Applying Effective Teaching Skills to Respond to Chinese Students’ Learning Expectations

By

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Acknowledgements

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Abstract

In 2012, Canada welcomed about 265,000 international students. Putting the immense number of newly arrived Chinese immigrant families aside, over 80,000 Chinese students made the choice to study in Canada, representing the largest group of foreign students in our country. (Studying in Canada, 2014) How can we deepen our knowledge of these students whose previous schooling experience happened in an educational system dramatically different from ours and expand our professional practice not only to address the learning expectations of these valued students, but to celebrate their presence in our classrooms and enrich the learning experience for all students as well? This paper will specifically examine the differences in learning expectations between Chinese students and Canadian mainstream students. It will investigate their strengths and weaknesses in forming up their learning expectations and explore the effective teaching skills Canadian teachers have utilized to address the learning expectations of this most dominant student ethnic group.

A qualitative study was conducted, including four emails plus face-to-face interviews with each of the four teachers from Ontario schools, public and independent. Based on the data collected from the interviews, this study present views on critical thinking, motivation, rote learning, expatriate adjustment, social skills, group work and independent learning expectations on Chinese students’ end. The interviews revealed a great number of effective teaching skills Ontario teachers have applied to address Chinese students’ learning needs as well as ineffective ones, some of which are recognized and some are not. The discussion will suggest that it is possible to have a deeper recognition and provide greater support for these students by teachers becoming aware that there could be many other different ways to help Chinese students meet not only Canadian mainstream learning expectations but their
own culturally relevant ones as well. It is vital for Canadian teachers to explore
effective ways to convince the Chinese students as well as their parents that academic
excellence is only one aspect of a student’s overall growth, while social skills and
adaptability are equally important in Canadian classrooms. However, diminishing the
importance of academic performance reflected by marks and over emphasizing the
paramount value of social skills and adaptability will also do harm to create a
balanced relationship in the classroom. Academic capabilities, social skills and
adaptability are three equally important learning expectations Canadian teachers need
to convince their Chinese students and families. Advantaging any one of the three
over the other will be detrimental to an inclusive and effective classroom.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

“As I sit here I wonder if you, my teacher, are able to tell when I am sinking in spirit and ready to quit this incredible task. I walked a thousand miles, dear teacher, before I met you.” (ESL/ELD student) (Many Roots Many Voices, 2005) In this increasingly multicultural and multilingual society, teachers are meeting the challenge of creating an environment in which students of varied cultures and language thrive and grow, academically and personally.

Bridging learning differences with the requirement for “effective teaching” in the classroom has been a consistent research topic in current North America educational world. In fact, many people consider effective teaching as a way of mastering specific rules for a specific classroom. However, when this notion comes to culturally diverse Canadian classrooms like those in Ontario, it should involve a more flexible set of actions and skills for teachers to pay extra attention and reflect on extra meaning of certain underlying behaviour by the students and parents from other non-dominant cultural backgrounds.

Interacting with people from around the world without knowing much about them is a bit like bashing away blindly at a piñata. (Peterson, 2004). Some of the professionals are doing the equivalent of fumbling and swinging around blindfolded like children swinging at a piñata. (Peterson, 2004). As teachers, it is important for us to know that learning about surface-level things such as Chinese cuisine, Japanese dance, or Russian music is not enough to interact appropriately with this multicultural classroom. We need a little deeper knowledge of what are being expected in the minds of the students as well as their parents. We need to use coherent definitions
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and frameworks to understand, sharpen and update our teaching skills for dealing with families from other cultures.

Therefore, how do Canadian teachers effectively teach Chinese students? What expectations do Chinese students and their parents hold for the education in Canada? How to be aware of these expectations and even challenge some of the learning assumptions? How to offer sensible advice and make adaptations resourcefully? These are the questions that have been whirling in my mind ever since I started helping my Chinese student friends and immigrant families to pursue their secondary education experience in Ontario.

There have been various views regarding to how Ontario high school teachers acknowledge and use cross-cultural teaching skills to promote an effective culturally diverse classroom. Subjects and lessons can be differentiated for students of different English language proficiencies and a lot of extra academic help as well as resources are being provided for newly migrated students. Among all of these students, it is not difficult to observe that the dramatically growing number of Chinese high school students coming to Ontario has occupied a large percentage of the international students’ population.

As there are many different nations and cultures infused into the multi-cultural pattern in Ontario classroom, the scope of this research paper will be limited to effective teaching skills addressed to Chinese students, mainly first generation immigrant students and international students without permanent residential status. The purpose of limiting this scope is to allow a more thorough and targeted exploration of effective practical teaching skills being applied to respond to the learning expectations of this soaring number of high school students and their families.
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This paper will look at Chinese students’ learning expectations in two different groups. The first group is the students from newly immigrated families (less than 5 years in Canada) who have to build up English language proficiency to study as well as help their parents whose English are limited in many ways. The second group is the international students who leave their parents at home and lead a school and social life in arranged homestay Canadian families. This research project will try to perceive the general teaching strategies and skills applied by Ontario intermediate and secondary school teachers to take care of the learning needs of these two different groups of Chinese students and explore possible further effective skills in better response to the commonalities of their needs as well as respective differences.

In Chapter 1 my interests and reasons for doing this paper were described. An examination of current relevant research literature on this topic was presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 was focused on the methodology, procedures as well as limitations of this research project. The participants in this study and findings of the collected data were outlined in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 was the discussion of the learning results through this study together with further suggestions for practically effective teaching skills and strategies. This chapter also covered the possible further study advice in relevant research areas.

Personal Background and Interests in this Area

My first interest in effective teaching skills emerged after I did my first master degree in Australia. Since I came to Toronto four years ago as a new immigrant, this interest keeps growing stronger as I constantly help quite a lot of Chinese students, either from immigrant families or international students, to adapt well in Ontario intermediate and secondary school classrooms. When I was in Sydney studying my TESOL (Teach English to Speakers of Other Language) program, most of my
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classmates were teacher candidates with non-English speaking cultural backgrounds and almost half of them were from Asian countries. Honestly, I didn’t witness many effective teaching skills exemplified by my Sidney University professors because almost all the student teachers were experienced in overseas campus lives and in many cases we could deal with cross-cultural communication situations based on our own profound personal experience.

In the year of 2010, I moved to Toronto with my family. It was in Toronto where I realized that there is a growing trend of Chinese students seeking for high school education experience and many of these young people as well as their families need extra help in understanding and adjusting their learning expectations. I first started tutoring IELTS (International English Language Testing System) to some Chinese immigrant students who did not have a full-time-4-year high school learning experience in an English speaking country. I prepared them for the test, got a good score and applied for good Canadian universities. After finishing Grade 9 or 10 in China, these students immigrated to Canada and were transferred to Ontario high schools, either public schools or private ones, to complete Grade 11 and 12 before applying for any undergraduate institute in North America. It was from the conversations and interactions with them that I shared some of their successes and frustrations in Canadian high school classrooms.

I was very surprised to notice that most of the misunderstandings lie in the different interpretations of what effective teaching and learning look like between the Chinese parents, Chinese students and the Canadian teachers.

As the Canadian educational culture was rooted in the Socratic Method, which encourages the use of questions to persuade students to think more deeply about topics they are studying (Palmer, 2003), the Chinese parents growing up in a vastly
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different educational culture put more emphasis on evaluating their children’s academic growth by seeing whether they have mastered the ‘known’ material and successfully practiced ‘known’ methods. (Palmer, 2003) They can’t get a correct evaluation of their children’s overseas academic performance if they are not provided with a lot of summative assessment results telling their children’s ranking status among Canadian peers. Many of my Chinese parent friends often come to me with a very frustrated experience of parent teacher meetings and ask me why the teachers always do not answer the questions in the way they want. They came home and discussed it with their children who also couldn’t understand why their parents were unable to recognize the gap between what parents wanted them to be and what teachers wanted them to be, which in many cases ended up with a cold war between children and parents.

Students from new immigrant families are so different from students from veteran immigrant families. Although they are both first generation immigrant families, the way of how their children reflect on critical questions, formative and summative tests and daily assignments and how they pursue their learning goals are very different, being impacted and shaped by their families’ social integration status as well as financial situations.

What’s more, being the most complex and fast growing economy entity in globalization, more and more Chinese families are able to afford sending their children to study abroad at a very young age. Besides being an IELTS tutor in a Toronto private school, I am also part timely developing my own business of providing Canadian education consulting service to young Chinese international students. My professional high quality service quickly spreads the word out and many Chinese parents turn to me for help because they don’t consider me as a
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businessperson but a real consultant with real international studying and learning experience. As my consulting service takes up an on-going following up service approach, after the students settle down at a Canadian high school for years I will still be available to offer help and advice if they run into any difficulties. Many of my student customers and parent friends described their concerns of the learning expectation difference between Ontario school teachers and their own anticipations.

I discovered that although many cultures in Asia are similar in certain aspects, the special unique characters of Chinese students’ learning expectations are indeed different from those of the students’ in other East Asian countries. The Chinese parents who send their children overseas realize that the learning pattern of discouraging questioning and exaggerating rote memory are not helpful in sharpening their children’s future international competition edges. They take initiatives and emotional sufferings to make changes by parachuting their young children across half of the globe to learn how to question and think in a critically creative way. However, due to their own different life experience and academic achievement, it is also challenging for them to comprehend the Canadian mainstream educational culture, for example, the formative assessment approach to evaluate their children’s learning outcomes.

I still remember what one of my Chinese parent friend said to me half a year ago, “My son’s English sucks but he told me that his English teacher thought his English was perfect.” Toronto District School Board has opened up its overseas admission office in Beijing and planned to admit 5000 Chinese primary school students to get their education in Canada in 2015. China is no longer the stereotyped country depicted by Western documentaries decades of years ago, Chinese students’ and parents’ learning goals need to be responded in a changing context both socially and
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economically. I believe it is important for us teachers to learn and apply effective
teaching skills targeted to this growing number of students in Ontario high school
classrooms by scaffolding for their particular needs and challenges.

Discovering the Academics

To discover what effective teaching skills we can apply in addressing the
leaning expectations of Chinese students, a general study of Chinese students’ cross
cultural strengths and weaknesses should be taken into consideration first. There are
so many ways for people to come up with different models, metaphors or analogies
for describing cultural intelligence. Still, my favourite one is the iceberg as it has a
part you see and a part you don’t. Things we can perceive with our five senses, for
instance, language, clothing, food, emotional display, eye contact and etc. are the ‘tip
of the iceberg’ (Peterson, 2004). Usually, the other 80 percent of the iceberg, which
you cannot perceive with five senses are the real values underlying the causes of why
people behave in the way they do and how they may react or act in a variety of
situations.

People from Other Cultures (2004) discusses how important a little deeper knowledge
of what is happening and a little bit more skills in interacting appropriately will help
to clarify intentions and minimize cultural misunderstandings. I read this book before
I came to Toronto and later found there are so many different icebergs in Toronto
society. When I was studying in Australia, this issue of addressing different cultural
needs in terms of learning expectations was not so obvious because all the teaching
patterns diverted to a group of learners from the same ethnical and cultural
background.
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All my observations and discussions with Chinese students, parents and teachers gave me an impression that cultural intelligence skills have not been addressed by teachers or families other than second language concerns. It seems that if a student can speak and read English with a higher proficiency level, then the communication between the students, teachers and parents won’t have any problem. For many Chinese students and parents, the importance of face and harmony in their culture will prevent them from clarifying very detailed information in communication and prefer to digest these questions by asking other Chinese friends or peers.

As the only student teacher with a Chinese culture background in my OISE MT program, it’s easier for me to be empathetic towards the students whose learning expectations are not being appropriately responded to because the communication skills applied by the teachers and parents are either too surface-level or kind of cliché. Each Chinese looking high school student has a unique individual family overseas experience background mingled with a collective modern Chinese culture changes. Some of them are more Canadian than Chinese due to the family immigration history but still behaving in the ways mirroring the part of Chinese culture heritage retained by their parents. Some new immigrant students are leading very stressful lives as they are not only taking care of themselves but being the only English language ambassador at home as well. For those complete international students, not having parents geographically with them and counting on the homestay guardian to perform part of the role of parents find it more challenging than they originally expected. Therefore, this paper will attempt to find out the most commonly used and effective teaching skills blended with culture intelligence practices and explore the possible developing skills of responding to Chinese students’ learning expectations.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Strengths and Challenges Experienced by Chinese Students in Canada

The globalization of education has witnessed the high level of academic achievement demonstrated by Chinese overseas students and among them Chinese Canadian students are definitely showing the similar academic success. A recent set of qualitative and quantitative studies related to the academic achievement of youth from Chinese immigrant families discovered that most of the strengths that these Chinese Canadian students have are stronger feelings of ethnic identity, better English language skills in the family, Chinese cultural values, parental emphasis on schooling, (Li, Expectations of Chinese Immigrant Parents for Their Children's Education: The Interplay of Chinese Tradition and the Canadian Context, 2001) and access to social networks that support achievement. (Costigan & Su, 2010)

However, despite high average levels of achievement, there was also significant research highlighting the psychological and social struggles that many Chinese youth experience. High achievement for some Chinese Canadian adolescents comes at a cost of other aspects of their well-being due to factors like stress in the home, experiences of peer discrimination, cultural differences in school-related expectations, and obstacles to parental involvement in schooling.

In particular, as mentioned by Li in 2001, Chinese immigrant parents’ expectations for their children’s education play an important role in shaping young Chinese immigrant students’ acculturative attitudes and prompting these youth to form a minority ideology as well as make effort to pursue science-related careers. These adolescents struggled with high parental expectations and intergenerational conflicts at home and suffered acculturative stresses and ethnic peer divides at school.
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With a dramatically growing number of Chinese international students in Ontario schools, addressing the learning expectations of the Chinese adolescents in the personal, relational, and larger sociocultural contexts is of vital importance to help them maintain their ongoing psychological adjustment and transformation at the intersection of two different cultures. (Li, Expectations of Chinese Immigrant Parents for Their Children's Education: The Interplay of Chinese Tradition and the Canadian Context, 2001)

**Recent Chinese Immigrant Adolescents’ Cross-Cultural Experiences**

In the first five years of the new millennium, more than one million immigrants from diverse national origins have landed in Canada as permanent residents, contributing to about two thirds of the Canadian population growth. (Statistics Canada, 2007) Because China has been the number one source country of immigration to Canada in the past decade, a large proportion of the recent arrivals are highly educated Chinese immigrants and their families. As a result of this steady immigration wave, Chinese children and adolescents have become the fastest growing student population in major Canadian metropolitan areas. (Li, 2009)

Human development is an interdependent process of biological maturation and experiential learning, therefore the interplay of culture and mind is one of essential underlying dynamics of human journey of life. Psychologically programmed in a culturally conditioned learning process of enculturation (Kottak, Descartes, & Kelly, 2007), children’s emerging minds stem from a structured world of social systems full of cultural artifacts, activities, and institutions (Kerns, Klepac, & Cole, 1996) As children grow up to become full-fledged members of society, they are naturally accustomed to certain ways of thinking, communication, and behaviour deemed desirable by their family, community, and larger society. (Venaik & Brewer, 2013)
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Living and studying in a new sociocultural environment, Chinese immigrant adolescents face various challenges. In addition to coping with dramatic developmental changes unique to this period of life, they undergo a dual process of enculturation and acculturation, concurrently participating in heritage culture at home and the Western culture at school. In this ongoing process of psychosocial adjustment, two tasks are immediate and prominent: one is to reconcile the striking cultural distance between Chinese tradition and Canadian mainstream and the other is to master a new language that has no linguistic comparability with their mother tongue. The cross-cultural experience of Chinese immigrant adolescents merits timely research attention because it not only affects every domain of their learning and development but also has far-reaching implications for adolescent research in a changing society of rapid demographic shifts. (Li, 2009)

Research done by Li (2009) has proved that culture and psychological processes are intertwined in dynamic interaction to shape and reshape the Chinese immigrant adolescent experiences. It is culture that conditions the adolescent thinking, and it is mind that subjects them to think through the lens of culture. Because both culture and mind are constantly changing and evolving, the interrelationship between cultural manifestations and the psychological adjustments of immigrant youth must be understood in emerging, interdependent individual and social processes in situated personal and sociocultural context.

The personal and cultural experiences of these immigrant adolescents are what make up their world that gives meanings to their new lives in Canada; therefore, their stories and perspectives must be heard to inform better policy, research, and practice in the age of global change and diversity.
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As the Canadian demographic composition becomes more and more diverse, Canadian schools should be expected to prioritize inclusion in classrooms and beyond, imbedding more detailed cultural intelligence skills into the curriculum to facilitate their classroom and creating a learning community of practice in which students from all backgrounds can participate equally to learn about and from each other. With mental maturation and experiential learning, the immigrant adolescents will capitalize on their strengths, overcome visible or invisible barriers, growing up to become socially confident, culturally and psychologically well-adjusted, happy, and productive members of our multicultural society.

Expatriate Adjustment and Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence (CQ) represents a promising advancement in the area of cross-cultural adjustment. Experiential approaches for CQ development have been proposed as highly effective; however, there is a lack of CQ-specific approaches in the Canadian classroom contexts. (MacNab, 2012)This research will overview the concepts of cultural intelligence and its relevance to addressing Chinese immigrant students’ learning needs.

As said by Zhang (2013), important cultural differences create the need for expatriates who are culturally intelligent. She presents and explores a framework of expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment to advance conceptual understanding and practical applications for cross-cultural approaches to the development of expatriates in multinational corporations and cross-border organizations. This literature can also be applied in education scenarios as the increasingly evident need is that a comprehensive, holistic, or multidimensional approach is crucial if we are to fully comprehend expatriate adjustment in Ontario multicultural classrooms. Responding to this need, teachers need to intend to overcome this limitation and incorporates the use
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of CQ (Ang & Inkpen, 2008) which covers all four dimensions of meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural capabilities, to investigate personal characteristics, thus providing a more comprehensive picture beyond personality traits.

Cultural difference will moderate the relationship between cultural intelligence and expatriate adjustment, such that the relationship between cultural intelligence and adjustment is stronger when the direction of cultural flow is from a less authoritarian cultural context to a more authoritarian cultural environment.

Critical Thinking and Rote Learning

Rote learning is the memorization of information based on repetition. Many Canadian teachers, including my interviewees, mentioned the overuse of test content memorization among Chinese students. Is rote learning an outdated technique that only Chinese students are using to survive schooling? Or is there a valid place for its use in the Canadian classrooms? Increasingly, rote learning is being abandoned for newer techniques such as associative learning, meta cognition, and critical thinking instead of being used as a functional foundation to higher levels of learning. (What is Rote Learning? A Battle between Memory and Intelligence, 2012)

According to Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, critical thinking and inquiry-based analysis have been necessary core components of all secondary subjects in Ontario. Teachers imbed inquiry-based learning tasks into their daily lesson plans and facilitate these learning activities among pupils at a very young age. Nevertheless, one Canadian study out of the University of British Columbia found that North American educators tend to find fault with Eastern learning styles as they are not analytic nor do they involve critical questioning. (Tweed & Lehman, 2003) (Campbell & Li, 2008)

When Campbell and Li (2008) spoke to Asian students studying in New Zealand many students said they enjoyed independent learning, but then when questioned
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about the methods their professors used to encourage such critical learning they said
that they found these methods did not meet up with their expectations. They found it
difficult to use the required analytic skills.

Hong, Morris, Chiu and Benet-Martinez (2000) said that bicultural individuals
are typically described as people who have internalized two cultures to the extent that
both cultures are alive inside of them. Many bicultural individuals report that the two
internalized cultures take turns in guiding their thoughts and feelings (Benet-Martinez
& Haritatos, 2005). This is interesting because it suggests that (a) internalized cultures
are not necessarily blended and (b) absorbing a second culture does not always
involve replacing the original culture with the new one.

Effective Teaching in Multicultural Classrooms

Effective Teaching vs. Ineffective Teaching

In order for Canadian teachers to reflect on what I need to do to effectively teach
Chinese students, it is of vital importance for them to see what effective teaching
looks like in Chinese parents and students’ ideologies and where the discrepancies lie
between what is effective and what is ineffective.

There are mainly three aspects for us to explore in order to understand the
differences lying between the different ideologies of learning expectations. They are
academic outcomes, social skills and the sense of inclusion.

An Experiential Approach

There is need to advance cross-cultural education to better prepare managers
and management students for the nuances of a modern, multicultural century.
(MacNab, 2012) The same awareness should be addressed in helping Chinese
immigrant students to get better adapted under the help of their teachers, who can
apply cultural intelligence in an experiential approach in and out of the classroom.
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Although related to other types of social intelligence, cultural intelligence (CQ) is also unique and people can be taught these skills. (MacNab & Worthley, 2012) CQ is to be distinguished from a personality trait, as it represents adjustments a person can make to be effective across cultures, whereas a personality trait describes what a person will normally do across time and situations. (Ong, Ang, Ho, & Lim, 2011) CQ education is the process of developing the competencies and capacities, including cognitive/metacognitive, motivation, and behavior, required for effective cultural interaction.

Specifically, CQ has been linked to a variety of positive metacognition attributes, including effective expatriate adjustment suspension of judgment reduced ethnocentrism, effective negotiation and capability for differentiation of group-level behaviours from individual-level behaviours (Rong & Cheng, 2007).

Earley and Ang (2003) developed a three-part model with cognitive/metacognitive, motivation, and behavior components. The cognitive component of the model refers to the “head”—awareness, self-awareness, and knowledge. It has been suggested that this aspect of CQ should be the first developmental step in training and is evident in my approach. This or cognitive control. (Ang & Inkpen, 2008) Metacognition is related to an individual’s process of gaining and using cultural knowledge. An example of metacognition would include questioning cultural assumptions when operating in new cultural environments or questioning one’s stereotypes; it involves applied self-awareness. (R.MacNab, 2012)

The motivation component refers to the “heart”—perseverance and appropriate goal setting related to cultural interaction (Earley & Peterson, 2004). An example of this component is not giving up too soon in relation to increased challenges and stress associated with intercultural activity. Although it is sometimes stressful to interact
with people from one’s own culture group, it is often significantly more stressful and challenging to interact with people from different cultural groups, often requiring heightened levels of motivation and perseverance. The motivation aspect of CQ is often considered a bridging stage between cognitive/metacognitive and behaviour.

The behaviour component refers to “action”—the ability to adjust or adapt behaviours suitable to the cultural environment. Action includes an aptitude to determine where new behaviours are needed and how to execute these effectively. Behaviour is viewed as requiring effective cognitive/metacognitive insight and motivation engagement. An example is adjusting one’s specific manner of communicating to more effectively interact with host nationals. It may feel unfamiliar, and perhaps unnatural, but the selected approach to communicating may be more effective within the host culture. As suggested in the CQ literature (e.g., Thomas, 2006), examination of how effective one’s behaviour is within a certain cultural context provides a link back to the cognitive/ metacognitive aspect and thus a potentially progressive cycle is established.

**Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Issues of diversity and multiculturalism continue to be in the forefront of educational and social concerns. Educators have a responsibility to develop and implement culturally responsive curricula through inclusion of content that goes beyond cultural holidays and celebration days or months. (Rolheiser, Evans, & Gambhir, 2013) Current educational initiatives call for a multicultural approach for several reasons, the most important being to meet the needs of a school population rich in diversity. Students from various cultural groups need to know that they are heard, respected, valued, and capable of achieving success. Institutions of informal learning can be resources that explore and support diversity by collaborating with
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community cultural groups and designing exhibitions and curricula that provide a contextual understanding of the culture represented. (Diversity, Community and Achievement, 2011).

A culturally responsive curriculum that incorporates students’ life experiences and cultural identities into planning and instruction based on several themes that resonate with middle and high school students (Knight, 2006) needs a group of qualified teachers with cultural intelligence skills to implement these notions into daily teaching, student communication as well as interactions with parents.

*Emotional Intelligence in Education*

Research indicates that social and emotional skills are associated with success in many areas of life, including effective teaching, student learning, quality relationships, and academic performance. Moreover, a recent meta-analysis of over 300 studies showed that programs designed to enhance social and emotional learning significantly improve students’ social and emotional competencies as well as academic performance. (Rivers, Brackett, Katulak, & Salovey, 2007)

Incorporating social and emotional learning programs into school districts can be challenging, as programs must address a variety of topics in order to be successful. According to Mayer and Salovey, EI pertains to an individual’s capacity to reason about emotions and to process emotional information to enhance cognitive processes and regulate behaviour.

The four EI skills included in the Mayer and Salovey model are interrelated, as proficiency in one skill influences mastery in other areas, and cumulative, as mastery on the first three skills culminates in proficiency in the fourth area – management of emotion. The first skill, perception of emotion, refers to the ability to perceive emotions in oneself and others, as well as in other stimuli, including objects, art,
stories, and music. The second skill, use of emotion to facilitate thinking, refers to the ability to use or generate emotions to focus attention, communicate feelings, or engage in other cognitive processes such as reasoning, problem solving, and decision-making. The third skill, understanding of emotion, refers to the ability to understand emotional information and the causes of emotions and how emotions combine, progress, and change from one to another. The fourth skill, management of emotion, refers to the ability to be open to feelings and employ effective strategies to promote personal understanding and growth.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This is a qualitative research project focused on a review of the most commonly used teaching practices implemented by native Canadian English teachers to address the learning needs and expectations of the Chinese students. There are four interviews with four English educators in Ontario schools. This chapter layouts each research stage as well as the limitations of this study.

Procedure

Literature Review

The purpose of conducting the literature review prior to the data collection is to enlighten myself with the relevant research areas in which Chinese students and native Canadian students differ in terms of learning expectations and how teachers respond to these differences. The research sources used during the literature review, which includes academic journal articles, books and mainstream media publications as well, play an important role in forming the interview questions and guiding the later data analysis. The considerable amount of this literature review is based on cross...
cultural adjustment education perspectives and recent Chinese adolescents’ learning experience which has becoming a main contributing force in Canadian schools’ multicultural classrooms.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

I conducted four interviews with four English educators from three different Ontario schools. One is an independent international school located in Brockville, in which more than 50% of the students have been educated in Chinese schools before coming to Canada. The second and third are public schools in GTA and 70% of their neighbourhood population are either of Chinese immigration originality or newly landed Chinese immigration families. The interviews were conducted in either face-to-face style or online social media approach. The same questions were asked to all my four interviewees as I felt that it was important for me, as an interviewer, to ensure clearer understandings and based on the interviewees’ different profound educating experiences with Chinese students, there would be abundant information and data generated from each of their personal perspectives.

All the research questions have been examined and approved by my research supervisor and they can be reached in Appendix C. The primary data that these questions seek to address was how much learning expectation differences in Chinese students have been observed by Canadian teachers, what type of cultural responsive teaching skills have been applied to address these needs and how effective or ineffective have these strategies been. Other areas I would like to focus on during the data collection and analysis stages were expatriate adjustment strategies, such as management of emotion, the ability to be open to feelings and employment of effective strategies to promote personal understanding and growth.
Participants and Participating Schools

My four interviewees are current English educators in three different Ontario schools. I chose these different schools as each of them represents a main demographic source of Chinese students. One school is an international independent school which has educated more than 800 international students between Gr.7-12 through a period of 12 years and among which half of the student population is from mainland China. The other two schools are GTA public schools in which all the Chinese students possess a family immigration story and many of them are second-generation Chinese immigrants, which indicates that they speak English as native tongue and uses Chinese at home. These two public schools include Chinese students who have been fully educated in Canada and others who are new to Canada.

All my four interviewees undertake different English educating roles in their schools so that their answers to all the interview questions can cover a range of subjects and interests. The teachers are all experienced, with their years of teaching ranging from 10 years to over 25 years in the classroom. One of them has been the principal of the school for over 12 years and has abundant experience with Chinese students overseas academic lives. The other teachers have been teaching Chinese students ESL, English, History, Math and Geography for over 12-25 years and understanding Chinese students learning strategies as well as thinking patterns in a profound way. One of the teachers works at the school as a French teacher and constantly involves himself in teaching English as well.

The interviewees were asked to consider Chinese students learning expectations in comparison with native students’ and share the effective or ineffective teaching skills they have successfully used or failed to address the differentiations.
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**Ethical Review**

All of the participants have been advised of the interview process that the interviews would be taped and transcribed. All the interviewees agreed to the data collection process and were asked if they required their own transcripts to be sent back to them so that they can add either further clarifications or other additional comments. The participants signed an agreement (Appendix A) to participate in the study with the acknowledgement that their names and the school name would be kept confidential. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time up until the research project was complete.

**Limitations**

There are three main limitations in this research project. The first is the lack of clear definitions of effective teaching skills being presented to my interviewees before they think and answer my questions. The teachers and educators participating in this study have no guided access to literature reviews about specific teaching strategies that they might have used or want to use to respond to their Chinese students’ learning expectations. The majority of their answers are randomly generated from their daily teaching experience, thus there is no consistency to support the accountability of the data.

The other defect is that all the participants are teachers only so that whether the teaching skills applied have been truly successful or unsuccessful is entirely depended on the judgment on the teachers’ side. It is possible that what the teachers consider effective might be thought not function well in the students’ perspective.

Also, the key role played by Chinese parents in helping their children’s learning expectations noticed by teachers has not been mentioned and analyzed enough in this research project. Even the Chinese parents are far away in another continent, due to
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the superfast technological advance provided by today’s internet services, international parents’ engagement in Canadian school lives have changed so much that their voices could be conveniently heard and their supervision could be easily impacting their children’s school life in Canada. Therefore, how the international parents feel about the effectiveness of teachers’ application of different teaching skills still remains unrevealed to some extent.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter will outline the overall findings from the data collected during the two interviews with each of the four participants. The first interview was an online email containing 5 questions about my participants’ different profound educating experiences with Chinese students. The second interview approximately happened a few weeks after the first interview and was 20-50 minutes in length. The majority of the substance of this chapter came from the second interviews as those interview questions aimed at more specific and substantive issues. The questions for both interviews can be found in Appendix B. The interviews were conducted with four teachers who teach in three different schools, where the population of Chinese students is estimated to be approximately more than 50%. Several themes emerged during the interviews and those themes have been grouped together to present the ideas in a more cohesive manner. The thematic groups are as follows:

• Academic Skills
• Social Skills
• Adaptation
Academic Skills

Attitudes towards Assessment

All of the interviewees mentioned that Chinese students view tests and assessment as something that has a clear beginning and ending, while Ontario students are expected to look at assessment in a more progressive and ongoing way. Two of the interviewees said that the skill of test content memorization has been repeatedly trained among Chinese students for so many years before they come to Canada that it is very easy to see that a considerable amount of anxiety and pressure resulted from test preparation has been preventing both Chinese students and their parents from seeing the holistic value of education. The other three teachers also mentioned that they have been trying to do all their best to make the students understand that assessment is only a very small portion of what we do in Canadian schools as there are so many social skills ingredients that deserve the Chinese students’ learning effort.

This idea is central to this research, as the study is suggesting that Ontario school teachers should be recognizing the students in their classes who have been educated in China, thus providing a new label. The scope of this study is limited to those from China, however, it can be suggested in much of the literature that effective teaching actions are found around the world and so this idea would not be limited to knowing about Chinese students.

Notion of Ranking

One of the most common themes running through the interviews was the difficulty that the teachers had in convincing the Chinese students as well as their parents that their school ranking position and their future rank in society are not based on how well they’ve done in tests. Academic excellence seems to be the only
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approach for the Chinese students to get recognized by their families. In the situations of many newly arrived Chinese immigrants, it is difficult for them to understand that homework is just an extension of school work and assigning a lot of homework won’t benefit their children’s overall growth. Two teacher participants clearly mentioned that parents ask for more homework during the teacher parent meeting and it took them a lot of time and energy to explain that doing a lot of repetitive practice at home has more harm than benefits.

All the teacher participants indirectly stated that both parents and Chinese students hope to see a ranking of either their school compared with other schools or they themselves compared with other students in the class. The notion of competitiveness being focused on academic marks only added a lot of pressure and anxiety on students’ classroom performances as they are afraid of making mistakes. One teacher interviewee who teaches French to intermediate level students said that Chinese students have a lot more difficulty in pronunciation because they do not know how to relax their muscles. The pressure caused by feeling afraid of making mistakes has make them feel nervous all time at school and they do not know how to relax in order to pronounce a proper syllabus.

Support

The teachers interviewed for this study all expressed concern for their students and an awareness of the need to differentiate and to support all students by recognizing their individual needs. One interviewee specifically spoke of differentiated culturally intelligent instruction saying “it is finding ways for the different students to express their strengths and share with me their experience of learning from mistakes.” This interview went on to discuss different methods used in the classroom to emphasize the student’s strengths and push them forward in areas
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where they are weaker. One teacher who works in an independent school, where 100% of the students are international students from countries all over the world with learning experience different from the Canadian students, said that most frequently, teachers in their school have been using a lot of introducing the Canadian style of learning in all kinds of modeling activities, which looks like holding the Chinese students hands and show them what Canadian teachers want to see in their work.

In several interviews, the teachers referred to the fact that effective teaching should be emphasized on the process. With the need for the academic results and the pressures at home to perform, Chinese students often do not focus on the process of their work but rather the final product. The process is often more important than the final piece of work. Students who develop strong work habits and understand how to bring all of their work together are generally better off as life-long learners. One teacher mentioned that Chinese students need to learn how to effectively use their freedom and learn independent work skills, time management skills and etc. The other teacher thought game-based teaching activities have been so helpful to reduce the pressure level of the Chinese students and make them relaxed. Once the students are relaxed, they are more able to function properly in the learning process and also more open-minded to learn from the mistakes.

One teacher who has had a lot of experience with Chinese students either at school or after school as she started tutoring Chinese students one-on-one when she retired, said: “Because so many of my students were focused almost exclusively on their marks, I was extremely aware of encouraging their parents to consider more of a balance: providing sufficient sleep (this was a huge problem) and lots of physical activity/exercise. I wanted to see them involved in extra-curricular activities and team sports, or activities requiring them to develop both leadership skills and interpersonal
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collaborative skills. It is important to get children involved in thinking about good citizenship and what kinds of things they can do to improve the lives of others in their community and/or abroad. Likewise, they need to develop the confidence and ability to speak orally and effectively when they present aloud. Thinking ahead to their university and job interviews, what kind of a resume are they building? How memorable will they be to an interviewer who has just interviewed hundreds of “A” students! Parents need to consider all these factors for their children. These types of concerns and awareness for Chinese students in their classrooms, were typical of all of the teachers interviewed.

Social Skills

_Academic vs Social_

One of the areas that is being most frequently mentioned in all interviews is the different learning expectation of social skills between Chinese students and Canadian students. All of the teacher participants of this interview unanimously agreed that Chinese students tend to fair better when the questions are more linear in thinking. They enjoy formulas and understanding a consistent process in order to complete the task at hand. Parents consistently ask us for more homework. With the idea that as long as they are working the students are learning. When it comes to critical thinking based questions, Chinese students tend to struggle when the thought process is not clear and consistent from one form to the next. Parents of our Chinese students do not put an emphasis on social skills. Academics is of utmost importance and everything else is secondary. All five teachers mentioned that they have had many conversations where the suggestion to the parents is for their child to join a non-academic program outside of school. They all believe Chinese students are involved in many academic extra-curricular programs, such as science and math. They do not
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stress a balanced social experience. Students who do not have a strong language background or are new to Canada often stick together and socialize with one another. Very rarely do they find new immigrants socializing with students who have been in Canada for more than 4 years. They don't feel that students or their parents place as much emphasis on social skills as native Canadians do. Only one teacher said that she found my students to be well behaved, compliant, and generally delightful students with whom to work. Their parents valued the development of good social skills and naturally, wanted their children to have friends and feels socially accepted/comfortable.

Individualism vs Group Work

This area was also one with slightly divergent views among the teachers who were interviewed. Some teachers found that the Chinese educated students preferred to work independently while others found that they could also be capable of working in groups; however the caveat to that was that those students were not handing in group work, but rather working together on practice work. Many of the teachers commented that the students like to work independently because of communication concerns. One such example is: “Those who I guess are new to the school or are new to the country they really prefer working independently in their own space and not being put in any verbally communicative situations which might be embarrassing for them.”

Another teacher found that when Chinese were put into group work where they will be marked on, they tend to get more anxious and the pressure lowers their energy level. He said that the game-based approach he has used would function so well to encourage students not be afraid of losing marks because Chinese students won’t take games as a way of learning. When they are freed of the burden of learning for
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assessment, they start to relax and the relaxation helps them to outperform. However, when it comes to school work that does not require team effort, three of the teachers interviewed discussed how the Chinese students often stuck together and worked together during class and outside of class.

**Adaptation**

**Differentiation**

All teachers emphasized the importance of differentiating the classroom because as experienced teachers, they know that every student learn differently. They all make effort to adapt their teaching styles and strategies to best suit the needs of the Chinese students.

One of the teachers said: “Well, in that sense, some of their group work is group together. It’s sometimes accommodated into different words. If we have, for instance, today we are watching a video and they are answering questions. The ELL levels won’t understand. So I gave them answers so their job is going home and translated and understood it. It’s different task but still completing the same information. They are going to absorb the information, but their task wasn’t the same.”

Another teacher mentioned that how she provided students with different learning strengths and different personalities with different opportunities to practice their English learning skills in class. She said: “Sometimes I think learning a language is sort of a personality. If you have this kind of outgoing personality and you are outgoing enough to take risks with it, and willing to talk to not to be afraid to make mistakes. Someone like Ryan, excuse me, he just has to talk. And that’s why his speaking is so good. I’m not going to say his writing is good. But at least he is keen to communicate. The quieter students, maybe develop their writing, but then the speaking is not there. So they have to compliment their strengths and weaknesses. As
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a teacher, in order to be effective, we need to see that. Okay, the student is very good at talking and we have to make sure all the students have the chance to talk. We have to make sure that all the students can keep checking what they are learning.”

It is very obvious that the clue of differentiation has been the main focus in applying effective teaching actions to respond to Chinese students’ learning expectations. Different teachers also use differentiated strategies to respond to Chinese parents’ expectations about their children’s school life. One retired teacher with 25 years of teaching many Chinese students said: “In many cases, anything less than a straight ‘A’ was often a disappointment. Naturally, their children (my students) were driven to produce these results. Other subjects were deemed important as well, particularly Reading and Writing, and in the later grades, Science was held in high importance. However, math was a pivotal subject of importance.” She has been relentlessly talking to Chinese parents during parent-teacher meetings about the importance of developing leadership skills and interpersonal collaborative skills through extra-curricular non-academic activities.

**Critical Thinking**

Children in Canada are often encouraged to be inquisitive. This belief was exemplified in a response from one interviewee. The participant said to the students: “You should always question authority if you don’t know what they say, if you think what they say isn’t right, or you want to question it, as long as you do it politely or with reason. For good reason you just say excuse me, can I ask about that?” Another teacher mentioned that when it comes to critical thinking based questions, Chinese students tend to struggle when the thought process is not clear and consistent from one form to the next. It is teachers’ mission to make students, especially Chinese students who have very limited experience in doing critical thinking before they
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arrived in Canada, to understand that nothing is black and white anymore. It’s not so much about the students’ unwillingness to take the risk, but about their old work habit of following a formula. A very effective way is to facilitate the classroom instead of standing at the front to teach them. “It’s like here’s the instructions, now you need to find your path, to get there and that’s all.”

Only this teacher touched the theme of critical thinking very clearly in the interview and he has a lot of concerns as well as experience in cultivating Chinese students’ critical thinking skills.

**Work Habits**

The views of the teachers in this study on the work habits of the students new to Canada, do not have much difference between the academic concerns and the social concerns that teachers have for these students. Some of the common concerns that all the teacher interviewees have for Chinese students are the lack of risk-taking initiatives and a very different mindset about assessment.

With regards to risk-taking initiatives, Chinese students seldom have the awareness of challenging the authority or feeling positive about the mistakes they make. They take mistakes as evidences of failures and some of them are so afraid of teachers because they think teachers are mistake searchers. It is very important to help Chinese students realize that mistakes are actually learning opportunities that help you to find out what you need to improve, thus assessment is not something final but something ongoing and never ending. These opposite attitudes towards assessment directly affect the Chinese students’ learning habits both in class and out of class, which also make the Canadian teachers spend quite a lot of time in figuring out adaptive methods to change this fixed mindset.

One teacher also talked about the impact of personality in helping Chinese
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students form good work habits. She said: “Sometimes I think learning a language is sort of a personality. If you have this kind of outgoing personality and you are outgoing enough to take risks with it, and willing to talk to not to be afraid to make mistakes.” She has been teaching ESL in Canadian secondary school for 10 years and she has observed many different Chinese students with different personalities have quite different abilities to take risks in learning a foreign language. It is interesting to notice that outgoing personality has been very important to help Chinese student adapt quickly into Canadian schools.

There are clearly a number of concerns that the teachers I interviewed have noticed within their classes in regards to Chinese students who have newly arrived in Canada. These areas will be looked at in more detail and compared to the research in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

I decided to do this research right after I started my teacher-training program in Canada because I surprisingly found Chinese students’ learning expectations were not discussed in schools and therefore many teachers I observed were depending on their isolated experiences with Chinese students to make adjustment in their teaching actions. I examined how different types of Chinese students and parents’ learning expectations could be grouped into certain patterns and in what ways teachers work with students and families to improve their performance. Through the early part of this research, what became immediately apparent was that when I invited the teacher participants to do my interviews and told them what my research topic was, all of them showed considerable amount of interest and recognized the importance of this research. They spoke to me with a lot of thinking and reflection throughout the whole
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process of two interviews and provided some valuable insight into how Chinese students adapt to different learning expectations in Canadian schools.

In discussing the findings of this study, this chapter will look at how the data gathered in the findings relates to the literature, discuss the implications of this research, and make recommendations for further study.

The Literature and the Data

In Chapter two, a number of studies have been discussed to look at how Chinese students and their families address their learning expectations in the personal, relational, and larger sociocultural contexts in Canada. These studies, while recognizing that there is always a great deal of variation within an ethnicity group, point out that there are significant similarities in educational-culture that affect how people view and interact with the world. The data collected through 8 interviews with 4 teachers shows that while the teachers recognize some of the learning expectation differences in their newly arrived Chinese students, other differences relevant to the learning expectations are not observed or addressed at all. In order to interpret the results in a profound and meaningful way, this part of my research will look at these areas of overlap and at those that are opposed to one another.

Strengths and Challenges in Cross-Cultural Experience

In Chapter two, the research of Li and Statistics Canada mentioned that as a result of a steady immigration wave starting from the 21st century from China to Canada, Chinese children and adolescents have become the fastest growing student population in major Canadian metropolitan areas. A recent set of qualitative and quantitative studies related to the academic achievement of youth from Chinese immigrant families done by L. Costigan, M.Hua and F.Su (2010) discovered that most of the strengths that these Chinese Canadian students have are stronger feelings of
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ethnic identity, better English language skills in the family, Chinese cultural values, parental emphasis on schooling, and access to social networks that support achievement. During my interviews, the Chinese parental emphasis on schooling has been mentioned by all my teacher participants in terms of how Chinese students and their parents view tests and assessment at school. On one hand, it is a positive push power, which motivates the Chinese students to produce hard work at school and bring back home a report card that contains beautiful marks to satisfy their parents’ expectations.

However, all interviewees observed a considerable amount of anxiety and pressure resulted from test preparation. Just as said in Chapter two, despite high average levels of achievement, there was also significant research highlighting the psychological and social struggles that many Chinese youth experience. High achievement for some Chinese Canadian adolescents comes at a cost of other aspects of their well being.

As mentioned by two of my interviewees, living and studying in a new sociocultural environment in Canada, it is very important to make both Chinese students and their parents understand that schooling in Canada places assessment as one of the portions we do at school, definitely not the majority or even the whole. The other prominent finding in the interviews is the different attitudes towards school ranking between Chinese families and Canadian mainstream. Most teacher participants in my research expressed the frustration in convincing the Chinese families that their school ranking and their future status in society are not related and extra homework won’t benefit their children’s overall growth. When students and their parents fail to look at Canadian schooling in a holistic way, struggle with high
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parental expectations and intergenerational conflicts at home, it is very possible that they suffered acculturative stresses and ethnic peer divides at school.

According to Hofstede in 2001, as children grow up to become full-fledged members of society, they are naturally accustomed to certain ways of thinking, communication, and behaviour deemed desirable by their family, community, and larger society. Chinese students face various challenges unique to them because they concurrently participate in heritage culture at home and the Western culture at school.

Besides the first challenge of mastering a new language that has no linguistic comparability with their mother tongue, all Chinese students have to deal with the other more challenging task, which is to reconcile the striking cultural distance between Chinese tradition and Canadian norms. It is an ongoing process of psychosocial adjustment (Li, 2009) and Canadian schools should spare enough attention to help Chinese students approach solutions to resolve these challenges.

In my opinion, the challenges and strengths occurred in the cross-cultural experience deserves timely research effort because it not only affects every aspect of Chinese students’ learning and development but also has a significant implications for youth health in a society of rapid demographic changes.

Expatriate Adjustment and Social Skills

In Chapter two, a literature review named expatriate adjustment is discussed to provide a framework of cross-cultural adjustment to help students advance conceptual understanding and practical applications to develop themselves in multicultural educational organizations. Responding to this need, teachers are encouraged to overcome different limitations and incorporate the use of CQ (Earley & Ang, 2003), which covers all four dimensions of meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and
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behavioural capabilities, to investigate personal characteristics, thus providing a more comprehensive picture beyond personality traits.

In the interviews, expatriate adjustment strategies have been touched upon by all interviewees in various manners. While Canadian parents put a lot of emphasis on cultivating social skills in their children, many Chinese families place social skills inferior to academic skills. Some teachers conducted a lot of after-class conversations with students individually and with parents as well. They spent a lot of time making tremendous effort to persuade the Chinese families that besides academic programs, they should also involve their children in non-academic programs to help foster social skills that their children need to use at school. Some teachers modified the homework and group structures to meet the needs of Chinese students by gradually switching it to a Canadian mainstream instead of drowning the students with the differences. Some teachers use hand-holding materials from elementary school curriculum and tailor them to the needs of new arrivals. After spending a few weeks of teaching how to be a Canadian student, Chinese students are more likely to function as successful expatriates. Some teachers apply empathetic communication skills by exposing their poor Chinese language pronunciation.

It is very encouraging and comforting to see that when the direction of cultural flow is from a less authoritarian cultural context to a more authoritarian cultural environment, most Canadian teachers are willing to make every possible adjustment they think necessary to meet the needs of the Chinese new students and help them develop cultural intelligence skills for their future Canadian lives.

**Critical Thinking and Rote Learning**

The research of Tweed and Lehman(2002) was discussed in Chapter two about the importance of critical thinking and inquiry-based questioning in Canadian schools.
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and Ontario curriculums. It was also mentioned that this learning expectation could be detrimental to Chinese students who are accustomed to rote memorization that allows them to remember the knowledge by repetitive practice. In all my interviews, many of the participants commented on the frustration in motivating newly-arrived Chinese students to reflect on critical thinking questions and how they consider that difficulty was linked to two factors: English language proficiency and shy personality.

On the same literature review page, I also talked about how Hong, Morris, Chiu and Benet-Martinez (2000) said that bicultural individuals are typically described as people who have internalized two cultures to the extent that both cultures are alive inside of them. A dynamic new constructivist approach may open new possibilities in understanding cross-cultural experiences. Two of my interviewees talked about how different a Chinese student’s classroom discussion response is compared with the written assignment produced by the same student. Chinese students necessarily struggled with questions that require a longer explanation because the rote learning experience interferes with their work habit in Canada. Looking back at my own observations of Chinese students in all my four practicum schools, I want to say that students who have not presented enough critical thinking process in either homework or classwork may not necessarily be victims of rote memorization or shy personality, it is highly possible that they have no idea how to think critically and therefore do not know how to employ this strategy in their answers.

In my fourth practicum, I volunteered to participate in Toronto District School Board’s ESL professional development project named Exploration Classroom. My associate teacher and I came up with an idea of implementing social justice topics into ESL level B classroom. We realized that it could be an audacious lesson plan since the limited amount of vocabulary in level B would not be big enough for Chinese new
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comers to express their reflections, needless to say the topics are unusual compared with their previous learning experience in China. However, we took the initiative to work as a professional learning community and built a word wall and foldable worksheets to help the Bs to learn the most basic vocabularies they need to grasp in order to understand the four social issues we wanted to teach. The initial stages of vocabulary building and teaching them how to critically reflect on the social justice issues are very challenging. We did not give up and kept working hard together with the students. After one week’s repetitive memorization of the new words and practice of critical thinking strategies, those ESL B students gave us a huge surprise by successfully designing their each individual website named “Malala & Me”. Six TDSB ESL teachers including TDSB program coordinator visited my class and were positively impressed by how much achievement these Chinese students have done with a very limited number of newly acquired words. The students also told me how excited they felt when they could do something big while how bored they felt each time they were asked to do childish topics, like my favorite city, to consolidate their learning of simple present tense. Their English language proficiency is truly not achieving a required level to profoundly express their thoughts. But their cognitive level as well as the ability to learn critical thinking skills should not be underestimated and fenced them out of certain learning activities.

During the interview, I have one teacher participant who has just retired and she mentioned that she really enjoyed all the years she has had with Chinese students as they were all well behaved, compliant and generally delightful to work with. It seems that she did not have parents who kept asking for more homework and chased her for the result of their children’s academic ranking in class because all her Chinese parents valued the development of good social skills and wanted their children to feel socially
acceptable. However, having said that the core of critical thinking skills is reasonable doubts and inquiry based questions, could we say compliant students without doubts and conflicting ideas are truly good students? Could we say Chinese parents who immediately embrace the Canadian mainstream and abandon the norms that they have adhered to for the past decades are critical thinking models for their children? Which is the more ideal pattern for a critical learning environment, classroom with more conflicting thoughts or harmonious agreements?

**Individual Work and Group Work**

One of the interview questions in my research triggered a lot of reflections and comments among my teacher participants. It was about the different strategies and attitudes that Chinese students have when it comes to group work or individual work. In 2003, Nisbett discussed that the most commonplace difference between east and west is the predilection for individualism in the West and for interconnectivity in the East. Chinese students have a very complicated feeling towards group work and individual work. On one hand, they love group work as they like the feeling of work informally and talking to each other while working on tasks. On the other hand, they dislike group work, especially when the work is to be assessed. The situation of having the group work involve assessment actually lowered their motivation of achieving high because they are afraid of the workload fairness. If they do much of the work and get a mark under their expectation due to the lack of work done by their team mates, or they wanted to be the team leader but met a more dominating member to take over everything, any unpredicted element in group work will make Chinese student agitate and feel stressful.

Three of my interview participants mentioned that the struggle experienced by many Chinese students relates to their level of fluency in English. One of the
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participants specifically talked about a Chinese student who was extremely talkative in her ESL classroom and even sometimes he was speaking English in an appropriate way, she still allowed him to freely express his ideas because she knew that only in her ESL classroom could this student gather enough confidence to speak out in English without feeling ashamed of his funny accent and lack of fluency. Another teacher participant thought that the reason why Chinese students were having trouble participating in their group discussions is that they were not accustomed to producing ideas and they were not trained to come up with their own ideas. One teachers found Chinese students liked to work together on tasks designed for assessment as learning, but not on assessment of learning. This does link to the work of Campbell and Li (2008) who found that East-Asian students prefer individual summative tasks but group time to work through ideas. It brings my question back to cross-culture experience talked before and how can we teachers help scaffold students’ learning to improve their performance in these situations? Can we teach the values and strategies of doing group discussions before we throw the Chinese students into the activities that Canadian students have been doing for so many years? Can we provide a more structured way that can lead the students to reach desired outcome?

Implications

I personally has benefited a lot from this research because it has revealed a considerable amount of insight into how effective or ineffective teachers’ teaching skills could be, provided by how much teachers know about the backgrounds of the Chinese students. This is the most significant outcome of my interviews with all the teacher participants. The teachers I have interviewed also harvested a lot of my feedback on how to adjust their teaching skills to tailor the learning needs and meet the expectations of Chinese families as my own ESL learning experience provided
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them with a lot of comments from other perspectives.

I believe the literature in Chapter two shows that cross-cultural experience makes a difference on how students learn and what sort of frustrations and challenges they will encounter. Corak’s (2011) study showed that students arriving in Canada after the age of 13 had a significantly higher likelihood of dropping out of high school. I consider this statistic disconcerting because all the high school teachers I have interviewed and communicated with during my practicums were not aware of this group of students. Low language proficiency level is the most frequently cited reason for the dropout rate, however, because that incoming students often had different learning skills from their previous education than those required in Canada, skills deficits should be more systematically addressed and dealt with for Chinese students in today’s Canadian schools.

It is well worth attention that there is no indication for teachers to know where their students are coming from. During my interviews, the only information teachers are aware of about the newcomers is whether they come geographically from China or another Asian country. They do not have other resources to understand the students in a more detailed and holistic way. Privacy concerns around a student’s background should be taken into consideration, but what if the families and students themselves hope to be understood more while teachers mistakenly assumed that they should step back and not interrupt with privacy. To avoid this dilemma, I would suggest more informal student and parent meetings to be organized by high schools. I think this is a resolution that allows parents and students who need more time to communicate with the teachers about their individual learning backgrounds. It will also save a lot of time on the side of teachers, who could gather more information they need to address their students’ learning needs at the very initial stage of their schooling in Canada. Or, if
there is inconveniency for face-to-face meeting, questionnaire could be an option to provide the information that is necessary to understand more about the students’ backgrounds. The content shall not be just about the students’ academic marks, but also touching the work habits and learning strengths as well as weaknesses back in their previous education organizations. Where did the student study last year and the year before? This should help me to know where the student is coming from.

This research has looked solely at Chinese students, and therefore, it can provide some suggestions and recommendations for bridging this particular cultural gap. However, I do not think that every teacher should make effort to learn the needs of students from each different culture. However, I see the soaring number of Chinese students coming to Canada to pursue their secondary education, and for teachers who work at schools with a dominant demographic Chinese shift, it is highly necessary for them to take a deeper dive into Chinese students’ learning expectations and what teaching skills are effective to help shorten their adaptation time.

All the teachers I interviewed found additional information helpful and with these extra understanding, newly arrived students get access to teaching assistance in a more efficient way since their teachers already know where they are struggling. I would then be able to ask more detailed questions to find out if their struggles are resulted from a difficulty in understanding, or are rather due to the newness of an activity. Any response would give teachers a new idea of how to tailor their lesson plans to meet the student’s learning expectations.

When it comes to critical thinking, almost all my teacher participants in the interviews mentioned the lack of motivation and barrier of language on the side of the students. I believe the teachers experience a lot of frustration when the students do not have the language skills to understand the instructions as well as the courage to ask
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for clarification and help. However, I also believe even if the students understand the
language they may not comprehend the expectations of a critical thinking questions
because they seldom meet this type of question back in their home country. Teachers
need to remember that students cannot self-advocate for something they do not realize
they are missing. Therefore, teachers need to be educated about their students’
different cross-cultural educational backgrounds so they can read into the difficulties
and plan accordingly to find the correct resolutions. For example, going back to my
Exploration Classroom project, I believe the real success did not only lie in the time I
gave to my students to grasp the new words and overcome the language barrier, but
also in the abundant time I offered to my students and teach them what type of
learning process they should use and what kind of thinking strategies they should
apply in achieving the learning expectations. I gave them both seeds and tools, so that
they can plant and harvest.

I think it is also very necessary for schools or school board to open admission
orientation classes for newly arrived students and parents as it is important for these
new families to be aware of the cultural aspect of education and be prepared that some
of the learning expectations might not be met in the way they assume. Stigler and
Hiebert (1999) stated that teaching is a cultural activity. I firmly believe that all the
teachers, especially the ones I interviewed, eagerly hoped to help all of their Chinese
students to succeed in Canada. I also think teachers should be provided with certain
assessment tools to formatively assess Chinese students’ critical thinking skills and
understand that some students are actually amazing critical thinkers well versed in
another language. However, if the student finds difficulty in this area even in the
mother tongue, then there could be a supplementary plan to break down the task into
more manageable pieces.
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Taking the growing success into a second thought, working in a culturally diverse classroom with newly arrived students calls for an additional set of assessment criteria for students with a previous educational experience in other countries. This assessment tool will be used to teach skills required in Canadian schools that may not be sufficiently taught in the student’s previous schooling. Teachers can have access to evaluate what difficulties may appear linguistically and what may be culturally. This awareness will also enable teachers to observe special learning needs or an individual learning plan if the students do not respond well in all adaptations.

I still believe the main reason why so many Chinese families are sending their children faraway across the seas to pursue their education in Canada is that Canadian teachers do their best to help students succeed. To keep this reputation globalized and market our education philosophy more profoundly, the next step is an ongoing effort to identify areas where Chinese students need pointed help so that they can finally develop scaffolding methods that fit with the individual teacher’s style while meeting their families education expectation at the same time. Providing the teachers with resources and information that they can find out where the problems stem from, providing the students with opportunities to learn what learning skills should be learned first, providing the parents with knowledge that they need to digest in order to keep calm when they find certain expectations are not being addressed due to cross-cultural educational experience, these are the three most important recommendations that I harvested from this research project. This is not an issue of stereotyping or pigeon-holing new Chinese students to Canada, but rather of recognizing that they may have come from a culturally different classroom and thus require assistance in becoming accustomed to the new educational-culture.
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It is vital for Canadian teachers to explore effective ways to convince the Chinese students as well as their parents that academic excellence is only one aspect of a student’s overall growth, while social skills and adaptability are equally important in Canadian classrooms. However, diminishing the importance of academic performance reflected by marks and over emphasizing the paramount value of social skills and adaptability will also do harm to create a balanced relationship in the classroom. Academic capabilities, social skills and adaptability are three equally important learning expectations Canadian teachers need to convince their Chinese students and families. Advantaging any one of the three over the other will be detrimental to an inclusive and effective classroom.

Further Research

It is very obvious that the biggest limitations of this study was that it did not include any data from the interviews or surveys of Chinese students or their parents. There is no lack of Chinese students or families to work with since the number of newly arrived Chinese students in Canada is rocketing each year. The valuable reflections that students themselves or parents themselves could come up with after looking into all the areas discussed in the research could be significant and immense. I believe there will be a lot of different insight and response generated from the conversations and interviews with students and families. Therefore, I hope to continue this research by looking for opportunities to conduct the talking to students and families.

What is additional is that students who have been in Canada for a couple of years and managed to get help from some teachers who identified their needs and successfully met up their learning expectations may be able to shed more light on this research. Their response may be of extra help to help teachers learn from each other.
about how to do an excellent job of scaffolding all students learning, even though some of these teachers are not aware of the cross-cultural educational aspects.

If possible, an ideal follow up research would be like several schools with the similar number of Chinese students working together to have a group of students and teachers interviewed for several times. Both teachers and students will be provided with adequate information on the progress of their adaptation and adjustment. A study like this would allow for a great assessment for whether teachers being provided with enough information will be able to do more effective teaching actions to Chinese students and in what ways they are making the effectiveness happen. Students who participate in this ideal research will benefit most from the ongoing process as they will be able to offer feedback right after a new strategy or skill has been used to meet their learning expectations and whether the effectiveness has been realized or to what extent it has been realized can be assessed in a more timely manner.

The other apparent limitation in this research was the narrow scope being focused only on Chinese students. There are so many different educational cross cultures living in Canada. A broader study will be of great help to students from other backgrounds. I do see many schools having a large number of black African students or students speaking Portuguese or other ethnic groups. I believe there is a large demand lying out there for educational researchers to do more specific study in order to address different learning expectations from different cultural backgrounds.

No matter how hard we work, of course there are always limitations occurring that there is no simple answer to how to best help newly arrived students in Canada. However, the more effort we are willing to make and the more research that is available to secondary school teachers, the greater awareness the teachers will have to help them address the needs from different cross-cultural experience and meet
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different students’ learning expectations in a more efficient way. Canadian teachers have been well known for their expertise in classroom teaching and I think all teachers deserve to be offered more resources to help them be more excellent. Where there is a will, there is a way.

Conclusions

Whenever cross-cultural experience is interfering with a person’s education, it is very natural for people to assume that students will be seen as having invisible deficits. The main purpose of doing this research is to help address that cultural differences might impede the learning progress of Chinese students, but differences could be learned and analyzed so that strategies might be designed to deal with the problems. If differences are not taught in correct ways, they will turn into misunderstandings interfering with the daily learning experience and thus not only delaying the timely adaptation of Chinese students but also destroy their confidence in making Canadian schooling successful.

It is crucial to recognize that Canadian education system is culturally biased, just as other systems worldwide. The ethnocentrism exists in every aspect of social life, including classrooms. Secondly, students arriving in a new education-culture have gathered all their courage to learn and I believe all of them have prepared themselves for difficulties and challenges. They need to be reminded that since they are prepared for an entirely different environment, the new one needs them to take patience and learn the skills before they learn the knowledge.

Moreover, we also need to recognize that none of us could predict how any newly arrived student will respond when their learning expectation is not met or how their parents will react when their initial needs are not being addressed in the way expected. The variation within a group is so great that effective teaching skills can be
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invented, tried and enhanced in many different ways to make better learning experience available to students from all other ethnic backgrounds.

I value the multicultural environment of Toronto and it is the very first reason I decided to immigrate to this great country five years ago. I believe different cultures should be celebrated in the classroom, but the mainstream Canadian educational expectations should still need to be met. Misunderstandings and deficits are not allowed to be passed over because they do not belong to Canadian mainstream culture. Most importantly, teachers can not attribute an ineffective teaching outcome to the different learning expectation resulted from a cross-culture experience or the gap between students’ learning expectations and the actual Canadian educational expectations. Students’ previous educational cultural experience deserve to be taken into consideration and help the teachers to increase the chances of appropriately and timely responding to students’ learning expectations.

Nowadays, Canada is competing against other countries, like the U.S, Australia and Great Britain in attracting international students to choose Canadian schools over others. Last but not least, I always believe that looking for effective teaching skills to respond to Chinese students’ learning expectations is a win-win situation for Canadian schools. If Canadian schools can do better than schools in other countries in accommodating international students and help them live and study comfortably with the cross-cultural educational experience, many more of them will select Canada as their ideal place to study abroad, which will inevitably help to boom the education related industries in Canada, as well as employment opportunities for people who have passion for a job in Canadian education.
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Letter of Consent for Interview

Date: ___________________

Dear ___________________,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying culture in the classroom for the purposes of a graduate research project. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the research process this year is Dr. Patrick Finnessy. My research supervisor is also Dr. Garfield Gini-Newman. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My research data collection consists of a 15 minute initial email interview and a 30 minute follow-up interview that will be tape-recorded through online social media. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.

The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final research paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a research conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher name: Maggie (Zhuohe) Ying
Phone number, email: 647-890-3098, zhuoheying@gmail.com
Instructor and Research Supervisor’s Name: Dr. Patrick Finnessy, pk.finnessy@utoronto.ca Dr. Garfield Gini-Newman, ggininewman.gini.newman@utoronto.ca
**Consent Form**

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Maggie Ying and agree to participate in interviews for the purposes described.

Signature: ________________________________

Name (printed): ________________________________

Date: __________________________

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Maggie Ying and agree to participate in interviews for the purposes described.

Signature: ________________________________

Name (printed): ________________________________

Date: __________________________
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Email Introductory Interview Questions:

I would like to do this email interview questions before a face-to-face interview so that I can give my interviewees time to consider what and how they are going to respond to my questions. Meanwhile, I can collect information that is necessary for me to understand more about their institutional biographies as educators.

- Can you tell me where did you grow up and go to school?
- Can you tell me a bit about your history as an educator?
- Can you describe the cultural diversity in your current school and classes?
- Can you describe the observations you have made about the Chinese students and their parents in terms of learning expectations? What kinds of learning do you think they value and consider effective? You may express your ideas from the three aspects of academic outcomes, social skills and sense of inclusion.
- In your opinion, what should be valued as effective teaching to Chinese students in Canadian classrooms?

Thank you for taking the time to answer all the questions. I would like to ask you to consider what teaching strategies you have used to address the Chinese students’ learning expectations over the next few weeks.
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Secondary face-to-face Interview

I would like to begin by clarifying a definition for the purpose of this interview. When I am referring to students who are Chinese I am referring to those who have completed much of their education in China, regardless of their English level.

• Would you like to start by sharing any thoughts you have had or observations you have made since our last conversation?

• Do you want to add something about the main difference between Chinese students and Canadian students with regards to learning expectations?

• Would you share some of your effective teaching skills that you have used to respond to Chinese students’ learning expectations?

• Are there any observations or experiences you have had about not being able to effective teach Chinese students due to the difference in learning expectations?

• Do you have any suggestions or ideas that you consider applicable for the schools, teachers, parents or government to take in order to address Chinese students’ learning expectations in a more effective way?