

The Experiences and Attitude toward the Exchange Programs in Korea among Burapha University Exchange Students

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Abstract. This study is analyzing Burapha University exchange students in Korea in order to explore their attitude towards the exchange programs and the way they adjusted their life in Korea. The samples are 15 Korean language major students who had ever been in Korea during their fourth year as Exchange Students. Questionnaires, consisting of 12 questions for checklist and 12 questions for writing, were used to collect data. According to the findings, the opinion about the students' life in Korea was rated good (4.22). Convenience in transportations was rated highest (4.80) but the higher standard of living cost was rated lowest (3.67). The outcome expected by most exchange students before going to Korea was 'Korean language skills (48%)' and the least was 'sightseeing & shopping (31%)'. The best final outcomes were 'listening-speaking skill (29%)' and living by oneself (29%). The most adaptable experience in everyday life was 'Korean living style (25%)'. 'Tolerance and openness' is considered as the important keys to live successfully in Korea. To understand more the lifestyle of Korean people, students are recommended to learn more about Korean living style expressed in food and drinking culture.

Keywords: major students, lifestyle, Korea, exchange students, tolerance.

Introduction

The Korean Language Major of Burapha University (BUU) was established in 2000 as the second university in Thailand. The first was Prince of Songkla University, which started Korean Language Major in 1999. In August of 2002, BUU sent the first exchange student to Korea after the Korea-Japan 2002 World Cup. At that time, this exchange program was not recognized as the university-to-university program. It was the program among Asean University Network (AUN) and Daejeon University in Korea (this program ended in 2012). In August 2004, BUU directly sent two students to Chung-ang University for the exchange program (this program also ended in 2012). These two programs were two-semester courses and the credits earned could be transferred. Also in February 2008, BUU sent

five students for the first time to Chung-nam National University for the other two-semester exchange program which has been going on until now. Last year, BUU started to send two students to Daejin University for one-semester exchange program. The students of these two programs also could transfer their credits.

The objectives of each exchange program were (1) to provide an opportunity to Korean major students in order to practice Korean language in native country; (2) to encourage students to learn and adapt themselves into Korean culture; and also (3) to promote the cultural exchange between Thailand and Korea. Moreover, the students could apply their useful experiences derived from Korean culture into their everyday life and education, as well as they would be able to share all of these experiences to their junior colleagues.

Korea is different from Thailand on various aspects. Korea has four distinct seasons (spring, summer, autumn and winter). The students could also learned from its invention of effective transportation, the different tastes and kinds of food, the various housing culture, and so on.

BUU has sent many exchange students to Korea more than a decade. Therefore, it is very important to examine the attitude among the students towards their exchange programs, and how they adjusted themselves into Korean culture and society. The result of this study could reflect BUU preparation on this issue and could be a milestone for the university to improve tolerance and openness of the students for living in Korea which are considered as the ultimate outcomes of the exchange programs.

Methodology

The population of this study was BUU’s Korean Language major students who had ever been in Korea during their fourth year as the exchange students. The sample group consisted of fifteen students taken by Simple Random Sampling (Lottery).

For data collection method, a questionnaire was build, and divided into three parts. The first part was regarding general information and personal information of the students. The second part was exploring the students’ life in Korea by using checklist questions. There were twelve questions in this part, each question consisted of 1-5 levels as follows.

- 4.51 – 5.00 = Very Good
- 3.51 – 4.50 = Good

- 2.51 – 3.50 = Normal
- 1.51 – 2.50 = Poor
- 1.00 – 1.50 = Very Poor

The reliability of the questions was 0.88911 which indicated high. The third part of the questionnaire was dedicated to examine students’ life in Korea. The questions in this part were similar to the second part, but the students were required to write what were the most or best/least or worst. The results were shown in percentage (%).

Results

The analysis of BUU exchange students’ life in Korea was summarized as the findings below.

General Information

The respondents are all females (100%). 20% were already living in Korea for a period of 1-6 month, meanwhile, mostly has lived in the country for 7-12 months (80%). While was in Korea, all of the them were living outside the capital city of Seoul (100%). It can be concluded that This part indicated that fifteen students are women and stayed outside Seoul. Most of them stayed in Korea more than 6 months.

Students’ Life in Korea: A Checklist

This checklist outlined how respondents experienced their living in Korea as student’s exchange program. Their opinion were ranging from education to way of living such as transportation, food, and customs of Koreanese. Complete checklist result are presented on Table 1.Part 2:

Question	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level	Ranking
1. The expectation before going to Korea.	4.00	0.76	Good	8
2. The timing of the program was appropriate.	3.93	0.88	Good	10
3. The subject of the Korean university was appropriate to study.	4.31	0.74	Good	6
4. The teaching methods of the Korean university were appropriate to study.	4.33	0.62	Good	4
5. The facilities of the accommodation were convenient.	4.33	0.72	Good	5
6. The transportations were convenient.	4.80	0.41	Very Good	1
7. The food was tasty.	3.93	0.96	Good	11
8. The weather was appropriate for living.	4.13	0.74	Good	7
9. The cost of living was appropriate for living.	3.67	0.62	Good	12
10. The habits, customs and cultures of Korean people were easy to adjust in a daily basis.	3.93	0.70	Good	9
11. The final outcomes.	4.67	0.49	Very Good	3
12. The experiences gained from the program are adaptable in everyday life.	4.73	0.46	Very Good	2
Total	4.22	0.47	Good	-

(Source: Research Questionnaire)

Based on Table 1, students said that the transportations in Korean were very good as the first ranking at the average value of 4.80. The second one was that they could adapt their experiences in everyday life at the average value of 4.73. The third one was that they gained many experiences from Korea at the average value of 4.67. Nevertheless, the last one at the average value of 3.60 seemed to be that it was not difficult for them to live in Korea. The cost of living in Korea is considered high, but the level of this question was 'Good'. The results also showed that Korean food was good, together

with the timing of the program just was appropriate at the average value of 3.93. The total average value was 4.22 which indicated at the 'Good' level.

This part reveals that the students were mostly happy staying in Korea: they liked best the Korea transportation system and they satisfied with their Korea experiences. For the students, Korea is not an expensive country to live in.

Table 2: :level of Opinion on the Students' Life in Korea by Persons

Sample (person)	Result		Level	Ranking
	\bar{x}	S.D.		
1	4.42	0.51	Good	5
2	3.58	0.79	Good	10
3	4.25	0.75	Good	6
4	3.83	0.58	Good	8
5	4.58	0.51	Very Good	3
6	4.58	0.51	Very Good	3
7	3.83	0.39	Good	7
8	4.25	0.75	Good	6
9	4.83	0.39	Very Good	1
10	3.75	0.97	Good	9
11	4.58	0.51	Very Good	3
12	3.25	0.62	Normal	11
13	4.75	0.45	Very Good	2
14	4.25	0.75	Good	6
15	4.50	0.67	Good	4

(Source: Research Questionnaire)

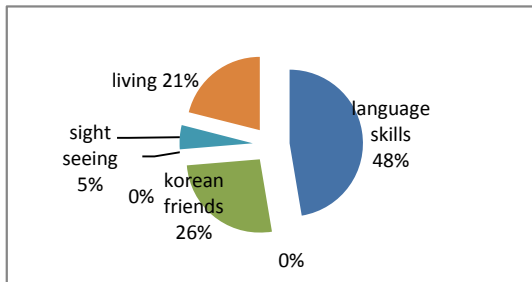
From Table 2, the ninth student showed a very good attitude toward living in Korea (first ranking). The second ranking was thirteenth student, meanwhile the fifth, sixth and eleventh

students respectively showed the very good attitudes with the third ranking. It means they did satisfy very much with their life in Korea.

On the other hand, the twelfth student expressed the attitude at the last ranking which indicated that she did not quite satisfy her life in Korea. Most of her answers were rather negative. For example, she did not like the dorm because of the shared toilet/bathroom. She did not enjoy the subjects she had to study, as well as method of teaching that made her get bored. She also disliked Korean's drinking habit.

Expected Outcome: Language Skills and Korean Friends

Most



Least

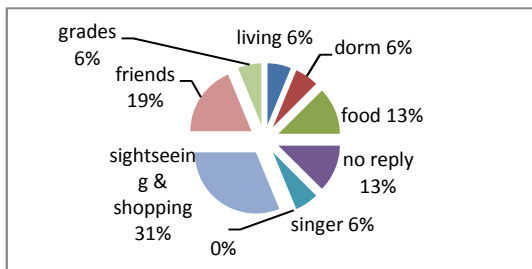
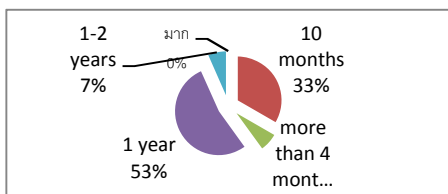


Figure 1: The expected outcomes before going to Korea

Almost half of the students (48%) expected that they could improve their Korean language skills. About 26% expected to make friends with Korean people during their time in Korea. Speaking about the least expected outcome, 31% did not expect sightseeing and shopping. About 19% did not think they could have many friends there.

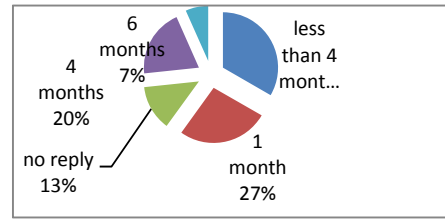
The findings in this part show that students desired to increase their Korean language abilities more than to pay much attention in shopping or going outside. Certain students reasoned that it was difficult to go outside by themselves because the universities they stayed in were not located in Seoul. So, they assumed that the transportations would not be good.

Most

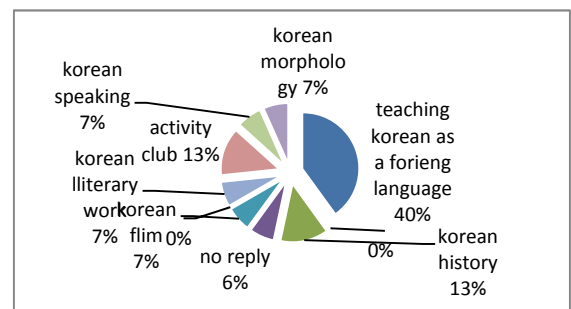


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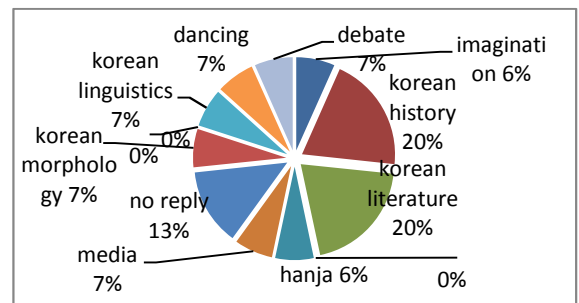
Figure 2: The appropriate time of the program



More than half of the students with 53% preferred a one-year exchange program. They wrote that it would be a suitable period of time to learn more and understand Korean culture. It was confirmed by others: 60% of respondents expressed that less than 4 months (33% and 27%) was considered too short for them.



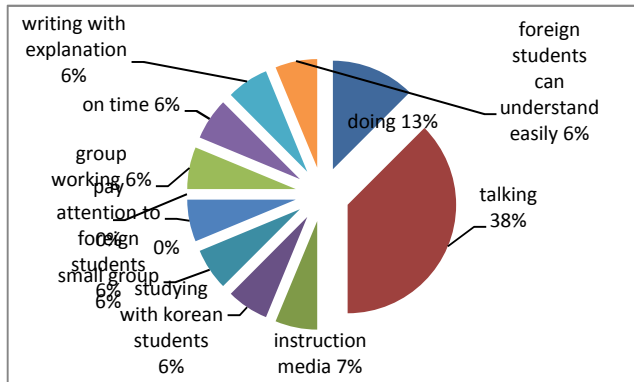
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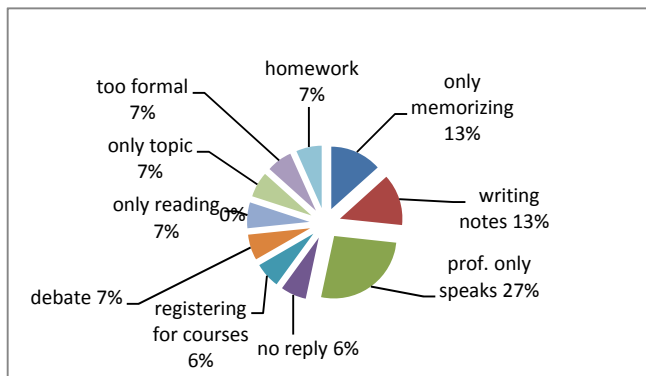
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Figure 3: The appropriate subject

This figure shows that 40% of the students preferred most the subject 'Teaching Korean as a foreign language' because they could transfer the credit of this subject and it was not too difficult. On the other hand, 40% did not like 'Korean history (20%)' and 'Korean literature (20%)' even though they could transfer the credits. Since they were required to learn about many Hanja or Chinese characters in these subjects, they could not understand well about the contents.



Most

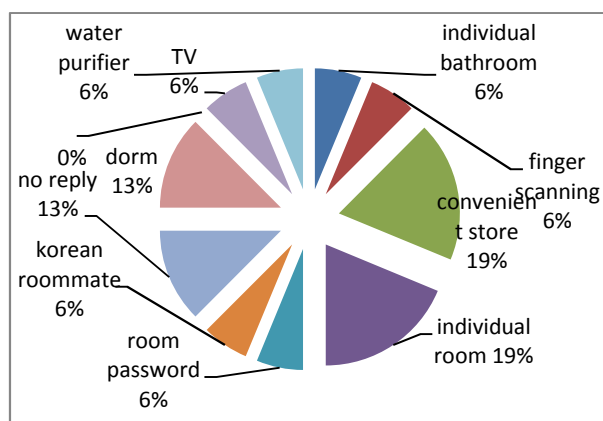


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Figure 4: The appropriate teaching method

This figure indicates that the students wanted to talk (38%) and do (13%) some activities in classes more than only to listen to the professor's lectures (27%), to write notes (13%) and to memorize (13%). They could not practice their Korean language skills if they merely sat down, listened, wrote and memorized—it made them bored.

Most



Least

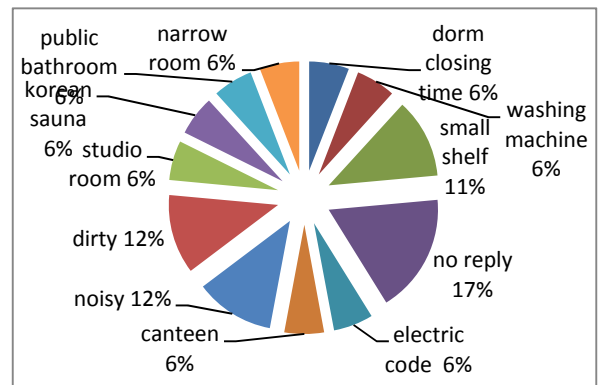
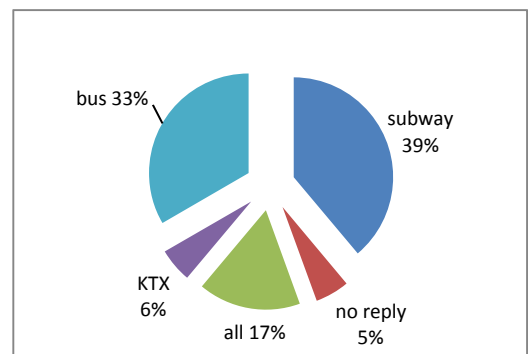


Figure 5: Convenient Facility of the Accommodation

This part shows that the students liked to have their own separated rooms (19%) with convenient stores nearby (19%). The results indicate that the students preferred to have their privacy and did not go far to buy something. For 'no reply' (13%), it seems to be that there was none they liked. Certain students showed that the dormitories were noisy (12%) and dirty (12%) because there were too many roommates in one room and the janitors did not clean the dormitories neatly enough. For 'no reply' (17%), it seemed to be that there was none they did not like.

Most



Least

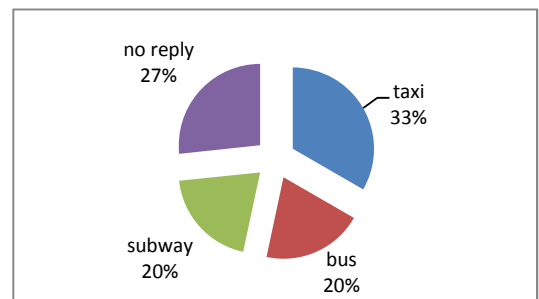
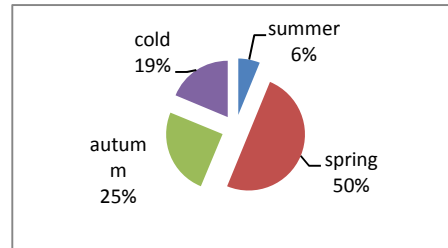


Figure 6: Convenient Transportation

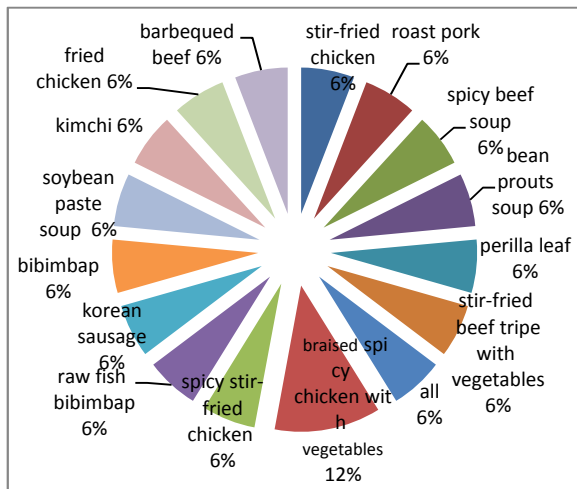
Most of the students (39%) preferred to take the subway since it was fast, comfortable, safe, and cheap. They also liked to travel by bus (33%) for easy access. There were monitors at every bus stop to show the arriving time. Taxi is something they didn't like (33%) because it was very expensive, the body is too narrow, and difficult to catch. Interestingly, some students reported that they did not like subway (20%) and bus (20%). There were too many people in the subway, and smelled badly, especially during rush hour. There were many bus routes, so it was difficult to pick the right line.

Regarding 'perilla leaf', the Korean had a habit of eating it raw. This food smelled terrible to Thai students. They did not like 'beef' either because too expensive for them.

Most



Most



Least

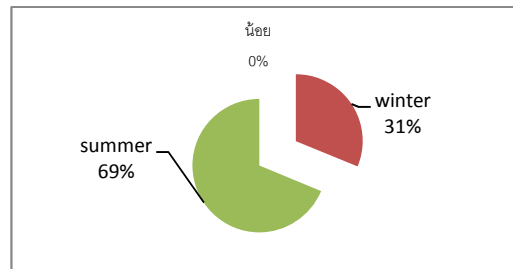


Figure 8: Appropriate Weather for Living

Half of the students (50%) preferred spring in Korea because it isn't too cold or too hot. They could enjoy beautiful and fresh flower blossoms. Some chosen autumn (25%) since the weather was similar to spring. It was not too cold nor too hot, but it was dry and not fresh. The students did not like the weather in summer (69%) since it was really hot and humid that made them feel uncomfortable due to sticky moments.

Most

Least

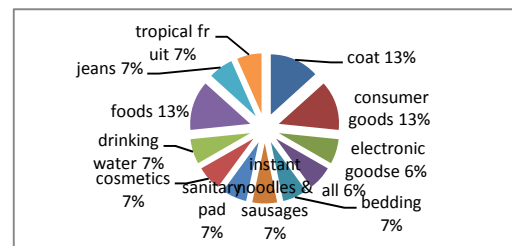
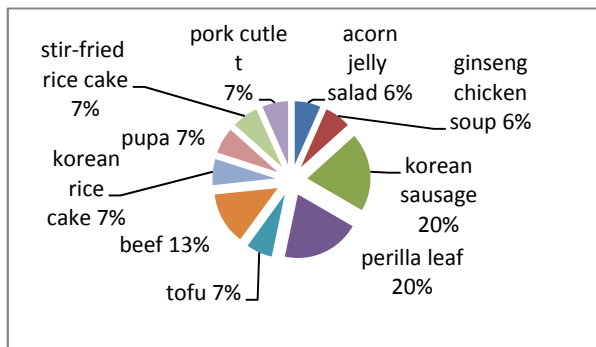


Figure 7: Favorite Food

Least

There were various foods that liked by the students, but not a single well-defined food that they liked the most while living in Korea. 'Braised spicy chicken with vegetable (12%)' which looked like Thai food was the most favorite food among students. The students revealed that they did not like 'Korean sausage (20%)' and 'Perilla leaf (20%)'. They mentioned that 'Korean sausage' was made by internal organs of pork so it smelled terrible for them.

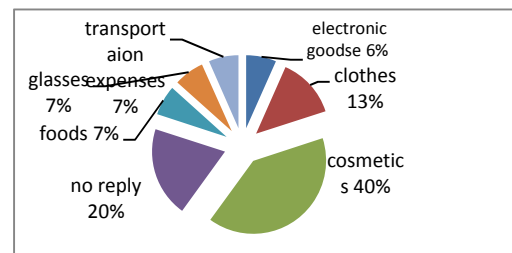
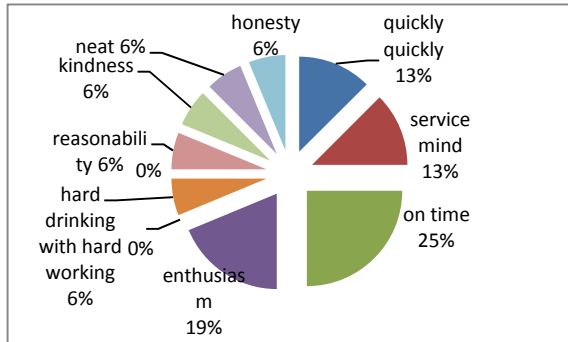


Figure 9: The Expensive Cost of Living

There were many goods that considered expensive by students, but not a single student could defined the most expensive goods. The three items that were considered more expensive for the students are coat for winter (13%), consumer goods (13%) and foods (13%). They remarked that foods and consumer goods were triplemore expensive than Thai foods and consumer goods. The coat for winter with good quality was also very expensive.

Best



Worst

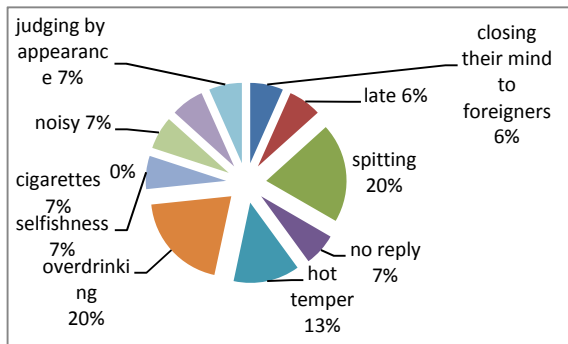
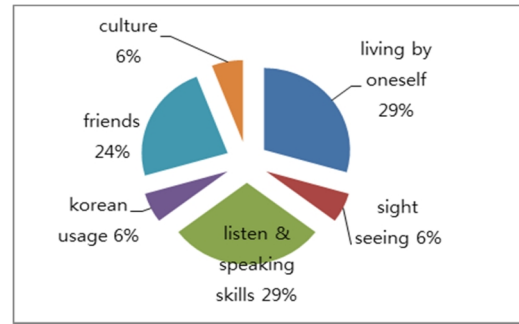


Figure 10: Habits, Customs and Cultures of Korean

The students mentioned that Korean were always be on time for their appointments (25%), and enthusiasm (19%). However, they did not like Korean people spitting on the street (20%). This behavior was considered absolutely disgraceful and dirty among the students. The students could not drink too much alcohol as Korean people did (20%).

Best



Worst

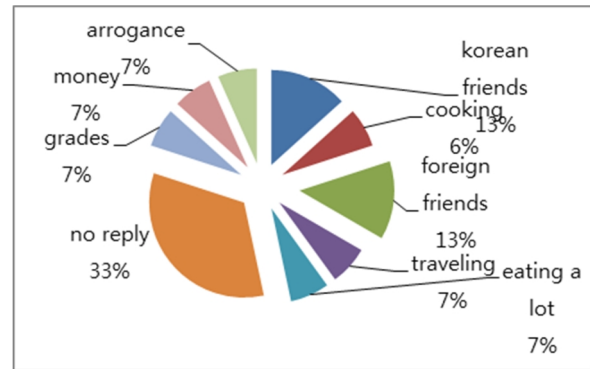
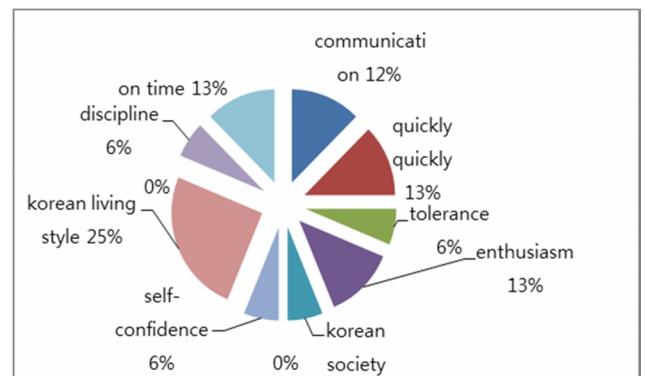


Figure 11: Final Outcomes

This part shows that 29% of the students felt that they could improve their Korean listening and speaking skills. They also gain more confidence to live by themselves. Meanwhile, 24% of them made many friends during their exchange programs. The students mentioned that everything was valuable. However, some of the students (13%) showed that they could not make friends with both Korean and foreign friends

Most



Least

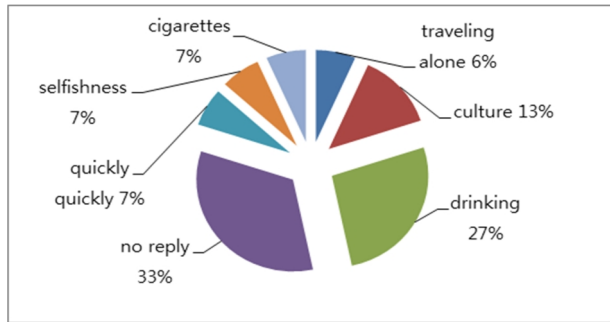


Figure12: The adaptable experience in everyday life

This part reveals that 25% of students could adapt themselves into all of Korean style in everyday life, while 13% of them adapt themselves to 'to be enthusiastic, to do quickly, and to be on time' in order to work with Korean colleagues in their companies. The highest score of the least adaptable experience was 'no reply' at 33%. They revealed that everything was adaptable in their life. However, certain students (27%) mentioned that Korean people's drinking behavior was not suitable for Thai society because drinking was considered an inappropriate behavior for Thai people.

Conclusion and Discussion

From the findings, it was found out that during their times in Korea, students were attracted most to the Korea transportation system, especially the subway. Korea subway is one of the best choices for going outside. It is cheap, fast and on time.

The results also showed that students also could adjust themselves into Korean everyday life. If they worked for Korean companies, these experiences would be valuable for them. They expected to upgrade their Korean language skills after coming back from Korea. The final outcomes showed that students could improve their Korean listening and speaking skills. It seems to be that these two skills are closely related.

The experience of Thai students as respondents of this research is contrasted with Chinese students. Joe (2015) stated that before leaving China, Chinese students needed better Korean language skill. So they went to Korea for a better environment to improve their language skills. But when they went back to China, they did not think that their language skills were improved.

Even though the students did not worry about the cost of living, the ranking of this was put as the last one. They commented that food and consumer goods were the most expensive.

The cost for one meal was no less than 5,000 won per 1 person (about 150 Baht) which is triplemore expensive than food in Thailand. As we know, Korean cosmetics are very cheap. The students mentioned that many teenagers bought cosmetics from Korea and sold them through internet. The students also did the online commerce as they mentioned.

The students did not like Perilla leaf and Korean sausage due to the 'unique' smell of these foods. Chantaravech (2006) stated that it is unavoidable to face the different culture. Even though the project participants knew well about American foods, they felt that American food was too greasy. They realized 'to eat for living' not 'to live for eating'. As a result, they sometimes cooked Thai food. On the other hand, no kitchen facilities were provided in the dormitory. They can eat for a meal at the dormitory cafeteria. As a result, Thai students were unable to cook. All they did is boiled the water for instant noodle.

Drinking was something unacceptable for the students. This is related to the answer of question number ten that showed how they feel about Korean drinking culture. As confirmed by question number twelve, certain students mentioned that Korean drinking behavior was unsuitable for Thailand. Before leaving Thailand, the students must be well-prepared on how to live happily in Korea. So far, no orientation has been organized for exchange students. Considering the research result, staff of student exchange program should educate the students about how to use Korean transportation. Such information would be beneficial for students. It enabled them to choose suitable mode of transportation.

'Tolerance and openness' is considered as the important keys to live successfully in Korea, the students are also required to learn more about Korean living style such as food, drinking culture in order to understand the lifestyle of Korean people. Another important lesson is financial management technique. According to Paige (1990) (cited in Mariano, 2011: 52), Pre-Arrival Adjustment Stage is one of the most important period of time to instill necessary information before students' arrival. It helped to reduce anxiety and possible cultural shock. Information about the adjustment process, culture, geographic environment, education system, financial requirements and housing should be sent out to all prospective students.

This study aims to provide important information regarding the attitude and experiences of Thai exchange students in Korea. The deeper analysis of this topic and solutions

and prevention steps for problems and obstacles is expected to be implemented in the near future.

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