

Changes in Lyrics of Tayu Lo and Bob Dylan under Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory

Yueni Yang*

Xiangtan University, Xiangtan, Hunan Province, China

Abstract: Bob Dylan, one of the most influential singers in the United State in 1960s, and Tayu Lo, the godfather of Chinese music hold different stance toward “changes”. By analyzing under Uncertainty Avoidance theory by Hofstede, the paper would dig deeper on the sources (on philosophy, political and economic background).

Keywords: Bob Dylan; Tayu Lo; Hofstede; Uncertainty Avoidance Index

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***Corresponding author:** Yueni Yang, xtu_yyn@foxmail.com

As the Godfather of Chinese music, Tayu Lo has been renowned for his Rock N’ Roll. Research on his themes can be concluded as love vision, nostalgia complex and Chinese complex. (Chen 97-101)^[1]. Here his attitude towards “changes” is typical and oriental.

There are three reasons to compare them on “changes”:

(1) Their statuses on their folksongs are incomparable and unreplaceable on the history of pop music. Tayu Lo is the godfather of Chinese-speaking music while Bob Dylan is the landmark of western pop music. Dylan’s eclecticism and inventiveness can be compared to Yeats. That is, in Yeats Celtic and English coalesce; in Dylan linguistic and musical idioms of ancient folk music and contemporary rock and roll become as one. (Ball 173)^[2]. The two giants are both significant.

(2) Their Rock N’ Roll have been so influential and meaningful that Lo’s lyrics have been adapted in the textbooks^[3] and scholars like Kevin J.H.Dettmar have published academic books to guide the study of Bob’s lyrics. There are numerous understandings and

attentions for their lyrics.

(3) Their lyrics have accommodated into the trend of times so that they became flags and slogans of the times. Industrialization and commercialism invaded Taiwan and the mainland of China from 1960s to 1970s. Songs in *Zhi Hu Zhe Ye* (Old Patterns) released by Lo has led a revolution to school ballad in the 1970s in the form of Rock N’ Roll^[4]. As for Dylan, he was regarded as the symbol of 1960s. As Li Yue and Yang Congmei wrote, Dylan’s songs were the revealing of mutual influence between music and society. (Li, Yang 119)^[5].

Considering their contributions and revelations, the paper will compare the two giant figures under the theory of Hofstede—uncertainty avoidance.

1 “Changes” in the music of Tayu Lo

1.1 “Changes” in the music of Tayu Lo

The aforementioned album *Zhi Hu Zhe Ye* (Old Patterns) reflects particularly the nostalgic complex, which has been one unique part of Chinese songs and poems. The central images mentioned are “jia” (home), “tong nian” (childhood), “lu gang xiao zhen” (Lu Kang Town) and so on. His nostalgic complex is expressed as three themes:

(1) Cherishment of youthfulness (*jiu gan tang mai wu: Tell me or There is a word there waiting to be found*)

(2) Recall of the former lover (*lian qu 1980: Love Song 1980*)

(3) Confusion of life (*guang yin de gu shi: The Story of Time*) (Huang 158-160)^[6].

The attitude of “changes” on his perspective is passive and negative, for the recollections are irreversible. Sources would be demonstrated at part

three.

1.2 “Changes” expressed by Tayu Lo

Here we choose four lyrics to analyze his nostalgia—“*tong nian*” (*Childhood*), “*lian qu 1980*” (*Love Song 1980*) and “*guang yin de gu shi*” (*The Story of Time*).

The song “*tong nian*” is the epitome of Lo’s cherishment of youthfulness. The images are ordinary and universal; events are regular and full of confusion. He used visional images “pool”, “banyan” and “cicada” to create an atmosphere of summer and liveliness, followed by auditory images “the sound of the cicada” and “the sound of chalks on the blackboard”. The confusion of life is full of his mind and he wastes his time, murmuring “day by day times are more precious than gold”. The tone is fundamentally pessimistic and regretful, and his attitude towards the future is ambiguous and passive, for he learns nothing at the present and has nothing to face the future.

The song “*lian qu 1980*” (*Love Song 1980*) is active in melody but painful in tone. The most famous sentences “Dear don’t say that we will never separate forever/ you don’t belong to me and I don’t own you” describe a seemingly independent but underneath heartbroken mentality. The recall of the former lover is compared as a prophet that love has its ups and downs and vanishment. (Huang 159)

The confusion of life is expressed in “*guang yin de gu shi*” (*The Story of Time*) and “*lu gang xiao zhen*” (*Lu Kang Town*). Lo confessed that the old time past so rapidly that he was unprepared, without chances to react. Confronted with the changes, he struggled and was discontented and was nostalgic for the lost.

From three themes, the attitude towards “changes” of Tayu Lo is passive and pessimistic.

2 “Changes” in the music of Bob Dylan

2.1 “Changes” in the music of Bob Dylan

“Bob Dylan is the spokesman of a period and my idol.”^[7] (Hong 56). As Hong Huang said, Dylan is a symbol of the 1960s, whose protest songs demand an evolution and rebel injustice. He is the “Representatives of public opinion” and spiritual leaders of civil rights movement and anti-Culture Movement.

“Changes” are the same concept in Tayu’s songs: industrialization and commercialism. Different from Lo, Dylan has a positive attitude towards “changes” and even predicts the upcoming.

2.2 Sources of his attitude

Personally, Dylan has read numerous classics and news at his time, according to his *CHRONICLES: volume one*. Though he was regarded the spiritual figure of civil rights movement and anti-Culture Movement, the inspirations of “protest songs” were pioneered by him but from his co-worker Tom Paxton and Len Chandler. Usually, they seek inspiration from updated news and add to their popularity^[8].

In view of his identification as a folk rhyme singer, he followed the path of Woody Gresley, Lead Belly and other singers, and took in the Blues and Spiritual styles. Woody Gresley concentrates on the lives of lower-class folks and unveil the reality, and Dylan reshaped the old melodies with new lyrics.

Broadly speaking, it has contact with the background of the 1960s. In the early 1960s, the Civil Rights Act of 1864 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were signed. Whereas people were discontented with the progress, requesting more black rights and cry for anti-war actions. Feminism was reborn at that time. (Li, Yang 118). As the observer of the time, Dylan witnessed the collapse and rebirth of it, the brilliant part of him is not in that he saw these changes, but dug deeper, which means that he predicted and spread them. On his left hand, he wrote poems of symbolism where he bestowed events, setting and mentality with artistic metaphors. On his right hand, he wrote fantastically exciting music and Lyrics, which heightened his poems with stronger spirits, more powerful strengths and more passionate emotions. (Li 3)^[9]. All can be studied in his famous song *Like a Rolling Stone*.

Fundamentally, the attitude can track back to human-nature relationship. With the coming of industrialization, technology and science have advanced so rapidly that Anthropocentrism and social Darwinism prevails. Holding that human beings have strength to conquer the earth, capitalist would create more properties and change the world.

The sources of a positive attitude to “changes” can be summarized as: Dylan’s co-workers’ protest songs, folksongs’ influence, the social background of the 1960s and ideological effects of industrialization and commercialism.

2.3 Like a Rolling Stone

As one of the most prominent songs by Dylan and the symbol of protest movements, *Like a Rolling Stone* is a song sung to a bankrupt wealthy girl. It describes the

collapse of the old times objectively instead of crying for good past memories.

The song compares the arrogant actions of the past to the sorehead life at the present, repeating sentences “How does it feel/How does it feel/To be without a home/Like a complete unknown/Like a rolling stone?” Though it sounds like a satire to rich girl, it provokes a common sense of helplessness caused by the destiny. (8). This specific change reflects Dylan’s macroscopic panorama on his time, revealing Dylan’s empathy to all creatures at that time.

He inherited the folksong tradition such as a series of questions unanswered and a distinct people’s position. With his observation and prediction, his attitude to “changes” is positive and at people’s stance.

3 The theory of Uncertainty Avoidance by Hofstede

3.1 The concept of Uncertainty Avoidance

In his book, he defined it as “on the national cultural level, tendencies toward prejudice, rigidity and dogmatism, intolerance of different opinions, superstition, racism, and ethnocentrism all relate to a norm for intolerance of ambiguity that I have measured and expressed in a national Uncertainty Avoidance Index.”(Hofstede 167)^[10].

3.2 The traits of nations under Uncertainty Avoidance

Hofstede exhibits two diagrams of UAI (Uncertainty Avoidance Index). One of them is as follows.

Table 1. The Uncertainty Avoidance Societal Norm extracted (182).

Low UAI	High UAI
The uncertainty inherent in life is relatively easily accepted and each day is taken as it comes.	The uncertainty inherent in life is felt as a continuous threat that must be fought.
Ease, lower stress, less anxiety.	High stress, anxiety, neuroticism.
Suppression of emotions.	expression of emotions.
Openness to change and innovation.	Conservation, law and order.
Tolerance of diversity.	Xenophobia.
Young people are respected.	Older people are respected and feared.

These present the differences of UAI nations on social norms. What worth highlighting is that those nations

with high UAI are prone to fear and upset confronted with changes, hence less acceptance to changes is presented and a sense of stability is demanded. Those nations are willing to have collectivism and authoritarianism and more innovation would be intolerable.

3.3 The analysis of Lo and Dylan under Uncertainty Avoidance

From the diagram, UAI of Taiwan (Lo’s hometown) and the U.S. are respectively 69 and 46. (172). Still, in another diagram, Taiwan(China) has large Power Distance and strong Uncertainty Avoidance while the U.S. has small Power Distance and weak Uncertainty Avoidance(173). The following part would probe the sources.

3.3.1 Confucianism

As one of the most influential figures in Chinese history, theologically in particular, Confucius (551-479 B.C.) has famous quotations, among which one theme is prominent: *zheng ming*. (The Rectification of Names). According to Fung Yulan, the meaning of *zheng ming* is “things in actual fact should be made to accord with the implication attached to them by names.” (Fung 75)^[11]. One of the most famous quotations is “君君，臣臣，父父，子子。” (Let the ruler be ruler, the minister minister, the father father and the son son). (*Analects*, XVII,21)^[12]. *Zheng ming* was regarded as a highlight for social order. The Confucianism School safeguarded social order and stability, which contributed to this high UAI partially.

3.3.2 Taoism

Another Teacher Lao-tzu (571-471 B.C.) held that “reversing is the movement of the *Tao*.” (182). The meaning of it is that “A man should restrict his activities to what is necessary and what is natural and never overdoing.” (184). Therefore, when people try to achieve something, they need to follow the objective law. So that Chinese would predict the results before action to avoid the possible side effects, which reinforces the stability.

3.3.3 Legalist School

As one of the leading Schools for every dynasty in China, Legalist School has been dominant for rulers and officers. These earliest philosophers held a rational spirit on the governing level. But as for the citizens, their duty was to obey and submit. This rigid system was so as to be enhanced and resulted in the passive

and negative attitude towards “changes”.

Confucianism, Taoism and Legalism are three mainstream philosophies in China, making a difference on all Chinese, developing the nostalgic complex and reluctance to “changes”.

3.3.4 Freedom and Democracy

As a young nation, the U.S.A. has never experienced ancient slavery and feudalism, and it accepted Enlightenment and separation of power once it was born. Freedom and democracy have been profoundly rooted among people, which is the cradle of innovation and changes.

3.3.5 Spirit of settlers

The earliest settlers have been hard-working and daring, believing in the legends of from-nobody-to-somebody, in other words, American Dream. Hence, they delved in challenges and changes.

3.3.6 Industrialization and Commercialism

The advancement of science and technology is related to innovation. On the process of industrialization and commercialism, the government put forward a series of policies to support innovators and encourage/protect invention.

Except for the aforementioned factors, the background of the 1960s, personal experience of Dylan and traditions of Europe are all contributors on his lyrics.

4 Conclusion

The UAI of Taiwan is high while that of the U.S.A is low.

Chinese people cultivated by Confucianism, Taoism and Legalism have strong pride in their big families. They put senior citizens ahead of the young and believe in authorism. They are less inclusive facing strangers and foreigners.

Conversely, Americans educated with democracy

and freedom prefer individualism and dare challenging authorities. They cherish youthfulness and beauty. They are more inclusive to international friends.

Chinese have marvelous past and memories, expressing their emotions in art. Lo is one of them, reflecting the adorable hometown. He is hopeless to resist changes and upset to face industrialization.

Present-oriented Americans observe the time objectively, reluctant to be the protagonists. Dylan observed and predicted.

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