**主题方向：多元文化生活**

**A Case of Cultural Interaction in Neighborhood**

**【Act I】**

**Wang:** My daughter Lily has been working here in America for years, so I decided to stay with her. But, there is a big problem here, the vegetables in America are really expensive and not fresh. How about planting some vegetables instead of these flowers?

**Eric:**Morning sir, I’m Eric, your neighbor from next door.

**Wang:** Good morning, Eric. I am Lao Wang, Lily’s father.

**Eric:** Nice to meet you. Anything wrong with the flowers?

**Wang:** I plan to grow some vegetables in my yard.

**Eric:** Growing vegetables? That might not be acceptable.

**Wang:** Not acceptable. Why?

**Eric:** Our neighborhood has a plan to keep all yards looking nice with flowers.

**Wang:** You mean I need my neighbors' approval to plant vegetables in my own yard?

**Eric:** Well, having veggies next door wouldn't look great, and the smell might drift over. It could even lower my property value!

**Wang:** I don’t get it. Don’t I have the right to decide what to grow in my yard?

**Eric:** In that case, I have my right to report it to the HOA.

**Lily:** Dad! What are you doing with my flowers?

**Eric:** Look, Lily! Your father is planting vegetables.

**Lily:** I’m sorry, Eric. Give me a second.

**Wang:** Lily, what is the so-called HOA?

**Lily**：Dad, in China we have “物业” in charge of neighborhood management, right? Here, it’s called HOA, Home Owner Association. The HOA of our community doesn’t allow vegetables in yards.

**Wang:** What a ridiculous rule! Alright then, Chinese saying, 入乡随俗, so I'll do as Americans do.

**Lily**：Wise choice, Dad!

**Wang**：But it’s so bad that I just argued with Eric. Tomorrow happens to be Chinese New Year’s Eve. Let’s invite him to dinner, so that I won’t have to apologize for planting vegetables. I don’t want to embarrass myself.

**Lily**：Good idea! Let me do it!

**Lily**：Sorry Eric, my dad didn’t know much about the HOA regulations. He moved here just a few weeks ago, you know...

**Eric:** Oh, I see! Never mind. It’s okay.

**Lily:** By the way, tomorrow we’re having dinner for Chinese New Year’s Eve. My father and I would like to invite you.

**Eric:** Oh, Chinese New Year, alright, Thank you! I’d love to come.

**【Act II】**

**Eric:** Good evening, Lily! Here’s a gift for you.

**Lily:** Oh, thank you! Come in!

**Wang:** Good evening Eric! Please take a seat.

**Eric:** Um okay, thanks.

**Lily:** My dad made all the dishes today.

**Eric:** Amazing! They look so different from what I usually eat! Are they typical Chinese dishes?

**Wang:** Yes, and they are home-cooked. Try this chicken soup. I simmered it for three hours.

**Eric:** Thanks, This is really good! I’ll have some more. (*serves himself soup*) Oh! There are chicken feet in the soup!

**Wang:** Yes. Almost the whole chicken is in there. Do you like the soup?

**Eric:** (*pauses*) Well, it looks a bit weird to me, but it tastes good. You know, we Americans mostly eat ribs, thighs, and breasts, but you seem to eat everything.

**Lily:** This is part of our tradition. Everything that grows in nature is not easy to come by. So Chinese people make the most of every ingredient and turn it into delicious dishes like these. Plus, our diverse cooking methods allow for a lot of creativity in our cuisine.

**Eric:** I’ve never had a soup like this before. It’s different but interesting!

**Wang:** Glad you like it.

**【Act III】**

**Wang:** And, well, Eric, I’m sorry about our argument yesterday.

**Eric:** No worries, Wang. By the way, how’s your new life here? It must be quite a change!

**Wang:** Well, when I first arrived here, I was deeply impressed by the beautiful surroundings and peaceful neighborhood. But soon I started to feel a little bit uneasy. The transportation here is not convenient, and life here seems too boring and lonely for me, to be honest.

**Lily:** Actually, in China, my dad used to play chess or mahjong and take walks with his neighbors in the park.

**Wang:** That’s right. Also, the vegetables are different here, and we Chinese cannot survive without fresh vegetables, you know. That’s why I’m thinking about planting some in the yard.

**Eric:** Oh, I see! I like Chinese food a lot, but this is my first time eating at a neighbor’s house. It’s gorgeous. We Americans usually have parties where lots of friends chatting and drinking together.

**Lily:** I see. You know, I really miss the good old days back in China when I ate at my neighbor Granny Zhang’s house and spent time chatting with her.

**Eric:** That sounds awesome!

**【Act IV】**

**Wang:** Eric, there’s a Chinese saying, “远亲不如近邻”, which means neighbors are more helpful than distant relatives, so you’re always welcome here!

**Eric:** Thank you! I do appreciate this sort of family dinner! And perhaps, growing veggies in the yard isn't impossible. If they look nice, why not?

**Lily:** Hey! How about Chinese chives? The flowers are beautiful, and they make great dumplings!

**Eric:** Dumplings! I love it! Can I try making dumplings with you next time?

**Lily:** Sure! Looking forward to it!

**Eric:** Can’t wait for the next big meal! Happy New Year!

**Lily:** Happy New Year!

**Wang:** Here’s to more gatherings in the happy new year! Cheers!

**Case Analysis**

This play highlights the subtle conflicts in some everyday scenarios between a newly arrived Chinese -- Lao Wang, and his American neighbor -- Eric. These seemingly trivial misunderstandings might often be overlooked, but they reveal significant cultural differences that are crucial for understanding each other.

**Analysis 1: Planting vegetables in yards?**

That’s exactly my point. For instance, the first conflict concerns whether Wang should plant vegetables in his yard. Eric believes that the HOA rules must be strictly followed, reflecting a U.S. perspective where regulations are seen as inviolable. In contrast, Wang draws from the “Differential Mode of Association” theory by Fei Xiaotong, where social networks in China rely on personal relationships and negotiation, rather than strict adherence to rules.

**Analysis 2: Wang’s suggestion of inviting Eric to dinner**

I have also noticed that instead of apologizing for the argument right away, Lao Wang chose to invite Eric to dinner. According to Erving Goffman's Face Theory, face is highly regarded for Chinese people. As a result, when Chinese people want to show apology, they are more likely to choose a more vague or euphemistic way, like a dinner invitation, to avoid the embarrassment. By contrast, American culture emphasizes personal expression of emotion, prompting individuals to speak out their apologies or other feelings immediately.

**Analysis 3: What are edible?**

That’s pretty accurate. Also, food culture shows significant differences. Chinese philosophy, deeply influenced by Confucianism and Taoism, emphasizes harmony between human and nature. As a result, we value every part of a livestock as a crucial part of nature and make full use of it. In contrast, American people typically favor the most nutritious parts, like the thighs and breasts, reflecting their rationalism and pragmatism philosophical tradition.

**Analysis 4: Relationships with neighbors**

Finally, Chinese people place great importance on maintaining close relationships with their neighbors, which stems from the core value of “和”, harmony, in Chinese culture. As stated in *The Analects of Confucius*, “In practicing the rules of propriety, it is harmony that is prized.” On the other hand, Americans foster a preference for respecting and maintaining personal boundaries, allowing individuals to focus on their own needs and responsibilities without engaging with others constantly. This cultural tendency leads to a more reserved approach in interpersonal relationships.

**Solutions**

Though it is essential to know about the causes of cultural conflicts, it is even more important to adopt effective strategies to reduce these conflicts.

**Solution 1: Understanding “Culture Shock”**

Lao Wang’s experience shows the importance of understanding “culture shock”. He needs to adapt to a new culture in order to overcome the difficulties and frustrations as quickly as possible. In fact, Eric also suffers from culture shock, when arguing with his Chinese neighbor about planting vegetables in the yard and eating chicken feet at the dinner. He needs to stay open-minded towards his neighbor's different ways of life before he really knows the reasons.

**Solution 2: Creating More Opportunities for Cultural Exchange**

Having navigated her own culture shock, Lily plays the crucial role as a mediator in building communication channels between her father and Eric. Organizing more gatherings can help people understand and appreciate each other’s cultures better.

**Solution 3: Encouraging Compromises between Cultural Differences**

Both Eric and Lao Wang’s change reflects the “Integration Theory” included in John Berry’s model of Acculturation. At the end of the dinner, Eric changed his mind and suggested planting some nice-looking vegetables. Lao Wang also adopted the strategy of Assimilation: doing as Americans do.

Their changes show their mutual respect for each other’s culture, aligning with Fei Xiaotong’s advocacy that every form of beauty has its uniqueness; it is precious to appreciate other forms of beauty with openness.

**Solution 4: Fostering Empathy through Shared Experiences**

Additionally, fostering empathy through shared experiences is essential. Engaging in community events that celebrate cultural diversity allows people to create shared memories, reinforcing friendships and alleviating initial frustrations.

Although cultural conflicts may never fully disappear, enhancing awareness, fostering tolerance, and committing to mutual understanding are essential steps in minimizing misunderstandings and embracing cultural diversity.