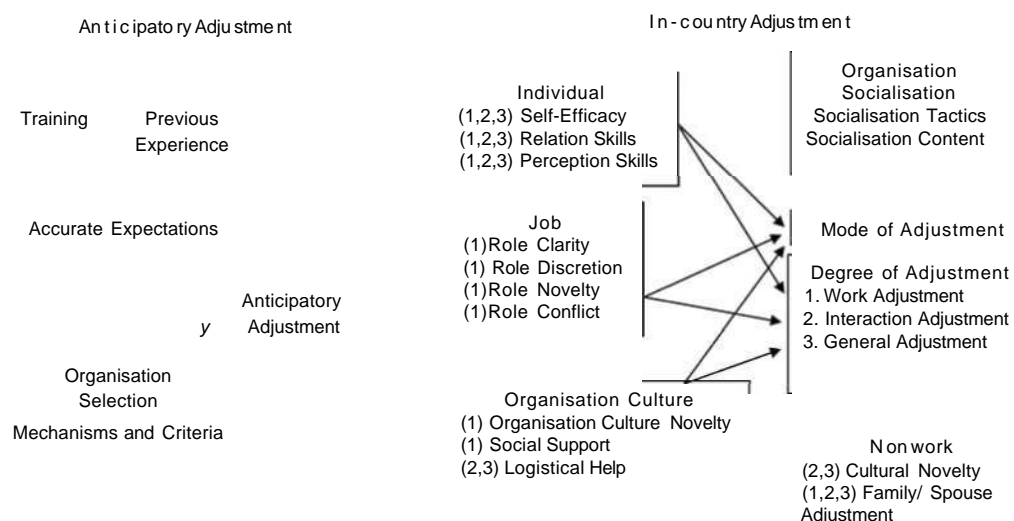


Figure 2.2 Cross-cultural Adjustment Model of Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991)

However, this approach primarily addresses socio-cultural adjustment and does not cover psychological adjustment. Several criticisms on the model have been raised as well, including the fact that the model was based on a study with only 67 responses, relying more on experience than on theoretical underpinnings (Hippler, 2000; Stahl & Caligiuri, 2005). It also excluded other significant aspects of adjustment, like the time-related issues, mechanisms and strategies required to achieve successful adjustment and the processes that lead to impactful changes (Thomas & Lazarova, 2006); Critics noted a lot of redundancy in work and interaction adjustment items (Stahl & Caligiuri, 2005); additionally, there were an uneven number of items across categories, including work and interaction adjustment (Harrison et al., 2004).

#### *2.2.4.6 Kim's Process Model and Structural Model*

Kim (2000) presented two cross-cultural models: the process model and the structural model. The process model outlines how cross-cultural adaptation occurs, explaining and defining a dynamic cycle of "stress-adaptation-growth" that causes gradual "intercultural transformation" of the person towards increased "fitness" in the host environment. The process model emphasises that stress serves as the exact force that opens new opportunities for people to reinvent themselves amid the difficulties in the new environment. Most people who are under stress often undergo internal changes as they face and navigate around difficulties and strive to maintain their stability by engaging in the process of adaptation. The long-term imbalance and cumulative management and adaptation of stress leads to a subtle and frequently undetectable psychological growth and a sense of an elevated level of system complexity in individuals. The stress-adaptation-growth dynamic, according to Kim, represents a positive psychological journey that develops over time in the forward and upward direction, increasing the likelihood of adaptive success. Stress, adaptation and growth together make up the three prong experience of this dynamic (Kim, 2000).

The structural model, which identified important variables, either help or hinder the adaptation process. This second model in Kim's theory specifies four categories of elements that interactively influence by either assisting or impeding the overall adaptation process outlined in the process model: (1) individual predisposition (adaptive personality, ethnic proximity/distance, preparedness); (2) environmental

factors (host conformity pressure, host receptivity, ethnic group strength); (3) intercultural transformation (functional fitness, psychological health, intercultural identity development); and (4) communication factors (host communication competence, host interpersonal communication, host mass communication, ethnic interpersonal communication and ethnic mass communication). (Kim, 2000) introduced 21 theorems specifying the interconnected bilateral interactions among these constructs.

Peng and Wu (2019) conducted a study to create a quick scale for assessing the cross-cultural adaptation of international students in China and investigate the primary channels for fostering their cross-cultural adaptation based on Kim's structural model. They administered English-language questionnaires to 665 participants chosen from universities in the northern, eastern, southern and central parts of China. The study examined the structural model and found four main factors influencing the cross-cultural adaptation of international students in China: (1) host communication competence; (2) host social communication; (3) basic intercultural transformation; (4) advanced intercultural transformation. Furthermore, the findings suggested four main pathways to cross-cultural adaptation that may help predict students' cross-cultural adaptation, with the most influential route being the one that leads from advanced intercultural transformation to cross-cultural adaptation. This pathway involves two sociocultural and psychological factors such as understanding and respecting cultural differences and feeling comfortable when interacting with Chinese people. The results show that the other three pathways-host social communication, host communication competence and basic intercultural transformation-are also crucial markers for evaluating how well international students have experienced cross-cultural adaptation in China (Peng & Wu, 2019).

#### *2.2.4.7 Berry's Modes of Acculturation*

Berry (Berry, 1995) proposed four modes of cultural adaptation: integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalisation (see Figure 2.3) according to the different attitudes and behaviours of adaptive individuals in these two dimensions. Assuming that the disadvantaged groups have the freedom to choose how they interact with other cultures, adaptive individuals who pay attention to both maintaining the

original culture and allowing the participation of mainstream culture adopt the "integration" mode. Adaptive individuals who prioritise only the participation of mainstream culture adopt the "assimilation" mode. Individuals who value only their own original culture and always avoid contact with the mainstream culture adopt the "separation" mode. Individuals who neither value the maintenance of the original culture nor accept the participation of mainstream culture adopt the "marginalisation" mode (Berry, 1995).

		Value and Maintain Native Culture	
		YES	NO
Value and Maintain Original Culture	YES	Integration	Assimilation
	NO	Separation	Marginalization

Figure 2.3 Berry's Modes of Acculturation

However, the acculturation mode of vulnerable groups is often limited by the interaction mode of mainstream cultural groups. Therefore, Berry expanded the corresponding mode of cultural interaction. The interaction mode in which mainstream cultural groups pay equal attention to other cultures and strive for cultural diversity is defined as "multi-culture", which can promote the "integration" strategy. In contrast, when mainstream cultural groups emphasise the prominent status of local social culture, it is referred to as a "melting pot", leading individuals to adopt an "assimilation" strategy. When the interaction mode of the mainstream culture group is to actively avoid the influence of other cultures on the local social culture, this is termed "racial segregation", resulting in individuals adopting a "separation" mode.

The mainstream culture group that denies other cultures is called "exclusion". Individuals in this context may experience "marginalisation" (Berry, 2003).

Based on Berry's theoretical frame, Cao (2017) conducted research among expatriate group and mainstream cultural groups to assist foreign teachers in adjusting to Chinese society. Interviews with twenty expatriate teachers working in Jiangsu province analysed the adaptation of these foreign teachers in China and the influencing factors involved. From adaptive individuals' perspective, the results showed that foreign teachers experienced the highest acceptance rate regarding daily life adaptation but had the lowest interaction rates with Chinese teachers and students. In addition, expatriate teachers maintain their original culture concerning their selection of relatives and friends, their attention to traditional festivals, and their use of social media. Consequently, expatriate teachers maintained and valued their original culture more than the mainstream culture, which aligns with a "separation" mode (Cao, 2017). A questionnaire survey conducted among 100 teachers and 600 undergraduates examined the interaction mode chosen by the colleges and universities. The results indicated that although teachers and students in colleges and universities were subjectively willing to interact with foreign teachers during their spare time, few of them actually did so, and even fewer interacted often with foreign teachers in their daily lives. The observed interactive signs show that the mainstream cultural groups in colleges and universities objectively tend to practise "racial segregation" and adopt a "separation" mode in their treatment of foreign teachers (Cao, 2017).

In contrast to other research, the above study based on Berry's modes of acculturation offers a comprehensive understanding of the cross-cultural adjustment of foreign teachers in colleges in China, considering not only the perspectives of expatriates but also those of the dominant cultural group. Influenced by Chinese Confucianism, Chinese students and faculty often struggle to interact with foreign groups, even though they show a highly subjective willingness to do so. Therefore, research like this allows us to get a fuller perspective on the challenges faced by the expatriate community during the process of acculturation in China, highlighting both actively generated problems and objectively and passively accepted obstacles.

This study also aims to portray a more comprehensive picture of the cross-cultural adaption process of expatriate teachers. By examining the perspectives of both expatriate and dominant cultural groups on cross-cultural adaptation, this research tries to gain a deeper understanding of how expatriate teachers adapt to

Chinese society and how they are affected by mainstream cultural groups. While the above seven models may account for expatriate groups, only Berry's four different adaptation modes consider the perspectives of mainstream cultural groups. For this reason, the research is conducted based on Berry's modes of acculturation.

## **2.3 Expatriates and Cross-cultural Adaptation**

Cross-cultural adaptation research has been continued for a long time. Previous research has explored the challenges encountered by expatriates during the adaptation process and has provided some lead; however, there are still gaps which are investigated in the current study. This part introduces the concept of expatriates, examines the previous study of cross-cultural adaptation and analyses the gaps.

### **2.3.1 Definitions of Expatriates and Expatriate Teachers**

The term "expatriates" in this thesis refers to people who relocate to another country and work legally in their field of interest while relocating their primary residency. Examples of these people include educated professionals, skilled workers and artists who hold positions abroad (Andresen et al., 2014; Castree et al., 2013). Short-term expatriates, on the other hand, are people who accept non-standard assignments with a relocation period of less than a year (Tahvanainen et al., 2005). This group includes flexible dispatchers, travellers for international business, frequent visitors and virtual global employees who work from home (Harvey et al., 2005).

Typically, there are two classification criteria used to group different kinds of expatriates. First, they can be categorised based on the type of organisation the their assignment: 1) business expatriates, who work for corporations; 2) non-business expatriates, who work for government agencies, non-profit organisations, and the military, as well as missionaries, athletes, academics and artists (McNulty et al., 2017). Second, expatriates can be categorised according to the type of position that led to their assignment: 1) assigned expatriates, who are managers and professionals sent by their organisations to oversee subsidiaries and manage local operations in order to meet organisational goals (Collings et al., 2007; Shaffer et al., 2012; Tharenou, 2015; Vijayakumar & Cunningham, 2016); 2) self-initiated expatriates, who are individuals

paying for their own emigration in active search of employment for lifestyle, professional, personal and cultural reasons (Collings et al., 2007; Shaffer et al., 2012; Tharenou, 2015). Self-initiated expatriates tend to have a normal employment intention, temporary residence intention and relevant skills, as well as professional qualifications (Cerdin & Selmer, 2014).

There are notable differences between self-initiated expatriates and assigned expatriates in terms of cross-cultural adaptation (Guo et al., 2021). Assigned expatriates are usually aware that they will often remain in a host country for a predetermined amount of time (Peltokorpi & Jintae Froese, 2009) before returning to their home country at the end of the agreed-upon duration (Edstrom & Galbraith, 1977; Huang et al., 2005). As a result, assigned expatriates may not be as motivated to learn the local language and culture, may not focus on building and sustaining relationships with host country nationals, and may be hesitant to adjust their personal behaviours in order to facilitate cross-cultural adjustment (Berry, 1990). In contrast, self-initiated expatriates are often more driven to actively study the language and culture of their new surroundings and build social networks with locals as a means of adapting and operating in their host country (Doherty et al., 2011; Froese & Peltokorpi, 2013). According to earlier empirical research, self-initiated expatriates tend to adjust more readily than assigned expatriates in terms of both general and interaction adjustment (Peltokorpi, 2008; Peltokorpi & Jintae Froese, 2009). However, another viewpoint holds that an expatriate's ability to adapt to a new work environment across cultural boundaries is independent of whether they are assigned or self-initiated (Wilson & Dutt, 2022).

The term "expatriate teacher" was first used in one of the earliest studies on the evolution of higher education in the former British colonies of West Africa and the Caribbean in the early 1950s (Lewis, 1959). Although the phrase has gained popularity since the turn of the century, its usage has largely been limited to educational texts. Current published literature more often uses terms such as "foreign academics" (Burford et al., 2019), "internationally mobile academics" (Bauder & Gonzalez, 2018; Teichler, 2017), "mobile academics" (Kim, 2010), "international academics" (Richardson, 2009), "migrant academics" (Kahn & Misiaszek, 2019), "migrant faculty" (Ortiga et al., 2019), and "international faculty members" (Kuzhabekova & Lee, 2018).

In this study, the term "expatriate teachers" refers specifically to self-initiated expatriates who leverage their knowledge as asset to seek teaching positions at colleges independently. The term "knowledge workers" was initially used by Drucker (1989) to describe people who possess knowledge as a valuable and personal asset, independent of their employers (Horwitz et al., 2003). This research focuses on expatriate teachers who teach subjects in Chinese colleges, excluding those involved in Sino-foreign joint programs or institutions, non-academic expatriate staff and short-term expatriates.

### **2.3.2 Cross-cultural Adaptation of Expatriate Teachers**

This study focuses on the motivations and experiences of expatriate teachers working in China. Therefore, the next section will provide a detailed literature review on the motivation of self-initiated expatriates working abroad and their cross-cultural adaptation experiences. Given the pertinence of this study to expatriate teachers working in China, the following literature reviews will be presented within both global and Chinese contexts.

#### *2.3.2.1 Motivation of Self-initiated Expatriates*

Research argued that self-initiated expatriates have more nuanced motivations than originally proposed (Muir et al., 2014; Nolan & Morley, 2014; Richardson & McKenna, 2006; Selmer & Luring, 2011). Many people decide to work abroad on their own for a while, even though there is no conclusive research determining the extent of self-initiated expatriation (Doherty et al., 2011). Early studies defined these expatriates who moved to work abroad voluntarily as young people engaged in a "backpacker culture", traveling for extended periods of time while working and sightseeing, and as being on a personal odyssey. This group was typically made up of recent graduates who saw traveling abroad as a "rite of passage" (Inkson et al., 1997).

The motivation to work overseas comes solely from the individual for self-initiated expatriates. When focusing on the elements that push them to transfer overseas, it is important to remember that this group of self-initiated expatriates is a heterogeneous population with varying driving motives (Suutari & Brewster, 2000).

For instance, studies in the existing literature on self-initiated expatriates have shown that several key factors influencing an individual's decision to take a job abroad were personal growth, excitement, the prospect of international experiences, meeting individuals from diverse cultures and potential career advancement (Tharenou, 2003). According to findings from a qualitative study conducted by Inkson et al. (1997), New Zealand workers abroad are frequently driven by a desire for the experiences of exploration and adventure. This self-directed experimentation appears to be the driving force behind their self-initiated values, as they seek cultural experiences and opportunities for personal growth. They also gain flexibility, self-assurance and cross-industry abilities. Jackson et al. (2005) synthesised a set of five driving variables for highly skilled individuals who had relocated overseas in the setting of New Zealand. They discovered that family, particularly extended family, and lifestyle were the significant pull factors, whereas economic conditions, cultural aspects and career opportunities served as push factors. The researchers highlighted the need for greater information about the possibly various drivers of global careers, speculating that these incentives might differ depending on one's geographical location.

Key motivators for self-initiated academics (Richardson & Mallon, 2005; Richardson & McKenna, 2006) include a desire for adventure and excitement, a positive predisposition to the experience prompted by family and social connections, and a desire to escape their current lifestyle or job. According to a qualitative research on British academics by Richardson and McKenna (2006), four metaphors capturing reasons for going abroad are the motivation to explore, the desire to flee, the desire for financial gain and the motivation to use the experience to further one's career. They discovered that among British scholars, individual proactivity, a desire for adventure, an opportunity to start a new life and benefits for family were significant factors in their decision to work abroad. The role of family seemed to be significant for those who self-initiated foreign work experiences (Richardson, 2006). Social and familial ties and interactions were found to be crucial for establishing an affiliation with the host country and, consequently, influencing intentions to return home (Richardson & McKenna, 2006).

In the context of careers in general and self-initiated careers in particular, serendipity frequently plays a significant role, as many opportunities have been discovered to develop by chance rather than through the outcome of explicit planning (Mitchell et al., 1999; Richardson & Mallon, 2005). However, the danger and

transience associated with the exhilarating and daring aspects of the self-initiated experience can be seen as possible drawbacks (Richardson & Zikic, 2007).

Muir et al. (2014) pointed out that as self-initiated expatriates are free to choose their host nation, they can select locations that are personally appealing to them. Napier and Taylor (2002) discovered that self-initiated expatriates who had previously studied in a particular country frequently returned to strengthen their language abilities or learn more about the local way of life. Furthermore, some self-initiated expatriates choose to leave their home country to return to friends and family, pursue personal interests or explore personal attachments such as ancestral connections (Muir et al., 2014). Doherty et al. (2011) observed that policies and social norms at the national level, the allure of job prospects and laws in the host country also significantly impact self-initiated expatriates' decisions to settle down in a particular area. Doherty and Dickmann (2012) identified six primary motivators for individuals deciding to relocate overseas. The main factors influencing the decision to move overseas include the evaluation of financial and non-financial organisational incentives, career development considerations, worries about friends and family, fulfilment of individual interests like a desire for adventure, assessment of host country environments like history, nature, security and climate, as well as a particular location of the host country. Self-initiated expatriates are particularly interested in visiting rich nations due to their desire for a better lifestyle, personal security, quality healthcare and political stability (Al Ariss & Ozbilgin, 2010; Doherty et al., 2013). Some self-initiated expatriates purposefully avoid moving to locations perceived as culturally challenging (Doherty et al., 2013).

The reasons why expatriate teachers relocate overseas can be broadly categorised into four categories: architect, mercenary, adventurer and refugee (Froese et al., 2012; Richardson & McKenna, 2002; Selmer & Luring, 2013). The term "architect" describes a teacher who is driven by career prospects and advancement. Teachers who are enticed by financial incentives to work overseas are known as "mercenaries". The term "adventurer" or "explorer" describes a teacher who has a strong desire to travel to new places. Lastly, teachers who are driven to leave their home country in search of a better life and professional opportunities are referred to as "refugees". Explorers are driven by an innate urge to participate in activities which they consider intrinsically valuable (Haines III et al., 2008; Richardson & McKenna, 2002). Research demonstrates that people with higher levels of intrinsic motivation

are more likely to look for and take on new challenges (Deci & Ryan, 1985), as well as show more interest, excitement and confidence in their new roles (Haines III et al., 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Additionally, it was observed that expatriates with intrinsic motivation were more likely to be willing to commit to overseas assignments and pick up a new language (Haines III et al., 2008). Engaging in humanitarian endeavours, traveling to new locations or having a positive influence on co-workers and pupils are all examples of inspiring activities for explorers. Conversely, extrinsically motivated individuals have been linked to a greater likelihood of experiencing adjustment difficulties while relocating overseas (Haines III et al., 2008). This anticipation can lead expatriates to experience less satisfactory assignments and slower transition to their new life in the host country. More often than not, refugees are driven by external factors rather than a genuine innate desire to relocate overseas.

Howe-Walsh and Schyns (2010) discovered that expatriate teachers are encouraged and motivated to leave their home country for a variety of reasons, including personal concerns about being faithful to a partner or relationship, having and pursuing a different career in a foreign country, particularly when the working conditions and reality of life in their home country are unsatisfactory, and their desire and interest in moving to a specific country in order to experience new things and learn about a different culture. In addition to the incentives for professional growth (Selmer & Luring, 2010), one of the primary driven forces for expatriation decisions is thought to be a financial incentive (Richardson & McKenna, 2003, 2006), which is also one of the best indicators for expatriate teachers' willingness to accept positions abroad (Selmer & Luring, 2010).

Based on previous literature, Arifa et al. (2021) classified motivations into four aspects: career, economy, politics and culture. From a career perspective, self-initiated expatriate teachers move abroad for career development, involvement in new projects, increased job opportunities and enhanced potential for career promotions. From an economic perspective, the better economic development in the host country compared to their home country, along with financial incentives offered in the host country, motivates expatriate teachers to relocate abroad. Politically, expatriate teachers are motivated to find a safer political environment than the one experienced in their home countries. The cultural motivations for expatriate teachers employed abroad is the desire to enrich their personal lives by being exposed to different cultures, such as food, art and language.

However, globally mobile workers have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic, with international professionals and their families experiencing a disproportionate impact from travel restrictions. Since the start of the pandemic, many expatriates were forced to leave their homes and jobs in their host countries, resulting in separations from their partners, family and friends for extended periods of time due to closed borders, cancelled flights and new entry restrictions or regulations for foreign residents. This has led some to doubt the allure of living and working overseas, as the previously long-held beliefs in the availability of travel to visit their family due to an emergency or whenever needed has been seriously called into question during the pandemic and going forward (Vegh et al., 2023). To evaluate the influence of the COVID-19 epidemic on the mobility of self-initiated expatriates, Vegh et al. (2023) conducted a mixed-method study and found that the motivations of expatriates have undergone some slight changes compared to the ones prior to the COVID-19 epidemic.

Prior to the COVID-19 epidemic, the main drivers for overseas deployments included seeing the world, acquire new skills and experiences, pursue career development and explore new opportunities. Nevertheless, as soon as the pandemic struck, priorities shifted, with financial reasons and worries about health, safety and security taking precedence. Despite this shift, "very important" ratings continued to be given by expatriates to career development, new skills and experiences, exploring the world and new personal opportunities. The epidemic appears to have affected expatriates' future objectives, with their family resurfaces as a key motivator, while once-dominant career priorities have become secondary (Vegh et al., 2023).

#### *2.3.2.2 Challenges Faced by Expatriate Teachers*

Due to personal and cultural differences between their home countries and their host countries, expatriates frequently struggle to adjust (Rahardjo et al., 2018). In addition to the substantial costs incurred by their employers, the failure of the expatriates to adapt and fulfil their responsibilities can lead to personal consequences.

Expatriate teachers encounter many severe challenges and experience a lot of pressure in the process of adapting to life in their host countries. One of the most common issues raised in the context of pre-service teachers participating in short-term

study programmes overseas was their physical discomfort (Santoro & Major, 2012). Factors such as large local crowds and various living arrangements, such as sharing rooms or sleeping on the floor, were linked to this physical discomfort (Santoro & Major, 2012). Past research by Roskell (2013) investigated the opinions of expatriate teachers and discovered that expatriate teachers perceived transportation and climate as difficult concerns.

Besides environmental challenges mentioned above, language barrier poses a severe obstacle for expatriate teachers. According to Savva (2017), language is the biggest challenge experienced by Anglophone teachers when working in international schools. Fewer language hurdles are encountered by Anglophone teachers in Europe due to a higher level of English proficiency among the majority of people on the continent (Savva, 2017). However, teachers in regions where English is not widely spoken, like Western Europe, encounter significant difficulties when interacting with host country nationals (Savva, 2017). Comparably, In her evaluation of 127 British students who worked as temporary English teachers in Spain, Masgoret (2006) found that there is no doubt that one of the most important factors in determining effective communication with members of the host community, and arguably the most central one, is one's ability to speak the local language. Language proficiency is necessary for carrying out daily responsibilities, particularly in settings where there is no English language support, and because it is essential for building rapport with host country nationals (Masgoret, 2006), and this emphasises that cross-cultural communication necessitates a certain level of competence in the local language.

In a study by Froese et al. (2012) involving self-initiated expatriate teachers residing in South Korea, 15 out of 30 participants stated that they had trouble completing everyday tasks since they had a lack of fluency in the language. Expatriates indicated that they had to approach friends, family or teaching assistants for help with tasks such as buying items, renting residences and doing other daily activities (Froese et al., 2012). Similar findings were reported by Peltokorpi (2008) in the study involving 110 foreign residents in Japan, which concluded that the most important factor influencing adjustment to the host culture was Japanese language proficiency. Although Peltokorpi (2008) found a stronger correlation between language proficiency and the ability to adjust to interactions in this particular scenario, the significance of language skills was also emphasised in other contexts, such as ordering food, requesting directions or accessing information.

Language ability, however, has also been demonstrated to be a negative factor for expatriate teachers' work experiences. According to Froese et al. (2012), proficiency in the language of the host country is important solely for general and social adjustment, even in situations when English is sufficient for employment (such as in international organisations). Froese et al. (2012) contented that while teaching English is a primary responsibility for these teachers, competency in the language of the host nation may not have an impact on the teacher's ability to adjust to a new job. On the other hand, one may expect that a lack of language proficiency would make it difficult for teachers to acclimate to their new work environment.

Teachers who relocate abroad are often also moving away from their established social networks, which include their friends and family. Hrycak (2015) observed that the feeling of being away from family was the most frequently mentioned disadvantage of working abroad in their interviews with foreign international school teachers. Feeling alone was another issue raised by self-initiated expatriates in South Korea (Froese et al., 2012).

Moreover, it is not easy to form new relationships with host country nationals. Self-initiated expatriates in South Korea stated a lack of opportunities to meet with host country nationals as one of the reasons they felt unable to establish relationships, in addition to language problems (Froese et al., 2012). Additionally, studies have demonstrated that while moving abroad, both foreign students and expatriate teachers may encounter discrimination (Chu & Morrison, 2011; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Savva, 2017). Both international students and expatriate teachers have expressed feeling othered by host country nationals (Chu & Morrison, 2011; Santoro & Major, 2012; Savva, 2017). Similar sentiments of discomfort were expressed by Australian pre-service teachers in South Korea and India on being othered (Santoro & Major, 2012). Furthermore, according to Santoro and Major (2012), for many of these pre-service teachers, these encounters represented their first experiences of being treated as the other after having grown up in a strong cultural majority. Similarly, Savva (2017) observed that Anglophone teachers working in international schools first felt marginalised, especially when others made notice of their physical differences.

Studies conducted on expatriate teachers frequently refer to their social experiences as occurring within a "bubble", a concept defined by Savva (2017, p. 581) as the "propensity of expatriates to congregate with their own kind". International school teachers, according to Savva (2017), frequently reside in compounds provided

by their schools, which physically isolate them from the host country local population, leading to interactions only with other overseas-hire staff members residing in the same compounds. Other research has shown that both students and teachers in international schools characterised living in a bubble as being cut off from the host nation and culture (Bailey, 2015; Harrington, 2007).

Unfamiliarity with the philosophy, curriculum and policies of their new environment is one of the main challenges encountered by expatriate teachers during their work. Bailey (2015) conducted a study on expatriate teachers in Malaysia and discovered that although those with prior experience with similar curricula perceived a few difficulties, they were unprepared for other aspects of teaching. International schools operate in an environment where several cultures coexist. Although they may have comparable curricula, there could be a prevailing cultural ethos and the school culture may also be influenced by the cultural elements of the host country, giving it a distinctively unique school identity (Allan, 2002). Thus, assuming that schools function similarly due to a common curriculum can give rise to "false hope". Roskell (2013) claimed that international school teachers who do not foresee challenges are much more prone to develop irrational expectations, which may cause the teachers to become even more unhappy if these expectations are not realised.

Teachers may find it difficult to modify the practices which they have always considered to be appropriate. For instance, in a study by Sunder (2013), expatriate teachers in Dubai expressed worries regarding their inability to present specific texts since they had to keep sensitivity to local cultural norms. According to DeBeer (as described in Halicioglu (2015), p.249), expatriate teachers who relocate to the Middle East may find it difficult to accept censorship in the classroom. Similarly, expatriate teachers in Malaysia stated that they were "playing it safe" in their classrooms and with their attire, as they were unclear about the boundaries that separated appropriate behaviour from inappropriate behaviour in the new culture (Bailey, 2015).

The policies and employment practices of foreign schools may also present difficulties for expatriate teachers working in a host country. A lot of expatriate teachers consider their jobs to be temporary (Bunnell, 2017). According to Nielsen (2014), one of the most significant issues faced by foreign TESOL teachers is the transience and lack of job stability. Similar to this, Hrycak (2015) noted that a challenge faced by expatriate teachers is a lack of job stability. One significant issue raised by expatriate teachers was the experience of working in profit-driven

institutions, such as private schools. Expatriate teachers may encounter difficulties when working in private schools since they frequently have to manage the expectations of their institutions and various stakeholders, such as parents (Hrycak, 2015). Harrington (2007) asserts that schools aim to meet the requirements and purchasing power of parents and their employers through school activities. Aydin et al. (2019) found that expatriate teachers in Turkey's private schools generally perceived parents as nicer compared to their previous experiences, and they also noticed that parents frequently questioned and intervened in their lessons. As is frequently the case in private international schools, parent interference may become more pronounced, especially if parents believe they are in a superior position compared to the teachers (Bunnell, 2017).

A lack of supportive leadership presents another challenge for expatriate teachers, who often rely on their schools for support. According to Roskell (2013), the principle was identified as the primary cause of early contract terminations among international school teachers. In a study involving 281 expatriate teachers at an international school, Odland and Ruzicka (2009) reached a similar finding and confirmed that administrative leadership significantly influences teachers' decisions to leave the school. In particular, the perception of leadership as having a supportive role appears to have had a significant impact on job retention. Although Roskell (2013) discovered that expatriate teachers were unable to modify their instruction, they also noted that these teachers also expressed a lack of leadership support. According to Roskell (2013), school administrators should be aware that opposition to the new host culture in the host country and unusual work methods is normal during the crisis stage of adjustment period, as expatriate teachers try to adapt and embrace new ideas and values.

Moreover, expatriate teachers also met challenges related to their teaching methods. Stirzaker (2004) found that teachers who relocate often experience stress due to feeling unprepared for the new students' various ways of responding. According to Ramsey (2004), when they realise that their teaching strategies are ineffective in a classroom that is culturally different from their own, expatriate teachers may feel a great deal of stress. Roskell (2013) further suggested that expatriate teachers' decisions to stay employed or leave may be significantly influenced by their sense of de-skilling.

Kambutu and Nganga (2008) used narrative inquiry methodology to explore the effectiveness of internationally planned cultural experiences in promoting cultural awareness, understanding and appreciation among American educators. They observed 39 educators residing in rural America, divided into three groups, who traveled to Kenya during three different summers. During the first few days, the participants experienced a high level of apprehension that was potentially debilitating due to the fear of the unknown of the host culture. Although post-visit reflections showed evidence of cultural change, all educators experienced an uncomfortable situation due to cultural dissonance.

Another narrative inquiry research also mentioned "apprehension" as a common negative emotion that appeared in the adaptation process. This research combined a Western teacher's working experience in Thailand with theoretical formulations to propose a more sophisticated multicultural approach to international education. When the expatriate teacher was preparing to teach the literature course in Thailand, she struggled in conveying a foreign cultural narrative, noting that the characters were performed differently and the plots had different purposes. She found that the discourse of language and behaviour were not in sync, often causing the students to experience confusion in her modes of communication and suffer misunderstandings of her cultural references or sense of humour. Thailand students, unlike their Western counterparts, were frequently silent during her discussion questions (Ferguson, 2011). This caused the Western teacher to feel quite apprehensive about teaching Western literature course in Thailand.

Expatriate teachers may also have trouble dealing with cultural differences and the misunderstandings that arise from them. According to Dunn (2011), expatriate teachers working in urban schools in the United States may face a considerable barrier in comprehending and establishing a connection with the culture of their urban American students. Dunn (2011) discovered that a number of respondents felt challenged in engaging with the attitudes and actions of students, characterising them as indolent and disinterested. Conflict in the classroom is a common symptom of the differences in viewpoints between teachers and students (Dunn, 2011). Deveney (2007) discovered that several expatriate teachers employed in an international school in Thailand would frequently reduce their expectations for host country local students to make learning experiences easier for them. These teachers believed they were not prepared adequately to teach diverse classrooms. In addition to potentially reducing

students' learning opportunities, such generalised interpretations of ethnic groups can lead to misunderstandings between teachers and students.

A conceptual approach that indicates the deep cultural differences between Eastern collectivist and Western individualist philosophies framed a study on the experiences of eight expatriate nurse educators who had taught in an East Asian country for more than two years. All educators found that adapting to a different cultural environment was challenging in unexpected ways. One participant said: "I found that because they have a different ethical system and a different pedagogy, their teaching methods were different. Those things sorely challenged me, and I was very frustrated (Melby et al., 2008, p. 179)." Exhaustion emerged as a major issue for some educators. According to another educator, "you just get tired from being away from everything familiar and being away from your family. ... I am learning the language, but I am far from being fluent. ... and all these things make it hard work every single day (Melby et al., 2008, p. 180)." Besides the negative emotion, bridging different pedagogies posed another severe challenge for these educators. The overall frustration and struggle faced by expatriate educators in trying to understand different educational systems was pervasive. Many educators identified that the host country's cultural norm of high social status attributed to teachers, often accompanied by the inherently great level of deference, is a particularly daunting challenge (Melby et al., 2008).

### *2.3.2.3 Adaptation Strategies of Expatriate Teachers*

At present, the classification of cross-cultural adaptation in the academic world is based on the views of Ward et al. (2020). They proposed that cross-cultural adaptation can be divided into two dimensions: psychological adaptation and socio-cultural adaptation. Psychological adaptation is based on emotional responses and refers to mental health and life satisfaction during cross-cultural contact. In the process of cross-cultural communication, psychological adaptation can be achieved when negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, loneliness and disappointment are either eliminated or minimized. Meanwhile, socio-cultural adaptation refers to the ability to adapt to the local social and cultural environment and make contact and communicate effectively with people in the local culture. This adaptation is acquired

through a process of cultural learning , which includes mastering culturally specific skills, norms and so on) (Ward et al., 2020).

Three dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment have been established by Black et al. (1991), namely general adjustment, interaction adjustment and work adjustment. These factors are succinctly defined by Froese et al. (2012) in their study on foreign workers in South Korea. General adjustment pertains to the degree of psychological comfort regarding aspects of the host culture's environment, such as climate, food, health care, housing conditions and shopping (Froese et al. (2012). These aspects, which may or may not result in difficulties for expatriate teachers, refer to how the teachers manage their living conditions in a foreign country, as they inevitably experience some degree of changes in the environment and living situations when they relocate, whether locally or abroad. Interaction adjustment deals with the teachers' attempts to build rapport with members of the host community. Froese et al. (2012) define it as reflecting the degree of comfort associated with their interactions with individuals from the host country both inside and outside of work. Lastly, work adjustment, as described by Froese et al. (2012), relates to the degree of comfort felt by the teachers regarding different expectations, performance standards and work values in the host country. This aspect of adjustment is significantly related to how expatriate teachers integrate into their workplaces, which are the specific schools where they teach. These three dimensions are categorised by (Peltokorpi, 2008) into the work and non-work domains of the expatriation experience.

In terms of some general adjustment challenges, such as climate or environment, Roskell (2013) found that ten months into the participants' stay, expatriate teachers expressed fewer complaints about their general adjustment and frequently expressed satisfaction with their ability to blend in. This tends to imply that the time spent in the host culture may ease difficulties related to general transitions, since expatriate teachers may gradually become accustomed to their new routines and living arrangements (Roskell, 2013).

Another effective adaptation strategy to adjust is increasing host language proficiency. According to Masgoret (2006), social engagement and host language competency are reciprocal, as increased interaction with the host community results in enhanced competency and increased proficiency in the host language. However, a study by Aydin et al. (2019) on foreign private school teachers in Turkey discovered that some teachers had no intention of learning Turkish that became a language barrier,

even though their shared belief was that integration with host country nationals is essential for fostering host language proficiency. This could mean that the expatriate teachers did not actively look for opportunities to learn the local language (Aydin et al., 2019). Notably, nevertheless, past research has discovered that both engagement with the host community and host language competency facilitate cross-cultural adjustment, indicating that expatriate teachers should not overlook the importance of learning the local tongue (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Kim, 2001; Masgoret, 2006).

Expatriate teachers may find it easier to relate to people who are going through similar experiences while they are managing the many obstacles that come with adjusting to a new culture. According to Savva (2017), mono-cultural grouping behaviours often create a sense of safety and camaraderie among individuals who share common bonds, and this type of behaviour is equalled to the experiences of immigrants in Western Anglophone countries. While this mutual reliance can help reduce stress brought on by adjustment difficulties, as was the case of expatriate teachers who turned to their Western colleagues for support (Chu & Morrison, 2011), there is an often-ignored adverse impact of the bubble effect, which may eventually make it more difficult for expatriate teachers to undergo transition. While co-national interactions may facilitate short-term transition, they may impede long-term adjustment (Kim, 2001). Joslin (2002) agreed with this by stating that while interacting with others from similar cultural backgrounds can act as an anchor, clinging to one's native worldview can seriously hinder the transition process. Kim (2001) argued that a deeper comprehension of the host culture can only arise from meaningful engagement with host country nationals.

Furthermore, interaction with host country nationals is another way to help alleviate the emotional challenges faced by expatriate teachers (O'Rourke, 2020). Kim (2001) claimed that such interactions with the host community can assist expatriates in comprehending the thoughts and actions of host country nationals. Further describing the former, Hendrickson et al. (2011) confirmed it in their research that the participants began to understand why local people behave, communicate and interact the way they do, thereby making previously unexplained behaviours viewed in their appropriate contexts and can be interpreted more readily. According to research by Froese et al. (2012), English language teachers who interacted more frequently with host country nationals developed better attitudes towards the host culture and gained more opportunities to learn about cultural differences. Similar findings were

confirmed by Ward and Kennedy (1993) in the context of overseas students, indicating that those with more connections to host country nationals reported having better communication skills and fewer social challenges, which generally pointed to stronger adjustment. Masgoret (2006) draws the conclusion that interaction with the host community would offer expatriate teachers a chance to identify with members of the host community and gain a better understanding of the local culture, which is consistent with the earlier claims. It is inconceivable that supporting expatriate teachers' language acquisition would alleviate overall difficulties in interaction adjustment through making contact with host country nationals and concurrently by creating more opportunities for language learning, even though expatriate teachers may view language learning as a barrier to interaction adjustment.

Support from friends, family and co-workers has been emphasised as crucial for expatriate teachers in Hong Kong to overcome the stress and loneliness they encountered during their adjustment period (Chu & Morrison, 2011). Although in this instance the value of this support and the loss of prior social networks would appear to suggest that expatriate teachers may also benefit from connections with host country nationals, assistance was sought after by these teachers from long-distance family and present Western colleagues. Research conducted by Hendrickson et al. (2011) on international students studying abroad provides evidence in favour of this hypothesis, showing that the students reported feeling less homesick and more socially engaged when they had more interactions with host country nationals. Kim (2001) made a similar argument, stating that overseas students could reduce their adjustment problems if they could form closer relationships with host country nationals. However, Kim (2001) also emphasised that even weaker relationships might still shed light on host country nationals' communication styles because they may be consequential for adjustment. These past researchers reported about how difficult it can be to adjust to new interactions and how difficult it can be to interact with host country nationals, especially when one has to learn a new language. However, making new friends in the host culture can help ease these difficulties and improve interactions and the overall adjustment process for expatriate teachers (O'Rourke, 2020).

According to Kim et al. (2008), foreign nationals who possess a high degree of cultural competence are better equipped to adapt to both their new job and non-work situations in their new country. They came to the conclusion that these individuals adjust more effectively because they connect with locals and receive more suitable

emotional and informational assistance. Additionally, Lee and Sukoco (2010) further confirmed that a direct and strong association exist between cultural competency and expatriate adjustment in their study on the subject.

Regarding the relationship between culture and adjustment, scholars have debated whether cultural similarities or disparities between the host country and the home cultures of the expatriates help or hinder adjustment process. According to the Cultural Distance Paradox, cultural differences between a foreigner's home country and their new one can help with adjustment because the foreigner anticipates these differences, leading to less overconfidence and more knowledge about the new culture they are working in. However, individuals from comparable cultural backgrounds might not be ready to explore for cultural distinctions, which could lead to painful awakenings or a simple lack of awareness of cultural differences (Black et al., 1991; Hemmasi & Downes, 2013; Pinder & Schroeder, 1987; Selmer, 2007). Vromans et al. (2013) provided an interpretation of the Cultural Distance Paradox by discussing how presumptive cultural similarities might result in unfulfilled expectations, which can further impair adjustment.

Contrarily, the counterargument to the Cultural Distance Paradox posits that transition is facilitated by similarities between the host and one's home cultures (A. Isakovic & Forseth Whitman, 2013; Babiker et al., 1980; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Research findings have also been established that the degree of similarity between a migrant's home culture and the new host culture can either enhance or lessen the difficulties encountered by a migrant when working abroad (Austin, 2007). This idea is based on the premise that adjustment problems increase with a greater degree of disparity between the new and the old cultures (Holopainen & Bjorkman, 2005; Ward et al., 2020). On the other hand, because expatriates tend to adapt more easily to countries that are culturally similar to their home countries, where they have spent the majority of their lives, Peltokorpi (2008) stated that living and working in countries with similar cultures is less stressful compared to doing so in countries that are culturally distant. For example, because Swedish and Finnish cultures are more closely related compared to Chinese culture, a Finnish teacher relocating to Sweden would probably face fewer obstacles than a teacher relocating to China.

However, Koveshnikov et al. (2014) contended that this relative ease of adjustment might only be present in typical living situations and might be less relevant

to the social or work-related aspects of adjustment. Applying this idea to the above example, although Finland and Sweden may share identical housing, food and climates, teachers in these countries may face greater obstacles in the areas of social interaction and work, since they are much less accustomed to these elements. Nonetheless, some argue that, in certain situations, such as when two cultures exhibit socially similar elements, a shorter cultural gap may also lessen difficulties faced within interaction adjustments. In these situations, the behavior of host country nationals may be easily predictable and explained due to cultural similarities (Peltokorpi, 2008).

Nevertheless, the idea of cultural distance seems to be significant for expatriate teachers who are relocating overseas, particularly those who are leaving behind cultures that are regarded as being quite dissimilar. Furthermore, it is clear in the examples from the studies mentioned above that expatriate teachers frequently deal with difficulties related to general adjustment, even though these difficulties may be mitigated over time or through cultural proximity (O'Rourke, 2020). Additionally, research that takes a neutral stance in this argument suggest that adjusting to cultural resemblance may be just as challenging as adjusting to cultural dissimilarity (Selmer & Luring, 2009).

When facing challenges at work, expatriate teachers could facilitate meaningful work adjustment by being flexible. In their study on foreign school teachers working in the United States, Tippins et al. (2006) discovered that expatriate teachers hybridised their approaches to practice and evaluation in compliance with school standards. Adopting a flexible mindset could potentially result in beneficial growth on both personal and professional levels. Alfaro and Quezada (2014) revealed that although expatriate teachers completing their teaching practices in indigenous communities in Mexico faced challenges in redefining their pedagogy, these challenges ultimately resulted in transformative experiences and a deeper comprehension of their own cultural norms and beliefs. Similar to this, expatriate teachers in an international school felt reskilled rather than deskilled, mentioning that going through culture shock in the classroom was a major motivator for them to rethink their teaching methods (Bailey, 2015).

### **2.3.3 Cross-cultural Adaptation of Expatriate Teachers in China**

#### *2.3.3.1 Motivations of Expatriate Teachers in China*

The factors that influence individuals' relocations to China are complex and varied (Muir et al., 2014). Muir et al. (2014) interviewed 25 Western self-initiated professional women living and working in Beijing and found that career aspirations were the essential dimension which was unlike earlier studies that suggested adventure and desires to experience new cultures were the primary, fundamental factors influencing the mobility of self-initiated expatriates (Richardson & Mallon, 2005). For all the participants in this study, there was a strong focus on career as a factor influencing their decision to relocate to China. Another important influencing factor in the decision-making was the location itself, with Beijing being perceived as a well-chosen destination (Muir et al., 2014). The participants had varying perspectives on their experiences in Beijing, particularly in terms of their original "pull factor variables". Some felt that, in one way or another, their time there would ultimately benefit their career prospects and employability, while others felt that their experiences had not lived up to their initial expectations.

In her study, Cao (2017) identified several reasons why expatriate teachers relocate to China. While two of the participants in her study were assigned to China as visiting scholars in a Sino-foreign cooperative education staff programme, other participants were all self-initiated expatriates. The motivations of the self-initiated expatriate teachers relocating to China included an intention to practice the ideal of helping education in developing countries, a passion for Chinese culture, opportunities to travel and learn about Chinese culture at the same time, and the better job prospects available in China.

Xu et al. (2022) summarised three main reasons for expatriate teachers coming to China: professional, cultural, social and personal motivations. Scholars have stated that their intentions or motivations can be singular or multifaceted. For example, some individuals viewed China as the "last resort" because of the country's more difficult labour markets and poorer living standards both domestically and abroad (Kim, 2015). Kim's study also brought attention to the general perception of low employment in China. However, more recent research indicates that since then, foreign teachers employed by Chinese institutions may have enjoyed better worldwide standing.

Professional chances, such as tenured or permanent jobs and positions leading to grants and research opportunities (Chen & Zhu, 2020; Fairer, 2014; Yu, 2019), are primary source of incentives for many expatriate teachers. The participants in previous studies (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Huang, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021) stated that China was growing its academic labour market, which frequently provided better working conditions compared to the unstable job markets in the US and Europe. Additionally, opportunities for dual careers, along with greater financing, allowances, subsidised housing facility, higher incomes and occasionally prestige and recognition were sometimes mentioned by some participants as interesting factors. Other professional goals, such as building or growing networks with Chinese organisations, co-workers and students, were also mentioned by several participants.

The second reason, frequently linked to professional motivations, is cultural affinity. After completing a PhD (or postdoc) abroad, individuals moving to China and carrying out research in a culturally diverse environment can gain a novel experience (Wu & Huang, 2018). For instance, a few individuals involved in Huang (2022)'s research expressed a preference for Chinese culture. Other recent studies (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Marini & Xu, 2021) discovered that certain teachers in the social sciences and humanities were attracted to China due to the exceptional prospects for collaboration in Chinese language, culture, data and research networks. Because these respondents were familiar with China, and frequently had prior experience living or visiting the country, they tended to value the local culture.

Personal ties accounts for the third reason for expatriate teachers moving to China. Previous studies (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Chen & Zhu, 2018, 2020; Huang, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021) discovered that some expatriate teachers relocated to China due to social networks or familial ties. In Marini and Xu (2021)'s research, 28% of surveyed respondents had a Chinese partner or were married to a Chinese national. It's possible that having a connection with a Chinese spouse may have contributed to their decision to extend their stay in China. Some expatriate teachers, particularly those earning high wages in urban centres, expressed their satisfaction with their lives in such locations in China (Chen & Zhu, 2018, 2020; Marini & Xu, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the implemented policy of travel restrictions and border closures had reduced China's appeal as a destination for pursuing talents and investments; however, as China has reopened its borders, this appeal has started to

increase again gradually (Wang, 2024). Additionally, Bailey et al. (2021) discovered that expatriate teachers would prefer to stay in countries like mainland China, where the pandemic appeared to pose a lesser threat to life compared to other regions such as Northern Europe, despite the fact that more stringent limitations are frequently enforced.

### *2.3.3.2 Challenges Faced by Expatriate Teachers in China*

To understand the challenges faced by expatriate teachers in China during their cultural adaptation process, three American expatriate teachers who had previously experienced living in China for more than five years were interviewed. According to Meng (2017), after experiencing a short or non-existent "honeymoon" period, expatriate teachers often faced stress as the participants became gradually aware of the differences between Chinese culture and American culture. This stress arose due to five main factors. Language problem emerged as a major stressor. Differences in dietary habits, unsatisfactory living conditions and occasional homesickness also made it difficult for American teachers to adapt to living in China. Among all these challenges, teaching presented the most important challenge. Variations in students' behaviour patterns, classroom conduct and attitudes toward studying were the main obstacles in teacher-student interactions. Besides, the participants mentioned that there was a lack of institutional support and autonomy in deciding teaching content (Meng, 2017).

The differences in behaviour patterns of students between China and America can be linked to the dissimilarity in cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism. Hofstede (1980, p. 92) defined individualism as the value of "societies in which the ties between individuals are loose". Individuals in an individualistic culture are driven primarily by their own rights, interests and preferences (Triandis, 2018). According to Markus and Kitayama (2014), it is crucial that individuals in these cultures often strive to convey their distinct qualities and traits for this reason. On the other hand, collectivism is associated with societies where individuals appreciate and practise values to ensure that they "are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups" ((Hofstede, 1980), p. 92). According to Triandis (2018), people who come from collectivist cultures are more inclined to value the group's norms, interests and goals

compared to their own individual unique desires. In individualistic cultures, students are encouraged to voice their opinions. Students are said to benefit from confronting and discussing conflicts openly (Hofstede, 1980). On the other hand, in collectivist cultures, such as China, students are urged to stay out of conflicts and confrontations; they may hesitate to speak up in large groups without the presence of a teacher or in classrooms with unfamiliar classmates (Hofstede, 1980). Western countries, such as the USA, ranked high, while Eastern countries, such as China, ranked lower in Hofstede (2003)'s individualism index value for fifty countries and three regions. Therefore, this emphasis on China's collectivism culture can bring about a cultural challenge for expatriate teachers who are accustomed to individualistic culture.

Research conducted by Cao (2017), involving twenty expatriate teachers in China, found several challenges in their daily life and work experiences. An issue that expatriate teachers faced on a daily basis was figuring out how to dry their clothes after washing them, especially during winter. Expatriate teachers in China, who were accustomed to using dryers to dry their clothes after washing in their home country, found the practice of air-drying garments outside unfamiliar. Additionally, due to language barriers, it was challenging for expatriate teachers to socially interact with locals and fellow teachers. Additionally, there was a perception that Chinese teachers and students held a negative attitude towards expatriate teachers. One expatriate teacher reported feeling left out because she saw few smiling faces or friendly greetings from Chinese students and teachers on campus. One of the things expatriate teachers wished was to experience traditional Chinese festivals and local cultural customs, but Chinese teachers and students hardly ever encouraged any interactions with them. Additionally, regarding professional obstacles, expatriate teachers found it challenging to adjust to the policies and procedures of Chinese colleges. Because of the protracted administrative approval procedure in Chinese colleges, as well as the pre-set percentage of failing students in each class, adjustment process after their relocation in China becomes more challenging for expatriate teachers, especially those who were more serious and responsible in carrying out their roles.

Moreover, expatriate teachers who were residing in Hong Kong reported feeling uneasy about what appeared to be challenging for them, such as the weather, particularly the summer heat and humidity. Yet, the main issue they faced was commonly identified as multilevel marginalisation. They expressed that they were not

regarded as partners but rather outsiders in the workplace, which contributed to feelings of loneliness and stress (Chu & Morrison, 2011).

In a related study, ten foreign professors who taught in three different Chinese universities were recruited and interviewed to explore their adaptation experiences in China, focusing on the difficulties, emotional stress and challenges they faced. The study also aimed to find out useful coping strategies and resources that facilitate expatriate teachers' cultural adaptation. The researcher identified five key themes from the results, namely multiple challenges, mixed negative emotions, active coping and insulation, rich supportive resources, and personal traits, along with nineteen subthemes. To be specific, the theme of multiple challenges contains barriers related to language and daily life activities, differences in teaching concepts and methods, closed-loop social interaction patterns, a lack of connection and different understandings of privacy and boundaries. In terms of mixed negative emotions, common emotions such as frustration, embarrassment and anger were often reported when encountering different challenges during the process of adaptation in China (Yi et al., 2020).

While the above studies focused on expatriate teachers' external manifestations of mental pressure due to cultural differences, other research paid more attention on the challenges expatriate teachers encountered in their professional lives in China.

Bunnell and Poole (2022) interviewed four expatriate teachers employed in an international school in China to understand the challenges they faced during their work in China. These four expatriate teachers all felt marginalised and undervalued in their work due to several reasons. According to the interviewees, their Chinese colleagues did not value the opinions of the expatriate group, which made up less than 40% of the teaching faculty. Even though expatriate teachers possessed enormous amounts of cultural capital that could be easily benefitted in any educational institution, the school did not seem to want to integrate expatriate teachers into the institutional framework. Chinese teachers were perceived to be more likely to be appointed to positions of responsibility at schools, regardless of the qualifications possessed by the expatriate teachers. As a consequence, the expatriate teachers felt annoyed, disrespected, excluded and largely ignored due to the rules and practices of their fellow colleagues from the host country. There is a possibility, without doubt,

that much of the situation was generally brought about by a failure to acculturate (Bunnell & Poole, 2022).

Similarly, Poole and Bunnell (2023)'s study revealed that two interconnected sets of precarity are created by short-term contracts in China. On one hand, these contracts have a significant impact on teachers' positions, resulting in a great deal of unpredictability and uncertainty. They also cause conflicts and differences between Chinese labourers, who are employed permanently, and expatriates. On the one hand, these short-term contracts bring up a great deal of instability and constant change because postholders and leadership are always shifting.

It is not an isolated case to find that expatriate teachers experience such challenging situations while working in China. The results of an interview study involving ten expatriate teachers employed at lower-tier international schools in Shanghai and Suzhou, China showed that the teachers had similar experiences. The interviewees expressed facing more challenges in their work beyond common negative associations such as language barriers and uncomfortable feelings when they were facing local mannerisms in the foreign cities. A major theme that emerged in the interviews was the cultural differences between Chinese and foreign teachers. The disparity that the foreign staff experienced cause them feeling bereft of agency in the school, unsupported by administrators, struggling with different ways of understanding cognitive development and education policies, particularly regarding students' parents, and challenges related to different teaching styles and student behaviour (Jenkins, 2022).

There is another point worth noting regarding several of the aforementioned studies on the intercultural adjustment process for expatriate teachers in China. Many of the interviewees reported that the cross-cultural adaptation process in China differed from that in other host countries. The research found that although some expatriates speak and write Chinese and even have Chinese spouses, they still feel that they cannot form deep friendships with the locals and fully integrate into China. China's deep-rooted polite distance can prevent foreigners from profoundly or meaningfully integrating into Chinese culture (Jenkins, 2022).

Xu et al. (2022) categorised the challenges faced by expatriate teachers in China into two groups: professional and non-professional obstacles. Five areas in the realm of professional obstacles were identified: power relations, professional isolation, research issues, administrative difficulties and teaching practises. In terms of power

relations, hierarchical management practices, combined with implicit institutional power dynamics, may lead to "collective disempowerment" for expatriate teachers (Han, 2022). Because of this, local academics and administrators may perceive expatriate teachers as potential sources of stress or conflict, even if they are highly respected as employees (Li & Xue, 2021).

The second challenge is related to professional isolation. According to Chen and Zhu (2022), a lot of expatriate teachers reported that they experienced feelings of being "cross-cultural misfits" as a result of their misplaced expectations and a lack of understanding about living in China. Such encounters could result from something that is beyond unmet expectations. For instance, despite their duration of stay, participants from Marini and Xu (2021)'s research described feelings of perpetually being "outsiders" and "guests," living in "golden bubbles" with privileges-some referred to these as "white privileges"-and constructive boundaries. Additionally, Braun Stfelcova et al. (2023) discovered that the majority of expatriate teachers who reported seclusion were junior researchers and social scientist. Furthermore, a lot of Chinese universities, including Sino-foreign joint institutions, exhibited low awareness of the importance of long-term professional development and staff induction, especially for expatriate teachers, a practice that is more widespread in certain Western nations. This lack of support might have added to the difficulties encountered throughout the adaptation process, along with structural variations and cultural barriers (Cai & Hall, 2016).

Research constitutes the third professional challenge. Language difficulties in financing applications can be one of the key obstacles, along with the ongoing struggle of being perceived as a "stranger" and the disconnection from essential administrative duties(Larbi & Ashraf, 2020). These issues resonate in light of Marini and Xu (2021)'s conclusions. Specifically, a number of interviewees mentioned that their long-term careers suffered since they were not eligible for numerous famous domestic funding schemes because they were not citizens of China. Braun Stfelcova et al. (2023) discovered that scholars in the humanities and social sciences usually worked in less globally integrated fields and relied heavily on access to local data. These scholars emphasised the necessity-as well as the difficulties-of assimilating into the local research community. Some participants also expressed that shrinking academic freedom across disciplines, and they reported a need to align their research agendas with political priorities (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023).

The fourth professional obstacle pertains to managing administrative matters. The main issues in this category include strict timelines, repeated tasks and a high requirement for proficiency in the Chinese language (Chen & Zhu, 2020, 2022; Huang, 2022; Wu & Huang, 2018).

The fifth challenge for a professional was teaching. Some expatriate teachers may have a "unfulfilled pedagogical experience" as a result of inactive classroom engagement (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Marini & Xu, 2021). The results of other research, nevertheless, revealed more encouraging experiences; they showed how much foreigners valued their relative liberty, contributed to the creation of new curricula or courses and promoted an environment of open conversation, albeit within certain limitations (Larbi & Ashraf, 2020).

Three areas constituted the majority of non-professional challenges: cultural integration, legal processes and living conditions. The first and most significant difficulty is cultural integration, also known as cross-cultural adaptation, which Chen and Zhu (2018) studied thoroughly in cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions. Many expatriate teachers experience feelings of otherness and alienation due to "non-effective integration" (China, 2019). Marini and Xu (2021)'s "golden bubble" is also applicable to social dynamics. Researchers from Europe reported difficulties adjusting to life in a culture that was seen as excessively competitive and discriminatory towards certain ethnic groups or genders more often than in their home countries (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023).

The second problem is related to immigration and legal processes. In Braun Stfelcova et al. (2023)'s research, European researchers voiced frustrations about the recurring, lengthy intervals for renewing permits and visas, along with the stringent legal requirements for academics (and their spouses) to remain in the country. The results of previous studies (Huang, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021) supported these sentiments, highlighting "still burdensome immigration procedures" in spite of the existence of "fast-track" visa policies for researchers. Among other goals, these measures have been implemented to facilitate the migration and mobility of scholars and students from the nations involved in the Belt and Road Initiative (Richter, 2020). However, the availability of these rules has not kept pace with the universities' increasing need for "international talents".

Financial strains related to housing, healthcare, children's education and occasionally additional concerns like internet restriction and air pollution constituted

the third obstacle (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Huang, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021). Specifically, several participants in the studies conducted by Marini and Xu (2021) and Braun Stfelcova et al. (2023) reported that Chinese public schooling was often unattractive or unavailable, while private international schooling was too expensive.

In summary, expatriates confront significant difficulties and endure a great deal of stress as they acclimate to life in their host country. These challenges stem from workplace pressures and personal growth experiences, including psychological independence and identity creation. Expatriates struggle with adjusting to unfamiliar dietary habits, social norms and customs, as well as drastically different systems and beliefs. They also encounter language barriers, culture shock, social tension, discomfort, psychological loneliness, isolation and homesickness.

#### *2.3.3.3 Adaptation Strategies of Expatriate Teachers in China*

Intercultural competency, which is valued highly by expatriate teachers, is essential for them to navigate new cultural contexts in China. The processes of acculturation and deculturation are cyclical, leading to cross-cultural adaption. The internal tension arising from the push and pull factors between the old and new ways of doing things is a source of stress for those who are learning new cultural practices while unlearning their old ones (McLeod-Chambless, 2021). The expatriate teachers in McLeod-Chambless (2021)'s study faced numerous difficulties in adjusting to life and work in China. They relied on the ideals of tolerance, open-mindedness and respect, which served as their guide to navigate unfamiliar cultural contexts. Comprehending the local culture was crucial for expatriate teachers as they put on efforts to enhance their intercultural competence by learning the local language, forging relationships with students, Chinese co-workers and local individuals, navigating daily life beyond expatriate-friendly areas instead of limiting their experiences as well as exploring local culture with an adventurous spirit instead of with fearful sentiment.

In Yi et al. (2020)'s research on expatriate teachers in China, they found that finding effective ways to deal with difficulties, whether through isolation or positive interaction, was prevalent among participants in the adaptation process in China, , and these approaches help them further adapt to the local circumstances to varying degrees.

Their research utilised three types of strategies: active coping and insulation, rich supportive resources and personal traits. Active coping and insulation strategies include functional interaction, localisation, emotional insulation and maintaining ties with the culture of origin. Rich supportive resources consist of convenient apps and facilities, help from local agencies and local people in China, multicultural competency, life experiences and stable intimate relationships. The last strategy, personal traits, include the trait of positive thinking, avoidant coping and low flexibility (Yi et al., 2020).

When faced with difficulties in China, some participants tried to engage with Chinese people as much as they can to get help with everyday tasks and instruction, a practice referred to as functional interaction. Localisation is a process that involves participants to gradually align themselves more with the local contexts of China and adopt local solutions to address teaching-related issues or other hurdles they encounter in their daily lives. Emotional insulation is the ability to regulate one's physical and mental states when issues cannot be resolved by a denial of one's own needs to accept truth. Keeping in touch with their native culture and customary living habits facilitate their adjustment to life in China. During the process of adapting to life in China, expatriate teachers actively or passively use software, surrounding facilities and local or cross-cultural resources to solve the problems they encounter. Also, different personality traits influenced their adaptation experiences in China to different extents (Yi et al., 2020).

## **2.4 Social Networking Sites and Cross-cultural Adaptation**

This part introduces the definition of SNS, uses and gratifications (U&G) theory, and discusses several Chinese SNS that were mentioned by expatriate teachers in this study. In addition, this part also reviews previous research that focused on the interaction between SNS and cross-cultural adaptation.

### **2.4.1 Definition of Social Networking Sites**

Scholars employ diverse terminologies to denote SNS, including internet social networking, social websites, social networking services and social media. Social

media encompasses a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, allowing users to create and exchange user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020). SNS are "web-based" services that allow people to build their public or semi-public profiles within a limited system, list and view other users whom they are connected with, as well as view the list of connections made by other users within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). SNS provide a platform for people not only to communicate and collaborate with others but also to engage in debates and discussions about cultural issues regardless of geographical distance. It is not surprising that SNS, which are the newest of the major digital media, appear to have developed into a worldwide infrastructure in a relatively short time. Though Cyworld in Korea in 2005 is considered to have been the first extensively used SNS, the meteoric development of Facebook is the most well-known example, transforming from a networking tool for Harvard University students to a platform used by half a billion users in only six years (Miller, 2020).

Our world is becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent due to social media, which plays a significant role in our daily lives. With instantly available information on the internet, social media allow people to interact and communicate with one another. The growing number of internet users in today's society has contributed to the rising popularity of social media in daily routines and habits. Through interactive discussions that foster understanding of other points of view, communication takes place in these virtual situations. Social media not only give everybody the ability to be both a publisher and a critic in cyberspace but also give users the chance to share their thoughts with the world and engage in discussions using a common virtual platform (Babel, 2010).

Weibo, a Chinese microblogging website that was formerly known as Sin Weibo, was first launched by Sina Corporation on August 14, 2009 and quickly became one of the largest social media networks in China (Michelle & Uking, 2011). As of Q1 2022, Weibo reported over 582 million monthly active users and 252 million daily active users. The foundation of Sina Weibo is to build user interactions through information sharing, dissemination and reception. Users can upload videos and images for rapid sharing via the website or mobile app. Other users can respond using a multimedia instant messaging service or leave text, picture and video comments (WeiboCorporation, 2022).

Bilibili, sometimes referred to as B station, is a bullet-screen video sharing website headquartered in Shanghai, People's Republic of China. It initially focused on contents linked to ACG (anime, comics and games), inspired by and sourced from the Japanese video-sharing website Niconico, which currently has more than 200 million users (Wang, 2016). Bilibili places a strong emphasis on social activities and user-generated contents. On Bilibili, there is no time limit for videos, and they can range anywhere from a few seconds to several hours in length.

TikTok, the Chinese counterpart of Douyin, is a well-known platform for short videos that was first launched in China and has rapidly gained over 500 million users worldwide (Zhong, 2018). Since its debut, TikTok has grown to be one of the most widely used social media platforms globally due to its recommendation algorithms that are more effective, compared to competing apps, in helping introduce content creators to new audiences (Fung, 2024). In order to promote new cooperative and immersive user experiences, the platform also offers a number of short video-specific features, such as "Duet," allowing users to create duet videos with one another, and "React," enabling users to respond with videos (Qiyang & Jung, 2019).

Interpersonal communication has been profoundly altered by social media. Instant messaging (HVI), a social media platform that facilitates real-time text communication over the internet, has become increasingly popular as a productive and successful communication tool in recent years. Because instant messaging enables users to rapidly obtain and share information with a list of their online "buddies", it is especially appealing to younger generations (Lien & Cao, 2014). In January 2011, Tencent Holding Limited, a multinational Chinese firm, launched WeChat, which has grown to be one of the most significant smartphone applications in China, with over one billion people actively using it each month (Tencent, 2018). WeChat offers a multifunctional smartphone application, incorporating a range of services, such as messaging, social networking and mobile payment services, which surpasses the functionality provided by its Western counterpart, WhatsApp. WeChat also continually adds new features, like city services that let users pay for traffic fines or reserve transportation in metropolitan areas of China (Montag et al., 2018).

QQ is an instant messaging service launched in 1999 by Tencent, a multinational conglomerate based in China. It enables users to engage in activities akin to traditional online forums, bulletin-board systems, chat, email and mobile phones and PDAs usage, in addition to other emerging platforms. One of its highly

favoured features is the QQ group, which can have a few hundred to several thousand members. It offers a space for individuals to participate in member-only communication activities and enables users to establish tiers of user groups catering to particular interests, objectives and communication requirements. With its convincing social networking capabilities, QQ group has managed to sustain a high penetration rate among Chinese users, catering to a variety of user groups from movement-oriented activists to hobby-focused chatters. Typically, a QQ group consists of a few dozen to several thousand members (Tai, 2022).

#### **2.4.2 The Uses and Gratifications Theory**

The early research on the U&G theory was descriptive (Berelson, 1949). Finding satisfaction was the main emphasis of U&G's study by the 1970s. The U&G theory proposes four categories of requirements that mass media fulfil: cognitive, emotional, personal integration, social integration. Cognitive needs refer to the need for information and knowledge. Affective needs refer to the need for emotional arousal or stimulation. Personal integrative needs refer to the need to reinforce or enhance personal identity and self-esteem. Finally, social integrative needs refer to the need for social interaction and companionship (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It also offers a theoretical framework for media researchers to examine how people utilize traditional or new media (Blumler & Katz, 1974). This theory proposes that people freely and consciously choose the kind of platform they use to fulfil their needs (Blumler, 1979) and aims to explain why people fulfil specific needs and how they do so (Katz et al., 1973). The significance of the U&G theory has become apparent in recent years due to the quick development of computers and networks, which has fuelled the growth of mass media (Wang & Oh, 2023).

More U&G theory academics have turned their attention to the reasons behind mobile phone use since smartphones became popular (Leung & Wei, 2000). Simultaneously, a wide range of smartphone-related social media apps, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, TikTok (Gan, 2017; Scherr & Wang, 2021), and others, have emerged as a research area. An increasing number of studies extend the U&G theory to social media settings in an effort to explain why people utilize various social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and instant messaging

(EVI) (Gan, 2017). de Oliveira and Huertas (2015) found that subjective norm, group norm, social identity, entertainment value, and maintaining interpersonal interconnectivity positively affect satisfaction on Facebook, further influencing the use of specific functions. Aharony (2015) found that professional advancement, information sharing, and social interactions positively affect satisfaction and duration on What's App. Similarly, Zeng et al. (2013) discovered in an interview study that WeChat usage may be divided into two categories: work and entertainment. WeChat helps lower communication costs, increase productivity, and lessen work-related stress (Zeng et al., 2013). While another research indicates that companionship and leisure are the primary determinants of undergraduate students' WeChat usage in China (Mao, 2014). Therefore, it is reasonable and feasible to use the U&G theory in this study to explore the social networking sites usage in cross-cultural adaptation.

### **2.4.3 The Influence of Social Networking Sites on Cross-cultural Adaptation**

In recent years, a new research field of digital media, especially the use of SNS, has gained a massive focus. One of the more recent developments that have changed the acculturation experience is the creation and popularisation of Online Social Networking Sites usage (Hofhuis et al., 2019). For immigrants and sojourners, communication activities play a prominent role in shaping their cross-cultural adaptation process (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013). Nowadays, the sources of interpersonal communication are no longer limited to face-to-face contact, telephone or traditional mail. Mediated interpersonal communication such as mail and the internet has taken on particular significance (Varma, 2007). Digital media technologies have been frequently used by contemporary international migrants to construct shared social networks, social spaces and organisations. In fact, research finds that migrants are frequently adopting cutting-edge media technologies (Dahan & Sheffer, 2001; Karim, 2003). In recent years, the most common and useful tool for adaptation used by expatriates is SNS.

Mai (2017) conducted interviews with 68 high-profile expatriate media producers and people who self-identified as amateur bloggers in mainland China between August 2012 and August 2013. By employing a case study approach to collect information from and analyse their published memoirs and online media

presence, the findings suggested that discussing issues related to China in media communications becomes a crucial means of showcasing their familiarity with the culture of the host nation. Since media practices and blogs introduce foreigners to physical locations (such as expatriate pubs and Western-style eateries) in a different foreign environment, expatriate media can also serve as important entryways for creating expatriate spaces in China, the researcher contended that expatriate media significantly serve not only as channels for information and communication but also as platforms for the construction of communities and expression of identities (Mai, 2017).

Newcomers use the social network for several purposes, such as communicating with their family members, classmates, friends and others in both their hometowns and host countries. This social network helps them obtain social capital and adjust socially in the educational settings (Alamri, 2018). Hendrickson and Rosen (2017) interviewed 34 international students studying in several universities in Argentina to examine the usage of social network in the development of cross-cultural adaptation. The results showed that social network helped students better understand local communication behaviours, enabling the international students to communicate in the intercultural adaptation process and assimilate effectively into the new culture through interactions with individuals from the host countries. Similarly, a survey conducted by Forbush and Foucault-Welles (2016) among 120 Chinese students in the United States indicated that increased utilisation of social network correlated with improved social and academic adaptation.

In order to show how online supportive social networks and information society networks improve expatriates' well-being and knowledge transfer, Crowne et al. (2015) developed a model based on network theory and technology. This model has a positive impact on expatriates' cross-cultural adaptation. Canhilal et al. (2022) examined how internet-based expatriate platforms foster complementary engagement possibilities and offer informational, emotional and practical support to expatriates in host countries.

Canhilal et al. (2022) explored the combined online and offline features of the internet-based expatriate platforms to understand their roles and functions. They carried out two research studies examining the interaction between various forms of engagement in virtual expat platforms and the different forms of social support available. The first study applied topic modelling to systematically analyse linguistic

data from 45 online English-speaking expatriate platforms, uncovering proof of various forms of social support, while the second study utilised an online questionnaire to collect information about types of participation and social support among expatriates around the world via different channels. Both studies revealed that expatriates chose to use the Internet for knowledge and interaction-based social support from other expatriates and platform contacts. This choice is likely attributable to the Internet's effectiveness in connecting users with shared experiences. With regard to the hybrid participation in the functions and roles of the internet-based platforms, the study proposed that a) online participants look for informational support and receive both informational and emotional support; b) hybrid participants not only receive emotional and instrumental support but also experience higher levels of emotional support compared to those who participate online exclusively; c) in contrast to non-recipients, support receivers exhibit higher levels of long-term participation. Among them, support recipients who are hybrid participants engage more frequently in dialogues with both platform contacts on an individual basis as well as with the larger community. Therefore, this study gives insights into the potential contribution that Internet-based expatriate communities can make to the development of complementary venues for interaction that foster informational, emotional and instrumental support for foreign nationals living in a host country (Canhilal et al., 2022).

Several other studies show that certain social media platforms, like Facebook, Meetup and InterNations, provide supportive environments for expatriates to build their social and professional networks (Vaiman & Haslberger, 2013); Twitter offers valuable informational interactions for expatriates using technology to communicate with the community (Hyduk & Worrall, 2016), while blogs serve as resources for online social support as well as cross-cultural adaptation support to help expatriates in Canada deal with their experiences of uncertainty, ambiguity and anxiety (Nardon et al., 2015).

Blogging technology, a form of the social network, is a platform for bloggers to create written content while enabling readers to interact with each other. This platform can generate online adjustment support resources that help expatriates deal with their experiences of uncertainty, ambiguity and anxiety (Nardon et al., 2015). Through a qualitative investigation of a collection of blogs created by foreign individuals residing in Canada between 2005 and 2012, Nardon et al. (2015) looked

into the impact of blogging technology on expatriates' adjustment to new, foreign environments. They discovered that the blogging system, which consists of blogging technology, bloggers, discussants and co-created digital discourse, produced online resources for adjustment support that expatriates could access. Moreover, expatriates remarked that they gained knowledge, new insights and fresh perspectives by participating in the blogging system, which made them feel comforted. These results imply that blogging platforms can serve as viable alternatives to face-to-face interactions in dyadic relationships for expatriates seeking the social support needed for adjustment.

Nevertheless, frequent contact with one's home country through a social network may also lead to some negative effects for expatriates (Hofhuis et al., 2019). Viewing pictures, posts and messages from friends and family back home can prompt international sojourners to reminisce about their previous lives. This can lead sojourners to feel alienated, lonely and homesick, which can further reduce their well-being in the host country (Hendrickson et al., 2011).

## **2.5 Existing Problems in the Past Studies of Cross-cultural Adaptation**

The literature review on the cross-cultural adaptation of expatriate teachers provides the researcher with reference to the research content and problems related to the adaptation of expatriate teachers in China. It also provides basic theoretical perspectives and materials for the construction of the theoretical framework for this study. Through literature review, the researcher identified the following issues in the current understanding of cross-cultural adaptation among expatriate teachers.

Firstly, most of the existing literature deals with the adjustment and repatriation of students from developing industrialised countries, along with other related issues. Due to differences in national conditions and cultures, it remains to be considered whether Western cross-cultural adaptation theories can fully explain the acculturation of foreigners in China and whether Western discourse system models are fully suitable for solving cultural problems in the local cultural environment (Wang, 2011). In addition, the literature currently available on the subject still primarily focuses on business expatriates in other countries, such as Europe, the United Arab Emirates, Japan, South Korea and Singapore, as well as the factors influencing their

cross-cultural adaptation and how it affects their future intentions. Unfortunately, the elements influencing expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation in the Chinese setting are understudied (Wang, 2024).

Secondly, the scope of current acculturation research is relatively small. When examining the subject of cross-cultural adaptation in the context of China, existing studies have mainly focused on overseas students. However, as higher education becomes increasingly internationalised, it attracts more and more expatriate teachers and experts to give lectures in China. This cross-cultural communication presents expatriate teachers with not only a mix of novelty and mystery but also anxiety and pressure. Failure to undergo cross-cultural adaptation can lead to difficulties in their work and personal lives in China, and may even affect their perceptions and evaluation of the host country upon returning to their home country.

Furthermore, the existing cross-cultural studies concerning expatriate teachers in China are almost exclusively focused on understanding the situation from the perspective of the expatriate teachers. Little research has been done to find out the views of local colleagues, students or school leaders. There is a lack of research on the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriate teachers from the perspective of the dominant cultural group. As such, the triangulation process in this research area is currently limited.

Lastly, there is a huge gap in research linking SNS, especially local SNS platforms, with expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation. Present studies on the relationship between cross-cultural adaptation and social network is basically dependent on self-reported data. Respondents' estimation of their time spent on or frequency of SNS use can be imprecise. There is a lack of more objective measure of SNS use, or direct measures of online contact with individuals from both the home and host countries (Hofhuis et al., 2019).

Therefore, by summarising previous research experiences and identifying deficiencies, this study aims to assist expatriate teachers in their cross-cultural adaptation in China, expand the field of cross-cultural adaptation research and enrich the content of cross-cultural adaptation theory.

## 2.6 Conceptual Framework

The key concept of this study is to understand the motivations of expatriate teachers coming to China, the challenges they face and their coping strategies in the cross-cultural adaptation experiences, as well as the usage of SNS in this process. By achieving these three specific research objectives, expatriate teachers can better adapt to life in China.

The first objective of this study extends to discover the motivations of expatriates who come to China to work as teachers in colleges. The "Expat Explore: Broadening Perspectives Global Report" published by HSBC in 2017 identified that expatriates who move to China can benefit from various career opportunities and income advantages. Among the top three job sectors preferred by expatriates, education ranks first (Wang & Miao, 2018a). These statistics effectively help anchor the reasons expatriates choose to move to China, providing us a structured perception and understanding of their different motivations.

The second objective of this study is to understand the cross-cultural adaptation process of expatriate teachers in Chinese society. Several different cross-cultural adaptation models have been discussed previously, with Berry's modes of acculturation serving as the basic framework for understanding expatriate teachers' adaptation process. Meanwhile, issues mentioned in the review of previous research offered us insight into comprehend potential challenges that expatriate teachers may encounter during the process of adjustment to life in China. Generally, expatriate teachers need to be ready and able to deal with the possible problems to adjust to living in China.

The third objective, which is crucial for the current study and has been the subject of much recent research, is to analyse the usage of SNS in the cross-cultural adjustment process of expatriate teachers in China. As stated by Hofhuis et al. (2019), one of the more recent technologies that has altered the experience of acculturation is the invention and widespread of online SNS. Digital media technology has emerged as the most popular tool to assist expatriates in the adjustment process in the twenty-first century. In general, we can affirm that SNS is a factor that cannot be neglected when discussing the cross-cultural adaptation experience. Uses and gratifications (U&G) theory, as one of the most prominent theoretical frameworks in media studies, used as the basic framework for understanding this objective, proposes that people choose to

consume particular types of media because they anticipate to gain particular gratifications as result of their choices (Ruggiero, 2000). As U&G theory emphasises the importance of digital media in the context of daily life, the range of demands it meets and the audience's active engagement, it is especially well-suited to study SNS (Falgoust et al., 2022). Based on previous study (Bae, 2018) and the primary frameworks established in the U&G theory, the results of this objective are divided into six categories: information, entertainment, convenience, socialisation, social support and escapism.

While Berry's modes of acculturation was proposed in 2023 and lack the engagement of social networking sites, the U&G theory complements the weakness of Berry's modes in this area. Therefore, the integration of Berry's modes and U&G theory is suitable and needed to explore the social engagement and cross-cultural adaptation of expatriate teachers in China. The proposed conceptual framework (Figure 2.4), which determines the direction of the investigation, was constructed to meet the objectives of understanding the cross-cultural adaptation experience among expatriate teachers, focusing on expatriate teachers employed in colleges in China.

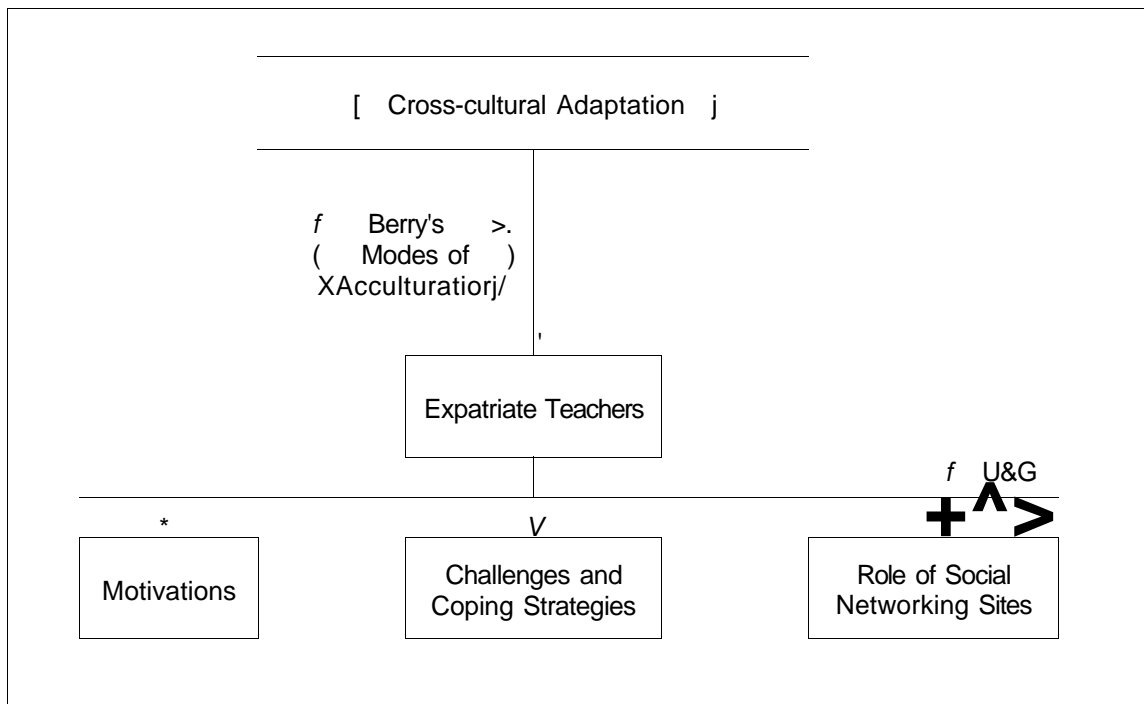


Figure 2.4 Conceptual Framework

## **2.7 Summary**

This research focuses on the social engagement and process of cross-cultural adaptation for expatriate teachers in colleges in China, with the goal of facilitating them to undergo a quicker adaptation to Chinese culture. In order to better understand how expatriates adapt to the dominant culture and whether the process of cross-cultural adaptation is influenced negatively, the researcher will leverage insights from previous studies as a guide to examine the difficulties and influencing factors associated with cross-cultural adaptation. According to the majority of earlier studies, there are various models of cross-cultural adaptation, highlighting the crucial point that it is vital to further explore the elements that can aid expatriates in assimilating into the dominant culture. At the same time, this research also aims to achieve a profound understanding of the value of the social network in cross-cultural adaptation and the U&G theory is used as the basic framework to understand this objective.

In the third chapter, the study methodology, approach for data formation and data analysis will be further elaborated upon and explained.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter gives an outline of the methodology adopted in the research process of this current study. This study used a qualitative method that combines semi-structured in-depth interviews with observation as a research design that aims to explore the experiences of expatriate teachers in cross-cultural adaptation process in colleges in China. Figure 3.1 below provides an illustrated version of the whole methodology process. This study seeks to find out the factors that affect expatriate teachers' adaptation process by understanding the motivation behind working abroad, challenges encountered during the adaptation process and positive elements that contribute to the adaptation experiences.

The discussion lists a variety of stages, including research method, sample selection, data collection process, data analysis and data presentation. The participants' perspectives on the issues were obtained through semi-structured in-depth interviews, while the subjective perspectives of the researcher were expressed through observational data.

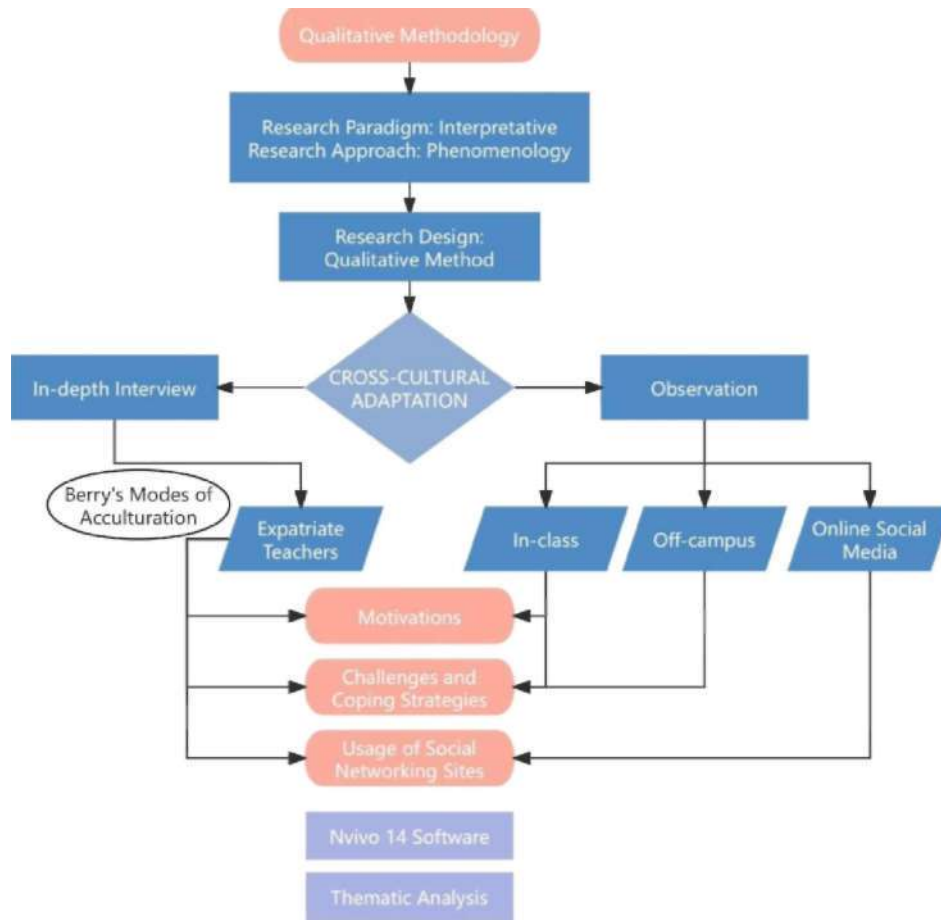


Figure 3.1 Methodology Process

### 3.2 Research Design

A research design is a strategy that describes the steps involved in conducting a study. It functions as a manual to help researchers gather, examine and evaluate research findings. This research strategy affects the design and gives the researcher a chance to think about the advantages and drawbacks of the many research strategies at their disposal (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Semi-structured in-depth interview and observation were the two methods of data collection that the current researcher employed. Through face-to-face interviews and observations, these approaches allowed the researcher a better chance to ask and obtain more first-hand data, go back to research topics and ask questions in response to previous replies (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). Additionally, as the researcher observed changes in nuances, body

language and vocabulary choices, in-depth interviews and observations can also help the researcher gain deeper insights.

### **3.2.1 Qualitative Research Methodology**

Research approaches are plans and procedures that guide research from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The choice of a research approach depends on the nature of the research problem or issue being addressed, the researchers' personal experiences and the audiences for the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). As this study aims to explore the phenomenon of cross-cultural communication by understanding the cross-cultural experiences of expatriate teachers in colleges in China, it adopts inductive methods along with qualitative research techniques. The main goal of the inductive technique is to allow research findings to emerge from recurring, predominating or noteworthy themes found within unprocessed data, free from the constraints of structured methodologies (Thomas, 2006). Qualitative research involves exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2003). Also, some previous studies (Bunnell & Poole, 2022; Cao, 2017; Chu & Morrison, 2011; Jenkins, 2022; Poole & Bunnell, 2023) in this field have showed that researchers tend to favour qualitative research methods to uncover the meanings behind cross-cultural adaptation. More specifically, this study utilises qualitative study techniques based on the interpretivism paradigm to sort, summarise, analyse and interpret results. This research involves two primary research methods to achieve its objectives, namely semi-structured in-depth interviews and observation.

#### *3.2.1.1 Semi-structured In-depth Interview*

Interviews, as highlighted by (Brenner, 1985), develop participants' views on a given topic. Semi-structured interviews are characterised by a set of major questions that are consistently used in the same way across different interviews, though the sequence and depth of the questions in exploring information may vary based on the interaction between the interviewer and participants. In-depth interviews are particularly effective for discovering thorough information about a specific event,

procedure, activity, program or individual (Creswell & Creswell, 2003). Showkat and Parveen (2017) described in-depth interviews as especially practical to utilise in the event of a requirement to gain a deep understanding of an event, issue or interesting incident in real-life contexts. This research method is well-established and favoured especially in the social sciences while also extensively applied in various other disciplines (Tobi & Kampen, 2018).

The primary aim of this study is to explore the cross-cultural adaptation experiences of expatriate teachers in colleges in China from the perspectives of both vulnerable groups and mainstream cultural groups. The study data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interview with expatriate teachers employed at colleges in China. They are from different countries, such as United States, United Kingdom, Spain, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Cameroon. Key participants, specifically the teachers who have lived and employed in China for more than three years, were asked about their perceived perspectives of the dominant cultural group. All interview data were analysed and guided with a focus on understanding participants' experiences, challenges, and the usage of social networks in their cross-cultural adaptation process. Hence, it can help the researcher achieve the study's objective.

#### *3.2.1.2 Observation*

Observation is the art of experiencing and recording events in a social context (Gans, 1999). Participant observation allows researchers to understand how participants perceive their social world-primarily by eliciting the explanatory schemata they use to construct and relate meaningful phenomena through sustained and intentional interaction (Lieberman, 1999). Observers seek to discover what their participants believe; what they do in their work and leisure time; what evokes their emotions such as happiness, sadness and anger; how they choose their friends, and how they maintain their relationships with whom they love, whom they hate and whom they fear (Delamont, 2004).

This research implemented observation as part of the research design method, alongside semi-structured in-depth interviews. The purpose of the observation was to understand how expatriates interact during their work and daily lives, as well as how

they utilise social media during their adaptation process. The researcher focused on the perspective of expatriate teachers by observing not only their classes and interactions during class breaks but also their lives off-campus to understand the interactions of the participants involved. Regarding the usage of social networks in the adaptation process of expatriate teachers, the researcher observed how they behave in online social groups, which included expatriate teachers' support groups and online communities. This approach helps the researcher gather detailed information from participants and form this information into categories or themes for analysis.

This study utilised two types of observation: online and offline. To address the second objective of the thesis, which is to understand the cross-cultural adaptation of expatriate teachers towards Chinese social culture and society, this study utilised offline observation research. In contrast, online observation research is utilised to address the third objective of the thesis, which is to analyse the usage of social network in expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation process in China. At the same time, observation research serves to examine whether the results from the interview are true or disputable.

Offline observations were mainly conducted on the campus where expatriate teachers worked, with the rest offline observations taking place in coffee shops and restaurants recommended by the expatriate teachers themselves. The researcher evaluated the expatriate teachers' performance in the classroom and their interactions with their students and local colleagues after class in order to determine how well they adapted to Chinese culture. Also, the researcher also observed the way they behaved in public places to determine how well they adjusted to life in China. Notes were taken on various aspects, including atmosphere of the class, expatriate teachers' behaviour, student behaviour, interactions between students and teachers, expatriate teachers' interaction with local teachers and expatriate teachers' interactions with local people.

In the twenty-first century, netnography has become a "new" type of research methodology due to its increasing use in online communities and social media communication (Fenton & Parry, 2022). Netnography is "a specific type of qualitative social media research. It adapts the methods of ethnography and other qualitative research practices to the cultural experiences that encompass and are reflected within the traces, networks, and systems of social media (Kozinets, 2019, p. 19)". The focus on online traces, socialites, and interactions sets netnography apart from previous

online research. Four characteristics set netnography apart, according to Kozinets (2019): 1. Cultural focus-comprehending a focal phenomenon, site, topics, or individuals; 2. Social media data focus; 3. Immersive engagement-a reflexive personal involvement in the culture; and 4. "Netnographic Praxis"-using acknowledged and advised netnographic research practices that show an understanding of the conventions, history, and methodological perspectives associated with netnography. Netnography may be less time-consuming, less expensive, and less intrusive than more conventional types of ethnography (Fenton & Parry, 2022).

Netnography fits this study well due to the online observation method in this study used internet communications as a primary source of data to understand a cultural phenomenon and focusing on social media data. The field site was set at one Chinese social media platform, WeChat, because the participants in this study mainly use this Chinese social media platform rather than other social media platform, like Douyin or Xiaohongshu. Data were collected by following and cataloguing interactions within WeChat online groups and analysing their posts made on the platform. Expatriate teachers chatted and shared information with each other through these online groups. These textual and photographic chatting records from these interactions subsequently served as prompts for in-depth interviews, using a photo-elicitation method, which is based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview. The researcher joined three expatriate WeChat groups to explore the behaviour of expatriate teachers within these groups. The information from these online expatriates' communities could be used to check the validity and reliability of the interview data.

### **3.2.2 Phenomenological Approach and Research Paradigm**

Phenomenology is a method of research that focuses on examining phenomena from the viewpoint of individuals who have experienced them, allowing researchers to capture their essence (Teherani et al., 2015). Phenomenology is sometimes defined as the study of phenomena as they appear in human experience, of how we perceive and comprehend phenomena, and the significance of these experiences in our individual lives (Smith, 2018). In other words, phenomenology explores how people experience the world. By investigating experiences as they are subjectively lived, new meanings

and appreciations can be formed, which can inform or even reorient how we view those experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019).

Phenomenology aims to explain the significance of an experience in terms of both what was experienced and how it was experienced (Teherani et al., 2015). Stilwell and Harman (2021) utilised the same method in their recent study, which emphasised their idea that the phenomenological approach's goal was to shed light on the particulars and discover phenomena through the perspectives of individuals in a given situation. This often translates into obtaining deep knowledge and perceptions through inductive, qualitative techniques like participant observation, discussions, and interviews, and then presenting the findings from the viewpoints of the study participants.

In this study, the phenomenological approach was used to analyse and guide all data collected from interviews, with particular emphasis on the expatriate teachers at Chinese colleges who assimilated into a whole new culture. Because it enables researchers to participate in adaptable activities that might characterize and aid in the understanding of complicated phenomena, such as different facets of human social experience, a phenomenological qualitative technique offers a theoretical instrument for educational research (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). Overall, the methods and strategies used in this study enabled the participants to communicate their ideas and sentiments in their own words. Additionally, it also aided in the researcher's ability to compile specific data from participants and organise that data into groups or themes.

The term "paradigm", first introduced by Kuhn (1997), refers to the common assumptions, ethical standards and worldviews held by a group of experts about the nature of reality and knowledge. In social research, paradigms serve as heuristics; that is, they are conceptual and practical "tools" that are utilised to address particular research problems (Abbott, 2004). Axiology, ontology, epistemology, methodology and rhetoric are all viewed differently from inside each paradigm (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). According to Lincoln et al. (2011), research paradigms comprise a collection of fundamental ideas that characterise the presumptions of individuals about the nature of the 'world', the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships they can have with that world and its parts.

Researchers follow paradigms as guidance in conducting their research (Waller, 2015). In this study, the chosen research paradigm is a qualitative methodology based on the interpretive model. Research paradigms reflect the worldviews, assumptions

and methods of the researchers, influencing how they define and engage with their subjects. Therefore, the researcher's opinions and attitudes regarding the topics they are investigating would ultimately determine the conduct of their investigation, including their methods for data gathering and analysing. Therefore, the research paradigm has crucial implications for every choice made during the study process (Kamal, 2019).

Interpretive epistemology is inherently subjective. Interpretivism advocates different realities that are socially produced. Reality and truth are made rather than found. Given that reality is always mediated through our senses, it is impossible to perceive it in its pure form. Without being influenced by their worldviews, concepts and backgrounds, observers cannot directly access external reality. Interpretive research aims to comprehend how people perceive the social phenomena they engage with, rather than seeking universally applicable knowledge and truth that are free from context and values (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Using the interpretative model in this research helps to understand the social phenomena through the perspectives of the participants rather than those of the researcher (Cohen et al., 2002). This approach enhances the researcher's ability to collect and interpret qualitative data from participants. The data gathered from semi-structured in-depth interviews and observations are analysed based on the interpretivism paradigm to sort, summarise, analyse the interview results and interpret the findings.

### **3.2.3 Population and Research Sample**

The participants were carefully chosen among expatriates from all over the world who worked at colleges in Nanchang. According to Campbell et al. (2020), participants should be chosen through purposive sampling, focusing on informants who would be able to give the researchers relevant information for the study objectives. It is crucial to select participants who have encountered the problems in this study (Tongco, 2007).

Two different sampling methods were utilised in this research: snowball sampling and purposive sampling, which are the most appropriate sample method for in-depth interview and observation as they allow the researcher to include survey participants they would not otherwise have access to, thereby identifying members of

a certain community (Etikan et al., 2016). The following criteria were established to choose the specific participants for interviews and observations:

Interview and Observation Criteria:

- i.) Foreign teachers who currently teach or have taught at colleges,
- ii.) Foreign teachers who have resided in China for at least six months,
- iii.) Active users of SNS while living and working in China.

Meanwhile, some key participants are selected to obtain more information related to the perspectives of the dominant cultural groups. The purposive sampling technique is appropriate for choosing these participants, as the researcher wants to gain detailed knowledge about a specific phenomenon. The criteria were therefore set by the researcher to reflect the goals of this research in order to attain the research objectives. Consequently, the following criteria were established to choose the specific participants for key informants:

Key Informant Criteria:

- i.) Expatriate teachers who have resided in China for more than three years,
- ii.) Active users in exchange groups of expatriate teachers, either online or offline,
- iii.) Expatriate teachers who have had extensive and frequent contact with local cultural groups.

A relatively small and purposefully chosen sample is often used in a qualitative study to boost depth (as opposed to breadth) of understanding. Purposive sampling is a technique for identifying and choosing cases that maximize the effective use of limited research resources. It is used to pick respondents most likely to provide suitable and useful information (Campbell et al., 2020). The number of participants is determined by the evolution of interviews, reading of data collected and data analysis progress until the point of saturation is reached (Wan Zainodin, 2018). The sample search ends when repetition occurs, and no fresh data or topic emerge.

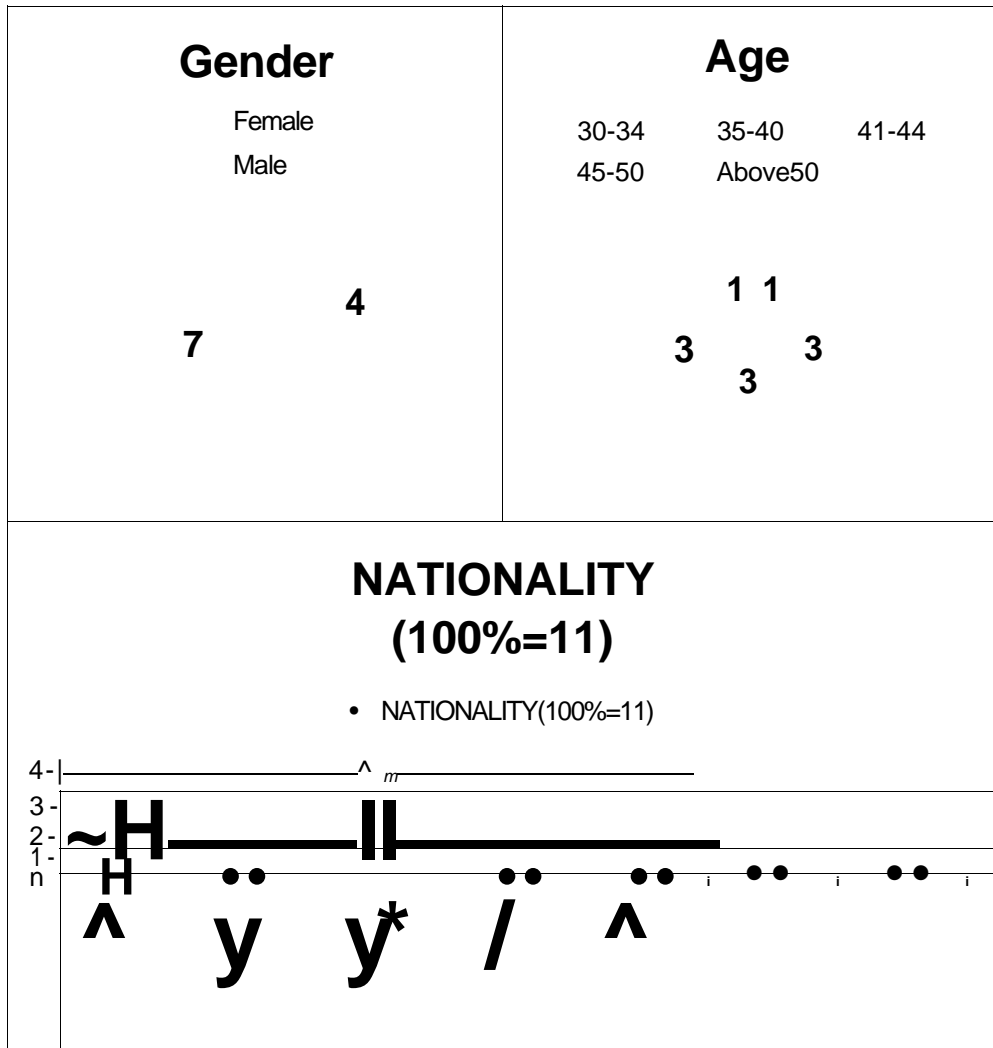
Several discussions exist regarding the appropriate sample size for such projects and when to stop sampling. Considering all points of view will help the researcher make more precise predictions about what may be expected in terms of sample size for studies using snowball sampling and criteria sampling. As long as the sampling method is appropriate, sufficient and relevant, and the sample size is appropriate, the research question can be answered adequately (Andrade, 2021).

This research adopted semi-structured interview and observation methods to collect qualitative data from the participants. Therefore, it is essential to select the

participants for the study in advance and prepare the interview questions and the observation plans.

An essential first step in designing a useful study is to provide a cogent justification for the sample size. Depending on the purpose of the data collection, the resources at hand and the statistical methods used for data analysis, there are several approaches to support the chosen sample size in research. All of these methods revolve around the fundamental idea that researchers should balance the importance of the data collected against their inferential objectives (Lakens, 2022). When determining the appropriate sample size for qualitative research, one should take into account the fact that the expense of gathering data from additional participants does not produce novel knowledge that is sufficiently valuable to support the inferential objectives. The concept of saturation is commonly applied here, which is shown by the findings that new data merely replicate earlier findings without providing additional information (Morse, 1995).

As mentioned before, snowball sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the participants for this research. The initial point of contact for the participants was the International Exchange and Cooperation Office of a college in Nanchang. Subsequently, the snowball sampling technique was employed to recruit additional participants through the contacted interviewers. Interested expatriate teachers reached out to the researcher using WeChat to express their interest in taking part in the study. Initially, ten expatriate teachers were approached by the researcher; nine of them agreed to participate in the study, while one of them did not reply. After the researcher analysed the data and classified the data in different codes, the researcher used snowball sampling again to get in touch with more participants to verify whether the data had already been saturated. Two additional participants were interviewed, and no more new codes could be classified. Therefore, a total of 11 participants agreed to participate in the study: four females and seven males, ranging in age from 31 to 53 years old, with three to twelve years of service at the college (see Figure 3.1). The participants' demographic data are shown in Table 3.1, Demographic Information of the Participants.



### TIME IN CHINA

Less than 5 Years    5-10 Years    More than 10Years

3

5

3

Figure 3.2 Demographic Information of the Participants

Table 3.1  
Demographic Information of the Participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Workplace</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Duration</b>
ETF1	35	Female	Jiangxi Tourism and Commerce College	The Philippines	4 years
ETM1	42	Male	Jiangxi Tourism and Commerce College	Cameroon	11 years
ETF2	38	Female	Jiangxi Tourism and Commerce College	The Philippines	4 years
ETM2	35	Male	Jiangxi Institute of Economic Administrators	United States	5 years
ETM3	45	Male	Jiangxi Institute of Economic Administrators	United Kingdom	4 years
ETM4	53	Male	Jiangxi Modern Polytechnic College	United States	5 years
ETM5	42	Male	Jiangxi Vocational Technical College of Industry and Trade	United States	6 years
ETM6	48	Male	Jiangxi Institute of Economic Administrators	United States	4 years
ETF3	31	Female	Jiangxi College of Foreign Studies	Spain	3 years
ETM7	47	Male	Jiangxi Tourism and Commerce College	Japan	12 years
ETF4	44	Female	Jiangxi Tourism and Commerce College	South Korea	12 years

Following that, in compliance with pre-established guidelines, potential participants were provided with an outline detailing the purpose, content, methodology and confidentiality principles of the study. Participants were advised by the interview guide that the goal of the interviews was to learn more about their experiences of intercultural adaption in China and the usage of social media in that process. In addition, the participants were also made aware that the interviews would be audio recorded and that they could pause the conversation at any time if they felt uncomfortable participating in the study. Any expatriate teachers who opted to participate and met the inclusion criteria were initially contacted by the researchers via

WeChat to confirm their interest to participate once again. Before the formal interview, every participant gave their consent to participate in this study.

As described previously, some key informants were selected using purposive sampling technique to gather deeper insights into the perspectives of the dominant cultural groups. The sample inclusion criteria were: (1) residing in China for more than three years; (2) actively participating in activities organised by expatriate teachers exchange groups, either online or offline; and (3) having extensive and frequent contact with local cultural groups. These requirements were met by six out of the eleven participants. Therefore, to further enrich this research, additional questions pertaining to the local culture were posed to these six participants.

The researcher's initial plan called for observing every participant simultaneously. However, during discussions with them, most of them expressed a preference to be interviewed individually and declined to be observed. They believed that having the researcher observe their classroom would interfere with their classroom management and instructions, and that having an external observer would make them feel uncomfortable. Also, participants expressed that internet observation would violate their privacy. The participants were informed by the researcher that the goals of the observation were to assess how they interacted with students and adjusted to life in China. The researcher also assured them that every effort would be made to avoid interfering with the lessons during the entire procedure. As a result, after a few conversations, five expatriate teachers consented to allow the researcher to observe their classes.

### **3.3 Pilot Study**

A pilot study is the initial phase of the entire research process and often entails a smaller-scale study designed to refine and modify the primary study. A solid research study with an appropriate experimental design and precise execution is necessary to produce high-quality results. Evaluating the feasibility of the study before carrying out the main study might be very helpful for this aim (Arnold et al., 2009; Thabane et al., 2010). Pilot studies ensure that all potential problems in the processes will be fixed and that the research questions will be put to the test. Through the pilot study, researchers learn about the processes involved in the major study, which helps

in choosing the most suitable research methods to address the research topic in the main project (In, 2017).

In this context, the researcher conducted the pilot study of semi-structured interviews and observations based on this study's research design. Through the pilot study, the researcher was allowed to get the idea to refine the questions of the interviews and identify areas requiring closer observation to meet the study's objective. Consequently, the researcher could improve the interviewing techniques and conduct additional research on crucial topic areas. After the interview questions and observation plan were finalized, a pilot survey must be completed in order to address a number of shortcomings and offer further enhancements that align with the study's objectives. This study did not need a large number of participants to effectively analyse the data because of its qualitative methodology.

The pilot study was carried out in China throughout May and June of 2023, using the convenience sampling method to acquire the data. Samples that satisfied the criteria for participation in the study were chosen by the researcher. Three academic teachers from Chinese colleges, two female and one male, made up the tiny sample size of the study. These pilot study participants also took part in the primary study. The participants were contacted by the researcher through the administrative office of one college in Nanchang. The accessibility and proximity of the college to the residence of the researcher played a facilitative role in the selection of the participants for this study. The previous involvement of the researcher with the college made it simple to get in contact with the chosen participants. After gaining access, the researcher started contacting the participants using WeChat to set up an appointment time and date for the interviews and observations.

Prior to the interviews, each participant received an information sheet and a consent form. The information sheet provided a detailed explanation of the purpose of the study and guaranteed complete confidentiality of all participants' personal information, as well as any written or audio data collected for the study. The researcher changed their names to pseudonyms to make sure that their identities are kept a secret. For example, instead of the first female participant's real name, "PSETF1," a pseudonym for "Pilot Study Expatriate Teacher Female 1," and so forth, was used to represent a participant in the interview and protect her identity. Additionally, they were also offered the choice to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to provide an explanation.

### **3.3.1 Pilot Study for Interviews**

Three participants from the pilot test were randomly chosen in order to obtain their feedback. The one-on-one, semi-structured interviews took place in a vacant classroom and lasted anywhere between one and two hours. To encourage open and lengthy responses from the participants, the questions were intentionally constructed to be more open-ended. The interview questions were given to the participants in advance so that they could have enough time to read the questions and get an understanding of them by thinking independently. During the interview, phrases like "I see," "Alright," or "Understand" were employed to convey to the participants that the researcher was paying attention and to urge them to continue talking. Meanwhile, the researcher also asked the participants if they could grasp the meaning of the questions and if they found anything ambiguous or anything that could be difficult to understand about the questions. As each interview came to a conclusion, the researcher expressed the feelings of gratitude to the participants.

A laptop was used to record all of the interview data, which were then separately transcribed into Word documents. During the transcription process, the researcher manually identified relevant quotes and themes from each transcript as each interview was being transcribed one at a time. Following the transcription of each interview, the researcher classified the quotes found therein into common themes based on what the researcher deemed relevant and acceptable. NVivo 14, a software for analysing qualitative data, was used to carry out data administration effectively.

### **3.3.2 Pilot Study for Observation**

The researcher intended to conduct a pilot study involving observation in the class of three participants who had previously participated in the pilot study involving interviews. However, one of the participants was not available in Nanchang at that time, and the other one was worried that the researcher's presence in the classroom to conduct classroom observations would have an impact on the course. Due to the limited amount of time available for the pilot study and the limited number of participants who gave their agreement to participate, the researcher decided to observe only one participant's class for the pilot study involving observation. As this

participant had sixteen classes per week, the researcher selected two classes that were scheduled on the day after their interview appointment. Before the observation session, the researcher informed the participant about the purpose of the observation and the safety measures taken to protect the confidential identity of the participant.

On the day of the observation, the researcher arrived at the classroom 10 minutes before the lesson started. There was only one student present in the classroom when the researcher arrived, and the participant was already there. The researcher greeted the participant, reiterating that she would not speak during the lesson and try to keep interruptions to a minimum. In order to cause as little disruptions as possible to the session, the researcher took up position in an empty seat at the back of the classroom. As the students gradually made their way inside the room, the researcher was spotted by those who had arrived earlier. At first, the students did not seem to know what to make of the researcher's presence, but once they were seated, they stopped paying attention to or turning around to look at the researcher. Then, without acknowledging the existence of the researcher, the participant began the lesson. The observation lasted for one hour and a half, which included two 40-minute lessons with a ten-minute break. A notebook was used by the researcher to record the observations. After leaving the classroom, the researcher got back to the car and added the perspective of the researcher and any extra insights that might have not yet been recorded in the notebook in case the researcher missed any details during the observation. The data from the observation were then arranged into digital files and classified into common themes, along with the interview data. The results of the pilot study are presented in the section that follows.

In the meantime, the researcher discovered that WeChat groups were the most popular social media platform among expatriate teachers following the pilot study of interviews. The researcher asked the participants to suggest a few WeChat groups for expatriates that the researcher may join in order to carry out the online observation. Then, the researcher joined several WeChat communities for expatriates after obtaining permission from the group moderators. Kozinets (2019) states that there are four methods for gathering data in netnography: capture, save and print, copy and paste, and scraping. The researcher captured research-related data via a screenshot and then save in the researcher's computer.

### 3.3.3 Pilot Study Findings

Significant insight into the fundamental problems under investigation was provided by the conclusions of the pilot study. A few of the most important conclusions drawn from the pilot study were instrumentally applied in the formulation of the interview questions for the major study and in the generation of the initial themes for the chosen data analysis method, which was the Thematic Analysis (see to section 3.11 Data Analysis). During the analysis, several overarching themes were identified (see Table 3.2 below).

Table 3.2  
Themes Generated from the Pilot Study

<b>Overview of superordinate themes</b>			
RQ1: Motivation behind Working Abroad	RQ2: Challenges Encountered during Cross-cultural Adaptation Process	RQ2: Adaptation Strategy	RQ3: Social Networking Sites Usage
Experience Different Life	Language Problem  Difficulties in daily Life	Help from People  Localisation	Daily Communication Information Acquisition

Three themes were classified from the pilot study, corresponding to the first research question regarding the motivations of expatriate teachers working abroad, including recommendations from other people, the desire to experience different lifestyles and the benefits of working abroad. These findings were crucial for understanding the reasons expatriates chose to work far from their home countries and the specific reasons why they chose to work in China. Based on the findings, all of the participants indicated that their primary motivation for working abroad was the opportunity to experience different cultures and lifestyles. Experiencing a new culture and immersing themselves in the new culture was a significant motivation and challenge to work abroad for the three participants in the pilot study. When asked about their reasons of working abroad, a female participant from the Philippines answered:

*"I chose to work abroad because I would love to experience different culture and meet new people. And I also love teaching. Because if you teach, you get to immerse in the community, you interact with students, you interact with parents as well. I would say it's the best way to learn the culture. You can learn a lot from your students. But mainly the purpose is to be able to experience a different culture and live in the country. "* (ETF2, 38, *The Philippines*)

Another female participant from the Philippines added that she wanted not only to experience a new culture but also to enjoy challenges, and for her, one of the challenges was teaching foreigners.

*"I really wanted to explore other places, not just the Philippines. I wanted to go to other countries, and then I knew about China. China has preserved culture. It's not the same with other countries, which are influenced by the other countries. That's why I wanted to go to China. ... It's a different feeling to teach other nationalities. Sometimes in my life, I wanted to be challenged, and it's really a big challenge to teach Chinese people English. "* (ETF1, 35, *The Philippines*)

The male participant from Cameroon also expressed that working abroad was an amazing experience to explore a new culture, and he emphasised that he was attracted to both Chinese culture and Chinese language.

*"And another part is to experience a new culture. It is something amazing and wonderful. Experiencing Chinese culture was something I was looking forward to. I really wanted to explore Chinese culture because I read about different countries, and China seems to be unique in a lot of ways. The culture was so deep, and I wanted to be apart of it. The culture was a very big motivation. Also, learning a new language is something that can help open your mind in very different ways. I knew that coming to China would give me an*

*opportunity to learn another language." (ETM1, 42, Cameroon)*

The two themes that emerged related to the first part of the second research objectives, the challenges encountered during the adaptation process, were specifically language problems and difficulties in daily life. When asked "What are the biggest challenges you were facing when adapting to Chinese culture?", all of the participants cited language as a significant problem. Some of their responses were:

*"The biggest challenge was language. Imagine knowing only Nihao and living in China. How hard it is. Without the language, you cannot handle anything by yourself. You always need to call someone in the beginning. You are like a little baby singing help all the time. So language was the biggest challenge." (ETM1, 42, Cameroon)*

*"I would say the language. The first time I arrived there in China, I barely knew any Chinese just Xiexie and Nihao." (ETF2, 38, The Philippines)*

These statements were further supported by the other female participant who was also observed by the researcher during the pilot study process. According to her, it was difficult to understand Chinese people even if she used the help of translation. Moreover, during the observation, the researcher also found that language was a problem that she encountered. During the class observation, the researcher observed:

*She asked about the students' weekend activities. A student replied in Mandarin that he had enjoyed playing the room escape game on Saturday. She appeared perplexed and asked the student to explain the activity he had just said. The student requested other pupils to help because he was unsure how to explain it in English. Even with the aid of the translator software, the entire class attempted to explain, but due to their low command of English, none of them were able to do so for the teacher. (Observation Notes for ETF1)*

The other theme, difficulties in daily life, was also mentioned by all of the participants when answering questions about the challenges they faced in China. Participants mentioned differences in dietary habits and weather as the major difficulties for expatriate teachers with regard to daily life challenges. As all three participants from the pilot study came from countries without cold weather, they all found it particularly difficult to adjust to the cold weather in China at first. One of the female participants from the Philippines answered:

*"Weather, the wintertime. That was really a shock to me, but I got used to it now. But it's a very big difference from my home country because we don't have winter, and it's always summer. So this was a big challenge especially when I was in the north of China, in Tangshan, Beijing, plus the air quality wasn't very good as well. " (ETF2, 38, The Philippines)*

The male participant who was from Cameroon also shared similar sentiments that it was very difficult to adjust to the weather of China in the beginning, as he experienced wintertime for the first time when he came to China.

*"The weather was something new to me as well because we don't have winter in Cameroon. ... Here I came to experience winter for the first time. It was very difficult in the beginning. It was so cold; I could even call it freezing." (ETM1, 42, Cameroon)*

During the pilot study, the researcher identified the following two key themes relating to the adaptation strategies utilised by the participants: getting help from people and localisation. All of the participants emphasised the significance of the support they received from the local people around them. Their co-workers were the main source of assistance, whom the participants could get help and a lot of support from to deal with their work experiences.

*"The two foreign teachers taught me a lot. ... The first time I came here, I asked Coco for the name list of the students. She told me not to worry, and one student would give me. And then she told the time when she gave me the books, not to worry*

*about the facilities in the classroom because one student would help me. " (ETF1, 35, The Philippines)*

*"I always had support. Like I always had Rita, I always had a staff from college just to assist whenever we needed something. There was no information like formal orientation, but whenever we needed something, they were always there. They were very helpful. Whenever you need anything, you can just go to them, and they're there, ready to go." (ETF2, 38, The Philippines)*

All of the three participants also expressed high appreciation for the help they received from the local students and residents in their daily lives. Students frequently offered the participants various valuable information about things in their daily activities and aspects of Chinese culture, as they would meet and interact with the students almost every day. They believed that local residents, no matter they were neighbours or even just strangers, were warm-hearted and willing to help at any time. One of the participants used an example to illustrate this point by sharing an experience whereby her neighbours helped her fix her clogged sink, showing the important role of getting local people's support.

*"For example, when I lived in Tangshan, we had a problem with our sink. It was plugged. My neighbour sent her husband just to fix our sink. That was really nice. When I got lost, local people would tell you the right way, even there was this language barrier, they would just use body language. " (ETF2, 38, The Philippines)*

While ETF2 expressed that language barriers did not prevent local people from being helpful towards her, ETM1 acknowledged the help that was provided by local people but felt that sometimes locals could not help even if they wanted to due to the language barriers.

*"From my part, I think Chinese people are always ready to help a foreigner. Sometimes you meet someone who knows some English, and they are most willing to talk and help you.*

*Even someone who doesn't know English, if you are trying to ask for something, they may try to help you, but the language barrier may come in. " (ETM1, 42, Cameroon)*

Additionally, the observation of ETF1 provided additional evidence to corroborate the statements. It was observed that ETF1, who depended on the help of the students to carry out the lecture, needed assistance from the students to maintain class discipline during the class. During participant observation of ETF1, the researcher noted the following observation:

*The whole classroom started to get a little noisy. Then, she walked from the front to the middle of the class, trying to attract the students' attention, but the students were still talking to each other. She stopped talking and seemed a little helpless. Then, one student said "quiet" loudly in Chinese, and then the whole classroom was quiet. (Observation Notes for ETF1)*

Localisation emerged as another strategy utilised by all three participants to adjust to life in China. Accepting cultural differences, understanding local customs, getting used to the weather and dietary habits of the local people in China and learning the Chinese language were the strategies they have to perform when they wanted to adjust their lives in China. ETM1 concluded that these were essential for settling into life in China:

*"There are differences, and these differences should be accepted and understood. If not, there is no way you can adapt to any culture. If you are not willing to adapt or willing to accept the differences and understand, these differences can make you angry for sure. But these differences are a part of the life of the people here, and you can't change it. You should understand and accept it, then be happy with it. " (ETM1, 42, Cameroon)*

The final two themes were identified from the pilot study with regard to the third research objective, to address the usage of social media in the adaptation process

of expatriate teachers: daily communication and information acquisition. When they were asked about their use of social media in China: "Do you use social media in China?", each participant positively answered yes to the researcher and specify various social media platforms they used to communicate with different people. Due to some regulations that China has established against Western social media, participants tended to use Chinese social media platforms to communicate with local people from China and use Western social media to keep in touch with their family and friends back in their home country. However, one of the participants said that she asked her family to download WeChat, a Chinese social media app, to facilitate more convenient communication with her family through the Chinese social media app because it was more convenient for her as she frequently checked messages on WeChat platform.

*"I use WeChat to make contact with my boss as well. Even my family have downloaded WeChat. I contact them using WeChat." (ETM1, 35, The Philippines)*

*"I talk with my friends through Facebook and Twitter. And I talk with my mom on WhatsApp every day. So social media helps us stay in touch and not miss each other." (ETM1, 42, Cameroon)*

All three participants indicated that social media was used as a tool of communication with family, friends, employers, acquaintances who were introduced by common friends and even strangers. The statement was further verified by the researcher through the contact between the researcher and the participants. The researcher received the WeChat contact information of each participant from a college staff member and communicated with them on the social media platform. Moreover, one participant emphasised that her use of social media was mainly to communicate with people rather than acquiring new friends.

*"When introduced by common friends, we would start communicating via WeChat as well. But I knew them through common friends, not through WeChat." (ETF2, 38, The Philippines)*

All participants mentioned that another important function of social media is access to information. They could learn about Chinese culture through social media and obtain news and relevant information through WeChat online groups. Two of the participants from the pilot study mentioned that they had gathered information about China through social media even before they travelled to China, while the other participant reported that she had learned information about Nanchang on the day she arrived there.

*"Before I came here, I learned about Chinese through social media." (ETF1, 35, The Philippines)*

*"I learned a little bit about Chinese culture online before I came. But mostly about how Chinese people are friendly and kind to foreigners, nothing too deep." (ETM1, 42, Cameroon)*

*"I learned some information about Nanchang when I first arrived in Nanchang, like where to go, which restaurant is nice, stuff like these." (ETF2, 38, The Philippines)*

Additionally, according to the participants from the pilot study, WeChat groups comprised of expatriates were another valuable source to get information. Different groups provided them with various kinds of information and also served as platforms for expatriates to participate in various activities and make new friends. All participants from the pilot study acknowledged that they had received help from these WeChat groups in terms of both work-related and daily life.

*"I asked in the Pilipino group about the teaching strategy they use every time I have difficulty explaining to the Chinese kids. And then they would tell me the strategy." (ETF1, 35, The Philippines)*

*"I'm also a member of pets in Nanchang group. Some members want to gain some information about how to send their cats and dogs to their home country or how to transport them to another city. Because my cats had actually been to many cities, I had to transport them by train. ... We use the*

*WeChat group to get information from other foreigners to know how they transfer. " (ETF2, 38, The Philippines)*

*"There are times when you see information about China in WeChat groups that you haven't heard about anywhere. Someone in the group may send a message like there's this thing that is happening, there is a new law about teachers, there's a new law about teaching, and so on. And you can learn and then understanding quickly about what's happening and what you need to do. " (ETM1, 42, Cameroon)*

### **3.3.4 Outcomes and Application of the Pilot Study to the Main Study**

After the completion of the pilot study, the researcher identified a few problems that needed to be addressed before the major study could begin. The identified problems are with regard to the interview schedule and the observation schedule. The specifics are described in more detail below:

#### **i) Interview Schedule**

During the pilot study, a variety of basic questions were asked in an effort to gain more insights into the participants' reasons behind the travels to China, their experiences adjusting to a new culture, and their attitudes on social media. The researcher discovered that the interview schedule had been overly depended upon the pre-planned questions, which were too many, during the pilot study, limiting opportunities for asking follow-up questions that may have elicited more in-depth responses from the participants. Thus, the answers obtained from the pilot study interviews were used to refine the interview questions for the main research. New questions were added, and those that generated similar answers were either removed or merged. To help elicit more detailed answers, questions that were judged overly general were slightly adjusted. For instance, the close-ended question "Do you use social media in China?" was formed to explore whether expatriate teachers use social media or not, and what social media platform they use frequently in China. However, participants often responded only with a simple "yes," failing to provide the researcher with further details about the social media platforms they used. Therefore, the question was revised to specifically investigate whether expatriate teachers use social

media and which platforms they frequently utilize in China. "What social media do you use a lot?" was added to get more detailed information from the participants.

To help the participants better grasp the data required for the study, it was also decided that several questions needed to be rephrased. Additionally, during the pilot study, the participants were not exposed to the concept of Chinese culture; instead, more generic questions about their daily lives were asked. Because of this, the researcher provided some instances of culture before posing questions such as "Do you know more about Chinese culture, or do you think there's anything significantly different from your home country?" This approach aimed to help the participants better understand the questions.

Due to the fact that one of the pilot study participants was not in Nanchang at the time, the interview process was also rescheduled; also for that reason, the interview process was conducted online via WeChat. Therefore, during the main study, the researcher asked each participant if they were in Nanchang, and she discovered that one male participant and one female participant were also not present. Thus, three interviews in the main research were conducted on the WeChat platform, while the remaining interviews were done offline. The language used during the interview was chosen based on the language proficiency of the participants from the main study. After evaluating the language proficiency of the eleven participants, the researchers found that three of them spoke Chinese more fluently than English. Since the mother tongue of the researcher is Chinese, these three interviews were conducted in Chinese instead of English to improve the quality of the findings,

#### ii) Observation Schedule

After the observation of one class, the researcher found that there were several weaknesses that need to be taken into consideration. First, the classroom setting that the researcher observed may not have accurately represented the typical conditions of a classroom because the participant was aware that she was being watched. The researcher then assured the participants that the quality of their teaching would not be evaluated during the observation, and the outcomes of the observation would not be shared with their colleagues. Also, the researcher chose to sit in the last row which has the least influence on the class; however, this seating choice also limited the researcher's ability to comprehensively observe the behaviour of the students of the whole class.

Nevertheless, not all problems could be implemented at these stages of addition and improvement. Instead of waiting for the participants to tell the researcher when she could start observing, the researcher asked for a permission to visit the classroom at random, capturing the most authentic classroom scenarios experienced by expatriate teachers. Participants expressed that they would feel anxious and uneasy if the research unexpectedly entered their class without warning them, and they would not want this to happen. Ultimately, after a few discussions, it was decided that the participants would provide the researcher with multiple class schedules, allowing the researcher to attend their class at random to conduct the observation during those designated times. Regarding the researcher observing from the final row, it was a concern that the ability to observe student behaviour might be restricted. Given the limited space of the classroom and the non-participatory nature of this study, the researcher concluded that the optimal location for observation should be chosen with the understanding that it would minimally or not have an impact on the class. As a result, sitting in the last row of the classroom was the best option.

### **3.4 Research Instrument**

In qualitative research, observations and interviews are both important sources of data. There are two ways that observations and interviews can be distinguished from one another. First, observations take place in the environment where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs rather than in a location designated for interviews; second, observational data represent a first-hand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a second-hand account of the world obtained through an interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this study, in-depth interview technique and observation technique were deemed the most appropriate method. Using these approaches would enable the participants to speak and share their experiences and, at the same time, the researcher was able to gather first-hand data from real situations.

### 3.4.1 Interview Protocol

Following the study questions that were outlined at the beginning of this chapter, the researcher set up the interview protocol. Setting high-standard questions is essential to allow the researcher to explore participants' perspectives in both implicit and explicit themes while asking questions to the participants during the interviews (Braaten et al., 2020). The researcher used three types of questions, as recommended by Patton (2014), to elicit replies from the informants:

- i.) Demographics Questions-The researcher began by posing a demographic query to kick off the interview session. It is crucial to establish a rapport throughout the "breaking the ice" phase in order to reduce nervousness and, at the same time, make the informant feel at ease during the interview. The samples of demographic questions that the researcher posed during the session are as follows:

*"Hello, can you introduce yourself? "*

*"How long have you been in China? "*

*"If you could share with me, what is your education background? "*

- ii.) Knowledge Questions -These questions aim to understand what participants prepared before coming to China and how much participants knew about Chinese culture. These questions are important because they probe information about the different ways of adaptation employed by the expatriates. The examples of knowledge questions that the researcher posed during the session are as follows:

*"Did you know anything about China or Chinese culture before you come to China? If yes, how did you get this information? "*

*"Since you have now been in China for a while, do you know more about Chinese culture, or do you think there's anything quite different from your home country? "*

iii.) Experience Questions-These questions were asked by the researcher to address the first and second objectives of the study, which are: to explore the motivations of expatriate teachers employed in China and to understand their cross-cultural adaptation of expatriate teachers to Chinese social culture and society. The samples of questions that the researcher asked during the session are as follows:

*"If you could share with me, what brings you to China? "*

*"In your personal opinion, have you adapted to life in China? "*

*"What are the biggest challenges you were facing when adapting to Chinese culture? "*

iv.) Opinion Questions-These questions were asked by the researcher to identify how expatriate teachers overcome the obstacles in adapting to life in China or what factors contribute to their failure to stay in China. The samples of questions that the researcher asked during the session are as follows:

*"Does the college provide information on what you need to adapt to your life in China? "*

*"Do you feel comfortable with your life here now? "*

*"What helps you adjust to your life in China? "*

*"What social media do you use a lot? Do you think social media offer any help for you to adapt to life in China? How does it help? "*

In this study, the researcher used semi-structured questions to encourage expatriate teachers to discuss the topic in a more relaxed, openly and honest manner. Since the interview is informal in nature, the participants are free to "drift" in order to share their experience and insights, as well as provide their responses. Most significantly, the researcher, who conducted the interview, is expected to address all of the relevant questions, compile all of the essential data and be able to interject or

interrupt as needed. The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview to establish a conducive environment where the objective might be accomplished in order to be able to achieve a deeper comprehension of the participants' stories and knowledge (Deterding & Waters, 2021).

Hepp et al. (2018) offer some advice on interview protocol to make sure everything goes smoothly, and the interview is successful. When conducting the interview, the researcher must be well-prepared and create a cosy setting for participants. Before the interview session begins, it is important to go over the interview process. Flexibility must always be presented and allowed within the structure that is "appropriately flexible" so that topics can be covered in the order best suited to the interviewee, while allowing the participants' responses to be properly understood and enabling the researcher to be responsive to any pertinent concerns raised by the interviewee (Braaten et al., 2020). A strong rapport must be established between the researcher and the participants to ensure a smooth interview and the collection of all the important and useful data required for the study (Navarro et al., 2019). These are crucial for dealing with and navigating unforeseen circumstances during the interview.

The second method used in this research is observation. Online observation through virtual and physical observations were conducted to examine expatriate teachers' activities on social media and their interactions with students and colleagues both on and off campus. When an activity, event or scenario can be witnessed first-hand, when a different point of view is needed or when participants are unable or unwilling to discuss the subject at hand, observation is the ideal strategy to use (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

In physical presence observation, the researcher collects information as a participant observer. In this approach, the group is aware of the researcher's observational role and activities; group involvement is unquestionably secondary to the job and primary goal of information gatherer; and this method allows the researcher access to a large number of people and a diverse range of information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Without engaging in the behaviours that constitute the foundation of group membership, researchers observe in a close enough proximity to and communicate with participants, thereby fostering an insider's identity (Adler et al., 1998).

Field notes were recorded as soon as possible after each observation. These field notes include the time, place, purpose of the observation, a diagram of the setting's physical aspects, direct quotations or at least the summary of what participants said, along with the observer's reflective comments, which is consisted of the researcher's feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations, speculations and working hypotheses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Online observation was conducted to achieve the third research objective which is to analyse the usage of social networks among expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation process in China. First, the researcher gained access to the social media apps that were most commonly used by expatriate teachers and then implement online observation through these social media platforms. Boellstorff et al. (2012) contend that ethnographic methodologies must be used in conjunction with a comprehension of virtual worlds since the online or virtual world constitutes a distinct culture unto itself. Additionally, online communities often represent smaller subcultures that exist within larger communities, made up of individuals who share common interests. The researcher will use a smartphone as a field data gathering tool and as a means of a constant connective device with the group members. Both notes and pictures in the field were taken using the smartphone to document the observation process.

### **3.4.2 Interview Questions**

The interview script questions are divided into four parts. Part one includes four questions regarding the background of the participants. Part two focuses on their knowledge, which consists of questions regarding their general understanding that are related to the scope of this study. Basically, the questions are continuously related to another. Therefore, it is flexible to start with any question. Part three of the questions address the experiences of expatriate teachers. Finally, part four consists of several specific opinion-based questions, particularly the participants' opinions and recommendations as their concluding statements. The forms and scripts that were prepared and made ready for the interviews were verified for face validity by a scholar with a doctoral qualification via email, ensuring the internal validity of the questions in terms of rationality and understanding. The forms and scripted interviews that were

completed and made ready for the interviews were also verified for internal validity by a scholar with a doctoral qualification via email, ensuring the reasonableness and comprehension of the questions. To accomplish the research goal, the following questions were created:

PART(A): INFORMANT DETAILS

General Question

- i.) Introducing the interviewer and the purpose of the research
- ii.) Hello informant, can you introduce yourself?
- iii.) How long have you been in China?
- iv.) How long have you been working as a teacher in college?
- v.) If you could share with me, what is your education background?

PART(B): RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

RQ 1: What are the motivations of expatriate teachers working in China?

- i) Why did you choose to work abroad?
- ii) Did you think of any other countries before you chose China?
- iii) What made you choose China as the destination?
- iv) Is teaching the only career you have tried since you arrived in China? Have you considered any other careers?
- v) Why did you choose to teach at colleges?
- vi) Did you know anything about China or Chinese culture before you come to China? If yes, how did you acquire this information?

PART(C): RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

RQ 2: How do expatriate teachers adapt to Chinese social culture and society?

- i) Since you have been in China for a while, do you know more about Chinese culture, or do you think there is anything quite different from your home country?
- ii) What are the biggest challenges you have faced when adapting to Chinese culture?
- iii) Are there any differences between the college education system here and your home country's system? If so, what are they? Have you adapted to the local college education system?
- iv) Does the college provide you with information on how and what you need to

do to adapt to your life in China? If yes, how does it help you?

- v) Do you feel comfortable with your life here now?
- vi) What has helped you adjust to your life in China?
- vii) In your opinion, have you successfully adapted to life in China?

#### PART(D): RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

RQ 3: How does social network help expatriate teachers adapt during the adaptation process in China?

- i) Do you use social media while in China?
- ii) What social media platforms do you use most frequently?
- iii) How often do you use social media to search for information related to your daily life?
- iv) Do you think social media help you adapt to life in China? If so, how does it help?
- v) Have you been involved in any online expatriate support groups? If yes, what are the agenda and activities of the group? How has this involvement helped you adjust to life here?
- vi) Have you experienced any negative effects of social media on your adaptation experience?

#### PART(E): THE KEY INFORMANTS

- i) Why did you choose to stay in Nanchang all the time?
- ii) Do you have any local friends?
- iii) Do you think it's difficult to get close to locals? Why?
- iv) From your perspective, do you think local people have reached out to you or helped you? Why?
- v) How would you describe your relationships with local students and colleagues?
- vi) How do you think the attitude of the local people has influenced your adaptation process?

The consent script, interview questions and consent forms were prepared in advance, and copies were made for the interview sessions. The interview script was distributed earlier to the participants once the date of the interview session was

confirmed through email. A mobile phone and a laptop were arranged as recording devices throughout the interview sessions.

### **3.4.3 Ethical Consideration and Confidentiality**

Prior to collecting data from participants, several measures were used to ensure that the study proceeded in a professional and ethical manner. Ethics refers to a "set of principles of conduct that embody or exemplify what is good or right, or allow us to identify what is bad or wrong" (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). Before the data collection stage commenced, ethical approval was obtained from the Universiti Teknologi MARA. The ethics committee of the institution holds a pivotal position in ascertaining that the research adheres to overarching ethical principles and norms, and that it is not flawed or detrimental to the participants (Bell & Wynn, 2023).

After receiving approval, the participants were contacted and asked about their willingness to take part in the study. In order to guarantee that participants could give informed permission regarding their participation in the study, pertinent study information was communicated to them via WeChat. Upon meeting them for the interview, the researcher also provided each participant with a printed copy of the consent form. Before the primary study was started, the participants were given the chance to ask questions and some time to consider whether they would like to engage in the research or withdraw themselves. The current study also addressed the following issues:

#### *Assuring privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality*

Before starting the interviews, the researcher gave the participants an information sheet outlining the purpose of the study, their right to anonymity and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time without having to offer a reason. The participants were reassured by the researcher via the information sheet regarding the validity of the study being conducted and the protection of their identities. The researcher made sure that neither the names of the participants nor the name of the university to which they were affiliated with at that moment would be revealed thereby protecting their right to privacy and guarantee complete confidentiality. Instead, codes based on the turn of the participants' interview and the gender of the

participants, such as ETF1, ETM1 and ETF2, were used to substitute their identification. When authorisation was given, these pseudonyms were used right away to take the place of personal identifications. These identifications were carried throughout the thesis, especially in the results and discussion section. These given pseudonyms provided no other identification, especially that could give away any potential information about the participants' names or initials.

The names of the participants and any other personally identifiable information are not and will not be included in this thesis or any subsequent publication(s), even though it is probable that some of the things the participants said during the interview are mentioned in the study and they might recognise their remarks if they choose to read the research. The possibility existed that participants could feel uneasy disclosing their opinions and perceptions because this study examines their interactions with college staff members and students. In response, the researcher made sure that each and every volunteer was not a part of a college-run surveillance programme, and only the intended use of the data was made of the collected information in this study.

#### *Data storage*

The researcher's password-protected laptop was used to securely record and store the interview transcripts. The researcher is the one and only individual who has access to the laptop. Additionally, a password-protected external drive, which contains a backup copy of the audio files, is also accessible only to the researcher. To further ensure confidentiality, a secure cabinet at the home of the researcher is used to store all other hardcopy of documents, including written notes and copies of the consent form, as well as data collection equipment.

### **3.5 Process of Interview**

A total of eleven interview sessions were conducted from June 2023 to January 2024. Since some participants were not in Nanchang at the time the interview sessions were initially scheduled, three of the interview sessions were conducted online, while the remaining eight were conducted in person. Each face-to-face interview session was scheduled independently, with each participant choosing a different time, date and location based on their schedule flexibility. The different dates and times allocated for

each participant was to ensure that there was no overlaps in the scheduled interview sessions. WeChat was used to conduct the online interviews, which were set up similarly to in-person interviews. The researcher provided the participants with a preliminary interview script via WeChat to facilitate a smooth interview process. The researcher used open-ended questions, and when necessary, the researcher employed follow-up inquiries, like "Could you tell me more" or "What do you mean by that?" to clarify any unclear responses with questions and make sure the interviews went well as well as obtain in-depth viewpoints from the participants. To preserve the flow and spontaneity of the interview process, the participants were provided with a limited set of guidelines or instructions.

Formal interviews were conducted with each participant, generally lasted from thirty minutes to an hour and a half. Most of the interviews were conducted in a private room in the college with total confidentiality to make sure the participants felt at ease. However, in response to specific requests from the participants, three interviews took place in public places. Two of the interviews took place in small coffee shops close to the campus, while one took place in a virtually empty restaurant outside the college.

These selected coffee shops were suitable for recording the interviews, even if they were not as silent as a college room. Additionally, in order to enhance our privacy given that these shops were not as private as a private room in the college, the participant and I chose to sit apart from other customers. As part of the data gathering process, the researcher conducted a second, less formal online interview with a few participants to gather information that addressed a broad variety of viewpoints and themes related to this study. Even during the interview, notes were taken and the responses were recorded by the researcher, utilizing an interview script that was pre-written on a piece of paper.

As the interviews were two-way communication, the conversation might sometimes stray off the primary topic. Therefore, utilizing a laptop and a smart phone to record audio during the interviews still proved to be the ideal option. On the day of the interview, the participants were asked for their permission once more, even though the researcher had clearly stated in the information sheet that they would be recording the session on audio. Since the interview topic did not make any of the participants feel intimidated or uncomfortable, none of them objected to the audio recording. The audio recordings were then transcribed for data analysis. At the end of each interview,

the researcher expressed appreciation to all participants for their contributions. Following each interview, the researcher presented each participant with a small gift as a token of appreciation for their time and dedication, even though it was made very clear in the information sheet that participation in the study was voluntary and no financial compensation would be offered for their time.

Immediately after the interview, the notes were reviewed to fill in any gaps or add comments on the scripted interview using a computer software. At this point, the responses from the interviewees can be condensed and used as supporting documentation for the thematic analysis data in qualitative research methods. Within a day after the conclusion of each interview, the researcher listened to all of the audio files to evaluate them. The completeness and audibility of every audio recording of the interviews were verified after listening to it. The researcher tried to make efforts to improve the following recordings of the interviews better after listening to the first one by removing fillers like "Ummm" and "Uh" from the interviews. Any difficult-to-hear parts of the interview were also marked by the researcher. Using specific interview transcription symbols such as "." to denote brief pauses, all interviews were transcribed verbatim, meaning they were written down word for word, including any nonverbal sounds and interruptions (such as coughing, ringing phones or laughter). All locations and personal names were instantly substituted with pseudonyms during the transcription process.

### **3.6 Process of Observation**

The classroom observations of five expatriate teachers were successfully completed between November 2023 and December 2023. Through prior discussions, the researcher obtained the class schedules of five teachers. Then, with their consent, the researcher observed their classes at random. Prior to the official commencement of the observation, the researcher reiterated to the participants that the goal of the observation was to comprehend their interactions with their students and how they fit into the Chinese classroom environment. The researcher would also make every effort to avoid interfering with the class in order to encourage the participants to minimise their awareness of the presence of the researcher.

Each teacher was observed for two 40-minute lessons, resulting in approximately 400 minutes of total observation time. In order to watch how the students and their teacher interact outside of the classroom, the researcher arrived at the classroom before each lesson commenced. Continuous observation was conducted from the start of the session until its conclusion, including the teacher's exit from the classroom and the teacher's preparation to get ready to go home. This continuous observation allowed the researcher to be able to gather as comprehensive information as possible about the interactions that expatriate teachers have with students, colleagues and their overall adjustment to life in China. Field notes were documented during the observation, encompassing aspects such as time, place, atmosphere, activities, interactions with students, interactions with colleagues, direct quotations and reflections from the researcher. Additionally, the researcher included in the field notes her reflective comments and any outside-the-classroom incidents that seemed to be too personal or too sensitive to write down at the time. At this stage, these field notes can be utilised as supporting documentation for the thematic analysis data in qualitative research methodologies.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The transcriptions of the data from the interviews and observations were analysed as part of the data analysis for this study. Data analysis and data collecting should be done in tandem with qualitative research. Nonetheless, preparation and organization of the data, as well as categorisation into topics using various techniques, are all integral parts of data analysis. Because it is such a difficult task, transcribing the material may require some time.

As a result, the researcher used the NVivo 14 software to transcribe the audio output. NVivo allows for easier preparation of data for analysis, display and reporting when it is possible to employ the arrangement and temporary storage of several types of data and document formats (Dhakal, 2022). Since qualitative researchers frequently analyse a range of data types during their analysis process, the researcher discovered that working with NVivo is more structured, safe and practical. Along with the coding time, the transcripts can be preserved in NVivo as well. In this study, the software assisted the researcher in computing the data by skilfully managing and appropriately

organising the data into folders and themes. Instead of organising the data manually, which could take more time and effort, researchers can accomplish the processes quickly and easily (Al-Kindi & Al-Khanjari, 2020).

### **3.7.1 Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis is used to identify the themes or concepts within the data, as noted by Kiger and Varpio (2020). Continuous comparative analysis is also used to identify and create codes. Due to its inductive nature, comparative analysis is frequently utilised in qualitative research. Braun and Clarke (2021a) noted that constant comparison is typically used to compare indicators with other indicators and concepts, even though it is typically utilised with grounded theory. Thematic analysis is one of the most widely used techniques for qualitative analysis, and it has previously been used to pinpoint themes in therapy sessions (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). Thematic analysis's main purpose is to spot and explain patterns and themes in the qualitative data (Sundler et al., 2019).

The basis of themes is determined by the ability to depict results connected to the study topic, rather than relying on any pre-set calculable measurements, such as the frequency of recurrence within the data, (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). Thematic analysis may be carried out using either inductive or theoretical methodologies (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). The results of their investigation showed that the inductive thematic analysis relies only on the analysis of the data. This analysis does not take any specific hypothetical stance into account; on the other hand, the theoretical theme analysis examines data derived from a previous theoretical outline and tries to explain how the data are related to an existing hypothesis.

Understanding the themes that organise a set of frequently occurring facts helps the researcher to address the research question (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). It provides a shared reference point and allows for extensive generalisations that combine and solidify ideas about the subject of the research (de Farias et al., 2021). In this context, category refers to the explanatory focus of the text, and is an obvious illustration of the participant's narration. This type of analysis is used to facilitate the categorisation and differentiation of data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). A better transition in data management is also ensured by the appropriate organisation of the condition. The

researcher thinks that a clearer explanation of the results can be provided if the data are collected and managed properly.

According to (Braun & Clarke, 2012), the thematic analysis process consists of six steps: becoming familiar with the data, creating preliminary codes, looking for themes, evaluating themes, defining and labelling themes and creating the report. NVivo 14 software was used to transcribe the data from the observations and interviews. Once all of the data had been transcribed, the researcher went over the transcriptions multiple times and made necessary modifications to address the problematic contents. As a result, through this process, the researcher was enabled to become well-acquainted with the data.

### ***3.7.1.1 Coding the Data***

The procedure of coding was crucial to the analysis of the data in this study. Data collection is pertinent to each code by methodically classifying intriguing aspects of the data throughout the whole data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The researcher used the import tool to import the document containing interview transcriptions into NVivo to facilitate the coding and categorisation. The first stage was to conduct an intra-textual analysis, which entailed reviewing each transcript in its entirety and creating a timeline for each participant's account regarding their purpose for working overseas, as well as their acculturation experiences, and use of social media. The researcher selected related contents from the interview transcripts and nodded it. In NVivo, codes are referred to using the term "nodes" (Dhakal, 2022). The selection of a specific passage of text from a source document-such as an interview transcript, an image or any type of source document-and attaching a node to it using NVivo makes the process of thematic coding simple. The creation of the node is possible either in situ or in advance. Users of NVivo are able to apply multiple codes to a text or picture segment as well as add as many nodes as they see necessary (Dhakal, 2022). The researcher tried to preserve as much of the surrounding data as she could after identifying the pertinent information, as this helped to guarantee the validity of the coding.

In order to identify themes that recurred throughout the data, the next step involved performing an intertextual analysis. The researcher compiled codes into

possible themes, collecting all pertinent information for each theme. Subsequently, the data were methodically put together by the researcher into broad category headings using pattern coding. For example, in response to questions about their motivations for coming to China, a number of teachers expressed sentiments such as, "I want to find a job at a university. And finding a job in university in Korea is more difficult than in China", "But China offers a better opportunity than other countries" and so on. As a result, the researcher categorised this kind of information under the theme of job opportunity; additional categories relating to the heading of each research objective are analysed in detail in the next chapter.

To create a thematic 'map' of the analysis, the researcher examined how the themes were related to both the coded extracts and the full data set. The researcher continued to analyse the data in order to improve the details of each theme and the overarching narrative that the study conveys as a whole, coming up with names and definitions that were distinct for each theme. Although the whole coding process could be rather boring and time-consuming, it was important for the completion of the data analysis and informing the findings.

### **3.8 Strategies to Achieve Validity and Reliability**

According to Patton (1990), validity and reliability are two critical elements that any qualitative researcher should give consideration to while planning a study, analysing the findings and determining the quality of the study. Reliability refers to the degree to which results are consistent over time and a precise representation of the entire population under study. If the findings of a study can be replicated using a similar approach, the research instrument is considered to be reliable (Joppe, 2006). Even though the term "reliability" is often associated with testing or assessing quantitative research, the concept is applicable across all types of research (Golafshani, 2003). An effective qualitative study can shed light on a complex situation that might otherwise remain mysterious or perplexing. This pertains to the idea of good quality research since dependability is a concept to evaluate quality in the quantitative study with the purpose of explaining, while the concept of quality in the qualitative study has the purpose of developing understanding (Stenbacka, 2001).

Even though some qualitative researchers contending that the term validity does not apply to qualitative research, they have also come to realise the necessity of some sort of qualifying check for or assessment of their work. As a result, many researchers have formed their own ideas about what constitutes "validity" and frequently created or used alternative words they believe to be more appropriate, such as quality, rigor and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003). Stenbacka (2001) addressed the question of validity in qualitative research alongside the issue of reliability. She described the idea of reliability as one of the quality concepts in qualitative research that "must be solved in order to claim a study as part of competent research".

A common method for testing or enhancing the validity and reliability of research or the assessment of findings is triangulation. Triangulation is a strategy for analysing the same study findings using multiple data collection techniques. This method is employed to improve validity, provide a clearer understanding of a study problem and examine several theories about how to approach a subject (Nightingale, 2020). Bush (2012) suggested several qualitative reliability processes and methods for checking and enhancing validity, including triangulation, member checking and combining different types of data. Four categories of triangulation are described by Denzin (1978), namely 1) triangulation of data (covering time, geography and person); 2) triangulation of investigators; 3) triangulation of theories; and 4) methodological triangulation. Given that this study employed two techniques of data collection-semi-structured in-depth interview and observation-the methodological triangulation approach were used to assure the validity and reliability of the research. The researcher can explain every data collection method employed, compare the study outcomes obtained using each method and explain how the data were combined to produce the study results. The ability to triangulate the data and conduct member checks will enhance the effectiveness of this successive mode of data collection (Carter, 2014).

The interviews with the participants were recorded for this study, and the transcription were done using the chosen programme later. Afterwards, the transcripts were shared with and examined by the participants for their justification of the recorded data after the transcriptions were managed verbatim. All participants were informed about the purpose of this study and the researcher's empirical data is sufficiently believable.

### **3.9 Summary**

This chapter concludes with a discussion on how the data were gathered and what analysis methods were used in the study. Prioritising the most meticulous interviewing techniques and observation techniques, such as choosing the best interviewing mechanisms, determining the appropriate sample size and identifying the relevant population, is necessary to ensure that all of the information gathered aligns with the research goals. To confirm the validity and reliability of the research, the study design employs the triangulation method.

The selection of applicable methodology was employed in order to achieve the objectives of this study. The primary goal the study is to ascertain the motivations of expatriate teachers employed in China. The interviews started with a few inquiries on their reasons for working overseas in order to elicit detailed information, and the responses were then subjected to a thematic analysis. The second goal is to comprehend the cross-cultural adaption process that expatriate teachers go through. The accomplishment of this goal depends on examining the difficulties faced by expatriate teachers and the coping mechanisms they employed. This question constituted the basis of the majority of the interviews. After paying close attention to the participants' responses, the interviewer carefully took notes and coded the results. Additionally, offline observations were also carried out in order to gather further information and validate the interview findings. The final goal is to determine how social media contributes to the process of cross-cultural adaption for expatriate teachers working abroad. As part of an ongoing data gathering effort, inquiries related to this context were made, along with online observations.

In the following chapter, chapter four, the collected data will be analysed through thematic analysis according to the three research objectives.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews and discusses the main findings from qualitative studies and answers the research questions one by one, determining the motivations of expatriate teachers coming to China, their cross-cultural adaptation experiences and the usage of SNS usage in cross-cultural adaptation process. For many years, the study of cross-cultural adaptation has been conducted using a range of theories and frameworks, each with diverse goals and objectives. This study, which revolves around how expatriate teachers in China adjust to a new way of life, looks at three key perspectives: the motivations for teaching in China, the process of acclimating to a new culture and the influence of SNS on this process. Semi-structured in-depth interviews and observations were the two primary methods used in the two phases of the data analysis process. The participants in this study, who were working as expatriate teachers, were subjected to semi-structured in-depth interviews that included open-ended questions utilising a pre-written interview script. The objective was to create a framework for descriptive analysis to support expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaption process in China. The selected participants were observed both offline and online to verify the veracity of the data on the participants' claims regarding their cross-cultural adaptation process. The themes were grouped under three headings, reflecting the goals of this study, which are: to investigate why expatriate teachers choose to teach in China, to comprehend how these teachers adjust to Chinese society and to examine the function that social media plays in these teachers' process of cross-cultural adaptation. The complete data analysis procedure is depicted in Figure 4.1 below.

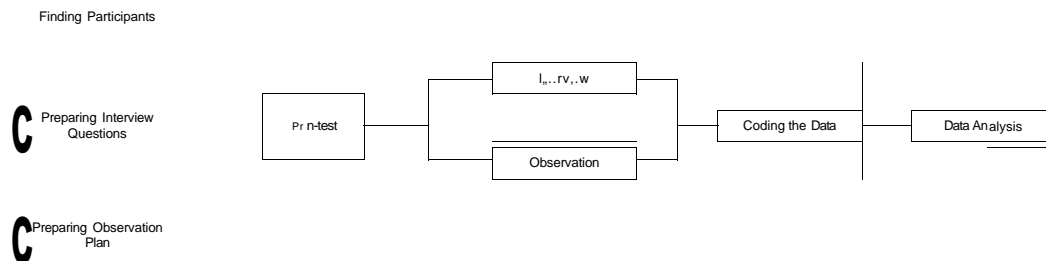


Figure 4.1 Data Analysis Procedure

## 4.2 Motivations of Teaching in China

This part presents and discusses the findings relating to Research Question One: 'What are the motivations of expatriate teachers working in China?' In line with the chosen method of data analysis, which is the thematic analysis, five distinct themes emerged: benefits of working abroad, experiencing a different lifestyle, interest in China, job opportunities and recommendations from other people. Figure 4.2 illustrates these themes.

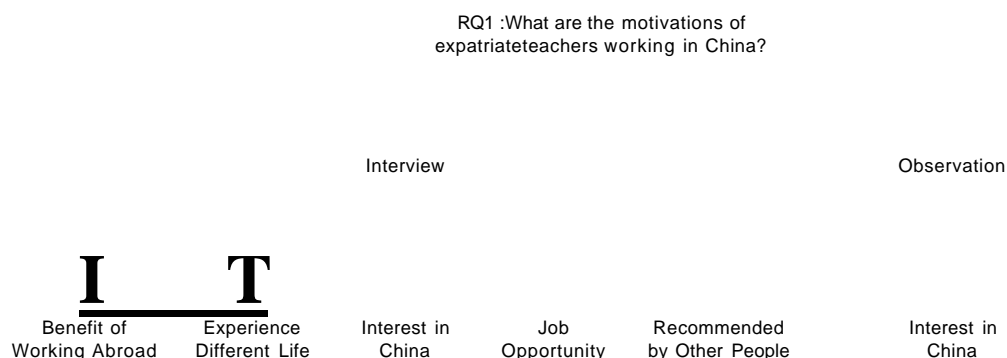


Figure 4.2 Motivations of Teaching in China

### 4.2.1 Benefits of Working Abroad

Working in China brings expatriate teachers several benefits such as the respect gained from Chinese students, better living conditions, lower living costs, and so on. Seven of the participants stated that expatriates experienced several advantages of working abroad. When comparing their experiences overseas to working in their

home countries, two participants (ETF1 from the Philippines and ETM7 from Japan) expressed that the benefits of teaching abroad included students' respect for teachers, their willingness to learn and a serious attitude towards learning.

*"And then the Chinese students, they really respect their teachers. And that is one of the reasons why I like teaching Chinese, even though I have some difficulties. Compared to students in the Philippines, Chinese students are more interested in learning. " (ETF1, the Philippines)*

*"We are able to communicate effectively because the students put in a lot of work and study, and some of them have a strong interest in contemporary Japanese culture. I enjoy teaching Chinese students since they respect me a lot as well. I have made the decision to work in China since I feel like I have now fully assimilated to Chinese culture, and the language barrier has vanished. " (ETM7, Japan)*

While ETM7 (Japan) and ETF4 (South Korea) provided completely different perspectives in their responses, ETM1 (Cameroon) and ETM4 (the United States) both emphasized a comparable point that working abroad offered better living conditions and salaries. These findings are in accord with studies by Richardson and McKenna (2006) and Selmer and Luring (2010), which indicate that one of the primary driving forces for expatriation decision is financial incentives. While contrastively, the former, ETM7 (Japan) and ETF4 (South Korea), shared that their pay in China was about 3000 RMB, significantly lower than what they could earn in their home countries. Their perspectives may be explained by the past situation that the country was still facing challenges related to progress and quality of life when the two participants had just moved to China ten years ago. However, ETF4 acknowledged that she could still benefit from working overseas because this opportunity allowed her to gain valuable experiences during her time spent working in China.

*"I think working abroad offers a lot of benefits, both financially and intellectually. You have better living conditions when you work abroad because the government wants to make*

*sure foreign workers have better pay and better living situations. I enjoy the life here. I enjoy living in China. People are friendly, food is good. The environment is very conducive for living. " (ETM1, Cameroon)*

*"I started out making 3500 RMB a month here. If I work in Korea, I may get paid three or four times as much. In addition, the level of living is low; China's development was not especially robust ten years ago. My senior pupils went to China for a year during that time, working for very little money and living awful lives. At the time, money was not something I gave much thought to or attention to. I reasoned that trying my hand at teaching in China would be a valuable experience for the future. I believed that even though things were not very comfortable for me at the time, travelling to China gave me the chance to learn a foreign language. Additionally, I enjoy teaching Chinese students." (ETF4, South Korea)*

China was perceived by two American participants (ETM2 and ETM5) as a much safer society compared to the United States. They expressed that they could travel anywhere in China without risk and shared that they did not feel safe to go out at night in the United States for fear of getting robbed. Furthermore, according to ETM2, health care costs were relatively low when compared to those in America.

*"When it comes to the society itself, I feel incredibly safe. I don't have to worry about going out at night and being robbed or anything like that. There is a sense of security that I feel, is lacking in the US. There's a real feeling of care from the government as well. Wherever in the US, health care is extraordinarily expensive. As a teacher, and even as a student here, I have very good health care. I would not have to pay a large amount to get anything done. Thankfully, I had no real issues. I've had no particular reason to go to the hospital or anything like that. But I know the option is there. It would not*

*cost me very much. Unlike in the US, if I were to even have something as simple as a toothache, it would cost me probably around 700 to 1,200. " (ETM2, United States)*

In addition to the aforementioned perspectives, ETM4 (United States) believed that working in China offered a degree of secrecy that was unmatched elsewhere. He felt that individuals had complete autonomy in their actions, and they could freely voice their opinions. He also felt that people had a great deal of freedom to be themselves and to do anything they wanted while they lived and worked in China. The Chinese would not worry if they did something that would be viewed as weird in their home countries as the Chinese community is generally unconcerned about such behaviours. There are similarities and differences between the current study and Al Ariss and Ozbilgin (2010) and Doherty et al. (2013)'s findings. They found that though self-initiated expatriates moving overseas are typically motivated by factors such as security and access to quality healthcare, they also found that expatriates were interested in visiting rich nations out of these reasons. However, in this research, a different perspective is presented. Notably, both ETM2 and ETM4 are from the United States, which is a wealthier and more developed nation than China, and they were still motivated to work in China because they perceive it as a safer place to live access to quality healthcare.

*"I think China, for a lot of experts, is sort of the island of misfit toys. People who, for whatever reason, work in China are doing well in their home country as well. They come here to teach or do whatever they do. Foreigners have an interesting pocket here that we don't look like anybody else. Chinese mostly ignore them. So, we have a level of anonymity that you might not get in other places. We can just go about; we can be who we are. In the USA, a lot of people always call me weird. Some people didn't get along with me well because I have my own ideas about things and my own way of doing things. But here, I can just be who I am. And the other experts, as long as you're not a jerk, nobody bothers you. ... The life here is more comfortable than back in America. Especially when I was in Virginia, I was staying with my sister, and the*

*place we were living was not very nice. When I came here, they showed me to my apartment. My standard of living went up like three steps instantly as it was. My life here is definitely better, and I get paid a lot of money. Even teaching is making more in China than I would in the US. " (ETM4, United States)*

In summary, expatriates enjoy both psychological and financial benefits from working abroad. Although there are different opinions on pay and living standards in China, the researcher considers that this this contradictory viewpoint can be attributed to two factors. The first consideration is the varying circumstances faced by expatriate teachers in their home nations, which influences their overall experience, and the second is the appropriate timing for visiting China. More than ten years ago, China was only starting to grow when many teachers relocated there and believed that the standard of living and their pay were inadequate. The conditions in China are generally less favourable for foreign teachers from industrialised nations compared to those in their home countries, where conditions are often better.

#### **4.2.2 Different Life Experience**

Working in a different country gave expatriate teachers a chance to experience different life. Even though working overseas can be challenging, five teachers expressed their desire to venture out, live a different life and step outside their comfort zones. ETF1 (The Philippines), ETM1 (Cameroon) and ETF2 (The Philippines) aspired to overcome obstacles, travel to new places and immerse themselves in diverse cultural experiences. This is consistent with the findings of Inkson et al. (1997) and Richardson and Mallon (2005), which suggest that self-initiate expatriates were primarily driven by a desire for exploration and adventure. Rather than staying in her own country, the Philippines, ETF1 desired to travel and chose China because, in her opinion, it has a distinct culture that is uninfluenced by that of other nations, which is similar to the finding of Cao (2017) that expatriate teachers came to China because they were interested in China and wanted to travel and explore China at the same time. She also viewed teaching Chinese people to speak English as a challenge she was eager to take on. Since teaching abroad can provide opportunities for direct contact with locals, ETF2 considered it as the best approach to learning about the local culture.

ETMI expressed his eagerness for discovering about the rich and distinct Chinese culture, and he is. Furthermore, he believed that being fully immersed in a foreign culture could help with his language acquisition because he wanted to learn Chinese to broaden his horizons.

*"When I was in the Philippines, I really wanted to explore not just my hometown, I wanted to go to other countries. And then I knew about China. China has the preserved cultural things. It's not the same with any other countries which are more or less influenced by other countries. That's why I wanted to go to China. ... First and foremost, it's a different feeling to teach other nationalities. Sometimes in my life, I want to be challenged, it's a big challenge to teach Chinese people English. " (ETF1, the Philippines)*

*"I chose to work abroad because I would love to experience a different culture, meet new people. And I also love teaching. It's because if you teach, you get to immerse in the community, you interact with students, you interact with parents. I would say it's the best way to learn the culture. You can learn a lot from your students. ... The mainly purpose is to be able to experience a different culture and live in the country. " (ETF2, the Philippines)*

*"And another part is to experience a new culture, which is something amazing and wonderful. The benefit of experiencing Chinese culture was something I was looking forward to. I read about different countries and China seems to be unique in a lot of ways. Culture was so deep and exciting, and I wanted to be a part of it. And. Language learning is something that can also help open your mind in very different ways. I knew this would give me an opportunity to learn another language. In Cameroon, we learned so many languages. We have local language, we have official languages, English, and French. I*

*learned a little bit of Spanish and German, and then I was looking forward to Chinese. " (ETM1, Cameroon)*

Despite having studied a little Chinese in her native Spain, ETF3 believed that mastering the history of the language might be accomplished by visiting Chinese civilisations. She boldly decided to venture outside of her comfort zone by going to China to check if her Chinese language skills were still applicable after working for some time in Spain. ETM4 selected Nanchang, a second-tier Chinese city, over other tier-one cities, because he felt had that the latter have a greater concentration of contemporary and Western amenities similar to those in his home country. However, he did not want to experience this; instead, he wanted to seek a more authentic experience that was not associated with his home country.

*"I've always had this feeling of exploring and getting to know all kinds of people, different cultures, traditions of other countries, and foreign languages, I feel that the world is amazing, huge, and has so many differences. After working in Spain for some years, I decided to go to China. I need to see if my Chinese is useful or not. ... Writing Chinese characters, for me, was beautiful and challenging. It was wonderful to see characters and understand each character has a meaning and that insights into characters. They have different parts, and you can see the history behind them. I got interested in this aspect. I felt like this is a good challenge because only by living in the country one can learn this, such a faraway language from Spain. " (ETF3, Spain)*

*"I think living in tier-one cities makes you end up in a sort of an expat bubble. You are in this Western bubble and probably go to a lot of Western restaurants, and you hang up with your Western friends. You can forget that you're in China because it is like the most modern place with the most Western stuff, which is fine if that's what you want. But I like going out to experience different things. " (ETM4, United States)*

These teachers learned that China has a distinctively well-preserved culture, which they wanted to experience even though it can be difficult to handle. The only way to grasp it, whether through experiencing the local way of life or studying the language, was by being there. Therefore, these teachers chose to work in China. This finding is accord with several previous studies (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010; Muir et al., 2014; Richardson & Mallon, 2005; Richardson & McKenna, 2006), which

indicated that one of the primary motivations for self-initiated expatriates was a desire for adventurous and exciting experiences.

### **4.2.3 Interest in China**

The interest in China is one of the reason that motivates expatriates working in here. A primary motivation for five participants to come and work in China is their curiosity about the country, which is similar to the findings of Cao (2017) that some expatriate teachers came to China out of their passion for China. ETM2 (United States) was motivated by his interest in China from his college days when he spent six months as an exchange student studying in China. Since he was interested in the country, he subsequently made the decision to teach in China in order to acquire both language proficiency and cultural expertise, with his ultimate intention to become a professor of ancient Chinese history.

ETF3 (Spain) expressed the same sentiment. When ETF3 was in Spain, her home country, she developed a strong interest in China. During her time in college, she studied Chinese, and the more she learnt and understood the language, the more she desired to travel to China and conduct independent research. This is consistent with the findings of Napier and Taylor (2002), which suggest that self-initiated expatriates who had previously studied in a particular country often went back to strengthen their language abilities or learn more about the local way of life. Additionally, Hainan, the first Chinese city she visited, shares similar characteristics with her hometown in terms of the beach, climate and atmosphere. She made the decision to work in China in order to experience Chinese culture and lifestyle firsthand. ETM7 (Japan) noted that the similarities between China and his homeland influenced his decision to visit China. He stated in the interview that China and Japan have comparable cultures, which is one of the reasons he decided to stay in China.

*"I'd always been interested in China. When I was in Melissa (in the United States), I had the chance to study, and it actually turned out that I went to Jiangxi School of Finance and Economics for 6 months as an exchange student because I wanted to learn more about China. I had decided very early in my college career what I wanted to do and how I want to do it.*

*I wanted to become a professor of ancient Chinese history. But I didn't know the language, and my knowledge of the culture was decent, but I was only informed through books and media compared to actually seeing what it was like for myself. So, I wanted to get a chance to see if this is what I really wanted to do. And while here in China, as a student, I did recognise this is what I wish to devote my life to. Shortly after graduating, I wanted to come to China to teach for several years. " (ETM2, 35, United States)*

*"When I was in Spain and wanted to come to China, I was very interested in Hainan because of the weather, the beach, the bar and the vibes. There are some similarities between Hainan and Barcelona. So, I can experience some Chinese culture and life but at the same time, I enjoy a similar atmosphere back home. I had a very clear idea of the country. I just wanted to go. I wanted to keep learning that language. And of course, after discovering the language, I wanted to learn more about the culture. So, the best way is just to go to the country itself. " (ETF3, 31, Spain)*

The remaining two participants (ETF1 from the Philippines and ETM5 from the United States) shared the same motivation for their interest in China: they had heard a lot about China and wanted to independently verify whether what they heard was real. Back in the Philippines, ETF1 was surrounded by a large number of friendly Chinese individuals, which aroused her curiosity about their culture and fuelled her desire to learn more about how Chinese people lived. Similarly, ETM5 wanted to independently verify the many positive and negative accounts he had heard about China. Furthermore, ETM5 has always had a passion for second language acquisition and found learning Chinese to be enjoyable.

*"There are many Chinese in the Philippines, and one thing I know about Chinese people is that they have good hearts. It's like they really want to help, and then I wanted to see what's in*

*them. I wanted to experience and see how Chinese people were. " (ETF1, 35, the Philippines)*

*"There were some reasons why I came to China. Number one, I hear a lot of things about China, good and bad, and I want to see by myself. Good things and bad things, there are all kinds of things; the country is growing, and I want to see it all for myself. And I'm interested in learning Chinese. I have always been interested in learning languages. Chinese is the language. " (ETM5, 42, United States)*

Moreover, the researcher noted that an interest in Chinese culture is also one of the reasons that drew ETF4 to China, even though she did not mention during the interview. During ETF4's participant observation, the researcher observed the following:

*She brewed a pot of tea with Chinese tea leaves before class and poured one cup for the researcher as well. She had Chinese tea in every class. When the researcher asked her how much she knew about Chinese tea, the teacher said that she had always appreciated Chinese tea culture. (Observation Notes for ETF4)*

These six participants opted to work in China out of curiosity, whether it was because they were curious about China, enjoyed Chinese language and culture, or had heard or seen too much about China. This is similar with the finding of Huang (2022)'s study that a few individuals came to China because of their preference for Chinese culture.

#### **4.2.4 Job Opportunity**

China offer better job opportunities to expatriates is another motive. Another reason that five expatriate teachers chose China as their place of employment was the availability of abundant good job opportunities there. This finding is similar with previous studies (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Huang, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021),

which indicated that China offers better working conditions compared to the unstable job markets in the US and Europe. According to two American participants (ETM4, ETM5), they had been laid off and were no longer satisfied with their jobs in the country. Thus, they looked for employment abroad, and China was the country that gave them the most job chances relative to other countries. The other American participant, ETM2, added that he chose to work in Nanchang instead of other tier-one cities to work in because it offered greater job prospects, had less competition, and provided better working conditions. Both ETF3 (Spain) and ETM1 (Cameroon) echoed this point. ETF3 highlighted her concerns about Spain's economy, stating that she was insecure because it was still recovering from the economic disaster that occurred a decade ago, and she expressed no trust in the country's recent economic growth. She made the decision to travel in order to pursue opportunities abroad. These findings align with those found in Howe-Walsh and Schyns (2010) and Arifa et al. (2021)'s study, which suggested that expatriate teachers would pursue careers in host countries that are more favourable than those in their home countries, particularly when working conditions and reality of life in their home countries are unsatisfactory.

*"But China offered better opportunities than other Asian countries." (ETM1, Cameroon)*

*"Working in America was not enjoyable for me. I therefore attempted to work overseas. I first attempted to look for work in Germany, but I was unsuccessful. Then, I sought employment at a university in South Korea, where the labour market is even more competitive than in China. The labour market in Korea is nearly full, yet there are far too many foreigners living there. Subsequently, I discovered that China offers me greater employment prospects." (ETM5, United States)*

*"I was unemployed for two and a half years. Then I started nursing and did that for about 15 years. That's a long time and at one moment I thought I had to get out of nursing because it was just too much for me. I'm underqualified for a lot of things in the US. Then I talked to my sister about it, and*

*she said I have a friend who is teaching in China, so she put me in touch with her friend. " (ETM4, United States)*

*"One reason was I felt the future, especially the working future, the working tense back in my country was not great. We had an economic crisis like 10 years ago, and Spain was still recovering from that crisis. So the economy was not very stable, so unsteady. I was feeling that it eventually would cause people to lose so many opportunities. So, I decided to try outside the country and go to another country. At the same time, I don't want to just keep in a queue in Spain and keep inside the box all the time. I wanted to open the door and just go outside. " (ETF2, Spain)*

These findings aligned with Arifa et al. (2021)'s study indicating that self-initiated expatriate teachers move abroad in search of better job opportunities, career enhancement and promotional prospects. According to the China International Immigration Report 2018 (Wang & Miao, 2018a), having a lot of job opportunities is one of the key advantages of working in China. As demonstrated by the aforementioned claim, China does provide foreign workers with more job chances than other countries. These results also corroborated the findings of studies conducted in China by Muir et al. (2014), Fairer (2014), Yu (2019), and Chen and Zhu (2020)'s study which indicated that job opportunities and career, rather than adventure and the desire to experience other culture, were the fundamental factors in influencing the self-initiated expatriates to China. Additionally, with greater job prospects, foreigners are more inclined to remain in China since they have higher faith in the development of the country.

#### **4.2.5 Recommendations from Other People**

Several expatriate teachers coming to China due to others' recommendations. Recommendations from friends and acquaintances were cited by six participants as a reason they travelled to China for employment. Among them, two teachers (ETM7 from Japan and ETF4 from South Korea) were sent to China after graduating from

college under the guidance of their university professors. ETM7's professor was familiar with China from his previous work experience in China, and he advised ETM7 to consider working in China. Similarly, a university in China collaborated with the university where ETF4 graduated, and ETF4's professor was also familiar with China. Therefore, she was recommended by her professor to work in China as well.

*"Upon completing my Japanese Language Education program, my teacher recommended that we begin working overseas as soon as possible. I made the decision to look at working overseas as soon as it is feasible. I made the decision to look at working abroad since I believed that if you spend a significant amount of time in Japan, there shouldn't be any opportunities to teach abroad. Working in China will be more convenient for me because my teacher has experience teaching in Xi 'an, China, and I have a solid understanding of living there as well as some fundamental knowledge of the country. "*  
(ETM7, 47, Japan)

The other four teachers received recommendations from their friends or friends of their friends. For instance, ETM3 initially wished to live in Japan but had no prior interest in visiting China or prior knowledge of the country. On the other hand, his American girlfriend was very interested in China and not interested in moving to Japan. As a result, he made the decision to go live with his girlfriend in China. ETF4's employer in China was introduced to her through her sister's acquaintance who was teaching in China. -ETF2, whose co-worker in Thailand was Chinese, developed an interest in China and the desire to travel there. Meanwhile, ETM1, who specialises in linguistics, became interested in teaching English in China after discussing the challenges faced by some friends who were already employed there.

*"I had an American girlfriend, and we met in Korea. Then, when I moved to Japan, she didn't want to move there. She didn't want to live in Tokyo. So, we agreed that we both come to China, and she picked Nanchang because of Meiling National Park. She likes hiking. That's why she picks*

*Nanchang. Then, I ended my working life in Japan and came here. But she decided that she wanted to stay in Montana, and she never came. So that's why I came to China. " (ETM3, 45, United Kingdom)*

*"When I worked in Thailand, I had a colleague from China. She was a Chinese teacher in a school in Thailand. We chatted a lot, and I got curious; and I thought China would be a great place to be. It's a big country. " (ETF2, 38, The Philippines)*

*"I had some friends who had some friends in China, and they always talked about teaching English in China, and my major is English and Linguistics. So, I had a lot of interest in teaching English in China. Also, I wanted to explore. I learned a little bit about Chinese culture online, mostly like just learning about how Chinese people are friendly and kind to foreigners. " (ETM1, 42, Cameroon)*

These six teachers chose to work in China primarily due to the influence and recommendations of those around them, including teachers and friends who had prior experience working in the country. This finding is consistent with the findings of past studies (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Chen & Zhu, 2018, 2020; Huang, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021), which highlighted that personal ties and social networks are reasons why expatriate teachers relocated to China.

#### **4.2.6 Summary**

Aside from their natural curiosity about China and personal interest in the language and culture of the country, expatriate teachers opted to work in China for multiple reasons. A significant factor influencing their decision is recommendations from friends who have worked or are currently working there. Other reasons why foreigners come to work in China are the opportunities for new experiences as well as the financial and psychological advantages of working overseas. While choosing a place to work abroad can be difficult, China is increasingly becoming expatriates' desirable destination due to its expanding job market.

### 4.3 Cross-Cultural Adaptation Experience in China

This part presents and discusses the findings relating to Research Question Two: 'How do expatriate teachers adapt to Chinese social culture and society?' Understanding the challenges faced by expatriate teachers during their adaptation process and how they overcome these obstacles is essential to understanding their adjustment to Chinese society. Consequently, this section is divided into two parts according to two themes: the challenges expatriate encountered by expatriate teachers in China and their adaptation strategy. The following Figure 4.3 summarises these two themes regarding the cross-cultural adaptation experiences of expatriate teachers.

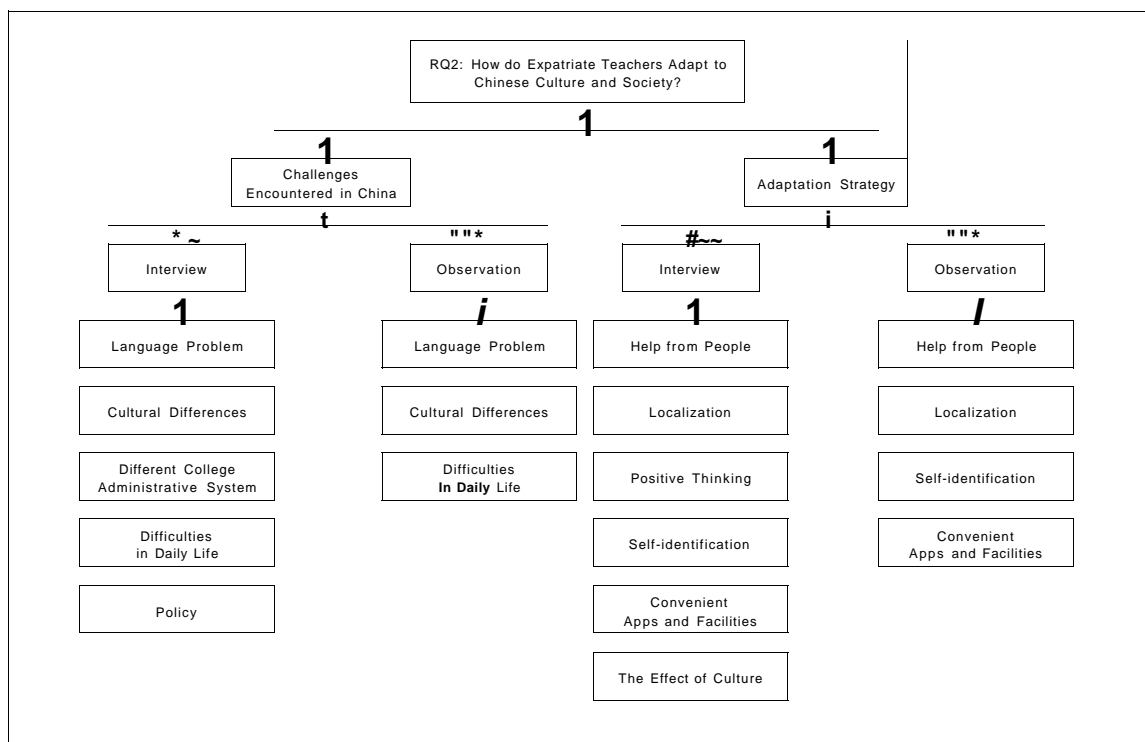


Figure 4.3 Cross-Cultural Adaptation Experience in China

#### 4.3.1 Challenges Encountered in China

Based on the information provided by the participants, five challenges encountered by expatriate teachers working in China were identified: language problem, cultural differences, different college administrative system, difficulties in daily life, and policy issues (see Table 4.1). Each of these challenges will be elaborated upon below.

Table 4.1

Themes on Challenges Encountered in China

No.	Themes
1.	Language Problem
2.	Cultural Differences
3.	Different College Administrative System
4.	Difficulties in Daily Life
5.	Policy Issues

**4.3.1.1 Language Problem**

Language barrier is the most significant challenge. All expatriate teachers mentioned it when asked about the largest challenge they have encountered since moving to China. This finding is accord with previous studies (Froese et al., 2012; Jenkins, 2022; Masgoret, 2006; Meng, 2017; Peltokorpi, 2008; Savva, 2017; Yi et al., 2020), which indicate that language is the biggest challenge for expatriate teachers. This barrier poses significant challenges in both their personal and professional lives. Inability to communicate effectively in Chinese discourages expatriate teachers from interacting with friends, neighbours, and even strangers, which hinders their capacity to learn the language and comprehend Chinese culture better. In contrast to Froese et al. (2012), who suggested that host national language ability demonstrated to be a negative factor for expatriate teachers' work due to their work responsibility in teaching foreign languages, this study discovered that the inability to speak Chinese results in several problems in their careers. This may due to the low proficiency level in foreign languages among the students whom these expatriate teachers were educating in this research. Even though the primary task of these expatriate teachers was teaching foreign languages, a lack of Chinese language proficiency thoroughly impedes the students' comprehension during classes. As a result, expatriate teachers have to occasionally use alternative approaches to ensure that the classes run normally, given that students often struggle to interact with each other in the foreign language being taught by the teacher and cannot communicate effectively in Chinese.

*"The biggest challenge was language. Imagine knowing only 'Ni Hao' (hello in Chinese) in China. How hard it is. Without the language, you cannot handle anything by yourself. You always need to call someone for help. You are like a little baby needing help all the time. But Chinese is a challenging language. And it is kind of a motivation for me to learn the language." (ETM1, Cameroon)*

*"At that time, it was hard to socialise. That was one of the problems. I think the language barrier is really hard to break when you're with friends. It's kind of like language makes it hard for you to have local friends here or connect with local people here. " (ETF3, Spain)*

*"I was unable to interact with my students since I could not speak Chinese. In addition, students' learning speeds are slow, and their Korean is quite inadequate. Therefore, learning Chinese is necessary if I want to accomplish well in class. " (ETF4, South Korea)*

*"Older people gathered and chatted with each other. They would say hi to me when I went down from my apartment, and then we would talk about basic stuff. But when they started to dive into a deeper conversation, I couldn't continue the interaction because my Chinese was limited. I wish I could speak Chinese fluently and then talk to them about any random topic. So, I did try to learn the language, but it takes time. " (ETF2, The Philippines).*

During one of the participant observations, ETF1 was seen having trouble interacting with students due to her lack of proficiency in Chinese. The researcher observed:

*At the beginning of the class, she attempted to strike up some small talk to start the lesson. She then inquired about the students' weekend activities. A student replied in Mandarin*

*that he had enjoyed playing the room escape game on Saturday. She asked the student to clarify what he had just stated, appearing perplexed. The student requested other pupils to help because he was unsure how to explain it in English. Even with the aid of the translator software, the entire class attempted to explain, but due to their low command of English, none of them were able to do so for the teacher. Throughout the whole process, she demonstrated a willingness to try and comprehend what the students were attempting to express. But in the end, they were unable to communicate with one another. Helplessly, she stopped talking about the topic. (Observation Notes for ETF1)*

While small talk may have little impact on the class process, similar incidents still occurred when ETF1 tried to introduce to students various traditional cakes from different nations as part of the course content. The researcher observed:

*She attempted to use traditional cakes as a means of introducing the cultures of various nations by preparing some images of them. When she displayed the image of the cakes and the culture, the class fell silent. Students had blank looks. It appeared that her remarks were not understood by the students. She must have noticed the lack of understanding among the students. She then asked the class what a traditional Chinese cake was. Students responded in Mandarin with mooncake. She asked the kids to describe the object's appearance and material composition, but they appeared perplexed and unable to comprehend. Students attempted to explain it in English, but their proficiency was insufficient for them to communicate well with her. She then had no option but to skip this part. (Observation Notes for ETF1)*

This type of incidents occurred not only during ETF1's observation but also other expatriates' class observation. Following the observation, the researcher conducted a brief interview with ETF1 regarding the communication issues resulting

from the language barrier with the students. She acknowledged that such situations occurred occasionally and expressed frustration at being powerless to address them unless she had the fluency in Chinese. At that moment, her only options are to use body language and translation software; occasionally, students who are well-proficient in English could also be of her assistance.

Besides the situation happened in the class, the challenging incidents also happened off-campus. ETM4 (United States) shared his experience during a meal with the researcher at an Italian restaurant that ETM4 chose during one of the participant's off-campus observations. The researcher questioned him if his lack of experience with local cuisine influenced his decision to dine at that specific Western restaurant. He mentioned that while he has started to enjoy Chinese food at that moment, the reason he chose that Western restaurant was because he had difficulty understanding the Chinese restaurants' menu and placing his orders. During the meal, the researcher saw that ETM4 struggled to interact with the waiter. This finding matches those observed in Froese et al. (2012)'s study findings that expatriate teachers frequently had trouble completing everyday tasks since they were not fluent in the language. They had to approach friends, family or teaching assistants for help. The researcher observed:

*When the waiter noticed that our cups were almost empty, he approached and inquired in Mandarin as to whether we wanted more water. While the waiter was speaking to us, ETM4 gave him a somewhat vacant look. When the waiter was done, ETM4 turned to face me and waited for me to translate for him. He responded to me in English after I explained to him what the waiter meant. He then waited for me to translate for the waiter in Mandarin. Throughout the meal, this kind of occasion occurred multiple times. (Observation Notes for ETM4)*

Language difficulties extend beyond oral communication; they can also include challenges in comprehending any written information in Chinese because expatriates are unfamiliar with Chinese characters. ETM7 (Japan) mentioned that many characters in Chinese and Japanese were similar, and by using these similar characters, he could grasp some basic meanings in Chinese. However, he still struggles to read Chinese, as the official Chinese typeface has changed from

traditional to simplified characters, which is comparable to Japanese script. ETM3 (United Kingdom) experiences a comparable issue. He was able to read Korean, making his adaptation to life in Korea and getting to know the local way of life much simpler for him. However, in his opinion, learning Chinese is far more challenging than learning Korean because Korean is a monosyllabic language. He also found it challenging to understand Chinese culture, and this was due to the complexity in learning the language, which requires a long period.

*"The issue of simplified Chinese characters also exists. Although I am familiar with many traditional characters, I am unable to read Chinese characters due to the significant differences between the simplified and traditional characters used in China. " (ETM7, Japan)*

*"One of the big differences, for example, living in Korea, I found it a lot easier to understand the culture, primarily because I could read Korean. The biggest challenges are reading and language. They're the biggest things. Because reading is a process, and the Chinese language doesn't come naturally. Chinese tones are very unusual. So again, for example, Korean is a very monosyllabic language, and it is much easier for me to learn. ... Because you can't read things, you have to memorise them. It's a lot slower; it's a very slow process. " (ETM3, United Kingdom)*

Furthermore, even if you know a few basic Chinese words, different dialects spoken across different regions in China still make communication difficult. Two of the participants (ETM7 from Japan and ETM5 from United States) stated that even though they could understand some basic Chinese after learning the language for a while, they found it was still difficult for them to understand older people's accent and local people's dialect.

*"The primary challenge I faced prior to learning Chinese was language. I still have certain issues even if I can now study Chinese. Dialect is one of them. Younger people can*

*understand and speak Chinese quite standardly, while older folks will talk with a slight accent and will not understand. I was also told not to go to the south part of China because there are so many different dialects in the South which are difficult to understand. " (ETM7, Japan)*

*"Language. I think pronunciation is a little bit different. The tone is extremely different. The tone is really hard to grasp. Also, the dialect is different. I can understand when I speak to students, they speak standard Mandarin. However, when I talked to local people around here, even if the same sentence, I couldn 't understand. " (ETM5, United States)*

Expatriate teachers encounter both oral and reading language proficiency issues. The complexity of Chinese characters, dialects and pronunciation made it extremely difficult for expatriates to understand the language quickly. They found it challenging to manage their everyday lives and careers in China as a result of this language barrier.

#### **4.3.1.2 Cultural Differences**

Cultural differences present additional challenges for every expatriate employed in China. As shown in the table below, the findings regarding cultural differences are categorised into four sub-themes: culture, manner, interpersonal interaction and privacy.

Table 4.2  
Sub-themes of Cultural Differences

<b>No.</b>	<b>Themes</b>
1.	Culture
2.	Manner
3.	Interpersonal Interaction
4.	Privacy

## *Culture*

The cultural perspective that is most often emphasised is Chinese communitarianism. Chinese people essentially live with their families and work or study as a team, unlike in Western countries, where individualism is preferred. This finding aligns with (Hofstede, 2003)'s cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism, which suggest that people in China, characterised by a collectivist culture, are more inclined to value group norms, interests and goals over individual ones, while Western countries are characterised by individualistic culture, which is the opposite. ETM2 (United States) expressed his preference for the group-focused approach over the individualism approach in the workplace, believing the latter would foster a competitive mindset rather than cooperation. Yet, this finding is quite opposite from Melby et al. (2008)'s research of eight Western expatriates teaching in East Asian countries. They found that the deep cultural differences between Eastern collectivist and Western individualist philosophies posed unexpected challenges for these Western expatriates in East Asian countries, leading to negative emotions. The reason for this discrepancy may arise from the differences in individual cultural backgrounds and varying levels of individual acceptance of different cultural practices. A similar viewpoint from the family standpoint was also highlighted by ETM5 (United States). He described that there is a stronger nuclear family structure in China because Chinese families always reside in the same area, compared to his own family, which is dispersed around America. Additionally, ETF1 (The Philippines) and ETM4 (United States) mentioned differences in holiday cultures, which is also related to Chinese communitarianism, as Chinese people value the family union during holidays.

*"When it comes to Chinese culture, I've been told this many times: there is a sense of community and a group mindset, which allows people to work extraordinarily well together. A lot of activities in class were based on groups so that they would be able to better express their ideas. In the West, things are more individualistic. Better or worse, this creates more of an attitude of competition, debate, and disagreement in some respects. I do appreciate the group focus concept here in China more than the individualistic, rugged trying to do things*

*all on one's own. But you often see this in Western academia as well as within the workplace. " (ETM2, United States)*

*"Holidays and how holidays are celebrated. I've learned about the importance of the family union in China, which is very different from the US. I also think it's a cultural scene; Asian culture generally venerates the family much more than Western culture does. The fact that you live in the same town as your family, when you have a family, you're probably going to live in the same town still. And my family, my mother lives in North Carolina, my sister lives in Virginia, my other sister lives in the UK, I live in China, my daughter lives in Colorado, and another in New York. It's very spread out. China has a much more nuclear family structure, and the US has much less. I think a lot of foreigners have a hard time understanding that on a basic level. " (ETM5, United States)*

ETF2 (The Philippines), a recent immigrant to the UK, mentioned that she missed the communal culture of China, where Chinese neighbours invite one another to their houses and share food. However, this practice is less common in the UK as people are usually not welcomed to their neighbours' houses and food is not shared.

*"The people here in the UK are nice, but they are different compared to people in Asia. You don't share your food if they cook something or if I cook something. And if I share food with somebody over here, it's a little bit strange. I actually miss that kind of culture, a sense of community. Also, there are boundaries here. People here would meet in a pub, in a bar or in a restaurant to socialise, but they don't invite you to their house. If you want to visit your friends here, you have to make an appointment. " (ETF2, The Philippines)*

Furthermore, working hours in China can be quite long, such as the 996 working system (working from 9 am, leaving at 9 pm, with one-hour breaks at noon and evening and working about ten hours in total daily for six days a week), which

contrasts sharply with the working cultures in other countries. However, ETM5 relished this work environment, clarifying that China's extended lunch and nap periods during the midday, which he felt to be highly favourable, make the country's lengthy working hours more manageable.

*"The work culture is very different. People do work long hours here. But then I was thinking in the US you go to work from 9 to 5, and you get like 45 minutes to rest. They gave me my schedule when I got here, and I asked why I have 2 hours off in the middle of the day. They told me they had a nap time; we have a two-hour break for lunchtime and rest. I love it. It's great. People work long hours, so you get 2 hours for lunch, and then you get another at least an hour for dinner. So that's 3 hours. If you work for 12 hours a day, you've just knocked it down to 9 hours. But you're not really working a full 9 hours, because there's other little breaks in there someplace. But I've noticed Chinese people, they sort of pick a speed they want to work at. It's not a fast speed. " (ETM5, United States)*

In addition, according to ETF4 (South Korea), who is married to a Chinese person, traditional Chinese culture values older people's ideas above all else and discourages younger generations from offering alternative viewpoints, which is quite different from her home country's culture. With a higher power distance index than South Korea, China accepts inequity and power differences, encourages bureaucracy and shows high respect for rank and authority (Hofstede, 2003). This finding is quite similar with Xu et al. (2022)'s research, which identified power relations as one of the significant obstacles for expatriate teachers. Besides, ETM6 (United States) mentioned that the traditional Chinese culture also contributes to the differences between Chinese and American aesthetic standards.

*"My spouse 's father taught us all to follow his instructions, and he gets upset if they are not followed in our family. The views of elders serve as the foundation for Chinese traditional culture. Also, attending a meeting in Korea will allow you to listen to a variety of viewpoints, after which we can*

*collaborate to determine the optimal course of action. In China, however, this is not the case. " (ETF4, South Korea)*

*"Chinese people value thinness and whiteness as beauty. Yet that's not what American women believe. Americans favour skin tones that are wheat. Americans also want bodies that are more symmetrical, healthier, and athletic in nature. That is, in my opinion, a significant distinction. " (ETM6, United States)*

The challenges related to culture perspective faced by expatriates who have freshly moved to China include Chinese communitarianism, distinct holiday, work cultures and traditional Chinese customs. When an expatriate needs to engage in deep conversations with Chinese people, these cultural differences can pose serious challenges.

### ***Interpersonal Interaction***

Different ways of interpersonal interaction bothers expatriate teachers as well. Five expatriate teachers brought out the cultural distinctions from the standpoint of social interaction. Chinese people are often kinder and easier to get to know than individuals from their home country, according to two American teachers, ETM2 and ETM4. ETM2 provided two examples of strangers giving back his wallet and helping him board a plane on time to clarify the kindness that he experienced from Chinese people.

*"There are many differences between Chinese and Western cultures, and there is a certain ambivalence. Non-caring is one characteristic that many people in America have. If things are not connected to them in some ways, they will simply ignore them. But here in China, I have found a fair amount of kindness. I remember once when I was in college, I was getting some papers printed and I went somewhere that I thought it would be free, but it turned out that it wasn't. Then I had a little bit of an argument with the proprietor of the shop,*

*and I left the shop with kind of a bad mood. I found my wallet was lost after 30 or 40 minutes. And I recognised I left my wallet somewhere and then I recognised no, I left it at the print shop where I just had an argument with the guys. Then, I went back to the shop, the fellow was kind and said you left this here. I was very shocked that even though we had this dust-up, he was still very professional, and he was still very kind.*

*I went therefor the rest of my time to get my printing done as a repayment for his kindness. He could have easily brought my wallet, taking so much of my identity. And I would have no proof one way or another. But no, he was kind and showed a good amount of respect to me, even though perhaps I didn't show the same amount of respect.*

*Originally, there was also a time when I was at the airport and running late. A kind Chinese helped me out through the whole thing and got me on the plane in time. By talking with security guards and all of that, I have been shown a large amount of kindness here in China that I have never really enjoyed in America. " (ETM2, United States)*

However, ETM4 expressed that even though Chinese people are easy to befriend, expatriates can feel difficult to get into their inner circle. This observation is similar to the findings of several previous studies (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Chu & Morrison, 2011; Jenkins, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021), which suggest that expatriate teachers often face difficulties to get really close friends from among the locals, and the deeply rooted cultural norm of maintaining polite distance can prevent expatriates from fully integrating into Chinese culture.

*"It's easy to become acquainted with Chinese people. Chinese people are usually very curious about you as a foreigner, and I kind of like this behaviour. But you can only get to a certain point. Then you sort of hit the wall and you'll probably never get into the inner circle, which is where family or close friends*

*are. I've got one friend whom I've made it to her inner circle, but she still won't let me meet her parents. So, it's like they know about you, and they like you, but you're not going to meet them. " (ETM4, United States)*

The interaction styles of Chinese people has both advantages and disadvantages. ETM7 (Japan) expressed his slight apprehensiveness because he felt that, in comparison to his own country, the proximity in conversations with Chinese people is too near for him to bear, even though he acknowledged that Chinese people are polite and considerate to others, even when they are strangers.

*"Japanese people tend to maintain a certain social distance from one another when they get along, but Chinese people tend to be quite close. At first, I had some trouble getting used to this. " (ETM7, Japan)*

Similarly, ETF3 (Spain) also noted that the distance between Chinese people talking to each other was too close. Moreover, she provided a completely different response, believing that because of certain cultural characteristics, Chinese people might initially be less receptive to interactions than Spanish people.

*"When I first arrived in China, it was surprising for me to see how close people get to each other, even if we don't know each other, they are talking to you very closely. ...I think locals feel shy sometimes. This is maybe because they are not used to dealing with foreigners or the characteristics of Chinese people. I felt that this was also a bit challenging in the beginning. Once they get to know you, they open their heart. It's like they break this barrier, and they completely change, as you said, like as if they give you their heart, but in the beginning, I thought that the interaction was a bit hard. And I may say that this was because of the character of Chinese people, which is different from Spanish people. We tend to be very open in the beginning, and if something goes wrong, then we will close our heart. But here, it is the other way around. I*

*would say there is a little bit of a cultural difference. " (ETF3, Spain)*

ETM6 (United States) also mentioned the variations in how American and Chinese colleagues engage with one another. He pointed out that, in contrast to China, where there was a lot of interactions between co-workers, there was relatively little of it in America outside of work hours. He also thought that individuals in America communicated fairly directly with one another, whereas in China, an individual may have to carefully consider what another person has stated in order to truly understand his meaning.

*"Colleagues may meet together after work in the US two or three times a year, at most. Outside of the eight-hour workday, co-workers in China engage with one another frequently. In the US, co-workers don't communicate after work; everyone goes home to lead their own lives. That is a significant distinction. ... For the most part, I can comprehend what the Chinese are saying on the surface, but it often takes a while to figure out the deeper meaning. You don't have to infer other cryptic meanings from his words because communication in the US is generally straightforward. " (ETM6, United States)*

These variations in styles of how Chinese people communicate with one another present certain difficulties for expatriate teachers (Yi et al., 2020). While Chinese people may appear approachable and simple to get to know for individuals from America, they can be shy, more reserved and not as open as Spanish people at first. Teachers' perspectives on this issue vary based on their diverse cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, Chinese co-workers are more likely to engage socially with one another after work, whereas American co-workers do not communicate with one another after work. These two sets of cultures are very distinct from one another. Chinese people typically tend to chop up their English words when they speak; thus, their speech patterns differ from those of Americans in this regard as well.

### ***Manner***

Different manner behaviours of Chinese can cause misunderstanding to expatriate teachers. When discussing behavioural differences, three expatriates brought up the issue of queue jumping. Queuing behaviour always takes place in a human crowd, albeit it can vary across cultures. These various queuing styles are due to several factors such as the features of the waiting line, the queuing environment and the type of service. Cultural differences are the root source of these variations. Individuals from cultures with high uncertainty avoidance tend to be cautious in their actions, according to the uncertainty avoidance dimension (Hofstede, 2003). Queuing can guarantee that people receive products or services fairly and in an orderly manner from a store. However, because they are not used to polite waiting, some mainland Chinese individuals, who are from cultures with low uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2003), may try to push and shove in queues, while others who are used to a more orderly system would feel perplexed by how the queue system operates (Thovuttikul et al., 2012). ETM7 (Japan) reported that when he initially arrived in China, he noticed that no one stood in line every time he was waiting to pay at the register of a store or supermarket. During his first year in China, this lack of queuing frequently caused him to lose his temper. This finding is supported by Tolkach et al. (2017)'s study, which found that Mainland Chinese tourists often show a significantly higher degree of acceptance towards queue jumping. ETM3 (United Kingdom) stated that one major distinction between Chinese and British people is how they interact with strangers, with Chinese people being less courteous than British people when it comes to strangers.

*"There was no line when I initially arrived in China, and for the first year, I was frequently upset about it. They don't line up at the grocery store or mall counter, which is conduct I find unacceptable. I get upset because I have to put up with people cutting in front of me and let them get away with it. However, the situation has greatly improved; the majority of Chinese people are now quite courteous. " (ETM7, Japan)*

*"I would say one of the big differences that I notice a lot is the way strangers interact. I grew up in London, and I have always felt there is a lot more consideration for strangers like getting on and off the subway. I always feel it is a battle here,*

*like nobody waits. In England, you always wait for people to get on and then you get on. But here, it's just like a battle. And I think that's because of the very strong thing about British culture. It's politeness. And I know in China, if you know somebody, then they're incredibly polite, generous and kind. But if you're a stranger, then it's kind of the opposite. " (ETM3, United Kingdom)*

In a similar vein, ETM5 (United States) reported that, even after five years, he still felt uncomfortable with this bothersome practice. Moreover, another significant distinction between American and Chinese cultures, according to ETM5, is that after dining at fast food places, Chinese customers often leave their trash on the table, while Americans typically dispose of their own trash in trash bins. This difference is due to the fact that, unlike in the US, cleaning tables is part of the duties of fast-food workers in China. ETM5 has not adjusted to the Chinese way of abandoning the table after eating at a fast-food outlet. While having coffee at Starbucks with ETM5, the researcher observed that ETM5 threw all of his waste into the trash bin after consuming the coffee and finishing the snack.

*"I don't adjust well to the body in line. I had a hard time to get used to it, but I can't. It happened all the time. I was at the hospital and standing in line. Someone just jumped from nowhere and cut in front of me. I didn't say anything. Then I paid the money and needed to go to another line to get my ticket. Another person jumped from nowhere again. It happened two times in just two minutes. It's not something I can ignore. ... If you leave trash on a table in America, people will get really mad about it because they are not going to throw out your trash. But in China, people usually leave their trash on the table. " (ETM5, United States)*

The differing responses from British and American teachers regarding the politeness of Chinese people towards strangers is also incredibly intriguing. While Chinese people are perceived by American teachers as more respectful of strangers compared to Americans, Chinese people are perceived by British teachers as less

courteous of strangers. Quite opposite to what ETM3 stated, ETM2 from the United States thought that Chinese people showed a great deal of respect to others, even to strangers.

*"I do see a noticeable difference among the common people in America compared to the common people here in China, which is, there is a greater respect shown for others, even just going down the street here in China than the Americans show one another." (ETM2, United States)*

Expatriate teachers expressed feelings of discomfort when faced with local mannerisms they witnessed in their cities (Jenkins, 2022). Even though two teachers described queue-jumping as an aggravating behaviour, they also remarked that the manners have improved due to the nation's prosperity and the increased access to higher education. The differing opinions on how people should behave towards strangers between ETM3 and ETM2 arose from their different cultural backgrounds.

### *Privacy*

One of the biggest cultural differences that expatriate teachers encounter in China is the Chinese people's divergent view on privacy. ETF3 (Spain) feels strongly about this particular aspect. When ETF3 first went to a grocery store to buy goods, she felt a little uncomfortable as locals approached her trolley and attempted to figure out what a foreigner would buy in a Chinese supermarket. She perceived this behaviour as an invasion of her privacy. In contrast, she felt that she was invading the privacy of others when she was undressing to change her attire in the exclusively female changing area at the swimming pool. Since the changing area was exclusively occupied by women, she usually undressed naturally to put on her bathing suit. However, when she did this in China, she sensed that the other girls felt uncomfortable seeing her body because they were accustomed to undressing in private and attempting to keep their bodies hidden from prying eyes.

*"I love to go to the supermarket to buy stuff I was buying my groceries with a trolley, and people were looking inside my*

*trolley just to see what I was buying. In the beginning, that was shocking because they were not just looking from a distance, but they got very close, and they were literally looking at what I was buying. I was very shocked when that happened. I thought that was a bit rude because I didn't have my own space. I know they are not evil, and they don't want to do anything to me. It's just I had no privacy and felt uncomfortable.*

*Sometimes when I go to the swimming pool, I just take off my clothes and for me, this is very natural, very common. Because we are all women. I have the same as you have, and I don't really care. I just took off my clothes and just put on the swimming suit. Then, I could see how uncomfortable others were feeling because they could see my body. They were not taking off their clothes, and they were going to a corner to hide themselves to take off clothes. I could see this is also a kind of privacy at the same time, but again, this is a cultural difference. In Spain, there's no problem. But I could feel that they were really feeling nervous in there. " (ETF3, Spain)*

In a similar vein, ETM1 (Cameroon) discussed how Chinese culture differs in terms of privacy. He expressed that Chinese people are highly forthcoming when discussing personal and significant issues with strangers, often asking very probing inquiries. It is common in China for people, including your colleagues, or even strangers, to ask you about your hometown, income, age and marital status. Some contend that close relationships form the foundation of guanxi (connections and networks) in Chinese culture, and that this concept predates the emergence of the modern networked society (Fei et al., 1992). Therefore, the distinctions between the public and private domains are not always clear in Chinese culture (Ping & Du, 2015).

*"I also learned that Chinese people are very open in terms of talking to strangers, and they want to know a lot. They can ask very big questions and sometimes personal questions. It's okay to me. It's not something that I'm angry about. It's something I*

*understand because I know it's a different culture. And I can choose not to answer. For instance, someone may ask me how much my salary is. And usually this is not the question we would ask people in my hometown. And I would say something like it's a secret, and they would laugh. I understand that they can ask this because this is their culture. " (ETM1, Cameroon)*

The differences in beliefs about privacy in China compared to other countries can partly be attributed to the physical distance people maintain from one another (Yi et al., 2020). For expatriate teachers, approaching strangers too closely or asking too personal questions might be considered an invasion of privacy, whereas for Chinese people, it is considered an infringement of private to reveal one's body to strangers.

All eleven expatriate teachers have experienced some challenges in their lives due to cultural differences, despite the many other ways that cultures in China and other nations diverge, particularly how people interact with one another. While some people have come to terms with and become accustomed to certain distinctions, others still require time to particularly or maintain their uniqueness.

#### *4.3.1.3 Difference in College Administrative System*

China's distinct educational system is another significant issue that nearly all teachers have mentioned. Five expatriate teachers from Western countries mentioned that teachers are the main focus of higher education in China, and their jobs are extremely demanding. In contrast, higher education systems in other countries are entirely different, focusing on the individual needs of students and essentially dependent on self-study. Expatriate teachers who are new to Chinese colleges often struggle with their teaching tasks because of this discrepancy (Jenkins, 2022; Yi et al., 2020). According to a British teacher ETM3, in the UK, teachers typically provide students with the necessary resources and let them complete their assignments on their own; however, in China, things operate in the exact opposite way. Besides, he also believed that shifts are occurring in China.

*"I think there's a lot more on us than on students. When I was a student to do the work, the professors would give me the*

*resources. Then you had to go and do it yourself. But I think in China, I think students are lead more. Students have not so much individual responsibility to learn, but I think it's changing as well. " (ETM3, United Kingdom)*

Four participants from the United States agreed that teachers in China were in charge of the classroom and students simply follow their instructions, which was quite opposite from the teaching approach in the United States. This difference was also observed by Meng (2017), who emphasized that variations in student behavioural patterns, classroom conduct and study attitude pose significant obstacles in the interactions between expatriate teachers and their students. Furthermore, ETM4 (United States) pointed out distinctions between public and private schools in China and the United States. Public education in China is often regarded as being of a somewhat higher calibre than private education, while in the United States, public colleges are typically considered to be of a lower calibre compared to private ones. In addition, he mentioned that students in Chinese schools are given a lot more homework during vacations because of the country's highly competitive educational system.

*"In America, teachers won't teach everything, just get kids to understand how to learn and understand big concepts. And then the details work themselves out. Whereas in China, it's the teacher who stands at the front of the class, telling the kids exactly what they need to know. So the kids are very good at remembering what they need for a test. Do they understand it? Maybe not, but they know the answers.*

*The Chinese system is sort of inverted to the American system where in the US public universities tend to be of lower quality than some of the private. In China, private universities tend to be a little lower than public universities.*

*Chinese schools are much more competitive than American schools. If you go to a high-priced private school in the US, you'll see a very competitive environment. But in public*

*schools, there's no pressure to succeed. I have one friend, a young Chinese friend who I met when she was in middle school and now, she's in high school. I once asked her what she would do during her vacation. She looked like dead in the eye, and answered do you think I get a vacation? I've got classes. My family will go someplace for a week, and I've got classes. So I can go nowhere but stay and study. In the US, it's totally different. If I wasn't in school during the summer, I would run around in the woods, I would go swimming, watch tv, I would do anything but not study. (ETM4, United States)*

ETM5 (United States) also echoed the same points, noting that American students spend less time in class and typically have little to no homework, while Chinese students spend more time in class and have more extensive assignments.

*"It's different. The Chinese would go to school more, like the time they spend is more in the class. But Americans spend less time in class and have no homework. " (ETM5, United States)*

Additionally, ETM6 (United States) also stated the distinctions in college administration structures. In China, teachers are required to handle various administrative duties on their own, while in the United States, American teachers solely concentrate on their professional duties and do not need to handle administrative tasks. Teachers are encouraged and permitted to perform administrative tasks in China to simplify staff administration, reduce the number of authorised staff, carry out educational reform and conserve educational funds (Zheng & Sun, 2020).

*"There are significant distinctions between Chinese and American colleges, with the administrative structures being entirely different between the two systems. A college in China, for instance, employs a large number of secretaries, encompassing administrative, scientific research, teaching and other positions. However, these staff members have a lot of their own work to do and are unable to assist teachers with some tasks outside of teaching because of the burdensome*

*administrative structure. Teachers have a lot of administrative tasks that they must complete on their own. To do the accounting, for instance, the Chinese teachers must visit the finance department. It's not the same in the US. One or two secretaries may work at a college, but teachers only need to handle teaching and research; deliver your materials to them and let them handle the rest. " (ETM6, United States)*

ETF1 (The Philippines) and ETM3 (United Kingdom) expressed that without any initial training session or orientation, it was challenging to become accustomed to the campus setting, educational resources and daily schedules. ETM3 specifically mentioned that he was on his own to learn everything about the college, without staff members giving him guidance on what to do in every situation.

*"The first week I came to the college, I arrived here started teaching and cried. I really cried and then I asked myself, did I make a bad decision, a wrong decision? Because the school is so big, I was so tired. I didn't know how to use the PowerPoint, the tv and other facilities. My bag was so heavy because I had my laptop with me. I didn't know how to use my computer to connect with the projector. " (ETF1, The Philippines)*

Furthermore, ETF4 (South Korea), ETM7 (Japan) and ETM3 (United Kingdom) all concurred that it was impossible for them to react and adequately make advance arrangements because of the short notice provided by the college.

*"My first semester was very difficult because I didn't know the system here. It is different from my experience in Japan and Korea, because I was more familiar with the system there, especially in Japan. They had a training session and orientation to introduce the campus and the facilities, which made me familiar with the college. But here, I had to figure it out by myself. Sometimes people often tell me what I need to do, and I have only one day to do it. It is always last minute. It*

*is difficult because I never really feel I was being told; I was just having to discover it myself " (ETM3, United Kingdom)*

*"In Korea, a semester's lesson plan is usually given to us in advance, and we would be asked to prepare for it. Materials needed to be submitted would also be informed in advance during the meeting. But that's not the case here. Reports or materials required by the school are usually required to be handed in within a day or two. To live in China, you need to be able to adapt to this abrupt instructions very quickly, and you need to have the ability to deal with it in time. " (ETF4, South Korea)*

*"The duration of the college's announcement was excessively brief. I could not have planned ahead for the arrangements later on, as the notice for tomorrow was just given today. I frequently use my electro-mobile to shop outside of the college, for instance. The school unexpectedly told me some time ago that an electro-mobile requires a permit to enter the campus, but I wasn 't in the campus when it happened. Not having a permit, the guard refused to let me in when I returned to the school the following day. Even though the notice was not widely known on the first day of the pass implementation, the school went ahead and enforced the policy all by itself. My ability to adjust is hindered by this college practice. " (ETM7, Japan)*

The Spanish ETF3 shared similar sentiments to ETM6, highlighting that she was sometimes confused since she was unclear about how Chinese colleges are administered, which added to her workload. She noted that the strict timelines, repeated tasks and other managing administrative matters created significant professional obstacles for expatriate teachers (Chen & Zhu, 2020, 2022; Huang, 2022; Wu & Huang, 2018). She also thought that teachers in China faced more pressure and put in more effort than teachers in her home country even though Chinese teachers also work in groups and support one another.

*"I asked something about rules or some administrative issues. Then someone has to ask someone else, and this person has to ask the leader and then the leader would say it depends on blah, blah, blah ... So I don't feel the system is clear. In China, a different situation has different kinds of rules, and you don't have a very clear image of what you should do in different situations. I feel this is a bit confusing sometimes and it might make your working life complex. ... Basically, I feel teachers, administrators and everybody worked very hard. They are very hardworking. I would say back in Spain, you do not have that much workload, and the pressure is not that hard, because it's split up among different people. " (ETF3, Spain)*

ETM7 (Japan) expressed sympathy for Chinese teachers, remarking that they are occupied with teaching and administrative tasks to such an extent that they had little time left for conducting scientific research and developing their professional ability. On the other hand, Japanese colleges provide their teachers with the necessary resources and time to carry out scientific research and advance their careers.

*"Japanese university professors have time for research in addition to teaching and professional growth, and Japanese schools give teachers the time and means to do this kind of study. But in addition to teaching at least a dozen classes a week, Chinese university teachers have a ton of work to complete. It is nearly impossible to find time for scientific inquiry because there are too many things to do. However, I feel sorry for Chinese university teachers since they are also expected to complete projects and write papers but are completely overworked. " (ETM7, Japan)*

On the other hand, ETM1 from Cameroon had the opposing views. He believed that Chinese education is more student-centred compared to the teacher-centred educational system in his home country. In addition, he also admired Chinese colleges for having superior facilities and infrastructure, which please him, compared to those in his own country. Furthermore, in his opinion, these

advancements are attributed to the influence of Confucius, who emphasised the need to better oneself as a means to contribute to the country's progress and served as the inspiration for Chinese education.

*"It is mostly teachers centred in my home country. But I noticed in China, students are assigned to do some individual work, group work, do critical thinking by themselves, and try to solve problems on their own. Chinese education is interesting, like even from the kindergarten level, I can see they're always giving children some things to solve by themselves. This can grow their mind and develop problem-solving ability. So I notice that my students are very good at solving problems and I think it has something to do with this education system. Because from the kindergarten level, the children are being taught to do things, a lot of things by themselves. This is very different from my country which is always focused on the teacher.*

*And there 's another difference in terms of the infrastructure. China is more advanced. They have better facilities, better buildings. My country is okay, but it needs improvement.*

*I also think the education in China is based on Confucius. It's mostly about learning how to improve yourself so that you can help the nation grow. In my country, it's mostly about being able to improve yourself, to better your own life, and not about the nation. This idea is about the nation. We don't have it."  
(ETMI, Cameroon)*

The discrepancies, such as the different methods of teaching, educational systems, unclear college administrative processes and heavy workloads, can all make newly arrived expatriate teachers at Chinese universities feeling rather unaccustomed to their teaching roles. Expatriate teachers encounter difficulties to perform their duties because of the inadequate training session and short notice from the colleges, which exacerbates their difficulties to familiarise themselves with the college

environment in the beginning. However, teachers from developing nations often find these great differences to be beneficial in general, as these dissimilarities are positive departures from the educational systems and approaches of their home countries. As a result, the teachers tend to adjust more easily and value the experience, hoping that their own countries can benefit from it.

#### ***4.3.1.4 Difficulties in Daily Life***

Daily lives of expatriate teachers were beset by several challenges. The distinct seasons in China, namely spring, summer, autumn and winter, may pose challenges for expatriate teachers. This finding is similar with several previous studies (Chu & Morrison, 2011) which showed that expatriate teachers often feel uneasy about the weather. For instance, as ETF1, ETF2 (The Philippines) and ETM1 (Cameroon) are from countries where summer is the only season, it is challenging for them to comprehend and adapt to the experience living in different seasons. When they first arrived, they all experienced extreme cold weather during a Chinese winter.

*"Weather is a challenge for me. Wintertime was really like a shock to me, but I got used to it now, but it's very different. It's a very big difference from my home country because we don't have winter. It's always summer in my home. Especially if the air quality wasn't very good as well. Very cold winter and pollution in the north. In the south, the air quality is better, but my struggle is in winter, there is no radiator and it feels colder inside. So this was a challenge. But when I lived in Nanchang and in Wuhu, it was much better. " (ETF2, The Philippines)*

*"The weather was something new as well. Because we don't have winter in Cameroon. We only have two seasons, summer and spring. We call them the rainy season and the dry season. There's rain all the time during the rainy season and 6 months of the dry season is totally dry and no rain. Here I experienced winter for the first time. It was very difficult in the beginning. It was so cold, it's freezing. " (ETM1, Cameroon)*

ETM4 and ETM5, two American teachers, share differing perspectives on the weather in China, shaped by their experiences in different regions of the United States. ETM4 found that the weather in China was hotter than in the location where he had previously lived, and noted that not all the buildings at the university were equipped with air conditioning. On the other hand, ETM5 struggled to adjust to the cold and often felt uncomfortable staying indoors, even though he knew that China has frigid temperatures in the winter.

*"It's so hot. Honestly, the weather here has a lot of similarities with my hometown. But the sun is much brighter here than where I lived in Virginia. So the weather became the first challenge. That was really the biggest thing getting used to the weather. And I don't know why there's no central air conditioning. There is no AC in the classroom or anywhere in the college. The students are also sweating in the classroom, and it makes it really hard for me to teach a lesson under this kind of extreme conditions. "* (ETM4, United States)

*"Philadelphia is colder than Nanchang, but the problem is that Philadelphia is much better inside the house. It's like the house will keep the cold out. But here it's the opposite, it's more freezing inside. It's like when you are inside your home, you have to put all the big cover, thick clothes and everything to make you warm. It's really hard during the wintertime."* (ETM5, United States)

Aside from the temperature issue, ETM5 (United States) felt that he could never get used to the spicy nature of Chinese food. Different dietary habits are a significant challenge for expatriate teachers (Meng, 2017). During their first trip to China, ETM1 (Cameroon) and ETF3 (Spain) also had to deal with dietary issues. ETF3 had the impression that individuals from the south of China tend to eat spicy food, to which she has never been able to adjust. In addition, she pointed out another contrast that ETM6 (United States) also mentioned: when asking for water in China, it is typical to get room temperature or hot water, while in their home countries, iced water is typically served.

*"It seems that people like more spicy food here, and everything here is spicy. " (ETM5, United States)*

*"I felt a huge difference in terms of the food flavour. Especially here in the southern part of China, the food is very very spicy. In Spain, we don't have spicy food, and I cannot eat spicy food. So it is a big challenge for me. ... Hot water is another shock to me. I had never drunk hot water until I came to China. There's only iced water in Spain. " (ETF3, Spain)*

*"The difference in diet is that in China, for example, you go to a restaurant, and when you go in, they will pour you a glass of water. In China, they usually pour hot water for you. In the United States, you go in, and he will pour for you a glass of ice water, you have to tell him not to ice water, then he will pour a room temperature water for you. " (ETM6, United States)*

ETM1 thought that the eating habits and culinary culture of the Chinese were very different from those in his own home country. In contrast to individuals in his home country, who often eat only one type of dish during a meal, Chinese individuals would typically consume multiple types of vegetables, meat, rice or noodles all at once.

*"There is also the food culture and the eating habits. Chinese people cook so many kinds of food for one meal. They make sure they have vegetables, meat or rice, like so many dishes simultaneously. This is not the same in my country. We usually eat one kind or two, but China values different kinds of food during mealtime, and not just one dish. There's another cultural difference I have learnt. Chinese people can eat ricedaily, like it's apart of the diet. But we don't eat rice every day." (ETM1, Cameroon)*

In addition to the weather and dietary issues that expatriate teachers have to deal with, ETF1 (The Philippines) shared another issue that she faces on a daily basis. She is frequently referred to as Chinese by the locals due to the physical similarities

between Chinese and Filipino people. Since the locals make this assumption, they speak to her directly in Chinese. However, because she is unable to understand what is being said and is unsure of how to reply, she either receives criticism from the local people or feels that she is being verbally harassed.

*"When I go to the supermarket, people think that I'm Chinese, maybe because we are all Asians and our appearance looks quite similar. And sometimes I'm tired of using a translator because I have to take out the translator machine and type the word in it. When the local people there talk to me in Chinese, I just stare because I don't understand them. Then, they would keep shouting at me. The local people don't know that I'm a foreigner, so they shout at me because they think I'm dumb. I treat this as a big challenge. " (ETF1, The Philippines)*

Issues including different eating habits, weather and a few small misunderstandings were encountered by expatriate teachers upon their initial arrival. For the teachers who could not handle spicy food, the popular spicy dishes in Nanchang posed a serious issue. Teachers from countries with warmer climates had to face challenges due to China's bitterly cold winter climate. In addition, due to a lack of air conditioning in China, it was difficult to travel to China for an American teacher who came from a country with widespread air conditioning.

#### **4.3.1.5 Policy**

The regulations pertaining to foreign nationals in China and the associated formalities have presented additional difficulties for expatriate teachers. ETM2 (United States), ETM6 (United States) and ETF3 (Spain) all felt that dealing with certain matters in China required a great deal of time due to its arduous and time-consuming nature. The burdensome immigration procedures and the lengthy intervals for permit and visa renewal processes have complicated the lives of expatriate teachers (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Huang, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021). For instance, in order to change his visa from student to teacher, ETM2 had to put in a lot of time and effort. The travel reimbursement process mentioned by ETM6 served

to highlight how much more straightforward administrative matters are in the US compared to the complexities faced in China. ETF3 expressed her feeling of being constrained by the restrictive practices of the Chinese government. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she needed the approval of 20 individuals to sign her travel application in order to which left her feeling campus, which made her feel incredibly unfree.

*"Changing my visa registration from teacher to student visa twice was a bit of a hassle. Also, it took quite a number of days. I had to run all around Shanghai to get that done, and I also had to talk to various officials at the college to try and get the paperwork I needed. And that took a fair amount of time. "*  
(ETM2, United States)

*"When applying for business trip reimbursement in China, we need a lot of documents, such as paper train tickets, hotel invoices, payment records and so on. In the United States, you just need to print out your train ticket and hotel order online. The procedures in China are a little more cumbersome than those in the United States, where the entire system is much simpler. "* (ETM6, United States)

*"Let's say if you want to do something in China, it's like you have to ask 20 people to get approval. For example, during the pandemic period, most of the time I stayed on campus. But when I wanted to go outside to travel to another province, I had to ask 20 different officials at my college. They had to sign a paper for me to allow me to go outside. But I'm not a kid anymore. This is how I feel. I think that somehow, it's hard to get this feeling of freedom here. So I would say not given the feeling of freedom is another challenge for me living in China. "*  
(ETF3, Spain)

ETM7 (Japan) stated that he found it challenging to integrate into the community because of certain anti-foreign policies or laws that do not take expatriates

into consideration in China. For example, while Chinese citizens can purchase rail tickets via mobile apps, foreigners cannot. Unlike the situation in Japan, certain hotels in China exclusively cater to Chinese visitors only. Moreover, foreign nationals only own a passport instead of an ID card. Nonetheless, some authorities only accept ID cards as proof of identity, creating significant challenges for expatriates living abroad.

*"Chinese people can buy train tickets directly on the app, but as foreigners, we can't. I wanted to buy tickets to go out with my friend, but we couldn't buy tickets together, because he could buy tickets directly on the app but I had to go to the train station or the agency to buy tickets. Some hotels do not accept foreign guests and only cater to Chinese people. I didn't know that until I went to Wuhan for the first time; I had booked a hotel in advance, but when I arrived, he wouldn't let me stay because the hotel didn't accept foreign guests. Many Japanese now know about this situation, so they will ask ahead of time before booking a hotel, but this situation does not exist in Japan. Another challenge is that foreigners only have passports but no ID cards while some authorities only accept us if we show our ID cards, and when we tell them that we only have passports but not ID cards, they do not accept our patronage." (ETM7, Japan)*

The lives of expatriate teachers in China are made further difficult by bureaucratic processes, redundant material requirements, imprecise procedures and inhospitable policies toward foreigners.

#### **4.3.1.6 Summary**

The problems faced by expatriate teachers in China were a result of various personal and professional obstacles. The first challenge for expatriate teachers is language barriers, which create difficulties in comprehending and interacting with locals, making it more difficult for them to complete their work and manage everyday tasks. Cultural differences with regard to traditional Chinese culture, Chinese work

culture, interaction among Chinese friends, acquaintances and colleagues, as well as variances in behaviour patterns and privacy conceptions, all contribute to significant adjustment difficulties for expatriate teachers working in China.

The most substantial issue for expatriate teachers when they first start working in China is the unfamiliar administrative structure of Chinese colleges. Expatriate teachers often struggle to rapidly familiarise themselves with their colleges and adjust to its routine upon their initial arrival due to inadequate orientation training sessions prior to their official job, short notice periods and complex work procedures that their colleges provide. For expatriate teachers, integrating into society can be particularly even more difficult because of policies that discriminate against them and disregard their specific needs. However, expatriate teachers must deal with personal issues on their own, such as adapting to the local climate and dietary differences.

#### **4.3.2 Adaptation Strategy**

Six themes emerged from the data provided by the participants about the adaptation strategies adopted by expatriate teachers employed in China: help from people, localisation, positive thinking, self-identification, convenient apps and facilities and the influence of culture (see Table 4.3). The specific details of these themes are outlined below.

Table 4.3  
Themes of Adaptation Strategies

No.	Themes
1.	Help from People
2.	Localisation
3.	Positive Thinking
4.	Self-identification
5.	Convenient Apps and Facilities
6.	The Effect of Culture

#### **4.3.2.1 Help from People**

Getting help from others is significant for expatriates to adapt in China. All eleven teachers expressed their gratitude for the assistance they received from others, who helped them better adapt to life in China. Forging relationships with students, Chinese co-workers and locals is one way expatriate teachers can enhance their intercultural competence (McLeod-Chambless, 2021; Yi et al., 2020). Foreign and Chinese co-workers, Chinese and international students, local and foreign friends, neighbours and even strangers are among the support network for expatriate teachers working in China. These expatriate teachers unanimously agreed that support from peers and students is crucial. When expatriate teachers needed help to connect with other employees, colleagues often acted as translators for them. They would also deliver notices and messages, helping expatriate teachers become familiar with college procedures and facilities. These shared experiences contrast with the findings from Bunnell and Poole (2022), which indicated that expatriate teachers in their research felt marginalised and undervalued in their work because their opinions were not taken into account by their Chinese colleagues. This discrepancy may arise from different expectations and positioning of expatriate teachers regarding their career development and the administrative arrangements of different colleges. A specific teacher is employed in each college to oversee matters related to expatriate teachers, ensuring that all of the work and life responsibilities of the expatriate teachers are controlled and manageable. Additionally, if expatriate teachers encounter any issues, they are encouraged to ask for assistance.

*"On my first day of class, the computer in the classroom didn 't work, but I needed to use the computer for my slides. So I contacted a colleague who could communicate with me, and then he helped me contact the relevant technical department to help me fix the computer. " (ETM7, Japan)*

*"I can communicate at work with the help of five or six Korean-speaking teachers in school. I have a co-worker who stays in touch with me in daily life. We support each other. I*

*teach her Chinese, and she teaches me Korean. She also offers me tips on how to live in China. " (ETF4, South Korea)*

*"I always have support from my colleagues, like I always have Rita, who assists us whenever we need anything from work or life. My colleagues are very helpful. Although there was no formal orientation, you can just come to them whenever you need something, and they are ready to help you. " (ETF2, The Philippines)*

*"There were certain things in the past due to the COVID-19 pandemic that I didn 't receive a proper orientation, I suppose. However, I was able to get enough information from other expatriate teachers. They gave me a lot of hints on how to construct my classes and all of that. My friendships with colleagues allowed me to understand more about the culture in society more effectively. " (ETM2, United States)*

*"The other two expatriate teachers taught me to do everything at work. Coco also helped me a lot to familiarise myself with the work routine. The first time I came here, I asked Coco about the student roster and other stuff I needed during the class. She told me not to worry because a student would give it to me before the class, and then she told me the time she would give me the books and the facilities in the classroom, and that I would be assisted by a student. I think it is great to be assisted by someone compared to my previous job where I had to struggle alone. " (ETF1, The Philippines)*

*"I think it helps a lot to have helpful colleagues. So I'm very lucky with my colleagues. That's also one of the very important points for me because even though the system might be a little bit confusing, hard or complex, my life and work become easier for me. After all, I have reliable colleagues, so I can ask them if I have an issue, and they will answer. They help me all*

*the time, even in my personal life. For example, when I wanted to send a parcel to another province, and I didn't know how to send it or which company to hire, I asked them, and they gave me some suggestions. " (ETF3, Spain)*

Both in the classroom settings and in their daily lives, their students offered assistance to their expatriate teachers. Chinese students helped teachers acquire the resources they needed for the classroom, and teachers relied on students who spoke English well to support their peers who struggled with English. Students also extended support to expatriate teachers in their day-to-day work. Additionally, international students who were proficient in Chinese acted as translators for expatriate teachers in their day-to-day interactions. Chinese students also taught Chinese to expatriate teachers, facilitating communication and providing information and advice on living in China. Through their interactions with Chinese students, expatriate teachers became more familiar with the local culture. These kinds of interactive signs show that both the Chinese students and expatriate teachers tend to adopt an "integration" approach based on Berry's modes of acculturation.

*"Although I couldn 't speak Chinese initially, a lot of people helped me deal with my difficulties in life. I lived in the same building as the Korean students here, and I have a good relationship with them. When I encountered some communication problems, they helped me with translations. " (ETF4, South Korea)*

*"I have students from different cities in China. A lot of them are professional workers. So they had already had conversations about their place and could tell me a lot about local culture through our interactions. ... My students also share information with me. I meet them every day." (ETF2, The Philippines)*

*"I come to class to see my students, and it always brings a great impact, expecting their faces as well as some genuine excitement and real thought behind their responses. This*

*positive feeling encourages and inspires me. " (ETM2, United States)*

*"Sometimes, I ask my students, and the questions are not only for practice but also for information that I really want to know. When I told them I bought things on Taobao, they said no, as there is another app we can use to buy things, and it's cheaper, or things are better. So, sometimes they give me some shopping tips as well. " (ETF3, Spain)*

*"If there's anyone who likes to help, they are my students. I told my students that when I have free time and if they want to learn English, I'll teach them English, and they teach me Chinese. We'll use an empty classroom, and I'll write words on the board in Chinese, and then they tell me what the words mean. Then I would try to figure out the words through dictation. My Chinese has gotten a lot better by doing that. " (ETM5, United States)*

Additionally, during several observations of ETF1 (The Philippines) in the class, the researcher discovered that she frequently needed assistance from her students during class, regardless of the routine or the lesson's content she wanted to cover. The researcher observed the following while conducting participant observation ofETF1:

*She showed a picture through slides and asked the students if they knew what it was. The students answered no. Then, she used several words to describe the picture, trying to let students guess the picture. After several descriptions, some of the students provided the correct answer, while others were still very confused due to their poor proficiency in English. The whole class concentrated on the picture. She kept describing the picture, trying to make the rest of the students understand. The rest of the students started to lose their concentration on the picture and started chatting with one*

*another in Chinese. The whole classroom started to get a little noisy. She then walked from the front to the middle of the class while the students were still talking to each other. She stopped describing. One of the students who had given the correct answer said "quiet" loudly in Chinese, and then the whole classroom was quiet. She asked the rest of the students if they knew the word of the picture now, but they still answered no. Then she asked the students who had already provided the answer in English to tell the rest of the class using Chinese. Once the students obtained the answer, she showed the word on the slide and asked all of them to read after her. After the class, ETF1 told the researcher that she really appreciated the help from the students with a good level of proficiency in English. Without their help, it would be very difficult for her to complete the class. (Observation Notes for ETF1)*

During the observation of ETM1 (Cameroon), the students were seen assisting the expatriate teacher with classroom facilities. The researcher noted the following while conducting participant observation of ETM1:

*Before the class began, he switched on the computer and plugged his USB into the computer. Then he tried to switch on the projector. There seemed to be a problem with the projector. The class was silent. All the students looked at him while he was dealing with these facilities. He tried several times to start the projector, but he failed. Then, he used Chinese to ask if any students could offer him some help. One student stepped to the projector and fixed something. Then he switched on the projector again, and it worked. The teacher thanked the student and began the class. (Observation Notes for ETM1)*

In addition to support from colleagues and students, expatriate teachers also received a lot of help from local and foreign friends they met in China. For example, ETM3 (United Kingdom) found that his life in China was comfortable because he had many acquaintances, both international and local, whom he could visit and rely on.

The fact that the local friends of ETF2 (The Philippines) assisted her in taking care of her pets while she was away demonstrated the importance of the relationships she fostered with local friends.

*"I think having friends and a network of people helped me the most. I think it's always the best way to become comfortable when you have people whom you can rely on. If I didn 't know anyone, or I didn't have friends, it would be a lot more difficult. "* (ETM3, United Kingdom)

*"Aside from colleagues, some local Chinese, as well as some fantastic local friends in Nanchang, helped a lot. They helped me look after my cats when I was outside Nanchang. "* (ETF2, The Philippines)

A week prior to the lockdown which made his life extremely difficult, ETM2 (United States) relocated to China for the first time. He received some guidance from his overseas friends in China regarding the issues he would need to handle throughout the transition. Expatriate teachers often find it easier to relate to individuals experiencing similar challenges while they are managing the many obstacles that come with adjusting to a new culture. This kind of support from fellow expatriate teachers can help reduce stress caused by adjustment difficulties (Chu & Morrison, 2011; Savva, 2017).

*"When I first came to China, it was one week before the borders closed due to the virus. Like everyone else, I was locked down for some time, but then, life was still quite comfortable. There were no real issues about how things were done. I was a new teacher at the college. I was given a lot of help and advice from both my other foreign friends as well as the Chinese administration. And overall, it was a very smooth transition. "* (ETM2, United States)

ETF1 (The Philippines) also learned several teaching techniques from her seasoned Filipino acquaintances, in addition to receiving everyday support for teaching Chinese students. Notably, a very close local friend of ETF4 (South Korea)

even applied for a day off to offer accommodation to ETF4's entire family during their travel from Nanchang to Hefei.

*"And then after maybe one year, I found out that there are five Filipinos here, who are teaching in other schools. They would message me to go out and have meals together during the weekend. Also, I would ask them about the strategies they use to teach Chinese students. Every time I asked them, they would explain a lot to me and tell me their teaching strategies."  
(ETF1, The Philippines)*

*"I also have a very good Chinese friend. She is from Hefei, Anhui. The day before yesterday, my whole family, including my kid, my husband and my parents-in-law, all went to Anhui from Nanchang. On our way to Hefei, I was told by my good friend that she had spared two rooms of her home to accommodate us. She even took the day off to cook for us. "  
(ETF4, South Korea)*

Remarkably, expatriate teachers can also benefit from the assistance and kindness of strangers, in addition to their acquaintances. ETF1 (The Philippines), ETF2 (The Philippines), ETF3 (Spain) and ETM1 (Cameroon) all reported that Chinese people are incredibly kind and always willing to lend a hand. Even though they were unable to communicate in English, they would still attempt to assist by using body language and other techniques.

*"When I got lost, they would just tell me. Even if there was this language barrier, they would use body language. I also lived in Tangshan for some time, and we had a problem with our sink. It was plugged. My neighbour sent her husband to our home, and he fixed our sink. That was really nice. These people made my adaptation process very easy. They are very helpful and welcoming, and they make my life in China easier. "  
(ETF2, The Philippines)*

*"I feel it's amazing living in China because I've had so much support and so much help from strangers. Let's say an example, I've been travelling all around China many times, and I need an app for public transport to take the bus. However, I didn't have my ID card, so I could not register the app. This became a little difficult and inconvenient for me. So I could only pay with cash to take the bus. But I forgot to carry some cash with me sometimes as we could use the mobile app to pay for all the other things. Then, when I got on the bus, I asked the driver how I could pay. People on the bus didn't know me, as they were strangers. But they offered to pay for my ticket. That's amazing. Nobody would do that back in Europe. It's very rare. Just because they see that you are in trouble, and they just help me, making me feel that I'm welcome in this city. If you are in a place where people welcome you, want to talk to you, and are willing to help you, you feel grateful and comfortable and you won't feel you are separated and discriminated. " (ETF3, Spain)*

*"For my part, I think Chinese people are always ready to help a foreigner. Sometimes you meet someone who knows some English and they are most willing to talk and help you. Even someone who doesn't know English, if you are trying to ask for something, they may try to help you, but the language problem may come in. " (ETM1, Cameroon)*

Expatriate teachers in China found that their lives were made easier and more pleasant by various sources, including the support and advice from friends and colleagues, the goodwill of strangers in the community and assistance with both work-related and personal matters.

#### 4.3.2.2 Localisation

Localisation refers to the process in which expatriate teachers adopt local solutions to deal with challenges pertaining to teaching and other obstacles they encounter in their daily lives in China and progressively align themselves with the country's conditions (Yi et al., 2020). Accepting Chinese cultural customs is a crucial aspect of adaptation for almost all of the teachers. While this process can be challenging at first, familiarising themselves with matters that are different from their customs in their home country gets easier with time as they learn to accept or adapt to the differences between their own unique ways and that of China in order to live in China (McLeod-Chambless, 2021). According to ETF4 (South Korea), who has been married to a Chinese citizen, living and thriving in China is possible only by embracing and accepting the customs of the Chinese people; otherwise, people cannot thrive in China. The finding regarding ETF4's perspective is completely in accord with the study by Marini and Xu (2021), which indicates that having a Chinese spouse contributed to their decision to extend their stay in China. She studied Chinese at the same time, and as she improved her language skills, she was able to comprehend and subsequently embrace and accept Chinese culture.

*"I cannot say that there is a specific way to adapt to living abroad, but to live in China, you have to accept Chinese culture and Chinese people's habits. There are definitely cultural differences between Korea and China, but I've lived here for more than 10 years, and I've slowly accepted the culture. I've married a Chinese; it was different after getting married. I wouldn't be able to live here if I hadn't accepted the culture. ... I've been learning Chinese. Through language learning, I can chat with many Chinese people. I like chatting with local people very much. I can even talk to the taxi driver about everything, their difficulties at work, and so on. Chatting with Chinese people is a way to get in touch with Chinese culture. Through these constant exchanges, I gradually accept Chinese culture." (ETF4, South Korea)*

Language acquisition is also considered a means of enhancing one's intercultural competence (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Kim, 2001; Masgoret, 2006; McLeod-Chambless, 2021). ETF3 (Spain) and ETM5 (United States) developed a deeper comprehension of Chinese culture by learning Chinese language. The more fluently they speak Chinese, the better they can converse with locals and have a deeper understanding of their culture. Moreover, even though great differences exist between the diets of ETF3 (Spain) and ETM1 (Cameroon) and that of China, these individuals have not only adapted to but also come to appreciate Chinese food after eating it for a while. This tends to imply that the time spent in the host culture may lessen difficulties associated with general transition, since expatriate teachers' lives may gradually become accustomed to their new routines and living arrangements (Roskell, 2013).

*"I realised it was a culture shock after a while and eventually, I got used to it. Learning Chinese was hard in the beginning, but I had spent a lot of time at home to study by myself. If you can speak even just a little bit of the language, it would help you a lot. Because if you approach people in their own language, they will feel more comfortable and more relaxed and friendly towards you.*

*Drinking hot water makes my body feel comfortable. I think it's very healthy and I love it. Now I drink hot water every day. I even don't know how I have survived all these days without hot water. ...I love to go to the market. I can spend like the whole morning there, and I love buying veggies that I've never seen before because I don't know the names, I don't know what they are, and I don't know the tastes. Then, I would ask the shopkeeper about my newly found vegetables, and I love to learn about them. They would give me the information about the vegetables, and then I would also ask them how to cook. "*  
*(ETF3, Spain)*

*"Now, I've learned how to adjust to it. I'll say that the more I learn about Chinese language and culture, the better I can adjust to living in China. " (ETM5, United States)*

*"I got used to eating potatoes every day because they are similar to those we eat in our country. So, I ordered potatoes every day at first, and gradually, I started to eat every kind of food, and now I can eat almost everything, not all, but almost everything. I love spicy food. Initially, it was hard too, but I got used to it. Now, I often order spicy food at restaurants. It's an exciting experience. These are cultural differences, and the differences should be accepted and understood. If not, there is no way you can adapt to any culture. If you're not willing to adapt or accept the differences and understand those differences, you can surely become angry. But this is a part of the life of people here. You can't change it, you should understand this clearly, accept it and be happy with it." (ETM1, Cameroon)*

Before arriving in China, ETM3 (United Kingdom) did not use smartphone applications, which are extensively utilised in many facets of daily life in China. He could only gain acceptance in society by adopting local customs, such as using WeChat pay, which the residents are familiar with, instead of cash payment. Similarly, ETM4 (United States) had to adjust to it in order to maintain employment in China, as the educational system in China differed significantly from the one that he had experienced in his home country. He needed to comply with the local school's requirements, even if he did not agree with some of the college requirements.

*"When I first came here, I only used cash because I didn't have an online payment method, like WeChat pay, set up. And I could tell that people really didn't want to take my cash. They're not happy about it. So I had to quickly work out to get WeChat pay working. " (ETM3, United Kingdom)*

*"I've gotten used to it, but there are still parts of it that I don't like. I think it's unfortunate that I have to give them work over the summer, and I have to check the assignment progress to make sure they're doing it over the summer." (ETM4, United States)*

Apart from the aforementioned circumstances requiring them to acquire Chinese customs in order to adjust to Chinese culture, ETM2 (United States) found that he naturally adapted to China because his demeanour and actions, which were deemed excessively formal in American society, were considered normal in China.

*"I've always been told that my manners are a little bit too formal in America. So, in China, my manners are normal, I guess I have just adjusted to it naturally. So there's nothing too difficult for me, and it's nothing different." (ETM2, United States)*

During her observation of ETF4 (South Korea), the researcher discovered that the localisation approach was frequently employed in her class. In order to establish a personal connection with her pupils and keep the class engaged, she occasionally spoke in Chinese. She also made extensive use of activities tailored to the needs of Chinese students to grab their attention. While conducting participant observation of ETF4, the researcher noted the following:

*She taught her students the dialogue and asked the students to read after her. She explained the dialogue in Chinese. All students concentrated on the dialogue and read loudly. She instructed the students to practice the dialogue in groups and read it to her after practising. She told the students they would get different bonus points depending on speed and how well they read. After hearing what she said, every student quickly got to their partner and started practising. The whole class was busy with the dialogue practice. The students rushed to her to read the dialogue. The students felt happy and returned to their seats contentedly after getting bonus points. The*

*students who could not speak well also went to her to read and tried to get the bonus point. She listened to their dialogue and corrected them with the correct pronunciation. (Observation Notes for ETF4)*

In an in-class observation of ETM1 (Cameroon), the researcher discovered that the teacher utilised Chinese as a means of building rapport with his students and fostering an engaging classroom environment. Additionally, ETM1 had already been acquainted with and adhered to Chinese college regulations. During the observation of ETM1, the researcher noted:

*Before the class started, some students took their breakfast to the classroom. He saw it and asked them not to bring food into the classroom. The students then exited the classroom to finish their breakfast. ... The atmosphere in the classroom was dead as a doornail. It seemed like none of the students was listening to what he was saying. He sensed that the students were not following him seriously. He started to speak in Chinese and made some movements dramatically to explain what he had just said. The students started to pay attention to him and listened to him carefully. Then, he assigned group work to students. Some students looked confused with what he had just assigned. He used Chinese to explain to them. (Observation Notes for ETM1)*

This localisation strategy shows that expatriate teachers adopt an "integration" mode. In order to effectively integrate into Chinese society, expatriate teachers need to embrace certain cultural practices. Over time, certain Chinese customs were welcomed and even appreciated by the teachers as they spent more and more time there. Expatriate teachers could gain more insight into Chinese culture and improve their ability to adjust to living in the country by studying the local language. Besides, the teachers also need to tolerate certain unadaptable habits in order to be able to successfully reside in China.

#### 4.3.2.3 Positive Thinking

Expatriate teachers with positive thinking fits better in China. Five of the expatriate teachers claimed that they were well-adjusted individuals who faced minimal challenges in adjusting to life in China. Positive personal traits are regarded as a useful strategy for dealing with the difficulties of the adaptation process in China (Yi et al., 2020). ETM3 (United Kingdom) considered himself to be an adaptable person and thought it was his duty to adjust to his surroundings because the surroundings would not change for him.

*"I'm a pretty adaptive person. When you live in different countries, you tend to adapt a lot. I think kind of adapting is on me. It's my responsibility. I think if you have an idea of how you want to live, then it's quite easy to adapt. If you're living in a more rural area or a lower-tier city, you might not be able to get everything that you want or everything that makes your life comfortable. But you can't expect the environment to change for you. You have to realise there are some things you had gotten used to before that is not going to be easy now. To me, everything I face in China is actually pretty easy." (ETM3, United Kingdom)*

ETM4 (United States) described himself as an extremely self-assured individual who blended well into Chinese society. He believed that some foreigners got upset living in different countries because they disregarded advice from others and always let minor problems bother them.

*"I'm a Dallas, the adaptation was very natural. When I came, I was very confident. I'm also naturally adaptable. I don't let a lot of things bother me. A lot of foreigners get really upset because they don't care about news of the society, and they don't know when things are happening. They do not want to fit into Chinese society and resist adapting to society until the very last minute, then they change. It really frustrates people. It's kind of like whatever people tell me where to go and when*

*to be, I'll just do that, and then everything would be okay. "*  
(ETM4, United States)

ETM2 (United States) had previously taught in Thailand before coming to China. He viewed his transition to China as merely a matter of relocating his teaching space from one place to another, finding nothing that needed to be adjusted. He thought that there was nothing difficult with his life in China and that he did not need to do too much adaptation. Two female participants, ETF1 (The Philippines) and ETF3 (Spain), also regarded themselves as very positive individuals and believed that there was not much they needed to adapt to.

*"There wasn't really much adjustment to do. I was coming from Thailand after all, and I was moving from one teaching job to another. There wasn't really that much of an adjustment to fit into the society. There wasn't really that much of a transition to be done. I haven't had any trouble to live in here. "*  
(ETM2, United States)

*"I'm so positive that I can adapt because my heart also belongs to China. When I meet trouble outside, I'm not that afraid even if no one can speak English. We can use body language to communicate and eventually, we can understand each other. "* (ETF1, The Philippines)

*"I have adapted to the life here, and I have no problem at all. I'm very happy that I adapted. I adjusted very well. I have no problems, nothing at all. "* (ETF3, Spain)

The aforementioned five expatriate teachers felt at ease and at home in China, attributing these to their optimistic outlook. They were able to successfully adapt to life in China due to their positive thinking, regardless of whether they believed they were excellent at adjusting to new situations, had a lot of self-confidence or believed it would be easy to adjust to the environment in China.

#### 4.3.2.4 Self-identification

The participants in this study found that living in China does not necessitate adherence to all Chinese cultural norms. Some of the expatriate teachers have chosen to maintain certain aspects of their old routines when it comes to confronting with some practices that they find intolerable. Expatriate teachers' adjustment to life in China was facilitated by maintaining their ties to their home cultures, customs and ways of life (Yi et al., 2020). ETM5 (United States) and ETM7 (Japan) both had problems with the behaviour of queue-jumping, and even after living in China for a number of years, they were still unable to put up with it. After witnessing incidents of queue-jumping, they expressed their intolerance of it and made an effort to dissuade others from participating in it. Moreover, ETM5 was not accustomed to seeing Chinese people leave their trash on the table after a meal. Although he was not able to ask Chinese people not to abandon their trash, he still made an effort to clean the table after he finished eating his meal. From the perspective of individuals who are more adaptive, the behaviours of ETM5 and ETM7 reflect a continuation of their original culture and suggest a "separation" mode of adjustment.

*"I haven't got used to the queue-jumping behaviour even after five years of living here. I would use Chinese words to tell people not to do this, and they are not good words. And it worked sometimes, and they would not cut in line. You just have to try your best to ignore or adjust to certain things. I don't adjust well to the behaviour of cutting in line. And I still take the trash away after the meals. "* (ETM5, United States)

*"Normally, I would leave them alone, just feeling very angry with myself. But if someone cuts in front of me, I will not tolerate it, and I will tell them not to cut in line. If not, I will push them away. "* (ETM7, Japan)

During a coffee outing with ETM5 (United States), the researcher observed that he took all his trash from the table to the bin before they were about to leave the coffee shop. The researcher observed the following during the observation of ETM5:

*"He finished all his snacks and coffee and took a tissue to clean the table. He took the tissue, the wrapper of the snack and the coffee cup to the trash bin. Other Chinese people and the shop assistant in the coffee shop did not notice his behaviour. Next, he went back to the researcher and said goodbye. Then, he left the coffee shop." (Observation Notes for ETM5)*

In a session with ETM3 (United Kingdom), he expressed his thought that British people tend to be more polite, compared to Chinese people, towards strangers. For example, he noted that in Britain, people would wait for others to get off or get on the subway, while this is not always the case with Chinese people in China. So, ETM3 continued to behave like a British person by showing politeness to strangers even though Chinese people would not do so because of cultural differences.

*"I would say one of the big differences that I notice a lot is the way strangers interact. I grew up in London, and I have always felt there is a lot more consideration for strangers like getting on and off the subway. For example, I always feel it's a battle here, like nobody waits. But in England, you always wait for people to get on and then you get on. But here it's just like a kind of battle. I think that's just because of the very strong thing about British culture. It's politeness. And I know in China, if you know somebody, then they're incredibly polite, generous and kind. But if you're a stranger, then it's kind of the opposite. I'm a pretty adaptive person. When you live in different countries, you tend to adapt a lot. I still behave like an Englishman. I still wait. I still hold doors for people. I still do." (ETM3, United Kingdom)*

Despite their understanding of Chinese culture and their experiences living in China, two American participants, ETM2 and ETM4, felt that there were aspects of Western society that they could not let go of. When ETM4 tried to fulfil his school's criteria in ways that were opposite to his own beliefs, he would look for ways to balance between the two and chose a neutral approach to meet the requirements. This

behaviour of balancing original culture and mainstream culture shows that ETM2 and ETM4 adopt an "integration" mode. This finding is similar to the finding of Tippins et al. (2006), which noted that expatriate teachers could hybridised their approaches to practice and evaluation in compliance with school standards.

*"And in many respects, although I do like to imagine that I have a deeper understanding of China and Chinese culture. And I do have so much appreciation for it. At heart, I am still a man who was born and raised in a small town in America. So, there are some things I can't quite let go of regardless of how much I try. " (ETM2, United States)*

*"I'm in China, but I never forget that I have a lot of Western stuff. I still order Western food. About the school requirements, I still don't give a lot of homework. I tend to give them some sort of time for homework. I don't usually ask my students to do written homework, which should be checked by me the next day unless it's on the curriculum schedule. I try to mix the American and Chinese styles together as much as I can." (EIM4, United States)*

Generally, expatriate teachers would not put up with behaviours they could not tolerate. For instance, if someone cut in front of them, expatriate teachers would reprimand that person and prevent such behaviour from occurring. Even when others would not do the same, expatriate teachers would nevertheless continue to hold doors for strangers and wait for passengers to board the subway first. Despite their appreciation for Chinese culture, expatriate teachers hold onto and retain the remnants of certain aspects of their own cultural backgrounds that they struggle to abandon.

#### **4.3.2.5 Convenient Apps and Facilities**

Expatriate teachers either actively or passively employed various software, surrounding resources and both cross-cultural and local tools to address the challenges they faced (Yi et al., 2020). Because of contemporary, cutting-edge smartphone apps, expatriate teachers were able to live more comfortably in China and obtain translation

services when they could not communicate with local people. Expatriate teachers found that it was helpful to use their smartphones for looking up information or making purchases. ETM3 (United Kingdom), ETM4 (United States) and two teachers from the Philippines, ETF1 and ETF2, all acknowledged the value and support provided by smartphones. They had the opinion that smartphones could perform all tasks and contain all the information one could possibly require.

*"To me, everything in China, where I live, is actually pretty easy, especially nowadays, as everything is on your smartphone. You just scan things, and then you can find them easily. If you need to translate something. It's not difficult as well. So I don't feel living in China is difficult at all. "* (ETM3, United Kingdom)

*"I was just talking to my daughter the other day about my phone. Smartphone is my greatest tool here because I translate Chinese into English with it and use it to pay for everything. "* (ETM4, United States)

*"I use my phone to translate for me when I go to the supermarket; and I also use Baidu to search for information. "* (ETF1, The Philippines)

ETF2 (The Philippines) and ETM5 (United States) also verified the advantages of China's infrastructure in addition to the help of smartphones, highlighting the efficient railway system that made it easy for her to travel around the country.

*"The infrastructure is very good in China. It's easy to travel from one place to another, even though those cities are very far from each other. China is a big country, right? Because of your very good railway system, it becomes so easy to explore China. ... Thank God. I have my phone all the time with me to translate whenever I need a translation. The language is not the end of the world because I have translators. And then I have my smartphone all the time. I have used it to order food; it is very convenient. If you want to buy something like clothes*

*or any household stuff, you can buy it on Taobao, and it will be delivered to you. If you're too lazy to cook, you can just order on MeiTuan. And when I need to get to another place, I use Didi to drive me there. These apps make my life so easy in China. (ETF2, The Philippines)*

*"I have expected such things, but it is still shocking for me to see how fast everything has developed in China. It's amazing how fast and how much tech, energy and effort were applied to infrastructures for building up the country. It's a really fascinating movement. These things were shocking. " (ETM5, United States)*

ETF4 (South Korea) emphasised the importance of smartphones during her class, noting that the smartphones were essential tools for helping her students accomplish their learning tasks.

*"I require my students to bring smartphones to class. Other teachers may not allow students to use mobile phones in class and even require students to hand in their mobile phones during class time, but I ask my students to use mobile phones regularly in class. I need the students to use their smartphones as time counters to speak Korean for a limited amount of time. Some assignments also need to be completed using smartphones. " (ETF4, South Korea)*

During the classroom observation, the researcher also observed that the students utilised smartphones to assist them in accomplishing the task that ETF4 had assigned. In the course of the observation, the researcher noted:

*She announced that the class had begun and told the students that she would check the assignments first. All students took out their phones and opened an internet page. They spoke Korean as they read the pages on their phones. Then she called the roll and her students spoke something in Korean*

*loudly to her one by one. She made notes while answering the students' inquiries. (Observation Notes for ETF4)*

During the classroom observation of ETF1 (The Philippines), the researcher observed that smartphones were commonly used in class by the students. When the students had difficulty understanding what the teacher was saying, they utilised the smartphone apps to translate, and they even suggested Chinese apps to ETF1 during the class. In the course of the observation, the researcher noted:

*She tried to teach her students several words. She was using English to describe these words and help make the students understand. Her students looked very confused. She used body language and objects in the classroom to tell them the meaning of the words. They still didn't grasp her meaning and took out their smartphones to translate these words into Chinese. The students wrote the Chinese meaning of these words in their books. ... She asked them if they knew how to make cakes. A student answered loudly that you could know everything through TikTok. Other students echoed the student's answer. She asked her students what a TikTok is. The students told her that it is an app for short video watching and that she could get a lot of information through the app. She seemed very curious and asked her students to show her the name and the look of the app. (Observation Notes for ETF1)*

The convenient apps significantly help expatriate teachers not only in their daily lives but also in the completion of the class. Moreover, the leading infrastructure level in China allows expatriate teachers to easily explore various regions of the country.

#### **4.3.2.6 The Effect of Culture**

One of the factors expatriate teachers find it relatively easy to live in China is that Chinese culture shares similarities with certain aspects of their own cultures. This finding contradicts the Cultural Distance Paradox, which argues that cultural

differences between one's home country and the host country may facilitate adjustment as this paradox means that the expatriates from different cultures often anticipate cultural differences, resulting in being less overconfident and having a greater willingness to learn more about the different culture. On the other hand, people from similar cultures may not be prepared to look for these differences in culture; consequently, they potentially face harsh awakenings or simply missing out on cultural differences (Black et al., 1991; Hemmasi & Downes, 2013; Pinder & Schroeder, 1987; Selmer, 2007). However, the experiences of several Asian teachers in this study align with the findings from Babiker et al. (1980), Furnham and Bochner (1986), A. Isakovic and Forseth Whitman (2013), Ward and Kennedy (1993), indicating that the transition can be facilitated by similarities between the host and one's home cultures.

Two Filipino teachers, ETF1 and ETF2, expressed a lot of similarities between China and the Philippines. They believed that food habits, educational systems and a sense of community of the two nations were all the same. Similarly, ETM7 (Japan) recognised that there were cultural and nutritional similarities between China and his home country, Japan. After arriving in China, he realised that he had already been heavily exposed to Chinese culture prior to visiting China because Chinese culture and Japanese culture were comparable in part, but he did not realize that he had previously seen Chinese culture until after he arrived in China. Unexpectedly, ETM4 (United States), a person from a Western nation, also believed that there were significant similarities between China and his home country, stating that people do almost the same activities no matter in which country, and that certain Western products were also available in China. This perspective, which suggests that expatriate teachers view Chinese culture as comparable to their original culture, can be regarded as an "integration" mode.

*"To be honest, it's quite similar, as both countries are in Asia. So it's quite similar. For example, your neighbours would give you food, neighbours would get together and have a chat and have a meal together. This sense of community is pretty much similar back home. There are some dishes that also taste similar to our food back home as we all eat rice. And the*

*college education system here is pretty much similar to the one back home. " (ETF2, The Philippines)*

*"The culture of the two countries is similar. For example, the diet is more similar compared to other countries. I have a friend who works in America, and he is still not used to living there because of so many cultural differences. Also, I think I had learned some Chinese culture in my previous studies, but I didn't know it until I came to China. I realised that I had come into contact with these things before. " (ETM7, Japan)*

*"I think Chinese and Americans have a lot more in common than thinking. We're both very nationalistic countries, and we both suffer from exceptionalism. Chinese and Americans really feel patriotic and hold their country. But at the same time, it's very adversarial right now, which is unfortunate. Life in China really has a lot of similarities with life in the US. We go to work, go shopping, go to the movies, complain about the inflation, and so on. Look, here we are right now; there is no mistaking I am in China, So, I like having the cultural experience but having the availability of certain similarities to Western countries. " (ETM4, United States)*

In addition to cultural similarities between the native countries of expatriate teachers and China, certain aspects of Chinese culture also aid expatriate teachers in their adjustment there. ETF1 (The Philippines) noted that Chinese students' strict adherence to college regulations significantly set them apart from students in her home country. Her teaching career in China was greatly aided by this quality of the Chinese students. ETM5 (United States) stated excellent public security and safe living conditions in China, which are very different from his home country, as factors contributing to his feeling of comfort when residing in Chinese society.

*"I think it's almost the same. The government schools in the Philippines have a lot of paperwork and administrative things, just the same as here. And teachers have a lot of meetings to*

*attend as well. So the college education system is quite the same. But in general, I think Chinese students are more goal-oriented today. I don't know if it's true, but when it comes to class, students know what to do in class. They know they have to keep quiet in class and they pay respect to the teachers and the authority. That's one thing we don't have there. We have class rules, but it's not that strict. But there 's one thing in China that I really admire. There is a class monitor, a student who helps the teacher with the facilities like PowerPoint and the classroom discipline maintenance." (ETF1, The Philippines)*

*"I'm from Philadelphia. So there are really beautiful and nice parts of Philadelphia. But other parts are extremely weak. And there are places where you can go and places you can't go. However, China is not like that. So you can walk anywhere you want in China. There are so many cities in America. There are probably hundreds and hundreds of cities in America. But there're no good neighbourhoods, and some of them are extremely dangerous. Thank goodness. I like to stay in a safe area where I do not need to be concerned about my safety. "*  
*(ETM5, United States)*

Teachers from the Philippines and Japan believe that since their home countries share the same geographical location in Asia as China and possess many Asian cultural traits, few matters are required for the adaptation process. Their life in China becomes easier due to cultural similarities with those of their home countries, complemented by a few distinctive aspects of Chinese culture that also make it easier for the teachers to live overseas.

#### **4.3.2.7 Summary**

Several coping mechanisms were employed by expatriate teachers to address the difficulties they faced in China. The key resources they could find to deal with

obstacles they encountered in their daily lives or at work include support from co-workers, students, strangers and both local and foreign friends whom they met in China. Having to make an effort to adapt to their new surroundings, expatriate teachers have attempted to localise themselves by adopting Chinese customs and habits, picking up the local language and familiarising themselves with local rules. Some teachers, on the other hand, possessed a strong sense of self-worth and regard themselves as rapid learners in a new setting, which has good psychological impacts on their lives in China.

It is important to note that expatriates are not required to give up their original their or ways of acting in every situation in order to become localised. Expatriate teachers continue to practice their original behaviours or balance them out with local customs in areas where they have their own demands and requirements or when they disagree with the local ways of doing things. This approach is another method for adjusting to the local culture. Expatriate teachers would not feel that there is a lot they need to adjust to when the culture and everyday items in China are comparable to those in their home countries. Thereby, it helps the expatriate teachers acclimate to the local culture more easily. Besides, expatriate teachers find that, due to China's world-class infrastructure and the availability of practical apps on their smartphones, travelling throughout China, completing their work responsibilities and managing practically everything in their daily lives are all simplified and made easier.

#### **4.4 Social Networking Sites Usage**

This part presents and discusses the findings relating to Research Question Three concerning the use of social networking sites: 'How does SNS help expatriate teachers adapt during the adaptation process in China?' Examining the impact of SNS is essential to exploring the usage of it in the adaptation process of expatriate teachers. Following the thematic analysis, five main themes were identified: daily communication, dealing with work, facilitating life in China, acquiring information and widening social circles. According to U&G theory, these five themes fall under the categories of seeking socialisation, convenience, information and social support. These five themes are summarised in Figure 4.4 below.

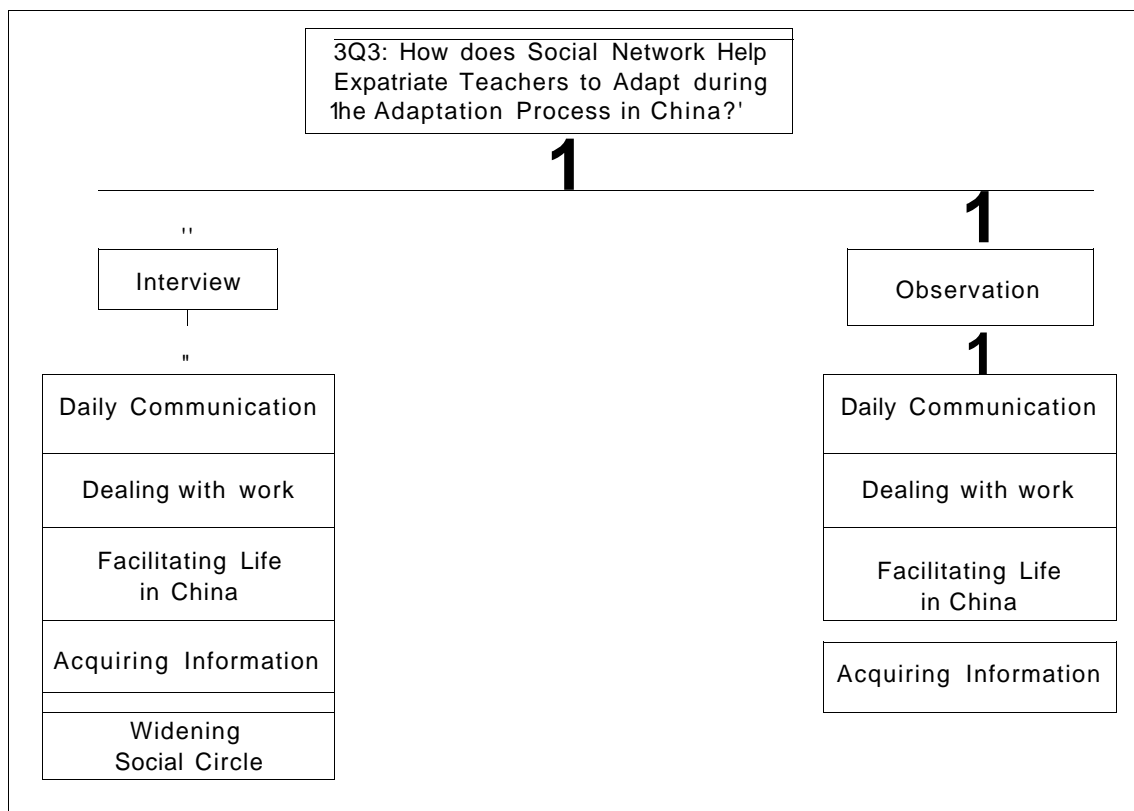


Figure 4.4 Social Networking Sites Usage

#### 4.4.1 Daily Communication

SNS is used to gratify expatriates' communication need. All eleven participants in the study reported using SNS for communication. Seeking socialisation via the use of SNS to communicate and interact with others was the most prominent category identified by all participants. Through SNS, their needs are fulfilled as they can contact and stay connected with friends and family who live abroad, with acquaintances they met in person or with relatives and friends who are not in China (Alamri, 2018; Hyduk & Worrall, 2016; Vaiman & Haslberger, 2013). The popular social networking apps in China are not the same as those in other countries. Some participants use foreign social media apps to keep in touch with families and friends back home, while using Chinese social media apps to communicate with friends in China. After moving to China, the participants said they rapidly got used to using Chinese social media apps and even shared these apps with their family members so they could talk to them more easily.

Every expatriate teacher has likely used WeChat to connect with friends, colleagues, new acquaintances whom they met through mutual friends and even

complete strangers. This finding aligns with research by Zhang (2020), which indicates that WeChat is primarily used for contacting people. ETF2 (The Philippines) mentioned that she would begin conversations on WeChat with individuals who were connected to her through mutual acquaintances. In order to facilitate communication with their relatives and friends back in their hometown, ETF1 (The Philippines), ETF3 (Spain) and ETM5 (United States) recommended using this Chinese social network.

*"I used WeChat. I talk to local people, Japanese friends and other foreign friends in China all through WeChat. " (ETM7, Japan)*

*"When introduced by common friends, we would start communicating via WeChat as well. But I knew them through common friends, not through WeChat." (ETF2, The Philippines)*

*"I use WeChat every day to make contact with people. I contact my boss and even my family, as they also have WeChat. I asked them to download WeChat so that we can communicate easily. " (ETF1, The Philippines)*

*"I use Facebook and Twitter. I talk with my friends on these apps and talk with my mom on WhatsApp every day. It helps us stay in touch and not miss each other. " (ETM1, Cameroon)*

*"Mostly, I make contact on WeChat. I use Western social media to get in touch with my family and friends in America. I have actually been off Facebook for a long time, but my mom uses it. So I have to go back to keep in touch with her. " (ETM4, United States)*

*"I use Skype with my mom because that's all she can understand. But I use WhatsApp as well to get in touch with foreign friends who live abroad. And Line, I use it for people living in Thailand. " (ETM3, United Kingdom)*

In addition to WeChat, other social network apps, such as Skype and Facebook, are also utilised by ETF3 and ETM5 to communicate with foreign friends. The remaining eight expatriate teachers also reported using different social network apps to communicate with friends from different countries.

*"I use social media with my family. Like my mom, she downloaded WeChat. So even if she is in Spain, I have told her to download WeChat. It's much easier for me because I look at WeChat all the time. But then, I use foreign social network apps to communicate with other family members and friends. "* (ETF3, Spain)

*"I have my parents and a couple of my friends on WeChat and then that works. Also, I talk to others on Facebook messenger app. "* (ETM5, United States)

Even though ETM2 (United States) reported his preference for making phone calls to communicate with people, he still used social networks sometimes to get in touch with his friends.

*"I often call my family and friends in America, but sometimes I use a little bit of social media to speak with friends. "* (ETM2, United Kingdom)

This study further demonstrated the significant use of WeChat when the researcher used it to contact college administrators from different colleges for participant recruitment. All contacts for the participating expatriate teachers in this study were shared via their WeChat accounts. The following Plate 4.1 displays the WeChat chatting page between the researcher and an administrator from one college, showing how WeChat contact information was sent to the researcher to get in touch with the expatriate teachers.

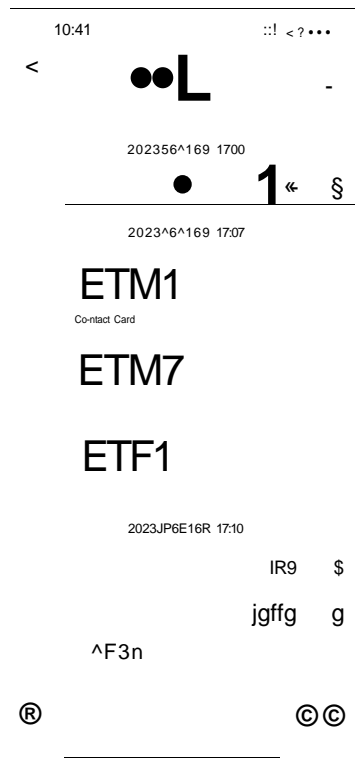


Plate 4.1 Chatting Page with Administrator of One College

When the interview with him had been completed, ETM3 (United Kingdom) voluntarily provided the researcher with recommendations for making connections with several expatriates living in Nanchang and working as teachers. The contact information for these expatriate teachers was also shared on their WeChat contact card, which ETM3 sent to the researcher through WeChat. Plate 4.2 below shows the WeChat chatting page of the researcher, while ETM3 was sending the WeChat contact information of more participants.

ETM4

2C235P6829B 10 W

ETM5

\*5 happy to help

2023^6^296 10:16

Cheers! f.

No worries \*\*,:-;

2C23S6E29B1tl7

WTM2

Contact Card

One more for you!

I think All be excited to do it



Plate 4.2 WeChat Chatting Page with ETM3

Once the researcher obtained the contact details of the expatriate teachers, communication was established through WeChat to arrange for the details of the interview. Also, some interviews were conducted through WeChat video calls or voice calls, particularly for ETM2 (United States), ETF2 (The Philippines) and ETF4 (South Korea), who were travelling outside Nanchang. Also, some of the follow-up interviews were also conducted via WeChat. The following Plate 4.3 shows the WeChat chatting page with ETM2, ETF2 and ETF4.

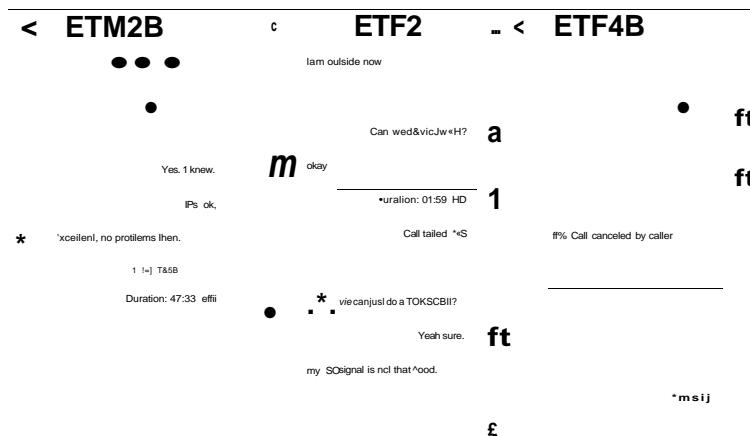


Plate 4.3 WeChat Chatting Page with ETM2, ETF2, and ETF4

Expatriate teachers frequently rely on social networks to stay in touch with their friends and family. While some teachers use different social networking applications to communicate with individuals in different countries, others introduce their friends and family to the most popular Chinese social media apps so that they can communicate effortlessly. Expatriate teachers use these social networks not only to interact with acquaintances they know well but also to make new acquaintances with people whom are referred to them by mutual friends. Occasionally, they even use social networks to communicate with complete strangers.

#### **4.4.2 Dealing with Work**

Social media not only helps expatriate teachers connect with friends and family but also as a means to manage their work (Vaiman & Haslberger, 2013). As previously stated, ETF4 (South Korea) mandated that her students bring their smartphones to class in order to complete tasks with the assistance of these devices. Similarly, WeChat was used by ETM3 (United Kingdom) and ETF1 (The Philippines) to communicate and discuss work-related matters with her students and supervisors.

*"I require my students to bring smartphones to class. Other teachers may not allow students to use mobile phones in class and even require students to hand in their mobile phones during class time, but I ask my students to use mobile phones regularly in class. I need the students to use their smartphones as time counters to speak Korean for a limited amount of time. Some assignments also need to be completed using smartphones. " (ETF4, South Korea)*

*"Being able to connect with students and people using WeChat is great. " (ETM5, United Kingdom)*

*"I use WeChat every day to make contact with people. I contact my boss and even my family, as they also have WeChat. I asked them to download WeChat so that we can communicate easily. " (ETF1, The Philippines)*

Another Chinese social media application, QQ, was used by ETF3 (Spain) and ETM2 (United States) to deal with student assignments. For the purpose of better managing her students, ETF3 formed individual groups on QQ for each class of students. Similarly, ETM2 took the same initiative by creating different groups for each class on QQ where he instructed his students to upload their video assignments.

*"I use QQ sometimes. I use QQ but basically, I was just like looking for the information on QQ, and seldom chat with it. I use QQ basically at college because I created different groups for all the classes I teach. For me, it's very useful. Also, this way can make me feel that I have WeChat to socialise more with friends and family areas and QQ for professional areas or working areas. With my students, I have created different groups. Let's say, class one, class two, class three and so on. I have all of my students on QQ. If anyone has questions about exams, homework tasks or whatever things, they can ask me. I also send them information and news or whatever on it. So QQ is very useful. " (ETF3, Spain)*

*"I can use QQ for some time. And the reason for that is kind of silly. WeChat used to only let you upload videos of 700 megabytes or less. As I mentioned before, a good number of my assignments were based on group work. And a lot of those things were discussions within that group. They would need to make videos, and some of those videos were quite large in size. QQ did not have a size limit on videos. So, they were able to send me the videos via QQ. " (ETM2, United States)*

TikTok, a short video-sharing social network app from China, was mentioned and utilised during the in-class observation of ETF1 (The Philippines). ETF1 asked her students how to make a cake, and the students used TikTok to search for the procedure of making a cake, subsequently answering the question. After responding to her question, the students recommended this TikTok app to ETF1. In the course of the observation, the researcher noted:

*She asked her students if they knew how to make cakes. One student answered loudly that you could know everything through TikTok. Then, the student took his phone and opened the app. Other students echoed this student's answer. The student showed her the video of the procedure of making a cake. She asked her students what a TikTok is. The students told her that it is a Chinese social media app for short video watching and that she could get a lot of information through the app. She seemed very curious and asked her students to show her the name and the look of the app. (Observation Notes for ETFl)*

The researcher noted that several Chinese social networking applications were used by expatriate teachers to deal with work-related matters. Different social media platforms are used for different purposes. Some were used to bridge the gap between expatriate teachers and students, while others were used to improve communication with supervisors and students, and some were used to manage the assignments of students more effectively.

#### **4.4.3 Facilitating Life in China**

Expatriate teachers in China might live more comfortably because of new and innovative social networking apps. According to U&G theory, convenience and social support are two important sought-after needs for all participants. This aligns with findings from Crowne et al. (2015) and Canhilal et al. (2022), which assert that online supportive social networks and information society networks can provide practical support to expatriates in host countries. Little Programmes on social networks could help expatriate teachers manage nearly all of their daily responsibilities. For instance, WeChat offers a number of Little Programmes that might provide users with a range of services. Expatriate teachers might use WeChat to perform almost all daily tasks such as ordering food, making payment, translating and topping up mobile phones balances. Expatriates mainly use WeChat payment for buying things in China (Zhang, 2020). According to ETM3 (United Kingdom), using WeChat is essential for

surviving in China. Therefore, even though ETM3 did not own a smartphone prior to traveling to China, he decided to acquire one when he was getting ready to relocate.

*"Especially nowadays whereby everything is on your smartphone, you just scan things and then you can find things easily. ... I use WeChat because you have to use WeChat. There's no option. So, I use WeChat. That's the only social media I have used. It's a new thing to me because I had never really used a smartphone before I came to China. I got my first one in Japan because I had never really needed it before. But living in China, I think if you don't have a smartphone, you'll struggle. ... When I first came here, I had used cash because I didn't have the WePay set up. And I could tell that people really didn't want to take my cash. They're not happy about it. So I had to quickly work out to get WePay working. "* (ETM3, United Kingdom)

ETF2 (The Philippines) expressed her belief that social media apps had made her life in China easier because the various services they offered.

*"It's very useful. WeChat is very convenient. You can use it to buy a train ticket. You can use it to pay for something, such as your utilities. You can use it to top up your phone credit. I have also used it to order food. If you're too lazy to cook, you can just order through the app. These apps make my life so easy in China. It's very convenient. "* (ETF2, The Philippines)

In addition to practical utilities that social networks could provide, ETF3 (Spain) found a lot of official accounts on WeChat that provided information on performances, the opening hours of public facilities and many more.

*"You can also find some official accounts on WeChat, and you can follow them. For example, I followed the gym I usually go to and then I could know when they are open and when they are closed. I can see it's closed now because it's the Dragon Boat Festival. Then, I'm not going swimming today because I*

*know it's closed. There are also a lot of posts and updates on the account. I think following these official accounts of places that you are interested in can give you a lot of information as they also post some articles on it. Let's say Jiangxi Arts Centre. They also post a lot of information about shows, performances, and other stuff. It's amazing because once I follow them, I can get to know what I want to have a look at, and then I can get tickets and enjoy the show. So it's very useful. " (ETF3, Spain)*

Moreover, social media apps also offer entertainment services to expatriate teachers. For instance, ETMI (Cameroon) reported spending a lot of time on WeChat Channels, which provide short videos watching platform.

*"WeChat has brought Channels to watch short videos. I think it's interesting but it can be addicting at the same time. I felt like it has taken a lot of my time and I couldn 't escape from it. " (ETMI, Cameroon)*

Whether for daily life-related services, informational resources or entertainment services, social networking applications have made the lives of expatriate teachers in China more convenient and comfortable.

#### **4.4.4 Acquiring Information**

Social media serves as a valuable channel for information for expatriate teachers (Canhilal et al., 2022; Crowne et al., 2015; Mai, 2017). Social media platforms have provided participants with a variety of information about China. Both before and during their time in China, expatriate teachers had learned about the country through different social media apps. The majority of the knowledge they had gained was on Chinese culture, along with other knowledge they thought would help them get along with locals and have a pleasant experience in the country. Additionally, many social media groups on social media platforms are run by expatriates, providing information to their members. They also discussed issues they encountered in China in these online social groups, and other members may offer answers.

Prior to arriving in China, five expatriate teachers used social media apps to learn about the country and its culture. ETM3 (United Kingdom) mentioned that he was provided with insights from people around him during his time in Japan, contributing to part of his understanding of Chinese culture, along with information obtained from social media.

*"Most of the knowledge on Chinese culture was on social media, some of which was through people who were living in Japan and had lived in China before." (ETM3, United Kingdom)*

This similar sentiment was shared by ETF1 (The Philippines), ETF3 (Spain), ETM1 (Cameroon) and ETM5 (United States). To gain some knowledge about China before they arrived in the country, they all browsed images and videos related to Chinese people and Chinese culture. They kept using social media to search for information after their arrival.

*"Before I came here, I learned about Chinese through social media. The most part was from social media and also from movies." (ETF1, The Philippines)*

*"I read books about China, and I use social media to do the research. I really like to see Chinese cities because I feel they are so different from Spain that I just want to see the pictures. So, I search for a lot of pictures on social media. I got a lot of information from the university as well, but they are more like professional stuff. If I wanted to watch videos and pictures, I would search on social media. ...I have Weibo as well. I read the news on Weibo. And Bilibili for videos and music. I think it's very interesting to learn some more about Chinese culture and stuff on it." (ETF3, Spain)*

*"I got the information from the internet, specifically through the social media. Mostly of my knowledge, let's say 90% of it, or 99% of it, was from social media and internet." (ETM5, United States)*

*"So I learned a little bit about Chinese culture on social media. Mostly, I just like learning about how Chinese people are friendly and kind to foreigners. Things like that, nothing deep or specific. In some ways, social media can help me understand the culture more deeply and know the local people more deeply. You can watch videos about how people live their local lives, and how people cook from some cooking videos. You can't know everything, but the video is helping you see things that you don't see. For example, I can see things happening in other villages in China that I haven't been to. So it helps me to learn about the local people, learn more about the culture, and also understand some more about China, the new laws, new rules, and regulations. "* (ETM1, Cameroon)

When the participants were asked about how they obtained information, almost all of them mentioned the expatriates group on WeChat as a valuable resource for expatriate teachers seeking information. The group was made up of a small number of Nanchang locals and hundreds of expatriates. The members of the group facilitated the exchange activities, news and information. Ten expatriate teachers had already joined a number of WeChat groups for expatriates residing in Nanchang. They found the platform to be very helpful as it allowed them to ask questions about any matters they were having trouble with and to answer queries from others if they knew the solution.

*"There are so many groups for different things, about everything you can imagine, like second-hand items. As I said, it's so useful. People will tell you which restaurant to go and they'll put the menu up, and then you might go there to check it out. "* (ETM3, United Kingdom)

*"I think the WeChat group helped me once. When I was looking for a specific hospital to get my records done. They had suggested to me a hospital to get it done. It was helpful. "* (ETM2, United States)

*"I will ask the members of the Filipino group which restaurant offers cheap and delicious food. And they will recommend some to me. ... I will ask them about their teaching strategies. They explain to me every time I ask them, like because the Chinese kids have difficulties in this and that about the language. And then they will tell me the suitable strategy." (ETF1, The Philippines)*

*"Most of the groups are just to chat and have fun. There are some serious groups about learning the Chinese language. And there are some other groups about helping each other. If you have a problem, they can help you, or you can help them. These groups are set up for these kinds of agendas, having fun, helping each other learn Chinese, and just making new friends. There are times when you see information about China that you haven't heard about in any groups. Someone may send a message like there's this thing and that thing happening. There is a new law about teachers. There's a new rule about teaching. So, you can learn through it and then understand quickly about what's happening and what you need to do. " (ETM1, Cameroon)*

ETF2 highlighted her positive experiences of getting help from a WeChat group about pets. She gathered a variety of information from the WeChat group about how to transfer pets as she needed to move to a lot of places with her pets. Even though she no longer lives in Nanchang, she still kept the WeChat group active so that she could offer the information she knew to people who need help.

*"There's a WeChat group of Filipinos who are living in Nanchang; that's Filipinos in Nanchang. And there is also a WeChat group, Filipinos in China, which is all Filipinos all over China. And I'm also a member of pets in Nanchang which includes basically all foreigners, as well as Chinese, who are alone with pets like cats and dogs, join that group. I'm still a member of that group because, just in case, if some members*

want to gain some information about how to send their cats and dogs to their home country, or how to transport them to another city. My cats had actually been to many cities because when I left China, I had to send them to a friend. So when I left Nanchang and moved to Wuhu in Anhui province, I had to transport them by train through a pet travel agency. And then I left for another city, and I had to leave my cats again with a friend. So, in another city, we used the WeChat group to get information from other foreigners to know how they transfer. Until now, even though I'm not in Nanchang now, I'm still a member of that group of pets in Nanchang. I learned some information about Nanchang when I first arrived in Nanchang, like where to go, which restaurant is nice, and stuff like that. "

(ETF2, The Philippines)

Besides acquiring information, expatriate teachers in need, such as ETF3 (Spain), mentioned that expatriate groups also share information about activities that she would like to take part in.

*"There are a lot of information exchange groups on WeChat. I am a member of the group of Nanchang. This group provides some information for you. You can ask any question, and they provide you with the information. If you have a doubt, they can give you some solutions sometimes. Because in those groups, for example, I wanted to go to a swimming pool. Then I will ask, hey guys, have you had experience in a swimming pool in Nanchang? Would you recommend me to go and swim? Do you know a good one, and do you know the prices? Do you know when they are open? Can you send me some contacts? And they will provide you with some information. Also, they like organising activities. It's a group of a little bit of everything action. There are different groups. For example, there's one group about food. Sometimes we organise different kinds of cuisine activities. Then there's another group about the second-hand exchange. There's another group about*

*outdoor activities which I love to join with them. The activities are like sports, bowling or just going to the cinema, or going to the theatre. " (ETF3, Spain)*

To undertake online observation, the researcher has joined three groups on WeChat that are made up of expatriates. The study discovered that the majority of expatriate teachers prefer reading the news and information shared by others in the group rather than engaging in conversation. This finding was consistent with their statements during the interviews, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Although there is only one active user, ETM4 (United States), he frequently shares aspects of his everyday life in the group, asks questions and offers suggestions to others. Plates 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 below illustrate the details of ETM4 asking questions in the WeChat group.

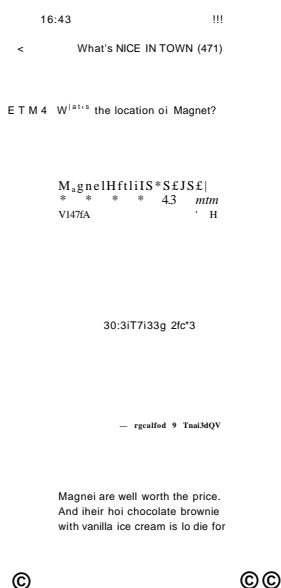


Plate 4.4 WeChat Group Chatting Page of ETM4 Asking for Information on Restaurant

16:58 !!

< What's NICE IN TOWN (471)

F T M 4 " s s y p " e e a having a Christmas dinner this year?

2023^12^36 10 5d

Sheraton has sth but one would have to contact the hotel (or mere details.

is snyplace having a Christmas dinner this year?



Plate 4.5 WeChat Group Chatting Page of ETM4 Asking about Activity

What's NICE IN TOWN [4711]      What's NICE IN TOWN [4711]

Anyone know a place to get kosher salt? Hs large grain salt,      j \* \* \* g Fm

Have you tried taobao? I think I on « got rt. rn SM i' I can 'nxJ the link tomorrow.



Memorable Christ mas FamSy Galhei ng      Quite often you can use English with taobao, but sometimes von get expensive results. Translating first usually works better.

Imiiimji Family Ggrwn ^B      Frobrmuft? :-: =: Knuanlo tna group cluu

t HsDuwVil Jil      GikWUCA j ←< StuDid.in\*Wijhu (a in\* poopmu

©

Plate 4.6 WeChat Group Chatting Pages of ETM4 Asking Questions

In the WeChat group, ETM4 could typically get answers to his questions from other users, and some of them would even offer advice that would greatly help him in his day-to-day activities. When ETM4 discovered the answer to an issue that someone

else was facing, he would also offer assistance. The plates below depict ETM4's specific responses to queries in the WeChat group.

< What's NICE IN TOWN 1471)  
ISM  
hi =>,"iyui id. uofrs anyone know of a good place around Hongqitian Jar massage, m u , ho\* springs and so? Thanks ^

ETM^Tfanmu Hot Spctfig Hold

**ETM4xtimmwm& mints\***

E7>4 «hij utati, but it's got a good

&B <\*\*\*»

I like Fianmu hot swings too. Buy tickets online, it's cheaper.

©

© 0

Plate 4.7 WeChat Group Chatting Page of ETM4 Answering about Hot Spring Place

16:59 ::\*  
< What's NICE IN TOWN (471)

Hello, what time does Starbucks open in the city? Is it 6 am?

ETM4  
Most are 10am!

I know some like the one is Sams cluu is usually ooen by e am last time I was there. Never tried to go earlier though. But I think they usually open earlier as many people grab a coffee before going to work

1 The one by the lwin towers opens at 7 30 that's the earliest in the city for that chain

1/17 03:25

®

§i>0

Plate 4.8 WeChat Group C latching Page of ETM4 Answering about Opening Hours



Plate 4.9 WeChat Group Chatting Page of ETM4 Offering Assistance

In addition to exchanging information in the WeChat group, ETM4 also engages in some small talk with other members. The following plates show the details.



Plate 4.10 WeChat Group Chatting Page of ETM4 Talking about Cat

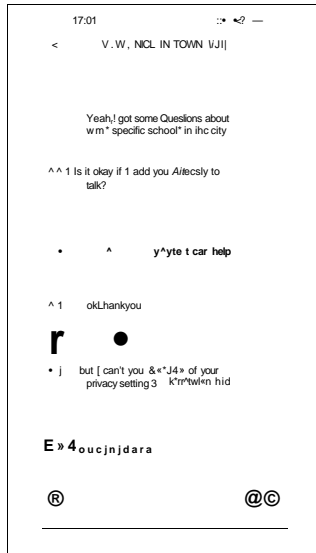


Plate 4.11 WeChat Group Chatting Page of ETM4 Talking about Food

When asked whether he would like to join any expatriate groups on WeChat, ETM5 (Unite States), the only responder who had not joined any groups, indicated that he would be willing to join these expatriate groups. The researcher informed ETM5 that she could invite him to some of the expatriate groups as the researcher has already joined a few groups for her online observations. After joining the groups, ETM5 participated in some discussions and found some solutions through the WeChat groups. The following plate 4.12 shows the information about restaurants in Nanchang that ETM5 was interested in, which was shared in the group.

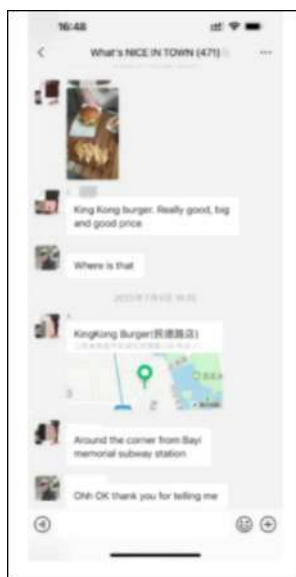


Plate 4.12 WeChat Group Chatting Page of ETM5 Asking for Information on a Restaurant

Besides getting the answers regarding some daily matters, the researcher also invited ETM5 to a WeChat group that posted work-related information. Plate 4.13 shows that ETM5 expressed his interest in some of the recruitment announcements in the group.

<p>17:05</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NCJobs (315)</p> <p>Salary 28-30k aftertax</p> <p>Line 6 qing nian lu subway station Need a native speaker Start On August Salary 30k per month Provide working visa</p> <p>Line 2 dong zhi men subway station</p> <p>Need a native speaker Pay holidays Pay insurance Salary 28-33k</p> <p>Line 6 chang ying subway station Pay International insurance Children attend school free of charge. Pay holidays Salary 28-31k after tax</p> <p>There is more offers if u Interested contact me asap</p> <p>WeChat ID : ALVA0627</p> <p>Interesting</p> <p style="font-size: small;">Full time high school job Need teacher who can teach Economics and IL,</p>	<p>17:03</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NCJobs (315)</p> <p>2023¥12H30B 19:48</p> <p>I need 4 male and 3 female models for commercial shooting 3-4 days Date:start from 3 or 4,5,6,7 City:Nanchang Shooting: Commercial ad shooting if you or your friends have time Contact me on wechat: Yaxir36</p> <p>Thank you</p> <p>^ ' I B I am interested how much</p> <p>Good evening ladies and gentlemen</p> <p>If anyone wants authentic and original cuban cigars can contact me (only 4 boxes left)</p> <p>ETM5Yaxir36 can contact me</p> <p>2023SM2B30B 20:1S</p> <p><i>XMzift</i></p>
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Plate 4.13 WeChat Group Chatting Page of ETM5 Asking for Recruitment Information

Social media applications provide expatriate teachers with multiple avenues for sharing information. Seeking and spreading information is an important motive, and all participants identified this as an important need. Before travelling to China, they looked up news and information about Chinese culture on social media, and once they arrived there, they began sharing the news and information. The WeChat group for expatriates has proven to be a great resource for exchanging messages, and it has significantly helped expatriate teachers a lot in both their personal and professional lives.

#### 4.4.5 Widening Social Circle

Through the many events hosted by the WeChat online group, social networks also serve the purpose of expanding the social circles of expatriate teachers living abroad. Social media platforms have become spaces for the construction of communities and expression of identities (Alamri, 2018; Hyduk & Worrall, 2016; Mai, 2017). The WeChat group often hosts quiz evenings and other social gatherings that enable expatriate teachers to network. ETM3 (United Kingdom) discovered that creating various online groups and organising events for individuals to come together was highly beneficial for fostering a sense of community among expatriates. ETF3 (Spain) shared the same feeling and expressed that she would love to participate in different kinds of activities organised by the WeChat group.

*"There are lots of groups offering information about restaurants, activities, or events that are going on. Like this quiz night, we have teams and stuff It's useful because it helps build those communities. " (ETM3, United Kingdom)*

*"Also, they like organising activities. It's a group of a little bit of everything action. There are different groups. For example, there's one group about food. Sometimes we organise different kinds of cuisine activities. Then there's another group about the second-hand exchange. There's another group about outdoor activities which I love to join with them. The activities are like sports, bowling or just going to the cinema, or going to the theatre. " (ETF3, Spain)*

Two Filipino teachers, ETF1 and ETF2, usually went out to eat with other individuals from the same country. ETF1 did not know any other foreigners in Nanchang apart from several Filipinos because she had only joined Filipino online groups and was busy with her work, resulting in having no time to socialise with others. ETF2 would take part in an activity if it was planned by a friend she already knew, which provided her the opportunity to get to know new people. Likewise, the case was true for ETM7 (Japan). Through an event hosted by his friend who ran a WeChat group, he got to know a lot of local and Japanese acquaintances.

*"I've joined several Filipino groups. There are also different group chats for Filipinos all over China. I only knew some Filipinos in Nanchang because I don't have time to know others for now. But I would go out with other Filipinos for meals together. " (ETF1, The Philippines)*

*"Our group is basically just about going out for a meal. When introduced by common friends, we would start communicating via WeChat as well. But I knew them through common friends, not through WeChat. " (ETF2, The Philippines) "" (ETF2, 38, The Philippines)*

*"There is a group whose owner is a friend of mine, and he would organise some activities. For example, he planted a cherry tree and invited a lot of people to see it. It's like a party. He invited me as well, and I met a lot of people there, both Japanese and Chinese. I met a lot of Chinese friends at that time." (ETM7, Japan)*

ETM4 (United States), the most active user in WeChat group among the participants, also attended several activities held by the group and met some people as a result. He considered that the expatriate circle in Nanchang was quite small, meaning that once he knew one expatriate, he would know everyone in that circle.

*"Most of the people in WeChat groups I've met at some expat community. But it's a quite small community, especially after COVID-19. It's pretty small in here. So, even if I don't know somebody, I know somebody who knows all the circles overlap somewhere. " (ETM4, United States)*

The researcher observed that ETM4 frequently participated in the activities organised by the WeChat group during her online observations. The following Plate 4.14 shows that ETM4, as an established member, was encouraging other people to attend an upcoming activity.

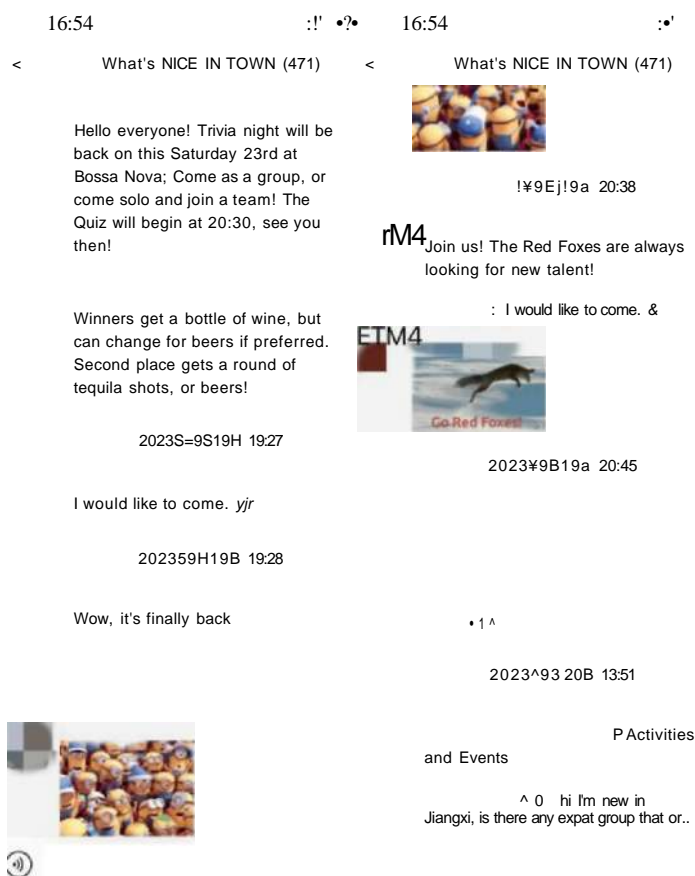


Plate 4.14 WeChat Group Chatting Page of ETM4 Participating in Activities

Overall, the expansion of expatriate teachers' social circles and opportunities to meet new people has been greatly facilitated by the events and activities hosted in WeChat online groups. Even though some teachers may lack the time for socialising, they still would like to make some friends through the activities held by the groups. A few teachers may choose to participate in the activities by themselves, while others preferred to have friends introduce them. Widening their social circle is another important aspect of socialisation that meets the needs of expatriate teachers.

#### 4.4.6 Summary

Social networks offer various aspects of help to expatriate teachers. The most common function of these social networks for expatriate teachers is facilitating daily communication with friends and family. Whether using Chinese social media or foreign social media platforms, these tools are essential for teachers to keep in touch

with local people and individuals in their hometown. The utilisation of social media has become an integral part of the everyday lives of expatriate teachers. Social media are used for transactions such as to make payment, top up mobile phones credit balances, buy tickets and more. Moreover, the WeChat groups dedicated to expatriates serve as significant platforms for expatriate teachers to exchange information and news, participate in activities and events and widen their social circles. In addition to these daily functions, the ability to form groups within social networks helps expatriate teachers to manage their students and deal with work-related matters more effectively.

#### **4.4.7 Attitudes towards Social Networking Sites**

Despite the advantages provided by social networks in assisting expatriate teachers in the above-mentioned aspects, the attitudes of expatriate teachers towards these platforms significantly influence the usage of social networks in the adaptation process of expatriate teachers living in China. Individuals have different mindsets and perspectives on social media. For instance, ETF2 (The Philippines) and ETM7 (Japan) viewed social media as beneficial to them, whereas others acknowledged its positive effects and simultaneously expressed their awareness of its potential negative impacts that can be harmful to people.

Although ETF1 (The Philippines) felt that social media greatly aided her adjustment process in China, she also felt that seeing her relatives' posts on social media, particularly around festivals, would make her experience feelings of homesickness and depression.

*"I don't think social media has had any negative effect on my adaptation here. But sometimes, especially if it's a holiday, I would miss home when I see my family on social media. If I talk to them through video calls, I will keep on smiling like I'm happy. But after I hang up the call, I might cry. " (ETF2, The Philippines)*

On the other hand, ETM1 (Cameroon) encountered a lot of content on social media that he preferred not to view. He expressed his concern that the idea of social

media showing you whatever you choose to view or not might cause anxiety in some people. He believed that some of this content might generate anxiety due to exposure to extremely terrible news, which might instil fear of unfamiliar societies.

*"I feel like social media has some downsides like sometimes you see things that you don't want to see, and this can be depressing. You may see a video about something really bad happening, and it makes you feel a little fear about going outside. The negative effect is just seeing things that are traumatising; bad things happening to other people can make you feel sad. "* (ETM1, Cameroon)

ETM2 (United States), who usually relied on phone calls to connect with his family and friends and only used a little bit of social media sometimes to speak with friends, felt that information obtained from social media could be untrustworthy, and that he would prefer to obtain more accurate information by asking people in their immediate vicinity.

*"I prefer talking face-to-face instead of through social media. I don't use social media to search for any information. Social media is incredibly unreliable for that. I don't really think social media had offered any help to me here except for the payment. It's so convenient to be able to just scan compared to having to take out of money or a card, all you have to do is scan the phone. That is probably the most convenient part of it. If I'm looking for concrete information, I will simply ask friends, and I will not rely on social media. "* (ETM2, United States)

Similar to ETM2, ETF3 (Spain) also mentioned that she preferred to inquire people and expressed her scepticism about the accuracy of information obtained via social media. In addition to this, she was worried that social media might lead to addiction and excessive time consumption. This same sentiment was also echoed by ETM4 (United States).

*"I would say sometimes the information is useful, but I'd rather ask people. I prefer talking face-to-face because sometimes I'm not sure if the information is correct. So I think it's better to get the right information talking to people. We Chat is okay because it's only used for communication. But I don't actually use Instagram, Facebook, and stuff like that. If I really want to keep in touch with my friends, I just use WhatsApp and I keep in touch with friends whom I really care about. I feel sometimes it is just a waste of time using Facebook, Instagram or TikTok For me, I don't have that much feeling about social media because I feel that if I want to share my life with people who care about me, we will talk, and they already know about my life because we talk quite often. I'm not a big fan of social media. And I think people can spend crazy time watching videos on social networks. Maybe in the beginning, you're looking for something. Maybe in the beginning, it was useful, and you could get what you wanted, but eventually you got addicted. Just in 10 minutes, you found what you wanted to look for. That's good. But then you spend like two more hours just looking at videos, just because it's fun. And I'm not saying this is wrong. I'm just saying it's okay; spending some time looking at videos is fine. But eventually, I feel it's not good to waste so much time on it. " (ETF3, Spain)*

*"Chinese social media, WeChat, has been nothing but positive. Overall, social media is kind of like crack, right? It's very addictive. Do you know the term doom scrolling? Doom scrolling is like when you go on Facebook, and you were reading it on this website for a long time. And you're going to scroll all down. So, doom scrolling is just an absolute time killer, and I've spent a full day doing it." (ETM4, United States)*

ETM3 (United Kingdom), who only started using smartphones and SNS in China, remarked that living a life in the country without smartphones and SNS would

be difficult. He expressed his opinion that social media would produce a new breed of narcissists. Since he believed that personal information is private, he found it quite unsettling when individuals shared personal information publicly on social media.

*"I use WeChat. When I think about social media, I think of things like Facebook No, I don't use other social media except WeChat. I use WeChat because you have to use WeChat. There's no option. Living in China, if you didn't have a smartphone, you'd struggle. That's the only social media I used. I generally don't like social media. I don't post anything. I actually think social media has actually done more harm to people. I think it has created a generation of narcissists. People are posting on Instagram their fake lives and all of these sorts of things just to get likes and accolades and approval. I think it's awful, but that's just a personal thing. I'm very uncomfortable with it. I don't like to share my life with people. This is private. I don't want to show off about my life or anything. I have no interest in this, and when I see people do it, I just think it's awful. " (ETM3, United Kingdom)*

Aside from the aforementioned views, ETM6 (United States) claimed that the WeChat group for expatriates was not useful for him as he had not participated in any of their events nor had received any useful information from the group. Overall, based on the aforementioned perspectives of expatriate teachers, it appears that while all of them acknowledged the value of social media, some of them still held reservations about the use of SNS.

#### **4.5 Summary of the Chapter**

The entire research process, from sample searching and creating interview questions to developing an observation plan and pre-testing, all provided a strong basis for this research from the very beginning. Although the researcher had encountered challenges during the preparation process, the official observations and interview sessions were conducted successfully, yielding useful data. According to the

data of this study, thematic analysis emerged as a simple, adaptable and increasingly popular, well-liked technique for analysing qualitative data. Its main advantage is the fact that it is a methodical and repeatable procedure that is guided by research questions to identify and understand key aspects of the data. Thematic analysis offers systematic methods for deriving codes and themes from qualitative data, making it both approachable and methodical. Codes represent the tiniest analytical units that capture intriguing characteristics of the data pertinent to the research topic (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The researcher went over the content and annotated the transcript while coding it. The researcher transcribed the headings and notes onto a coding sheet after reading through the material several times, which is often necessary for this step. The next stage involved grouping the data by merging related headings into more inclusive categories, thus lowering the total number of categories. By using this procedure, the researcher was allowed to gain insights and deepen the comprehension of the subjects. Similar to other types of qualitative analysis, thematic analysis frequently necessitates extensive and repeated readings of the source material. In qualitative research, it is possible for theory to develop through the iterative analysis and categorisation of raw data.

This chapter addresses three research questions of this study. First, the incentives for expatriate teachers working in China include the job opportunities in the country, interest in China, advantages of working overseas and recommendation from others. Second, expatriate teachers have faced a number of obstacles in China, including linguistic barriers, cultural differences, disparities in the administrative framework of Chinese colleges, issues related to their personal and professional lives and policy discrepancies. Expatriate teachers used a variety of strategies to address these issues. The most significant support they received to go over the difficulties came from people in their immediate surroundings. Additional strategies that helped expatriate teachers' adaptation included localisation, optimistic thinking, self-identification, convenient tools and resources and cultural influences. Third, SNS has assisted expatriate teachers communicate on a regular basis, finish work-related tasks, get information, facilitate their daily life and widen their social circles. However, expatriate teachers did not rely too heavily on social media because they felt that the content on these platforms was untrustworthy, and were concerned that using them could take up too much time and cause bad emotional effects.

The next chapter will conclude the findings, contributions and limitations of this research. Suggestions for future research will also be listed in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This thesis sought to provide an in-depth understanding of the process of cross-cultural adaptation among expatriate teachers in Chinese colleges in Nanchang city. The thesis began by introducing the concept of cross-cultural adaptation, which encompasses the reasons individuals choose to work abroad and the cross-cultural adaptation experiences encountered by expatriate teachers. Different perspectives and research related to cross-cultural adaptation were discussed, leading to the formulation of three central research questions that address core gaps in the literature: (1) What motivates expatriate teachers to work in China? (2) How do expatriate teachers adapt to Chinese social culture and society? (3) How do SNS help expatriate teachers during their adaptation process in China? A qualitative methodology was adopted for this thesis. Eleven expatriate teachers, who were either currently teaching or had taught in Chinese colleges, were selected to participate in the research. Data were collected through one-to-one in-depth semi-structured interviews and online observations, which were conducted with each of the participants, and classroom observations were made during the expatriate teachers' class and off-campus interactions involving a subset of the participants. The participating teachers varied according to their length of stay in China. Thematic analysis was applied to the data to address each of the three research questions, with the findings presented in Chapter 4.

In this final chapter, the results reported in the previous chapters are summarised in order to draw conclusions about the cross-cultural adaptation of expatriate teachers in China, particularly in the academic context in China. This chapter begins by concluding the key findings of this research and discusses the contributions of this research both to theory and practice. The contributions are discussed based on the empirical results and findings of this research pertaining to the challenges encountered by expatriate teachers in China and the strategies they utilise during the cross-cultural adaptation process. The key limitations of the research are

also outlined. Some suggestions for future research that arose from the findings will be offered later. Finally, a brief conclusion will be summarised to end this chapter.

## **5.2 Conclusion of the Study**

Based on the findings presented in Chapter 4, this section concludes the three research objectives of this study, which are (1) to explore the motivations of expatriate teachers employed in China; (2) to understand the cross-cultural adaptation of expatriate teachers to Chinese social culture and society; (3) to analyse the usage of social networks in expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation process in China.

### **5.2.1 Motivations of Expatriate Teachers Working in China**

The first objective of this study is to explore the motivations of expatriate teachers working in China. The findings in this study suggest various types of motivations drive expatriates to come to China for employment. These motivations can be classified into host country motives and personal motives. Host country motives include benefits from working abroad, interest in China and job opportunities, whereas personal motives include the desire to experience a different lifestyle and recommendation from other people.

Numerous teachers asserted that expatriates could benefit significantly from working in China. In particular, some teachers believed that their working experiences in China have led to better living conditions and higher salaries. This is supported by numerous existing studies (Richardson & McKenna, 2006; Selmer & Luring, 2010), which suggests that financial gain is one of the driving forces influencing expatriation decisions. This study also found that several expatriate teachers viewed China as a highly safe society with relatively lower health care costs compared to the home countries of several expatriate teachers. This finding corresponds with findings from Al Ariss and Ozbilgin (2010) and Doherty et al. (2013), which indicate that self-initiated expatriates often seek security and access to quality healthcare when working abroad. However, their findings suggested that expatriates are motivated to work abroad as they move from developing countries to more developed countries, whereas this research highlights that the expatriate teachers coming to China were

from more developed countries than China. The researcher believes that this discrepancy may be attributed to the different timing of the research conducted and the unique context of China (Hofstede, 2011). Besides financial benefits that working in China provides, psychological factors also motivate expatriate teachers to work in China. The respect shown by Chinese students for their teachers, their willingness to learn and their serious attitude towards learning contribute to the expatriates' enjoyable teaching experience in China. Moreover, the complete autonomy and freedom to express one's individuality in the workplace in China are significant psychological benefits for expatriate teachers employed in China.

Consistent with previous studies (Cao, 2017; Huang, 2022), several expatriate teachers expressed their admiration for Chinese culture and their passion for China. Some of the teachers learned Chinese in their home countries, which fuelled their curiosity about China and motivated them to come and experience Chinese culture first-hand. Others had heard various things about China; therefore, they wanted to come and verify these claims for themselves. The findings of Napier and Taylor (2002), that self-initiated expatriates who had previously studied in a particular country often went back to strengthen their language abilities or learn more about local customs, were also proved by this research, as some teachers had previously studied in China as exchange students before and later returned to work in China again.

The more stable economic development and job market in China have made expatriate teachers felt more confident about the prospect of their career development in China compared to their home countries. Previous studies have indicated that China offers more job opportunities and better working conditions than other countries (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Huang, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021). Some teachers admitted they were laid off in their home countries, struggled to find a job and had no trust in the recent economic growth in their home countries. In contrast, China, especially in lower-tier cities of China, offered greater job prospects, less competition and better working conditions. This finding also supports the studies by Howe-Walsh and Schyns (2010) and Arifa et al. (2021), which suggest that when working and living conditions in their home countries were inadequate, expatriates would seek a different career opportunities in a host country that was better than their home country.

One of the key motivations for self-initiated expatriates is often a desire for adventure and exploration, which is consistent with previous studies (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010; Muir et al., 2014; Richardson & Mallon, 2005; Richardson & McKenna, 2006). Several expatriate teachers expressed their wish to travel, experience a new lifestyle, and step outside their comfort zones, despite the fact that working abroad can be challenging. While this motivation is a relatively personal reason, expatriate teachers also stated the part of this motive related to host country. Expatriate teachers viewed China as having a rich and distinct culture that is not heavily influenced by other nations, which fuelled their desire to immerse themselves in and learn about Chinese culture and experience new lifestyles in China. This finding is supported by Cao (2017), noting that expatriates come to China out of the reason of the desire for travel and exploration of China.

Some expatriate teachers were recommended to come to China by their supervisors or professors who were familiar with the country when they were nearing graduation from college. Others were introduced to the idea by their friends who are interested in China or who had already worked in the country for some time. The literature suggests that personal tie and social networks play a significant role in why expatriates relocate to other countries (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Chen & Zhu, 2018, 2020; Huang, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021) .

### **5.2.2 Cross-Cultural Adaptation Experiences in China**

The findings regarding the second objective, to understand the cross-cultural adaptation of expatriate teachers to Chinese social culture and society, are divided into two parts: the challenges encountered in China and the adaptation strategies employed. Consistent with prior findings (Jenkins, 2022; Meng, 2017; Savva, 2017; Yi et al., 2020), the most significant challenge faced by expatriate teachers in China is language barrier. Seeking help from others is the main strategy that expatriate teachers utilised to adapt cross-culturally. This supports previous research findings (McLeod-Chambless, 2021; Yi et al., 2020), which indicates that forging relationships with students, Chinese co-workers and locals enhances expatriate teachers' intercultural competence.

### 5.2.2.1 *Challenges Expatriate Teachers Encountered in China*

The first and most significant challenge encountered by expatriate teachers in both their personal and professional lives in China is language barrier. In contrast to Froese et al. (2012)'s finding that host national language ability negatively impacts expatriate teachers' work (given that they were supposed to teach foreign languages), this study found that the inability to speak Chinese has complicated their work. Several teachers asserted that without the ability to communicate in Chinese, students struggled to comprehend the class thoroughly, forcing the teachers to adopt alternative teaching approaches to keep their classes running smoothly. The researcher also observed difficulties when expatriate teachers tried to introduce traditional cakes and their related cultural significance using the target teaching language, the students were unable to understand at all. And due to their language limitations of speaking Chinese, the teachers were also unable to explain it in Chinese to students.

Besides affecting their professional lives, language problem further complicated personal lives for expatriate teachers. According to Froese et al. (2012)'s findings, expatriate teachers often experience difficulties completing everyday tasks due to their lack of proficiency in the local language. The inability to speak and read Chinese has made it difficult for expatriate teachers to order food, comprehend information written in Chinese and interact with friends, neighbours and strangers. This language barrier eventually hinders their capacity to understand Chinese culture and adapt cross-culturally. Moreover, the various dialects spoken across different regions of China has complicated matters for expatriate teachers who were otherwise proficient in basic communication.

Another challenge recognised by each expatriate teacher is cultural differences. The varying culture, manner, the way of interpersonal interactions and perspectives on privacy present additional challenges for expatriate teachers in China. Chinese traditional culture, which emphasises communitarianism and hierarchical power relations (Xu et al., 2022) and contrasts sharply with the home cultures of many expatriate teachers, is one of the main challenges for expatriate teachers to adapt. Chinese people's different way of interaction present certain difficulties to expatriate teachers (Yi et al., 2020). Several teachers admitted that Chinese people are often kind and easy to get to be acquainted with, but it can be difficult to get into their inner circle. This observation provides support to prior findings (Braun Stfelcova et al.,

2023; Chu & Morrison, 2011; Jenkins, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021), indicating that expatriates struggle to form really close friendships with the locals, as the deep-rooted polite distance prevents expatriates from deeper integration into Chinese culture. The closer social interaction which is very typical of Chinese society poses additional challenges to several expatriate teachers due to their differences from those in their home countries.

Several expatriate teachers expressed discomfort feelings when encountering uncivilised behaviours, such as queue jumping or leaving trash on dining tables. This finding aligns with Jenkins (2022)'s finding, which stated that expatriate teachers often felt uncomfortable about local mannerisms they witnessed in the cities in China. An interesting finding from this study is that the expatriate teachers from the UK and the US hold completely opposing perspectives on the politeness of Chinese people towards strangers. British teachers tend to view Chinese people as less courteous towards strangers, while American teachers believe that Chinese people are more respectful. The researcher believes that this discrepancy in the findings likely stems from the differences in social norms, manners and behaviours of people in expatriate teachers' host nation. Another cultural difference encountered by expatriate teachers involves different perspectives on privacy. Several expatriate teachers expressed that Chinese people were overly curious about foreigners and often asking them questions that were too personal, which was an invasion of privacy to them. In contrast, it is common for expatriate teachers to change clothes in certain situations, such as changing into swimsuits before swimming, while this behaviour of exposing one's body to others, even in this kind of situation, may be viewed as inappropriate by Chinese people's standards.

China's distinct college administrative system also poses as challenges encountered by expatriate teachers during their work. Several expatriate teachers mentioned that, unlike in higher education institutions in other countries, the primary focus in Chinese colleges is mainly on the teacher, with students expected to just follow their instructions without much individual initiative. This finding provides support to prior findings (Jenkins, 2022; Yi et al., 2020), indicating that expatriate teachers may rather struggle to be accustomed to this teaching approach when they first begin their teaching work in Chinese colleges due to this discrepancy. Moreover, Chinese college administration structure that requires teachers to handle many administrative tasks besides teaching and research duties often burdens expatriate

teachers and becomes an obstacle encountered by expatriate teachers in their work life. Whereas, this kind of administration system is less prevalent in other countries where teachers can solely concentrate on their teaching and research duties.

Expatriate teachers also encounter several issues in their daily life which have been concluded as daily life challenges. Consistent with prior findings (Chu & Morrison, 2011; Meng, 2017), differences in eating habits and weather can pose difficulties in expatriate teachers' experiences. For instance, the spicy food that is so popular and favoured in regions such as Nanchang can present a significant problem for expatriate teachers who are unable to manage it. Additionally, China's extremely severe winters can create difficulties for expatriate teachers from countries with warmer climates. Regarding workplace challenges, several teachers found that it is challenging to familiarise themselves with the campus environment, educational resources and daily schedules without a proper training session or orientation programme.

Finally, Chinese policies pertaining to foreign nationals in China represent the last challenge for expatriate teachers. Bureaucratic procedures, repetitive documentation requirements, imprecise procedures and inhospitable policies towards foreigners have presented additional difficulties to the experiences of expatriate teachers. This finding supports previous findings (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Huang, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021) regarding the burdensome immigration procedures and extended intervals for renewing permits and visas, all of which add difficulty to expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation experiences.

#### *5.2.2.2 Adaptation Strategies of Expatriate Teachers*

A single strategy utilised by all expatriate teachers is seeking help from people. Expatriate teachers forge relationships with students, Chinese co-workers and locals to enhance their intercultural competence (McLeod-Chambless, 2021; Yi et al., 2020). All expatriate teachers in this study agreed that support from foreign and Chinese co-workers, as well as from Chinese and international students, local and foreign friends, neighbours and even strangers, is crucial for their work and daily life in China. However, expatriate teachers felt marginalised because their opinions were not valued by their Chinese colleagues, a finding from this study that contrasts with the research

by Bunnell and Poole (2022). The researcher believes that this difference is due to the varying expectations and career development positions of expatriate teachers, as well as the diverse administrative structures of different colleges.

Another adaptation strategy adopted by expatriate teachers is localisation. Initially, cross-cultural adaptation can be challenging but the things that are different from those in their own countries tend to become easier with time as they learn to deal with the situation by accepting and adopting local solutions (Marini & Xu, 2021; Yi et al., 2020). Several expatriate teachers learned Chinese to improve communication with people and deepen their understanding about Chinese culture. Acquiring the host country's national language is a form of localisation and is considered to be a means of enhancing one's intercultural competence (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Kim, 2001; Masgoret, 2006; McLeod-Chambless, 2021). The more time expatriate teachers stayed in Nanchang, the more they enjoyed Chinese food, implying that the time spent in host nation can ease the difficulties with the overall transition (Roskell, 2013). This localisation strategy is also applied by expatriate teachers in their work, as they utilise activities tailored to the needs of Chinese students and incorporate some basic Chinese words and phrases into their classes. By doing this, expatriate teachers can grab the attention of students in the class to better engaged in learning and enhance their teaching effectiveness.

A psychological strategy that can assist with cross-cultural adaptation is positive thinking. Several expatriate teachers believed that they had successfully adapted to life in China because they were excellent at adjusting to new situations and possessed strong self-confidence. Positive personal traits are regarded as a useful strategy for addressing challenges in the adaptation process in China (Yi et al., 2020).

Self-identification is another strategy that helps expatriate teachers maintain ties to their home culture and way of life while in China (Yi et al., 2020). Several teachers asserted that they continue to behave according to their home culture when faced with behaviours and manners in Chinese society that they find intolerable, such as queue jumping. In terms of work, some expatriate teachers navigate the balance between the school's criteria and their own beliefs by adopting a neutral approach to align with college standards (Tippins et al., 2006).

The use of convenient apps and facilities is another adaptation strategy that expatriate teachers utilise to simplify their lives in China. Several teachers attested to the significant value and support that smartphones provide for them, both in work and

daily life. This provides support to prior findings indicating that expatriate teachers either actively or passively employ software, local resources and cross-cultural or local resources to overcome the challenges they are facing (Yi et al., 2020). In addition, the advanced infrastructure in China has made it easier for expatriate teachers to explore every corner of the country and gain a better understanding of Chinese culture.

The distinctive aspects of Chinese culture, along with the similarities between Chinese culture and expatriate teachers' home cultures, compose the final adaptation strategy utilised by expatriate teachers to adapt cross-culturally. The strict adherence of Chinese students to college regulations reduces the challenges faced by expatriate teachers in their work. The excellent public security and secure living conditions in China make expatriate teachers feel comfortable residing within Chinese society. Several Asian teachers in this study believed that the cultural similarities between China and their own cultures facilitated their life in China, countering the Cultural Distance Paradox and supporting prior findings (A. Isakovic & Forseth Whitman, 2013) that suggest transition is facilitated by similarities between the host culture and one's own culture.

Based on Berry's modes of acculturation, the results showed that expatriate teachers were willing to accept the mainstream culture in their daily lives and interactions with Chinese individuals. Although expatriate teachers maintained some elements of their original culture in response to some cultural differences, they paid significant attention to their adaptation of the mainstream culture. As a consequence, participants in this study tend to adopt "integration" mode. The results from the interviews as well as the online and classroom observations of the expatriate teachers can provide insight into the interaction mode chosen by the mainstream cultural group. The results indicated that students are willing to interact with expatriate teachers, while expatriate teachers greatly rely on mainstream cultural groups for assistance. All kinds of interactive indicators show that the mainstream cultural groups objectively have a tendency to adopt an "integration" mode.

### 5.2.3 Social Networking Sites Usage in Cross-Cultural Adaptation

The third objective of this research is to analyse the usage of SNS in the cross-cultural adaptation process of expatriate teachers in China. Although the increased interest into SNS, only a few of exploratory research related the usage of it with cross-cultural adaptation. Based on data collected from interview and online observation, the present study fills this void by investigating the usage of SNS in terms of the gratifications within the theoretical framework of the U&G theory. The findings of this study show that expatriate teachers have utilised SNS for various gratifications, including daily communication, dealing with work, facilitating life, acquiring information, and widening their social circles in China. Although SNS provides substantial assistance to expatriate teachers in many aspects, their attitudes towards these SNS platforms vary.

All expatriate teachers in this research opted to use SNS for socialising. Some expatriate teachers rapidly adapted to Chinese social media apps and even recommended them to their family and friends in their home countries. Meanwhile, other participants preferred to use Chinese social media to communicate with Chinese individuals while relying on foreign social media platforms to keep in touch with family members and friends in their home countries. This finding aligns with prior studies (Alamri, 2018; Hyduk & Worrall, 2016; Vaiman & Haslberger, 2013), which highlighted that through social media, people can maintain contact with friends and family who live abroad and people they have met in person, as well as relatives and friends who are not in China.

Besides daily communication, expatriate teachers also utilise SNS to deal with work-related matters. The participants used WeChat to communicate with students and co-workers about work-related matters, QQ to handle assignments and manage students more effectively and TikTok to bridge the cultural gaps with Chinese students. Therefore, SNS provides significant assistance in expatriate teachers' work (Vaiman & Haslberger, 2013).

Seeking convenience and social support are two important sought-after needs that drive expatriate teachers to choose SNS. This is in line with prior studies (Canhilal et al., 2022; Crowne et al., 2015), which state that online supportive social networks and information society networks can provide practical support to expatriates in host countries. Expatriate teachers rely on Chinese social media

platforms for dealing with almost all daily responsibilities, such as making payments, ordering food and topping up phone credits.

Moreover, expatriate teachers have used SNS to fulfil their need of seeking information both before and after arriving in China. This finding is supported by prior findings (Canhilal et al., 2022; Crowne et al., 2015; Mai, 2017), which indicates that SNS serves as channels of information for expatriate teachers. Besides news and information about Chinese culture, WeChat online groups provide expatriate teachers with abundant resources in both their personal and professional lives in China.

Widening their social circles is another reason why expatriate teachers choose to utilise SNS for socialising. Social media has emerged as a platform for the construction of communities and expression of identities (Alamri, 2018; Hyduk & Worrall, 2016; Mai, 2017). The events and activities hosted through WeChat online groups make it possible for expatriate teachers to meet and get to know new acquaintances and expand their social networks.

However, most expatriate teachers in this research believed that the usage of SNS in their cross-cultural adaptation process was not as crucial as it could be, primarily due to concerns over the trustworthiness and reliability of the information available on these platforms. They often relied heavily on information from acquaintances instead. Additionally, issues such as addiction and excessive time spent on SNS can have negative effects. Moreover, negative emotional effects, such as depression, anxiety and homesickness, which are brought about by using SNS might complicate expatriate teachers' ability to adapt cross-culturally.

### **5.3 Contributions**

This research contributes to our understanding of the cross-cultural adaptation experiences of expatriate teachers and their interaction with the use of SNS. By exploring their personal experiences and perspectives as expatriate teachers working in colleges in China, this study responds to the calls for further research into the migration experiences of expatriates in China (Hofstede, 2011), especially the migration experiences of expatriate teachers (Wang, 2011), and establishes a connection between cross-cultural adaptation experience and SNS (Nardon et al., 2015; Selmer et al., 2022). This research reveals and provides a broader view on the

evolving usage of SNS in the cross-cultural adaptation process in the context of expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation experience.

Ultimately, this research concludes the motivations behind expatriate teachers relocating to China, reveals the challenges they face during cross-cultural adjustments, outlines the adaptation strategies of cross-cultural adjustment and identifies the usage of SNS in cross-cultural adaptation process. The key findings diagram (see Figure 5.1), developed through this qualitative study of expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation experiences, specifies the reasons for their relocation to China, their experiences of cross-cultural adjustment and the practical applications of SNS. This research not only provides valuable insights for college students and the public in China but also offers strategies and solutions for colleges, government policy makers, and most importantly, for the expatriate teachers themselves.

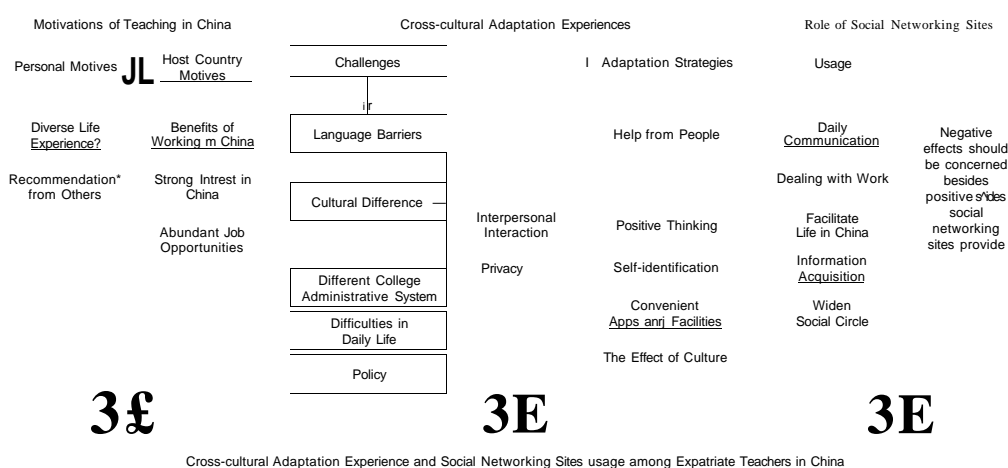


Figure 5.1 Key Findings of Cross-cultural Adaptation and SNS Usage

### 5.3.1 The Implications of the Theory Guiding the Study

First, this research concludes the motivations for expatriate teachers moving to China, thereby theoretically contributing to existing literature in relation to cross-cultural adaptation and expatriates, especially expatriate teachers. Motivations of expatriate teachers coming to China include the benefits gained from working in China (Al Ariss & Ozbilgin, 2010; Doherty et al., 2013; Richardson & McKenna, 2006; Selmer & Luring, 2010), the opportunity to experience a different lifestyle

(Cao, 2017; Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010; Inkson et al., 1997; Muir et al., 2014), interest in China (Cao, 2017; Huang, 2022; Napier & Taylor, 2002), greater job opportunities (Arifa et al., 2021; Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Chen & Zhu, 2020; Huang, 2022) and recommendation from others (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Chen & Zhu, 2018, 2020; Huang, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021). This finding is particularly significant to the existing literature pertaining to expatriates in China given that the policy of travel restrictions and border closures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic had reduced China's appeal as a destination for talent and investment (Wang, 2024).

Second, this research reveals the challenges and adaptation strategies of expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation in China. This research shows the main challenges encountered by expatriate teachers in China, namely language problem (Jenkins, 2022; Meng, 2017; Savva, 2017; Yi et al., 2020), cultural differences (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Jenkins, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021; Xu et al., 2022), differences in the college administrative system (Chen & Zhu, 2022; Huang, 2022; Jenkins, 2022; Yi et al., 2020), difficulties in daily life (Chu & Morrison, 2011; Meng, 2017) and policy-related issues (Braun Stfelcova et al., 2023; Huang, 2022; Marini & Xu, 2021). In response to the challenges, expatriate teachers adopt various adaptation strategies, including seeking help from people (Chu & Morrison, 2011; McLeod-Chambless, 2021; Savva, 2017; Yi et al., 2020), localisation (Marini & Xu, 2021; McLeod-Chambless, 2021; Roskell, 2013; Yi et al., 2020), maintaining a positive mindset (Yi et al., 2020), self-identification (Tippins et al., 2006; Yi et al., 2020), utilising convenient apps and facilities (Yi et al., 2020) and adapting to the effect of cultural differences (A. Isakovic & Forseth Whitman, 2013; Babiker et al., 1980; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Ward & Kennedy, 1993).

By identifying a new and important factor of expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation that has not been previously investigated in past research, this study expands the existing literature on the factors influencing expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation from the perspective of SNS application, revealing the results which challenge prior literature. Although SNS has helped expatriate teachers in daily communication (Alamri, 2018; Hyduk & Worrall, 2016; Vaiman & Haslberger, 2013), dealing with work (Vaiman & Haslberger, 2013), facilitating life in China (Canhilal et al., 2022; Crowne et al., 2015), acquiring information (Canhilal et al., 2022; Crowne et al., 2015; Mai, 2017) and widening social circle (Alamri, 2018; Hyduk & Worrall,

2016; Mai, 2017), the usage of SNS is not as vital as other factors in cross-cultural adaptation. Moreover, expatriate teachers' attitudes towards SNS vary individually. From the perspective of expatriate teachers, besides the benefits SNS offers, it also has some negative effects, such as negative emotional states, waste of time and unreliable information.

### **5.3.2 Practical Contributions**

Besides its theoretical contributions to cross-cultural adaptation and expatriates research field made by this research, it also offers practical insights for expatriates who are currently in China or who are considering a relocation to China, as well as for colleges and government policy makers in China.

#### *For Colleges*

This research provides valuable insights for colleges with expatriate teachers to help design human resource management interventions and develop successful strategies to enhance cross-cultural adaptation and retention of expatriate teachers.

Human resource management should give preference to candidates with specific characteristics, such as high proficiency in the host language, respect for host country culture, a positive mindset, supportive networks and a favourable attitude towards using local SNS. This approach can help screen out candidates who may perform well in the domestic environment but struggle with cross-cultural interactions and adaptation. Ultimately, this will help reduce unnecessary costs associated with failed international job assignments and improve expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation and retention (Jyoti & Kour, 2017). Human resource managers should be ready to offer additional assistance to applicants who may lack certain characteristics if colleges are unable to reject particular candidate groupings due to concerns about talent maximisation. Therefore, this situation can ultimately reduce the amount of talent pool available to them (Vance & Paik, 2002). It is important to understand that similarities or differences in culture with the host nation should not be a significant concern. Colleges, on the other hand, ought to offer support equally to expatriate teachers, regardless of whether they share cultural similarities with the host country.

By providing pre-assignment training in cultural knowledge and the language of the host nation, human resource management at colleges can improve the cultural understanding and language proficiency of expatriate teachers before they officially start working. Human resource management should assist in several important areas of the work, including daily routine support, induction, language and cultural training, multifaceted support for grant applications, spouse and child care, as well as international and local connection facilitation and assigning assistants.

It is especially crucial for human resource management to foster a positive mindset towards the use of local SNS. In order to cultivate this mindset towards using local SNS and help expatriates integrate local SNS into their daily work and lives, human resource management should provide expatriates with personalised training and consultation on using these local SNS platforms, along with information about local mobile apps. This is especially important for newcomers and those who do not speak the language of host country. Additionally, in order to aid expatriate teachers acclimate more effectively and swiftly to their new surroundings, human resource management should place a high value on language instruction in the hostcountry, including regional dialects.

Moreover, human resource management should provide correlative introductions and guiding instructions to help local co-workers and students get along and interact positively with expatriate teachers. The attitudes of students and local co-workers also significantly affect the cross-cultural adaptation of expatriate teachers. Increased mutual understanding between local teachers and students can improve the quality and effectiveness of expatriate teachers' work.

#### *For Government Policy Makers*

This research offers insights for government policy makers to better support and cater to the needs of expatriate teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds in enhancing their cross-cultural adaptation. From the standpoint of national policy, government policy makers should emphasise the status and function of expatriate teachers in China, establishing policies that are advantageous to them. There are still not many policies in place in China to retain, encourage and develop expatriate teachers although the country has developed and executed numerous measures to

attract and hire expatriate teachers as well as reopen its borders after the COVID-19 outbreak. Government policy makers have not thoroughly considered the uncertain status of expatriate teachers within China's national policies (Li & Xue, 2021). It is imperative for government policy makers to enact more targeted national policies, create a friendlier atmosphere, remove social and cultural barriers and actively support and deepen the integration of expatriate teachers into Chinese society in China. Certain national initiatives may include improving the compatibility of identification system and streamlining application and approval processes for work permits, residence permits and social and health insurance. Furthermore, it is imperative to construct a career development process and incentive structure that is both sustainable and long-standing to attract and retain expatriate teachers. Government policy makers could also assist expatriates by addressing a few other important issues, such as making it easier for them to travel within China, clarifying government regulations, supporting bilingual services and offering excellent day-to-day assistance.

Furthermore, considering the sizeable expatriate population in China, the value of local SNS for expatriates and the importance of a positive international reputation for local mobile applications, it is imperative that government strategies promote foreign-friendly local mobile applications that meet the needs of expatriates from various cultural backgrounds. This approach not only helps attract expatriate users, fosters their positive attitudes towards using local mobile applications, retains them and encourages them to recommend their preferred apps to others, thereby gaining a competitive edge in international marketing, but also demonstrates the Chinese government's commitment to the practice of social inclusion for non-native speakers and individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Two primary approaches include prioritising awareness of cross-cultural differences and providing bilingual interfaces. Government policy makers should fully take into account the impact of cultural differences on users' attitudes towards using local mobile apps in order to avoid cross-cultural neglect of expatriate users by the host country of the apps due to behaviour models built using locally designed systems. Additionally, cultural differences can have a negative cultural impact on the successful implementation and adoption of information technology. In the end, this will help to cater to the cultural preferences of expatriate users, attract more expatriate academic users and enhance their positive attitude towards using local mobile apps. It is a smart strategy to further

customise the interfaces more thoroughly in accordance with the cultural backgrounds of users who are expatriates in particular countries.

Government policy makers should fully take into account the challenges and difficulties faced by expatriate users when accessing Chinese web pages. Accommodating their language preferences will allow expatriate users to interact with the websites in their mother tongue and draw in more expatriate users. Additionally, in order to improve expatriate users' positive attitude towards using local mobile apps and avoid the processing barriers represented by texts written in a second language, such as decreased attention or concentration, lower perceptual control of interaction and increased navigation difficulties, government policy makers should take into account the learning and comprehension challenges posed by host country language interfaces. In order to make it easier for expatriate users to browse, choose, download and interact in their native languages, they can encourage the use of some of the most popular apps, such as WeChat, QQ, TikTok and Alipay. Additionally, they can also present cultural values that are consistent with the languages of these users and offer multiple language options in local mobile apps.

#### *For Expatriates*

This research also provides expatriates who are currently in China, as well as those intending to relocate to China, with a comprehensive understanding of various challenges they have already encountered or may encounter in the future. It also offers strategies to deal with these challenges and facilitate the development of cross-cultural adaptation.

Cultivating engagement with individuals around them, whether the individuals are local co-workers, students or other expatriates, is very important. Expatriates should be willing to interact with host country nationals, ask for help from them and try to be less ethnocentric.

In addition, expatriate teachers need to understand that acquiring a basic understanding of the local language of the region where they are living in should be regarded as a critical task. It is important to understand that, even though Mandarin is the official language in many regions of China, local dialects can be more effective for day-to-day communication, particularly when interacting with host country nationals.

Expatriates' communication with locals may therefore be significantly enhanced if they are able to grasp both Mandarin and the local dialects. Even if learning the language of the host nation is important, expatriates also need to be more willing to speak the language and take advantage of any chance to improve their language skills. In fact, as Selmer (1999) noted, a lot of Chinese people value an expatriate's willingness to speak Chinese more than their actual language proficiency or ability.

Furthermore, expatriates should cultivate a favourable attitude towards using local SNS as much as possible. On the other hand, expatriate teachers should be moderate in using SNS, avoid excessive or prolonged use of SNS and selectively and critically accept various information to prevent exposure to unreliable information and information overload.

It is imperative for expatriates to proactively comprehend the local culture, values and customs of the host country. Developing a heightened sense of cultural awareness and refining their cultural intelligence is also necessary. However, expatriates can still uphold certain aspects of their personal values without compromising their ability to adjust to the new culture. Meanwhile, expatriates should also work on developing optimistic mindsets that will aid their assimilation. It is imperative that they understand that going through culture shock in the new nation and experiencing temporary adjustment difficulties is a common. Hence, they should not feel overly anxious or concerned about this. Over time, they will eventually get over their culture shock and become more accustomed to the host country as they stay longer there.

#### **5.4 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

While this research on expatriate teachers in Chinese colleges provides representativeness of the research results through appropriate sample size and semi-structured in-depth interviews which were conducted before the observations, this research also has some limitations.

First, a significant limitation is geographical generalisability, as this research focuses solely on expatriate teachers in Nanchang, China. Different cities across China vary significantly in terms of living environments, customs, cultures and levels of economic development. For example, first-tier cities such as Beijing, Shanghai,

Shenzhen and Guangzhou, are more modernised and developed, offering greater access to a wider range of Western amenities compared to Nanchang or other lower-tier cities. These disparities may influence the experiences of expatriate teachers, suggesting that the findings from Nanchang may not be fully generalisable to other regions of China. For instance, in Nanchang, it is not easy for expatriate teachers to find authentic restaurants from their home countries, and as a result, expatriates living in Nanchang have to adapt their diets to local food options. However, this situation may differ in other cities, where access to nation cuisine may lead to different cross-cultural adaptation experiences for expatriates. Therefore, it is essential to further investigate the validity of experiences in other cities with higher degree of modernisation. It is suggested that future research should consider expatriate teachers in different cities of China to generate more comprehensive insights into the expatriate experiences in diverse contexts and provide better suggestions for expatriate teachers.

Second, in terms of expatriate teacher types, this study focuses only on self-initiated expatriates. Since there are notable differences between self-initiated expatriates and assigned expatriates regarding their approaches to cross-cultural adaptation, the findings of this study may not be relevant to assigned expatriated. Moreover, this study was conducted among expatriate teachers in Chinese colleges, representing a unique industry. As such, the experiences of expatriate teachers in this context may differ from those in other industries. In different contexts, the factors influencing cross-cultural adaptation may vary. While this qualitative study identified factors specific to expatriate teachers, such as student perspectives and differences in college systems, previous studies (Chou, 2021; Mendenhall, 1996; Richardson & McKenna, 2000) have also highlighted many similarities between expatriate teachers and other types of expatriates in many aspects. Moreover, the literature review and qualitative research results indicate that there are no fundamental differences in cross-cultural adaptation experiences between expatriate teachers and other categories of expatriates. Therefore, the findings of this study are likely to be valid in other industries. Further investigation is recommended to compare self-initiated expatriates and assigned expatriates, and to examine expatriates in different cities and industries for more comprehensive and convincing findings.

Third, regarding research methodology, instead of using a longitudinal analysis, this study uses a cross-sectional analysis that captures the circumstances during a specific time period. This limitation restricts the study results to particular time

periods and fails to examine causal relationships and does not accurately reflect the dynamic evolutionary process of expatriates' cross-cultural adaptation. Adopting a longitudinal design allows researchers to capture changes in research variables over time, potentially providing richer insights into the progress of cross-cultural adaptation. Moreover, the study's reliance on observation as a data collection method poses another study constraint. Participant observation is regarded as one of the most efficient methods for researchers to obtain information in addition to text, speech and numerical formats, as noted in Chapter 4. While these are some of the advantages noted, it is possible that the researcher's understanding of the study's results, as well as the experiences of the participants, is the only basis for the conclusions drawn from this methodology. Future research should incorporate longitudinal design to evaluate more thoroughly on the entire progress of cross-cultural adaptation.

Fourth, regarding research content, this qualitative study examines the motivations of expatriate teachers working in China and identifies the challenges and adaptation strategies, especially the usage of SNS in cross-cultural adaptation. It is recommended that future research should further investigate other adaptation strategies, such as the assistance from people surrounding expatriates, which this research has identified as an important factor that affects expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation process. In addition, future research can further explore some particularly unexpected but interesting antecedents unintentionally revealed in this qualitative study, such as previous international work experiences, attitudes towards Chinese culture, comparisons of the economic levels of home and host countries, personal mindsets, allocation of assistants, college orientation programmes, psychological support and governmental assistance. Furthermore, while this qualitative study explores the motivations and cross-cultural adaptation experiences of expatriate teachers, it lacks the connection and interrelation between the two. It is recommended that future research should examine how differing motivations influence the cross-cultural adaptation process of expatriate teachers.

Finally, the interpretation of the findings of the research presents another limitation. The researcher, being a female junior academic from a Chinese college with her own experiences and personal traits, may have influenced the conducts of the interviews, the understanding of the comments made by the expatriate teachers, the classroom and off campus observations, as well as the interpretation of the data and results in her specific ways. Throughout the data collecting and analysis process, the

researcher made an effort to keep her background in mind because making too many presumptions can hinder the emergence of new ideas. This limitation should be acknowledged in future research interpretations.

In conclusion, this research has provided valuable insights into the motivations of expatriate teachers working abroad, their cross-cultural adaptation in Nanchang, China, and the usage of SNS in their cross-cultural adaptation process. With the reopening of China's border after the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for global expatriate teachers in Chinese colleges has further increased. However, recruiting, inspiring and retaining these expatriate teachers presents a significant difficulty for Chinese colleges' administrative departments, since these individuals are crucial to the talent strategy of Chinese colleges but also introduce a number of complex issues.

This research combines the fields of expatriate teachers, cross-cultural adaptation and SNS, providing a comprehensive overview of expatriate teachers' cross-cultural adaptation experiences in Chinese colleges. While other research has typically focused on the perspectives of international students from developing countries or the cross-cultural adaptation experiences of expatriates moving from developing countries to more developed countries, this research was based on interviews with eleven expatriate teachers in China, exploring their motivations of relocating, the challenges they face and their adaptation strategies for cross-cultural integration process. The study also validates insights gathered from the gathered interview data through online expatriate groups as well as classroom and off-campus observations. Additionally, it examines the usage of SNS in supporting expatriate teachers during their cross-cultural adaptation process, concluding that while these platforms provide valuable assistance, interpersonal support proves to be even more significant for expatriate teachers.

This research provides important insights into the challenges faced by expatriate teachers during their cross-cultural adaptation, reaffirming the impact of language barriers and cultural differences while emphasising the critical role of personal networks or interpersonal assistance as a key adaptation strategy. What sets this study apart is its focus on the intricate relationship between institutional support and personal networks within the Chinese context, offering actionable recommendations for administrative departments in colleges and policy makers to better support expatriate teachers. Additionally, the study provides practical suggestions tailored to expatriates, bridging gaps in existing research by highlighting

context-specific adaptation strategies that can enhance their experiences in China. Finally, this research encourages researchers to conduct further interdisciplinary research with wider geographical generalisability and various types of expatriates, research methodologies and content to further explore new solutions to cross-cultural issues.

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## APPENDICES

# APPENDIX 1 REC APPROVAL LETTER



UNIVERSITI  
TEKNOLOGI  
MARA

Pejabat  
Timbalan Naib Canselor  
(Penyelidikan dan Inovasi)

Reference 600-TNCPI (5/1/6)  
Our reference REC/06/2023 (PG/MR/214)  
Date 21 June 2023

**Dr Ireena Nasiha binti Ibnu  
(LeRoujia- 2021229058)**  
College of Computing, Informatics and Media  
Universiti Teknologi MARA  
40450 Shah Alam  
SELANGOR

Dear Dr Ireena Nasiha,

## APPROVAL LETTER -UiTMRESEARCH ETHICS COIVMTEE

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Research Ethics Committee (REC). After considering your application, the Committee approved your proposal titled "Cross-Cultural Adaptation Experience and Social Networking Sites Usage among Expatriate Teachers in China" at Nanchang city, Jiangxi province, China.

Details of the approval are as follows:

<b>Ref. number:</b>	REC/06/2023 (PG/MR/214)
<b>Approval Period:</b>	21 June 2023 until
<b>Authorised personnel:</b>	1. Dr Ireena Nasiha binti Ibnu 2. Le Roujia 3. Dr Tengku Elena binti Tengku Mahamad

The UiTM Research Ethics Committee operates in accordance to the ICH Good Clinical Practice Guidelines, Malaysian Good Clinical Practice Guidelines and the Declaration of Helsinki. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with these guidelines and declaration.

We draw to your attention the requirement that a report on this research, must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on the completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed. Amendments, if any, to the study documents are to be submitted to the REC for approval.

If you require further information, please contact the REC Secretariat at 03-55448069/03-55442794 or email at [recsecretariat@uitm.edu.my](mailto:recsecretariat@uitm.edu.my).

Yours sincerely,

**EMERITUS PROFESSOR/DATO' DR RAYMOND AZMANALI**

Chairman  
UiTM Research Ethics Committee

c.c: Dean (Research and Innovation), College of Computing, Informatics and Media, UiTM

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# CONSENT FORM

## Consent Form for Interviews: a Qualitative Study

### Title: **CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION EXPERIENCE AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES USAGE AMONG EXPATRIATE TEACHERS IN CHINA**

Thank you for reading the information sheet about the interview sub-study. If you are happy to participate, please complete and sign the form below. Please initial the boxes below to confirm that you agree with each statement:

**Please  
Initial Box**

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research material and will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

I agree for this interview to be recorded. I understand that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis and that extracts from the interview, from which I would not be personally identified, may be used in any conference presentation, report, or journal article developed as a result of the research. I understand that no other use will be made of the recording without my written permission and that no one outside the research team will be allowed access to the original recording.

I agree that my anonymized data will be kept for future research purposes such as publications related to this study after the completion of the study.

I agree to take part in this interview.

## AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Le Roujia is a Lecturer in English at the Faculty of International Business, Jiangxi Tourism and Commerce College, China. She holds a Master's degree in Culture, Creativity, and Entrepreneurship in 2015 from University of Leeds, United Kingdom. She is now a PhD student (Media and Communication) who started her doctoral studies in cross-cultural adaptation at Universiti Teknologi MARA in 2021.

### **LIST OF PUBLICATIONS:**

- Roujia, L., Ibnu, I. N., & Mahamad, T. E. T (2024). Bridging Borders: Expat Teachers Navigating Cross-cultural Challenges in China. *Quantum Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5(6), 453-466.  
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