

The Koreanization of Baguio : Issue of Acculturation

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Abstract

Acculturation, according to Douglas Brown, has four stages: excitement, culture shock, recovery and adaptation to a new culture. Furthermore, the Acculturation Theory identifies four modes of acculturation, namely: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization.

The paper uses the Acculturation Theory to determine the cultural factors used as contexts in which Koreans in Baguio City integrate in their host culture. Korean pastors, missionaries and students were randomly sampled for this paper. The in-depth interview technique generated results that point to current issues, concerns and trends in acculturation, leading to the formation and development of multiethnic, multiracial and multicultural society.

The study points to minimal changes in the cultural patterns, perceptions and communication styles of the Koreans. They maintain the “integration” mode of acculturation as they opt to retain their original or heritage culture while still actively participating in the host culture. Slight alterations in their cultural patterns are seen in terms of language, value for education, hobbies and food preferences. The Korean impact on the cultural diversity of Baguio is reflected through the increase of Korean churches, schools and restaurants as well as the local community’s adaptation of Korean fashion, interest in Korean soap dramas on TV, and slight acculturation of Filipino classmates and tutors teaching them English as a second language. Notably, language is still a major factor of acculturation.

Baguio City is known as the “Summer Capital of the Philippines.” It is a popular tourist spot which has a cool climate. It has a diverse culture brought about by different people and races who come to the city for study, business and travel purposes. More so, the city boasts of a very high literacy rate, which is why it is dubbed as the education center of the northern part of the Philippines. Seventeen

universities and colleges and 42 technical or vocational schools currently operate in the city. The Department of Education reports that there are 3 public high schools, 38 public elementary schools, more than 20 private high schools and more than 80 private elementary schools in the city. (Aguilando, 2005).

Interestingly, a growing number of special education centers have started to mushroom in the city. Most of these are tutorial centers for Koreans who come and study English as a second language. Based on the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), twelve Korean schools have already been established in the city. Around 5,000 Koreans are studying in Baguio City (Bayaua,2005). They chose to study in the city for its cool climate, abundant natural resources, rich and unique culture, cozy environment and less costly standard of living. A primary reason, of course, is the low tuition fee rates. Further, a number of Korean pastors and missionaries have also made Baguio City their new spiritual harvest field.

Since Koreans take a huge part in the diversity of Baguio City's population, it is imperative to determine how their culture influences the way Baguio locals live. Likewise, since these Koreans spend time exposed to the city's culture, it is therefore assumed that their cultural perceptions in terms of language, lifestyle, beliefs and values are influenced by the local culture of the host city. This paper therefore, also discuss the influences and other cultural factors contributing to the process of acculturation of Koreans in Baguio City.

This paper deals mainly with the factors that cause acculturation of the Koreans, and their impact on the diversification of Baguio City's culture. This study tries to evaluate if affecting or influencing a certain cultural perception will create positive results to both heritage and host cultures. It also looks into the positive or negative responses of the Koreans as they get acculturated to the host city, thus, discovering ways to manage cultural conflicts and understanding others' cultures. Thus, socio-cultural factors as language, food, communication styles and behavioral patterns are looked into and used as contexts to determine how the Koreans operate in the local community and thus speed up their acculturation and accommodation.

A Related Study on Korean Students in Baguio City

Acculturation involves the identity and culture of one person or group. It is the stage of becoming adapted to a new host culture, while the old heritage culture gets distorted in one way or another. This is evident when people move or stay in a certain place. One study which scrutinized how acculturation occurs (Ysmael, 2004) situated the Koreans in the context of how ethnocentrism on the host culture, the Filipino culture, affects their study of English. The study determined how their ethnocentric attitudes affected the achievement of intercultural understanding. Ysmael's findings revealed that those who were not affected by ethnocentric attitudes were more well-adjusted and had easier learning experience, in contrast to those who had certain degrees of ethnocentric attitudes. The Korean students' intercultural experiences also played a role in their adjustment process.

Theoretical Perspectives

Acculturation is a process in which members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs, values and behaviors of another group. Although acculturation usually concerns minority groups which adopt habits and language patterns of dominant groups, acculturation can be reciprocal where the dominant group also adopts patterns typical of the minority groups. Assimilation of one cultural group into another may be evidenced by changes in language preference, adoption of common attitudes and values, membership in common social groups and institutions, and loss of separate political or ethnic identification. (www.rice.edu;n.d.)

Acculturation is also defined as "the process and effect of significant change through mutual borrowing and adaptations by peoples of different cultures in contact with some continuity. Chung (1977) shows that acculturation involves two cultures: the original or "heritage culture," and the one that is borrowed and adopted by the heritage culture, or so called "new host culture."

Berry (1980, in Echaves, 1999) identified four modes of acculturation on the basis of how individuals and groups respond to two central issues: whether cultural identity and characteristics are of value and should be maintained, and whether relationships with other groups are of value and should be sought. Responses to these central issues may lead to the four modes of acculturation, namely, assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization.

Assimilation is the loss of the heritage culture and replacement by the new culture; integration refers to the maintenance of the heritage culture identity and active participation in the new society; separation happens when the dominant group formally excludes them from the mainstream society; marginalization is self-imposed isolation from other cultural groups. (Chung, 1997)

Douglas Brown's Acculturation Theory (1994) explains the process on how the original or heritage culture is changed by several cultural factors. He says that "a person's worldview, self-identity and systems of thinking, acting, feeling, values, beliefs, perceptions and communicating can be disrupted by a change from one culture to another. According to Brown, there are four successive stages of acculturation:

The first stage is excitement and euphoria over the new surroundings. The second stage, culture shock, emerges as individuals feel the intrusion of cultural differences into their images of self and security. The third stage is typified by culture stress and it is one of gradual, tentative recovery. Progress is made as individuals begin to accept the differences in thinking and feeling. The last stage represents full recovery, either assimilation, adaptation or acceptance of the new host culture.

Migration Issues

Migration is the act of leaving one country or region to settle or work for a period in another. (The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language. USA: Lexicon Publications, Inc., 1995, s.v. migrate). It is a general term indicating a change of habitat, with a more or less serious intent to take up permanent residence in the new country.

Oberai (1987) points out that there are more than 175 million migrants in the world today. People leave their countries for many reasons, including war and civil conflict, the desire for economic improvement, family reunification and environmental degradation. The bulk of field studies conducted into population mobility to the west which have asked migrants why they have moved and examined the context of migration decision-making have produced findings which confirm the dominance of economic factors.

Migration today differs in many important particulars from that of earlier times. Down to a quite recent date, peoples moved as tribes, nations, or races, moving and settling en masse. Taking forceful possession of extended areas, they maintained their individuality either under colonial systems or as separate groups; they finally established nations. With these migrating groups went their own institutions, language, religion, industrial methods, and political and legal systems.

In all such cases of migration en masse the native habitat was forever abandoned, and the migrating tribes, thoroughly equipped, entered a new environment and yielded entirely to new influences. At times, migration is effected by families and individuals. These go from dense and highly cultured populations where free opportunity is usually closed, taking few possessions with them; their language survives during their own generation, and in the succeeding one is exchanged for the language of the adopted country, though they usually retain their religion. They must fit into a new industrial system, however, unlike their own. As a rule, they renounce their natural political allegiance and assume a new political status, abandoning the relations attaching to their former status and assuming new political and contractual relations.

The Respondents

There were forty respondents for this paper. Twenty four students, whose ages ranged from 11-25, and sixteen pastors and missionaries were randomly sampled for this paper. The in-depth interview technique and focus group discussions generated results that point to current issues, concerns and trends in Asian migration, leading to the formation and development of a multiethnic, multiracial and multicultural society such as that of Baguio City. Two weeks were allotted for the intensive data gathering.

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Korean Influence in Baguio City

Aside from coming to Baguio City for pastoral work and to study and learn English, the Koreans have secondary causes for migration, like solicitation of relatives and friends for mission work. Migration theories point to a current practice that once in the new country, in many instances relatives plan to bring those left behind, secure places for them, aid them in coming, and in general form a center of attraction in the new land, drawing powerfully on those left behind. This was strongly evident with some of the Koreans pastors. Their Korean senior pastors gave them invitations to help build local churches in Baguio. Given a strong financial support from their mother churches and contributions from relatives and friends, they came to Baguio due to the call for mission work.

Their presence in the city led to the opening up of more English worships among local churches in order to accommodate them. But as soon as these migrant ministers have fully integrated in the community, they begin to form their own respective churches, with strong financial support from their home churches. This proves that the Korean pastors would still gravitate to their respective heritage cultural groups. Thus Korean-based churches and fellowships, “have mushroomed in the city” (Marigza, 2005) since the late 90’s. Apparently, Korean pastors have lifetime terms and putting up a daughter church in Korea would be very expensive. The only means by which younger pastors can do their ministry is to come to the Philippines and begin churches whose thrust is on missions. (Pstr. Javier, 2005, interview) The Korean pastors, most of whom come from the cities of Pusan and Incheon, regarded Baguio City as an ideal destination due to its weather, which was similar to home cities.

A compelling issue was their problem on accommodation due to different housing structures, architecture and lack of amenities (such as cooling facilities for summer, and heating system during the cold months). Those without mission houses in the city had to look for a place to stay while living with their fellow missionaries. Friends and people from their local school or receiving churches were instrumental in their positive search for residences. So far, this culture of welcome is the strongest evidence of support that the local community has given the Korean pastors.

As it is, the Korean pastors themselves take care in addressing issues of family welfare, education of their children, work, associations, and their various ways of participation in their host society. It is not surprising, therefore, that with the growth of Korean churches in the city came the establishment of Korean schools for the children of both religious and secular migrants. Korean stores, groceries and restaurants have also found their way in malls and other parts of the city.

The Korean ministers have formed the Northern Philippine Missionary Association in order to improve fellowship among themselves and help each other in their adjustment process. The members engage in monthly sports events of badminton at the local country club. This, too, gives them opportunities to share testimonies regarding their mission work

Likewise, the pastors clearly manifested their recognition of cultural diversities. They view Baguio City’s structural dimensions, especially among the Cordillera tribes, as a strong factor in the people’s social interactions. They are very well aware of the influence of older people (konseho ng mga matatanda or council of elders) and of the Filipino’s respect for elders, as important elements in the Filipino culture.

The Korean pastors also fully understand that Filipinos are comfortable when they are part of a reference group. These reference groups may be comprised of members of the family, close friends and church associates. An important part of the cultural context within which the ministers operate, then, is the recognition of the importance of opinion leaders in the decision making of the people in their mission

communities.

Personal Activities

Part of exhibiting the power of life involvement is for the Korean pastors to assimilate themselves in the normal lives of the community and “to do normal activities like Filipino families do.” (Pstr David, 2005, interview) Their daily activities are mostly religious-oriented or mission-based such as personal study and devotion, prayer, visitation of church members, fellowships and services, and theological/seminary classes. Undoubtedly, they also do normal tasks like laundry, grocery and market and personal correspondence..

The pastors had little or formal social contacts or ministry linkages with their local counterparts or with Filipino pastors. Their religious independence from local churches of the host culture, but strong social dependence on the sending churches of their heritage culture manifested the minimal role the receiving communities played in the exercise of free religion. It also points to the maintenance of strong ties with their original or heritage culture, making their acculturation limited to the integration mode.

The Koreans have also helped enrich Baguio City’s cultural landscape through the popularity of Koreanovelas like “Fullhouse,” “Lovers in Paris,” “Only You,” and “Jewel in the Palace.” These are television sensations that have caught the fanaticism of Baguio viewers. These Koreanovelas have become part of the primetime activities of most Filipino families, especially because, as one Filipino student claimed, “they tell something about reality.” Due to the Koreanovela phenomenon, some lifestyles of the shows’ actors are adopted by Filipinos, mostly teenagers, who imitate their hair style and sense of fashion. Korean fashion has, therefore become the trend in Baguio City nowadays. Some enterprising Koreans, therefore, capitalize on this by bringing in more consumer items and fashion apparels when they come back to Baguio from their home visits and vacations.

Language As A Factor of Acculturation

Meanwhile, Korean students in Baguio City, already about 5,000 in number, come for the main purpose of learning the English language, which they regard as a language of success. They recognize that many successful Koreans are English literates. Some of the interviewees claim that proficiency in the English language will land them in jobs, if not in their own country, in any English speaking country. Likewise, it is inevitable for them to learn the Filipino language from their local teachers and in their encounters with people of the host culture. Filipino phrases like “matalino ako” (I am intelligent), and “pangit ka” (you are ugly) are now familiar to them. Filipino expressions like “grabe” (big deal) and “tsamba” (pure luck) are often used in their conversations even with their fellow Koreans. Not surprisingly, some students have also caught Ilocano phrases like “napintas ka” (you are beautiful), and “mabisinakon” (I’m hungry). With the use of a common language, different cultural identities open up to a universal way of understanding. Indeed, as Brown (1994) states, language learning is second culture learning. Nevertheless, they still use their native language most of the time for better understanding among themselves.

Language is a key component of and the primary medium for transmitting culture. (Gowing, 1971; Herkovits, 1938, Rod, 1994) The building of culture comes from the various ideas expressed by

people. Language, then, also becomes the expression of culture that defines the people's way of life. Truly, language is still one of the major agents of cultural transmission. The crucial significance of language is that it provides the symbols from which the image of the other is formed. (Wilson, 1971) To the Koreans, learning the Filipino language facilitated their understanding of the Filipinos and of the Filipino culture. Two Korean pastors even engage the services of an Ilocano tutor to help them translate their sermons in the local dialect. (Pstr. Kim, 2005, interview)

Language, therefore, overcomes ideological or cultural barriers and divisions. With the use of a common language, different cultural identities open up to a universal way of understanding. It highlights and reveals unity in diversity which, for the Korean ministers, refers the communion with their "mission field" and leads to "the fullness of their personal life" as well. To the Korean students, learning the Filipino language only helped developed their sense of confidence in their social interactions and improved understanding of the local people. Wilson (1971) refers to this as the "internalization of the other."

Changes in Cultural Patterns

Cultural patterns focus on the actions, behaviors and values of individuals. These are conditions that contribute to how people perceive and think about the world, and the manner in which they live. Generally, the Korean students in Baguio City gained more self-confidence, self-improvement and self-expression. As reported, the respondents were not as outspoken when they were new in the city. But with the influence of their Filipino tutors and schoolmates, they have learned to be more friendly, cheerful and fun to talk to. Similarly, their value for education has been heightened, taking their studies more seriously and responsibly.

Instead of playing computer games or watching television programs, some of these Korean students shifted to such sports as tennis, golf and horseback riding when they moved to Baguio City. Shopping at the malls have also become a strong interest because "everything in Baguio is cheap." However, being away from home and the inaccessibility of financial resources, as well as difficult bank transactions have made them realize the importance of wise spending.

Their eating patterns have also seen slight changes. The respondents claimed that they have been influenced to eat more often, just like Filipinos who, they observed, eat a lot. Instead of chopsticks, some of them now use spoon and fork as what Filipinos typically do. In terms of food preference, though, the Koreans still choose their own compared to Filipino food which they find greasy, salty or sweet.

Other customs that Korean students have adopted include wearing slippers inside the house, showing respect for the elders by using "po" and "opo" in their conversations, and celebrating traditional Filipino celebrations and holidays. As a collective group, they make their presence in the city strongly felt through participation in the city's events, joining the famed Baguio Flower Festival and holding an annual Korean Food Festival at the city's biggest mall.

Problems Encountered

Aside from the inherent problem of adjusting to a new environment and a different language, some Koreans regard Baguio traffic, the transportation system (“It was difficult to take a jeep, and very expensive to ride a cab”), the air pollution and over-population (“There are so many people in the market.”) as concerns they had to deal with. Due to the mountainous terrain in most towns of Benguet, the pastors found it problematic to walk at least two kilometers through the mountains.

Summary/Conclusion/Recommendations

The Koreans who served as respondents for this study came to Baguio City for two main reasons: religious and educational. While it is certainly true that people in general move from rural to urban places on a permanent or temporary basis to broaden their experience and improve family financial conditions, generally, this paper has discovered that the economic factor or “bright lights” explanation has little applicability. Primarily, religious or educational factors motivated the migratory patterns and acculturation modes of the respondents for this study.

They have come to Baguio City due to its weather, which was similar to theirs and for the reason that tuition fees were also more affordable. Generally, the Korean pastors manifested recognition of cultural diversities between their heritage culture and the new, host culture. Their presence in the city has led to the opening up of more English worship services among local churches, more Korean schools for their children, and the “mushrooming” of Korean restaurants and specialty stores.

Meanwhile, the Korean students in Baguio City gained more self-confidence, self-improvement and self-expression. This points to the validation of the theory that language is still one of the major agents of cultural transmission. Language, then, has helped in the expression of the host culture that defines the migrant people’s way of life. The crucial significance of language is that it provides the symbols from which the Koreans’ images of the Filipino culture and people are formed

Although learning the Filipino language facilitated their understanding of the Filipinos and of the Filipino culture, it cannot be denied however that the Koreans still prefer to use their native language as a means to communicate among themselves. Korean food, , likewise, is still better to them, although they have learned to include Filipino food in their eating fare. The Koreanization of Baguio City has also been, to a certain extent, due to the popularity of Korean novels and adoption of Korean fashion by the local youth.

Despite the growing participation of Koreans in Baguio City, their heritage culture is maintained. The extent of acculturation is limited to the first level which Berry refers to as integration mode, which means that an individual opts to maintain his/her cultural identity while moving to become part of the larger dominant society. The Korean students and pastors reflect their integration to the city through a strong maintainance of their own cultural identity. Korean practices and patriotic characteristics are still very much valued, although relationships with the locals are clearly sought.

As to Douglas Brown's Acculturation Theory (1994), which explains the process on how the original or heritage culture is changed by several cultural factors, the Koreans worldview, self-identity and systems of thinking, acting, feeling, values, beliefs, perceptions and communicating are not totally disrupted by their stay in Baguio City. Normally, it also goes to say that their heritage culture has been tainted by the host culture's values, beliefs, perceptions and patterns of communication.

It is well to consider at this point that the Baguio City's National Statistics Office claims the lack of proper accounting of Koreans, and all migrants to the city for that matter. In this light, proper responses to their presence in the city is neither fully documented. (Cris Gonzales, interview).

With the progressive and self-initiated integration of Koreans in the city, it is quite surprising that there is no comprehensive documentation and evaluation of their acculturation patterns. Consequently, policies that are tailor made to their specific needs of religious, educational, economic and institutional structure have not been formulated by city officials. Direct or indirect policies of any kind (religious, social, economic/trade, cultural, transportation and communication, population) in light of the Korean's presence in the city are not available.

Further studies ,therefore, may focus on religion and education as integrating mechanisms and further explore their consequences on places of origin and destination, with emphasis on the family structure, socio-psychological impact on individuals and the bigger communities. As a city's or country's landscape changes, it is likewise vital to see how transnational policies are shaped. Given today's multi-sociocultural and pluri-religious contexts, another interesting area of exploration would be the role of acculturation in shaping identities. Other issues that may be addressed include such factors as mass media, multilingualism and cultural traditions. The interplay of these may all lead to new ideas on acculturation.

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Mr. Chris Gonzales, Nat'l Census and Statistics Office, Benguet-CAR

Pstr. Ahn Jung
Pstr. David Chun
Pastr. Jong dae kim
Pstr. Kim Byung Cho
Pstr. Francis Javier, Jr.
Pstr. Jan Fleming Marigza