

# *A Review of the Suggestions of Acculturation for Chinese International Students in America*

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**Abstract:** As the top destination for international students, America receives a large number of international students. Among these international students, Chinese students make up the majority of the population, but their adjustment rate is consistently low. In this context, it is worth discussing how to improve the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students. This study provides a review of suggestions given by previous researchers. Drawing on acculturation theory, these suggestions have been reorganized and summarized. The review aims to provide guidance to Chinese students and help them improve their cross-cultural adaptation. It provides a new approach to improving cross-cultural adaptation. This review finds the relationship between cross-cultural adaptation and internationalization. There are many similarities and even overlaps between strategies to improve internationalization and strategies to improve cross-cultural adaptation. And the advance of internationalization is positively related to the improvement of cross-cultural adaptation of international students. Additionally, the cross-cultural adaptation of minorities needs constant attention, especially Chinese students. American government and schools continue to accept international students and must also pay attention to their acculturation. Strategic updates should keep pace with the times and look at issues from new perspectives.

**Keywords:** adaptation, Chinese international student, internationalization

## 1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, the number of students studying abroad is increasing. One of the best examples is in America, which continues to draw the most skilled immigrants and international students worldwide [1]. About 1.1 million international students were enrolled in U.S. institutions during the school year 2019-2020 (MPI). Whereas Chinese students make up the largest portion of international students in America. The majority of international students studying in the United States are originally from China, totaling 290,086 students in the 2021/22 school year. (see Figure 2) Representing 31% of all current overseas students [2]. Chinese overseas students, in particular, are more likely than their European counterparts to face stress and difficulty adjusting to North American culture because of the greater cultural barrier [3]. This means that Chinese students face a huge challenge when studying abroad. Chinese international students are the largest minority in the U.S. Whilst, because of the evolving relationship between the United States and China and the uniqueness of Chinese culture and society, school and Study Abroad Policies might be difficult to implement. So the study of Chinese students in the U.S. has become more meaningful.

Many scholars have identified this problem. They conduct research and make suggestions to help Chinese international students. The recommendations are comprehensive, covering various areas such as psychology and social culture. However, “after a decade of record-breaking Chinese student enrolment, American colleges are beginning to experience sharp decreases. (AP reports). Between 2019 and 2021 witnessed a steady decline in the number of college and university students from China to the United States from 372,532 students to 290,086 students. (figure1) According to polls done by New Oriental, in 2015, almost half of Chinese students wishing to study abroad for a higher education planned to do it in the United States. By 2022, that number had fallen to 30%. This indicates that Chinese students still have problems in the process of cross-cultural adaptation. It is reasonable to suspect that these suggestions are not implemented precisely and effectively to help Chinese international students.

This study will summarize these suggestions for acculturation. These suggestions can be grouped into two main categories, social support and personal competence. Based on this, different branches are refined. It aims to make the content more straightforward To help international students find ways to adapt and improve their competence in cross-cultural adaptation. Also, it provides schools with more apparent theoretical knowledge to adjust improvement measures in time. The study has discovered blanks in previous studies in order to provide a direction for further investigation.

## 2. Acculturation

Acculturation is first defined as “those phenomena that occur when groups of people from different cultures interact continuously, leading to changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups.” [4]. This was followed by Berry’s research and publication, which further deepened the understanding of the concept. He defines the different cultural groups in a plural society with proper nouns, like “mainstream,” “minority,” “ethnic group,” and so on [5].

Initially, acculturation was thought of as a one-dimensional process that solely included the immigrant, with the theory being that the immigrant went through a process of giving up their cultural background and embracing the culture of the host nation [6]. However, as it developed, the areas in which it was applied gradually expanded, and it was also used to analyze minority groups, including international students. The expansion of the research field is accompanied by the refinement of the concept. In the research on the subject of psychological acculturation, a difference between psychological and social acculturation has been made [7]. The first is a group of internal psychological results, while the second is a group of exterior psychological outcomes that connect people to their new environment and include their capacity for problem-solving [5].

Many of the suggestions made by experts in the paper draw on one of Berry’s acculturation strategy models. First, he proposes two central issues, for which different choices are made, generating four behavioral strategies in the cross-cultural process. Acculturation strategy may be influenced by the larger national context. For example, people may choose to match such a strategy with their own inclination for integration into cultures that are overtly multicultural [5]. Accordingly, I argue that Chinese students lack experience in living in a diverse society. Society in China is still homogenized except for a few big cities, such as Beijing, and Shanghai. Chinese students generally do not have the relevant knowledge base. So they need assistance in cross-cultural adaptation.

## 3. International Student and Stereotype

“Internationally mobile students are those who have physically crossed an international border between two countries with the intention of taking part in educational activities in the destination country, which is different from the student’s country of origin.” (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, n.d.) According to previous studies, Americans generally have several impressions of Chinese

students and these stereotypes are changing over time. Asian images in advertising are often those of “model minorities” [8]. ACE has conducted a survey on American attitudes toward international students. American’s positive attitudes are more prevalent than unfavorable ones toward overseas students. But this idea is based on the national interest. Moreover, half (55%) of those surveyed concur that “the United States should encourage more students from other nations to study in the United States in order to boost the U.S. economy and contribute to our level of international competitiveness. (ACE) Respondents expressed some concern about perceived risks to national security [9]. The attitude of the American people towards Chinese students is generally positive, but stereotypes and some thoughts that are not conducive to cross-cultural integration still exist. Despite the fact that this stereotype may seem favorable, it can have detrimental effects on people both inside and beyond the group [8].

#### **4. Suggested Strategies to Improve Cross-cultural Adaptation of International Students**

##### **4.1. Social Support**

Social support is a manifestation of the reciprocity and affection that characterize the connection between the parties rather than a commodity that belongs to the donor and is transferred to the recipient [10]. Better adaption results were typically associated with more effective utilization of techniques and social support [11]. Based on previous research, it is proposed that the precision of providing social support is important. The precision here refers to the control of the specific target, the degree of support and the way of support in the process of social support for international students.

In the initial phase of the acculturation process, family [12,13] and counselor support [14] plays an important role. When international students first arrive to a new culture, they don’t know anyone. Family is the only spiritual connection which can also provide them with moral and material support. In terms of counselors, they may be the first people international students meet at this school.

Schools can provide consulting services. By teaching faculty, doctors, and other individuals involved in the care of these students to recognize signs of psychological distress and to direct them toward helpful campus services, counseling center staff and other professionals who work with international students on U.S. campuses may need to build a larger network of resources for international students [15]. After a period of enrollment, students will get to know more of their classmates and teachers, and this is the time when their role needs to be considered. To assist overseas students who prefer to turn to peers for support rather than professors, counseling services might offer a peer counseling program [15]. It is significant to note here that interacting with different students has different effects on cross-cultural adaptation. A great connection with local friends will lead to a better cross-cultural adaptive. However, an excessive support from non-local friends will diminish the integration with the dominant culture [11]. So it suggests that international students should take initiative to interact with local people.

##### **4.2. Social Networks**

Researchers have argued that schools should support Chinese students to utilize SNSs in advance when making plans to study abroad [2]. This will build connections between Chinese and local students and help with cross-cultural adaptation.

The targeted building of social networks, choosing the right approach according to different groups. Due to the national and social conditions in China, social networks are more special for Chinese students and should be considered separately. Users’ social capital and adaptations would be influenced by personality factors and cultural variances [16]. Host institutions should think about developing their own internal SNSs in order to solve the problem of China’s blocked network [2]. Also, the size of the social network can help to indicate students’ social adjustment [17]. Monitoring

students' social network status is a way to help schools understand their students, and schools can use the data to analyze it and provide the assistance they need promptly.

### **4.3. Personal Competence**

#### **4.3.1. Improve Language Skills**

Scholars argue that language barriers are the main reason for poor cross-cultural adaptation. The foreign students' reluctance to participate in unstructured recreational activities with their mainstream peers was mostly due to their limited language skills [18]. Chinese students rarely initiate communication [19], or we call it "passively" taking initiative [20]. Therefore, improving language skills is a priority for international students. Speaking and writing are two essential abilities for studying and living abroad. Thus oral training should be appropriately emphasized [19]. Yuen Yee Hor and Ahmad Jazimin Jusoh said, some students can utilize their first language as a tool for learning. [21] For example, if the points taught in class are not clear, they can search through Chinese to help understand. However, this approach is only suitable for the initial adaptation phase of studying abroad. It should not be used for a long period of time and will make students dependent. It is not conducive to the formation of a linguistic mind.

Chinese students should form an English mind and have a growth mindset. Although recently arrived migrants are less likely to use English and are more nervous about it, they are resilient, especially when they see the potential for improvement in their new language [22]. A less worried, more likely to use English, and more proficient group of migrants were those with stronger growth mindsets [23]. Always have a growth mindset when learning a language. Students learning English as a second language (ESL) will benefit from growth mindsets to excel in language learning and intercultural dialogue [23].

#### **4.3.2. Improve Survival and Social Skills**

A few Chinese students came to the country prepared for some form of prejudice and an unwelcoming reception from the locals [20]. Under this mindset, some students said it is challenging to interact with Americans more [19].

International students must abandon this type of thinking and actively participate in leisure activities. In 2018, researchers mentioned two active experimentation strategies: increasing interaction with Americans and adopting their ways of doing things [20].

In terms of life, It is advised that students develop a feeling of self-management apart from their parents, learn to cook, and become self-sufficient in all facets of their lives [19].

## **5. Implications of Internationalization for Improving Cross-cultural Adaptation**

### **5.1. Internationalization**

The definition is "The process of incorporating an international, multicultural, or global component into the goals, operations, or delivery of postsecondary education is known as internationalization at the national, sector, and institutional levels." An additional point is "the process of incorporating an international or intercultural dimension into the institution's teaching, research, and service functions." [24]. There is a common phenomenon that more and more universities around the world are embracing internationalization [25].

Previous studies have focused on the application of internationalization in education and the adaptation of students in the context of internationalization in higher education. Many of the strategies to improve internationalization and strategies to improve cross-cultural adaptation are similar or even

overlap. So I think there must be a significant correlation between these two fields, which can be studied together. Reviewing previous studies, limited attention has been paid to the contribution of school internationalization to the cross-cultural adjustment of international students.

### **5.1.1. Preparation for Studying Abroad: In China**

Advancing internationalization in higher education can prepare students for an interrelated world (American Council on Education, 2022) Many Chinese universities are overhauling their teaching policies and curricula by implementing EMI (English as a medium language) and incorporating cutting-edge educational strategies and governance frameworks from top Western universities [26]. It suggests that Chinese students who decide to study abroad can study at a local international school in China for a period of time. In order to experience the plural society in advance, attain an opportunity to develop their cross-cultural thinking.

In the small international community that the school has created, Chinese students will find problems when interacting with international students. In an environment where the Chinese are the dominant group, they can solve problems more easily. Identify problems ahead of time and solve them. It is instructive for cross-cultural adaptation after going abroad. Whist, they can eliminate stereotypes about foreign students. Realize that stereotypes are mutual [20]. For example, there are five main stereotypes that American students have about Chinese students, they are smart/hardworking, kind, bad at speaking English, quiet/shy, loud/ intrusive on personal space [27]. In sum, international schools create a small multicultural society that provides students with a simulated study abroad experience. It is positively helpful to improve the cross-cultural adaptation of international students after they leave the country.

### **5.1.2. Study Abroad: American Universities**

In order to improve internationalization in higher education. Study abroad programs, enlisting international students, and the internationalization of staff are three efficient educational tactics used by American colleges [28]. ACE's latest research also mentioned to focus on the important role of faculty and technology. In the 21st century, the application of technology should be considered in every field. Technology is an important factor for student services. (ACE, 2022) This approach greatly reduces the need for faculty and frees up more of the workforce. It is recommended that faculty primarily take on the task of internationalizing the classroom. If an institution has funding for only one internationalization approach, it should be faculty development since faculty engagement is crucial for internationalization to take place [28]. The internationalization of the classroom is enhanced by means of intellectual and cultural popularization and group activities. Promote mutual understanding between local and international students. This is a good way to improve the adaptation of international students.

On the whole, internationalization is developing well, but in terms of details, there are still loopholes and shortcomings. American Council on Education has discovered some weaknesses in Internationalization. For example, they found the proportion of students taking foreign languages in all courses remained constant. Figure 3 shows 12 most frequently offered language in the United States university. Spanish was by far the most popular language course, with 53.2% enrollments in 1995, which means more than half the students have a preference to learn this language. French and German accounted for the second and third percentage respectively. After that, the table demonstrates that students tend to have more knowledge about Spanish and French, reaching 33.9% and 12.6% respectively. (See Figure 3) Students liked studying foreign cultures and languages with an emphasis on Western nations. Even though American universities have aspired to promote the internationalization of their schools, there is still an internal imbalance in development that is

detrimental to the cross-cultural adaptation of minorities such as those in Asia and Africa.

## 6. Conclusion

American schools have been working tirelessly to provide international students with assistance to improve their cross-cultural adaptation. In acculturation, it is more significant for Chinese students to work hard alone. Read these guidelines and actively seek changes. The school's cross-cultural adaptation strategy and internationalization strategy can be implemented simultaneously. Explore the relationship, differences and similarities. Use the same strategy for the similarities and consider the interplay for the differences. This saves resources and provides new perspectives for thinking about both areas. There is still a need for constructive suggestions to improve the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students.

## Figures

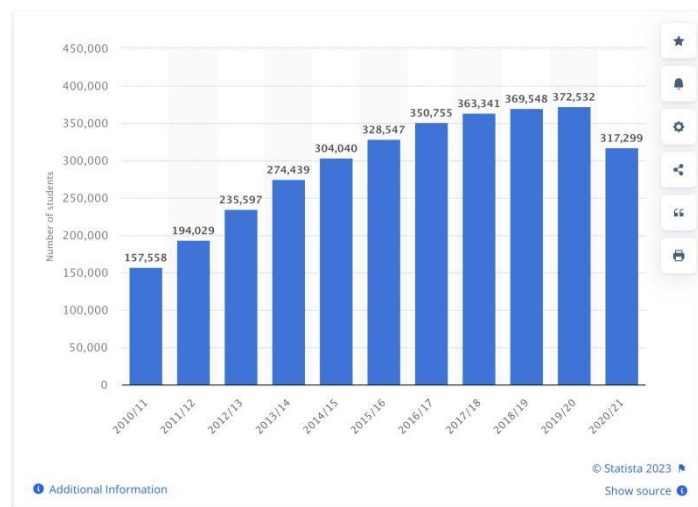


Figure 1: Number of international students studying in the United States in 2021/22, by country of origin.

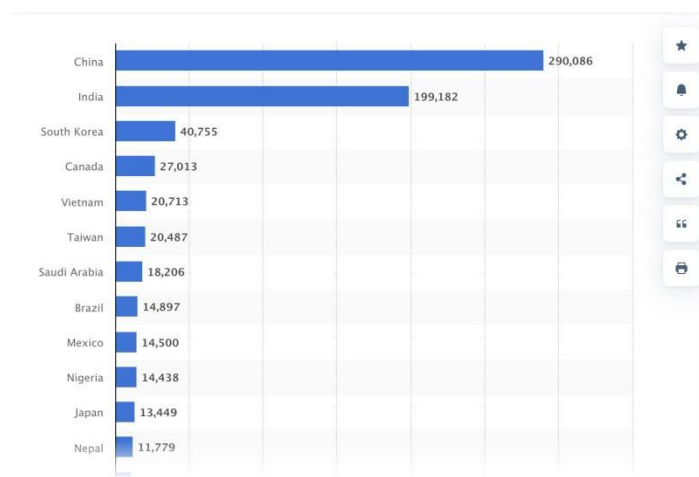


Figure 2: Number of college and university students from China in the United States from academic year 2010/11 to 2020/21.



	Share of Institutions <sup>1</sup> Offering Languages (2002)	Share of Total Language Enrollments (1995)	Share of All Students with Language Knowledge <sup>2</sup> (2002)
Arabic	7.2	.4	.3
Chinese	18.7	2.3	.9
French	73.7	18.0	12.6
German	54.3	8.5	5.9
Greek <sup>3</sup>	12.0	1.4	.6
Hebrew	7.5	1.2	.9
Italian	23.9	3.8	2.2
Japanese	29.4	3.9	.9
Latin	14.0	2.3	2.0
Portuguese	4.3	.6	1.1
Russian	15.9	2.2	1.0
Spanish	89.3	53.2	33.9

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Brod and Welles, op. cit.  
<sup>2</sup> The question was: "Besides English, please list the other languages you can speak or read."  
<sup>3</sup> Includes modern and ancient Greek.

Figure 3: Most commonly offered languages and percentage of total language enrollments.

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