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The next stop in happiness of the Foreign Spouses

作者：

陳姍澧。私立永年中學。高 3 信班

陳佩琪。私立永年中學。高 3 信班

林宜珊。私立永年中學。高 3 信班

指導老師：

林郁宸老師

## I. Introduction

### A. Background

With the advancement in technology, the transportation and messages transmission has become more and more convenient than that in the past, though the distance among countries doesn't change substantially. With the development of transportation, people spend less time going from countries to countries. Thus, interactions between people from different cultures might also increase the number of people having affectionate relationship, while sometimes this results in a wide range of conflicts among people as well. There are two sides of a coin. Convenience which saves plenty of time on international transportation and communication, which increase international marriages, we might find that there have been some media coverages about problems occurred in international marriages. But as we all know, we can't just believe in the hearsay and jump to conclusion. People always say that "Nothing ventured, nothing gained", so the truth would reveal more if we can investigate this in person.

### B. Research motivation

According to statistics provided by the government in Taiwan, **among the four hundred and forty thousands married couples in Taiwan, there are one hundred and fifty thousand couples are international marriage.**<sup>1</sup> In other words, there are one-third of the families being the international one. In addition, two members of the study group were born in the international families. Therefore, the study group decided to investigate more on the influence of international marriage and show how foreign spouses deal with problems they were faced with. And hopefully, the study group would like to provide some useful tips for people on the same boat to avoid repeating the same failure.

### C. Research Questions

To understand how foreign spouses face the unknown life styles in Taiwan and meanwhile strike root in a new place, the study group proposed the following questions.

1. What gave the foreign brides the determination to marry a Taiwanese and live in Taiwan?
2. What were the troubles caused to the foreign spouses when living in Taiwan, and what were the causes behind them.
3. How did the foreign spouses manage to overcome the hardship they were faced with? And were there any knacks on this issue?

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<sup>1</sup>內政部統計通報。2016 年 12 月 27 日。取自 [http://writcent.nthu.edu.tw/writcent/uploaded\\_files/view/583](http://writcent.nthu.edu.tw/writcent/uploaded_files/view/583)

#### D. Research methods

To deeper understand the real situation of how a foreign spouse adapted to the life in Taiwan, the study group adopted qualitative research method for further investigation, where the study group conducted semi-structured interview with the interviewee. Therefore, the study group induced an outline of interview questions on account of the research questions. On November 13th, 2016, the whole group did the interview in the house of the subject, Mother of one member in the study group. The Filipino subject had stayed for over 23 years, so during the one and a half interview, the study group gained quite a lot of useful information with the assistance of one camera and one pen recorder.

#### II. Literature review

To get the full view of the project on foreign spouses' living, the study group first searched for information on related websites and dissertation, through which the study group could also get to understand other researchers' idea on this issue.

##### A. The development of the transnational

###### a. The embryonic period<sup>2</sup>

In the 1960s, agencies in charge of international marriages began to introduce the single from Southeast Asia to Taiwan, and in the mean time, they also introduced Taiwanese women to Europe and the United States, when was the budding period for international marriages. During that period, differences in customs and ways of communication were the main barriers for them to conquer because, for that time being, the government was short of support in policy, leading to high rate of escaping foreign spouses. Therefore, with low public acceptance, the phenomenon did not last long.

###### b. The expansion period<sup>3</sup>

After 1980, because of the government's "southbound policy," Taiwanese businessmen established a large number of factories in Southeast Asia, which hence introduce lots of Taiwanese workers to Southeast Asia, some of whom consequently chose the local to get married. As a result, agencies on international marriage discovered the opportunity and seized upon it.

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<sup>2</sup>莊孟蓉（2007）。近三十年台灣跨國婚姻的演變及影響。台北教育大學社會科教育學系社會學習領域教學碩士學位班。

<sup>3</sup>莊孟蓉（2007）。近三十年台灣跨國婚姻的演變及影響。台北教育大學社會科教育學系社會學習領域教學碩士學位班。

### c. The development period<sup>4</sup>

Since the 1990s, Taiwan's political and economic changes have led to the relocation of funds. In order to handle this change, the government introduced foreign workers, which unfortunately resulted in the unemployment and employment difficulties on domestic workers. Coupled with the recent rise of Taiwan's women's self-consciousness, many men were forced turn to foreign spouses, this result in many foreign spouses and the son of Taiwan's phenomenon.

### B. Main reasons why foreign spouses are willing to come to Taiwan

First, due to the popularity of education, Taiwanese women have more choices for their future, which used to be getting married for settlement. Therefore, it is getting harder for Taiwanese men to marry Taiwanese women. Considering this circumstance, Taiwanese men have to turn to exotic marriage partners.

Secondly, from the perspectives of foreign spouses, many of whom may come for marriage on account of economy factor, since the GDP of the foreign spouses' motherlands usually is lower than that in Taiwan.

### C. Situations that foreign spouses encountered in Taiwan

According to the related information found on the Internet or books, the study group would like to introduce the two main situations that foreign spouses have encountered in Taiwan. First, compared with Taiwan, most countries in Southeast Asia are relative not so advanced, and many Taiwanese might regard the people from those countries as uneducated or even bad-mannered. With this kind of negative stereotype, foreign spouses are often faced with judges on their opinions, especially on social behavior and educational parenting. What's worse, WEN-ZNE KE, the mayor of New Taipei City, has blurt out the sentence **"At present, New Taipei City has already imported 30 thousand foreign spouses,"**<sup>5</sup> which insulted foreign spouses by treat the foreign spouses as goods. Secondly, facing barriers of different languages and troubles in adjusting to climates and cultural conceptions, these foreign spouses might easily misunderstood by everyone who has connection with. As we all know, the more misunderstanding people have, the more hatred or distrust there will be developed. Therefore, some domestic violences on foreign spouses have been seen on papers or news from time to time.

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<sup>4</sup>莊孟蓉 (2007)。近三十年台灣跨國婚姻的演變及影響。台北教育大學社會科教育學系社會學習領域教學碩士學位班。

<sup>5</sup>吳家翔 (2015)。「進口」說遭抗議 柯 P 認錯道歉。蘋果日報，2015 年 03 月 08 日  
<http://www.ettoday.net/news/20150307/475201.htm>

#### D. Analysis

Due to the notes taken from the interview were full of interjections and colloquial speeches, and were in Chinese. Therefore, the study group summarized the main points of each answer to the responding question and listed as follows.

1. Why did the interviewee decide to marry a Taiwanese?

Since the economic situation was difficult for the subject's family to make ends meet at that time, she made her mind to earn money in Taiwan, where she would be paid much more than in the Philippines.

2. How did the interviewee get acquaintance with her husband?

The happy fate bringing the two lovers together could contribute to one of the subject's former college, who arranged a blind date for the couple. And after several times of dates, they decide to get married.

3. What is the situation like when the interviewee gets along with her mother-in-law?

At first, the subject did get along with her mother-in-law very well, since her mother-in-law often shared negative comments with neighbors behind her back. However, things were better off after her mother-in-law got the lung cancer. The subject spent most of the time taking care of her, which helped the two develop intimate relationship like mother and daughter.

4. Did the interviewee need to adapt to the local food in Taiwan?

Owing to the relatively hotter weather with over six-month boiling hot days, the Philippine food tends to be sour, which enables the locals get better appetite. On the other hand, although the food in Taiwan tends to be more greasy, the subject found no dissatisfaction in savoring Taiwanese food. In addition, with years practice, she could make unique dishes blended with flavors of Philippines and Taiwan.

5. Was there any gap of religions between Philippines and Taiwan?

Since the interviewee is a pious Catholic believer, she used to go to church almost every night in Philippines. After marriage, it was not only the long distance between the church and her home but also her husband's religion, Taoism that kept her from going to church. Moreover, the subject had to learn to prepare the necessities for worshipping gods and ancestors.

6. What is the difference in medical practices between Taiwan and Philippines?

The biggest difference is that Taiwan has National Health Insurance. Therefore, in Philippines, people would cost a fortune when visiting hospitals, or they could only resort to alternative folk remedies, which could possibly lead to other negative side effects.

7. What is the most difficult part for the interviewee to adapt to? And how did the interviewee manage to overcome it?

Being illiterate in Chinese would be the hardest for the subject since initial reason that the subject came to Taiwan was to work for money, and the employers she had worked for talked in Chinese, which served as a big barrier for communication. Therefore, the subject decided to learn Chinese at a course sponsored by Council of Labor Affairs, which took her a large amount of time

and effort. Teased by colleagues as she was, the subject didn't feel depressed. Instead, she tried hard to make some local friends, which eventually helped a lot in her language skills. Moreover, the subject would also find some books with two versions of language for extra reading, and whenever she was faced with trouble figuring out the meaning of the context, she would turn to her children for assistance. With those efforts, she can speak fluent Chinese now.

#### E. Discussion

With the information provided in the last chapter, the study group would further investigate the results according to the research question proposed by the study group.

First, as to the reason why foreign spouses come to Taiwan for marriage, the answer of the subject was coherent with the information mentioned in Literature Review, which is for economic factor. And in the case of the interviewee, although she didn't come to Taiwan for marriage but for higher salary, it was reasonably speculated that she had the desire to settle down in Taiwan because she accepted the blind date. Secondly, the subject referred to many obstacles she encountered, such as differences in diet, language and religion and even a feeling of animosity between her mother-in-law and she, accordingly, living in a culture which is very different from one's own is the main problem. Finally, to overcome the hardship in adapting to a different culture, the subject spent quite a lot of time and effort understanding and appreciating every aspects of the culture in Taiwan, such as learning another language, Chinese, and trying to blend in with the society of Taiwan by sincerely spending time getting along with the locals .

#### III. Conclusion

From the discussion of the last chapter, it is obvious that the notions proposed earlier by the study group was correct, that is, adapting to a new culture. When people come to unfamiliar country, especially different in native language, they naturally feel nervous about the surroundings. What is worse is, with the barrier of language, misunderstanding normally occurs , which could result in conflict with others, so we all have learned from social media that domestic violence on foreign spouses. Aside from the fact that government and non-governmental organizations are managing to help foreign spouses, it is essential that foreign spouses, when faced with troubles, should not only turn to others but also turn to themselves. Like the subject in discussion, she face the hardship with determination and persistence in adjusting to the world she had barely known, and eventually, she proved that every effort paid off.

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