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Factors that Contribute to Acculturative Stress of Chinese International Students

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by

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Abstract

Chinese international students in English-speaking countries experience an array of culturally-based stressors while adjusting to different pedagogical styles and cultural environments. Consequently, Chinese international students experience substantial levels of acculturative stress. Because this is a relatively new phenomenon, at least with respect to scale, insufficient research has been done on developing effective programs to address this issue. Thus, the current study conducts a literature review on Chinese international students' experiences and challenges to determine the possible causes of the acculturative stress. Based on this research, it is clear that the acculturative stress is often a result of insufficient English, cultural shock, academic difficulties, limited integration with domestic peers, and perceived discrimination. Future research should explore the factors of acculturative stress focusing on the influence of English proficiency, cultural adaptation, and learning problems. In addition, a series of recommendations are provided for faculties, institutions, and students.

Keywords: Chinese international students, acculturation, acculturative stress, predictors, challenges

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Chapter 1: Introduction

An increasing number of Chinese students prefer to study in an English-speaking country. Chinese international student enrollment in Canada currently comprises a growing segment over the past few years. Statistics Canada (2016) shows that the international student population at Canadian universities almost doubled in between 2004 and 2014, rising from 66,000 students to 124,000. In Canada, the number of Chinese students increased from 39,850 in 2004 to 119,335 in 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Researchers consider the growth in the enrollment of Chinese international students as a common occurrence in some English-speaking countries, including Canada, the United States, UK, Australia and New Zealand (King & Raghuram, 2013). International education brings economic benefits, facilitates cultural diversity and increases global competence and cross-cultural awareness. Given the economic and educational advantages, international students will continue to be welcomed, and, consequently, the number of international students will likely continue to increase. Even though the enrollment rate of Chinese international students is increasing, Chinese students are still regarded as one of the most underserved and understudied population and tend to experience more psychological problems than domestic students (Smiljanic, 2017; Zhang & Goodson, 2011).

Chinese international students face numerous challenges in the process of adjustment while studying abroad (Hwang & Ting, 2009). When Chinese international students move to an English-speaking country for educational advancement, they immerse themselves into a completely new milieu with a different language, new educational system, and a diverse cultural background. They leave familiar surroundings

to spend several years in a different culture, and not all of them perform effectively within these foreign environments given the differing norms and rules. When Chinese students enter English-speaking nations, they must rapidly adjust and learn in order to cope both academically and socially. In addition to the English proficiency and academic learning, adjusting to a different culture can also be a significant challenge for this population. When integrating into the domestic culture, Chinese international students will inevitably experience the process of acculturation. The challenges produced in the process of adaptation often lead to mental health concerns and negative psychological outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, and even suicidal ideation (Chen & Lewis, 2011; Young, 2017). For all of these reasons, it is critical for post-secondary institutions to clearly understand Chinese students' challenges and how to support these students as the institutions' effectiveness in this regard will impact Chinese students' academic performance, social interactions, and psychological health.

An investigation of the challenges and experiences of Chinese international students would be an essential tool for educators, university administrators, and prospective and current international students. A thorough understanding of their practices would contribute significantly to more effective pedagogy, social, and institutional support that will promote the adaption and success of struggling Chinese international students. This research investigates the influential factors of Chinese international students' acculturative stress by examining their experiences and challenges when studying abroad. This study also gives pedagogical frameworks (culturally and linguistically responsive teaching) to professional teaching practices and recommendations to faculty and

institutions to address the linguistic, cultural, and academic needs of Chinese

international students in higher education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Method for Literature Search

Proper keywords were used to get more search engine traffic. Peer-reviewed journal articles were selected by searching for key terms "Chinese international students" and "acculturative stress", as well as synonyms for the key term of "acculturative stress". The terms of "culture shock" and "adjustment stress" were likewise included as these terms have similar meaning with acculturative stress. Other words and terms related to the topic were utilized to search journal articles, including "acculturation", "anxiety", "predictors", "challenges of study abroad", and "experience of overseas study". In addition, different combinations of key words were used when searching the database, such as "acculturation and anxiety", "predictors of acculturative stress", and "experience and culture shock of overseas study".

Several databases were used to locate literature for the current study. Upon commencing research, Google Scholar was used to do a broad search which indexes peer-reviewed journals across many disciplines and provide a broad range of articles. E-journal articles were also located at the University of Windsor's Leddy Library. To identify the broad statistics regarding the issues being studied, the researcher collected data from Statistics Canada. These tools helped to establish a broad understanding of the issues being explored; however, the current study focuses on education and Chinese international student' psychological well-being, so more specific databases were required. To get specific information on education, the current study utilized the Education Recourses Information Center (ERIC), an online library focused on education research and information. Moreover, as the topic is related to international students' psychological

well-being, the current study also conducted extensive search at PsycINFO, which is an expansive database that features peer-reviewed literature in the behavioral sciences and mental health.

Because these databases returned thousands of articles, the searches needed to be refined with several limiters. The first two limiters were language of publication and publication date. Only articles published in English and between 2003 to 2017 were chosen. Moreover, because the study focuses on Chinese international students studying at universities, only studies that include undergraduate and graduate international students from China were selected. Likewise, because the current study is concerned with Chinese international students studying in English-speaking schools, only studies conducted in countries where English is their primary language were chosen. These countries include Canada, the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), and New Zealand.

Further strategies were added to the literature search. The first strategy is that once the key articles that relate to the research topic were identified, the researcher looked at the reference lists of each article for further references. Also, ten articles were identified by searching *Journal of International Students*.

Theoretical Framework

Social-cultural Theory

The experience that Chinese international students encounter in a new environment could be investigated and discussed with social-cultural theory. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological System Theory places the individual in active interaction with the environment including culture. "All levels of our human ecology are directly or indirectly

influenced by and continue to influence culture" (Nieto & Booth, 2010, p. 407). It indicates how the immediate and distal environment impacts the individual's learning and development. The complex relationship and direct influence could be identified between international students' academic world and the events in the social life. In describing this phenomenon, Taylor and Ali (2017) state that "The microsystem, which is composed of cultural values, traditions, and laws, is the influence closest to the person. The individual is positioned at the very core of the microsystem" (p. 4). This theory could act as a useful framework for the comprehensive understanding and analysis of the Chinese international students' experience. Even though it is difficult to address every aspect of this theory, the application of the microsystem will offer a holistic theoretical foundation to investigate the direct and indirect influences on the acculturative stress of Chinese international students.

Pai, Adler, and Shadiow (2006) indicated that culture - referred as behaviors, beliefs, and worldviews - is a set of values that belong to a society and that these values may vary between one group and another. However, understanding differences in cultural values is not equated with determining which is superior. Rather, it is important to be open to different cultures and thinking without disregarding the other. When Chinese international students study abroad in English-speaking countries, they will be engaged in a Western academic context and also bring their own cultural history and different social and academic expectations. For example, many Chinese international students have learned in teacher-centered and exam-orientated educational settings where students are not encouraged to speak freely, and focus on rote memorization. Therefore, when they are expected to express opinions or be critical in Western classrooms, they often feel

uncomfortable. This is encapsulated by Nieto and Booth (2010), who noted that "As cultures come into contact with one another, new conceptions and adjustments occur within each culture" (p. 407).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Based on the multicultural backgrounds, culturally responsive teaching is of great importance to considering students' cultural needs (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Marshall & DeCapua, 2013). Lin and Scherz (2014) suggested that "Cultural responsiveness reflects the awareness of an individual to variances within cognition, behavior, language, and education among individuals who have differing racial, ethnic, social, gender, linguistic, religious, political, or other backgrounds and experiences" (p. 2). Culture can influence the way students think, interact, communicate, and express themselves; therefore, the development of educators' cultural responsiveness is critical. According to Terrell and Lindsey (2009), the continuum of cultural responsiveness could be divided into two phases. The first is to tolerate diversity, which refers to cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, and cultural blindness. The second is to transform for equity, which includes cultural precompetence, cultural competence, and cultural proficiency. The responsiveness is changed from eliminating the cultural differences and refusing the understanding of different cultures to effectively serving the educational needs of cultural groups (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). In this case, the continuum of cultural responsiveness is the foundation for the culturally responsive teaching. There are four basic tenets of culturally responsive teaching: respecting and valuing cultural diversity, developing a culturally relevant curriculum, understanding the dynamics of cross-cultural communication, and creating cultural harmony in the delivery of instruction (Gay, 2002).

In this case, culturally responsive teaching would be a pragmatic pedagogical tool for educators when the classroom contains cross-cultural students.

Educators receive students who are impacted by many different cultures into their classrooms and schools, therefore, culturally responsive teaching could help students adapt to the learning environment in a new cultural setting. Chinese international students studying in English-speaking countries, in general, are exposed to a new language and culture, and their native language and culture is not the basis for instruction; therefore, the advisors and administrators are responsible for comprehending the effect of cultural forces on students. In this section, the awareness of their language proficiency and cultural differences - including racial, ethnic, or national origin - appears to be particularly important (Gay, 2002; Heng, 2017). Cultural responsive teaching has been identified as an effective way to "incorporate the lives of the students and their cultural knowledge, as well as community resources into classroom setting" (Marshall & DeCapua, 2013, p. 119).

Acculturative Stress among International Students

In order to understand the acculturative stress that Chinese international students encounter, it is critical to first define acculturation and acculturative stress. Once this is established, it becomes important to delineate the cultural differences between China and the Western countries. Besides, even though Chinese students share the similar challenges with other international students from Asian countries, they also have unique characteristics deserving further examination.

What Are Acculturation and Acculturative Stress?

Berry, Kim, Minde, and Mok (1987) defined acculturation as "culture change which results from continuous, first hand contact between two distinct cultural groups. Acculturation refers to psychological changes in an individual in both behavior and internal characteristics" (p. 491). They also identified five kinds of changes which would lead to the acculturation: physical changes including a new place to live, a new type of housing, and increased population density; biological changes including new nutritional status and new disease; cultural changes including the alteration of original political, economic, linguistic, religious and social norms; the changes of social relationships including ingroup-outgroup and dominance patterns; psychological and behavioral changes for the individual when attempting to adapt to a new milieu (Berry, et al., 1987). Acculturative stress, then, refers to stress that is caused by individuals' efforts to adapt to the host culture, and the outcome of acculturative stress may generate the occurrence of mental and psychological problems (Berry et al., 1987). This definition frames acculturative stress as something that is generated during the acculturation process when individuals are striving to adjust to a new cultural setting.

During the process of transition to a college or a university, all students often face difficulties as they will deal with stress stemming from academic life, economic independence, identity formation, and psychological autonomy (Poyrazli, Thukral, & Duru, 2010). However, Chinese international students who are studying in Western countries specifically face additional stress because they must cope with challenges of cultural adaptation. As a consequence, the stress because of culture shock can cause role conflict and mental illness (Heng, 2017). Since acculturative stress is closely associated with the change of culture and social values, it is necessary to address the cultural

difference of China and Western countries, which in the context of the current study

refers specifically to Canada, the United States, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand.

Cultural Differences between China and Western Countries

Culture is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that includes political,

economic, and social dimensions; thus, it is difficult to define in simple terms. Fan (2000)

described culture as the collection of values, beliefs, customs, and attitudes that

distinguish a society. With respect to Chinese international students, even though

political and economic factors have an impact on their daily lives, this paper will focus

more on the culture and values related to interpersonal relations and social orientation.

Since culture is important in the generation of acculturative stress, the cultural differences

and divergent values of China and Western countries will be articulated. It is worth

mentioning that Western countries in this paper refer to five countries including Canada,

the United States, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. Table 1 summarizes the

differences.

Table 1   Summary of Chinese and Western Society

	Western	Chinese
Language	English	Chinese
Culture	Individualist	Collectivist
Mean of Expression	Direct/Open Expression	Indirect expression; saving face

The first two differences are language and cultural customs between China and

Western countries. Chinese is the official language in China. In Chinese culture,

collectivism and group concepts are preached, which value interdependence and in-group harmony within a hierarchical household and social structure (Young, 2017). For example, in the extended family, the elders are revered and children are responsible for showing their respect and appreciation through obedience and emotional self-restraint. At school, it is the norm that the class is mainly dominated by teachers, and students should keep silent when the teacher enters the room. In hierarchical countries, students might interact with their teachers less often and have weaker relationships with each other (Chiu, Chow, McBride, & Mol, 2016). Valdez (2015) identified that the ability of students to ask questions during class was a difference between U.S. and Chinese students as Chinese students had less opportunities to make their voices heard in a Chinese classroom. English is the first language in the Western countries of Canada, the United States, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. In these countries, the culture has always been individualistic which emphasizes on individualism, autonomy, and independence (Scott, Ciarrochi, & Deane, 2004). In an individualist society, people are primarily independent thinkers and are more likely to challenge authority. Individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only.

Interpersonal communication and expression are significantly different among students in China and Western countries. Conventional Chinese values rely on social controls supported by shame techniques within the context of socialization. "Face-saving" or "saving face" is practised to maintain a respectable public image and is a way to avoid bringing shame or embarrassment on others (Young, 2017). For example, many Chinese international students may be reluctant to speak in public for fear of embarrassment because of the accent and the English deficiency. Furthermore, the

communication is often conducted in an indirect way and sometimes with nonverbal

expressions (Bond, 1993). However, in Western countries, people generally communicate

through direct expression and open expression of thoughts (Hofstede, 2001).

In general, the language, cultural customs, and means of expression are considered

quite different from the culture and values that are common among the Chinese (see

Table 1). For Chinese international students who study in Western countries, these

cultural conflicts can easily lead to culture shock and acculturative stress.

Stressors Faced with Asian International Students

Asian international students have become a significant component in Western

universities. Andrade (2006) defines international students as individuals enrolled in

institutions outside of their native country who are on temporary student visas. English-

speaking countries, such as Canada, the United States, the UK, Australia and New

Zealand, attract more international students from Asian countries, who account for a

significant proportion of their international students (Shea & Yeh, 2008). The increasing

number of Asian international students studying in English-speaking countries not only

depends on the high value of the degree and the attractiveness of Western education

(Kurucz, 2006), but also the pursuit of opportunities to increase their understanding of a

foreign language and learn about different cultures (Sumer, Poyrazli, & Grahame, 2008).

Furthermore, Asian international students make two significant contributions: they

facilitate the development of a multicultural environment in the classroom and on campus,

and they promote a global understanding and perspective to native students (Sumer, et al.,

2008).

Asian International students may experience an array of stressors when studying in English-speaking countries. Even though a large number of international students adjust successfully (Misra & Castillo, 2004), a literature review on international students shows that many international students, especially those who come from Asian countries, endure challenges derived from adjustment and adaptation to a new culture and academic language (Arkoudis, 2006; Lin & Scherz, 2014; Taylor & Ali, 2017), coping with long distance relationships, and experiencing anxiety, homesickness, and loneliness (Chalungsooth & Schneller, 2011; Yuan, 2011). The studies investigating the utilization of counseling centers show that anxiety, depression, cultural adjustment, and learning issues have been common complaints (Hwang, Bennet, & Beauchemin, 2014; Poyrazli, 2015). Lyken-Segosebe (2017) interviewed seven East Asian international graduate students to explore the factors that account for the academic, cultural, and social adjustment problems. The interview data were analyzed with a grounded theory methodology, which revealed that the challenges encountered in their first year included language barriers, different institutional models, and the cultural shock that led to acculturative stress and lowered self-confidence. Finishing the post-graduate program in one's home country is not an easy task, and pursuing a degree in a country with a different language and culture can create more challenges for Asian international students.

Acculturative Stress of Chinese International Students

Even though most Chinese international students voluntarily decide to study abroad and are passionate about their overseas life, it is inevitable that the process of acculturation can create unwanted challenges when they immerse themselves into the host country (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Exposure to a new country is more likely to help them

learn to think and act more independently without parents hovering nearby and "bring opportunities for self-discovery and cross-cultural engagement" (Harvey, Robinson, & Welch 2017, p. 750). However, there is no denying that Chinese international students are experiencing a wide range of challenges and problems. Studies on Chinese international students' experiences and challenges indicate they are vulnerable to a high level of acculturative stress, such as anxiety, depression, uncertainty, and distress (Smiljanic, 2017; Yuan, 2011). Researchers have studied Chinese international students' difficulties and have identified a number of possible acculturative stressors. Social stressors result from the loss of contact with families and friends from one's native country, which gives rise to higher rates of loneliness (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008). Cultural stressors are coupled with the experience of cultural shock, concerns regarding adjustments to the host culture, and the difficulties associated with language barriers and academic study (Leong, 2015). Zhou, Zhang, and Stodolska (2017) noted that "Physical environmental stressors include housing, transportation, and safety issues. One of the biggest psychological stressors encountered by Chinese international students is the perceived discrimination" (p. 4). In brief, when studying abroad in a new cultural and living environment, Chinese international students encounter various stressors.

The literature demonstrated that compared to students from European countries, Chinese international students tend to encounter more challenges during the process of cross-cultural adjustment, which is identified by the enormous differences in cultures (Yan & Berliner, 2013) and perceived prejudices (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Yeh and Inose (2003) explored the predictors of acculturative stress among a sample of 359 international

students and indicated that cultural patterns could be predictors of acculturative stress. As the cultural values of Western countries are based on White and European norms, European international students show lower levels of acculturative distress than students from the regions of Asia, Africa, and Latin/Central America. By investigating the acculturative distress of international students from different countries, Yeh and Inose (2003) also concluded that European international students are less likely to experience acculturative stress because they may encounter less racism and discrimination. Generally, international students with an extensive knowledge of English or the English logic can handle institutional and societal-wide challenges more easily. In their studies, the European participants, who were Caucasian, felt at ease in interaction with the host culture and were easier to integrate into local culture. However, Chinese international students suffered from loneliness and isolation, feelings of being different from native students, and a lack of interactions with students from different cultural backgrounds. Yan and Berliner (2013) conducted semi-structured interviews by involving with 18 Chinese international students in the United States and found that they experienced a high level of acculturative stress during the process of acculturation because of large cultural differences. They conclude that "when Chinese international students enter a different culture, most of the familiar cues are removed and are followed by a feeling of frustration and anxiety. They are unable to understand, control, or predict other people's behavior" (p. 79). Chinese international students are facing a lot of sociocultural concerns including the interactions with Americans, language and culture deficiency, and clashes in values. They may feel the most exclusion because of the enormous difference in cultures. In addition, influenced by Confucian virtues, Chinese international students are more likely

to express ideas indirectly; therefore, when studying in Western countries, they find their habitual humbleness and modesty may bring them undesirable consequences. The authors also pointed out that "Chinese students' coping experiences are likely to be more difficult compared to those of students from European countries or even those students from other Asian countries, as China and the United States have been identified as having a maximum cultural distance" (p. 79). When Chinese international students study in an English-speaking country, they may face more challenges and a higher level of acculturative stress because of the cultural differences.

Zhou et al. (2017) examined 43 Chinese international students' acculturative stress by exploring the role of leisure participation during the process of adjustment, and the significance of interpersonal social support. The authors conducted two rounds of semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect data. Academic stress, socialization stress, stress related to cultural differences, and safety-related stress were identified as the acculturative stressors reflected on their first-semester of study abroad. They suggested that leisure could serve as a coping strategy with acculturative stress as it provides opportunities for Chinese students to gain interpersonal social support from Chinese and domestic peers, which will help to reduce the level of acculturative stress. The results also imply that Chinese students who lack experience studying abroad underestimated difficulties related to the acculturation process. They generally obtained the information regarding overseas life from their schools, peers, families, and media. In addition, as some of the Chinese international students expected to adjust to the host country easily, they were less likely to make extensive and full preparation in their home country. A lack of adequate preparation, including the lack of experience of studying abroad, inadequate

information about the overseas school life and the undervaluation to the difficulties related to the acculturation process, leads to more stress and uncertainty when they are exposed to a new cultural setting.

The study by Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer (2016) investigated the acculturative stress and mental health problems of Chinese international students from the perspective of faculty staff by interviewing sixteen participants, including international student support staff, counselors, general medical practitioners, and academic staff. The collected data were analyzed from three domains: 1) the increase in the frequency and severity of Chinese international students' mental illness, 2) factors that influence mental health problems, and 3) feasible and potential solutions. According to the study, Chinese international students experienced increased mental health problems that included suicidal ideation, anxiety, and depression. The factors contributing to this included "adjusting to unfamiliar academic practices, developing skills to manage everyday life in a different cultural context, and both recognizing and seeking professional help for mental health problems" (Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2016, p. 674). They suggested that facilitating a greater sense of belonging among this population, offering more support, and providing more effective treatment were significant to promote healthier transitions. The study also found that Chinese international students tended to delay or were unwilling to seek help for mental health problems because of different cultural construction. For example, Chinese generally cannot treat psychological counseling as normal or as something akin to a physical health problem. In this case, more effective instruction and guidance about the timely treatment on mental problems should be given to Chinese international students.

In order to examine the experiences of Chinese international students in Canada, Zhang and Zhou (2010) collected and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data by using mixed data gathering techniques, including survey questionnaire, individual interviews, and focus group discussions. They discovered that English skills, prior education background, interactions with the local students, and adjustment to the local culture were the major barriers that negatively impacted their participants' acculturation. Problems associated with language communication and cultural adjustment were the most significant influencers with respect to their engagement in academic and social life. Although most of the undergraduate students showed good English proficiency, language still impeded in-class and group discussions. The participants reported that it was difficult for them to make friends with the students from other countries because of language deficiency and cultural differences, leading Zhang and Zhou (2010) to conclude that "English language proficiency and cultural differences caused barriers to [participants'] willingness and attempts to make friends with native English-speaking friends, share residence rooms with them, and become fully involved in group work" (p. 57). When investigating Chinese international students' experience and expectation in the United States, the challenges of social integration with domestic peers were also examined by Heng (2017), who found that, compared with other international students, Chinese international students encountered more interpersonal intercourse problems because of the stereotypes held by domestic peers. The stereotypes ranged from favorable (i.e. nice, smart, and hardworking) to unfavorable (i.e. shy, more quiet, timid, and bad at English). One student said:

"I hope that they [USA peers] are warmer. I do try to take initiative to speak with

them, but often I feel that they don't take the initiative to speak with me, even

though I've done the initiating with them….in China, when meeting an overseas

person, Chinese tends to be warmer, but also here." (p. 841)

The author argued that in order to be supportive, local peers should give Chinese students

more patience and reassurance as "the show of care for and inclusion would improve

Chinese students' motivation, self-esteem, and psycho-emotional well-being" (Heng,

2017, p. 844). In this case, regardless of Chinese students' English skills and cultural

background, it will be helpful to Chinese students if the local students are open-minded to

connect with them.

Some studies focused on the effect of social support on acculturative stress. Kuo and

Tsai (1986) identify the significance of social network support on stress reduction when

the individual was exposed to a new culture. Bochner, McLeod, and Lin (1977) classified

international students' social ties into three categories: "a) co-national ties – whether the

friend belonged to the same culture as the subject; b) host-national ties – whether the

friend belonged to the host culture; c) international ties – whether the friend came from

other cultures" (p. 283). By investigating Chinese international students' acculturation

strategies, Cao, Zhu, and Meng (2017) pointed out the significance of host-national ties

and international ties as these two kinds of social network support can increase Chinese

students' tolerance for cultural difference and assist them to integrate into the local

culture. Sullivan and Kashubeck-West (2015) found that the acculturative stress of

Chinese international students was related to the level of social support, suggesting that

higher levels of social support and the effective connections between international

students and host nationals would significantly lower the acculturative stress. Likewise, Lyken-Segosebe (2017) put forward that the campus support should be intensified and the help should be more effective for Chinese international students. The similar suggestion is put forward by Yeh and Inose (2003), who proposed that it was significant to strengthen the effectiveness of the social support with the purpose of increasing opportunities for Chinese students to communicate with and seek help from students of different culture circles. Since interpersonal social support from peers plays a positive role in the process of acculturation, it is important for Chinese international students to maintain contact with Chinese students and local peers.

Predictors of Acculturative Stress

Though acculturative stress is caused by a variety of elements, there are some aspects that could be used as predictors of international students' acculturative stress level. As the environmental elements—including cultural values, social norms, and educational systems in home and host countries—are difficult and even impossible to change, the predictors of the acculturative stress will be discussed and articulated from the perspective of individual students.

English Language Fluency

Yeh and Inose (2003) indicated that "self-reported English language fluency was a significant predictor of acculturative distress" (p. 23). Their study involved 372 international students from 77 countries, 227 of whom were from Asia. The result shows that higher frequency of use, fluency level, and the degree of being comfortable with speaking English predicted lower levels of acculturative stress. When students are more fluent in English, it is easier for them to interact with the native speakers in a new cultural

setting. In this case, international students will be more confident in the process of adjustment. "It also shows that international students with higher self-reported levels of English language fluency may be less embarrassed and less self-conscious about their accent or ethnic background" (Yeh & Inose, 2003).

Smiljanic (2017), using the Pearson correlation research, found that higher Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores, specifically on the speaking part, were negatively correlated with the level of acculturative stress. The author also demonstrated that "there was no significant relationship between acculturative stress and the score on the other subtests of the TOEFL including reading score, listening score, and writing score" (Smiljanic, 2017, p. 196). The finding showed that speaking skills might be more related with the adjustment process as speaking will directly influence international students' social activities. Although international students are required to take TOEFL or International English Language Test System (IELTS) before they study in an English-speaking country to pursue a higher degree, the overall score of the standardized test cannot predict students' ability to understand in and communicate with spoken English, and it is these skills that impact their daily interactions the most.

Cultural and Emotional Intelligence

Cultural intelligence and emotional intelligence can illustrate the adjustment process of international students when studying in a country with a foreign cultural setting. Cultural intelligence refers to "the ability of a person to interact, relate, adapt, and work effectively across cultures" (Mesidor & Sly, 2016, p. 265). In this case, cultural intelligence can demonstrate the adjustment ability when students study and live in a foreign land. With 537 participates, Harrison and Brower (2011) conducted a survey to

investigate the correlation of cultural intelligence and psychological hardiness of international students, which demonstrates that "students who have strong cultural intelligence were more apt to adjust to the cross-cultural context, experiencing less homesickness while abroad" (p. 52). Students with higher cultural intelligence enjoy the experience of living and studying in a new culture as they actively interact with others and form friendship with host peers. In general, if the international students could form positive perspectives on different cultures and embrace the chances to accept new things, they are more likely to adjust to the new culture.

Mesidor and Sly (2016) define emotional intelligence as "the ability to recognize, evaluate, manage one's emotions, and interact with others" (p. 265), which is associated with the cultural intelligence. Emotionally intelligent international students are more likely to integrate into a different cultural environment as they are better able to understand and accept individual differences. Gullekson and Tucker (2012) supported this position, stating that the emotional intelligence can be one of the predictors of intercultural growth based on an investigation of 160 international students in the United States. Thus, it is critical for international students to cultivate high cultural and emotional intelligence as it will accelerate the process of cultural adjustment.

Race/Ethnicity

The strong correlation between ethnicity and acculturative stress was validated by extensive research (Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, & Baker, 2004; Poyrazli, Thukral, & Duru, 2010; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Based on a study that featured with 613 students, Poyrazli, et. al. (2010) argued that there were significant differences in the level of acculturative stress among students from different racial-ethnic groups. In this study, a demographic scale

that included questions on race-ethnicity was employed and the acculturative stress scale for international students (ASSIS) was used to measure students' acculturative stress levels. Some variabilities on acculturative stress among different race/ethnic groups were discovered. For example, the study emphasized that African students had the highest acculturative stress level followed by Asian/Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and Latino international students. In addition, international students from the European countries were presented with the lowest levels of acculturative stress. These results present the close relationship between the race/ethnicity and the levels of acculturative stress that international students may potentially experience. Poyrazli, et. al. (2010) also claimed that compared to students from other geographic regions, European students, who were predominantly Caucasian, may experience less social discrimination and found it easier to be accepted by the individuals in the host culture because of fewer problems in English speaking.

For Europeans students' lower levels of acculturative stress, Poyrazli, et. al. (2010) argued that the reason for this phenomenon could be that the European culture is more similar to the mainstream of American culture. Consequently, the European students were less likely to experience difficulties adjusting to a new culture. However, the students from Asian and Middle Eastern countries, which value the culture of collectivism, struggled to adjust to a Western culture with individualistic norms. Therefore, this could be one of the reasons that non-European students were more likely to suffer from acculturative stress and mental well-being.

Age

Though there is a limited amount of studies on the relationship that age has with respect to acculturative stress, those that do exist suggest older students experience higher rates of acculturative stress. A cross-sectional and exploratory study conducted by Sumer, et al. (2008) indicates that how students experience anxiety can vary based on age. Their study featured 440 international students ranging from 18 to 40 years of age who are studying in the United State. Their duration of residence in the United States ranged from 2 months to 10 years with an average length of 2.9 years. The results illustrated that compared with younger students, older students struggled with higher levels of anxiety. They also noted that the possible reason for this was that younger students may be more open and flexible to a new culture and to environmental differences. Ye (2006) also found age differences in the level of acculturative stress. In the study, older Chinese international students were reported with a higher level of acculturative stress than the younger. Along with globalization, younger students have more opportunities to be exposed to various cultural values through the internet and media. When they make a change to a new country, they may experience less anxiety toward the different culture, educational system, and social norms, making their adjustment easier (Sumer, et al., 2008).

Gender

There are few studies on gender and acculturative stress, and the results are inconsistent. Sumer et al. (2008) found no relation between gender and international students' depression and anxiety level. Misra, Drist, and Burant (2003) state that female students were more likely to feel homesick and lonely than male students and their reactions to stressors were more intense. Due to the inconsistent research results, it is

critical that more studies should be conducted to study how gender might be related to the acculturative stress.

Length of Residence

The findings of different research showed that the length of residence cannot be an effective predictor for international students' acculturation stress. Wei et al. (2007) surveyed 189 Chinese international students to investigate how the years in the United State influence the acculturative stress. They discovered that the international students who had been living in the United States for a longer period of time were still suffering from acculturative stress, which may result of the maladaptation. A similar result was found by Lyken-Segosebe (2017): they proposed that the length of residence and the levels of acculturative stress were not necessarily negatively correlated.

Chapter 3: Discussions

Causes of Acculturative Stress among Chinese International Students

Among the causes that lead to acculturative stress among Chinese international students, language deficiency, cultural adaptation, and different academic context were the most influential factors during their adjustment. Although Chinese international students may have similar experiences with other international students, they are suffering from unique challenges which deserve further examination (Lu & Han, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate how these factors affect international students' academic and social life in order that the relevant help and support can be implemented.

Language Deficiency

Language proficiency would be the most challenging issue for the majority of Chinese international students, as a lack of English skills would make it difficult when studying in an English-speaking classroom (Mori, 2000). Arkoudis (2006) pointed out that Asian international students in Western countries struggled with challenges relating to "learning and living in a different culture; learning in a foreign university context; learning while developing English language proficiency; and learning the academic disciplinary discourse" (p. 5). Thus, even Chinese international students who achieve academic success in China are distressed due to a lack of ability to understand their new contents and effectively express their ideas in English as they have more difficulties with lecture comprehension and communication with team members.

Lin and Scherz (2014) indicated that the proficiency levels of social and academic language impact Chinese international students' learning, thinking, and academic performance. When professors speak quickly or use idiomatic terms and slang in lecture,

it makes it difficult for many Chinese students to understand (Lin & Scherz, 2014). The English deficiencies of Chinese international students also causes difficulty in understanding the course sequence (Zhang, 2015). According to Lin and Yi (1997), Chinese international students with deficient English may require more time for reading and writing, which may interfere with their academic performance if an exam is set to be finished within a limited time. Li, Chen, and Duanmu (2010) demonstrated that "English writing ability is the key predictor that explained the difference of academic performance between Chinese and other international students. Chinese students' English writing ability was significantly lower than other international students', as was their academic performance" (p. 401). The academic difficulties derived from the lack of English may cause Chinese students to doubt their success and keep reinforce feelings of insecurity and lead to depression. For example, Young (2017) found that "depression and mental health symptoms were correlated to English language fluency and English language proficiency served as a precipitator for acculturative stress" (Young, 2017, p. 437). Thus, a lack of English skills is likely to negatively impact students' academic attainments, and these academic difficulties can consequently affect their psychological adjustment (Yeh & Inose, 2003).

In addition to the reading and writing ability, the limited oral English skills also prevented Chinese students from actively participating in the class discussion (Yuan, 2011). Millar (2009) also reported that a majority of Chinese international students reported difficulties with regard to participating in classroom discussion. Even in instances where they follow the content of the discussion, their inability to adequately express themselves impeded them from contributing to the classroom discussion. Heng

(2017) explained the reason for Chinese students' inactive participation as they had to spend seconds to phrase their thought as English was not their native language. Moreover, without a language communication environment, some Chinese students do not have good oral skills to fully or quickly express their ideas when communicating with students and professors in English. Besides, although students would generally take the English proficiency tests of TOEFL and IELTS, these tests do not always reflect actual English proficiency required to study in an English-speaking country. This is supported by Bayliss and Ingram (2006), who stated:

> Although the score a student achieves in an IELTS test is meant to indicate whether he/she has a sufficient level of English proficiency to cope with the linguistic demands of the studies, it does not imply that they will succeed academically or that they will not struggle linguistically. (p. 1)

Since Chinese international students do indeed experience many barriers in English learning when studying abroad, it is essential to conduct in-depth research that explores the possible reasons for their English deficiency.

In addition, the deficiency in language competence among international students will reduce their opportunities to interact and make friends with native peers, which can further increase feelings of isolation and in turn acculturative stress. Leong (2015) explored the acculturation and social activities of international students and discovered that

> The language barrier was the biggest challenge that the Chinese international students faced, leading to other adjustment issues. A lack of full fluency of American English undermined the students' ability to communicate with peers and

others, occasionally leading to miscommunication and misunderstandings, as well as

the inability to form friendships. (p. 464)

One Chinese student reported that he engaged in minimal social activities due to

communication issues and thus felt socially isolated, which made it more difficult to

communicate and interact with his host peers. He said:

"When I came here, I could not understand who others were saying, and I could not

say something I want clearly. Like others could not understand what I was saying.

That's a big challenge for me when I just came here." (p. 464)

Cultural Diversity

Culture difference in interpersonal communication is another concern that may lead

to acculturative stress. Culture includes domains of "acquired knowledge, learned

patterns of behavior, attitudes, values, expectations, rituals, and rules, a sense of identity

and of history" (Webb & Read, 2000, p. 1). Living and studying in a country with a

different culture leads to confusion about cultural norms (Oberg, 1960). For instance,

when studying in Western countries, Chinese students may be unclear as to how to refuse

an invitation, how to respond to compliments and jokes, and what kind of behaviors are

welcomed in the classroom. Even though they are broadminded and have good English

proficiency, some Chinese students are likely to encounter these cultural challenges.

Wang and Mallinckrodt (2006) investigated the adjustment of Chinese international

students and concluded that there was an association between psychological anxiety and

acculturation. Moreover, there is also a close connection between the adaptation of

Western values and the adjustment to the host environment (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006).

It is clear that the adjustment to a different culture is definitely a significant issue faced by Chinese students.

Education has always been culture-related as universities are complex social organizations with distinctive cultures (Sporn, 1996). When students move to a new country that consists of different cultures, languages, and traditions, their multicultural competence has a significant impact on their studies (Sporn, 1996). To some extent, all the comments, discourses, and perspectives in the area of education are primarily influenced by and reflect a certain culture. Hofstede (1980) highlighted that in the countries with individualist culture, students were independent with critical thinking and active participation in the classroom. However, influenced by Confucianism, Chinese students held collectivist values and were expected to show a high level of respect for teachers. They learned in a teacher-direct classroom and were not encouraged to speak without invitation. In this case, having a high English proficiency is not enough to be successful in academic learning. The cultural conflict will also be presented by offering different views when the discussion is related to professors' and students' perceptions and ways of thinking. Cultural values will influence how students learn and engage with conversation and societal content and how they relate with others as well (Harrison & Brower, 2011). Because of the significant differences in cultures, it is sometimes difficult for Chinese international students when studying in Western countries to effectively work with local counterparts. When Chinese students encounter cross-cultural interaction problems or misunderstanding, they are more likely to feel disappointed and discouraged (Heng, 2017). Consequently, due to the cultural maladaptation, some Chinese international students are more likely to be isolated and lonely, which may escalate into

severe depression (Nieto & Booth, 2010). The culture shock and the ability of culture maladaptation have bad impact on their learning.

Different culture makes it more challenging to engage in productive interactions with people from the host country as the cultural adjustment can impact interactions with peers. International students from the same cultural background tend to work more effectively with each other than they do with host peers (Akanwa, 2015). Yuan (2011) conducted a qualitative study by interviewing ten Chinese international students who were studying in the United States. One student reported that even though she did not limit her social circle, her friends were primarily Chinese students because it was difficult to develop meaningful friendships with Americans. The author noted that "cross-cultural adaptation is not just a matter of open-mindedness or competence. Instead, it is a painful battle between long-term cultural indoctrination and unfamiliar values" (Yuan, 2011, p. 153). Insufficient English and cultural differences consequently increase the Chinese international students' uncertainty and anxiety when interacting with the domestic students (Yuan, 2011), and the excessive anxiety and uncertainty negatively contribute to a reluctance to communicate and a failure to adjust to the local cultural environment.

The maladaptation to Western food makes Chinese international students feel insecurity and lose the sense of belonging. Zhou et al. (2017) interviewed 43 first-year Chinese international students to explore their acculturative stress and the results revealed that "acculturative stress related to identity and cultural differences became one of the biggest and most difficult issues to overcome" (p. 10). Cultural differences could be identified as more complex social values and also as the different food preferences. Leong (2015) also indicated that food was a major cultural change for Chinese

international students as they tended to have more difficulty in getting used to Western

food. Though this may seem superficial, "Food from the students' home country can

provide a sense of comfort since each culture and country is characterized by their own

foods, particularly when the student is missing home and struggling with homesickness"

(Taylor & Ali, 2017, p. 12). A lack of sense of belonging was reported by Chinese

international students and their initial desire for assimilation diminished because of the

distinctive cultural conflict.

Different Academic Context

When Chinese international students move to an English-speaking country for

educational advancement, they throw themselves into a completely new environment

with a different educational system: in this process, cultural and linguistic challenges are

compounded. Studies show that Chinese students experience challenges because of

different curriculum content, pedagogy, assignment expectations, and connection with

professors (Heng, 2017). Because of the totally different educational system between

China and Western countries, Chinese students much more tend to be uncomfortable

when studying abroad. For example, in China, all the courses from primary school to

higher education are fixed by national educational institutions and schools, so students

are not allowed to select courses. Chinese students often find themselves in the mire

when they face the situation of the course selection (Lu & Han, 2010). It would be highly

beneficial if Chinese students can be provided courses to introduce the differences of two

education systems, which would assist them to reach their academic goals.

There are some culture-related factors which will influence academic behaviors and

achievement. Andrade (2006) indicates the most critical areas for Chinese students are

their familiarity with the norms, rules, and regulations of Western education and classroom discourses. China is an exam-oriented education system, which is drastically different from most of the English-speaking countries. Chinese education places more emphasis on exam scores rather than the classroom participation with critical thinking and innovation, which Western education conversely prioritizes (Valdez, 2015). Thus, it is common that some Chinese students have relative high IELTS score but struggle with dynamic involvement in the classroom. If students are not familiar with the educational system and academic requirements, they are less likely to achieve academic success.

The teaching pedagogy is also identified as another factor for the anxiety experienced by Chinese international students as they are exposed to an unfamiliar teaching approach and different classroom expectations (Ching, Renes, Mcmurrow, Simpson, & Strange, 2017). For example, in China, professors are the controllers of the classroom, and students tend to keep silent for most of the time as the discussion between students is not the teaching pedagogy in Chinese classrooms. However, the classroom of Western countries emphasizes the development of students' independence and active participation in classroom and within groups. Heng (2018) mentioned that Chinese students had problems when studying in a dynamic classroom with different pedagogy. "They were less comfortable with face-to-face confrontation of ideas as they felt that to question someone's ideas or argue with someone is considered impolite" (p. 29). The conflict of different teaching approach heightens the level of stress for Chinese students.

In addition to the different classroom norms and teaching approaches, the faculty-student relationship is also a challenge for Chinese international students in academic learning (Ruble & Zhang, 2013). By facilitating face-to-face interviews, Heng (2017)

concluded that faculty members were not always informed that the cultural-based learning environment had a negative impact on Chinese international students' academic performance. When investigating Chinese students' expectations, they express strong demand for the introduction of the culture and history of the host country in the classroom. To the contrary, some advisors hold the stereotype that Chinese international students are inactive, dependent, uncritical and uninterested in acculturation. One participant indicated:

> "I wish teachers could be more warm-hearted and take the initiative to ask me if I need help. A lot of students don't realize they can ask the professor. So if teachers take the initiative to ask students they would appreciate it." (p. 840)

Faculty members' acknowledgement on the cultural background and language level of Chinese students in teaching and assessment has a significant impact on their sense of integration and confidence in academic success (Glass, Kociolek, Wongtrirat, Lynch, & Cong, 2015). Sometimes based on the limited language ability and traditional Confucian thoughts, Chinese students are more likely to seek academic help from students of the home country instead of asking teachers questions (Heng, 2017). In this case, teachers are requested to take the initiative to connect with students. Also, on account of the difficulties in speaking and writing abilities, Chinese students should be provided effective feedback and positive reinforcement. The faculty-student relationship should be strengthened as it is important for Chinese students' academic success and acculturation.

Chapter 4: Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Studies conclude that international students experience high levels of acculturative stress, which is closely related to the challenges in the process of adjustment. There are a variety of studies that have identified the challenges facing Chinese international students, including language barriers, cultural diversity, and academic problems, which contribute to the high levels of acculturative stress. By reviewing the existing literature, this study investigates the learning and living practices of Chinese international students in Western countries. Their challenges in language skills, cultural adjustment, and academic learning are separately discussed so that the appropriate and sufficient help can be provided for current and prospective international students. In addition, whether the elements of language proficiency, cultural/emotional intelligence, race/ethnicity, age, gender, and length of residence could be regarded as the predictors of acculturative stress is elaborated. A majority of literature shows that the levels of language proficiency and cultural/emotional intelligence are negatively correlated with levels of acculturative stress. The acculturative stress varies among the international students of different origins. Compared to European students, individuals from Asia, Latino, Africa, and Middle East experience more acculturative stress. Younger international students are more likely to have less acculturative stress. In addition, there are different findings on the predictive ability on gender and length of residence.

By discussing the findings, faculty members and administrators can better understand, advise, and assist international students as they work toward a successful transition by keeping linguistic and cultural differences in mind. Additionally, it is vital

for international students to take advantage of every opportunity in and out of the classroom to improve their linguistic and cultural competence in order to achieve academic success.

<div align="center">**Recommendations**</div>

Pedagogical Recommendations for Faculty

Since the international students possess varying degree of English-language proficiency and have differing cultural backgrounds, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching should be utilized as an efficient method to deliver instruction as it would help international students meet their unique needs. This is supported by Omar, Mahone, Ngobia, and FitzSimons (2016), who stated that "International students' academic success and professional development… are dependent on the kind of relationship and interaction they have with their faculty advisors as they are dealing with higher levels of language barriers, and academic and cultural adjustment" (p. 1).

Language. Language has been identified as one of the barriers in the process of adjustment among Chinese international students. Chinese students in the classroom are at different levels of English-language proficiency. Some students communicate well but have problems in academic learning with respect to reading materials, academic writing, and project assignments. Some other students may have sufficient academic language ability in reading and writing but lack spoken English skills, which contributes to less classroom participation. Yan and Berliner (2009) concluded that language-related problems are obvious among Chinese international students as they do not have an English-speaking environment in China, so it is difficult for most of them to study in a classroom where the lecture is delivered in English. The English ability of international

students affects their learning outcome. Therefore, instructors should understand the different English level of students and prepare them with appropriate course design and instructional delivery. When delivering the instruction, it is better for instructors to stress the main point and difficult concept in the class so that Chinese students can more easily focus on the key elements. Avoiding the use of slang, idioms, long sentences, colloquialisms, and cultural-based examples would help students accurately grasp what they learn in class. Moreover, when professors speak clearly and slowly without long-winded and complex sentences, Chinese students can process the content more effectively. Lin and Scherz (2014) suggested that when delivering instruction in class, instructors should "a) simplify complex language; b) keep it relevant to the content; c) explicitly define culturally-embedded terms and expressions; and, d) maintain a good rate of speech, paced so as to be comprehensible" (p. 27). Professors should likewise place an emphasis on enhancing Chinese international students' English language skills by incorporating language-focused tasks. Finally, in order for students to develop their language skills, it is critical that instructors be able to provide productive and instructive feedback.

Culture. Chinese international students differ compared to their domestic peers with respect to prior knowledge, learning experiences, and way of thinking; thus, instructors seek to establish a culturally adaptive and inclusive classroom. A variety of instructional strategies should be used to address different cultural experiences (Lin & Scherz, 2014). Instructors should be aware of Chinese international students' cultural background and their cultural expectation for teaching and learning. Zhang (2015) notes that "showing awareness of different cultures and respecting international students' decisions emerged

as the most widely used strategy of advising international students" (p. 53). Their

expectations should be communicated specifically and clearly by involving Chinese

international students in office hours, appointments, and in-class and out-of-class support.

Such efforts can forge connections between Chinese international students and advisors.

Also, classroom activities should be organized in a way to scaffold students who have

different cultural and linguistic background. Instructors should carefully choose

classroom materials and create assignments that encourage students to learn about

different cultures. A culturally-sensitive method should be used to avoid singling out

Chinese international students during class, and efforts should emphasize intentionally

connecting domestic and Chinese students. There are different strategies that are

beneficial to the teaching outcomes. For example, using examples from Chinese

international students' home country, encouraging students to share their different culture,

and engaging students in cross-cultural interactions. Each of these have the potential to

provide students with the opportunity to express their ideas and make them more

comfortable engaging in classroom discussion.

Academics. Academic challenges stemming from different language proficiency

and cultural background have been identified as the barriers for Chinese international

students (Yan & Berliner, 2013). As instructors can confront the students directly, they

should provide more help in the process of delivering instruction so as to reduce Chinese

international students' acculturative stress. Lin and Scherz (2014) observed that due to

the different educational system and linguistic backgrounds, Asian international students

need clear and detailed directions about the various academic tasks and procedures. For

example, in China, the performance of students is completely based on exam scores

rather than classroom participation, various assignment, and team-work projects. However, in Western countries, the final exam is only part of students' final grade. One possible strategy is offering specific syllabi with detailed information about course design, expectations, and guidelines for assignments requirement. In addition, the different pedagogical strategies should strive to "engage students in intellectually and culturally inclusive learning experience" (Lin & Scherz, 2014, p. 28), which can improve their language skills and intercultural awareness. Furthermore, when engaging students in cooperative tasks, instructors should reflect the students' linguistic and ethnic diversity. Genesee, Geva, Dressler, and Kamil (2007) pointed out that the different languages and cultural diversity of each individual student could be used as an additional tool and valuable resources for learning and teaching. Akanwa (2015), for example, observes that "facilitating a diverse academic environment where international students could interact with fellow international students as well as domestic students is crucial to academic success" (p. 275). Besides, educators can recommend Chinese students utilize the university-wide supports such as peer tutoring, ELL workshops, and librarian support for research methods. Therefore, assigning teamwork assignments and similar approaches can be an effective way to improve students' learning achievement while addressing and incorporating cultural diversity.

Students Coping Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

Language. Chinese international students' English-language proficiency plays a vital role in their academic success when studying in English-speaking countries as their first language is not English. Although some Chinese international students have a high score in English standardized test, they still face many problems when communicating

and completing writing tasks. Cheng and Erben (2011) argued that Chinese students generally face language anxiety with written and spoken English. Therefore, they should be aware of their linguistic strengths and weaknesses and take advantage of every chance prior or after coming to foreign countries to improve their English abilities with regard to speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. In addition to the academic purpose, English proficiency is important for the social adjustment of Chinese international students (Andrade, 2006). It is beneficial for students to interact with English-speaking students, even when their English is not proficient. For example, they can listen to English audio recordings repeatedly to enhance their listening and speaking ability. Visiting churches regularly would be a good choice since Chinese students can make native friends with whom they can practice their English and also learn about local culture (Zhou, et al., 2017). There are some additional strategies to overcome linguistic barriers, including watching TV, self-talking in English, and paying attention to how people express their ideas. Also, joining clubs, social organizations or intra-mural sport teams through the university could be effective methods to improve English language proficiency.

Culture. Chinese international students' acculturative stress caused by cultural difference was one of the biggest issues. As the culture and mainstream values of China and Western countries are quite different, it leads to the lack of sense of belonging among Chinese international students. Zhou, et al., (2017) suggested that leisure activities could serve as a coping strategy for acculturative stress. Since it takes time to make friends with host peers, Chinese students can share their experience with sympathetic individuals from home country or other international students with similar problems. Socializing with

friends is an effective way to lower acculturative stress (Leong, 2015), and frequent involvement in campus and local activities are also effective ways to integrate into local culture. Zhou et al. (2017) stated:

> Regular involvement in campus and faith-based organizations as well as taking part in holiday celebrations such as Halloween and Christmas organized by student associations served a similar function of helping students socialize, find support, and relieve stress related to study abroad. (p. 11)

Furthermore, cultural intelligence, which refers to the individual's aptitude to accept and appreciate different cultures, has a significant impact on the process of students' acculturative stress (Mesidor & Sly, 2016). Therefore, Chinese international students should have a respect for different cultures and be well prepared to work with individuals with diverse cultural experience.

Chinese students should get prepared for future overseas study and life when they are in China. In addition to the language and academic difficulties, Chinese students who are studying in English countries may face a lot of problems because of different cultures and social norms. Therefore, before entering the foreign countries, it is necessary for them to have some understanding of their future living countries before they take off. It is better for them to get the information beyond what they usually take from books or other people. They should learn how to live on their own in order that they are able to handle their own life problems. For better make adequate preparations, they can participate in the Summer Camp to feel the foreign life in advance or take some guidance courses.

Academics. For the sake of meeting their academic expectations, Chinese international students should integrate language and cultural strategies when taking

courses. Even though Chinese international students are shy when expressing ideas, asking instructors for assistance is a common and effective strategy when they are coping with academic challenges. In the classroom, active participation in team-work tasks and group discussions can also help to address academic problems, which can likewise promote linguistic and cross-cultural adjustments. Integrating into new learning environments in Western countries can be a stressful process for Chinese students as they have to adapt to a new cultural value, language and study habit. Thus, frequent social relationships are important for them as it provides them with an opportunity to practice English and grasp different learning styles.

Suggestions to Institutions

Because of the cultural differences between China and host countries, institutions should make concerted efforts to support Chinese international students to overcome communication issues and promote a positive relationship among Chinese students and all other members of the campus community. Institutions should provide effective orientations and lectures that focus on cultural differences for international students. Peer-support systems should be established to ease students' adaptation difficulties by allowing Chinese international students to enhance their English skills and understanding of different cultures. Culture-related activities and lectures should be organized to enhance students' cross-cultural awareness and create opportunities for cultural exchange. In addition, campus posters and an information consulting website could be significantly useful for Chinese international students to get information about travel, eating and transporting, which will instill them with a sense of belonging and lower their level of stress.

Since international students struggle with psychological stress, campus counseling may strive to assist students coping with adjustment difficulties. Based on the cultural differences among international students, it is necessary to employ counselors who have a high level of cross-cultural sensitivity so that they can develop some level of comfort for Chinese international students. As Mesidor and Sly (2015) note, "Providing therapeutic services that are culturally sensitive and evidenced based can make therapy more efficacious" (p. 272). They likewise indicate that the majority of Chinese international students had negative perceptions of mental health services. In this case, universities and colleges should educate Chinese international students about the benefits of counseling services.

In addition, college counseling offices can work with other schools to develop peer activities for international students, such as skill-training workshops and cultural exchange programs, which can help international students foster a sense of community. Yeh and Inose (2003) conclude that informal group meetings can provide a chance for international students to share their concerns with fellow international students as well as host students.

Thus, in order to facilitate the academic success and acculturation of Chinese international students in particular, it is critical that academic institutions consider the linguistic, cultural, and academic barriers that Chinese international students encounter. Moreover, they must ensure that their faculty are establishing inclusive classrooms that consider these barriers and that Chinese international students are aware of how to address these issues. Most importantly, the institutions themselves must provide support programs to help students overcome the challenges they face and monitor their success.

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