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# Cultural Integration and English Language Learning of Chinese Students in Canadian Contexts

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**Chinese Students in Canadian Contexts**

By

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**ABSTRACT**

Canada has an increasing number of Chinese international students, and although they demonstrate advanced language skills in English standardized tests, they encounter various cultural integration problems. This paper focuses on Chinese students studying in Canadian universities and analyzes the potential problems with English language education in China based on Chinese international students' cultural integration experiences. The findings suggest that although cultural awareness is currently being emphasized in the English educational reforms in China, it will take time for its advantages to be noticed. The problems with English language education in China have led to a relatively weak cultural awareness of English learners in China who are affected by the traditional exam-oriented English language education. Secondly, traditional English instruction does not provide an understanding of cultural interactions. Now, the understanding of culture has developed to the stage of cultural reciprocity, but Chinese students' understanding of culture in their English language learning is still at the stage of cultural integration through imitation. Finally, driven by external motivations, Chinese students have no clear understanding of their real learning motivation and are unwilling to integrate into Canadian social contexts due to language barriers and other reasons.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**Introduction**

When I first came to Canada as an international student to pursue my graduate degree, a few of my domestic classmates invited me to become a team member for a class competition. I was pleased to be asked to participate in their group and regarded it as an excellent opportunity to become familiar with Canadian culture. I did not perform well in the beginning, and one of my classmates tried to cheer me on by saying: "Do not worry, let us turn the tables!" As we were in front of some tables, I immediately moved and turned the tables in the opposite direction. The rest of my team members were shocked and asked for the reason behind my action. I responded confidently, stating that I did what they asked, and they laughed. After they explained this phrase's implication, I was so embarrassed that I could not focus on the rest of the discussion. This embarrassing situation reveals my disconnect between effective communication and cultural understanding in English. I fully understood every word that my Canadian team member had spoken, yet I failed to interpret the implication of this phrase. These kinds of embarrassing intercultural learning experiences may have negative influences on international students in terms of their willingness to use the target language (in this article, the target language is English) as their acceptance and adaptation to the host culture relies on personal traits, such as confidence and emotional resistance.

This narrative is emblematic of language and cultural barriers that many Chinese international students encounter when studying in Canada. To determine whether these students possess sufficient language proficiency, Canadian higher-education institutions require international students to complete English language assessment exams, such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or Test of English as a

Foreign Language (TOEFL). Despite diverse language proficiency requirements among different disciplines and programs, the threshold to succeed at Canadian postsecondary education is to reach a professional level in English. For example, to be considered for the entrance level of postgraduate education, you are generally required to attain a score of 6.5 on the IELTS test, which represents the "Competent User" level of English. This level requires that the test-taker has "generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacy and misunderstandings" and can "use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations" (IELTS, n.d., para. 4). However, these scores are not always reflective of students' language abilities. For example, I earned an IELTS score of 6.5 (8.0 in listening, 6.5 in reading, 6.0 in writing and speaking) and obtained the Tem-8 (Test for English Majors-Band 8) certificate, which is the highest certificate of English proficiency that a University English major student can obtain in China. And yet, I still found that I made embarrassing gaffes such as taking figurative language literally.

This issue may be especially prevalent in Canada where there is a vast number of Chinese students. In 2019, Canada was host to nearly 650,000 international students, of which more than 140,000 came from China (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2019), highlighting the importance of supporting this population. Although advanced English is the prerequisite for studying in Canada, Chinese international students who are fluent or even advanced in English may not adapt to the host culture as well as expected. Chinese students begin their English learning at a very young age, and those who study in Canada have proven that they possess the target foreign language proficiency required to succeed at the postsecondary level. However, despite Chinese

students having advanced language proficiency in English, they, as a temporary immigrant group in Canada, may still lack a sense of belonging and connectedness with the local culture. Scott et al. (2015) suggest that this sentiment may lead to less effective intercultural communication and fewer interactions with native English speakers.

        With the increasing number of international students and immigrants, further research focuses on this specific group. However, many studies have focused specifically on integrating cultural education into language courses from the teachers' perspective. They state that culture functions as the medium and substance of learning and takes a dominant position in language learning (Scarino, 2017), as well as international students' language proficiency may influence their adjustment to the host society (Van Niejenhuis et al., 2018). Thus, to achieve the purpose of the English language teaching curriculum and prepare students to function effectively in the changing democratic society, and guide them to respond to social justice (Roofe et al., 2018), it is crucial to highlight the importance of cultural awareness in language teaching. However, there is insufficient research from the perspective of students. Therefore, the actual problems students may encounter when using English in English-speaking countries may not be competently exposed. The disparate lenses of teachers' and students' perspectives may lead to bias when discussing students' language learning and cultural integration problems. Additionally, there are some studies that discuss English as a second language (ESL)/English as a foreign language (EFL) and cultural competence separately, which detail the development of ESL/EFL and cultural competence from various perspectives, but few studies that consider them together from the perspective of students' language learning. Therefore, this study will discuss Chinese students' English language learning

problems from the perspective of Chinese international students' cultural integration and English language learning problems in Canada through a detailed review of related literature.

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**Background and Historical Context**

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To understand this phenomenon, it is important to first outline the historical context as well as the contemporary background.

**Historical Context**

International human flow has been happening for more than two centuries. In the book *International migration in the age of crisis and globalization: historical and recent experiences*, Solimano (2010) details the development of international migration from both historical and recent experiences. According to Solimano, immigrants have significantly contributed to 'new-world countries' (the United States, Canada, and others), where there are abundant natural resources and insufficient workforce. These new-world countries may have higher living standards and quality of life compared to the immigrants' home countries. In this perspective, early immigration did not consider whether diverse cultural backgrounds would be problematic, because these destination countries were at the beginning of construction and their workforce only needed to understand basic instructions. During that period, the purpose of language learning was to complete daily interactions with native speakers.

McKeown (2004) argues that the ending point of the mass immigration movement should be extended from 1914 to 1930. During that mass immigration period, the integration of diverse cultures did not have major influence on the world economy; instead, political intervention into the immigration systems shaped the world economy

(McKeown, 2004). Since the Cold War, English language learning has focused on practical elements, such as linguistic and grammar rules, so that additional language speakers could use it pragmatically as a common communication language. Consequently, culture as a domain of language learning has traditionally been isolated from grammar.

The problem may be more prominent for Chinese students, as evidenced by the transformation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the 'open-door' policy in 1979. China had been in a passive isolation construction period during that time because under the international background of the Cold War, Western capitalist countries led by the United States carried out the policy of economic blockade, diplomatic isolation, and military encirclement against the new socialist government in China (Lu, 2019). This isolation period also influenced Chinese cultural input and output, and international cultural integration was not a prominent topic for English language learning in China. However, the external world changed rapidly while China was in that construction period. Cultural integration and immersion along with immigrants' movement and frequent commercial trade gradually brought the world together. In this context, Chinese students may start later than students from other countries in terms of cultural integration.

**Current Background**

With the increasing awareness of English in China, it is becoming more common for Chinese students to learn English. This change can be discussed through emergent themes: the importance of English in China, and a current problem of English learners in China.

*Importance of English in China*

After China officially opened its gates to the West and began participating in the stream of globalization, China became recognized as a fast-developing country. English, as the gateway to immigrants' flow, has shown its profound influence on education, commerce, and industry (Clark-Gareca & Gui, 2019). Thus, China has developed more educational policies and strategies to stimulate English learning. The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China in 2001 published *Guidelines for Promoting English Language Instruction in Primary Schools*, which emphasized "using English to achieve interactive communication" (para.7). Two years later, in 2003, English was added as a compulsory course starting in primary schools (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2003), and English became the third compulsory subject in addition to Chinese and mathematics. In 2011, the number of weekly English classes was officially mandated at 3 lessons per week for primary students (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2011). Today, globalization and opening markets reinforce the importance of using English, which underscores the usefulness of English by exposing the unbalanced job opportunities in the world market. English speakers tend to obtain more job opportunities, and more employees learn English as a fundamental skill. Moreover, as international commercial transactions broaden the destinations of commodity circulation, this has caused the common international language to become a necessity for trade. As a result, English as a foreign language learning and teaching has become more pervasive in China as it is the concomitant of globalization.

*A current problem of English learners in China*

The population of China is 1.4 billion, among whom there are 390 million English language learners (Wei & Su, 2012). Moreover, Chinese students are one of the leading

international student groups in Canada. In 2017, 40% of international students who study in Canada came from East Asia, and Chinese international students represented 28% of all international students in Canada, which was more than any other nation (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2018). Some researchers predict that there may be more English speakers in China than in the United States in the future (Wang et al., 2017). However, Wei and Su (2012) found that although the number of English speakers in China is continuously increasing, only 3.53% of them rated themselves as being proficient enough in English to converse fluently, while only 1.8% reported being able to act as interpreters on formal occasions. Although this percentage may increase through the development of English language learning and teaching in China, the current situation of Chinese international students who can be defined as advanced English learners is still not satisfactory.

In general, Chinese students have been studying English in China for a long time. They have passed many English proficiency tests to prove that their English level should meet effective communication standards in English-speaking countries. However, the low percentage of Chinese students who self-assess their practical English proficiency as high, suggests that Chinese students encounter various practical problems using English in English-speaking countries as international students. This problem reveals the gaps between English language learning and practical use. For Chinese international students, the gaps between language learning and practical use are significantly influenced by their understanding of and adapting to the target culture. Thus, in-depth research that focuses on interpreting Chinese international students' integration into the host culture may help

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researchers analyze and evaluate English language learning and teaching problems in China.

## Purpose Statement

This paper aims to analyze Chinese international students' English language learning problems by examining their cultural integration in Canada through a detailed review of related research. Chinese international students' adjustment experiences in Canada are analyzed to understand the real problems for their cultural integration, and the reason for their lack of belongingness and connectedness to the host culture. In addition, this paper may raise awareness of globalized education and enhance international students' understanding of diverse cultures and cultural coexistence.

## Research Questions

This study explores Chinese international students' English learning problems by examining their cultural integration problems in Canada. It also focuses on the perspective of Chinese students' English language learning through the review of related studies, and seeks to answer three key research questions:

1. Why do Chinese students encounter problems while living and studying in Canada?

2. What are the differences between English education in China and English education in Canada?

3. How do these differences between English education in China and English education in Canada influence Chinese international students' integration into Canadian contexts?

## Definition of Specific Terms

There are several key terms that are critical to understanding the current phenomenon; therefore, it is important to detail the definitions of each relevant term.

**ESL**

ESL refers to English as a second language, which is the process of learning English as a new language within a context where the speaker must be able to speak the language in daily contexts. For example, an immigrant who moves to Canada and who does not speak English needs to learn it as a second language to engage in their new environment. However, the term ESL from some perspectives is perceived as overstressing the importance of English as the *lingua franca*, and it may be a misnomer for students who master more than two languages (Wright, 2010). Therefore, in some studies, English as an additional language (EAL), Second language (L2), English language learning (ELL), and English learners (EL) are used in place of ESL.

In Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Education published a series of ELL documents to guide and help teachers support English language learners in their classrooms, such as *Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (2007)*, which provides detailed descriptions for ELL and its subgroups. Based on the description of this document, the newcomers from other countries worldwide are categorized into ELL groups, and the term ESL is included to describe language supporting programs in Ontario.

However, in this study, ESL is used to describe Chinese international students learning English as a second language in Canadian universities. Because this term is frequently used in both Chinese and Canadian contexts, it will be consistent with the language used by most studies on this subject.

**EFL**

EFL refers to learning English as a Foreign language. It differs from ESL as

language learners learn English in a context where they do not need to speak it

throughout their daily interactions, and are learning it as an academic pursuit. For

example, Chinese students learning English in China are EFL learners as they do not need

to speak English when communicating with other people in China.

**Culture**

The United States officially defines 'culture' as a combination of philosophical

views, behaviours, and social products (National Standards for Foreign Language

Learning, 1996, p.6). In addition, numerous diverse definitions exist in the literature

regarding culture. For example, Goodenough (1957) believes culture is a consistent

system where everyone within it understands and accepts shared values. In contrast, Boyd

and Richerson (1988) define culture as the human behaviour inherited process by

teaching and imitating knowledge, values, and other factors (p.8). Moreover, culture can

be differentiated from natural human evolution that is caused by changing environments.

For instance, Brown (2007) interprets culture as a lifestyle in which a group of people

think about their connection with others and are bonded together through a shared

culture. It can also stand for specific ideas, arts, customs, skills, and tools that a group of

people obtained within a period (Brown, 2007). Similarly, Sowden (2007) states that

culture is a historical connection between the body of society, artists, knowledge, and a

specific ethnic group. Thompson (2013) emphasizes the symbolic character of culture

reflecting social life and the exchanging of social values. He states that modern cultures'

symbolic characters are not restricted to in-person interaction; instead, the institutions and

mechanisms of mass communication have functioned as a mediator in extending social interactions. Moreover, the desire to integrate diverse cultures into a global context underscores the increased prevalence of multiculturalism. Song (2020) discusses the significance of cultures that are not isolated, and have long influenced each other through war, trade, and other forms of exchange. Song (2020) supports multiculturalism theorists' perspectives that cultures overlap and interact in contexts where individuals maintain their unique societal cultures. Despite the various diverse definitions of culture, there is still no recognized definition (Tang, 2006) because culture is not a concrete entity (Dervin, 2011) and is a continuous changing phenomenon.

**Cultural Competence and Intercultural Competence**

Cross et al. (1989) define cultural competence as a set of different behaviours, attitudes, and policies that are integrated into one unified system where systems, agents, and professionals can work effectively in cross-cultural situations (p.17). Later explanations of cultural competence have developed significance in the professional nursing field because in this profession multiple cultures have been intersecting for over a century. Betancourt et al. (2002) state that the cultural competence in nursing represents the staffs' abilities to offer proper service depending on clients' diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, nurses should ideally offer Halal food to Muslims. Similarly, cultural competence in education can aid teachers in effectively teaching students from other cultures. This competence can facilitate the integration of diverse cultural knowledge and interpersonal skills to achieve successful cross-cultural teaching (Moule, 2011).

*Intercultural Competence*

There are several definitions of intercultural competence. Hammer et al. (2003) define this term as the competence to function and think appropriately in an intercultural context. Deardorff (2011) reveals the various definitions of cultural competence based on different disciplines, and states that cultural competence used in the social discipline can be described as intercultural competence. However, people tend to recognize that intercultural competence is the ability to act effectively in diverse cultural contexts (Whaley & Davis, 2007), which is consistent with how the present study applies the term.

**Acculturation**

Traditionally, the definition of acculturation is the process of cultural change that occurs when "individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into prolonged, continuous, first-hand contact with each other" (Redfield et al., 1936, p. 146). In a macro sense, acculturation is the process of change when distinct cultures come together (Spicer, 1968) and people learn from a different culture (Damen, 1987) to adapt to the culture (Brown, 1986). In 1997, Berry put forward the acculturation model based on the perspectives of culture and psychology change. He indicates that this dual adaptive process of acculturation occurs when one culture interacts with another culture or cultures (Berry, 2015).

**Cultural Adaptation**

Adaptation, as a component of acculturation, is the process of changing or adapting to an unfamiliar environment, which relates to the change of people's original culture and some psychological factors that are involved in the adapting process (Maureen, 2018). Adaptation theory also reveals a gradually unconscious personal identity transmission process to more intercultural personhood (Kim, 2017).

**Cultural Integration**

Many researchers have defined cultural integration in a variety of ways. For example, Hansen (2016) likens the successful integration process to instances where immigrants achieve equal or better economic outcomes than their native-born peers, and differences in education and other aspects are mitigated to the point of near irrelevance. In addition, it can refer to a process where members of one culture absorb the essence of another culture while maintaining their native culture at the same time ("Cultural Integration," 2017). Another interpretation of cultural integration suggests that people immerse their native cultures into the host culture and create a balance zone for distinct cultures, indicating their cultural integration ability ("Cultural Integration," 2017).

*Differences Between Cultural Adaptation and Cultural Integration*

There are some overlaps between cultural adaptation and cultural integration, but the critical point to differentiate these two factors is the interpretation of "adaptation" and "integration." According to Chivacongelado (2009), adaptation is the process of adapting to a new environment. This environment may contain natural and social aspects, such as contact with local language, and culture. In contrast, integration is a dual process through which immigrants become familiar with the host culture, while some parts of their native cultures are accepted in the host culture. Thus, cultural adaptation includes individual cultural and psychological factors (Maureen, 2018), while cultural integration deepens the process and analyzes how different cultures interact with each other.

**Theoretical Framework**

To explore the relationship between Chinese international students' cultural integration and English language learning problems in a Canadian context, as well as the

factors that can influence this relationship, two perspectives may serve as useful lenses: Chinese English learners' learning situation and Chinese English learners' cultural integration problems in Canada. Language learning is a linguistically and culturally based activity that is rooted in learners' diverse prior backgrounds, knowledge, histories, and cultural situations (Scarino, 2017). In this regard, the way students acquire the target languages may shape their understanding of the host cultures. English is not an official language used in China; therefore, the English as a second language acquisition (SLAC) theory is a useful method to analyze Chinese students' language learning process.

In addition, although culture is strongly associated with language learning, it contains more fruitful information, such as non-linguistic attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour (Liton & Madanat, 2013). Moyerman and Forman (1992) further explore this idea and state that the aim of acculturation theory is to explore the changing process of an individual's behaviour and beliefs when one culture encounters a different culture. International students may struggle with many problems in host countries during their cultural integration processes, such as language barriers and lack of understanding of the host culture (Gebhard, 2012). Thomas (1995) brings attention to acculturative stressors that illustrate immigrants' and international students' integration problems. Thus, in exploring Chinese international students' cultural integration problems in Canada, acculturation theory and the cultural integration approach are useful frameworks to study.

Moreover, today's English education in response to globalization has emphasized integrating students' diverse cultural backgrounds and diverse literacies into the classrooms. Therefore, it is significant to explore the multiliteracies theory, as well as students' diverse learning styles and motivations. The assessment theory is also important

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when analyzing Chinese students' English language learning and cultural integration problems in Canada because the assessments in China are different from those in Canada.

In conclusion, second language acquisition theory, Berry's acculturation model, multiliteracies theory, learning motivations theory, and assessment theory are worth discussing when analyzing Chinese international students' cultural integration and English language learning problems in Canada. Moreover, the aforementioned theories have guided this paper's discussion and understanding of Chinese international students' learning traits and their interpretation of cultural integration in a Canadian context, as well as the subjective factors which influence their cultural integration in Canada.

**Second Language Acquisition Theory**

In this study, second language acquisition theory represents the basis for students' understanding of language learning. As English is the second language of Chinese international students, English can also follow the theoretical framework of second language acquisition in the learning process. However, the second language acquisition theory consists of various approaches, and not all of them can be connected to cultural integration and English language learning problems. Therefore, only some second language acquisition approaches are discussed when analyzing the cultural integration problems in Chinese students' language learning. The relevant approaches include Berry's acculturation model, Stephen Krashen's five hypotheses; namely the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. The most valuable theories that explore the central problem and are discussed in this study are, the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the affective filter hypothesis, and Berry's acculturation model.

*Stephen Krashen's Five Hypotheses in Second Language Acquisition*

**The Acquisition-learning Hypothesis.** Krashen raised five hypotheses in the 1980s that discuss the second language acquisition process, which has left a major influence on the second language acquisition field (Schütz, 2007). According to his explanation of the two systems in the second language acquisition process, an 'acquired system' or 'acquisition' is similar, yet different, from the 'learned system.' The acquired system emphasizes the communicative act of native speakers with the target language, while the learned system is the same as a child's first language acquisition process, which stresses formal instruction such as sentence structure and grammar rules (Schütz, 2007). Krashen states that the acquisition process of second language learning is a more communicative behaviour that requires meaningful interaction with native speakers. For example, Chinese students learn English with Chinese English teachers through classroom teaching, however grammar learning cannot be interpreted as an acquisition process because during this learning process, Chinese students may have limited exposure to native speakers. Therefore, Chinese students may master the grammar rules of English, but might not be able to apply them in practical English communication with native English speakers. This is because mastering English is a learning process that emphasizes students' linguistic development rather than communicative improvement. Furthermore, both additional language acquisition systems (learned and acquired) should have a knowledge base, and the difference between the two systems lies in the origin of the knowledge base. When children are learning their native language, they are in the initial stages of language development. At this stage, they do not have their own previous background knowledge, so teachers and parents' language guidance promote the

formation of the child's first language system. However, *additional language acquisition* happens after children already have prior native language knowledge. This is the case when Chinese students learn English as an additional language. Even in situations where Chinese parents have immigrated to Canada, children may learn English as an additional language if their parents teach them Chinese as their first language at home. In this case, family background may cause some preference for learning languages. Thus, second language learning information resources may directly affect students' understanding of unfamiliar cultures. In this regard, language learning outcomes and cultural integration abilities of second-language students may differ because they learn languages in numerous ways and receive information from multiple sources.

**The Input Hypothesis.** The input hypothesis is a core theory in second language acquisition because it explains how input information influences language learners' acquisition processes. This hypothesis assumes that learners accept input and develop a higher level of understanding that exceeds their previous language level (Schütz, 2007). The input hypothesis emphasizes information input, which comes from an external power such as teachers. This theory, on a large scale, stresses teacher effort. To be more specific, students' current language levels are the ground level, which represents 'i' in the input model, and the input information is represented as '1'. Therefore, the use of input knowledge to achieve another level of students' language ability is shown as 'i +1.' This theory is further developed to include 'i+0' and 'i+2,' which represent two additional degrees of information input. The formula 'i+0' shows that the input is insufficient with respect to improving students' language learning, as the input may not exceed the knowledge that students already know. Therefore, the input information can not help

students reach a higher level of language proficiency. In contrast, 'i+2' refers to the input that may exceed the limit, meaning that students cannot absorb and understand the excessive input. For example, if a student is beginning to learn a new language and teachers try to teach them the philosophy behind the language, students can not understand. In this situation, students cannot improve their target language proficiency.

From a students' perspective on the cultural integration aspects of learning a new language, the focus of the input theory may be a combination of 'i' and '1', because the internet enriches information resources in language learning. Students today do not only gain information from teachers, but the various information input makes language learning and cognition more complicated than in the past. The way in which students obtain information may also influence how they interpret unfamiliar cultures, because diverse information may impact them differently.

**The Affective Filter Hypothesis.** Unlike the other four hypotheses, the affective filter hypothesis emphasizes the emotional factor of the learner. Krashen believes that affective variables function as a promotion factor in second language learners. It is believed that low motivation, low self-esteem, and high-anxiety students may establish a mental block between themselves and learning the target language. Therefore, they may demonstrate unwillingness to use the target language, which may result in isolation while they attempt to navigate their new surroundings. In contrast, high motivation, high self-esteem, and low anxiety in students often lead to high achievement in second language learning (Schütz, 2007). This theory is deeply connected to the cultural integration problem of Chinese international students, and it overlaps with some views of Berry's acculturation model.

*Berry's Acculturation Model*

According to Berry's acculturation theory, the proportion of a language learner's original culture compared to their target culture in cultural assimilation can classify learners' acculturation into four categories: assimilation, integration, separation/segregation, and marginalization. (see Figure 1).

**Cultural Adaptation (relationship sought among groups)**

| | | Low | High |
|---|---|---|---|
| Maintenance of heritage culture | High | Separation | Integration |
| | Low | Marginalization | Assimilation |

Figure1: Berry's acculturation model from Kiylioglu et al., (2015).

**Separation/Segregation**. Fu (2002) defines the separation/segregation process as maintaining one's ethnic group and rejecting the host culture. Other researchers, such as Kuran et al. (2008), state that separation is opposed to integration and occurs when individuals label themselves as "different" to block the integration process.

**Marginalization.** In contrast to integration, Berry (1997) expresses that marginalization indicates a weak connection with both native and host cultures. Similarly,

Fu (2002) finds that marginalization refers to instances where a person rejects the host culture, and either rejects or does not have access to their own culture.

**Assimilation**. According to Maureen (2018), the process of assimilation refers to instances where immigrants or people who are new to a given culture choose to participate exclusively in the host culture, while rejecting their native culture. Verdier et al. (2012) describe the phenomenon of assimilation as people from distinct cultures gradually losing their own culture and merging into a new and unified cultural pattern.

**Integration**. According to Berry's (1997) acculturation model, integration demonstrates a high correlation between heritage and host cultures. In addition, Maureen (2018) interprets integration as a process that both accepts and maintains a person's native culture and host culture.

When considering the unfamiliar cultural environment in Canada, Chinese international students have different degrees of acceptance. In this process, the way in which the original culture and the target culture are absorbed and integrated explicitly defines which model of acculturation they adopt.

**Multiliteracies Theory**

Multiliteracies theory is a response to the increasing cultural diversity in classrooms due to globalization and the proliferation of modern technologies that have created new literacy expectations. This theory aims to explore the future development of literacies in education across various cultural contexts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2001). Under the old social function order, students and teachers act as production line workers who do not need to understand additional knowledge surpassing the basic factory/curriculum required knowledge. However, this order must change and evolve as globalization and

technology expand and connect throughout the world. People in the world trading system

should acquire practical communication abilities to keep up with the evolving world.

Therefore, a new discussion regarding educational development has brought to light the

term 'multiliteracies.' International students are the leading participant group in

globalization. Some international students may choose to stay and work in a multicultural

environment (which will require higher levels of literacy), and although others may return

to their native countries after they reach their academic goals, they may still find work in

the globalized economy. In this regard, multiliteracies theory and related approaches are

imperative to international students' second language learning.

**Learning Motivations Approach**

Gardner and Lambert (1959) found that language motivation is expressed as

goals, attitudes, and self-related beliefs. This theory has developed in the second language

learning field, and currently maintains that learners are driven by two main motivations:

instrumental motivation and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivations are

impelled by outside stimulations (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). For example, the desire to

get promoted within a target language-speaking company, or students who want to pass

the target language learning program. In contrast, learners' desires to integrate into the

host culture, make friends with native speakers, and maintain effective communication

with the host society (Oxford & Shearin, 1994), are interpreted as integrative motivation.

Similarly, the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations theory claims that learners who

actively try to interact with native speakers and gain mental satisfactory are driven by

intrinsic motivation (Mahadi et al., 2012), while extrinsically motivated learners may be

influenced by external desires, such as academic reward (Mahadi et al., 2012). Examining

earning motivation theory is vital to interpreting Chinese international students' English language learning outcomes because cultural integration as a concomitant of language learning may present differently based on learners' diverse learning motivations.

**Assessment Approach**

Historically, language assessment standards emphasized test scores because other assessment methods may not be reliable. To be more specific, any assessment that focuses on a single area may not be fair due to students' different areas of expertise. However, some current researchers argue that scoring-related assessments, such as standardized tests, are considered high-stakes. Such high-stake assessments often have punitive results, such as terminating principals and staff (Hargreaves, 2020). Teachers may feel stressed in these high-stakes situations and transfer this stress to their students. Within this assessment approach, students are evaluated after being taught during a given period. These assessments are summative (Bailey, 2016), and the results are presented through numerical scores. High-stake assessments are often criticized in many countries, and lately, educational reforms have adjusted some high-stake assessments to be "mid-stake" assessments or alternative assessments. Unlike the punitive consequences of high-stake assessments, mid-stake assessments are less severe and life-changing (Lee & Kang, 2019). Therefore, schools and teachers have the flexibility needed to focus on students' diverse study requirements. However, despite the assessment reforms in education and the increase in formative or alternative assessments being utilized to evaluate student performance, Chinese English learning programs still emphasize numerical scores. This may cause the test scores to be the foregrounding factor in Chinese students' English language learning. Therefore, Chinese international students may lose motivations and

interests in learning about cultural understanding and integration.

**Cultural Integration Theory**

Cultural integration theory has had a considerable influence on exploring Chinese international students' integration problems. In this study, cultural integration theory helps provide an understanding of the way Chinese international students interpret the meaning of cultural integration in a Canadian context. There is a subtle difference between cultural adaptation and cultural integration; therefore, perceiving and identifying the nature of cultural integration may bewilder international students in their interactions with native speakers. For instance, Chinese international students may perceive themselves as successfully integrating into Canadian culture because of their ability to quickly adapt to new environments, and consequently do not encounter many problems because they are able to efficiently imitate native people's behaviour. In most cases, this self-believed "integration" tends to be an adaptation: the students may adapt to the new culture, yet they still cannot effectively immerse themselves in the host culture. Cultural integration theory essentially argues that people absorb the new culture while maintaining their native culture ("Cultural Integration," 2017). For example, Chinese students in Canada may learn to say "bless you" when others sneeze, and may participate in celebrating Canadian holidays, such as Canada Day, while simultaneously celebrating traditional Chinese festivals, such as Chinese New Year, and maintaining other Chinese traditions. This kind of cultural adaptation can be interpreted as cultural integration, and many immigrants use this cultural adjustment as a survival tool in their new communities.

Another interpretation of cultural integration is that people establish a "mediated" culture, which is the integration between their native culture and the host culture

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("Cultural Integration," 2017). China-English can best exemplify this idea. For a long time, China-English, colloquially, and sometimes pejoratively referred to as 'Chinglish,' has been criticized as the incorrect use of English. However, research argues that this critique might be biased, because diverging from native-speaker-based English does not equate to incorrect use of English (He & Li, 2009). For example, if a piece of clothing is damaged, a native Chinese speaker might express this in English by saying it is 'broken,' while a native English speaker might say that it is 'torn.' This difference in English language usage does not signify that the Chinese English learner's interpretation is incorrect, yet, as Chinese English learners are not always able to distinguish between the nuances of words with similar or even identical meanings, some native speakers refer to such phrasing as Chinglish. Likewise, English itself can also be incomplete. For example, implied elements are often omitted from sentences, creating grammatically incorrect sentence fragments. In addition, globalization, English colonialism, and the Chinese economic boom has created an overlap between English and Chinese that has led to the emergence of many Chinese-specific English expressions, such as 'tycoon,' 'rickshaw,' and 'bok choy.' Since there are no exact foreign translations of these Chinese-specific expressions, China-English emerged. Thus, Li (1993) put forward the definition of China-English as a vernacular that is based on standard English and expresses Chinese culture.

## Literature Review

Previous research has established a variety of insights and constructive suggestions to support the learning outcomes of ESL/EFL students in relation to the cultural integration of international students in different cultural backgrounds. An

amalgamation of these studies can inform a broader discussion about culture and how it intersects with language learning. However, whether cultural education in the 21st century can promote cultural integration is dependent on educators' and learners' understanding of the *definitions* of culture. It is important to first understand that culture is often defined as an understanding of behaviours, society, and beliefs. However, this definition ignores the development of culture within the context of globalization, which has integrated and facilitated the evolution and renewal of cultures. Under this background, it is essential to interpret culture from a global perspective. In addition, it is also important to recognize that EFL teaching modes in China are different from ESL teaching modes in Canada; therefore, the language learning process based on different backgrounds may affect students' acceptance of, and integration into distinct cultures. Some scholars have raised the issue of cultural competence in the study of cultural integration. Thus, it is important to analyze the subtle differences between cultural competence and cultural integration as some scholars have proposed that students' cultural integration ability and cultural competence may have different influences on international students' cultural integration. Moreover, each country has different language teaching methods. Therefore, an analysis of English teaching methods in China must be acknowledged when studying cultural integration of Chinese international students in Canada. Finally, from a students' perspective, motivation for language learning can be an intrinsic factor that affects learning outcomes and cultural acceptance. This combination of external and internal factors may provide a more comprehensive understanding of cultural integration of Chinese international students' cultural integration and English language learning problems in Canadian contexts.

**Culture as a Dynamic Change Factor**

Culture inherits process transmits from one generation to the next based on human behaviour. Human beings inherit culture through language learning and action imitation, and children inherit specific cultural traits of their parents through language learning. Thus, early understanding of culture stresses specific information inheritance. Culture is cognized traditionally as factual knowledge, while literature and other aesthetic forms are considered a supplemental representation of culture (Scarino, 2017). According to Scarino's theory, cultural interpretation examines observable products or artifacts linked to specific social groups (2017). However, because language learning is based on linguistic and conceptual understanding, Halliday (1999) suggests that culture is the grammar people utilize for information exchange. This is demonstrated when people exchange information. In such contexts, language is used to deliver meaning, usually in a situational context. For example, when a mother talks to a seller to purchase milk for the next day's breakfast. In this situational context, culture is a meaning-making process.

When language is used in a social group, culture represents the social interaction, way of life, attitudes, and behaviours of this specific group (Scarino, 2017). Byrnes (2010) further argues that the use of language itself creates societal norms and behavioural standards. During any given social interaction, culture influences human behaviour to a greater degree than spoken words. Consequently, the way a social group understands their culture determines how they behave in society. Culture can also be a constant permeation of behaviour patterns, and can exist in decontextualized situations. For instance, Japanese people are accustomed to bowing, and the act is not limited to a specific situation. Bowing happens in different situations, and can have a multitude of

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meanings. In general, bowing is a sign of respect, but it can also be an act of formality. For example, some Japanese mall attendants bow as they walk in and out as a form of etiquette and custom, rather than respect. Thus, the understanding of culture stresses 'symbolic competence' (Kramsch, 2006), rather than performative competence.

Early understandings of culture focus on the meaning-making and behaviour interpretation aspects. However, these two perspectives are criticized as insufficient due to the static analysis of the context of the situation and the participant in that context (Scarino, 2017). Globalization has reshaped the view of culture because geographical area, race, and region are not limiting factors to people's interaction (Birukou et al., 2013). For example, the considerable number of immigrants and refugees who move to other countries in search of better opportunities has accelerated human interaction among different cultures (Liton & Madanat, 2013). In addition, communication through information communication technology (ICT) blurs time and space constraints of cultural transmission. This idea is supported by Balkin (1988), who coined the term 'cultural software' to describe how culture represents a group of people sharing similar cultural information. Cultural information is dynamic, and evolves based on the development of human beings. Balkin describes the ways in which cultural information grows in relation to cultural software, and claims that this relationship is fundamental to cultural understanding. Cultural information is more accessible than in the past due to the pervasiveness of Web 2.0, and has inspired a shift in cultural norms (Clark, 2010). As a result, people can discuss culture in online communities, and countries are no longer the primary consideration in defining one's culture. Instead, defining and representing target cultural communities becomes a more relevant problem in relation to information

exchanges (Birukou et al., 2013). Therefore, culture as a term for dynamic change is more complicated than in the past.

**English as Foreign Language (EFL) in China**

It is important to consider the dynamic changing state of culture when discussing English as a foreign language (EFL) in China, and connecting it to Chinese international students' cultural integration problem in Canadian contexts. Whether Chinese students adopt dynamic cultural education as a part of language learning may directly affect their understanding of the vital connection between culture and language learning. Culture is a perpetually changing phenomenon; however, English teaching in China is out of step with the development of culture. Ranta and Meckelborg (2013) collected data from 17 Chinese graduate students in Canada and found that participants tended to passively absorb and accept the English language instead of actively using English to interact with native speakers. In the study, many Chinese international students said that they preferred the Chinese-style teaching strategy and felt anxious when Canadian teachers required them to express their thinking process. Therefore, they preferred to sit in the back of the class and avoid interactions with teachers.

Clark-Gareca and Gui (2019) stated that Chinese English teachers feel that the student-centred teaching mode is challenging, and the traditional teacher-centred teaching approach is more influential in Chinese English classrooms. This may be because the EFL learning system in China is shaped by high-stakes English tests, which causes many teachers to over-emphasize test scores (Clark-Gareca & Gui, 2019). In fact, many Chinese educators believe that examination is the key factor for success and that the English test should contribute to this goal (Lee, 2013). This way of thinking is common

practice for Chinese English teachers because the evaluation system is result-oriented, and when students receive unsatisfactory test scores, their teacher may be penalized in several ways; including reduced bonuses, income, or even termination (Hargreaves, 2020). In this regard, some researchers argue that many Chinese English teachers do not teach English language, but rather they teach language skills and test-taking strategies (You, 2004).

Some researchers argue that English education in China does not adequately evolve with the development of culture. This critique can be further explored through a criticism of the inadequate revision of English textbooks used in China. According to Liu (2011), Chinese English textbooks have experienced five periodical reformations. In the third period, from the early days of the People's Republic of China to the 1970s, the guiding position of political ideologies was emphasized. In that period, Chinese English textbooks contained political information, such as the "Long live Chairman Mao" (Liu, 2011, p.3) chapter in Sichuan Junior Middle School English textbooks in 1970. After the "open-door" policy enacted in 1979, Chinese English textbooks became systematically coherent but still input-oriented while the world English education emphasized output ability.

In contrast, some studies argue that the Chinese English teaching reforms have successfully evolved to meet the modern world's education requirements. Chinese Curriculum Standards in 2001 required teachers' roles to change from being authorities in the classroom to co-constructors of knowledge with students (Ministry of Education of China, 2001). Later, Wang et al. (2014) put forward the output-oriented English reform in China, which emphasized achieving the communicative input and output of English

learning. Their theory has become the current model for today's EFL teaching. Driven by this new teaching goal, the 2017 edition of English textbooks for senior high schools in China drew attention to coping with diverse cultures and world education. The reform of English textbooks emphasizes cultivating Chinese students' multicultural abilities, cultural communication, and spreading Chinese culture (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017). Many Chinese English teachers have since then been transformed from traditional rigid teaching approaches to interactive teaching approaches. Additionally, more information and communication technology has been applied in Chinese English classrooms, creating a more transformative English environment.

Although there are some indications that Chinese English teachers are more transformative than in the past, the exam-oriented background remains the primary influence on the implementation of English education in China. The teach-to-the-test approach restricts the information that teachers deliver to students. According to Krashen's input theory, the 1 in the 'i+1' model can refer to the input information from teachers which may influence how students structure their language learning and understanding system, because students can reach the next level with the help of input information. Similarly, Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) theory indicates that individuals can solve potential problems that may exceed their abilities through the guidance of more capable peers and adults. Therefore, the external input information can significantly influence language learners' learning outcomes. Theoretically, to achieve English language proficiency, students should have the ability to read, write and communicate in English. Unfortunately, the exam-oriented English

learning approach limits Chinese English teachers to focusing only on improving

students' reading and writing abilities, because these two parts are the main components

of Chinese English tests. However, communication ability is mostly ignored as it has less

influence on final test scores. Consequently, to meet the requirements of English tests, the

input information that Chinese teachers give to students may be tedious and focus on one-

sided language abilities. This purposeful teaching mode in China is examined by Harklau

(2011), who found that since English composition can largely determine English test

scores, it is extremely important in Chinese English classes. These findings may expose

that input information which Chinese students receive from teachers is linguistically

based instead of culturally based.

**English as Second Language (ESL)/ English language learning (ELL) in Canada**

The difference between EFL and ESL/ELL lies in the interpretation of the target

language. For example, English is a foreign language in China because English is neither

the official language or the local dialect. Although English is increasingly important in

today's Chinese classrooms, it is not featured on the official or frequent language use list

of China. In contrast to EFL learning, ESL is a language that children learn besides the

one they use at home (Chan & Cheuk, 2020). Because English is an official language in

Canada, some non-native English speakers who are learning English while living in an

English-speaking part of Canada must learn English as a second language to efficiently

use English on a daily basis. In some multicultural countries such as Canada, ELLs better

interpret the language learning program because English may be the third or the fourth

language of international students, and ELL education requires more immersive teaching

strategies, such as teaching English through English literature (Courcy, 2002). In fact, the

major goal of ESL/ELL is to "prepare students for learning in English across diverse disciplines, the interrelationship between language and culture has been backgrounded in order to focus on subject matter learning across the curriculum" (Scarino, 2017, p. 18).

Some literature indicates that historically, ESL/ELL programs in Canada have shown an emphasis on multiculturalism. In the 1970s, the prime minister of Canada, Pierre Trudeau, put forward the multiculturalism view and called for the development of multi-ethnic cultures, and to help new immigrants master the official language (Derwing, 2017). During the 1980s, multiliteracies theory responded to the increasingly diverse cultural representations in classrooms throughout the world that resulted from globalization. This theory has important implications in Canada, which adopted multiculturalism as a policy. Multiliteracies encourage educators to emphasize the value of learners' identities (Boyd & Brock, 2015) and understand that ESL/ELL teaching should not rely exclusively on students' grades (Herrera & Murry, 2016). This means replacing high-stake tests with multi-assessment modes that include low-stake assessments and mid-stake formative assessments. ESL/ELL learning in Canada tends to be more flexible and student-centred; teachers often use multimodal approaches to guide the language learning process and scaffold learners' understanding of new knowledge by connecting it with their prior knowledge (August et al., 2008). This is what Cope and Kalantzis (2009) refer to as experiencing the new through the known. Cicolini et al. (2015) further develop this idea, noting that prior background experiences can extend students' awareness to familiar situations in the future. For example, the total physical response (TPR) and total physical response storytelling (TPRS) strategies combine textual elaboration with physical movements, which can build new language acquisition

and cultural knowledge of the learners' previous understanding (Herrell & Jordan, 2008).

This strategy may also stimulate learner activeness as it allows students to have more

autonomy in their studies. Thus, teachers can draw on students' various cultural

backgrounds to connect new knowledge and their existing knowledge.

In 1992, the official document to support multiculturalism was enacted: The

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). This document was initially

raised to eliminate the illiteracy of early international labourers,' and promote

immigrants' identity re-establishment in the Canadian context (Derwing, 2017).

Furthermore, because of the massive number of immigrants, the Canadian government

established the ESL program as the core program to stimulate newcomers' cultural

integration and promote Canadian social and economic development (Fleming &

Morgan, 2011). This historical establishment of the ESL program in Canada has led to

the Canadian government renewing and publishing English language learners' education

policies and procedures every year.

While some researchers argue that the central goal of the Canadian ESL/ELL

program is to help immigrants in a diverse setting better master the official language,

there are a few problems with the implementation of this vision. Thomson and Derwing

(2004) argue that although legal issues, gender equality, and respect for diversity are the

leading values in Canadian ESL teaching, almost a quarter of ESL teachers indicated that

they only focus on teaching students English for survival, and they did not teach 'values'

at all. In addition, Byram and Wagner (2018) point out a misconception that many

language teachers may naturally assume that they are teaching culture and cultural

competence synchronously when teaching language; however, the opposite is true

(Risager, 2007). This unfortunate reality may result in sufficient language learning, but insufficient cultural understanding, even if a language student takes the ESL/ELL class in Canada.

Moreover, the ELL program in Canada targets newcomers who arrive from other countries "…in their preschool years or at any point between Kindergarten and Grade 12" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, para. 9). These K-12 newcomers often do not use English at home, but must study English to succeed in schools where English is used for instruction (Lapp & Fisher, 2011). This insight reveals the problem that ELL courses in Canada are primarily addressing the needs of K-12 newcomer students, while official support for international students in college and university may be insufficient.

In addition, native-born students who adopt a primarily Eurocentric mindset naturally believe that newcomers should adapt to their culture, and that they are the "mainstream" in this cultural context (Howe & Xu, 2013). Therefore, when international students meet these native-speaking students, the latter may naturally ignore the cultural differences and interact with international students the way they interact with native speakers. Although the Eurocentric mindset in native students has been decreasing as more efforts have been made to educate pre-service teachers to call attention to this problem, native-speaking students may not have sufficient awareness.

**Cultural Adaptation May Not Equal to Cultural Competence**

The interpretations of cultural competencies were initially categorized into the following: grammatical competence focuses on vocabulary and rules of grammar, sociolinguistic competence stresses conventions of use, discourse competence represents cohesion and coherence of texts, and strategic competence compensates for using

language in limited resources (Canale & Swain, 1980). In 1999, Halliday put forward the notion of "communication competence," framing language learning as a situational context. This newly added interpretation of understanding cultural competence was a relatively accurate version; however, this theory was later criticized because it emphasized context (Bachman, 2007). Other studies interpret cultural competence as interactional competence under the cross-cultural framework (Kramsch, 1986). The awareness of cultural competence in education is reflected in multiculturalism. For example, in 1994, a group of scholars gathered in the small town of New London, New Hampshire, United States, to discuss the future of education in the rapidly changing society. Many problems associated with future teaching and learning were pointed out. The group of scholars noticed that there was more diversity in language and culture than there had been in the past, and that current trends suggest this diversity would only increase. Consequently, the New London group determined that education's primary concern would be the consistency between language learning and diverse culture (Cope & Kalantzis, 2001). Recently, with the rise of multiculturalism, cultural competence in education increasingly requires teachers to value students' diverse cultural backgrounds and life experiences, and integrate these diversities into classroom teaching, especially when teaching ESL/EFL classes (Boyd & Brock, 2015). Thus, generally speaking, cultural competence today focuses on respect, cognition, and the absorption of diverse cultures, as well as learning from different cultures and using them to achieve effective communication and cooperation (ACECQA's National Education Leader, 2014).

However, people with cultural competence may not achieve cultural adaptation to the host culture. Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer (2016) note that in the early stage of

international study, most people are influenced by "cultural shock." International students

still suffer from various adaptive problems, such as unfamiliar academic environments

and new living conditions in an unfamiliar cultural context. This can even inhibit their

daily communications with academic peers and instructors from the host culture.

Adjustment to a different culture requires a gradual adaptation of different elements, such

as beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours (Boruah, 2016). This process includes adapting to

different existing cultures and consists of two dimensions: psychological and socio-

cultural competence (Gezentsvey & Ward, 2008). International students are considered to

have socio-cultural competence because they can complete their academic studies and

interact in their daily life with native speakers from a different cultural background.

However, based on data collected from approximately 12,000 prospective international

students from 175 countries planning to study in Australia, Tomyn (2019) concludes that

mental health concerns are prevalent among international students. He states that

international students score high in the feeling of aloneness, pressure, and anxiety

(Tomyn, 2019). Similarly, the American international and domestic support organization,

Morneau Shepell, and a mental support organization, The Jed Foundation, conducted a

survey in 2020 that found that a quarter of international students in North America seek

mental health support due to stress. These findings reveal that international students are

disproportionately suffering from mental health concerns.

### *Situation in Canada*

When relating this case to a Canadian context, some people may argue that the

situation is much better for international students because Canada is a multicultural

country; thus, in theory, no single culture should take precedence over others (Trudeau,

as cited by Cui & Kelly, 2013). However, in practice this is not true, not only for Chinese international students, but for Chinese Canadians who have been in Canada for generations, and have been consistently perceived as "Other," and considered a "visible minority" or "Asian" (Cui & Kelly, 2013). In this Canadian environment, Chinese international students may still face varying degrees of cultural adaptation problems. This racial bias issue may lead to an unwillingness to adjust to Canadian culture because Chinese international students and immigrants can not build intimate identities to Canada, which will hinder their adapting process (Carmona et al., 2016).

Lewthwaite (1997) points out that cultural adaptation is a learning and recovery process, during which international students are psychologically transitioning from separation to integration. Consequently, how international students' experience a new social environment may influence their reaction to the host culture because personal perceptions may determine what adjustments they must make (Lewthwaite, 1997). For example, many people have blamed China for the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to discrimination against Asian groups, especially people of Chinese origin. Some regional protests were organized to rally against Chinese international students and immigrants, and in a few instances, people took part in racist behaviour targeting people perceived as Asian/Chinese. There is no doubt that these discriminatory behaviours will hinder cultural integration between ethnic groups, and even undermine the spirit of the Canadian multicultural agenda. To combat discrimination, Chinese international students may refuse to accept the new culture even more than before.

**Cultural Integration and Chinese ELLs Learning Preferences**

Archer (1985) defines cultural integration from two perspectives: cultural system integration and socio-cultural integration. The former emphasizes the logical relation between ideas, while the latter focuses on relationships between people. Based on Berry's acculturation model, the degree of acculturation of immigrants into unfamiliar cultures can be divided into four stages: separation, marginalization, assimilation, and integration. Early in the colonial period, immigrants were perceived as immoral and their cultures as inferior. Therefore, immigrants to the United States, such as Asians, were denied education or restricted to segregated schooling (Spring, 2016). In the cultural separation period, immigrants' cultures were segregated from the host culture. The often-used term "Asians" was initially coined to generalize people from Korea, Japan, China, and other countries around that area, ignoring their ethnic differences (Spring, 2016). When the period of imperialism and colonialism was over, the world was not prepared to recognize different cultures' diversity and celebrate cultural equality. In the 1900s, the Canadian press still frequently used the term "others" to indicate people of colour and other outliers from the Canadian community. These groups were perceived as outside the symbolic mainstream Canadian community (Henry & Tator, 2002). Cultural assimilation happened in various places and time frames. For example, during World War II, Japan opened Japanese classes in Chinese colonies to teach Chinese children Japanese language and culture to assimilate Chinese colonial ideology. This education method aimed to achieve cultural assimilation and enforce the host culture. Today, with the awareness of cultural diversity and equality, more people call for cultural integration. However, some researchers argue that although cultural integration is seen as an optimal treatment of diverse cultures, it still holds cultural superiority. Many people believe that integration

means people from other cultures should accept and integrate into the host culture. In this regard, recent research has put forward the notion of reciprocal learning in which diverse cultures should learn from each other (Howe & Xu, 2013).

Another interpretation of Berry's acculturation model points out that the four levels of cultural status depend on the immigrants' attitudes towards the absorption of different cultures, and the degree to which they keep their original cultures. If immigrants have respectively high senses of their native cultures and low absorption of the new culture, they are regarded as separate. This reality is evident in elderly Chinese immigrants who live in China-town and do not necessarily speak the host language; instead, they separate themselves from the host culture. On the contrary, relatively high levels of absorbing the host culture and low levels of keeping the native culture or abandoning the native culture is seen as an assimilation process. Feng (2007) argues that Chinese-English bilingual education has some benefit-oriented problems, and assimilates the non-dominant language because people share more similarities under globalization. The worldwide spread of media has disseminated global values to every corner of the world (Esser & Pfetsch, 2013).

Moreover, globalization has established English as the dominant international language, which perpetuates the trend of learning the English language and Western cultural values. However, this cultural dissemination trend has caused non-dominant local cultures to disappear (Esser & Pfetsch, 2013), and Chinese identities gradually being lost (Zheng, 2014).

The worst cultural integration values both native cultures and host cultures at a low level. People in this situation are marginalizing themselves from both cultures. In

contrast, the ideal cultural integration keeps both a high level of the host cultures and native cultures, in which people from one culture have a clear and correct understanding of other attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour, and are accepted as a part of the host culture (Chivacongelado, 2009).

International students are often considered to have successful integration with the host culture as many of them perform well academically; however, many studies suggest international students unsatisfactorily integrate into the host culture. Sherry et al. (2010) maintain that international students are a vulnerable group. They experience many integrative problems such as language barriers, financial problems, and lack of understanding at the host schools. This finding overlaps with Zhang and Zhou (2010) and Gebhard's (2012) statements that some essential influential factors, such as academics, social interaction, and understanding of local culture, are significant in exploring international students' integration process. Chinese students' lack of English proficiency will hinder the effective discussion in classes and communication in daily interaction (Henze & Zhu, 2012). However, even among Chinese students who are fluent in English, previous educational background diversity still causes various adjustment problems, such as Chinese students not being able to adjust to the learner-centred teaching approach in Canada (Zhang & Zhou, 2010). Research shows that international students with high social supports can reduce acculturative stress (Eustace, 2010). These social supports can include making friends with native speakers. Unfortunately, data shows that although more than half of Chinese students have native speakers as friends, only a small percentage spend time with native speakers in their spare time (Zhang & Zhou, 2010). This also supports Henze and Zhu's (2012) finding that Chinese international students

tend to be closer to people who share the same ethnic identity. This shows that many Chinese students have close communication with local students on campus, but not enough communication in daily life. In this regard, the integration process of Chinese students is still problematic.

*Chinese ELLs Learning Preferences*

Liu (2011) uses her personal experience as a Chinese graduate student in Canada to exemplify that Chinese international students may be unsatisfactory in cultural integration due to the natural conflicts between their native cultural values and the host cultural values. Liu (2011) believes that Chinese students are immersed in the traditional Confucian values of modesty and implicitness, which produces an introverted culture. This cultural difference results in less participation in social activities, and less communication with native speakers. Many Chinese students show a higher motivation for observing rather than interacting in language learning (Liu, 2011). Chinese English learners devote an average of six hours to reading and writing while only spending 46 minutes in oral interaction, within which 29 minutes are used for academic discussion and only around 10 minutes are for chatting with friends in English (Ranta & Meckelborg, 2013). Chinese students may achieve success in the Chinese learning context because this learning strategy prepares them with test-taking skills; however, this learning strategy may fail to help them achieve English learning by interacting with native speakers in a Western cultural context (Gao, 2006). Liu (2011) describes a loss of achievement and comfort in Canada, although she was regarded as a successful English learner in China.

In conclusion, Berry's acculturation model introduced the different cultural integration degrees, and maintained that the ideal cultural integration is the preservation of both native and host cultures. However, the Chinese ELLs language learning preference may leave a gap between passive cultural absorption and active cultural integration. Some studies suggest that the relatively passive Chinese language learning style hinders Chinese international students' cultural integration because they may lack effective communication with native speakers, while others point out that there are other factors that influence the integration process. All findings reveal the importance of sufficient exposure to the native-speaking environment. Therefore, these findings may contribute to a further exploration of Chinese international students' cultural integration problems from different perspectives.

**Language Learning Motivation and Emotional Adaptation to New Culture**

Alizadeh (2016) states that second language learners will be successful with proper motivation. This success can either be interpreted as achieving proficiency in the language, or complete cultural integration through language learning. Depending on different language learning stimulation factors, Oxford and Shearin (1994) categorize students' learning motivations into the instrumental and integrative approaches. Similarly, Mahadi et al. (2012) name these two types of learning motivations as intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Some students may be driven by the instrumental or extrinsic motivation, in which students intend to fulfill the desire formed by external stimulations (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). For example, the student may want to complete the academic study to receive a scholarship. In contrast, some students may naturally prefer the new culture, and may show a high willingness to interact with native speakers or actively

engage in different cultural practices. In this case, researchers define this learning

motivation as integrative, or intrinsic motivation (Mahadi et al., 2012).

Whether students are motivated internally or externally, they will adopt their own

approaches to language learning to achieve their goals. These motivations may also lead

to differences in their cultural integration level with host countries because their goal

setting process is different. Any success depends on the extent to which people want to

achieve their goals (Gilakjani, 2012); if students do not want to achieve complete cultural

integration, they may not focus on establishing effective communication with native

speakers. For example, students driven by instrumental or extrinsic motivation focus

more on completing specific goals such as passing the exam or getting a higher grade.

This group of students may choose not to take part in social activities as they think their

English is sufficient for academic use. Therefore, they may achieve a high academic

score, yet be less effective when interacting with native speakers and the host culture. On

the contrary, integrative or intrinsic motivated students may show a higher interaction

with native speakers, and they may show a high degree in new cultural integration

because they want to be accepted in the host culture and establish interaction with native

speakers; thus, they may actively take part in social activities.

Feng (2010) states that Chinese students are driven by three types of motivation:

instrumental motivation, cultural motivation, and situational motivation. Among these,

Chinese students are mainly driven by instrumental motivation in language learning.

From this perspective, Chinese students learning English focus on the linguistic factor

and put less emphasis on cultural aspects. This context-based or knowledge-based

learning approach may result in the apathy of cultural integration. This is evidenced by

the Feng (2010) examination of Chinese undergraduate students' English learning motivation, which found that most non-English major students show less interest in the target culture. Due to the low motivation for cultural integration, Chinese students use language learning strategies at a medium level (Feng, 2010). However, instrumental motivation can not be interpreted as negative in language learning and cultural integration; students with instrumental motivation may have explicit goals. For example, Chinese students may focus more on dealing with the language barriers when studying and living in Canada. This motivation may not lead to a direct cultural integration with Canada, but it will diminish the inconvenience of living in the host country. Nonetheless, instrumental motivation may lead to low integration into the host culture because socio-cultural integration emphasizes effective and sufficient communication with native speakers (Archer, 1985). In this regard, Chinese students' instrumental motivation may focus mainly on language improvement and academic achievement. Therefore, Chinese students may put less effort into integrating with their host culture.

Distinctive from the theory that Chinese students are primarily driven by instrumental motivation (Feng, 2010), You and Dörnyei (2016) found that although instrumental motivation does have a significant influence on Chinese students' language learning, the determining factor should be the different components in second language learning motivation systems, such as attitudes toward the host culture. Their opinion supports Mills et al.'s (2007) critique that the previous studies only divided students' learning motivation into integrative and instrumental orientations, which may insufficiently consider the learning context and students' self-recognition influence. For example, if international students have negative attitudes towards the host culture, they

may be poorly culturally integrated, whether they are driven by instrumental or integrative motivation.

International students' attitudes towards the host culture can be influenced by many factors. In the trend of globalization, economic development is an essential factor in influencing language learning (Sun, 2013). In one way, positive economic development may stimulate the learning of a language; while on the contrary, the recession may lead to the abandonment of learning a language. For a long time, Western countries' economic prosperity has laid the foundation for the importance of English as the international lingua franca. However, the booming of the Chinese economy boosts China's international influence, and with it, Chinese culture gradually gains attention. Considering this, Chinese students may naturally value their native culture and pay less attention to integrating into other cultures. Moreover, as globalization may also bring some instability and political conflicts among counties, the natural conflicts in cultural diversity may also influence international students' willingness to accept the host culture. For example, due to the recent trade war between the United States and China, Chinese international students encounter a challenging time in the United States. Some Chinese international students choose to leave the United States or separate themselves from Americans.

Chen et al. (2005) put forward the "Chinese Imperative", a unique Chinese-style motivation in which academic achievement is an essential factor in individual success and family welfare. As students' learning motivations are strongly influenced by their environments, such as friends, family, and society (Kormos et al., 2011), these influences further emphasize the importance attached to test scores (You & Dörnyei, 2016). Because

of this, Chinese students may focus more on English language learning instead of language acquisition. In addition, this externally formed motivation may cause submissive learning rather than subjective learning. For example, when asking Chinese high school students why they want to go to college, many of them responded that it will lead to future success in society. However, when asking them why they believe that pursuing a higher degree in college will help them achieve success, they may say, "because my family tells me so." This clearly exposes that Chinese students under the Chinese-style learning motivation system may not clearly understand their real learning motivation. They are motivated by external factors, which may come from their friends, families, and society. Therefore, when they begin a new life in Western countries such as Canada, where the external force may not have such a strong influence on goal setting, attitudes, and behaviour guidance, these Chinese students may encounter a sense of loss (Liu, 2011). Consequently, they may go back to follow their familiar learning strategies, focusing on grammatical knowledge instead of cultural interaction.

In summation, international learners are a shifting group; their motivations continuously transform based on many factors (Schwarzer, 2009). Therefore, it is more reasonable to view motivation as a dynamic changing factor (Allen, 2010). However, Chinese students are educated in a traditional education system. The fact that Chinese society believes achievement is an important indicator of success may cause Chinese students to focus more on instrumental stimulation. Students' self-perceptions are an influential factor in determining Chinese students' integration problems in a Canadian context because these self-perceptions reveal Chinese students' natural willingness to accept and integrate into the host culture. In this regard, language learning motivation can

influence students' cultural integration process, yet the determining factor may be interwoven with other factors.

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

In analyzing the previous findings of international students' language learning and cultural integration problems, it is obvious that language and culture are essential components to learning (Scarino, 2017). For international students learning cultural contexts that differ from their native cultures, the influential factors can vary. From a large-scale perspective, students' diversity in language learning may influence the learning approaches they adopt. To be more specific, this paper reviews related studies to analyze Chinese international students' English learning problems by examining their cultural integration process in Canada. Thus, Chinese social and educational backgrounds should be considered. In addition, students' integration process may be influenced by the way they interpret cultural integration. Some Chinese students may believe that successful integration can be reached through cultural imitation. Moreover, integrating the host culture may be determined by other influential factors, such as learning motivations and psychological willingness, which may also function as influential factors to the integration process.

**Cultural Education in English Language Teaching is still Developing in China**

Comparing the difference between English language teaching approaches in both China and Canada can offer important insights into the English learning problems that Chinese international students experience during the acculturation process. It is clear that early English teaching in China presents a relatively static mode, as shown by the Chinese EFL project. This is because Chinese educational assessment focuses on test

scores, which Clark-Gareca and Gui (2019) label as a high-stakes approach. This teach-to-the-test approach considers Chinese students' academic performance as an important standard to evaluate their abilities and study outcomes; however, cultural evaluation in this assessment is relatively less important. With this background, students may establish a relatively rigid "learned" mode for language learning, that is, passive absorption of knowledge to pass the language tests, rather than actively "acquiring" the cultural context behind the language.

This rigid English teaching mode has influenced Chinese language learners for a long time, and many international students educated under this education pattern have a limited sense of cultural diversity. Consequently, when this group of students come to study and live in English-speaking countries, such as Canada, they may not know how to view and respond to cultural diversity. In addition, the Chinese isolation construction period limited teachers' exposure to the changing globalized world, and EFL teachers who provided instruction before Chinese educational reformation may not have sufficient cultural accumulation to provide instruction on international culture. Cicolini et al. (2015) indicate that prior background knowledge can help students deal with similar situations in the future. However, due to early Chinese EFL teachers' limited understanding of diverse cultures, they could not appropriately establish students' cultural background knowledge to achieve that goal. Therefore, many Chinese English learners who were educated in the early language teaching mode may not be aware of cultural diversity, and may not understand how to interact with native English speakers.

The stereotype of "white" Canadian people is prevalent among some Asian countries. For example, Nelson (2019) describes that during his instruction experience in

Japan, a Japanese young person in his program felt surprised because Nelson is Black, because according to this young man's understanding, all Canadian people are "white." Similarly, before coming to Canada, many Chinese international students, including myself, firmly believed that Canadians are "white," and people of colour come from other countries. This stereotype is born from insufficient cultural education in Chinese English education. Traditional instruction about Western culture in Chinese English classrooms has taught that most Western people are white; however, with the frequent immigrants' flow, people of various backgrounds mixed with each other, and recent generations of Western countries are more diverse. Canada is a typical immigrant country, and people of different ethnicities come together to form the Canadian community. This stereotype that Canadians are white shows that early Chinese EFL learning did not meet the dynamic cultural requirements of the globalized world. In this regard, the Chinese EFL program under that teaching approach failed to provide a sufficient understanding of Western culture, and Chinese students educated under such EFL courses may naturally adopt a limited perspective of culture, which can impede their engagement when studying abroad.

However, the early English teaching mode has changed along with continuous educational reforms in China. Today, Chinese English teaching emphasizes cultivating students' multiculturalism awareness and intercultural competence (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017). More English teachers have taken part in international scholarly communication programs, and new educational reforms discuss the importance of output-oriented English teaching (Wang et al., 2014). Chinese English learners in today's EFL program have more transformative teachers than in the past; these teachers may be more culturally aware and able to cultivate the students' own

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cultural awareness. Moreover, more native English-speaking teachers join in English education in China, which increases the opportunities for students to interact with native speakers and enhances students' understanding of cultural differences through direct dialogues. English teaching programs in China have transferred their linguistic-centred mode to a more diverse teaching mode.

In general, although China has experienced a period of isolation from the world, Chinese EFL reform is still evolving. Thus, many Chinese international students who were educated under the earlier insufficient cultural education may have difficulty adapting to the host culture, while later generations may be more culturally sensitive.

**Chinese English Instruction: Cultural Integration vs. Cultural Reciprocity**

Early points of Berry's acculturation theory showed that cultural interaction includes four stages: separation, marginalization, assimilation, and integration. However, recent perspectives in this field advocate recycling learning, emphasizing round learning, and information exchange between West and East (Howe & Xu, 2013). This new development of the acculturation theory reflects on raising awareness of cultural equality. Students today should respect and learn from other cultures while keeping their own native culture.

However, many Chinese students' understanding of different cultures is still at the stage of integrating into the host culture. With an insufficient understanding of cultural diversity, this kind of cultural integration can be likened to cultural imitation. This phenomenon supports the earlier findings that Chinese English teaching tends to be benefit-oriented and assimilates into the target language (Feng, 2007). In some areas of China, English education still expresses a sense of Eurocentrism, in which American or

British accents are considered perfect oral English. Teachers and parents encourage students to "speak and think like native speaking people." This mindset enhances Chinese students' belief that Western culture is superior, and if they want to achieve English proficiency, they should assimilate to Western culture. Thus, many Chinese international students who come to English-speaking countries, such as Canada, cannot communicate with native speakers because they worry about their "inaccurate" accent. The Chinese English language learning environment creates a natural cognition of cultural inequality, thus hindering effective interaction between Chinese international students and native speakers.

My personal experience provides a first-hand example of this phenomenon. When I first came to Canada, I was confused about how to behave in this new country, and my deep cognition of successful integration suggested that I should act like "white people. I observed and imitated how Canadians interact with each other; however, I felt that I lost a part of my identity after some time. I spoke and behaved like Canadian people, but I still could not think from their perspectives. I could not understand why the post carriers cannot deliver parcels on the weekends and why the malls close earlier on the weekends. Consequently, I spent more time observing and avoided unnecessary interaction with native speakers. This experience resonates with the findings of Liu (2011) and Ranta and Meckelborg (2013) that suggest many Chinese students devote more time to non-interactive activities. Language does not determine individual's cognition and emotion (Kramsch, 2014); it only functions as a communication tool (Bennett, 1998); yet, when connecting language with something else, such as culture, it can change the degree of speakers' cognition (Kramsch, 2014) and improve their understanding of the host culture.

However, the Chinese educational system does cultivate educators' and learners' cultural awareness. In this context, culture may not be successfully linked with language teaching; thus, many Chinese students may have a vague understanding of cultural interaction and simply integrate into the host culture by imitating.

People around the world today share more similarities because of globalization, and the worldwide spread of media has disseminated global values to every corner of the world (Esser & Pfetsch, 2013). Moreover, the increasing number of immigrants and international students exposes the importance of multiliteracies, which encourages educators to emphasize the value of learners' identities (Boyd & Brock, 2015). However, some researchers argue that the global cultural dissemination trend causes local culture to disappear (Esser & Pfetsch, 2013) because globalization has established English as the dominant international language, which perpetuates the trend of learning the English language and Western cultural values. Therefore, Chinese identities are gradually losing their status (Zheng, 2014). In this context, further consideration of cultural diversity and cultural equality leads to the principle of cultural reciprocity, which emphasizes recycling learning between West and East (Howe & Xu, 2013). The boom of the Chinese economy has resulted in many Chinese-specific expressions appearing in international communication. Chinese English today challenges the stereotype that only English expressions coming from Western culture are correct. The English education reforms in China stress the importance of Chinese culture and adaptation of other cultures instead of emphasizing Western culture as the only notion in Chinese English language learning.

In general, Chinese students may be naturally unaware of the development of cultural integration due to early Chinese English education. Therefore, this weakness in

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interpreting culture may potentially influence the ability to differentiate cultural

integration and cultural imitation. Chinese students may pay great attention to their ability

to understand and learn from Canadian culture; however, the inability to balance the host

culture and native culture may hinder their integration process. In addition, since English

education in China is in the stage of improving students' own national cultural awareness,

it will take time for Chinese students to understand the equality between their own

national culture and host culture.

**Students' Learning Motivations and Willingness to Integrate into the Host Culture**

Chinese students are believed to be driven primarily by instrumental motivation

(Feng, 2010); therefore, they may focus more on achieving goals set based on external

stimulations, such as passing an examination or getting a scholarship. These goals tend to

be more purpose-oriented, which may cause them to pay less attention to cultural

integration. This may explain why most Chinese students who study in Canada put more

time and energy into academic reading and writing instead of communicating with native

English speakers (Ranta & Meckelborg, 2013). The rise of Chinese international status

has widened students' horizon of the world and increased their appreciation of global

English (You & Dörnyei, 2016); however, their appreciation of global English comes

from the belief that proficient English can bring more job opportunities in the

international market and improve their global competitiveness. These students are mainly

driven by the desire to pursue a better future in different countries. In this regard, these

Chinese students may focus more on improving their language ability rather than their

cultural understanding. Although this competence can enhance their ability to function

effectively in an unfamiliar cultural environment, and improve their understanding of

diverse cultures, this competence cannot equally be interpreted as cultural integration. For example, they may naturally respond to other English speakers based on their interactions without knowing the native speakers' cultural customs and beliefs.

In addition, the "Chinese Imperative" motivation (Chen et al., 2005) significantly influences Chinese students. Chinese students may not fully understand their learning motivation; therefore, the external forces, such as friends and families' expectations, become their learning motivation. Some may argue that the situation may be improved as the Chinese educational system is reforming based on actual students' needs. However, when I recently discussed this problem with one of my high school cousins, she responded that she still feels pressure because she does not clearly understand why her parents push her to study English. She liked English in the beginning, but later, when her motivation transformed from personal interest to focus solely on achieving a high score in English, she lost interest in the subject. In this case, when students' learning motivation is influenced or stressed by an external force, their learning goals may focus on achieving immediate interests; therefore, little attention will be put into exploring the deep context behind the language. Many Chinese international students struggle to get a high score in language proficiency tests such as IELTS; as these paper tests restrict students' attention to linguistic aspects. Consequently, when Chinese students come to Western countries such as Canada, they may experience a knowledge gap between using English academically and applying English in daily interactions. Some Chinese students may fail to complete this adjustment and cannot successfully adapt to Canadian culture.

*Subjective Willingness and Attitudes*

Exploring Chinese students' cultural integration problems based on their learning motivations may be an insufficient approach because other components take a determining role in the acculturation process (You & Dörnyei, 2016). In some cases, Chinese students obtain English proficiency and have positive motivation in integrating into Canadian culture; yet they may still show separation status in the Canadian context. This separation status is easy to see when observing how students from diverse cultural backgrounds react in a classroom discussion, because these distinct cultural backgrounds may reflect different classroom responses. Take one of my classmates' firsthand experiences as an example. She came to Canada at the same time as me; however, she took another term in English Language Improvement Program (ELIP) at the University of Windsor due to the language barrier. When we met in the winter term, she introduced herself as having one-year working experience as an English teacher in China. Based on her introduction, I assumed she would be fluent in communicating in English; however, to my surprise, when we had a discussion in class, she could not effectively communicate with our classmates. She tried at the beginning to involve herself in the discussion, yet, after several times, she could not make herself understood by the rest of our group. Some of my classmates changed the topic of the conversation and did not respond to her comments. This continued for several classes. One day, staff from a public immigrants' organization came to present their program to help immigrants. She cried and said she felt helpless because although she tried to engage in daily interaction and make friends with others, she could not interact with others effectively; therefore, she avoided contact with others, especially native speakers.

In this case, she shows a positive motivation to integrate into the Canadian culture as she tried many times to make effective interactions; however, language problems restricted her communication with others and made her feel frustrated. Consequently, she chose to isolate herself. This phenomenon is prevalent among international students. It may not be exclusive to Chinese international groups; other groups such as Indian students and Japanese students also reflect various levels of isolation to host cultures.

Students' attitudes towards the host culture or their willingness to integrate into the host culture may be worth further discussing when some students already have positive motivation to learn the target languages and integrate into the host cultures. Although early EFL in China focused on linguistics and grammar and puts little effort into improving Chinese English language learners' cultural awareness, ESL in Canada presents an open and flexible teaching and learning mode. ESL teachers stimulate students' enthusiasm in language learning through multimodal approaches (August et al., 2008) and immerse them in the atmosphere of English culture. The external environment gives students a positive motivation to learn; however, the way students choose to use language subjectively will directly affect the cultural integration process. For example, many Chinese students limit their interactions with native speakers to meaning-making rather than cultural information exchange; therefore, when there is a language communication barrier, they may feel emotionally frustrated or resist the host culture.

Moreover, China is a typical socialist country that is politically different from Canada. Therefore, when there is contradiction or conflict between the two ideologies, Chinese students will naturally choose to support their own culture, which may lead to resistance from people from the host country. The current COVID-19 conflicts, which

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target Asian groups, is illustrative of this situation although the social, cultural and political complexities require another in-depth study for further discussion.

To conclude, the Chinese social environment and educational background may cause language learning to be benefit-oriented. Therefore, students influenced by this instrumental motivation may focus on language rather than cultural understanding. However, China has realized this problem; thus, recent education reforms aim to strengthen student competence and a sense of multiculturalism. The reforms of English textbooks aim to cultivate students' multicultural ability, cultural communication, and accurately disseminate Chinese culture (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017). In this regard, Chinese English teaching is consciously reforming to catch up with global education; however, besides external influences, it is vital to consider Chinese international students' own willingness to integrate into the Canadian culture.

**Conclusion**

There are a considerable number of Chinese international students in Canada. They are expected to successfully adapt to and integrate into Canadian culture because they have demonstrated English proficiency by performing well on standardized English tests. However, their experiences in Canadian contexts inhibits their cultural integration. Liu (2011) reports that Chinese international students' experiences in Canada expose many problems associated with the adaptation and integration processes. This is typical of Chinese international students' experiences in Canadian cultural contexts. The Chinese teach-to-the-test mode has influenced Chinese students, causing Chinese English language learners to 'learn' language instead of 'acquiring' it. In response to this, Chinese

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educational reforms are developing to progress with global education and multiculturalism; however, the process still requires time to see the benefits. Thus, many Chinese international students adopt a relatively passive learning mode.

The understanding of cultural integration can be explored through the perspectives of Chinese international students in Canadian contexts. Chinese students, including myself, believe that successful cultural integration involves completing the integration process by imitating local behaviours and learning to understand the host culture. This approach to cultural integration is a one-sided perspective that frames the host culture as superior to one's heritage culture. This mindset has come to fruition due to early English education in China, which has led to an insufficient understanding of cultural diversity and equality. Meanwhile, English Education in Canada is relatively insufficient in cultivating Chinese international university and college students' English practical ability and cultural competence, which keeps Chinese students' stereotypes of Western culture unchanged, even if they study English in a Canadian context. However, through a detailed review of related literature, this paper provides an insider's analysis of the Chinese international students' cultural integration and English language learning problems in Canada, and demonstrates that as globalization has strengthened the links between different countries, new insights have been developed to further understand cultural equality.

In addition, Canadian educational reforms and institutions can put more effort into cultivating pre-service English teachers' transcultural competence, and enhancing in-service English teachers' multicultural understanding, specifically in terms of scaffolding Chinese international students' adjustment to Canadian context. The new understanding

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of cultural integration suggests that teacher education programs should facilitate

cultivating transformative teacher candidates who have transcultural awareness and

critical perspectives against the educational pedagogy supported by a single culture

(Howe & Xu, 2013). Teacher candidates have broad international horizons to respond to

students' multi-cultural backgrounds (Xu, 2019). Therefore, based on the differences

between Western and Eastern teaching backgrounds, the new concept of cultural

integration emphasizes that Eastern and Western education should coexist harmoniously

and understand each other by enhancing the mutual learning of Eastern and Western

cultures (Xu, 2019).

　　　　Furthermore, many researchers criticize that English language classes in China

tend to overemphasize linguistic and grammatical learning and lack instruction on

cultural sensitivity (Clark-Gareca & Gui, 2019; You, 2004; Feng, 2017). Therefore,

Chinese students may get confused about how to react to diverse cultures when they

become immersed in Western cultural contexts, such as Canada. As a result, they simply

integrate into the host cultures, imitating native-speakers around them. In response to this,

the new education reform in China has raised the awareness of multicultural competence,

and with the implementation of new educational principles, Chinese students will have a

clearer and more correct understanding of culture. Moreover, Canadian education reforms

can strengthen the implementation of multicultural education values and change the

assumption that ESL teachers only teach international students English for survival.

　　　　Lastly, language only functions as a communication tool (Bennett, 1998); while

students' willingness and motivation to integrate into the host countries may be a central

determining factor. Therefore, English education in China should focus on exploring

students' practical needs and help students find their real learning motivation. In addition, both schools in China and in Canada should give more encouragement and support to students, to help them establish a proactive attitude towards solving difficulties.

## Significance of the Study

This paper seeks to help Chinese ESL/EFL learners in Canada by connecting findings from related research and by exploring their international studying experiences, while concurrently analyzing the challenges they meet during the process of cultural integration. Earlier research may not sufficiently answer questions related to some of the students' cultural integration problems because the recent generation is navigating a dynamic world. Thus, this paper seeks to help them understand what they are learning and why they should learn through a literature analysis of the needs and challenges of international students to provide them with some tools for enhancing learning and navigating cultural challenges. This paper may provide useful insight for ESL/EFL teachers as it focuses on identifying the current status of cultural integration in language learning from the students' learning perspective. Thus, the study aims to outline students' cultural integration needs through English language learning, and provide teachers with directions on improving students' cultural competence and adaptability through language teaching. This study can likewise help support university programs that welcome international students. This article, from the perspective of Chinese international students' cultural integration and English language learning problems in Canada, reveals that students with diverse cultural backgrounds who are taught through different education systems require host institutions to provide programs and activities that can help enhance international students' cultural learning and understanding. These programs

can encourage interactions between the Canadian students and the international students, which will help reduce international students' cultural shock and maladjustment to the Canadian society and culture, and to their academic studies. For example, early contact with potential international students before going abroad, such as student mentors, may help them quickly adapt to the local culture, as international students can become familiar with the cultural backgrounds of schools and host countries in advance. Thus, international students can have an early understanding of their future study and living environments, and be psychologically prepared for potential issues.

## Future research

Based on this review of relevant literature, Chinese international students' cultural integration along with their English language learning problems in Canada are worth further studies. Based on the literature review of this important topic, future practical research with participants selected from international students will be of great significance. Future studies can analyze the actual living and learning situations of Chinese students in the host country, and ESL/EFL teachers' perspectives on students' language learning and cultural integration can supplement the data. Moreover, future studies could be conducted on other international student groups in addition to Chinese students in Canada.

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