A transcultural view on ambivalence and ambiguity – “Don`t push the river, it flows by itself”

- related to the first study-results:
“mental state of Chinese students in Germany”

Witten-Herdecke, 2022-08-12

Research

Topic: Psychological condition of Chinese students in Germany and their living situation.

Objective:
- Analysis of the situation and assessment.
- Development of guidelines for support
- Communication to stakeholders

Methodological approach:
- Exploratory study
- Independent (fluid) project team
- Action research approach
- Continuous, collegial exchange of ideas

Tools:
- Student reports of experience
- Online questionnaire
- In-depth interviews
- Collegial exchange/literature

First basic results (among others) 1 / 2

- New University milieu (open lectures, new way of thinking, group-discussion, brainstorming, asking questions etc.)
- To make ones own decision, more freedom
- No final examination/ fixation
- new culture of error
- Reading texts self-critically
- Life is slower and more attractive
- Different lifestyles (and feeling at home)
- Big language problem
- Goal-oriented communication vs. communication as shared experience with others (lived language)
- Life is different compared how one was prepared in China
- Being less prepared for practical management of everyday life

First basic results (among others) 2 / 2

- New: The learning of learning
- Missing the “comfortable life” in China (overprotection)
- Experience of self, self-development and self-enrichment
- Experiences like a treasure and one was “eternally grateful”
- To feel more independent and more honest with oneself
- Proud to feel self-experience as Chinese without polarisation (no mission)
- Joy of sharing this experience with ones own family

Specific essence

- Important is the experience of **different modes of making experience**
- Experience the tension between being overprotected in China vs. **feeling independency, maturity and self-esteem**
- Showing up as Chinese **and** respect curiosity for other cultural identities
- Experience the relevance of **different and changing roles**
- Importance and permission of **asking questions (self-critical question)**
- To feel oneself in an more open that pre-structured situation
- **There is no “yes” or “ no”, there is yes and no**

Cultural perspectives

- **Intercultural**

  it is about cultural knowledge, social identity and application-oriented

- **Multicultural**

  it is about cultural perception, culural rules, patterns and psychological identity, solution-oriented

- **Transcultural**

  It is about cultural co-designing, cohesion, emotional resonance and hybrid identity

3 Approaches for Working with Cultures*

Perspectives	Intercultural	Multicultural	Transcultural
Culture appears as...	Challenge for intercultural learning	Part-system, interference in the expectations	Undetected prerequisites for interaction and identity
Culture concept	Essentialist: Countries, nation states	Systemic: Game rules, patterns	Cohesive: Differences and diversity
Methods	Teaching, advising, training ▸ Apply and adapt	Use of models for the reflection and detection of values ▸ Reflect and test	Deconstruction of all preconceptions, images of normality and power asymmetries ▸ Consider cultural and diversity factors on all levels of activity
Intercultural competence encompasses	Knowledge and techniques	Ability to reflect and flexibility	Competences and personality development
Advantages	Recognition of cultural factors	Multiple perspectives	Essentially difference and equality oriented
Role and particular competences of the expert	Promotes intercultural competence as cultural expert; trains and recommends	Broadens perspectives, choices and options for actions, provokes and intervenes	Assesses collaboratively which identity factors and boundaries are relevant
Challenges	Overestimation of cultural factors	Lack of (inter) cultural expertise	Limited reach of individual influence

*Source: Nazarkiewicz/Krämer (2012): Handbuch Interkulturelles Coaching. V&R.

Typical aspects of learning (China)

- Top – Down
- clear and „given“ roles
- Focus on goal orientation
- Focus on rules, requirements and obedience
- Traditional culture of error (legalism)
- Not so familiar with „learning the learning“
- Not so familiar with discourse and so on

„Not so familiar in China with……

- Experience of "Simultaneity of the Unequal”
- Characteristic of an inner conflict / tension
- Notion of commonality is fragile
- Life is double-value (ambivalence) and interpretatively ambiguous (ambiguity)
- Need to position / decide personally
- Decisions made can give rise to changed, new decisions
- It is (always) about the interplay of factual-rational and emotional aspects

Ambivalence

- **Ambivalence** is a state of having simultaneous conflicting reactions, beliefs, or feelings towards some object. Stated another way, ambivalence is the experience of having an attitude towards someone or something that contains both positively and negatively valenced components.
- **Example:** struggling with whether to invite someone to an event because she has a positive relationship with you but not with the other attendees. The definition of ambivalence is a state in which you lack certainty or the ability to make decisions.
- **Opposite:** clarity

Ambiguity tolerance

- **Ambiguity tolerance**, sometimes also called uncertainty tolerance, is the ability to tolerate ambiguous situations and contradictory courses of action. Ambiguity-tolerant people are able to perceive ambiguities, i.e. contradictions, culturally conditioned differences or ambiguous information that appears difficult to understand or even unacceptable, without reacting aggressively to them or evaluating them unilaterally negatively or - often in the case of culturally conditioned differences - unreservedly positively. The concept plays an important role, especially in personality development and social learning. Tolerance of ambiguity is also a prerequisite for a person's intercultural competence.Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version)
- **Opposite**: clarity **and** feeling of security

Juxtaposition

- **Juxtaposition:** is to place two aspects close together or side by side, especially with an arresting or surprising effect, or in a way that invites comparison or contrast. Or: a side-by-side-position.

Examples: Any time unlike things bump up against each other, you can describe it as a juxtaposition. Imagine a funeral mourner telling jokes graveside, and you get the idea — the juxtaposition in this case is between grief and humor. Juxtaposition of two contrasting items is often done deliberately in writing, music, or art — in order to highlight their differences.

- Typical sentences:

-"Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country“

-"Let us never negotiate out of fear. but let us never fear to negotiate",

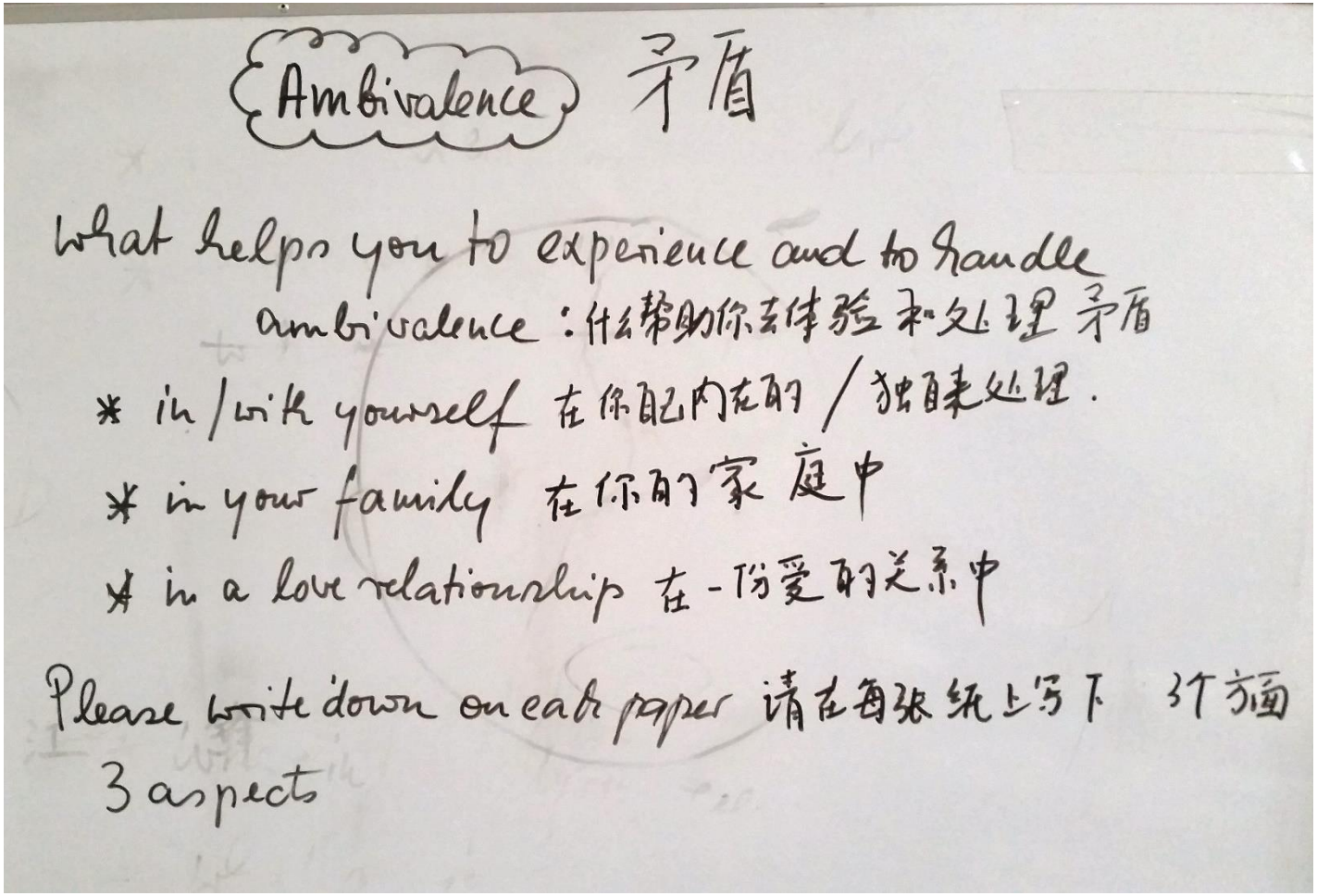
- Typical examples: 1 is 1, 4 is 4

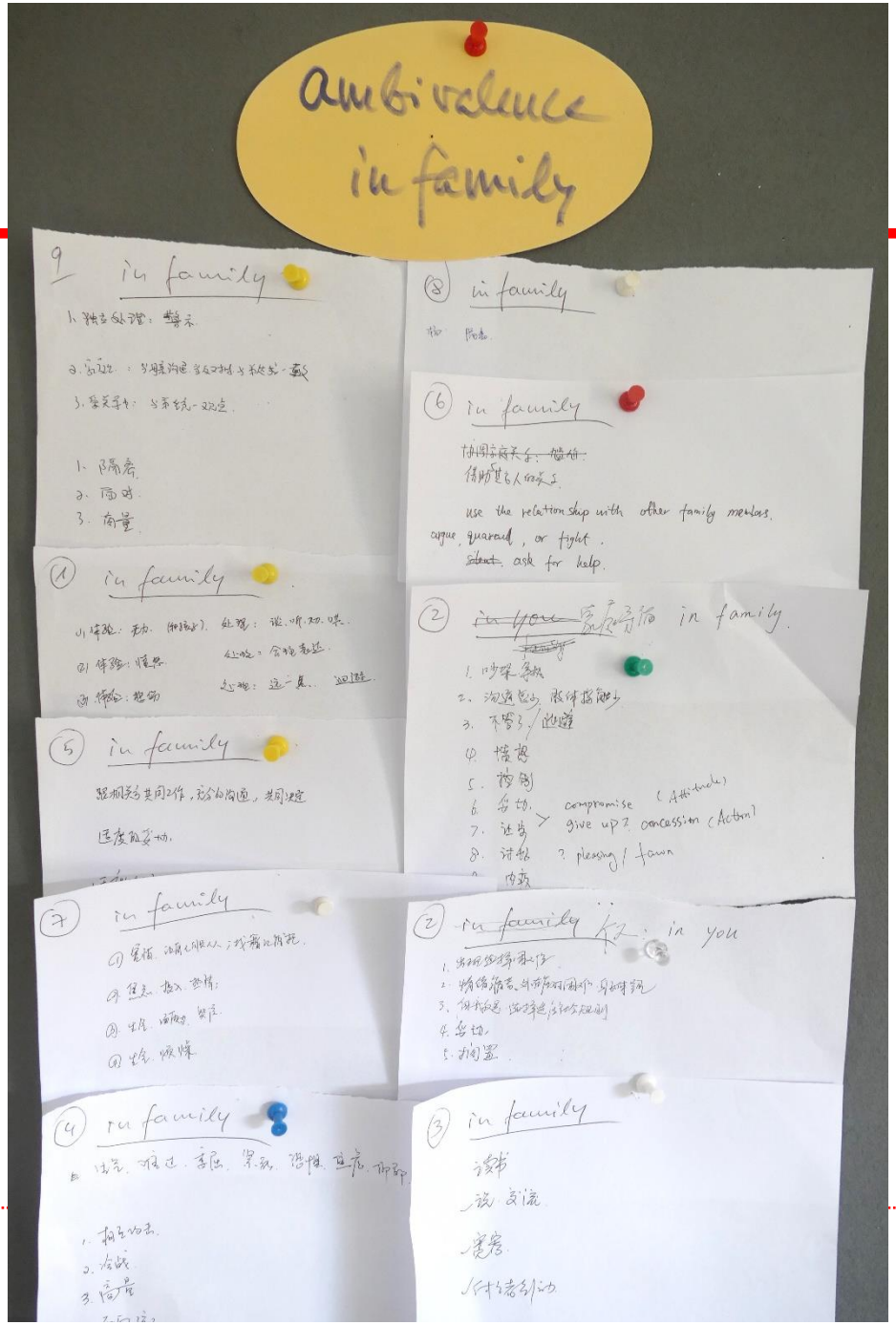
and the juxtaposition of both is

so different: ¼ liter of milk

Discourse

- A **discourse** is related to the reality of the social world and the people, ideas, and things that inhabit it. It is about speaking or writing about reality that defines what can be intelligibly thought and said about the world and what cannot.


Ambivalence 矛盾
What helps you to experience and to handle ambivalence: 什么帮助你去体验和处理矛盾
* in/with yourself 在你自己内在的/独自来处理.
* in your family 在你的家庭中
* in a love relationship 在一份爱的关系中
Please write down on each paper 请在每张纸上写下 3个方面
3 aspects


ambivalence
in family
9 in family
8 in family
6 in family
use the relationship with other family members.
argue, quarrel, or fight.
ask for help.
1 in family
5 in family
2 in family
compromise (Attitude)
give up? concession (Action)
7 in family
2 in family
in you
4 in family
3 in family

Spontaneous feedback to ambivalence by professionals

- **In myself**
- Arousal/excitement
- Abwehrverhalten
- Kompromis / Orientierung an Regeln
- Wunsch mehr wissen und lernen zu wollen
- **In the family (most mentions were here)**
  - sehr differenzierte, tiefe Gefühle erlebt
  - Konfrontation vs Gehorsam
  - viel über Verhandlung geregelt
- **In love relationship**
  - Rebellion vs Gehorsam
  - to accept, feel dependened, pleasing
  - acting out, worrying, angry or nervous controlling
  -

Some quintessence

- “and” instead of “but”
- both and as well as
- and instead of but
- Not (only) the Other is other, I am (also) other to myself
- There is always an aspect you don't know and can't know. That's life.
- Ask questions, questions already the answer
- Dont push the river it flows by itself
- astonishmen and curisosity are an utmost important start to learn
- be aware and decide, this is the most important decision

Content analysis of the experience reports of Chinese students after their return to China

Ulrich Sollmann (Bochum), Huijing Chen (Shanghai), Jiajia Wu (Shanghai), Yuqi Wang (Hangzhou), Muyu Lin (Haikou City), Zhao Xudong (Shanghai)

https://api.china-bw.net/uploads/cnbw-web/originals/7fb57158-48d2-4c88-b8c5-214e7995de85.pdf

If you want to read about this approach, just have a look

Dipl. rer. soc. Ulrich Sollmann
Guest Professor at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law (SHUPL)
Höfestr. 87
D- 44801 Bochum / Germany
+ 49 234 383828
+49 177 3838280
sollmann@sollmann-online.de
www.sollmann-online.de
Wechat: us44801