

Topic: Cultural Difference

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Chapter 1: Introduction

We are honored to have a chance to enroll in the Grand Tour which is the tradition of our school. Our group chose Vietnam as our destination. Vietnam is the easternmost country on the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia and the world 14th most populated country. Besides, Vietnam was ruled by France and China before. Hence, the Vietnam culture shares a lot of similarities with us.

During the tour, we had travelled to three cities, Thành Phố Hué (順化市), Thành phố Đà Nẵng(峴港市)and Thành phố Hội An(會安市) as well as various tourists spots like Thien Mu Pagoda(天姥寺), Ba Na Hills(巴拿山)and The Citadel (順化古城).

In this grand tour project, we will focus on the cultural difference between Hong Kong and Vietnam like in the transportation aspect and food aspect. Hence, we had savored different dishes and visited few local markets like Han Market and Big C supercenter. For further observation of the local life, we visited a primary school which is established by a local NGO - Action for the City. In that primary school, we found out more cultural difference between Hong Kong and Vietnam.

Our horizons are widely broadened during the tour. Once again, we are honored to have the chance to visit Vietnam.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Choice of method

Quantitative method was adopted for the project.

Methods included: literature review, photography analysis and field study

Literature review: reading books and magazines, and watching TV programs

Photograph analysis: photos taken during grand tour in Vietnam and the analysis was done by our own investigation and some online information

Field study: Tasting dishes in local restaurant and food bought from supermarket

2.2 Classification of the studying target

No matter comparing with the quality of life or lifestyle, Vietnam locals and HongKongers are pretty distinct. Take food culture as an example. Food from Hong Kong, an international city, is a mixture of eastern and western culture while food from Vietnam is spicy and sour as a country of Southeast Asia and is under a little bit influence by France and China as former colonies.

As the project is mainly focused on food culture, we are trying to find out the reasons behind the difference of eating habits between Hong Kong people and Vietnamese and we look into ways to facilitate the integration of both cultures.

2.3 Target group

The target group of the project are the waiters of Vietnam local restaurants and the tour guide.

Moreover, the project aims at comparing the food culture of Hong Kong and Vietnam, so Hong Kong people are also involved in the target group.

2.4 Problem faced and solutions

When we are doing literature review, photography analysis and field study, our group has come across some problems. Also, our group needs to assume the outcome in the earlier stage because those can only be conducted after grand tour. By making our best effort of observation and research, variation is minimized.

Literature Review

Problem: 1. Most of the sources are found in Chinese

2. Some flavorings and ingredients are hard to translate in English and describe their taste.

Solution: 1. Ask English teacher for the translation problem

2. Take the menu from restaurants of Vietnam style in Hong Kong and description as a reference

Photography Analysis

Problem: 1. Unable to match the names of the dishes and the photos of dishes

2. Identify the herbs and ingredients used in the dishes

Solution: 1. Find online by searching the names of the dishes one by one

Field Study

Problem: 1. Forget the taste of some dishes so it is difficult to express the feeling or opinion about those dishes in a non-local way

Solution: 1. Ask the classmates and the teachers who have gone to Vietnam together during grand tour.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Living Background

To observe the living background of Vietnam in depth, we look at two aspects which are economic aspect and cultural aspect.

Economic Aspect

According to the website of Wikipedia, in 1986, the Sixth National Congress implemented socialist-oriented market economic reforms. Private ownership was encouraged in industries, commerce and agriculture. As a result, the annual GDP¹ of Vietnam increased 8% from 1990 to 1997. Until today, the GDP of Vietnam can be mainly divided into three sectors which are services at 44%, industries at 39% and agriculture at 19%. The most famous industry in Vietnam is exports. For example, in 2016, Vietnam gained \$169.2 billion by exporting goods such as clothes, shoes, rice, coffee and you name it. Vietnam will export those goods to other countries like U.S.A and China every year. Exporting goods already has become the main income in Vietnam.

Cultural Aspect

In cultural aspect, we mainly focus on the food culture as it is one of the aspects that we would like to investigate in depth. Common ingredients which are used in Vietnamese dishes are fish sauce, shrimp paste, soy sauce, rice, fresh herbs, fruit and vegetables. They also use a myriad of spices like lemongrass, ginger, mint and so on. Some part of the food culture in Vietnam is affected by China. Chopstick, for example, are still being used as utensils in Vietnam.

The most famous Vietnamese dish is phở (越式河粉) which can be divided into two types, Phở bò(牛肉河粉) and Phở gà(雞肉河粉). During the Grand Tour, we almost can see it every day no matter in breakfast or lunch, even in dinner. There are other Vietnamese dishes like baguette (法式麵包), fried spring rolls(炸春卷) , Vietnam coffee and so on.

Moreover, as Vietnam was the colony of France in 19th century, so some Vietnamese dishes like baguette are affected by France food culture.

¹ The data of GDP(Gross Domestic Product) is come from EIU (Economist Intelligence Unit)

Chapter 4: Photograph Analysis

4.1 General information of the photographs

Photographs were taken at Action for the City, which is a local elementary school in Vietnam. The spots are general the interaction between two different races. These spots reflect the real side of Vietnamese's living.

4.2 Details of the Photographs

Vietnam



Fig.4.2.1 Abnormal Normality

Fig. 4.2.1 is captured when one of our classmates is taking selfie with the children in Vietnam. In Hong Kong, we see having a smartphone as normality. Instant messaging, mobile games, photo editing software and dictionary, those applications we use daily are all stored in a hand carry size device. However, Vietnam is poor and a densely populated country that it has been associated with wars for many years. Although there are steady improvements in Vietnam's living today, smartphone is still a luxury good to children in Vietnam. From Fig. 4.2.1, we can see that the eyes of the children are full of curiousity when looking at the smartphone, especially the child at the bottom right hand corner. It shows the different living culture between Hong Kong students and children in Vietnam and this fact reminds students that having a

smartphone is not a must and students should treasure the well-living in Hong Kong.



Fig.4.2.2 Behind the Smile



Fig.4.2.3

There is an unbalanced distribution between wages and price level in Vietnam. Wages of Vietnamese have not been regulated under the continuously increasing in price level. Cars are untouchable luxury goods to most Vietnamese. A research found that Vietnamese with general income have to work for 50 years without any living expense so that they are able to buy a house, to say nothing of travelling to other remote countries to explore the giant world. From Fig.4.2.2, the girl seems like she is trapped in her country and wants to go out to see the world. However, the darkness behind her reflects the reality and the powerlessness of the girl. From Fig.4.2.3, the boy also wish to get rid of reality and go out to see the world. These reflects the poor living standard in Vietnam.



Fig.4.2.4 Family of Strangers



Fig.4.2.5



Fig.4.2.6



Fig.4.2.7



Fig.4.2.8



Fig.4.2.9



Fig.4.2.10

Fig.4.2.4 to Fig.4.2.10 are the photos of the interactions between two different races. Cultural difference did not become the barrier of communication between two races. In fact, it was full of care and love when we were visiting the school. Smile is the common language of the two different races. Care and love can let two strangers get closer like a family.



Fig.4.2.11 Independence

Vietnam's women are able to endure hardships and capable of hard work as they have been suffered from poor living standard for many years and they must strive to become stronger constantly in order to sustain their living.

Hong Kong



²Fig.4.2.12 Feminism

Hong Kong female can express their own voice to strive for equal pay for equal work, equal rights and equal opportunities. The traditional thought ‘Men are breadwinners; women are homemakers’ has been broken in Hong Kong nowadays. The law of gender discrimination has been legislated to protect the rights of female. However, in Vietnam, the proportion of male and female in Vietnam are very different. It is estimated that the number of male will exceed the number of female for about 230 million to 430 million in 2050. This reflects the huge difference in the development of feminism in Hong Kong and Vietnam. Hong Kong people should treasure the rights they have nowadays.

² Fig.4.2.12

(<http://en.hkctu.org.hk/mainland-china/position-and-analysis/feminist-activists-detained-ahead-of-international-womens-day>)



³Fig.4.2.13 **Mobile Phone Addicts**

Hong Kong is a well-developed country and almost everyone holds a smartphone. Since smartphone is too convenient that people can communicate with others without any geographical barriers and people can get free flow of information on the Internet. People in Hong Kong are so addicted to mobile phone. In contrast, Vietnamese is relatively simple. Children in Action for the City like to play outdoor collective games instead of mobile phone games. These reflect the cultural difference between Hong Kong and Vietnam.

To conclude, mobile phone addicts and feminism are the two of the major difference between Hong Kong's and Vietnam's culture. The status of female in Vietnam is low while Hong Kong female's rights and opportunities are protected by Basic Law. Since Vietnam is relatively poor and still backward in the economic development, people's general income is relatively low compared with Hong Kong citizens. Therefore, their life is relatively simple that mobile phone is not necessary for them while mobile phone addicts have been a serious problem in Hong Kong.

³ Fig.4.2.13 (<http://www.chillinginthepressurecooker.com/category/under-monkeys/>)

Chapter 5: Field Study: Food Culture of Vietnam

During the 5 days tour, we tasted a bunch of different Vietnamese cuisines, and found that they have quite a different flavor compared with dishes in Hong Kong.

5.1 Appetizers

For appetizer, we tried the unique Gỏi(Vietnamese salad) with phồng tôm(shrimp chips). Unlike western salad we found in Hong Kong which consists of a lot of vegetables, Vietnamese salad is mainly meat.



5.2 Main dishes



For main dishes, we mainly have beef, pork, chicken. For beef, pork, and chicken, they are cooked with many different kinds of spices, to give them a rich or spicy flavor. This is very different from Hong Kong dishes which only uses a few spices like salt and sugar.



As Vietnam has a long coastline, seafood like shrimp and fish are very common in Vietnam cuisines. Fish sauce is also used as a condiment for many dishes.



5.3 Desserts

Fish sauce

For desserts, we mostly have fruits like watermelon, mango and dragon fruit, and other desserts like Bánh phu thê (husband and wife cake).



To sum up, Vietnamese cuisines consist of natural spices to produce a rich flavor for dishes, and a wide range of seafood due to the location of Vietnam. Thus, Vietnamese cuisines are healthier than Hong Kong's one, as they are cooked with natural spices instead of artificial spices.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

After the deep investigation, the cultural difference between Vietnam and Hong Kong can be apparently seen. It is blatantly obvious that the lifestyle (or quality of life) and the food culture of Vietnam and Hong Kong are like chalk and cheese.

To begin with, the quality of life of Vietnam is much lower than that of HK. It can be seen from the large difference in GDP which the Vietnam government had spared no effort to enhance. Since HK is a financial center, the economic development is very fast. While HK relies on commerce, finance, and tourism, Vietnam relies on industries, commerce, and agriculture. In addition, the financial transaction is the main industry of HK while exporting goods is the main income in Vietnam.

Secondly, Vietnam teenagers are not used to having their own mobile phone. Since the living standard of Vietnam is much worse than HK's regardless of the steady improvements today, the smartphone is still a luxury good to teenagers in Vietnam. From the photo analyze, we got to understand that children are full of curiosity of the smartphone which they probably cannot afford to have one throughout their life. This reminds students to treasure the well-living in Hong Kong.

Using electronic devices and surfing the internet as routine for entertainment is not the case in Vietnam. Instead of focusing on one's own mobile device, children there play and interact with one another for entertainment. This makes us reflect that perhaps sometimes technology is separating us from the social relationship and the basic entertainment.

Other than lifestyle, the food culture of Vietnam and Hong Kong is very different too.

First of all, an appetizer of meat salad with shrimp slices is very common in Vietnam. It is not too much to say that we can see it in almost every meal. The only difference is the use of meat. Some restaurants choose to use beef(which is not common), and some choose to use pork or chicken. Making the salad with meat is quite a large difference between western salad with vegetable only. Apart from that, eating salad with shrimp slices is a new idea for us. Despite the fact that it is not, in fact, uncommon to see shrimp slices in HK, many of our classmates found it interesting to taste this "brand new dish" of eating salad with shrimp. It shocked us lots.

Besides, Vietnam dishes are always served with sauces. There were at least three sauces on every table of every meal. Dipping foods into the different sauces give us different taste experience. In contrast, Hongkongers are not used to dipping foods into the sauces in every meal unless eating the fast-food like McDonald's.

Following this, seafood like shrimp and fish are very common in Vietnam cuisines. Due to the unique environment of having a long coastline, the cost of seafood in Vietnam is much lower than that in HK. This is the reason why seafood is very common in Vietnam. Shrimp dishes are nearly in every meal of Vietnam.

To conclude, the living standard of Vietnam is much worse than Hong Kong and that we learn the importance to treasure the good living standard in Hong Kong which citizens from the less-developed countries jealous of. Vietnam children understand the difficulty of living in the plight, so they are always contented with their life. About the food culture, the cuisines between HK's and Vietnam's have a large difference due to the specialized location. The eating habits of the two countries are totally different too.

After this tour, we do not only have a lot of fun when traveling, but we also get the chance to break the limitation of learning only in the classrooms, and get to experience and immerse in the Vietnam culture.

Chapter 7: Reflection

7.1 On the first day (31st March 2017)

This is the first day of our class Grand Tour. We were so excited about it since it was the first time we, 5A, to go outside Hong Kong as one group. We, 29 classmates arrived at the Hong Kong International Airport on time.

After arrival, the weather there was like what we expected, very hot. Yet, unlike Hong Kong's airport, the Vietnam airport did not turn on the air conditioner. We thought that a day without air conditioner is unacceptable, however, after experiencing that in Vietnam, it is not really that hard to pass a day without air conditioner.

It makes us reflect that if there is a need to turn on the air conditioner every day in Hong Kong. We may turn on air conditioner less often in summer. In school and home, we can use fans instead of air conditioner. It can not only alleviate Global Warming but it can also save energy.



7.2 On the second day (1st April 2017)

Spot description

On day 2, our class visited one tourist spot and one supermarket. First, we took around 20 minutes to arrive at the tourist spot, Bana hill by coach. Bana hill is located at 40 kilometers west of Da Nang, visitors can take the cable car to reach the top from the foot of the mountain. The cable car has broken the record of world longest and highest non-stop cable car with total length 5801m. Second, we visited Big C which is a large supermarket as well as the favorite shopping choice for tourists and locals. That's because it sells a broad range of variety of products in a reasonable price.

Reflection

To begin with, when we arrived at Bana hill, we took a few class photos and then immediately took the cable car in order to go to the different parks in Bana hill. During the time we headed to half way up the mountain, waterfalls and streams are along the way. It is enjoyable to see the whole view of Da Nang City. The scenery is stunning.

Although we went to different parks, there is one point in common. There are just a few rubbish bins in each park. Nevertheless, With less trash around, the ground was still free from rubbish. The environment was relatively clean. This situation is similar to Taiwan that the government encourages the public to create less waste. Actually, it shows Vietnamese's national quality and it gives out the role model to tourists. Indeed, less trash means how the countries advanced in a different way. It is worth for Hong Kong to learn. Also, our classmates also created as less rubbish as they should from that time. From my view, the visit of Bana hill did teach us a distinct lesson.

After visiting Bana hill, we took the coach to go to Big C in order to experience the local life. The structure is similar to Hong Kong supermarkets, such as Wellcome and Parknshop. Yet, the scale is larger than Hong Kong. There are countless types of instant noodles and snacks that we have ever seen in Hong Kong. They all seem new to us. From the visit of Big C, we found that when we said excuses me to the locals, they would not understand. We had to use body languages instead of just language to communicate with others. From my experience, it shows that body language is of paramount important when communicating with different people. All in all, both of the destinations gave us a great lesson out of the classroom.

7.3 On the third day (2nd April 2017)

Spot description

On the third day of the Grand Tour, our class went to the city called Hue and visited three historical sites including Tomb of Khai Dinh, ThenMu Pagoda, and The Citadel. Actually, the Tomb of Khai Dinh is the Twelfth emperor's tomb. Then Mu Pagoda, has 400 years of history, is a famous ancient temple in Vietnam. With the rich history, it is included in the United Nations cultural heritage protection list. The Citadel is the Forbidden City of Nhà Nguyẽn which is the last dynasty in Vietnam. In 1968, it was destroyed in the Battle of Hue. Yet, it is still the largest, most complete ancient buildings in Vietnam and it has been included in the world cultural heritage list. All of these spots have long history and are protected.

Reflection

From Da Nang to Hue, it took around 3 hours to arrive. After the long journey, we eventually arrived at the first destination, Tomb of Khai Dinh. It features the architecture of China and France. This can truly reflect the transition period of Vietnamese being ruled by China to France. The tomb has not yet completely repaired and the color fading revealed the faraway history.

With the explanation of the tour guide, we realized that the tomb was not built easily. Vietnamese had faced a myriad of obstacles, such as French government disapproval, lack of talent and resources. Thus, this tomb took a long time to be completely built.

As the saying goes, from small beginning come great things. The tomb expresses the spirit of persists and patriotism of Vietnamese. This attitude is what we have to learn. We should never give up, tackle the problems as much as we can and threw ourselves into work. It is believed that this attitude is a must when we are facing the public exam after one year. In the preparation of DSE, we may feel physically and mentally exhausted but we have to keep the spirit learning from this tomb in mind, nothing is impossible for a willing heart. Above all, it is a wonderful chance for us to learn from the history with real experience.



7.3 On the fourth day (3rd April 2017)

Spot description

Hoi An Ancient Town is a South-East Asian trading port dating from the 15th to the 19th century. Therefore, the style of buildings and streets reflected by this influence. It combined both indigenous and foreign culture. The combination of Chinese, Japanese and Vietnam culture produced this unique heritage site. This unique characteristic also makes this spot to be included in World Heritage List of UNESCO.

In this spot, there are tourists from the world, special restaurants, bicycles around, local handicrafts and cultural lanterns. I got a wonderful time to relax and experience local culture in a slow pace along the streets. We also walked for about 10 minutes to a local restaurant which was along a river. We had lunch at a long table with about 20 students instead of in a Chinese round table. It is like a high table dinner setting but in a Vietnamese style. Not as grand as high table dinner, we felt more casual and relaxed to enjoy meals.

Later, we went to an NGO, Action For The City. We were divided into three groups, I was in the group which stayed in the classroom and made plants with the children. The special thing is that the flower pot is handmade by leaves. The most touching part is the pureness emotion from the children. Although we only spent a few hours with them, they had already given us the most pureness emotion.

From their eyes, I really felt that they did not want us to leave. This really made me sad and sorry for them. Could those hours really help them and improve their school life? I hope so. On one hand, we may have impeded their studies and the teachers may have needed to spend time preparing the material for us to do the activity with the children. On the other hand, we let them know there are people who care for them and give some gifts to them.



7.3 On the fifth day (3rd April 2017)

Spot description

Han Market is a beautiful place in Vietnam. The market is full of native food and high imitation products. There are two floors. The first floor is mainly selling food and the second floor is mainly selling clothes. Han market is pretty like the dry market in Hong Kong.

This is the last day of the Grand Your. After checking out from the hotel, there were 3 locations we would like to visit. The first one is Marble Mountain, second is the museum of the Campadesa and the last one is the Han Market.

We bought a lot of stuff there. But there was a tricky thing. The price the owners told us was not the real price. We needed to bargain with the owners. The price of items we bought was about half of the original one. After this journey, we all realized that we should be more aware of everything and we should not believe everyone is doing good to us. For example, when we work in the future, we should not fully trust others' words because they may do harm to us for taking advantage of us.

The weather was very hot, but we did not complain much. We suffered in the hot weather but we chatted like normal days. After the short but hard journey, we finally finished the entire site and went to the local shop for the souvenirs. This experience teaches us that after facing some difficulties there must be good ending at last. Therefore we should not give up at any time.

