

5-7-2018

A Study of Chinese International Students' Classroom Participation in an International M.Ed. Program

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**A Study of Chinese International Students' Classroom Participation in an
International M.Ed. Program**

By

Zongyong Yu

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Faculty of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Education
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2018

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**A Study of Chinese International Students' Classroom Participation
in an International M.Ed. Program**

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May 04, 2018

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the classroom participation performance of Chinese international students (CISs) at a Canadian university. Because CISs are coming from an education system that employs a teacher-centered pedagogy, they often struggle to acclimate to the student-centered pedagogy employed in Canadian schools, which is particularly a problem for graduate students. However, there is limited research on the subject. The current study explores how graduate CISs participate in Canadian classrooms, what factors promote and inhibit their participation, and what approaches can help to improve their participation. The researcher recruited eight CISs and two of their instructors. The method used was interviews with open-ended questions as the instrument to collect data. The analysis of the data showed that Chinese international graduate students struggle with eight key factors that shape their classroom participation: language proficiency, working experience, personality or character, part-time job commitments, self-motivation, personal interest, emotional state, and instructor's likeableness. Therefore, it is critical for instructors to distinguish and observe why their students participate less, then adjust due to different situations to improve that participation level. The study found that instructors' preferred methods might include comparative teaching methods, a welcoming classroom climate, and organizing activities to juxtapose with lectures. Alternately, students should be self-motivated and academically extroverted. Both instructors and students can work to improve classroom participation performance of CISs. Finally, the author discusses some limitations of this study and give suggestions for further research. Quantitative methodologies, such as questionnaire, survey and observation, should also be utilized in future research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. George Zhou, my supervisor from Faculty of Education. Without his continuous instructions, prompt feedback, and thorough care, I would not have completed my study smoothly. I would also like to thank my other committee member, Dr. Glenn Rideout, who spent much time on my paper and guided me from many aspects.

In addition, I would like to offer thanks to Sonia Ho, who gave me many good suggestions as my peer reviewer, and Jason Horn, who helped me improve my English writing through his editorial suggestions.

Last but not least, thanks to all student and instructor participants: your participation and support made this research possible.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Alongside the development of globalization in the contemporary world, economic growth is becoming more dependent on creation and innovation, which has arisen from highly qualified educators (Global Affairs Canada [GAC], 2014). Many Canadian institutions and companies benefit from international cooperation, especially in the field of higher education. For example, students and educators from different countries who participate in the classrooms and labour markets of Canada contribute to the promotion of academic performance and employment chances for native Canadians. Moreover, with the collective support of these international talents involved in research and education, Canada can become a world leader in the field of international education and may consequently ensure its own prosperity (GAC, 2014). As a global centre of creation, Canada can provide high-quality educational programs at a reasonable price and, perhaps most importantly, it can do so in the context of a safe and multicultural environment (GAC, 2014). Thus, for many reasons, Canada attracts a significant number of international students from around the world.

In 2015, 353,000 international students were present in Canada at a variety of educational organizations, representing a growth of 8% compared to 2014 and a 92% increase since 2008 (Canadian Bureau for International Education [CBIE], 2016). This growth in international education generated nearly \$8 billion annually from international student expenditures, including tuition and living expenses; this portion of the educational sector has created over 81,000 direct job positions in Canada, and provides \$445 million of revenue to Canada's federal and provincial governments (CBIE, 2016). In addition to the financial benefit of this massive influx of international students, these

individuals contribute extensively to Canadian society through universities and surrounding communities, improving the country's capacity for multiculturalism and its reputation of tolerance and non-discrimination. Indeed, more than 30 cultures can be identified concurrently in Canadian universities (CBIE, 2016). Peterson, Briggs, Dreasher, Horner, and Nelson (1999) state, "Intercultural learning could be a beacon, illuminating a world of cultural differences and a common global humanity, building blocks for a just and peaceful world" (p. 76). Furthermore, international students are often pathways to international business connections, and they can help solve political issues while promoting understanding of global issues through cultural empathy and understanding (Andrade, 2006).

Problem Statement

Approximately 34% of international students in Canada are from China and 58% of these study in post-secondary educational organizations (CBIE, 2016). This may be one reason why many scholars have recently focused their research on the study of Chinese international students. For example, Zhang and Zhou (2010) researched different dimensions of Chinese students in academic programs at Canadian universities, and found that factors such as English language proficiency, previous educational background, communication with others, and understanding of the local culture influence Chinese students' integration into the academic and social environment. Liu (2016) studied the integrated performance of Chinese students in a specialized international stream of Master of Education at a Canadian university. Her research showed that five fundamental and central factors can cause difficulties for Chinese graduate students: English

proficiency, cultural barriers, different thought, new learning system and social adjustment.

While many studies have reported the experiences and challenges Chinese international students encounter on North American campuses, there has been minimal research on exact and concrete classroom participation performance among Chinese students. Indeed, Liu (2016) discussed the significance of classroom participation and analyzed the classroom difference between Chinese and Canadian educational systems. She found that teachers in China were usually the center of the classroom, often leading and controlling students. Typically, these instructors asked their students closed-ended questions with finite and quantifiable answers and, in this context, it was acceptable for the class to laugh at students who gave wrong answers. Alternately, students in Canada were encouraged to participate in the classroom actively, share their personal opinions, and engage in open-ended discussion where students were free to express incomplete or even incorrect thoughts. Likewise, Huang and Klinger (2006) noted that classroom participation problems occurred for Chinese international students because the form of organizing the class in North America differs greatly from that in China. For example, the roles and expectations of teachers and students differed from China, and a lack of critical thinking skills were a typical result of long-term Chinese traditional education since students in that environment were used to obeying parents, teachers, and other authorities without question.

However, Liu (2016) did not focus her study on classroom participation. It did not particularly explore classroom participation performance of Chinese international students, nor the reasons for the nature of their classroom engagement. This thesis

addresses this gap by building on Liu's research. The study focuses on the classroom participation performance of Chinese M. Ed. students at a Canadian university. Class is a key place for students to experience academic learning, and Chinese students are no exception. Whether Chinese students can efficiently participate in and learn from classroom activities is a central issue that requires a deeper understanding to assess how it might contribute to academic performance. Furthermore, most current research refers to undergraduate rather than graduate students. The current study focuses on graduate student performance because examining Chinese graduate students' classroom participation in Canadian universities can provide a more concise analysis of key challenges faced by Chinese students, which can in turn be used to formulate recommendations to address these problems. This will allow administrators and teachers to plan interventions that help students to deal with challenges and help school officials support students more effectively.

Research Questions

This study explores the classroom participation of Chinese graduate students at a Canadian university. It was guided by three key questions:

1. How do Chinese international students participate in class at a Canadian University?
2. What factors may promote or hinder their participation?
3. What strategies may improve their participation?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review encompasses a broad range of perspectives regarding Chinese international students' classroom participation performance. It approaches Chinese students' classroom participation from various aspects, divided into the following sections: low participation; cultural differences; social context; mental and psychological issues; language barriers; learning backgrounds and learning habits; personality and gender perspectives; and instructors' influence. A short paragraph at the end summarizes this chapter.

Low Participation

Chinese international students tend to keep silent in North American classes (Liu, 2002). "The speculation that Chinese students are likely to be silent in classrooms could be plainly erroneous and dangerously misleading if the types of social contexts in which silence regularly occurs and the silence is derived from are not taken into consideration" (Liu, 2002, p. 37). There are many possible explanations for Chinese students' silence, but "it is unclear whether their lack of classroom participation is due to their unwillingness, or inability to speak up in class, or a combination of both" (Liu, 2002, p. 38). Lu and Han (2010) state:

In particular, it has been observed that Chinese graduate students tend to refrain from actively participating in classroom activities, which can puzzle or frustrate instructors ... [and] ... in general, international students tend to experience difficulties in communication skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and

writing, particularly with regard to effectively responding to questions and participating in class activities. (p. 81)

Furthermore, Huang and Brown (2009) noted that, in China, it is shameful for the students when they cannot understand what the teacher is talking about in class. Therefore, it is quite natural for them to keep silent or simply agree, in order to pretend they understand everything (Xiang, 2017).

Chinese international students lack the critical thinking experience found in western classes (Huang & Brown, 2009). Studies have found that Chinese students, in attempting to have good relationships, seldom criticized others, even from a purely academic perspective (Holmes, 2006; Huang & Klinger, 2006). Due to the standard Chinese education most had experienced throughout their lives, Chinese students were unable to provide critical ideas and preferred to simply praise others and their opinions. For example, Grez, Valcke and Roozen (2012) studied the assessment of oral academic presentations and found that peer assessment by Chinese students was typically much higher than teacher assessment. That is, Chinese students usually give higher marks than the presenters should attain.

Oral academic presentations (OAPs), one of the most popular activities in post-secondary classrooms, can reasonably describe the performance of international students. Morita (2000) studied many OAPs; in her primary example, OAPs consisted of presenting an article, usually from a required textbook, and leading a class discussion based on the article. English as a second language affected international students during OAPs, despite their attempts to compensate by rehearsing their presentation, bringing reference documents for themselves, and even writing out other extra notes to overcome

nervousness. For example, “some were conscious of specific areas of linguistic problems ... whereas others were more concerned with their overall lack of fluency and limited ability to elaborate. Another concern was that their English was "too simple" or "childish" and that their OAP might be "not very academic sounding" as a result. (Morita, 2000, p. 298)

Group work is another popular form of class participation activity, and a “mixed group” is a common example. Elliott and Reynold (2014) found that although instructors and students preferred to mix domestic and international students within groups, students would choose group members who shared a similar ethnic background as themselves. As Chinese students said, “When you kept quiet in a group you felt intense stress. ... I became nervous and totally lost confidence in myself. ... especially when someone in the group tends to dominate, I am afraid to speak out” (Elliot & Reynold, 2014, p. 313) and “group work was proved to be even more stressful ... my silence upset my groupmates, for whom I was helpless, the only thing I could do was quietly prepare what was requested – drawing posters, doing the photocopying, doing my part in the role-play, and pretend that nothing happened” (p. 315). Despite these challenges, both Chinese students and their instructors viewed group work as the most efficient classroom activity for developing and sharing ideas. (Kingston & Forland, 2008; Kim, 2006)

Cultural Differences

Although Canada is esteemed as the most multicultural society in the world (Statistics Canada, 2017), international students still experience misconceptions and misunderstandings due to significant cultural gaps. Past studies have documented that culture differences influence Chinese international students’ classroom participation. For

example, Huang and Brown (2009) found that teachers in China were models for their students, not only in terms of knowledge, but also in terms of virtuosity: “As a Chinese saying goes ‘One day’s teacher, a lifetime master,’ which means students should always respect the teacher no matter how long he/she teaches them. Teachers can be very influential in Chinese students’ lives” (p. 645). This is why Chinese students seldom engage with their teachers in classrooms.

Cultural factors are always be worthy of consideration when discussing the ability of Chinese students to adapt to Canadian classes. Lu and Han (2010) and Xiang (2017) found that intercultural adjustment influenced Chinese students’ classroom participation, but these studies did not consider how to ameliorate these challenges in the classroom setting. Zhang and Xu (2007) analyzed Chinese international students with regard to teaching and learning differences between China and Canada from a special cultural perspective and found that three major comparisons could be drawn: “a) learner responsibilities, b) learner engagement during class, and c) learner assessment” (Zhang & Xu, 2007, p. 46). They went on to explain that traditional Chinese cultural requirements for students’ preparation for class, participation in class, and assignments after class were starkly different from those in Canada.

Chinese international students are used to culturally isolating themselves within Chinese classmates and friends. For example, Myles and Cheng (2003) found that Chinese students lived in a shared house with other Chinese students and insulated themselves socially. Consequently, they had few and only minor connections with other students and their cultures. In the short-term, this made them feel better, since they were enjoyed the same, familiar cultural background and customs. However, this inhibited

their overall adaptive abilities to communicate with native speakers in class and other academic workshops. Indeed, Zhang and Zhou (2010) found that Chinese students preferred to stay together with Chinese classmates and ask for help from them whenever necessary. This is why many Chinese students have found it challenging to be accepted by native instructors and classmates (Holmes, 2006).

In order to solve problems related to Chinese international students' cultural adjustment, Guo and Chase (2011) ran a case study of a transnational and intercultural learning space where international students developed "a sense of belonging, increased cross-cultural understanding and raised awareness about global issues" (p. 305). These intercultural perspectives were involved in the design of many Canadian curriculum processes. Guo and Chase (2011) found that in a program designed specifically for Chinese international students, most Chinese students felt mentally and physically comfortable, and that the program helped them to participate better and learn more in the classroom.

Social Context

Living in western society is quite different from living in China, and this can create social problems for Chinese international students. Zhang and Brunton (2007) found that "the influence of sociocultural factors beyond the learning experience itself is vital in facilitating mutually beneficial outcomes for Chinese international students and the international education industry" (p. 124). According to three Chinese student case studies that Liu (2002) explored, social factors influenced Chinese students and kept them silent in class. Lu and Han (2010) identified social change and engagement in local communities as key factors influencing Chinese students' classroom participation.

Family is one key factor that affects Chinese international students' performance. Zhang, Ollila and Harvey (1998) discussed Chinese parents' influence on their children; they found that social differences challenged Chinese students, especially those new to Canada. Students raised in a Chinese background typically received teachings from parents based on Chinese traditional social values, which can differ significantly from what they are told in Canadian schools. For example, Zhang and Brunton (2007) stated "living management issues" (p. 133) led to trouble for Chinese students because they lacked related experiences. In China, their parents helped to solve living issues and ensured their children paid full attention to their study; thus, being forced to deal with such living problems in Canada often affected their mood and subsequently their performance in class (Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Meanwhile, Huang and Rinaldo (2009) found that in many cases, family factors promoted or hindered Chinese students' performance. For example, students who were able to stay together with family members were more likely to feel comfortable and participated more. In contrast, if they were separated from family members for extended periods, homesickness and loneliness sometimes inhibited their engagement while abroad.

Li, Chen and Duanmu (2010) compared Chinese students and non-Chinese students and found that for Chinese students, family was one of the most important factors affecting their achievement, stating that family influenced students' performance: "both models consistently showed that the perceived importance of learning success to family had the most significant effect on students' academic achievement, and this appeared to be an adverse effect" (p. 400). Li et al. (2010) noted that many Chinese students were financially supported by their families, who had demanding expectations

for them to complete the program successfully, and that this placed immense pressure on these Chinese students. Therefore, Li et al. (2010) suggested that one solution would be to relieve this pressure to some extent by having students support themselves while abroad with part-time earnings, lessening their family's leverage on them. As Huang and Rinaldo (2009) described, "in order to survive some Chinese graduate students had to work after school, doing heavy labor and earning only minimum wages" (p. 4). Huang and Klinger (2006) supported this idea that financial difficulties were viewed as one of the most challenging situations, noting that many students were required to find a part-time job, on or off campus, to support themselves. That said, spending too much time on part-time jobs can directly lead to spending less time on studies, which may affect students' preparation for, and participation in, class.

Relationships with domestic students is another key factor that affects Chinese international students' performance. Elliott and Reynold (2014) found that the relationship and familiarity between international and domestic students influenced the effectiveness and efficiency of classroom participation, especially "group work" activities in class. As a result, students in a mixed group that includes both international students and domestic students should be taught separately how to interact with students from the other culture. Otherwise, a "mixed group" might not generate the expected multicultural learning outcomes.

Zhou and Zhang (2014) sampled first year Chinese international students at a Canadian university and found that 92% of participants had native English speakers as friends, and that Chinese students typically asked for assistance from peer friends when required. However, relationships with domestic students were limited to class projects,

and English proficiency was one of the most important factors affecting their relationships (Zhou & Zhang, 2014). Even for “class projects,” Chinese students lacked topics to discuss with one another in depth, due to different social backgrounds and values (Holmes, 2006). According to Yuan (2011), Chinese students thought their chances to socialize with local students were “very limited,” and a lack of spoken English competence was one of the main reasons. Holmes (2006) stated that in Chinese students’ opinions, it was challenging to make friends with domestic students. For example, many students described how, after class, all students just went directly home so there were few chances to socialize with peers, a phenomenon observed by Liu (2016) as well. In addition, acculturation problems presented challenges to Chinese students with regard to forging lasting friendships with Canadians: this exacerbated emotional difficulties, loneliness, and anxiety (Huang & Klinger, 2006). These emotional difficulties were one of the main reasons Chinese students keep silent in class (Liu, 2002).

In order to improve the relationship and familiarity between international students and domestic students, Leask (2009) argued that formal or informal curricula must be designed, its use encouraged and rewarded by universities or related faculties, and that formal curriculum, intercultural learning objectives, activities, and assessments should be included. Moreover, Leask (2009) suggested it is vital to design suitable tasks to promote interaction between domestic and international students. For example, professors or instructors should have practical skills that contribute to leading intercultural classes. In the context of an informal curriculum, it is advisable to employ domestic students as mentors and set up an online peer-mentoring team. Other actions might include building special facilitation groups, providing cross-cultural lunches on campus, and installing

signs in different languages. Understanding how to assess intercultural results is similarly a key factor for ensuring success in an informal curriculum. Leask (2009) concluded that the changing interaction between domestic and international students was related to socio-culture factors and thus required more time and effort.

To solve problems partially related to Chinese international students' classroom performance, Westwood (1990) tried a peer-pairing program. For example, using the problem that some students "may be seen as not capable of coping with the academic demands" (p. 253) in class, Westwood (1990) suggested "an eight-month-long [peer] program that links each individual international student to a matched host peer" (p. 256). Peer duties included interpreting cultural differences, giving the necessary social information, and academic advising, such as class study skills and preparation for writing a paper. Westwood (1990) chose peers from social or human science departments, e.g., education, social work, and counselling science, and concluded that "overall achievement rates are higher and drop-out rates lower for those who participated in this matching program of first-year students with host national students" (Westwood, 1990, p. 251). The "achievement" here referred to final marks, including tests, papers and classroom assessment.

Racial micro-aggressions are another key factor that can create social issues affecting Chinese international students' participation performance. For example, Houshmand, Spanierman and Tafarodi (2014) explored micro-aggressions that Chinese students face at a Canadian university, dividing micro-aggressions into different themes before considering how to cope with them; "excluded and avoided" (p. 381) was one such identified theme in their research. Six Chinese students reported they felt excluded

in many aspects. On one hand, the activities they participated in were often organized by an international students' society and most of the participants were thus international students. On the other hand, when classroom activities involved white peers, domestic students played the dominant roles and ignored most international students because of language barriers or values differences. In Houshmand et al. (2014), Chinese international students dealt with the "excluded and avoided" problem by staying together with students from the same community by, for example, sitting together in class. Since they shared the same origin, they could easily understand each other, and they felt comfortable and relaxed because they typically shared the same base values. Myles and Cheng (2003) found that this coping method was quite popular but noted that it caused other problems by making it even more difficult for the Chinese students to be academically involved in class or socially engaged after school, even after they had stayed in Canada for an extended time.

In addition, discrimination on campus was another concern related to the theme of "excluded and avoided." In comparisons between Chinese and American students, Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) found that Chinese students were at a much higher risk of discrimination than American students. In their study, they found three key influences that affected Chinese students: age, language proficiency, and years of residence. Younger students with lower language proficiency reported more discrimination, while increased years of residence decreased feelings of discrimination. Discrimination affects Chinese international students' engagement and performance, so Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) suggested that universities and administrators should take two steps to help these populations. First, they should establish intervention programs, which can greatly help

Chinese students through the use of brochures, activities, websites and other tools, and can help Chinese students clarify what they should do in class and what they should do when socializing. Second, they should provide multicultural training on how to reduce discrimination to both Chinese and American students. Houshmand et al. (2014) and Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) both found that much more attention should be paid to Chinese students and that early intervention might help newcomers:

Programs to educate faculty, staff, and the campus community could greatly benefit universities. Programs designed to help international students understand and cope with discrimination, homesickness, and the transition to college life would make it clear to the students that the university is concerned with their well-being and wants to minimize their discomfort. (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007, p. 17)

Many researchers have studied how to improve the classroom participation performance of Chinese international students in a social context. For example, Turner (2006) studied Chinese international students by socializing with them so that he heard students' voices through "discussion with the students about any aspect of their lives" (p. 29) and he found that there was not much interaction between Chinese students and their instructors or university administrators. Perspectives also differed immensely with respect to which approaches could facilitate learning, teaching, and management of international students' affairs. Turner (2006) found that during and after these designed listening sessions, he became friends with the Chinese students to some extent. He knew that the Chinese students needed more help to adjust to the western teaching and learning classroom environment and thus concluded that "in reflecting on professional practice,

therefore, the main contribution that the project made ... [is] that it has encouraged [me] to trust students more” (p. 46). This trust led Chinese students to relax and gain the self-confidence to communicate in class or during academic workshops.

Mental and Psychological Issues

As mental health issues are relevant to classroom participation and social integration of international students, Mori (2000) stated it is critical to determine what specific mental health issues appear in and outside of class, why these issues exist, and how to solve them. Every student must deal with normal academic and social pressure, but Chinese international students face more stress because of the social and cultural adjustment they go through. Zheng and Berry (1991) stated that Chinese students experienced poorer psychological health than others and experienced “less desired and actual contact, more contact incongruity, more separation and less assimilation” (p. 451). Mori (2000) identified five difficulties that created special mental pressures for international students: language, different academic requirements, socialization in new communities, financial concerns, and new relationships with western students and instructors. For example, low language proficiency led to students’ lack of self-confidence, which then affected their communication with instructors and classmates in class.

Due to cultural differences, international students often ignore mental health, not daring to ask for help for fear of losing respect, and this usually leads to silence in class and isolation in social contexts (Zheng & Berry, 1991). To address this, universities should contact students in advance to tell them all the information they need to attend class and to clarify where students can go to ask for assistance if they find themselves in

trouble (Liu, 2016). Zheng and Berry (1991) argued that professional officers and consultants, social groups and clubs, and any other mental health-related organizations need to advertise themselves in more positive ways to help Chinese students. For example, Mori (2000) suggested placing mental assistance centers together with other academic and social help centers to avoid embarrassment for international students who visit. Finally, Zhang and Goodson (2011) focused on the psychosocial perspective for proposed methods that can reduce mental health issues. They explored how professional systems and the intercultural factors within them influenced Chinese international students, and found that connections with local students and instructors were correlated with the level of cultural and psychological adjustments students made. Liu (2002) stated that mental problems could lead to classroom silence for Chinese students. Generally speaking, if Chinese students deal with their mental problems successfully, it will benefit not only their classroom performance, but also all academic, social, and cultural engagement.

Motivation is regarded as one of the mental or psychological factors that can influence all international students' class involvement (Liu, 2002). Chirkov, Safdar, Guzman and Playford (2008) investigated the relationship between self-decided motivation and classroom performance among Chinese international students in Canadian universities and found that self-decided motivation was a key factor influencing classroom engagement and educational outcomes. Xiang's (2017) study also demonstrated that self-determined motivation influenced Chinese international students' classroom participation. Chirkov et al. (2008) concluded that two primary predictors interacted with one another to influence Chinese students' participation attitude and

learning outcomes: autonomy in their decision to study abroad, and clear goals when studying abroad.

Language Barriers

The assumption students made before studying abroad regarding how easy it would be to learn English in an English-speaking country was proven incorrect; rather, language barriers existed throughout their time abroad (Zhang and Brunton, 2007). Likewise, English language problems affected academic and social confidence, and sometimes even those with high TOEFL or IELTS scores struggled to become accustomed to academic participation and rapid-paced social communication (Huang & Klinger, 2006). Liu (2002) stated that the linguistic factor, which includes issues such as English proficiency, English accent and dialogue competence, was troublesome for Chinese students. Lu and Han (2010) studied the reasons why Chinese graduate students did not participate in the classroom and identified English level as a factor that hindered Chinese graduate students' classroom participation. However, they also noted that English level had an "impact depending on the 'developmental stage' of the Chinese graduate students in question" (Lu & Han, 2010, p. 12). Upon arrival, English might be the biggest problem for many of these students, but they could catch up with teachers and other domestic students gradually.

Andrade (2006) studied several areas of Chinese students' adjustments, and concluded that their "adjustment challenges are primarily attributable to English language proficiency" and that their "achievement is affected by English proficiency" (p. 131). Andrade (2006) found that Chinese students had more language barriers than expected and attributed their own lack of classroom participation to language weaknesses and to

their own sensitivity about their abilities. Zhang and Zhou (2010) also emphasized how a low proficiency of English limited Chinese students' academic and social involvement. Moreover, Baker (2017) found that if Chinese international students could communicate in English with locals and other international students confidently, they were more likely to feel comfortable during their university studying experiences. For those whose English was not proficient, perceived feelings of available help was a significant factor, as they needed more care to support their academic writing, discussions with local classmates, and engagement in the new classroom environment. Indeed, "the students that feel highly supported and have lower levels of language competence experience the lowest amount of regret" (Baker, 2017, p. 32). This was because the students' felt that they received help when they were in trouble. On the other hand, Myles and Cheng (2003) noted that many Chinese students focused their attention on their oral proficiency of English, especially pronunciation, in order to help domestic students and other international students understand them in class and to avoid potential embarrassment, which was a particular concern for them. Moreover, regarding the relationship between linguistic and emotional factors, Liu (2006) found that anxiety with regard to English proficiency was a concern, and concluded that students in the study felt most anxious when they responded to the teacher or were singled out to speak English in class, while they felt least anxious when working in pairs. Thus, with regard to the "relationship between proficiency and anxiety levels, the more proficient in English the students were, the less anxious they seemed to be" (Liu et al., 2006, p. 314).

Mohan and Lo (1985) analyzed Chinese students' performance using academic writing as an example. They found that many Chinese international students had

difficulties with academic writing in English, including sentence-level problems related to grammar and vocabulary. However, a special characteristic of academic writing was the significance of discourse organization, which regularly disturbed and trapped students, and developing students' abilities in rhetorical organization was usually ignored during English composition teaching in class. Mohan and Lo (1985) provided an alternative perspective: "Another way to look at this point is to reverse cultural roles and imagine a Chinese researcher analyzing the expository essays of English-speaking students writing in Mandarin" (p. 521). Therefore, it is clear that negative transfer from the first language to the second language is not the only reason for Chinese students' difficulties in English writing. Leo (2012) argued that, according to linguistic theories and practices, the build-up of English discourse structure for international students required much more time than expected. His study discussed ensuring students' success in universities from a pedagogical perspective, noting that specific pedagogies in class should be designed according to Chinese students' unique cultural backgrounds and academic and social habitation.

The effectiveness of communication in the diversified-cultural classroom has also been explored and found to correlate with language proficiency. Vita (2000) explored the factors that influenced multicultural communication, focusing on "stereotypes, pronunciation, rate of speech, the use of metaphors, international models of literacy and academic conventions on bibliographic referencing and plagiarism" (p. 2). The effectiveness of communication in the diversified-cultural classroom was defined by Holmes (2006) as intercultural communication competence (ICC). Holmes (2006) selected fifteen Chinese undergraduate students as the target group and five related topics

as the main themes: dialogue engagement, compassion, relationships, problem management, and distinction. For example, some students attained high IELTS or TOEFL scores; however, that did not mean they could deal with academic and social affairs successfully in the new educational environment. ICC is based on linguistic competence, and thus it caused Chinese students trouble. Mohan and Lo (1985) and Leo (2012) both confirmed that a lack of linguistic competence affected Chinese students' efficiency of communication in class.

Additionally, Cheng and Fox (2008) looked for ways that Chinese international students could improve their classroom participation by exploring English-as-a-second language (ESL) teaching and learning, specifically the links between academic success and English language support programs for international students. All the participants were chosen by means of ESL/EAP support programs. They found that completing assigned articles before class, choosing suitable class activities, reading selectively as tutors required, and small group discussions helped students complete academic work on time and with high grades. Also, academic achievements reflected the degree of students' self-motivated engagement. Given that the study did not incorporate random sampling or a focus on EAP students, it does have some limitations and deficiencies. Liu (2016) also suggested that the quality of Chinese international students' language preparation courses needs heavier regulation and that students need to be screened better to ensure students' scores reflect their practical skills with regard to coping with foreign classroom participation. This is consistent with Xiang (2017), who stated that students' English proficiency affected their communication competence in academic courses.

Learning Backgrounds and Learning Habits

Learning background, such as study experiences and countries studied in, is a key factor influencing Chinese students' classroom participation (Liu, 2002). Zhou (2005) and Tatar (2005) add that the educational context in different countries should be considered a significant factor influencing learning results. As familiarity with Canadian education and society increased, Chinese students started to behave differently in the classroom, participating in the classroom more frequently and positively as time passed (Lu & Han, 2010). Generally speaking, different learning backgrounds lead to different learning habits, and poor transfer between different learning habits might lead to poor classroom performance for Chinese students.

Wong (2005) found that the learning habits of Chinese international students were a principal challenge influencing their classroom performance. To address concerns regarding learning habits, Wong (2005) highlighted several approaches. First, Chinese students in the study were eager to change their own traditional learning habits and adjusted to the new one. Second, a better understanding of western learning habits was regarded as a vital step. Third, more practice was needed to provide Chinese students the opportunities to experience and accept new learning habits in class. In general, the students welcomed a student-centered learning style, but evidence showed that it needs to be more accommodating to those not familiar with its parameters. Gu (2009) raised a concern regarding learning habits, noting that they could change gradually over two or more semesters, and that "it is the interaction of these learners with their particular living and studying environments that facilitates change" (p. 48). He suggested that academic

consulting services should be provided to those who could not adjust well on their own (Gu, 2009).

Mathias, Bruce and Newton (2013) investigated the learning habits of Chinese international students and found that the popular thought that Chinese students study by reciting was incorrect, and that the gap between Chinese and western learning methodologies was not as wide as thought. In fact, Chinese students typically used understanding as their main study tool, using memorization only when they could not understand the topic or were under the pressure of examinations. Poor academic achievement, including a lack of classroom participation was related to language proficiency and lack of western educational background, instead of Chinese students' learning habits (Mathias et al., 2013d). Mathias et al. (2013) added to the understanding of Chinese students' struggles by noting that students must regulate learning and manage their own time, both of which are big challenges to Chinese students, although these are also issues for their western peers who are transitioning from local high schools. This is reinforced by Zhang and Brunton (2007), who found that many Chinese international students lacked time management skills, and that this affected their classroom performance to some degree.

Personality and Gender Perspectives

Lu and Han (2010) found that, after a period of adaptation to western classes, personal character was typically the most challenging barrier for Chinese students. Gu (2009) stated individual personalities contributed to vital factors that affected adaptation when Chinese students studied abroad. Gu (2009) also argued that the deepest change was related to students' maturity with regard to human development. Only after Chinese

students surmounted cultural barriers could they have the competence of multicultural awareness, including how they saw themselves and how they were judged by local instructors and classmates. Therefore, the influence of personality type cannot be ignored for Chinese international students' cultural adjustment.

Furthermore, gender, including marriage status, was also an important predictor of the performance of Chinese students, as described by Zhang and Brunton (2007):

Women's motivation to move to study abroad is comprised of more autonomous ... forms of motivation in relations to controlled (introjected + extrinsic) forms of motivation. Male participants ... reported higher preservation goals for studying abroad than their female counterpart. (Chirkov et al., 2008, p. 437)

Although gender influenced participation in class and after school, marriage status made almost no significant differences among international students. However, Xiang (2017) found there were no vital differences between male students and female international students in terms of classroom engagement.

Instructors' Influence

To address concerns surrounding teaching methodology, university administrators and instructors should be aware of approaches and design methods that can effectively help Chinese international students bridge the pedagogical gap (Liu, 2016). Liu (2002) found that methodological factors, such as how to teach and generate participation in class, which refers to concerns such as providing opportunities to speak in class, influenced Chinese students' classroom participation. Xiang (2017) stated that teaching pedagogies largely influenced classroom participation. Therefore, teaching and learning

were closely integrated, necessitating more comprehensive study of classroom participation. In addition, Tatar (2005) found the climate of the classroom played a dominant role in influencing classroom participation. Here, classroom climate meant the atmosphere professors or teachers set up, which helped or hindered international student participation. In other words, teachers influenced whether international students participated in multicultural classrooms.

To improve Chinese international students' classroom involvement and learning outcomes, Li (2003) focused on language instructors' teaching methods at English language schools abroad and found that when students studied in these language schools, their expectations were not matched by the actual teaching and learning experiences they had later in academic classes. Li (2003) went on to observe that differences fell along the lines of teacher qualification, teacher ability, teaching methods, learning content, and academic materials. In addition, the interactive teaching method, which was popular and recommended by most English teachers, was incompatible with Chinese students' learning habits and rarely fulfilled learning objectives (Li, 2003). To help Chinese students improve their real competence in the English language, Li (2003) recommended that teachers at English language schools should grasp three skills and abilities in class: language skills, methodology skills, and multicultural communication skills. Moreover, Yang (2017) found that pedagogical difference was a major obstacle to Chinese students' classroom engagement: before they arrived at host English-speaking universities, few prepared effectively, especially with regard to the western teaching and learning classroom environment. Yang (2017) suggested that the problem extends well beyond educators in the host universities — English language teachers in China should do

something to help students learn more about differences between Chinese and western classes.

Furthermore, Love and Arkoudis (2006) studied Chinese international students' performance from their academic teachers' perspectives. In a qualitative analysis, they considered four teachers and revealed a problem: although the academic teachers knew that these international students had more difficulties at the linguistic level, they were uninterested in teaching language in their academic areas. In addition, teachers seldom worked with language teachers to help students bridge the gap between language and academic subjects. Love and Arkoudis (2006) noted that better cooperation between these types of instructors would translate to better classroom outcomes for these student populations.

Inspecting the gap between Chinese students' actual classroom performance and their instructors' perceived expectations was the focus of Kingston and Forland (2008). They suggested that the notion that Chinese students from the traditional eastern educational system performed worse than domestic students from the modern individual western educational system was simply untrue. Therefore, for instructors' expectations, "there is a move away from viewing international students as problematic and toward a more positive viewpoint in which they can add a fresh perspective" (Kingston & Forland, 2008, p. 216-217). Chinese students seemed "to be active participants in the class" (p. 206) and emphasized "the importance of valuing their personal opinions" (p. 214) with their instructors. Kingston and Forland (2008) concluded that understanding such facts would help university administrators and instructors improve their teaching methods and incorporate new characteristics of international students.

For Chinese international students to improve their classroom participation performance, direct engagement by instructors is essential. Myles and Cheng (2003) studied the relationship between Chinese students and their Canadian instructors and supervisors, concluding that “it has become essential for faculty to make a conscious effort to learn about students’ cultures and cultural differences to become more aware of their own ethnocentric behavior” (p. 252). Professors’ understanding of international students is an indirect but necessary way to help improve their classroom participation. Kingston and Forland (2007) also used the instructor perspective to demonstrate that instructors should know their students and adopt flexible teaching methods to involve students in class. Moreover, Vita (2000) focused on a practical methodology to help solve communication barriers and demonstrated that strong relationships between students and instructors were important for students to interact effectively in the classroom. To facilitate this, Vita (2000) noted that he told his students to call him by his first name. He also encouraged students to ask questions, share their experiences, and help each other. To reduce their tension and nervous feelings, Vita (2000) would divide students into small groups during class discussions and give positive remarks to all students’ answers. However, he was against using the method of grading participation since it places pressure on students. Vita (2000) used the instructor or professor perspective in his research, which is a significant component of classroom participation research.

There has been considerable research in terms of classroom participation studies from unique and academic perspectives. Unfortunately, the lack of a systemic and live focus on classroom participation has made conclusions difficult and identification of relevant factors inefficient. Indeed, most research done to date provides little in the way

of generalizability. In conclusion, the literature provides a general understanding of the classroom participation of Chinese students, but gives no practical guidelines for improvement. Relevant studies focused on many different operational factors that typically have nothing to do with one another. Thus, the current research will study classroom participation from the perspectives of students and their instructors using qualitative research methodologies. This will provide a systematic analysis of Chinese international graduate students' classroom participation performance.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts an ethnographic design, which is a “qualitative research procedure for describing, analyzing and interpreting a culture-sharing group’s shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time” (Creswell, 2013, p. 466). A broad definition of culture is everything that is related to behaviour and belief of human beings. To understand a culture-sharing group more deeply, an ethnographer usually spends a period of time within the group, recording their living, working, or studying experiences, observing or interviewing from a third party’s objective perspective.

This study is a case study, subsidiary of ethnographic designs, that is “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection” (Creswell, 2013, p. 469). First, the case of my study is eight Chinese graduate students from the international cohort of the University of Windsor’s M.Ed. in 2017 fall semester and two of their instructors. Two sets of interview questions were used: one for the students and another for their instructors. I demonstrate and discuss a special issue as it pertains to Chinese international graduate students’ classroom participation performance to help them improve the effectiveness of classroom activities and learning efficiency. Finally, I commit to an in depth understanding of classroom participation performance benefits for students by analyzing both teachers’ and students’ viewpoints.

Participants Recruitment

All 26 Chinese graduate students from the international cohort of M.Ed. in Faculty of Education in fall term 2017 and their eight course instructors acted as the pool of participants. The participants constituted the first eight students and the first two instructors who agreed to participate.

I sent a printed Letter of Intent (LOI), a recruitment letter, and an interview consent letter to the instructors who taught these 26 students, and the instructors delivered them to students. In the script of interview consent, I added “It is my own research and it has nothing to do with the course instructor, so feel free to make your choice: participate or not.” Then I invited participants to contact me with questions and ensured they had read the LOI and interview consent. Each participant signed the consent before the interview started.

For instructor participants, I sent the LOI, recruitment letter, and interview consent through email. Then I invited participants to contact me with questions they might have and ensured they had read the LOI and interview consent. Each participant signed the consent before the interview started.

Data Collection and Analysis

Student interviews took place in the independent group discussion room in the library while instructor interviews were in their own offices. The interview times ranged from 30 to 90 minutes.

During the interview, I asked open-ended questions in English, and participants could stop any time or skip questions if they did not want to answer them. Sometimes I

asked sub-questions to get additional information. Auto recording was used to record the interview content, and field notes were also taken to capture the data that audio recording might miss, such as gestures and expressions.

After having collected all participants' interview data, I started to analyse them. I transcribed all audiotape recordings of students and instructor participants into text documents and typed every word I heard from the tapes. Then, I divided the transcription data into parts separately according to different questions for students and instructors. The eight student participants were renamed by letter, students A-H, and the two instructor participants were marked as instructors A and B. I deleted any information that might lead to participants' identifications. Before coding the data, I read through all the data several times in the sequence of interview questions. Afterwards, I used codes in the participant's actual words to describe his/her main ideas and compared the coding words within eight student and two instructor participants for the same or related interview question to summarise the similarity and difference. Finally, the answers—coding words—to some interview questions were organised together, providing answers to the research questions of my study.

Interview Protocol

The interview questions focus on the classroom participation performance of Chinese international graduate students at a Canadian university. The first group of *Interview Questions* were for students (Appendix A).

- Questions 1 to 5 sought background information of all student participants.
- Questions 6 to 7 sought to compare the differences between Chinese classes and Canadian classes.

- Questions 8 to 10 sought to help understand the factors that help or hinder classroom participation and how to promote better participation.
- Questions 11 to 18 sought to collect information on exact classroom performance related to raising questions, answering questions, and group work performance.
- Question 19 to 20 sought to identify the influences of course instructors.
- Questions 21 to 23 were related to the comparison between the international cohort and the blended cohort.
- The last question was designed to give the participants the chance to comment about the related topics.

The second group of *Interview Questions* were for instructors (Appendix B).

- Questions 1 to 2 sought to compare the differences between Chinese classes and Canadian classes.
- Questions 3 to 4 sought to help understand the factors that help or hinder classroom participation and how to promote better participation.
- Questions 5 to 10 were designed to collect information on exact classroom performance related to raising questions, answering questions, and group work performance.
- Question 11 sought identifies the influences of course instructors.
- Questions 12 to 13 were related to the comparison between the international cohort and the blended cohort.
- The last question was designed to allow the participants to comment about the related topics.

This instrument *Interview Questions* has been widely used in research related to classroom engagement as a reliable and valid research tool.

The Role of the Researcher

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education and I have been working in the educational field in China, including English teaching and learning, for more than 16 years. These experiences were quite helpful to me because I was familiar with the difficulties Chinese students faced in class before they went abroad. My study here focuses on the difficulties Chinese students faced in class after they went abroad. In addition, I finished a course on educational research last semester and I am quite familiar with the qualitative research involved.

CHAPTER 4: INTERVIEW RESULTS

The study is designed to determine the classroom participation performance of Chinese international graduate students from the international cohort of the M.Ed. program in the Faculty of Education at a middle-sized Canadian university. I conducted the case study and used interviews as the study tool to collect data. Data analysis revealed three major categories of responses: background information, academic experiences, and classroom participation.

Background Information

Work Background

I designed the interview questions to ascertain how long each student participant had worked before coming to Canada. Student A said, “Before I came to Canada I had been an English teacher in China for almost 15 years.” Student F said, “I worked part time during university, and after graduation, I came to Canada immediately.” These were the two extreme representatives of the student participants’ working years. All the other students had working experience ranging from half a year to 13 years. Six had less than three years’ working experience and two had more than ten years.

For the question about what kind of jobs they had experienced, all the answers are related to language teaching. Six students worked as English teachers or private tutors teaching English to Chinese students, and two worked as Chinese teachers who worked with students from western countries. Student B was somewhat different: “Besides being a part-time tutor, I did some jobs not relevant to education.” I then asked questions related to what type of educational organizations they worked for: two student

participants answered that they worked in public schools, two worked in private schools, two worked in training schools, and the other two worked part time before or after university graduation. In addition, the students they taught ranged from grade 1 in primary schools to freshmen in universities and colleges.

Education Background

The questions concerning educational background focused on the undergraduate majors of student participants. Five of them majored in English areas such as “English Education”, “Business English”, or “English Literature”. Two majored in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language (TCSL). Student D said, “My undergraduate major is Teaching Chinese as a Second Language, and it's a branch of Chinese Language and Literature subject.” The last student majored in “Primary Education”.

Seven of the majors were related to English, because even for the two TCSL students, English was the officially required language to teach Chinese. Only one student graduated from a major named “Primary Education”. All student participants came from the M.Ed. program in Faculty of Education, so their backgrounds tended to be predictable.

Family Background

My questions about student participants’ family background focused on their parents and were divided into two parts: one for education, and the other for career.

In terms of parents’ education background, Student A stated,

I don't think my parents are literate. You see, my mom doesn't know anything about education and my mom can't read and write. My father had been to school for 12 years and he had the education of high school. However, in his high

school's time, school was very different from nowadays, and he learned nothing at all.

Student C said, “My parents had secondary school diplomas”, while Student H’s parents “graduated from universities”. In fact, from all 7 student participants who provided their parents’ education background, 6 pairs of their parents had high school or lower diplomas, and only one pair had university degrees.

For the relationship between parents’ educational background and their attitude towards their children’s education, different participants had varying experiences and ideas. Student A said, “I do believe parents' education background will influence their children’ education... once parents have higher education degrees, then they seem to ask their children to get higher degrees.” Student C also shared that her father, who had a secondary school diploma, paid attention to her studies when she was a child, so her achievement was always at the top of her class from primary school to high school. Student D’s experience suggests that the desire to encourage higher education is not reserved to those who have higher education themselves: “I think actually my parents' educational background is not very high, but they will emphasize on my education.” Thus, the interview results showed that, regardless of parents’ educational background or even illiteracy, Chinese parents might highlight their children’s education and prefer to invest money and time helping their children get better and higher levels of education.

With regard to parents’ careers, Student B described her parents as ‘normal workers’: “My father is a manager at an agricultural company and my mother is an accountant.” Student D used “working class” and “middle class of the society” to label her parents. Student E’s father was a businessman and her mother was a housewife.

Student F stated that her parents run their own private company. Different parents had different jobs, and the interview did not show that there was any direct relationship between parents' jobs and their attitudes towards their children's education.

Canadian Residence Background

I designed the question "how long have you been in Canada?" to get the exact Canadian residence length of all student participants. The study showed that three of them had been in Canada for six months or less and five of them been in Canada for a year or more. For example, Students G and H had been in Canada for only five months, while Student D had been in Canada for 16 months.

The five student participants who stayed here for more than one year all took part in the English language improvement program (ELIP): four students started ELIP at level three, and one student starting from ELIP level two. Student C said, "I was studying in the ELIP programs: from ELIP two to ELIP three. But between ELIP two and ELIP three, there were more than two months." Student D said, "After I finished the ELIP program, I stayed in Ontario for about half a year and I found part-time jobs and traveled around the country." In fact, most student participants did some part time jobs, and some of them even spent a lot of hours working after school.

Program Motivation

The question of why these students chose the M. Ed. program falls under motivation background. The results suggest that half of the students chose this program on their own, while the other half chose the program based on the recommendations of study-abroad agencies in China.

Students C, D, F, and H made their own choices, while Student C said her undergraduate major was education and she wanted to transfer from teaching to administration, leading her to this particular program in education administration. The other three students' choices were related to their future job hunting. Student H said,

I felt it was not enough to only focus on how to teach, like the teaching methodology or focus on the language itself. I want to know more about education. The branches of education, such as administration or acquisition, ... are beneficial for my future career. Or maybe I think I might open my own business in the future, so I want to know more about it.

Students A, B, E, and G made the decisions due to agencies' suggestions. Student A said, "The agency told me that it's easy for me to apply for this education program because I had the teaching experiences in China." Student G found that, as a student coming from an English major, there were quite a few choices if she wanted to study abroad. She had also worked as a teacher, so she accepted the agency's advice to apply for this program.

From the motivation perspective, students who chose the program by themselves may easily be more motivated than students who only came to Canada due to others' advice. Generally speaking, if one is passionate about something, one is more apt to devote oneself to it, leading to greater achievement rather than the bare minimum. This is exemplified by Student E. When she was asked whether or not she loved education, she replied, "I'm not sure. I gained a lot from teaching, especially ... the relationship between students and me ... that is the lovely part in teaching. But our workload can be very heavy ... we taught courses eight hours a day when the peak time arrived." It is difficult to conclude the exact relationship between one's inner interest and actual learning

outcome, but self-determined motivation may affect the academic performance of Chinese international students to some extent.

Academic Experiences

General Impression

The question “how are you doing in the program?” was designed to obtain an impression of the M.Ed. program and the lived experiences of all student participants. Six students used the following words to describe their experiences in this program: “a lot of challenges”, “sometimes very hard”, “much difficult [*sic*]”, “very stressful”, “didn't find the right way”, and “not used to it”. One student described their experience as “not too bad and not so good” and the last student simply said “good”. This seems to suggest that the M.Ed. program brought challenges to almost all the students, and that many had difficulty dealing with emerging problems within a short time.

Student B said,

I find it's very hard sometimes, especially when I face the due dates. Yeah, it is almost like the national exam to enter university in China for me. I can't sleep well, and I have to read a lot of materials. However, I don't like reading and that's the biggest problem. So most of them is hard for me.

Student C also thought that a lot of reading materials caused her a great deal of trouble because her English was poor, though she spent much more time reading than other students. Some students found that they were always struggling. For example, Student A said, “At the very beginning I did not understand teachers' instructions, and after three months I still worried about my final paper.” Some students used a step-by-step method

to acclimatize to their new environment. Student D, for instance, stated she initially felt very stressed about the program but that she gradually accepted the different teaching and learning environment, attaining acceptable grades on her assignments. An overload of reading materials and critical writing style were mentioned most frequently by all student participants as elements that made the program particularly challenging for them. Student G even said, “the professor didn't tell us the right way to do.” There was an exception to this mentality: Student H shared her opinion from a totally positive comment about the program: “I think it's good. I adjust[ed] myself very quickly to this program because I had such relevant experience before.” She also had international studying experience before, which played a significant role in her ability to catch up in the program so easily. When she was asked about the first time when she studied abroad, however, she expressed the same feelings as other students.

Differences between Canadian and Chinese Classrooms

The result of the interview showed that all students agreed that, in China, teacher-centered pedagogies dominated, while in Canada, student-centered learning methods were widespread. While their meaning was similar, they described this phenomenon with different words or expressions: “learning atmosphere”, “how the professor organizes the class”, and “class climate”.

Four students described in detail what they thought about the teacher-centered and student-centered differences. Student F said Chinese classes “focus more on teacher-center teaching”, where “Students sit down and take notes”, keeping silent most of the time. Thus, there is a lack of engagement compared to Canadian classes, where student-centered learning facilitates group work, presentations, workshops, and brainstorming

sessions with peers. Moreover, Student F stated that professors ask “questions to arise student's attention” and that, where teachers prepare class content in China, the students are expected to prepare class presentations themselves in Canada. Student H added a small detail: for sitting arrangement in Canada, depending on the classroom, students sit in all kinds of patterns, including circles and squares. In China, they only sit in rows and lines.

Student A focused on differences in critical thinking in her response to the question. She said, “In Canada, from presenting to doing homework, people emphasized critical thinking: every time, I was encouraged to criticize the designated articles, their authors, even other students’ presentations in class.” She compared this with her experience in China, where she and her classmates tried to be docile, follow instructors, listen to lectures, and to take notes with no critical thinking. She went as far as to say there was no thinking involved at all. Student B expressed the same idea: in Canada you could doubt teachers, while in China you could only say ‘yes’ to instructors.

Student A and B also talked about the difference in teamwork: in Canada, there was a great deal of teamwork in class and out of class, but in China students usually finished their assignments independently or separately. Student C demonstrated the difference in assessment, stating that “In Canada, there were many assessments: presentations, essays, quizzes, papers, classroom participation marks, projects and so on to compose a final course grade. In China, mostly the final examination would decide a student’s final grade.” Student C elaborated that this was why, in Canada, she was always busy studying while in China she usually studied during the last two weeks at the end of the semester. Student C also explained why teaching and learning methods differed from

the perspective of class size: student-teacher ratio of 30-40:1 in China and 15:1 in Canada in graduate classes. Due to the large number of students, Chinese instructors had to choose the lecture as their key teaching methodology—they simply did not have time for other methodologies in the classroom.

Student E had different experiences compared to her peers in that she graduated from an English department and there were many foreign teachers in her courses. This meant she was quite used to student-centered learning strategies, so there was almost no culture shock for her between her classes in China and Canada. I asked the students which of the two methods they thought was better. Seven student participants preferred the Canadian student-centered learning method, but Student D was reluctant to suggest that the teacher-centered approach was inferior.

There might be some differences between Canadian and Chinese students who grew up in different teaching and learning educational environments. The two Canadian instructors express their thoughts about the differences between teacher-centered and student-centered learning with regard to classroom performance.

When I asked about the differences they have noticed between Chinese and Canadian students, Instructor A said,

I'd say the Canadian students often have an opinion about anything. Even if they're not necessarily that well informed, they can give you an opinion and probably fairly easily. Where the Chinese students, some are more comfortable with communicating their thoughts on an idea than others, and others hope not to be asked.

He also stated that Canadian students were usually more assertive and likewise asserted their presence more willingly and more openly than their Chinese peers. He found students who were a little bit older, with work experience, and possibly some international experience, came closer in their mentalities and performance to domestic students.

Instructor B expressed the same impression as Instructor A, and he thought Chinese students were quieter than Canadian students. Few spoke in class, and he pointed out that Chinese students' English writing was inferior to domestic students because English was not their first language. Instructor B found that another difference was that Chinese students generally had a great deal of respect for authority. He gave an example:

Chinese students are much less likely to contest their grades and to fight with me about their work. If they get a bad grade, it's more likely a Canadian student will come and argue about the grade. Chinese students... can get very bad grade... they'll come to me and say "Oh, what can I do better?"

Preference between International and Blended Classes

This subsection outlines the definitions of international classes and blended classes. An international class in the faculty of education means that most students in one class are from China, with few students of other nationalities. For example, Student C said, "There were 14 Chinese students and one Indian student in one of my classes." Blended classes in the faculty of education typically refer to classes with an equal number of or more (non-Chinese) Canadian students than Chinese students in one class. For example, student B said, "There were seven Chinese students, one Indian student and eight Canadian students in one of my blended classes."

In order to collect data on students' attitudes towards these two kinds of classes participants were asked if they preferred international classes or blended classes. All eight students preferred blended classes as opposed to international class. Student B, G, and H summarized why they preferred blended class: in the blended class, Chinese students and Canadian students could exchange different opinions on different culture and educational systems due to different thinking styles and mindsets. Indeed, these students considered this opportunity one of the important reasons they chose to study abroad in the first place. Student E added that "as long as you have domestic classmates, you have a better English learning atmosphere" because domestic students speak quickly, which puts pressure on the international students and compels them to learn more. Student E paid attention to domestic students "pronunciation, their speed, and their use of grammar", which she felt reflected their different cultures, behaviors, and values.

Student F said she improved her academic performance by learning from Canadian classmates. She explained that giving her presentations in the standard Chinese way only allowed her to attain marks as high as 75%. Once she listened to Canadian classmates' presentations and gradually understood how to do the presentation in a Canadian way, she was able to obtain much higher grades, earning as much as 96%.

Students' attitudes about international or blended classes varied somewhat. Student A said that she "preferred the blended class because it was how Canadians conducted learning." However, she also noted that when she faced difficulties, she preferred the international classes because communication was easier, teamwork was more efficient, and learning efficacy increased.

When asked whether they perform differently in the international class and the blended class, only half of the participants attended or taught both international and blended classes: students A, B, G, and H, and Instructor A. Thus, only half of the participants answered this question.

Student A said that regardless of the class type, she would try to participate and conform to the 'Canadian way'. She stated that behaving in the Canadian way required one to "participate actively, raise [one's] hands freely, and share in teamwork positively." Alternately, Student B said she performed differently in the international and blended classes, elaborating that when there were only Chinese students she felt confident because they understood each other's culture and she just needed to explain what she was thinking. However, while in blended classes, she did not understand others' cultures, so she was afraid of saying something ridiculous to domestic students. As a result, she usually kept silent.

All the four students agreed that some students always participated actively, and some students always kept silent, regardless as to which class they were in. This was consistent with instructor A's answer when he was asked whether Chinese students performed differently in these two types of classes. He said,

I don't think so. You would think that maybe if they're all Chinese, they would feel more comfortable. But those that spoke in the mixed, blended class, spoke in the Chinese class, and those that didn't speak, I don't think they spoke in either class, because I've had the same students in both.

Classroom Participation

Perception of Classroom Participation

The question “Do you think classroom participation is significant for learning?” was meant to cultivate data that would provide an understanding of participant students’ attitude towards classroom participation. The interview results showed that all eight student participants gave positive answers: they agreed classroom participation was essential to learning.

During the interviews, participants shared their perceptions about various aspects of classroom participation. First of all, student D included working with partners in addition to listening to instructors and student F included sharing ideas after reading materials. Then student G connected answering questions to generating new thoughts. Student H stated that independent thinking could contribute to classroom participation.

Five out of eight students highlighted the importance of class participation. There were many student explanations about why classroom participation was of great significance. Assessment requirement was one of them. Student A said,

There are two reasons. The first one is that teachers here highlight classroom participation: attendance and discussion in classroom usually occupy 20% of the final score. The second reason is that I should participate in the classroom because this is how we learn here. Every time you participate in the activity, you can learn new things.

Student C thought the classroom was a good place to practice and improve their English. Student B added she could discuss topics with “Canadian students in a natural English-speaking environment.”

Status of Classroom Participation

Although all student participants recognized the importance of classroom participation, there were still different answers when they were asked about whether they actively participated in the classroom. Four students responded affirmatively, which led to a follow-up question that explored how active the students were in class participation. Student A said she was well-prepared before she entered the classroom. When teachers raised questions or organized group-work, she took part in every activity and did her best to speak as much as possible. Student F said, “When my classmates are giving presentations, they will give some questions to discuss. Every time, I share my ideas because sharing help[s] me learn from others through dialogue.”

Three students responded to this question with “it depends”. According to them, the first reason was personal interest. Student D declared that if she was interested in the topics that were covered in that class, she might participate in the discussions. The second reason was how students perceive their instructors. Student E said that she enjoyed participating in one of her instructors’ courses and the reason why she loved that teacher’s class was because he created a very welcoming classroom climate to relax students. The third reason was students’ personal experience. Student G stated that if she was experienced, which meant she had related working experiences and she was quite familiar with the discussion topics, and she knew the answers, she was keener to participate.

There was only one student who responded to this question with “no”. She explained that her inactivity was due to the fact that it was difficult for her “to organize

and to express” ideas in English and was therefore afraid of wasting class time. She did not graduate from English department and could not catch up other students.

The results from student participants were correlated to those from instructor participants. With regard to whether Chinese students actively participated in the classroom, Instructor A said,

I think some did, some didn't. I would say a smaller portion did sort of naturally. And it comes out of that experience, age, work, intercommunication, and maybe international experience. So those ones were, I would say, pretty, pretty good, if not very good. Then you have the other ones that are kind of afraid and silent and that they hope they don't get asked publicly to express themselves.

Raising questions. Raising questions may be one of the most popular concrete classroom activities. In response to the question “did you often raise questions in class?”, only Student F responded affirmatively, and she only asked questions “from time to time.” She explained,

I will raise some questions in class. That's why I don't have a lot of questions after class. I think one of the reasons is critical thinking. I didn't have this experience to criticize any materials when I studied in China. Every time our teachers gave some handout of materials for us to summarize... they never, never aroused us to criticize... the articles.

Thus critical thinking was unfamiliar to Student F. However, in Canada, she was allowed to express her “own understanding or ideas”, which is why she was able to “raise questions in class.”

Alternately, though Student A felt comfortable raising questions because the learning atmosphere was quite free, she did not ask her instructors questions directly. Instead, when she had problems, though she could raise her questions or just speak out to help develop a better understanding, she always asks her Canadian classmates rather than the teachers themselves. When the teacher was standing in the center of classroom lecturing, Student A would just look up unfamiliar words from the dictionary or ask her Canadian classmates for clarification if she found she could not keep up with the teacher.

All other six student participants responded negatively. Student C made it clear that she only raised questions when she had to, such as during the required presentation assignment. Student B said she did not want to interrupt the class or be the focus of attention. Student E expressed the same opinion as Student B and also thought it was impolite to interrupt the class with her own questions. Student G explained that she did not want to place her teachers or classmates in an embarrassing position if they could not answer questions she had. When they were asked what to do if they had questions, most said they would ask for help from Chinese and Canadian classmates or pose questions to the instructors after class. Instructor A confirmed students' answers, stating he noticed that the students who did not raise questions during class sometimes came up to him after class to discuss a question they had. While he did not mind this practice, he expressed the opinion to them that "if we are a community of learners, then I can benefit from your thoughts, from your context, from your experience. Your classmates will also benefit if you ask them in class."

There was another reply that may also be representative among Chinese students: student F said that sometimes, students "just let it go". That is to say, if they don't finish

reading a required book, which may happen if they are overwhelmed with reading, and the teachers brings up a subject or theory they do not understand, they will avoid asking questions. Student F noted that this was a way of avoiding embarrassment, or saving 'face', which she said is an important component of Chinese culture.

When asked if Chinese students often raised questions in class, Instructors A and B both gave negative remarks. Instructor A said, that thinking back on the question, it seemed that they seldom raised questions. He echoes the sentiment express by Student F about avoiding embarrassment: "My understanding is that ... nobody wants to look like they don't know something, or they're not informed, or they're less smart than the person beside them." Instructor B found that Chinese students raised less questions, and those they did raise were often simply clarification questions, such as what the professor wanted or expected in assignment. He added that this limited Chinese students' creativity and originality, which was critical for their university studies and their life after graduation.

Response to questions. Students were asked who often responded when instructors posted questions in class, and their responses suggested that Chinese students were more hesitant to respond than others. Student H briefly summarized her observation of this program and her other international studying experiences, concluding that, if divided by countries, domestic (Canadian or British) students would always respond first, other international students after, and Chinese students would always be the last to respond to instructors' questions. This was the general order of response for students in multicultural classroom. Student G added that, even among Chinese students, a few responded quite often, and most responded occasionally or not at all.

Students A, B, E, and F stated that if the class was composed of Canadian students and Chinese students, the Canadian students would usually respond first and more frequently. Alternately, if the class was composed of all Chinese students, most would respond to instructors' questions. Student A and B agreed that students' frequency of response depended on the students' working experiences: if they had working experiences, they would answer more. If they did not understand systems or situations, they would speak less, regardless of nationality. Student B took one of her classes as an example: the article was discussing Chinese education, and during classroom discussion, Canadian students seldom spoke.

Instructor A replied to questions about Chinese students' raising questions by agreeing with the students A, B, E, and F: "If you had 50-50, Canadian and Chinese students, more than likely the hands would go up faster with the Canadian students... the exception to the rule are those what you could call statistically outliers, those individuals who are an exception to the norm in terms of Chinese." Instructor B responded with the same idea about Chinese students' raising questions performance.

For the intention to respond, seven student participants and two instructor participants agreed that Chinese students intended to respond to the questions posed by instructors. Student E said she was trying to respond every time, and as long as she raised her hand, the teacher would let her speak at some point. She also found that she might not get the chance to respond sometimes because of time limitations. Only Student C said she had no intention to respond because she thought she could not express her ideas in English very fluently.

The qualitative data of this study suggests that Chinese students had the intention to respond to questions, though they did not respond quickly or frequently. Instructor B hypothesized that the lack of response might have been due to “nervousness about speaking in a public setting,” given that “English is not... their first language.” He added that there might be a gender issues as well, given that most “would imagine women would be quieter than men, because women were socialized traditionally to be more receptive where men were socialized to be more aggressive.”

Feedback to Classmates. When asked if they often provided feedback to your classmates’ work, all eight student participants and both instructor participants said Chinese students would provide feedback regularly, but they had different opinions about how to provide that feedback, how often to give feedback, and how to assess work for feedback. Student B explained the importance of feedback for classmates by stating that feedback would help them understand their work more deeply through sharing opinions, self-evaluation, and adjustment.

Participants varied in their opinions on this matter. Student D stated that, whether she agreed with her classmates or not, she would always give some feedback, while Student A said she offered her classmates different ideas. Student F said she would just give some praises so as not to make them lose face. This was a trend observed by Instructor A, who reported that Canadian students were generally more willing to address a negative aspect of student performance than Chinese students were. This seemed to be the primary difference between how to provide feedback. For the frequency to provide feedback to peers, four students used “often” and four students and one instructor used

“sometimes”, with the only exception being Instructor B, who reported the use of feedback as being “limited” and “very limited”.

Student E said providing feedback to classmates depended on the class climate: “If the atmosphere is friendly and relaxed, I always do this. For some serious teachers, actually we don't say anything.” In addition, Chinese students were more inclined to provide feedback after class or through emails, which is a factor corroborated by Students A and G.

Instructor A focused on the effectiveness of feedback for classmates. He said that sometimes he was disappointed in both Canadian and Chinese students in terms of evaluating each other because they always evaluated too high. As a result, he thought the great challenge of peers-evaluating-peers was the superstition that “if I evaluate you low, it will come back to haunt me when you evaluate me.” He also admitted that Chinese students also mixed personal relationship with academic comments:

I had one student actually, a Chinese student, surprised that I gave her critical feedback, "Well, make sure that you follow APA in terms of citation and do this and do that," because she knew me. I think she thought I was going to immediately accept it and sign off on it. But if I care about her, I'll spend the time to try and help her make it better, not to sign off on it. If I don't care about her, I'll sign off on it. It's just the reverse.

Instructor B said that written feedback performed better than its oral equivalent. If students were forced to provide written feedback, they were more likely to provide more because they would not be exposed in a public setting.

Group work. Participants were asked how they felt about the group work in class, and the results showed that all eight student participants loved group work. They unanimously thought it was an efficient method to help Chinese students participate more in the classroom. Student C thought group work was quite popular, not only in class, but also out of class, because she saw it everywhere, such as in the library and in the student activity center, where many students went about sharing ideas with others.

They provided clear reasons for recommending group work. Students E and F said group work allowed peers to benefit from different people who had different backgrounds and experiences, which regularly resulted in completely new ideas and mutual learning experiences. Students D and H thought group work was an excellent chance to practice their English because there were just a few students in one group and all of them had many chances to converse and raise their concerns. Student H mentioned that many Chinese students were afraid of speaking in public, so group work could provide them the opportunity to express their feelings or ideas in a small scope without fear.

Student A preferred the way one of her teachers organized the group work. She stated that this particular teacher encouraged Chinese students to work with Canadian students and the teacher would use teaching strategies to blend Chinese students with Canadian students to ensure each team incorporated a mixture of students, thereby breaking up cultural cliques. Student A enthusiastically supported this kind organization for studying and the opportunities it afforded her and other Chinese students to learn from Canadian students. She also stated that this method was the only way she had a reliable chance to work with Canadian students.

Chinese students were used to finishing work or assignments separately, so problems appeared during group work in this sample. Student G said that the cumulative result of group work depended on partners and their attitudes towards cooperation. She stated that one of her group work partners did not want to contribute to the group work and the partner did almost nothing for the project, making group members feel uncomfortable. Student C also said that, during the group work, she devoted much to contribute to the topic and to share her own experiences, while some of her group members mostly chatted about irrelevant topics, sometimes in Chinese. She felt helpless because she could do nothing to change this atmosphere, which made the group work highly inefficient.

With respect to group work, five students reported that they were free to form their own group, while two reported that the instructors would assign groups. Student F used “it depends” to describe this difference:

in some classes, most students were Chinese students, so the instructor just let us go whatever we wanted and organize our own group. In other class Chinese students were blended with Canadian students so the instructor usually appointed groups... in order to [ensure] Canadian and Chinese students [had] chances [to] shar[e] different opinions.

Student A observed the same patterns and thought the instructor should try to mix them into assigned groups, otherwise “Chinese students sit together and Canadian students sit together.” Student E added that Chinese students and Canadian students sit separately in different sections of the classroom, and they seldom rearranged their seats throughout the course.

Student C said the instructor allowed them to form their own groups for different assignments in class: presentations, papers, or group discussions. Student D thought forming the group by themselves would make them feel at ease, as opposed to the instructor assigning the groups. Of course, sometimes the instructor would encourage them to form groups with different students, as was observed by Student G.

Instructor A thought instructors should pay attention to how to assign students into different groups. First, he never said, “you're Chinese, you go with the Canadian student because I know it will be good for you”, because he thought that would be patronizing. Second, he tried to mix personalities. He elaborated: “If I think somebody is very shy, I don't put all shy people in the same group.” Third, he made attempts to bring students out of their comfort zones. For example, “I know those three young women are friends, I don't necessarily just keep them in the same group, because part of the experience is interacting with people that you don't know”. Fourth, he would always use different methods to assign groups to improve the efficiency of group discussion. Finally, he noticed a phenomenon in one of his classes with four Canadian students and 20 Chinese students. Instructor A just assigned groups so there would be a Canadian student in each group. In this context, every group chose the Canadian student as their representative. Instructor A considered this to be problematic, while Instructor B would let students form their own group and did not consider influencing the process as an important factor affecting the effectiveness of group discussion.

With respect to whether the Chinese students had opportunities to work with domestic students, six student participants admitted they had no real chance to work with domestic students because they studied in the international cohort of M. Ed, wherein

most students came from China (with a few from India or Africa). Instructor B stated his classes had rarely had domestic students or had very few—he knew it would be alienating to place one domestic student in a group with 14 internationals. In this context, he encouraged students to interact with him. Instructor A said he would try to create the possibility for Chinese students to work together with domestic students, even when there were few domestic students. He admitted, “things have changed over the last ... eight years. Where before we would have an occasional international student, now we have... international students and... occasional Canadian student.”

The other two students got the chance to work with domestic students regularly because they chose to attend a blended class. Student A said that in one of her classes, all Canadian students had themselves been teachers and they had their own way to encourage Chinese students to participate in the group discussion, just as the course instructor did.

When doing group work with domestic students, Student F participated in a positive way and contributed much to the discussion. She said she shared a lot, even though there was always a cultural difference. Because she was so active, domestic students often wrote down her ideas to help form the final presentation to the class. Two instructor participants expressed the same comments as Student F, in that they thought Chinese students would contribute more when compelled to discuss matters with domestic students. Instructor B reinforced this, suggesting that this happened because “the students themselves are intelligent and thoughtful” and the factors holding them back in classroom discussion are related to timidity, not intellect. He also observed that “Every student has their own motivation and ... could say with surety that every student

is academically committed.” Instructor A added that if the teacher monitored their group discussion from time to time, more Chinese students would contribute whether there were domestic students present or not. Knowing this, he often walked around to observe their discussion and sometimes would join them to encourage participation from all group members.

If they had been given the chance, six students said they would have worked with locals and contributed to the discussion with domestic students. Student B replied that each student had his/her own different experience, cultural background, and unique insight about educational problems, so she considered opinions precious. This meant that, for her, sharing was always the best way to understand each other. Student G stated that every time she would read all the required materials in advance, and she was confident to share her ideas about that topic. Each of these six students expressed a hope and desire to study with domestic students.

Factors that Influence Classroom Participation

According to the interview results, it was difficult to determine one factor as just promotive or just obstructive. Student participants listed eight factors: language proficiency, working experience, self-confidence, mood, interest, classmates, instructors’ teaching methods, and classroom atmosphere. All these eight elements helped or inhibited classroom participation as well.

Language proficiency. Language proficiency could help or hinder classroom participation. For example, student A said that low proficiency in verbal English was the factor preventing her from class participation. On the other hand, Student E said, “Fluent spoken English can help me participate.”

Working experience. Participants' degree of working experience could also help or hinder classroom participation. Student B noted that sometimes she would not participate because she "lacked hands-on experiences related to the issue that was discussed in class".

Self-confidence. Language proficiency and work experience could also shape students' self-confidence, which in turn impacted participation. Student H stated that self-confidence affected students' classroom participation: if they were self-confident, they would participate more in the classroom, and if they were not self-confident, they would keep silent and seldom involve themselves into the class.

Mood. Emotion and mood could help or hinder classroom participation. Student E said, "Sometimes I felt happy and I spoke up more, while sometimes I was in a worse mood and less inclined to participate." In this way, mood often affected participation. Then she added language proficiency affected self-confidence and self-confidence usually shaped her mood.

Interest. Participants also identified interest as an influential factor in classroom participation. Student B said, "if I'm interested in it I will participate more. But if it is not my interest, like a very specific theory, I don't want to participate." Likewise, Student H argued that if the topic was too boring, she might lose the interest and not participate.

Classmates. Classmates could help or hinder classroom participation. For instance, student E thought local classmates or other Chinese classmates would affect her performance in the classroom.

Instructors' teaching methods. In addition, participants reported that an instructor's teaching method could determine the level of classroom participation. If the

instructor was a leader and could give reasonable feedback, and explain any confusion, Student G was more likely to involve herself. Otherwise, she often refused to participate. This was consistent with Instructor A, who suggest that incorporating follow-up questions could improve students' classroom participation.

Sometimes, the most popular teaching methods may lead to negative effects. Many instructors encourage students to raise their hands and answer questions, but Instructor A differed in her opinion:

I actually think asking them to raise their hands... has [the] potential to hinder... because it allows people not to participate. As soon as you ask, "Now where do you think this study took place?" People that put up their hand... No teacher wants to confront somebody who doesn't know, doesn't care, or they might feel awkward answering, because that builds anxiety. The person that puts up their hand and says, "Well it was in a park, a very large park." "Yes, right." So the teacher gets reinforcement from that response, but they're still not dealing with the other students. So I don't ask for hands. I don't ask for hands.

Instructor B used "social modeling" to help Chinese students participate in the classroom; he gave an example:

Sometimes I'll have a Canadian student in the class and, almost inevitably, that student talks... much more than the rest of the class. I give gestures and facial expressions. I'm running a seminar, so when a student talks, I probably smile. I probably get excited and the rest of the students must see that the professor thinks this is a good thing. They may start to imitate either me or the Canadian student in that it's socially acceptable and socially desirable to speak up in class.

Classroom atmosphere. Both classmates and teaching methods shape the classroom atmosphere, which, according to participants, also had an impact on classroom participation. Student G stated, "If I felt there is a relaxing classroom climate and other students are positive in terms of involving themselves, I am far more likely to participate."

Improvement of Classroom Participation

What instructors have done. All eight student participants stated that their instructors encouraged Chinese students to participate in class, and both instructor participants confirmed that they consistently engaged in this practice.

This section entails partial methods that instructors have used according to the interview results of student participants. Instructors applied several approaches: some specifically designed different group work, some instructors appointed presentations as assignments with a specific requirement of interactive activity, some asked questions and follow-up questions to involve students, some organized discussions in class or on the Blackboard website (a cooperative education platform), some gave comments and feedback to students to encourage deeper thinking, and some explained questions in detail and provided examples to help students understand the work. Each of these teaching methods would help Chinese students in their classroom participation. However, Student E shared another example, noting that even though the instructor tried to involve Chinese students, the students seldom responded. She said, “Another professor may not act like this way. She/he asks questions. She/he waits for answer. If you don't want to answer and if you don't raise your hands, no matter what reasons, she/he would just ignore you.”

Instructor A explained what he did to encourage Chinese students' classroom participation:

I think all the things I've said in terms of I walk around, I don't just take students who put up their hand. I expect everybody to contribute to the class, but it's also

my responsibility to build a relationship with those students so they don't mind talking.

He also worked with students with follow-up questions when he asked a question, and he sometimes checked whether students read the required materials, which he considered critical to classroom participation. Instructor B described what she/he did to involve Chinese students' participation in class. He said,

I structure the class in a way that... requires a lot of discussion... There's writing done every single class that students make submissions of short, one-page comments... and there are presentations... I meet my students when they want to meet me... I also intervene in their discussions and presentations with stories and jokes and try to keep it in a conversational format so it's not someone talking, someone listening... I have tried to encourage them to think about their own cultural background...

Both instructors agreed that specific pedagogical methods should be adapted when teaching Chinese students.

What instructors should do. When asked how they felt teachers could improve the participation of Chinese students, participants offered answers that provided insights into their expectations regarding what instructors should do to involve Chinese students in class and increase their classroom participation.

Student A said the instructors should try to assign different students to different groups every time, which would help Chinese students learn to communicate with Canadian students and other international and Chinese students. She also thought that having the same groups or seating arrangements limited Chinese students' socialising

because they lost the chances to communicate with a larger variety of students. Student D suggested classroom participation should be a significant portion of the final evaluation in the class, such as 20% or even 30%. This would ensure students could not ignore the requirement to participate. She said that scoring facilitated Chinese students' involvement. Students E, F, and H said the instructors should choose some materials related to China, some practical cases to clarify theories, and some activities to make the classroom climate fun and relaxed. Student G suggested that instructors should call upon students individually and in a cycle to ensure each student participates. She also added that discussing in pairs, rather than in large groups, would more effectively encourage students to speak out.

Student C admitted it was challenging to involve some Chinese students in classroom participation because of character or personality, and no one could change them in a short time. She continued to state, going forward in the M.Ed. program, such students might slowly adapt and begin performing better in terms of classroom participation.

Instructor A said it was important for non-Chinese professors to understand the different types of behaviour of Chinese students in the class because a wide range of reasons may shape this behaviour. He noted that these reasons might include discomfort in speaking out due to the difference between the teacher-centered pedagogy used in China and the student-centered pedagogy employed in Canada. Likewise, they may have simply not done the work and therefore do not know the answer. In addition, there might be personal reasons related to feeling self-conscious or looking "stupid in front of their

peers.” Thus, he notes, it is critical “that professors don't simplify and say, ‘Oh, well, they're Chinese. They don't have that experience,’ because some students do.”

What students should do. Improving classroom participation was not the only task of instructors, but also the responsibility of Chinese students themselves.

“Personality” and “character” were two words mentioned frequently by almost all students who participated in the study. They thought Chinese students were shy and docile, so they seldom spoke out in class because they had been trained for most of their lives to act this way in a pedagogical environment. Student B shared her suggestion, which could be described as “academically extroverted”. In this scenario, one might start considering what it means to be “academically extroverted”, which refers to students performing in an academic environment in an outgoing and interactive way. The first and most important suggestion was that whether one was extroverted or introverted in real life, Chinese students must adjust themselves to be “academically extroverted” as soon as possible if they are interested in excelling within Canadian education.

Student participants made a lot of suggestions. Student A said, “I think we should encourage ourselves, whether we want to immigrate, find a good job, earn money, or experience foreign culture.” She then added self-determined motivation was essential to finishing the M.Ed. program and making the most of the experience by learning through the program, teachers, and classmates. Student A also said, “I think we'd better focus on our study, not part time jobs, and we should participate actively in the classroom. We have spent energy, time and money to study abroad, so we should pay our attention to the academic requirements. For example, we must read all the required materials before class and bring questions and comments to the classroom discussion.” Student D stated, “It is

very important to improve our English. After I finished the ELIP program, I thought I could catch up the academic courses, but I couldn't in fact. There are so many new words and it really make me in the trouble to read through some textbooks and articles. I think we still need to learn English all the time, otherwise it will bring many difficulties to our study.” Student D mentioned another thing: one must respect others and others' work. For example, when classmates were presenting, one should always listen to them and interact with them despite lack of interest. She thought it was the very basic mutual respect principle expected within Canadian classrooms. Student H shared her opinions, “I think we should share our ideas and experiences, because they will always help others. If the teacher asks a question in class, it is usually related to one's own thought and experiences, not a right-and-wrong question. Therefore, you can just raise your hand to answer the question and don't be afraid of losing face. That is also the way we learn from other students when they answer questions.” Finally, she suggested one should communicate with domestic students directly in class. She then explained: this meant simply sitting at a table and beginning a conversation, even randomly. Most Canadian students are welcoming and ready to converse and make friends, especially with people they know are new to Canada. These suggestions, summarized from these 3 student participants and taken together, may greatly help Chinese international students in Canada by providing much needed advice from individuals who have walked in their shoes.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the classroom participation performance of Chinese international graduate students. I have used the interview results to answer the following three research questions:

1. How do Chinese international students participate in class in a Canadian University?
2. What factors may promote or hinder their participation?
3. What strategies may improve their participation?

This section discusses the data from three correlational themes: classroom participation performance, factors that influence classroom participation, and improving classroom participation.

Chinese International Graduate Students' Classroom Participation

Student participants faced many challenges in this M.Ed. program. Firstly, interview data suggests that the student participants have experienced challenges with respect to completing and comprehending the required articles before class. Hence, failing to develop an accurate understanding of the reading materials can affect the quality of class participation. This was consistent with Kuo and Roysircar (2004), who found that English language reading ability was one of the main challenges for Chinese international students and immigrants. Both student and instructor participants agreed that the next big challenge was Chinese students' lack of critical thinking skills in class. In addition, Chinese students were much quieter than Canadian students, and Li (2002)

found the reason was due to three factors: a lack of “intercultural communication competence” (p.18); a lack of experience presenting their opinions in public; and a reluctance to criticize others and others’ opinions, particularly teachers.

In terms of the concrete classroom activities, there were some performance factors relating to Chinese students. Chinese students seldom raised questions to ask for assistance from instructors, and when they did have problems, they often asked their Canadian and Chinese peers for help or just searched for answers on the internet. Liu (2016) also found this phenomenon in her research, which she attributed to cultural influential factors, such as “not losing face”. Only some Chinese students responded to the instructors’ questions, and when peers were presenting or posing questions, experienced students were more likely to involve themselves and share their own experiences. This was partially consistent with Gu (2009), who reports that personality sometimes affected classroom participation. All Chinese students liked group work and many shared their ideas with little fear or anxiety during group discussion because working with several students made them feel easier than to present to the whole class.

Factors that Influence Classroom Participation

Every Chinese student knew the importance of classroom participation, but not all participated in class actively; the data showed there were many factors that hindered them from involving themselves more. The current study uncovered both promotive and obstructive factors in this regard.

One’s level of work experience was a major factor that could help or hinder classroom participation. Both student and instructor participants’ interview data showed that students with more working experience would participate more and perform better.

In Canadian classes, instructors asked students to share their own ideas based on their experiences, so there was more to share if one worked longer. Even when they learned educational theories, the experienced students would easily correlate academic content with practical contexts, allowing them to quickly develop a thorough understanding of the concept. It appears that researchers seldom studied topics related to Chinese international students' work experience prior to their studying abroad. Even though Kuo and Roysircar (2004) discussed the work experience of Chinese students, they did not conclude that there was a direct relationship between work experience and classroom participation. Therefore, work experience is an influential factor with regard to participation, as demonstrated by previous studies.

Personality is another significant factor that helps or hinders classroom participation. If participants were outgoing in daily life, they would usually be active participants in class. However, if they were shy and did not socialize with others easily, they would often keep silent in class and seldom state their ideas. Chinese students thought it was difficult to adapt one's character quickly enough to excel in such classroom environments. Gu (2009) also found personality was correlated to students' classroom participation, but also found that students could adapt their personalities within one or two semesters of studying abroad.

Language proficiency significantly influences international students' classroom participation. All student participants finished the ELIP program or obtained high scores in IELTS or TOEFL, but when they participated in class at a university in Canada, language, particularly verbal and written English, was still a major problem. For example, they sometimes failed to understand teachers' instructions because of their poor language

proficiency. Chinese students experienced difficulties in this regard to differing degrees, but they reported that they could catch up to Canadian peers. The student who did not graduate from English department admitted her English level was obviously lower than other students, this data indicated that low English proficiency might significantly hinder students' classroom participation. Many researchers have discussed students' language problem and concluded language barriers existed everywhere for most Chinese students (Andrade, 2006; Huang & Klinger, 2006; Liu, 2016; Zhang & Zhou, 2010)

Part time jobs seem to have formed another 'help or hinder' scenario for classroom participation. None of the student participants had to support themselves financially, but most of them worked part time, and many prioritized their part time jobs. Sometimes, this interfered with reading materials required before class. Thus, all instructor participants encouraged Chinese students' prioritizing their academic learning. Myles and Cheng (2003) found another problem was that almost all Chinese students worked in Chinese companies who did not employ local Canadians, which did nothing to help them communicate with local communities or Canadians. This problem is consistent with the findings offered by Zhang and Brunton (2007), who note that Chinese students preferred to live together and socialize with their Chinese classmates.

Self-motivation regularly influences the level of classroom participation in this study. Four students came to this program because of others' suggestions while the other four made their own decisions. The students who made their own decisions had precise study and career plans, and they actively participated in class so as to involve themselves in the Canadian learning atmosphere. Their proactiveness was largely self-motivated by their clear future career goals, rather than out of a sense of obligation or follow-through.

This factor of self-motivation is consistent with Chirkov et al (2008), whose research found a clear relationship between self-motivation and high levels of academic performance.

Students' level of interest certainly helps or hinders classroom participation. In this study, if students were interested in the topics, they usually listened to the lecture carefully, asked questions, or shared their opinions. For example, if the instructors mentioned something about China, most Chinese students would participate through questions and answers. In contrast, if they had no interest, they often became lost and they contributed little to the discussion. All instructor participants would do something to interest Chinese students in class. However, many researchers might not consider their interests.

Instructors can hinder or improve classroom participation by shaping the classroom climate and learning atmosphere. If the instructor created a sympathetic classroom climate, students felt relaxed and comfortable, spurring them to participate in class. Alternatively, if the instructor seemed "strict" or made the class "not interesting as they thought", students were less likely to participate, sometimes remaining silent or becoming lost in the material. In another study, Grayson (2008) compared Chinese students and domestic students with regard to their attitudes to their instructors.

Although class experiences vary little by domestic or international status, overall there are differences in ... domestic and international students who are satisfied with their instructors. Although 78% of domestic student report satisfaction, the figure for international students is only 69%. (p. 219)

Vita (2000) explained how he created a positive classroom climate by letting students use his first name or making jokes with them.

The emotional state of students affects classroom participation as well. Most Chinese students are still quite young, so emotion might be a key factor to influence them in and out of class. For example, if a student just had a dispute with a landlord before class, that student may be less likely to connect with the material and participate during class. Alternately, upon receiving a high score in another course, a student might be motivated to participate in this class. Emotional problems might be regarded as part of the mental health of students, which was consistent with Mori's (2000) study, which states that Chinese students experienced many mental health issues. It is therefore essential for instructors to do warm-up activities at the beginning of the class to facilitate positivity in class. For example, random chatting can help students feel relaxed and focus their attention on what the instructor is talking about.

There are some other factors affecting classroom participation. If students were self-confident, they would participate more. If students did not finish the reading as required, they would participate less. If their classmates were nice, they would participate more. If they had difficulty understanding the questions, they would participate less. If it was a sunny day, they might participate more, and if it was raining, they might participate less. With this in mind, it behooves instructors to distinguish and observe why their students are participating less or more and adjust their classes accordingly.

Improvement of Classroom Participation

As for the importance of classroom learning for Chinese international students, how to improve classroom participation efficiency and involve them in Canadian

educational environments should be the object of greater focus in ongoing research. Different instructors have their own teaching methods and understand Chinese students differently due to their own teaching experiences. Based on the interview results of eight students and two instructors in this case, the following section supplies some suggestions for instructors and Chinese students themselves to promote effectiveness and efficiency of classroom engagement.

Instructors. Instructors may carefully choose the reading materials for accessibility and reduce the quantity of reading, especially in the first semester. All student participants felt overloaded in terms of reading tasks and could not finish them before class. In order to help Chinese students finish required reading before class, instructors might choose textbooks and articles within a reasonable difficulty level for Chinese students. For example, they can contact the ELIP instructors to confirm the real English level of students. In addition, instructors might not give too many chapters or pages, otherwise students cannot finish the reading on time, resulting in them giving up on the reading entirely. This was consistent with Li and Munby (1996), who note that metacognitive strategies could be used to solve reading problems among Chinese students, such as starting from an easy level and improving the difficulty of the reading materials gradually.

Instructors may educate themselves on modern China and Chinese society. Student-centered teaching and learning pedagogy demands instructors inform themselves in order to be effective in a multicultural educational environment and to improve learning outcomes. Kinston and Forland (2008) and Myles and Cheng (2003) state that instructors should be familiar with their students' social and cultural background. The

Chinese educational system is quite different from the Canadian educational system, and Chinese culture is drastically different from Canadian culture, so knowing some things in advance will help Canadian non-Chinese instructors involve Chinese students in class. Of course, instructors may use comparative teaching methods in class. When they are presenting something about Canadian or Western educational events, it would be effective to make comparisons with parallel conditions in China. Chinese students are familiar with Chinese education and other topics related to China, so engaging with Chinese topics is one way to keep them interested and encourage their participation. The comparative teaching methods was also consistent with Grayson (2008). In his study he viewed the comparative methods as an efficient way to understand and solve multicultural problems.

Warm-up activities prior to and at the beginning of class may improve Chinese students' participation. Some Chinese students may have emotional problems, or they might not be able to focus their attention to the class quickly. If instructors design some activities to ease students into the content, it will attract Chinese Students' attention: this can be as simple as encouraging random conversations before class begins. Interview data showed that Instructor A used some warm-up teaching strategies in his class while Instructor B did not. Furthermore, instructors can build a relationship of trust and create a positive class climate, as Vita (2000) did in his own teaching experiences. A positive class climate can relax students, assuaging fear and anxious feelings to make it easier to share opinions without pressure. Chinese students are used to respecting authorities, and they seldom engage in critical comments. This makes the relationship of trust a key factor to influence the frequency of Chinese students' participation.

The instructor may also improve participation among Chinese students by organizing activities in place of lectures. For example, a teaching activity is a useful tool to interest students and make them more involved in class. During the process of these activities, instructors themselves participate at all times to secure the efficiency of activities: they may walk around, give feedback and comments, explain some difficult points, and engage in discussion with different groups and students. In addition, Elliott and Reynolds (2014) recommended blending international students with domestic students into “mixed groups”. When posing questions, instructors should confirm students’ understanding. Many Chinese students fail to understand the teacher’s questions, which inhibits their participation in class discussions. Instructors should repeat the questions, elaborate, or try to explain the questions differently, avoiding slang and technical vocabulary. After students answer some questions, follow-up questions encourage students to think deeply or involve other students’ participation. Another tactic is to call on students directly to participate. Some students regularly raised their hands and spoke often in class, while others kept silent; however, this can result from differences in personalities. If instructors sometimes call students’ names to answer questions, Chinese students are more likely to focus on class content and keep alert. This solution uses their fear of losing face productively—to avoid losing face in public, these students will be careful to keep up with and pay attention in class to succeed when called upon to participate. Of course this practical tactic is inconsistent with most previous studies: almost no studies mentioned it. Finally, instructors might assign students into groups rather than allowing them to choose their own. As described in the interview, in a blended class, Chinese students and Canadian students sit separately and in an

international class, Chinese students usually sit with the same people. Sharing with Canadian classmates and different Chinese classmates is valuable because it provides an opportunity to learn from them. Thus, instructors should assign students to different groups every class to create situations where they must adapt to and communicate with their classmates. Fresh group members may also encourage and motivate them to participate. This is consistent with Kim (2006), who suggests that teachers should purposefully design or intervene in the classroom activities.

Instructors may use PPT presenting and write key words on a blackboard or marker board. Language barriers are still a major problem for all Chinese students: if instructors use PPT as a presenting tool, Chinese students will more easily catch up, because they can read faster than they can listen. Writing down key words will help clarify concepts and indicate terms for Chinese students to focus on in order to keep current with the class discussion. In addition, instructors can work to speak clearly and slowly for more complex vocabulary and expressions, which would help many Chinese students to follow the discussion. However, these kinds of teaching strategies were not discussed thoroughly by researchers.

Students. Students should be “self-motivated.” Their reason for coming to Canada and studying in the M. Ed. program is an important influential factor for Chinese students regarding classroom participation and academic performance, as well as integration into Canadian culture. There are many ways to engage in Canadian society, and participating in class is one of them. One can learn from teachers, Canadian classmates, and other Chinese Classmates. Classes provide avenues of communication and experience of different social and cultural behaviors, which are beneficial whether

one plans to stay or go back to China. Holmes (2006) also emphasized the importance of class activities because that was almost the only time that Chinese students had an opportunity to engage with Canadian students.

Students should work to be “academically extroverted,” which means simply that they should perform actively in class. This has nothing to do with one’s personality in real life. Even if one is timid and seldom communicates with others in daily life, one must engage in classroom participation in order to improve their learning efficiency. Learning from classmates is a vital part of the learning experience in Canada. This is an effective way to solve the personality problems mentioned by student participants.

Students should focus on academic courses and their requirements. Due to the contrast in pedagogical approaches. Canadian classes are very different from Chinese classes. The learning process will lead to the learning outcome directly and every course provides theoretical and practical guidelines that will be useful at some later junction. The best way is to first guarantee enough time to preview the required materials before class, to participate in class, and to complete the assignments after class. This means not prioritizing part-time work, which can significantly interfere with one’s classroom performance. This is consistent with Huang and Klinger’ (2006) research, but financial problem is not the main problem for Chinese students any more nowadays.

Students should be improving their English at all times. English is an additional language for most Chinese students, so language barriers are ever-present, as Andrade (2006) observes. Fortunately, in Canada, there are many chances to practice and improve English language levels if one proactively involves oneself. In addition to shopping, watching TV, going to see films, joining local parties, and involving oneself in the

community, there are also opportunities to engage in volunteer work and the classroom activities, all of which are platforms where Chinese international students can effectively practice and improve their English.

Students should respect others through interactive communication in class by sharing opinions and experiences to contribute to class. Students should communicate with domestic classmates positively. Indeed, the classroom is a vital place for Chinese students to communicate socially and academically.

Conclusion and Implication

Conclusion

Because Chinese international students (CISs) are coming from an education system that employs a teacher-centered pedagogy, they often struggle to acclimate to the student-centered pedagogy employed in Canadian schools, which is particularly a problem for graduate students. This study explores how graduate CISs participate in Canadian classrooms, what factors promote and inhibit their participation, and what approaches can help to improve graduate CIS's participation.

Chinese international graduate students face many challenges in their M.Ed. program, such as their belief that they are overloaded with reading materials and lack of critical thinking in class. Moreover, Chinese students are often much quieter as they are not accustomed to present their opinions in public. They seldom criticize others or argue with teachers, and some students participate a lot while many of them keep silent. Chinese students seldom raised questions and only some responded to the instructors' questions, while all Chinese students liked group work.

Eight key factors shape Chinese students' classroom participation: language proficiency, working experience, personality or character, part-time job commitments, self-motivation, personal interest, emotional state and instructor's likeableness. In addition, there are some other factors, such as self-confidence, and ability to finish the assignments. Therefore, it is critical for instructors to distinguish and observe why their students participate less, then adjust due to different situations to improve that participation level.

This study has several suggestions for instructors and Chinese students to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of classroom engagement at the pedagogical level in the M.Ed. program. Instructors can be careful in their selection of class reading materials, learn more about Chinese culture, use comparative teaching methods, use warm-up activities at the beginning of the class, create a welcoming and social classroom climate, organize activities to juxtapose with lectures, confirm students' understanding, call students' names directly to participate, assign student groups, use PPT presentations, and write key words on a blackboard. For their part, students should be self-motivated and academically extroverted. Students should focus on academic courses and consciously make efforts to improve their English. Both instructors and students can work to improve classroom participation of Chinese students.

Implication for Future Research

As a case study, there are some limitations that can direct the focus of future research. The following questions are still worthy of more attention and study. For example, it is important to determine whether there is a difference between M.A and M.Sc. classroom participation, or whether there is a difference between graduate and

undergraduate classroom participation. This is particularly important as the size of class may affect the efficiency and level of classroom participation, and the teacher might not be able to read a large class as effectively or be able to determine if international students are absorbing the content. It is also important to determine how domestic students can help classroom participation of international students and how the dean and associate dean of the faculty can guide the instructors' teaching process. It is likewise important to determine differences between Chinese students and other international students. These are all related to the classroom participation and engagement.

As for the findings of the current study, there are some new issues worthy of further research, such as the relationship between classroom participation and students' part time jobs, whether the work experience will directly influence classroom participation, the role of personality in students' classroom participation, and the mental health issues caused by social and cultural adjustment.

Though the qualitative methodology of interview offers a number of valuable insights, quantitative methodologies, such as questionnaire and survey, should also be utilized in future research. Observation is another useful tool that can be used to effectively study the classroom participation of international students. Then the size of the sample can also be extended to other faculties and the whole university. In addition, the participants were chosen based on volunteering, they might not represent all possible participants to some degree.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Questions (student)

1. Did you ever work before you came to Canada? If yes, how long?
2. What was your undergraduate major?
3. Could you tell me something about your family, such as your parents' career and education?
4. How long have you been in Canada?
5. Why did you attend the M.Ed. program? (your own decision or parents' decision)
6. How are you doing in the program?
7. What are the differences you have noticed so far between Chinese class and Canadian class? How do you comment these differences?
8. Did you actively participate in class interaction? How? (Why not?)
9. Do you think class participation is significant for your learning? Why or why not?
10. What factors influence (help or hinder) your participation in class?
11. Did you often raise questions in class? Why or why not?
12. Did you often provide feedback to your classmates' work? Why or why not?
13. When the instructor posted a question, who often response?
14. Did you have the intention to response? If yes, did you get chance to response? If not, what was the reason?
15. How do you feel the group work in the course?
16. Did the instructor allow students to form their own group?
17. Did you get chance to work with domestic students?
18. If you had group work with domestic students, did you think you made contribution to the group discussion? Why not why not?
19. Did the instructor encourage you or other Chinese students to participate in class? How?
20. How do you feel teacher should improve the participation of Chinese students?
21. Do you prefer international cohort only class or blended class with domestic students?

22. Did you perform differently in these two different types of classes? Why?
23. In two different class configurations, did you notice any difference in terms of Chinese students' performance?
24. Are there any other comments about classroom participation?

Appendix B

Interview Questions (instructor)

1. What are the differences you have noticed so far between Chinese students and Canadian students? How do you comment these differences?
2. Did Chinese students actively participate in class interaction? Why or why not?
3. What factors influence (help or hinder) their participation in class?
4. Did Chinese students often raise questions in class? Why or why not?
5. Did they actively provide feedback to their classmates' work/presentation in class? Why or why not?
6. When you posted a question, who often response? (Chinese students or domestic students)
7. If Chinese students didn't response, what was the reason?
8. Did you allow students to form their own group? Why or why not?
9. Did Chinese students get chance to work with domestic students?
10. If Chinese students had group work with domestic students, do you think they made contribution to the group discussion? Why not why not?
11. How did you encourage Chinese students to participate in class?
12. Have you taught both international cohort only class and blended class?
13. In two different class configurations, did you notice any difference in terms of Chinese students' performance? If yes, why such difference?
14. Are there any other comments about Chinese students' classroom participation?

Appendix C

Interview Recruitment Letter (student)

University of Windsor

Date:

Dear Students,

We are conducting a study about international students at the University of Windsor. This study focuses on Chinese graduate students' classroom participation performance and solving strategies, and is being conducted as part of my master's thesis through the Department of Education under the supervision of Dr. George Zhou. As you may know, Chinese graduate students go through a lot of challenges when they studying in a new environment. As Chinese graduate students, your opinions will be important to this study. Thus, I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about your experiences. Participation in this study is voluntary, and would involve interviews in an alternate location at a convenient time. There are no known or anticipated risks to your participation in this study. The questions are quite general. You may decline to answer any questions if you feel do not wish to answer. All information you provide will be considered confidential and grouped with responses from other participants. Further, you will not be identified by name in my thesis or any report, publication resulting from this study.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have comments or concerns, please contact me at email: yu14j@uwindsor.ca.

If you are willing to participate in the study, please email me back. Thank you for your assistance with this project.

Sincerely,

Student Investigator

Zongyong Yu

Appendix D

Interview Recruitment Letter (instructor)

University of Windsor

Date:

Dear Instructors,

We are conducting a study about international students at the University of Windsor. This study focuses on Chinese graduate students' classroom participation performance and solving strategies, and is being conducted as part of my master's thesis through the Department of Education under the supervision of Dr. George Zhou. As you may know, Chinese graduate students go through a lot of challenges when they studying in a new environment. As Chinese graduate students' instructors, your opinions will be important to this study. Thus, I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about your teaching experiences.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and would involve interviews in an alternate location at a convenient time. There are no known or anticipated risks to your participation in this study. The questions are quite general. You may decline to answer any questions if you feel do not wish to answer. All information you provide will be considered confidential and grouped with responses from other participants. Further, you will not be identified by name in my thesis or any report, publication resulting from this study.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have comments or concerns, please contact me at email: yu14j@uwindsor.ca.

If you are willing to participate in the study, please email me back. Thank you for your assistance with this project.

Sincerely,

Student Investigator

Zongyong Yu

Appendix E

LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

(student and instructor)

Title of Study: *A Study of Chinese International Students' Classroom Participation in the International M.Ed. Program*

Email: yu14j@uwindsor.ca (Zongyong Yu) & gzhou@uwindsor.ca (George Zhou)

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to understand the classroom participation of Chinese students who study in a Canadian university. The objective of this research is to explore some academic & pedagogical strategies and classroom supporting activities & services to help Chinese international students successfully integrate into the new educational system.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in interviews. Each interview will be guided by open-ended questions, and will take approximately 60 minutes. The interviews will be audio recorded and notes will be taken.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no known potential risks or discomfort in the research. However, there may be potential psychological risks associated with the research. You may feel uncomfortable sharing your past experiences. It may once again remind you unpleasant experience and make you a little nervous. Feel free at any time to skip questions and end the interview, should you not feel comfortable.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There is no direct benefit to participants for your involvement in this study. However, the findings from this study will be informative for the academic and administrative units of the University of Windsor to improve curricula and services for Chinese Graduate students.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

If you attend one complete interview, an Amazon gift-card for \$20 will be issued to you following the interview.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Only researchers will have access to the audio tapes. Audio tapes will be transcribed, double checked, and then destroyed. Study reports will not mention any participant's identifications.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

The interview is voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not before final data reporting. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. You have the right to withdraw up until Dec. 1, 2017. If you choose to withdraw, you may keep the compensation.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

A brief summary will be posted on Faculty Blackboard sites.

The study report will be published on the REB website in spring 2018.

Web address: www.uwindsor.ca/reb

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

The data collected in this study may be used in subsequent studies.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Board, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix F

INTERVIEW CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (STUDENT)

Title of Study: *A Study of Chinese International Students' Classroom Participation in the International M.Ed. Program*

Email: yu14j@uwindsor.ca (Zongyong Yu) & gzhou@uwindsor.ca (George Zhou)

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to understand the classroom participation of Chinese students who study in a Canadian university. The objective of this research is to explore some academic & pedagogical strategies and classroom supporting activities & services to help Chinese international students successfully integrate into the new educational system.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in interviews. Each interview will be guided by open-ended questions, and will take approximately 60 minutes. The interviews will be audio recorded and notes will be taken. It is my own research and it has nothing to do with the course instructor. So feel free to make your choice: participate or not.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no known potential risks or discomfort in the research. However, there may be potential psychological risks associated with the research. You may feel uncomfortable sharing your past experiences. It may once again remind you unpleasant experience and make you a little nervous. Feel free at any time to skip questions and end the interview, should you not feel comfortable.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There is no direct benefit to participants for your involvement in this study. However, the findings from this study will be informative for the academic and administrative units of the University of Windsor to improve curricula and services for Chinese Graduate students.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

If you attend one complete interview, an Amazon gift-card for \$20 will be issued to you following the interview.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Only researchers will have access to the audio tapes. Audio tapes will be transcribed, double checked, and then destroyed. Study reports will not mention any participant's identifications.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

The interview is voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not before final data reporting. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. You have the right to withdraw up until Dec. 1, 2017. If you choose to withdraw, you may keep the compensation.

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SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

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If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Board, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study “*A Study of Chinese International Students’ Classroom Participation in the International M.Ed. Program*” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix G

INTERVIEW CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (INSTRUCTOR)

Title of Study: *A Study of Chinese International Students' Classroom Participation in the International M.Ed. Program*

Email: yu14j@uwindsor.ca (Zongyong Yu) & gzhou@uwindsor.ca (George Zhou)

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to understand the classroom participation of Chinese students who study in a Canadian university. The objective of this research is to explore some academic & pedagogical strategies and classroom supporting activities & services to help Chinese international students successfully integrate into the new educational system.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in interviews. Each interview will be guided by open-ended questions, and will take approximately 60 minutes. The interviews will be audio recorded and notes will be taken.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no known potential risks or discomfort in the research. However, there may be potential psychological risks associated with the research. You may feel uncomfortable sharing your past experiences. It may once again remind you unpleasant experience and make you a little nervous. Feel free at any time to skip questions and end the interview, should you not feel comfortable.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There is no direct benefit to participants for your involvement in this study. However, the findings from this study will be informative for the academic and administrative units of the University of Windsor to improve curricula and services for Chinese Graduate students.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

If you attend one complete interview, an Amazon gift-card for \$20 will be issued to you following the interview.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Only researchers will have access to the audio tapes. Audio tapes will be transcribed, double checked, and then destroyed. Study reports will not mention any participant's identifications.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

The interview is voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not before final data reporting. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. You have the right to withdraw up until Dec. 1, 2017. If you choose to withdraw, you may keep the compensation.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

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I understand the information provided for the study “*A Study of Chinese International Students’ Classroom Participation in the International M.Ed. Program*” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

VITA AUCTORIS

NAME: Zongyong Yu

PLACE OF BIRTH: Shandong, China

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1979

EDUCATION: Tianjin University of Technology 2000 B.A.
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