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A Study of Drop-out Chinese International Students from a Canadian Pre-University  
English Language Improvement Program: Acculturation Experiences and Challenges

by

Peiyu Wang

A Thesis

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

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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English Language Improvement Program: Acculturation Experiences and Challenges

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June 14, 2016

## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

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## ABSTRACT

With an increasing number of international students coming to Canada for higher education, Canadian universities are offering diverse English Language Improvement Programs (ELIP) to increase education opportunities. However, some Chinese international students are found cannot pass this program, eventually result in withdrawing. The purpose of this study is to understand the life and learning experiences of drop-out Chinese international students who used to study in ELIP, and also seeks to explain the their retention and dropout in this program. Data were collected through interviews, and five participants took part in this study. Chinese international students in this study dropped out of ELIP due to academic failure and largely regard ELIP learning as a waste of time. Possible factors have been raised may cause students' academic failure, which include low learning and integrative motivation, lack of time management and self-regulation, and an inability to adapt to distinctive learning and teacher-student relationships.

## **DEDICATION**

**To myself**

**To my parents**

**To my grandparents**

**To the professors who have been inspiring me**

**To the Faculty of Education**

**To all Chinese international students**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. George Zhou, who has supported me throughout my thesis with his guidance, patience, and insights whilst allowing me the room to work in my own way. Dr. George Zhou has encouraged me to pursue further educational research in the second semester of my graduate learning, and it would be impossible to finish this thesis without the support and help I received from him. I still remember how he inspired me to conduct research, and encouraged me to be an educational scholar. His priceless guidance has made my research valuable learning process.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

With an increasing number of international students select North America countries as destinations to pursue their higher education, from 2011 to 2013, the total international students' enrollment in post-secondary institutions increased by 15.9%, establishing a record of approximately 886,052 (International Students in the United States, 2014). For post-secondary institutions in Canada, the statistic reveals that between 2003 and 2013, international students' enrollment grew from 159,426 to 290,00, an increase of 84%. With this trend, international students comprised the total of 8% (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2015) post-secondary students in Canada, so that Canada became the seventh most popular abroad studying destination.

The policy of Chinese economic reform allowed Chinese students to study abroad since the late 1970s, in order to promote modernization through international scholarly and technological exchanges (Yan & Berliner, 2011). After that, an increasing number of Chinese students have gone abroad to study to exchange their knowledge as well as absorb advanced technologies. Both the government and parents give adequate financial supports with high expectation; however, research has broadly indicated that challenges and problems exist when international students are immersed in the new academic and social environments (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Kennedy, 1999; Lin & Yi, 1997; Lu, 1990; Xu, 1991).

Apart from some challenges faced by local students such as academic problems, identity conflict during adolescence, and school transition stresses, international students

also have to deal with problems like insufficient language proficiency, lack of culture skills, homesickness and loneliness, and prejudice and discrimination (Berry, 1997; Mori, 2000; Kim & Abreu, 2001; Lee, Koeske & Sales, 2004; Russell, Rosenthal and Thomson, 2010). According to a Canadian study conducted by Salvarajah (2006), international students have struggled with more problems than their Canadian peers in terms of communication and prejudice. Among these international students, Chinese students are one of the international groups who have greater barriers to adapt to the new educational system (Yeh, 2000). Thus, Chinese international students deserve closer attention and more support in order to facilitate acculturation, allowing them to be more efficiently integrated into the new learning environment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

If Chinese international students want to study in Canada, they have to meet admission requirements set by Canadian universities. Proof of language proficiency is required and is often demonstrated by passing language tests such as TOEFL and IELTS. For example, if international students want to study in the university of Windsor (U of W), in general, they have to get minimum 6.5 IELTS and 220 TOEFL scores (U of W, 2015). In order to offer international students adequate education opportunities, several universities, such as the University of York and the U of W, set Pre-university English Language Improvement Program (ELIP) for those students who do not have sufficient language proficiency (University of York, 2015; U of W, 2015). By providing quality English language instructions, pre-university ELIP enables non-native students to gain sufficient mastery of English and prepares them in specific use of English for academic

purposes. Even though some students successfully complete pre-university ELIP and pursue their study at Canadian universities, there are still a number of students who cannot pass this program, eventually result in delaying their academic studies for years, or even causing them to withdraw. For instance, according to Watt and Roessingh (2001), the ESL students' dropout rates have remained for 73% to 76% of the total amount for nearly a decade, and it presented that ESL students are at high risk for dropout.

Previous studies on international students' acculturation focus on four primary topics. Some studies, such as research conducted by Zheng and Berry (1991), McInnis and James (1995), Kuo and Roysircar (2006), and Salvarajah (2006), compared international students with local students and found that learning differences existing between two distinctive groups. Otherwise, studies, like those conducted by Wan, Chapman and Biggs (1992), emphasized the academic experiences of international students and explored the barriers they experience in making academic progress (e.g., Campbell & Li, 2007; Hellsten & Prescott, 2004; Lin & Yi, 1997; Trice, 2003; Wan, Chapman & Biggs, 1992; Xu, 1991). Other studies, like Severiens and Wolff (2008), focused on the social life of international students in the host country, let both educators and researchers realize that social circumstances such as friends, family, and relationships between students and teachers have a significant impact on international students' academic performance (e.g., Severiens & Wolff, 2008) and social adaptation (e.g., Gloria et al., 2005; Meeuwisse et al., 2010). Additionally, a number of studies (e.g., Chen, 1999; Kwon, 2009; Yang, Noels, & Saumure, 2006; Zhang & Brunton, 2007; Zhang & Goodson, 2011; Zhang & Zhou, 2010) investigated the relationship between English language proficiency and acculturation and reported a positive correlation between

English competence and academic achievement.

Studies on international students have failed to consider the time factor. Since many studies have confirmed that language is one of the most significant barrier for international students (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Trice, 2003; Zhang & Goodson, 2011; Zhou & Zhang, 2014; Zhang & Zhou, 2010), the international students who study in pre-university ELIP might deserve more attention from researchers due to they have little time to get themselves used to the language and academic context. In other words, ELIP international students might need even more support compared with other international students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Chinese students, who accounted for the largest percentage (32.42%) in Canadian international students in 2013 (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2015), have drawn much attention from researchers. With the rapidly increasing number of international students, especially Chinese international students, Canadian universities have become increasingly multicultural. However, significant culture differences exist between China and Canada. Chinese international students, who are mostly influenced by Chinese culture, find mainstream society in North America countries surprisingly foreign (Ye, 2006). As a result, the process of acculturation for Chinese international students takes longer and they experience more challenges than other groups of international students.

The purpose of this study is to understand the life and learning experiences of

dropout Chinese international students who previously studied in a pre-university ELIP, and also seeks to explain their retention and dropout in this program. This study draws upon multiple case studies with the intent to discover academic and social challenges faced by Chinese international students. Otherwise, this study aims to explore strategies and support services that help Chinese international students successfully integrate into the new educational system. With this understanding and attention, researchers can isolate variables and develop model about dropout behavior. Administrators and teachers can then develop more supportive services to address this issue.

In this study, the researcher focused on exploring ELIP Chinese international students' acculturative experiences and their drop out stories. The research questions are designed based on the research purpose that as followed:

1. How do drop-out Chinese international students in pre-university ELIP describe their learning and life experiences in Canada?
2. What were the challenges faced by the students during their programs of study?
3. Why do Chinese international students withdraw from pre-university ELIP?
4. What are meaningful strategies and services that could better serve and support Chinese international students so that they can successfully integrate into the Canadian educational system?

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two theoretical frameworks are employed in the current study: Berry's stress-coping framework, and Tinto's theoretical model of dropout behavior. Berry's framework is central as it outlines the group and individual factors that impact acculturation, while Tinto's model is essential as it outlines the internal and external factors that impact dropout rates.

#### **Berry's Stress-coping Framework**

Berry's stress-coping framework regards the cross-culture experiences as a major life event that is characterized by stress, demands, and cognitive appraisal of situations, which results in affective, behavioral, and cognitive coping responses. According to Berry (1997), acculturative processes require coping strategies, which are influenced by social and individual factors. To be precise, on the macro-level, characteristics of settlement and origin society have a significant impact on sojourners discriminating features of these societies may include social, political and demographic factors. On the micro-level, features of individual sojourners situational aspects of the acculturative experience exert influences on stress, coping and adaptation. The above mentioned influences are distinguished into factors arising prior to acculturation such as personality, age, gender and expectation, and factors during acculturation like acculturation strategies, coping strategies, and social support.

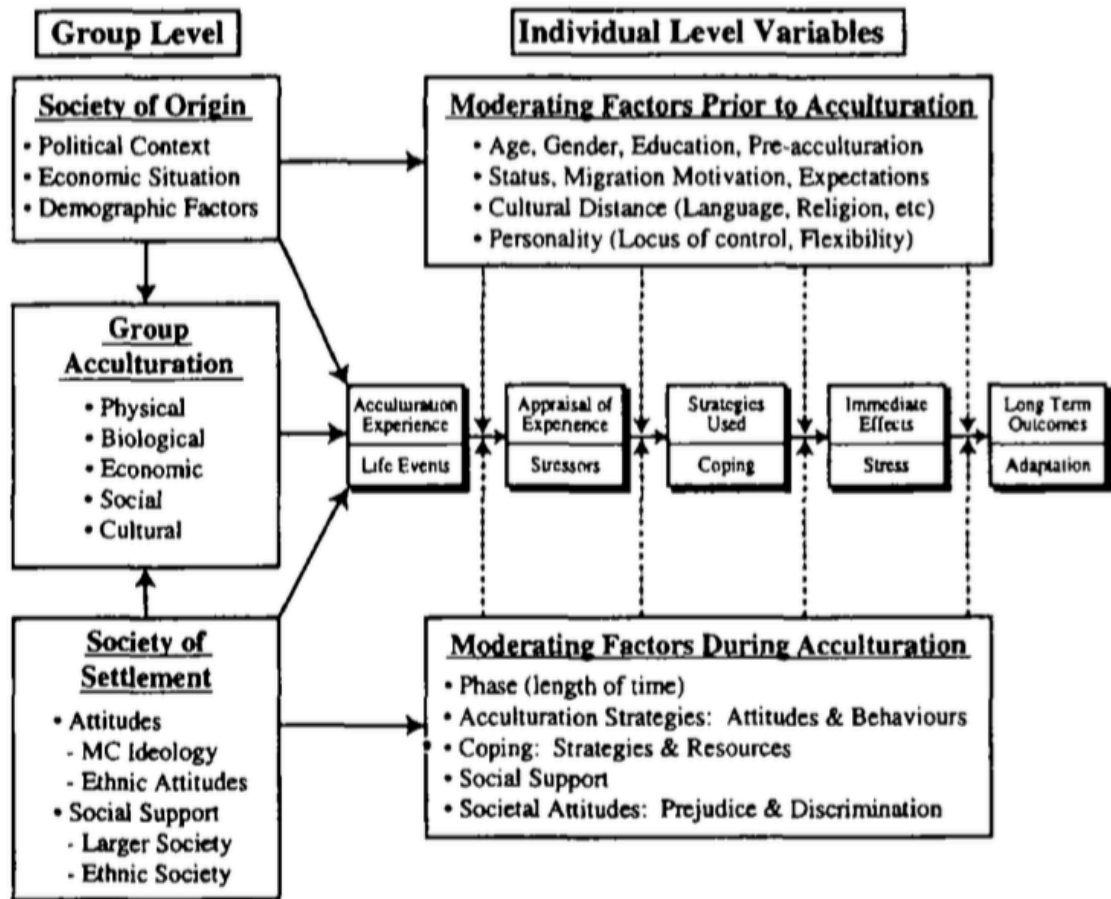


Figure 1. Stress and Coping Framework for Acculturation Research (Berry, 1997 p. 15)

### Group-level (Macro-level) Factors

The Stress and Coping Framework (1997) outlines that group-level factors significantly influence sojourners' acculturation process, which include the society of origin and the society of settlement, and changes happen between both societies.

**Society of origin.** Based on Berry's (1997) model, culture characteristics must be described in order to identify cultural distance between the society of settlement and the



society of origin. The combination of political, economic, and demographic conditions being faced by individuals also need to be studied in order to establish a fundamental understanding of individuals who going through acculturation process and their motivations with respect to migration.

**Society of settlement.** Berry (1997) argues that the general orientations of the settlement society and its citizens have towards immigration and pluralism affect sojourners' acculturation process. It is essential to understand immigrants' traditional and attitudinal situation during the acculturation process because discrimination characteristics of the host country, such as the extent of cultural pluralism, ethnic composition, and attitudes towards ethnic and cultural out-groups, determine whether this country can provide a diverse environment for sojourners to fit in.

**Group-level acculturation.** Living within two cultures often causes migrant groups to change substantially, which includes physical (urbanization, increased population density), biological (new dietary, new diseases), economic (loss of status, new employment opportunities), social (range from new disrupted communities to new social networks), and culture (range from superficial changes, like eaten and worn, to deeper changes that may involve language, religion, and values) (Berry, 1997).

### **Individual-level (Micro-level) Factors**

Rather than focus on group-level acculturation, Berry's stress-coping framework (1997) centers on factors that may influence individual-level acculturation. Variables such as age, gender, education and social status, expectations and motivation, culture distance, length of stay, knowledge and skills, acculturation and coping strategies, and

social support significantly influence sojourners' acculturation process and determine whether international students will be able to acculturate to the new environment or not.

**Factors existing prior to acculturation.** Berry (1997) states sojourners settle in a new environment with a number of demographical and social characteristics. Several factors that include gender, education, expectation, background, and personal factors influenced by these characteristics impact the process of acculturation, especially one's age has a known relationship to the cross-culture adaptation. According to this model, if acculturation starts early, the process is generally smooth. However, substantial problems will hinder the cross-culture adaptation if it begins during later childhood, especially during adolescence; even more, acculturation will have multiply risks if it happens in later life such as on retirement (Beiser et al., 1988; Ebrahim, 1992).

Gender has a significant influence on the acculturation process. Substantial evidence has proved that females have more problems than males, and the problems depend on the relative status and different treatment for female in two diverse cultures. Education is another factor associated with acculturation process, as higher education is a predictor of lower stress. However, although higher education may reduce stress, migrants often experience a combination of status loss and limited status mobility in the society of settlement, which negates the impact higher education on their stress level.

Expectation may significantly influence migrants during the acculturation process. According to Richmond's (1993) reactive-proactive continuum of motivation, push/pull motivations and expectations have a relationship with stress and adaptation. Push/pull motivations were intended to describe what compels someone to leave their home

country and move to a new country. Incentives that attract people away from their native country are known as pull factors, while circumstances that may help an individual to decide to leave their country are known as push factors (Ward et al., 2001). It will lead to greater stress if sojourners have extremely intense or excessively high expectations of their life in the new society and such expectations are not met after migration.

Additionally, the background of the acculturating individual determines the cultural distance with the culture of new settlement. Greater cultural differences have been negatively associated with adaptation. Moreover, personal factors such as locus of control, introversion/extraversion, and self-efficacy turn to be influential to the course of acculturation.

**Factors arising during acculturation.** Acculturation strategies, coping strategies and social support have been correlated with individual acculturation. Berry (1997) outlines four acculturation strategies to describe individuals' adaptation: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Assimilation strategy is employed by an individual who do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seeks daily interactions with other cultures. In contrast, if individuals hold onto their original culture and tend to avoid interaction with other cultures, they adopt the separation strategy. Integration occurs when individuals seek to maintain their native culture while also learning about and adapting to the host culture. Finally, marginalization occurs when there is minimal interest in culture maintenance, or having relations with others (Berry, 1997). Among these four strategies, individuals who employ the integration strategy most successfully adapt to the host culture, while those in marginalization category have been seen the least success, while assimilation and separation fall in between.

Berry (1997) reveals that empirical evidence has shown acculturation strategies are linked to coping strategies. Coping strategies are primarily defined as three major functions: problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance-oriented coping. Problem-focused coping tends to facilitate successful acculturation, while emotion-focused coping attempts to regulate the emotions associated with the process of acculturation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Endler and Parker (1990) have identified the relationship between acculturation strategies and coping strategies. They concluded that integration is positively correlated with task orientation, while segregation is positively correlated with emotion and avoidance orientation, and assimilation is positively correlated with both task and emotion orientation. However, assimilation is also negatively with avoidance orientation.

### **Tinto's Theoretical Model of Dropout Behavior**

Tinto's theoretical model of dropout behavior has its roots in Durkheim's theory of individual suicide, which intends to explain the dropout rates from institutions of higher education. Based on Durkheim's (1961) suicide theory, "suicide is more likely to occur when individuals are insufficiently integrated into the fabric society" (p. 91). He states that there are two types of insufficient integration may increase the possibility of suicide: insufficient moral integration, and insufficient collective affiliation. Insufficient moral integration refers to someone who maintains values that are highly divergent from the prevailing social values, while insufficient collective affiliation refers to insufficient personal interaction with other members in the society. If the academic institution is regarded as a social system with its own value and social structures, dropping out from an

educational institution is in a manner similar to the suicide in the wider society. Thus, insufficient integration into the social system in the educational institution will cause low commitment to that social system and will eventually result in the individual leaving the school or pursue alternative activities.

Tinto (1975) states that since colleges have both academic and social components, student social integration and academic integration will influence students' performance in colleges. Students who failed either of these two modes of integration will be more likely to dropout. Academic withdrawal can take place as the result of voluntary withdrawal or forced withdrawal. In a sense, voluntary withdrawal is similar to the "suicide", while forced withdrawal primarily arises from insufficient levels of academic performance or improper academic and social behaviors. In this circumstance, Tinto views the process of academic withdrawal as a longitudinal process of interactions between the individual and academic institution and its social system.

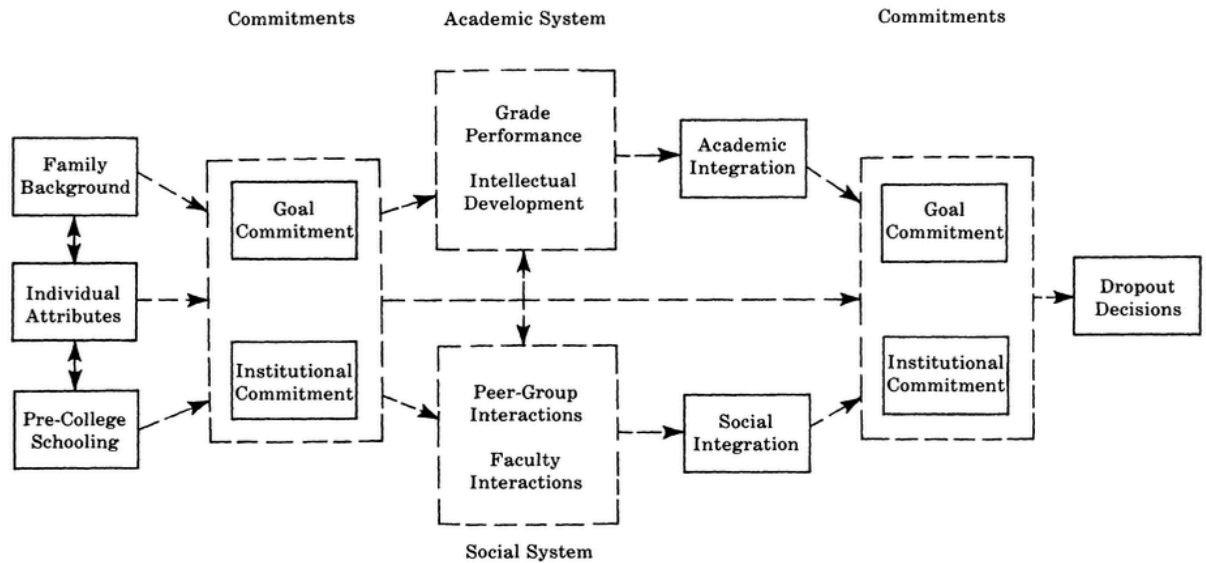


Figure 2. A Conceptual Scheme for Dropout From College (Tinto, 1975 p. 95)

### Internal Impacts on Dropouts

The academic performance of individuals entering institutions of higher education will be directly or indirectly influenced by their precollege experiences, individual attributions, and family backgrounds. These variables also have a significant impact on individuals' educational expectations and commitments. According to Tinto's dropout behavior model, whether or not the individual will withdraw from school and other forms of dropout behavior are determined by the interplay between the individual's commitment to the institution and the goal of college completion. Specifically, either low institutional commitment or low goal commitment will result in dropout behaviors. In other words, whether the individual transfers to another institution or withdraws from higher education is influenced by the distinctive levels of person's goal and institutional

commitment. So, even though an individual may have a minimal academic and social integration or a minimal institutional commitment, the presence of a high commitment to the goal of college completion may compel the individual to persist until completion of the degree, or until he/she is forced to leave. In such situations, the individual would decide transfer to another institution after dropout. In contrast, the lower an individual's commitment to the goal of college completion, the more likely he or she will withdraw from higher education.

### **External Impacts on Dropouts**

The model describes that individuals' decisions of leaving higher educational institution are influenced by external events, such as interactions within the college systems. These impacts can be easily recognized through their change of evaluations and commitment to the goal of college competition, and the institution. Based on cost-benefit theory, individuals will invest their energies to activities for a long period in which they think will maximize the rate of benefits (Tinto, 1975). Thus, individuals will choose to withdraw from college, as they believe that another activity will reap a greater reward in exchanging their time, energies and resources. These students' perspectives of attending the college can be reflected from the evolution and commitment change to the institution, and the goal of college completion during college learning period. Therefore, commitments of higher institutions and the goal of completion can reflect students' academic and social integration conditions.

Other possible factors that may influence an individual's decision of withdraw from college include the changing supply and demand in the job market, and the existence of

restrictions such as discrimination. With the reduction of an available job supply, individuals may tend to withdraw from college and invest their time and energy in the job market even if their performance in the college is satisfactory. In contrast, the restrictions that hinder individuals from exploring their potential and competence lead to noticeable dropout rates, and can be recognized through changes in the quality and quantity of individual interactions within the college environment. Essentially, even though the perception of benefits and costs has an impact on college students, individuals may hold distinctive perspectives due to different reasons and varying personal characteristics. However, it is clear that the perspectives are influenced by both individual personal characteristics and the college environment.



## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on Chinese international students who drop out of post-secondary school is difficult to find; however, the literature about international students' adaptation and acculturation is rare, especially with respect to international students and Chinese international students specifically. Since challenges related to academic and social integration, which are the possible causes of delays in students' studies and their dropout rates (Tinto, 1975; Berry, 1997), research literature about Chinese international students and international students' perceived challenges have been included. Combining Berry's Stress-coping Framework (1997) with Tinto's Theoretical Model of Dropout Behavior (1975), academic and social integration have been identified as significant influences on students' adaptation that may cause them to drop out. In order to develop a thorough understanding of the factors surrounding students' dropout behaviour, it is important to explore research that analyzes root causes that lead students' dropout. In this context, academic difficulties, linguistic challenges, academic support, sociocultural challenges, social networks, friendship networks, and psychological challenges are included in the analysis of the root of dropout causes.

This review of the literature will explore four main themes, namely: (1) international students' perceived challenges, (2) Chinese international students' perceived challenges, (3) factors influencing Chinese International students' acculturation, and (4) students' retention and dropout.

### **International Students' Perceived Challenges**

The literature has documented that even though all students undergo adaptation processes in their first year of university studies, international students experience more difficulties compared to local students, not only because of language barriers but also because international students have distinctive learning approaches and expectations (Gery, 2002; Zheng & Berry, 1991). After comparing international students with domestic students, Hanassab (2006) and Nora and Cabrera (1996) conclude that international students experience perceived prejudice and insufficient contacts with peers, faculty, and staff more often than majority students, and the lack of academic integration for international students leads to more negative consequences compared to domestic students (Eimers & Pike, 1997).

In most studies, Asian international students' demographics are primarily focused on students from China, Japan, and Korea (e.g., Heggins III & Jackson, 2003; Renshaw, 1995). These students are categorized as a single ethnic group because these three countries are Confucian-heritage countries, and Confucianism having influenced their cultures widely (Brooks & Brooks, 1998). As cultural background impacts students' learning (Holtbrügge, 2010), international students with distinctive cultural backgrounds perceive their learning environment differently (Koul & Fisher, 2005). Salvarajah (2006) argue after investigating 110 postgraduates that Asian international students have different attitudes, cultures, and learning habits compared to domestic students. Thus, he suggests the educational objectives and the preferred assessment of Asian students to be different than those of domestic students. Likewise, Renshaw (1995) reveal that Asian

students prefer social forms of academic support, provided by both staff and peer study groups, while local students think that studying alone is more effective. As a result, these distinctive increase the difficulties of Chinese international students adjusting to the dominant learning environment. McInnis and James (1995) confirmed this claim by stating that local students tend to enjoy “the intellectual challenge of their subject, finding their subjects interesting, and receiving satisfaction from studying” (p. 79), while Asian students find their academic workloads to be heavier and are concerned about linguistic difficulties, social isolation, and homesickness.

Russell, Rosenthal and Thomson (2010) observe, “Homesickness, loss of support systems, loneliness, lack of meaningful relationships with host nationals, culture shock, perceived discrimination, language differences, unfamiliar academic approaches and overload, an altering sense of identity, unrealistic family and self-expectations, financial problems, and difficulties at home in their own country” (p. 236) commonly bother international students and hinder their acculturation processes. When responding to this situation, international students experience stress and undertake its negative consequences. Psychological problems such as depression, perceived helplessness, anxiety, paranoia, and irritability frequently lead to physical problems, such as persistent sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, and low energy (Lee et al., 2004; Mori, 2000; Thomas & Althen, 1989). As international students have demonstrated more university adjustment problems compared to domestic students (Mori, 2000), such adjustment problems have caused mental illness that make international students a high-risk group (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994; Ward et al., 2001).

Discrimination has been identified as a stressor that significantly influences international students' acculturation in the literature. International students from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East commonly report significant perceived discrimination more than domestic or European international students (Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). Lee and Rice (2007) report that international students from Asia, Latin American, and the Middle East often encounter discrimination, which include direct verbal insults, exclusion from jobs, and physical attacks. Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) likewise note that participants experienced off-campus discrimination, including covert interactions to overt acts. Such discrimination and feelings have significant negative impacts on international students' adjustment, which has been related to poor psychological well-being and depression (Atri, Sharma & Cottrell, 2006; Jung, Hecht & Wadsworth, 2007; Wei et al., 2007). Recent tragic incidents happened in Australia, where Indian international students were assaulted and attacked by members of the host country. It can be regarded as one of the extreme possible prejudice examples experienced by international students (O'Loughlin, 2010; O'Malley, 2010). This event created significant fear among international students and decreased the number of Indian students coming to Australia from July to October 2009 (Harrison, 2010). It also reminded host countries that they need to take steps to address the discriminatory acts perpetrated against international students.

### **Chinese International Students' Perceived Challenges**

Chinese international students generally influenced by Chinese education so that distinctive beliefs impact learning compared to domestic students. Mau and Jespsen

(1990) found out that Chinese international students have different perceptions and behaviors when it comes to seeking help. For instance, Chinese international students' first choice for an advisor is usually a friend, while North American domestic students choose an academic advisor. Likewise, Chinese international students choose no one for help, while North American students prefer a psychiatrist. The education environment in China is also distinctive from the North American. A teacher-centered approach has dominated the Chinese educational system for a long time (Gu, 2006). As culture has an impact on students learning and determines their learning preferences (Holtbrügge, 2010), international students with distinctive culture backgrounds differently perceive their learning environment (Koul & Fisher, 2005). Even though a social constructivism approach encourages students to actively participate in class, Chinese education still puts too much emphasis on students' scores (Zhu, Valcke & Schellens, 2009). However, Canadian education emphasizes equalitarianism, individual development, independent and critical thinking, and cooperation. The two distinctive education systems increase the difficulties of Chinese international students adjusting to the new learning environment.

Influenced by Confucianism and their previous knowledge, Chinese international students are more likely to listen and learn rather than speak during the class (Dao et al., 2007; Edwards & Tokin, 1990). The previous knowledge is sometimes regarded as prior knowledge, which refers to “not only information or skills previously acquired in formal instruction but also the totality of the experiences that have shaped the learner’s identity and cognitive functioning” (Cummins et al., 2005, p. 38). This different learning preference may sometimes cause biases for Canadian teachers, or even, eventually, become discrimination against students' learning abilities, or the old-fashioned image of

Chinese students understanding the convention, which influences teachers-student relationships.

### **Factors Influencing Chinese International Students' Acculturation**

According to Tinto's theory of Student Departure (1975; 1993), students not only have to persist in their studies, in order to graduation, but also must participate in the student culture, both within and outside of the immediate learning environment. So, both academic integration and social integration influence Chinese international students' adaptation to the new environment. Combined with Berry's stress-coping framework (1997), several factors have been raised that could influence Chinese international students' acculturation or even cause them to drop out: academic difficulties, linguistic challenges, academic support, sociocultural challenges, social networks, friendship networks.

#### **Academic Integration**

**Academic difficulties.** A large number of studies have been conducted on international students' experiences in English-speaking countries. Most of studies place an emphasis on general academic obstacles faced by international students. For instance, after examining the perception of 27 academic staff members, Trice (2003) concludes that English proficiency is the main challenge for international students, and it significantly influence students' academic achievement. Likewise, Chacon (1998) surveyed the international students at the University of Albert and state that 74.4% of international students have a problem with English writing and speaking and struggle to understand their instructors in class. Later, Berman and Cheng's (2010) research

supported this result and reveal that non-native English speaking students come across more challenges than their native peers. As a matter of fact, even though international students with language difficulties are able to reach similar academic results, their GPAs are still relatively lower than native students (Berman & Cheng, 2010).

Chinese students in particular are found to have less confidence in their English abilities and are not confident about expressing their opinions, struggle with tutorials, and do not know how to behave in their new academic contexts (Zhang & Zhou, 2010). Wen and Clément (2003) explain, “It is widely recognized that while Chinese students are very good at grammar-based written examinations, they are poor speakers, often designated as ‘reticent learners’ who lack the willingness to communicate” (p. 18). According to Huang’s (2004) investigation, 53.8% of the Chinese international students experience difficulties understanding English lectures due to the rapidness of the professor’s speech, and 44.9% of the students have troubles with comprehension because of the professors’ unclear pronunciation. A similar study by Zhang and Zuo (2010) reveal that many international students face obstacles when adapting to their new educational environment. The obstacles, such as a failure to adjust themselves to Canadian teachers’ different teaching styles and understanding lectures that are delivered in English, make it difficult for international students and result in significant problems that hinder their academic progress. Furthermore, other challenges, such as financial difficulties, difficulties of adapting to the classroom-learning environment, acculturation problems, and emotional difficulties, cannot be ignored when understanding Chinese international students’ adaptation to their new environment (Huang & Klinger, 2006).

Chen (1999) argues that a lack of language proficiency is the main factor that leads to academic stress. International students who experienced academic stress have greater reactions to other stressors when adapting to their new environment, and their academic stress is demonstrated to be correlated with life stress (Misra, Crist & Burant, 2003). This finding is consistent with Rasmi et al.'s (2009) longitudinal research, which illustrates that international students who report more academic stress experience greater levels of psychological distress after 18 months. In response to this situation, international students may have negative consequences, such as depression, perceived helplessness, anxiety, paranoia, and irritability, which frequently lead to physical problems, such as persistent sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, and low energy (Lee et al., 2004; Mori, 2000; Thomas & Althen, 1989).

**Linguistic challenges.** The biggest challenge faced by most international students is language. Particularly, speaking and writing commonly barrier students make academic progress (Chacon, 1998). Mullins, Quintrell, and Hancock (1995) reveal that ESL international students having three or four times more difficulties than native students in writing assignments. Likewise, Durkin (2004), Goodman (1976), and Reid, Kirkpatrick and Mulligan (1998) state, students whose first language is not English have to spend more than twice as long as native learners to finish reading. These linguistic challenges, to some extent, can be linked to culture and educational background.

As Asian ESL students start their academic writing by copying (Pecorari, 2008), there is a dramatic difference between Asian and European writers in terms of the coherence of writing, and Asian students are particularly found regard Western writing



style as having an unnecessary redundant amount of reading (Mullins, Quintrell, & Hancock, 1995). To be precise, in China, English instruction is primarily dominated by deductive grammar and form-focused pedagogy (Zhang & Li, 2014). It means that students in China learn English through memorizing the structural features of the language rather than understanding. However, in English-speaking countries, little value is placed on deductive grammar knowledge, particularly in the second language education field (Zhang & Li, 2014). The two different forms of education concentration and pedagogy increase the Chinese international students' English learning challenges in English-speaking countries.

English language proficiency could be a predictor of international students' adjustment, and is correlated with the level of confidence they have in regards to completing their programs successfully (Poyrazli, Arbona, Nora, McPherson & Pisecco, 2002; Zhang & Zhou, 2010). Insufficient language proficiency impacts many aspects of international students' lives, including making friends with native language speakers, understanding the course materials, and seeking group work partners (Zhang & Zhou, 2010). Poyrazli and Kavanaugh (2006) argue that low-academic-achievement international students who study in the United States commonly report insufficient language proficiency and significant overall adjustment strain. This finding reveals a relationship between language proficiency and academic achievement in international students. Otherwise, Zhang and Goodson (2011) illustrate that English competency is a predictor of both psychological and sociocultural adjustment. Lower levels of English language proficiency can be a predictor of acculturative stress or depression (Dao, Lee & Chang, 2007; Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker & Al-Timimi, 2004;

Sumer, Poyrazli & Grahame, 2008; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Thus, international students who have insufficient language competency face more challenges and deserve closer attention from teachers as well as university faculties.

**Academic support.** Apart from the literature about academic obstacles that create barriers for international students, other research has investigated how university facilities and personal support could more effectively help international students adjust to their new educational settings. Some of the research indicates that appropriate academic support structures and facilities could enhance students' learning outcomes (Russel et al., 2001; Zhou et al., 2008). The academic support includes classroom tutorials, learning support, and facility services such as libraries and computers.

Various universities provide distinctive support based on particular situations, as well as their standard offering. Wang (2006) examined the experience of library usage among eight Chinese international students at New Zealand universities and found out even though universities had provided academic supports and facilities to help international students to better fit in the new academic system, numerous international students could not fully access to these supports. Specifically, they could not get used to unitizing Western library and facilities to retrieve books and find academic journals. Similarly, Morissey and Given (2006) conclude that "plagiarism, copyright, and appropriate citation strategies are areas where international students need targeted advice and support" (p. 236) after examining nine Chinese international graduate students' library usage.

Chinese international students come to study in the United States with significantly distinctive library experiences. For instance, some libraries in China still use card catalogs. Likewise, other libraries in China require students to pay for computers or have limited accessible databases and library services (Wang, 2010; Yan, 2011). Chinese international students may be unaware of such common university library facilities, services, and instruction programs available in Canadian universities. Therefore, it would be important for universities to make international students aware of how to access supportive services and adapt to their new learning environment through various support services.

### **Social Integration**

When international students enter a new environment, life in their host country is drastically different from their home country. They have to face multiple issues and life stresses, which include personal concerns such as job opportunities, visa problems, and dating issues, as well as sociocultural concerns such as difficulty adapting to a new culture and experiencing culture shock (Yan & Berliner, 2012). In comparison to domestic students, international students are more likely to experience homesickness and culture shock, as well as prejudice and discrimination, because their family, friends, and social network are often out of reach (Zhou et al., 2008). Specifically, Asian students have been shown to experience more acculturative stress than domestic students, and Asian students who primarily socialize with co-ethnics have higher levels of stress (Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, & Al-Timimi, 2004; Yan & Berliner, 2013).

**Sociocultural challenges.** According to Berry (1999), acculturation is defined as “the process of culture change that results when two (or more) cultural groups come into contact with each other; the changes occur in both groups, but usually one (the dominant group) changes less than the other(s)” (p. 40). Thus, both domestic and international students need to adapt when these two groups work and learn together in order to work effectively (Russell et al., 2010). Positive adaptation such as sharing accommodation with others, participating in study associations, and joining students’ communities and clubs, as well as having a sufficient number of friends from the host and home countries may foster international students’ social integration and make academic progress (Rienties et al., 2012).

Even though many international students believe that interacting with Canadian peers beyond the classroom would “enhance knowledge of on another, increase comfort in communication, and indirectly improve their classroom performance” (p. 297), Chinese international students still have difficulty interacting with their Canadian classmates, and their interaction is superficial (Zhou, Knoke & Sakamoto, 2005). The main reason for these social challenges is a lack of linguistic and sociocultural familiarity (Zhou, et al., 2005). Montgomery and MacDowell (2009) reveal that international students can have a successful learning experience through working together and helping each other even if they do not have close social and cultural contact with native students. Chinese international students only socialize and seek help from individuals who share the same cultural background, which does not contribute to these students learning and gaining social experience with their host society (Jiao, 2006).

**Social networks.** Literature on cross-culture acculturation has highlighted how national and ethnic identity affects students' learning in social networks (Asmar, 2005; Baba & Hosoda, 2014; Bochner et al., 1977; Phinney, 1990). Gloria et al. (2005) and Meeuwisse et al. (2010) argue that the nationality and ethnicity of students' parents significantly influence students' cognitive and social development and their ethnic identity. Students who feel at home and who engage with their fellow students and teachers while participating in extra-curricular activities are more likely to graduate (Severiens & Wolff, 2008). Also, appropriate social support provided by family and friends promotes the academic success of first-year university students (Wilcox et al., 2005). Support from friends, family, and teachers could be non-cognitive predictors for the academic performance of international students (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1988; Rienties et al., 2012), and students who receive positive support from friends, family, teachers, and peers have been shown to have better cross-culture adaptation (Baba & Hosoda, 2014). Baba and Hosoda (2014) confirmed the importance of social supports for international students adjusting to the new environment, and the finding reveal a direct positive relationship between social support and cross-culture adaptation. In contrast, students who drop out of higher education often report that they receive inadequate support from social networks (Ozga & Sukhnandan, 1998).

**Friendship networks.** Lacina (2002) observes that the social environment is a vital “aspect of the university experience that should not be ignored by university faculty” (p. 26). Research has validated this view by emphasizing the importance of social networks when investigating the acculturation of international students. For example, according to Zhou and Zhang (2014), 67% of international students sampled in a Canadian University

report that they have more than two native English speakers as friends, 25% have one or two, and 8% do not have any. This study suggests that Chinese international students struggled to acculturate into the host country. Likewise, Jiao (2006) claims that Chinese international students only communicate and seek help from friends who were born in the same culture, which does not help them gain learning and social experiences from the host country. Thus, international students commonly have more difficulty establishing friendships than native students and are less likely to be satisfied with the relationships they have with native students (Ward et al., 2001; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Such friends are important, as Boyer and Sedlacek (1988), Rienties et al. (2012) argue, when they note that support from friends could be a non-cognitive predictor for the academic performance of international students. Therefore, the failure to acclimate to their new environment can impede that academic success of Chinese international students.

### **Students Retention and Dropout**

Christie, Munro and Fisher (2004) state that differences in integration exist between continuing and non-continuing students. It is significant that poor choices and a lack of both social support and of comfort with the academic institution lead to increased academic withdrawal. This phenomenon is demonstrated by the fact that students who do not complete their programs are found to have lower compatibility with the institution, which caused by insufficient social network contacts (Ozga & Sukhnandan, 1998). Otherwise, Tomas (2002) observes that financial problems have significantly impacted students' study progress, while Meeuwisse et al. (2010) reveal that non-competing students from low socio-economic backgrounds are more influenced by their family, and

personal or social network situation, factors which may directly or indirectly be associated with their financial situation.

Research provides an inconsistent picture when comparing domestic and international retention rates. For instance, Kwai (2009) illustrates that intentional students' dropout rate is slightly higher than domestic students, likely because they have to face more challenges. However, Zhou and Scratchley (2005) draw the opposite conclusion, insisting that the international dropout rate is lower than domestic students. Zhou and Zhang (2014) analyzed these contradictory findings, arguing that such confusion may be the result of researchers' failure to distinguish the difference between voluntary and forced withdraw, and permanent and temporary dropouts. For example, the persistence rate is higher than expected when considering the students who are temporary dropouts (Finnie, Childs & Qiu, 2012), which may contribute to the statistical gap Zhou and Zhang (2014) spoke about. Thus, more in-depth research must be completed regarding the dropout rate of international students.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter provides an overview of this study's methodology. The purpose of this study is to understand the learning and life experiences of drop-out Chinese international students who used to study in pre-university ELIP and seeks to explain their retention and dropout in this program. This study has drawn upon multiple case studies with the intent to discover the academic and social challenges faced by Chinese international students. The following section addresses research design, participants, data collection, data analysis, and the researcher's role.

#### Research Design

A qualitative research with multiple case studies is appropriate for the type of research questions that this study is investigating. Qualitative research concentrates on “particular events, situations and processes that are located in specific and single social and culture settings” rather than “general phenomena that are presumed to apply relatively similar ways across particular situations and contexts” (Bermudez, 2010, p. 5), and it can also provide detailed views of students' perspectives using their own words, complex analyses of multiple perspectives, and the specific lives and academic experiences of international students studying in the host country (Creswell, 2013). The study draws upon an understanding of Chinese international students' experiences in ELIP and why they make their decision to drop out. Examining a small sample of Chinese international students who dropped out from ELIP would provide the in-depth perspective data that this study and the phenomenon itself warrants.



Case study research is defined by Creswell (2013) as "a qualitative approach in which the investigators explores a real-life, contemporary bounded systems (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case themes" (p. 110). There are many advantages of utilizing the case study method. Firstly, case studies can provide a detailed and in-depth analysis of a phenomenon within its natural settings (Yin, 2005). It allows the researcher to explore a topic in an in-depth way that answers why and how Chinese students drop out from an ELIP. Secondly, case studies "describe, illustrate or explain the process and/or mechanism of a phenomenon" (Bermudez, 2010, p. 6). Case studies are appropriate when investigating the decision-making process of Chinese international students who drop out from ELIP. Thus, using the qualitative research method with a focus on the multiple case studies offers Chinese international students adequate opportunities to describe their experiences and freely talk about opinions associated with their learning in ELIP.

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were utilized to capture participants' dropout stories because, as Schensual, Schensual, and LeCompte, (1999) note, "Semi-structured interviews combine the flexibility of the unstructured, open-ended interview with the directionality and agenda of the survey instrument to produce focused, qualitative, textual data at the factor level" (p. 149). In the interview process, open-ended questions guided participants to describe their views based on their personal values and feelings of their experiences in the U of W's ELIP.

By examining the responses of Chinese international students who are studying in the pre-university ELIP, researchers and educators can more deeply understand Chinese

international students' lives and academic experiences because the participants express their specific experiences. In addition, because of the intent of case study research is to illustrate cases that "have special interest in and of itself and need to be described and detailed" (Creswell, 2013, p. 133), it can foster a thorough understanding of Chinese international students' learning experiences in the pre-university ELIP while simultaneously investigating the reason why they withdraw from this program.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were comprised of Chinese international students who voluntarily withdrew from ELIP, or those who did not have sufficient English language competence and were consequently forced to withdraw from their respective programs.

#### **Selection of Participants**

Creswell (2013) recommended, "not including more than four or five case studies in a single study". Based on this information, interviewing five Chinese international students would be a priority. The researcher did not increase the number of participants because many participants who qualified for this study were not willing to participate in interviews and share their stories for privacy concerns. Thus, the participant pool was comprised of five Chinese international students who dropped out from the U of W's pre-university ELIP.

The researcher was enrolled in the ELIP for one semester and had been living in Windsor for two years and had thus encountered many Chinese international students before the study was proposed. Participants were chosen from those Chinese international

students and their friends or classmates who met the sampling criterion. Purposeful sampling, as Crewell (2013) notes, is defined as the process of intentionally selecting “individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (p. 110). Thus, a purposeful sample was chosen because the participants “have particular features or characteristics which enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 78). Only those who were willing to participate and share their stories were included. The criterion sampling, which identifies “participants who meet the defined criterion” from a “select a group of five or so participants” (Gay et al., 2011, p. 143), helped to target a special group of participants. The target participants in this research were Chinese international students who had voluntarily withdrawn from U of W’s ELIP, or those who did not have sufficient English language competence and were in turn forced to withdraw from the programs. Thus, the criterion used to select interview participants from Chinese international students required students who had exited U of W’s ELIP without successfully completing it. Finally, five participants who met the criterion and were willing to participate shared their experiences and their opinion about being included in this research.

### **Recruitment of Participants**

After securing approval from the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the U of W, as well as receiving the permission of the U of W pre-university ELIP to start the research project, the researcher started the process of recruiting participants. First, potential participants’ emails were gathered, which primarily came from Chinese international

students who the researcher knew or were friends and classmates. Then, the recruitment letter (see Appendix C), which was used to explain the purpose of this study and provide detailed information concerning the study process, was sent to potential participants by emails. Those who were willing to participate emailed the researcher back. After that, the researcher emailed them to establish a time and location for an initial meeting. The first point of contact with participants (recruitment and consent) was conducted at an agreed upon time and location following the receipt of ethnic clearance. At this time, an overview of the study was provided to the participants, and a letter of information and consent form were distributed. The sociogram on each form was explained and the voluntary nature of the study was stressed. This was intended to ensure that participants understood the purpose and procedures of this study, the duties they were expected to fulfill, their rights to withdraw at any time, and the means through which they could access the research results.

### **Data Collection**

According to Berg (2007), Open-ended interviewing allowed the researcher to have some control over the flow of the topics, and also encouraged participants to freely interpret questions that were asked and express their general views or opinions in details. Data collection in this study occurred through two open ended semi-structure interviews with five international students who had dropped out of U of W's ELIP over a period of one month. Interview time and location were determined based on the convenience, comfort, and privacy of the participants. Each interview lasted 40 to 50 minutes. At first, the participants did not familiar with the researcher, and they may not feel free to express

their opinions and their dropout stories. Thus, the content of first interview focused on their background and ELIP learning experiences. After one interview, the relationship between the researcher and participants became much closer, so the content for the second interview were emphasized on their dropout stories and their life after dropping out from ELIP.

In the interviewing process, open-ended questions were utilized to guide the interviews (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), and the questions were carefully developed to avoid and eliminate discomfort. Participants could choose to speak either Chinese or English in order to ensure the questions were fully understood, and also to encourage them express their perspectives and feelings as clearly as possible. Participants could refuse to answer any question that they were not willing to answer or made them feel uncomfortable. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Field notes were taken to record data that an audio recording may miss, such as gestures and expressions, which can help the researcher improve the data's credibility. For example, participants may provide inaccurate information for personal reasons. In such situations, they may offer an affirmative answer while contrastingly shaking heads. Thus, field notes focused on observing participants and jotting down notes (Emerson et al., 2011). In this study, the research's field notes of the interview mainly looked for participants' body language, emotive responses, facial expressions, and paralinguistic in the interview. It offered some data that audio taping cannot capture.

The researcher strictly followed research ethics principles to protect the participants' anonymity and confidentiality. All participants signed consent form before

the interview started and all actual names were changed. The researcher offered confidentiality by protecting participants' identifications. Audio tapes were transcribed and checked and then destroyed. Study reports did not mention any participants' personal identifications. The file and computer that include data were locked. All the information that could link to the identification was deleted when the researcher coding the transcript.

### **Interview Questions**

Centered with the research questions, interview questions (see Appendix A) were divided into five sections: background information, ELIP learning and life experiences, challenges and support, reason for exiting the program, and improved strategies and services. All questions were established using the study's two main theoretical frameworks, which are Berry's stress-coping framework (1997) and Tinto's theoretical model of dropout behaviour (1975). After applying the two models to the study, the study proposed several factors that could influence Chinese international students' acculturation and may cause them drop out of ELIP, including pre-college schooling, learning motivation and expectation, learning styles, socialization, family and social support, institutional commitment, and coping and acculturation strategies. These proposed factors were carefully interpreted with detailed questions that were asked during the interview. The interview questions were also translated into Chinese in case the participants felt uncomfortable speaking English, and the words used in the questions were student friendly and easy for them to understand. Participants had the option to choose either the English or Chinese version of the questions, and were also encouraged to respond to questions in either English or Chinese. All the participants ended up

choosing Chinese version and spoke Chinese during the interview. By using their mother language, participants fully expressed their feelings and talked about their stories without taking much time on finding appropriate words and organizing sentences. It fostered participants to recall their experiences without many barriers.

### **Data Analysis**

This study yielded a detailed picture of Chinese international students and their dropout stories within the particular educational context of the pre-university ELIP. Interviews were transcribed and coded. The analysis process sought patterns and themes, and explored their relationships. This process:

consists of preparing and organizing the data (i.e., text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (Creswell, 2013, p. 180).

According to Heieh and Shannon (2005), "conventional content analysis is generally used with a study design whose aim is to describe a phenomenon" (p. 1279). Based on the research's scope and intent, a conventional content analysis approach was adopted. The whole analysis process involved selecting key ideas, the summarizing the field notes, identifying and dividing codes into themes, counting the frequency of the codes, relating that categories to analytic frameworks in existing literature, creating a point of view, and the displaying the data.

The analysis began by repeated readings of all the text data to get a sense of the

whole process. The researcher then derived codes by reading the text word by word along with the researcher's notes, recording impressions, and opinions. Using the semi-structure open-ended questions, field notes taken during the interview, and the transcripts, the data analysis was refined several times in order to ensure all the information was coded properly. At the first level of coding, the researcher used open coding to break down the data into the first level concepts, headings, subheadings, and second-level categories. The codes were labeled and sorted into subcategories based on correlation. In the open coding, the researcher primarily focused on the text to define and utilized highlights to distinguish these concepts and categories. After that, the research adopted axial coding method while re-reading the text by using concepts and categories that emerged in the open coding to confirm it accurately represented interview responses and explore how these were related. At this point, the categories were combined into a smaller number of categories by looking for similarities and differences and establishing a hierarchical structure. Finally, transferred final concepts and categories into a data table, the report findings were prepared.

### **Reflection upon the Researcher's Role**

The researcher is a Chinese international student who has been studying in Canada for more than two years. As a Chinese international student who used to study in pre-university ELIP, the researcher has experienced many of the same challenges that the participants have face, such as culture conflicts, the feeling of being lost, and confused by the host culture. These experiences not only motivated the researcher to conduct this research, but also helped to develop the researcher's in-depth understanding of the



challenges that Chinese international students may encounter, thus facilitating a deeper connection with the participants. Understanding students' experiences and difficulties promotes the opportunity to reflect on participants' responses in a deeper way because the researcher can relate their experiences and ask probing questions to engage in a richer dialogue. In addition, the researcher's educational experiences in China allowed her better understand the values of the Chinese educational system and interpret the positive and negative impacts it has had on Chinese international students.

According to Creswell (2013), the researcher's personal views, thoughts, and interpretations will change the way the project study takes shape because the researcher is the person who gathers the information from the participants. This emphasizes the fact that researchers need a better understanding of the participants' experiences and must resist over-identification. Because the researcher shares the same background and experience with the participants, she brings biases to this case study. In order to increase the validity and reliability of the research, the researcher needs to continuously reflect upon and remain open to understanding participants' own feelings and views, and avoid projecting my own perspective onto theirs.

## CHAPTER 5

### INTERVIEW RESULTS

In this study, five Chinese international students (*D, F, K, M, Z*) who had exited U of W's ELIP before completion were interviewed. Each interview lasted for 40 to 50 minutes. This chapter narrates the qualitative results of the study. The results of the case study were derived from multiple questions that were asked from each participant, and were classified into five themes that emerged from the data: dropout stories, background information, learning and life experiences, challenges and support, and suggestion for ELIP improvement.

In ELIP pre-university program, there are five progressive levels: Foundation, Basic, Level 1 (ELIP 1), Level 2 (ELIP 2), and Level 3 (ELIP 3). Each level takes 12 weeks to complete. Before students are admitted to the program, they have to take a placement test and the test result will determine their appropriate level. In this study, some participants dropped out from ELIP trying to pass language tests. The language tests included IELTS (International English Language Testing System), TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), and CAEL (Canadian Academic English Language).

#### Dropout Stories

##### D-story

After completing the three-year of high school in China, *D* decided to go abroad for university leaning. He and his parents selected U of W as the destination. International students who want to study abroad have to provide their language proficiency by taking

tests such as IELTS, and their scores have to be at least 6.5. **D** took the IELTS test twice, and his highest score was 5.5. U of W's ELIP has a pre-university program for international students who do not have insufficient language proficiency. In order to enter university as soon as possible, **D** choose to take ELIP pre-university program.

On the first day the program, students were asked to take a placement test: **D**'s results placed him at ELIP 2. When asked, **D** had a neutral opinion of the first semester in ELIP, stating that classroom instructions were similar to his high school. There was a four-hour class each day from Monday through Friday, and a teacher who taught an integrative course that covered listening, writing, reading, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary. There was at least one test per week, and the final result would combine the mid-term examination, in-class tests, the final examination, and daily participation , which included class attendance and answering questions. **D** felt the curriculum content was very easy, and he was good enough to pass.

However, **D** failed his first semester and had to take this level again. He felt so upset and did not want to waste his time and money in ELIP. Thus, **D** made a detailed English self-learning plan, and chose to drop out and prepare for the IELTS test at home. After **D** dropped out from ELIP, life was as it had been, and he only leaned English based on his plan for several days. He stayed at home by himself every day, playing online games, watching movies, and sometimes taking some IELTS practices. This pattern held for a year, during which time he took the IELTS test five times. Unfortunately, he did not get the score of 6.5.

After his friends suggested that he return to ELIP, he took the placement test again and **D** was placed at Level 3. He worked diligently in order to pass it. However, he found that the examinations in ELIP 3 were really difficult and he failed it again. **D** lost all his confidence to ELIP and dropped out a second time.

**D** finally earned a 6.5 on the IELTS test two years after dropping out of ELIP. During this time, he did not tell his parents the truth about dropping out of ELIP, and even now they do not know the truth. Though **D** stayed at home for two years and wasted time, he does not regret his decision to leave ELIP. He believes ELIP would have wasted more of his time and frustrated him.

He concluded that there were several reasons why he could not pass ELIP. Firstly, he is not a hardworking student and had wasted too much time playing online games. Secondly, he believes that he is a potential undergraduate student in ELIP, and ELIP failed him on purpose. Thirdly, the curriculum in ELIP is not functional and attractive. Finally, though learning the ELIP content was easy, the examinations were difficult.

### **F-story**

**F** made up his mind to study abroad when he graduated from middle school. His parents strongly supported him and sent him to an international high school that had been cooperating with a high school in Canada. Thus, the school's curriculums and examinations are the same as Canadian high schools and most of their courses were taught in English. Three years of learning in this school prepared him for studying abroad. **F** chose U of W by himself. However, his 5.5 IELTS score was not up to the university admission requirement. Thus, **F** went to ELIP for English language improvement.

On the first day in ELIP, he took a placement test and a few days later was informed that he was placed in ELIP 2 class. According to *F*, that term in ELIP 2 was really boring. The curriculum, in his view, was too easy, and he felt that he knew everything that teacher taught. *F* passed ELIP 2 with a high grade. However, he did not see the value in the program and believed that if he stayed in ELIP, he would have wasted an entire term. Just as *D* believed he could pass the IELTS test on his own, *F* believe that by preparing for the CAEL test by himself, he could secure the required score without having to waste his time in ELIP. Thus, *F* left ELIP and stayed at home to prepare for CAEL test. After dropping out, *F* spent a lot of time by himself and bought all the books that he needed to prepare for the language test. However, he seldom used them and his autodidactic approach was not effective. *F* also played online games instead of studying. *F* repeatedly took the CAEL test and failed ten times. Eventually, he gave up on his autodidactic approach and went back to ELIP where he was retested and placed in an ELIP 3 class. *F* was different this time, and his learning was more active than before. He was seldom late for or absent from class and did every task that the teacher gave them. Finally, *F* passed the ELIP 3 and entered into the university.

After one year learning in university, *F* came to the conclusion that the things he learned in ELIP were useless. He complained that he never learned about or developed an academic vocabulary in ELIP, and that the writing practiced in ELIP was different from the university reports and essay writing. This frustrated and disappointed him.

**K-story**

In 2010, **K** participated a winter camp that visited Canadian universities. He really liked the life and culture in Canada, so he decided to apply for universities in Canada. **K** applied to five universities in Canada and finally selected U of W. However, his IELTS test score of 4.5 was not up to the admission requirement, so the university asked **K** to take the pre-university program in ELIP. After taking the placement test, **K** was placed in Basic.

First semester in ELIP was really hard for **K**. Sometimes he could not understand the teachers and had difficulty in adapting to Canadian education and life. He was particularly disheartened by the fact that he did not have many friends and was often by himself, causing feelings of loneliness and isolation, instilling him with a desire to return home. **K** told his parents that he missed home, and his parents always told him it would be fine later. **K** repeatedly failed the Basic, resulting in severe less of stress and anxiety. In the meantime, his parents pressure him, exacerbating his stress and anxiety.

After taking the Basic four times, **K** told his parents that he wanted to quit and go back to China. His parents suggested that he come back to China for a break. When he arrived, **K** tried to persuade his parents to let him stay in China instead of returning to Canada. However, after eight months, **K** found life in China so boring and had nothing to do every day, and the fact that all of his friends had their own businesses while he was not motivated. **K** went back to Canada to continue his learning in ELIP.

**M-story**

In China, if one has a bachelor's or master's degree from Europe or North America, he or she can get better job opportunities than native undergraduate students. Thus, *M*'s parents sent him to Canada to study. *M* arrived in Canada in 2012. The first program that he took was ELIP, where he was placed in ELIP 2 after a placement test.

Everything went well in ELIP, and *M* successfully passed ELIP 2. Because the curriculum was too easy for him, *M* did not think he could learn a lot from this program. Thus, in order to enter into the university as soon as possible, *M* dropped out of ELIP and started to take TOEFL test. Like others who dropped out, *M* often found himself home alone playing online games. *M* took the test again and again, but did not secure the required score. *M* gradually lost his confidence and became anxious. He began to play online games day and night.

Three years after *M* dropped out of ELIP; he totally gave up on himself and transferred to a college to start a new life. During this time, *M* returned to ELIP, but only for a week because he thought that ELIP was boring he dropped out again.

**Z-story**

Studying abroad is very popular in *Z*'s hometown. Most of his parents' friends sent their children to other countries for study. However, *Z* did not want to go aboard for university; it was his parents' idea. They asserted that studying abroad would be a great chance for *Z* to be independent. *Z*'s mom selected U of W after communicating with the student recruitment agency, and *Z* was asked to attend ELIP after he secured admission.

**Z** was placed in ELIP 1 after taking the placement test. He took the ELIP program for four terms in total. The first semester in ELIP 1, **Z** found the ELIP curriculum to be easy and thought the teacher was nice. However, **Z** was often absent from class as he opted to socialize with friends and playing online games at home. He did not study at all, but that teacher still let him pass the ELIP 1. However, ELIP 2 was not as easy as ELIP 1, and **Z** went onto fail ELIP 2 twice.

After that, **Z** dropped out from ELIP and started to take TOEFL test. One year later, he had still not secured the required score on TOEFL. At this point, **Z** returned to ELIP and decided to apply himself with the hope of completing the program. **Z** was significantly different than before. Unfortunately, he had a bad relationship with the ELIP 2 teacher and quarrelled with her during the class, after which he dropped out of ELIP again. **Z** was completely disappointed with ELIP by this time and decided not to return.

Life after dropping out was the same every day. **Z** stayed at home all by himself and still does not enter the university. He has been dropped out for seven years. His parents are worried about him, but they insist that he pass the exam; **Z** does not know how to deal with this situation. All of his friends have graduated from universities and are working in their respective fields, while he has still not begun his undergraduate degree.

### **Background Information**

Interviewees' background information in this study included educational backgrounds, reasons for coming to Canada and U of W, and learning motivations and expectations.



## Educational Backgrounds

All the interviewees had completed their three-year high school before they entered ELIP, and four had learned in international high schools. Based on their description, international high schools focused on cultivating students' English language, knowledge, and skills for studying abroad. Most of the courses in international high schools were taught in English, and teachers were primarily from English-speaking countries such as Canada and America. When being questioned about the pedagogical differences between high school and ELIP, those who had attended international high schools stated that the learning environment was similar. *F* offered a detailed explanation:

My high school is cooperating with one of the high school in British Columbia... Thus, our courses, learning content, and even examinations are the same as that school, and most of our teachers are from Canada. Thus, when I came here for study, I did not have many challenges or difficulties. I can confidently talk with teachers and natives, and life in Canada is as good as in China.

The others who stated that ELIP was just like English classes in the international high schools noted that the curriculum and learning content were similar, especially with respect to presentations, group projects, and essays.

In contrast, *Z* finished his three-year learning in a public high school. He stated that his high school courses were based primarily on the Chinese National Higher Education Entrance Examination Requirement. Thus, the examination-based English curriculum primarily focused on writing, listening, and reading. He never practiced oral English or spoke English in public at that time, which consequently left him ill-equipped to study

abroad. He shared details about this experience: “When I first came to ELIP, I feel so nervous when communicating with teachers and natives because sometimes they could not understand what I was talking about.” When he was asked about the learning differences between high school and ELIP, he insisted it is significantly different:

I never did a presentation during... class until I came to ELIP. The presentation seems to be a challenge for me, and most of the time I do not know what to say or how to express my thoughts. Meanwhile, our tasks and projects in high school were done... individually rather than in groups. It took time for me to get used to it.

### **Why Students Come to Canada and the University of Windsor**

All participants indicated that they were living away from home for the first time, while various reasons were given to explain why they studied abroad and selected U of W as their destination. Participant **K** choose to pursue learning in Canada due to an 18-day Canadian learning camp that was organized by his international high school, which left him with a good impression of Canadian life and culture. Participant **D** made the choice to study abroad principally based on his parents’ wishes, and he agreed without a doubt because he believed his parents were right. **D** explained why his parents wanted him to study abroad:

After I finished my high school... I participated the Chinese National Higher Education Entrance Examination for 2010. The result was not good enough to get into one of the top 100 universities in China. From my parent’s view, if I did not get a degree from an “Outstanding” university, I could not find a satisfying job after graduation. Besides, my parents believed that Canadian Universities have a better

quality of education... Thus, they asked me to go abroad and earn me bachelor's degree.

Similarly, *Z* obeyed his parents' order to study in Canada, even though he is strongly opposed to the idea. He also shared his thoughts on this experience:

My parents asked me to go abroad to study, and it was not my idea. In fact, I am not willing to go abroad, I... talked with my parents... plenty of times, and they still insisted on sending me to Canada. My mom communicated with the student recruitment agency and selected this school. Finally, I compromised.

Unlike others, *M* came to Canada to study with a high expectation of the Canadian education system:

Chinese education is examination-based education, and it put too much emphasis on examination scores. That kind of education seems boring to me. As far as I know, Western education focuses more on developing students' creative and analytical thinking. I believe I can learn more from it.

Finally, *F*, he stated that he selected Canada because his international high school has a relationship with a Canadian high school, and the curriculum that they learned is as same as curriculum in British Columbia.

### **Learning Motivations and Expectations**

Four of the participants' learning motivation and expectation was to earn a bachelor's degree so that they could secure a good job. *M* explained why a degree is so important:

The degree is so important for Chinese people. People would get distinctive jobs based their education levels. For example, one with a master degree will get a better job than one with a bachelor degree. Thus, if I get a bachelor degree from North America, I can get a better job and my parents will be proud of me.

**D** and **Z** have the same expectation, which largely came from their parents' instruction. **K** followed his parents' wish without questioning them:

I do not know why I am studying. I have just followed my parents' instruction since I was born. They think that I need to study and get a degree in order to get a job; so do I. I believe it is not a bad decision... and they know more than me.

Similarly, **Z** began studying abroad under his parents' suggestion and gradually lost his confidence in learning:

At first, I did not have any plan for my future and career. Studying abroad was not my idea. After a long... ELIP delay, I gradually lost my faith in learning. I feel like I cannot stay at home doing nothing anymore. I talked with my parents and told them that I want to back to China and create my own business. They still insist that I need to get the bachelor degree. Now, I really do not know what... my learning motivations and expectations are.

In contrast to the other participants, **D** and **F** have their own interests and preferences, but their parents strongly disagreed and pushed them to pursue learning in universities. **D** detailed his experience:

My family has high expectations for me with respect to going to university. I do not have the right to choose and have to follow my parent's instructions. If I could choose to decide my life, I may choose to learn some practical majors in college, such as cooking. However, my parents would not allow me to do that. In China, students who cannot be admitted to universities, will study in colleges. Thus, my goal and expectation for studying abroad is to get a degree as soon as possible, then find a job with high earnings.

*F* admitted that he had no interest in learning and preferred to work. His parents pushed him to continue, and he had no choice:

Actually, I have been contracting for a while. I am not interested in studying at all. I want to create my own business rather than staying in university. However, my parents insist on pushing me to get the bachelor degree. They always told me that if I want to get a job in China, I need to get the bachelor degree. Thus, I compromised with them. In fact, I do not have enough learning motivation. I just want to get the bachelor's degree so that I can get a job in China. My parents helped me select the major in the university, and the major is related to their career. In my opinion, the major is not important at all. I have seen many people doing something not related to their major after graduation. The knowledge and skills that they got from university are useless. The skills they need are all learned from their years of working.

## Learning and Life Experiences

### Time Allocation

Expect for a four-hour class each day from Monday to Friday, all five interviewees spent their time outside of school, watching American television programs or movies, playing online games, and hanging out with friends. **D**, **F**, **K**, and **Z** all noted that they spent at least 6 to 10 hours a day playing online games. **M** explained that because “Life in Canada is so boring”, he does “not have many things to do”, and that video games has been one of his favourite activities since he was young: “When I was in China, my parents did not allow me to play too much. However, no one would control me in Canada, so I can play anytime I want.” **D** also stated that video games is one of the ways he relaxes and relieves pressure, and that “After several semesters’ ELIP delay”, he felt stressed out, admitting that he may have “tried to avoid pressure by playing online games at that time.” **Z** explained why he played online games so much: “When I first came to Canada, my schedule was the same as it was in China. I slept during the daytime and played online games with friends in China at night. We have many common topics, and I really enjoy talking with them. When I have some troubles, I... talk with them. They would give me suggestions.”

However, when being questioned about how much time they spent on learning outside of the class, only **K** reported that generally he would spend 2 to 3 hours a day on doing homework and reviewing. However, the others expressed that, except for doing homework, they were seldom learning outside of the class. Only several days before the

examination would they consider spending some time reviewing their curriculum documents.

### **Socialization**

**Socialization within Canada.** All five interviewees reported that they primarily socialized with Chinese people and seldom had native friends as language barriers impeded them from making friends with natives. **D** illustrated the issue:

Even though our class in ELIP has international students from other countries, I only talk with them... if I have to. I had tried to talk with natives and international students from other countries before, but sometimes they seem like they cannot understand what I am talking about. I feel like I am the kind of person who is not good at socializing. Thus, I talk with people from other countries only if I have to.

As participants did not have close friends to associate with in the spare time, they commonly faced homesickness and loneliness, especially during the first few semesters. A lack of socialization in Canada made **K** feel lonely and miss home a lot. He could not stand the loneliness, and even asked his parents to allow him to go back to China several times. **Z** also encountered socialization problems in Canada; however, he chose to interact with his friends in China through social media instead of finding ways to broaden his social networks in Canada:

I do not have native friends; all my friends here are Chinese international students. At first, I had a lot of Chinese friends, and most of them were my ELIP classmates. We always played online games and hung out together. However, some transferred to other institutions, some graduated and left here, and others went back to China. I

have not been to school for years, and my life here is all by myself. I felt lonely at first, but now I have adapted to it.

**Contacts with family and friends in China.** All five interviewees regularly contacted with their family members using videos, social media, and phones. They reported their life and learning in Canada, but never talked about their troubles and challenges. When questioned about why they did not let their parents know their troubles, they stated that their family could not help them and that they did not want to worry their family. Even though had dropped out years ago, participants did not tell their parents the truth about their situations. They also reported that they sometimes contacted their friends back in China. For example, *Z* stated, he contacted his friends in “China almost every day” because staying at home was boring and “playing online games and chatting with his friends through social media” made him feel less lonely. The other interviewees reported that they seldom contacted friends back in China because of the time difference.

### **Interviewees’ Comments on ELIP**

Because there are so many levels in ELIP, it takes a long time for students who have poor English foundation to complete the program. This led interviewees to believe that ELIP failed students in order to earn more money from additional tuition fees.

**Curriculum content does not connect to the university learning.** Participants pointed out that ELIP did not help them understand the academic language expected in their respective disciplines. *F* offered his thoughts on the program’s shortcomings:

I believe ELIP should prepare us to learn in university. In fact, ELIP learning content has nothing to do with my major. I have to say it is not a functional



program for me. My major is engineering, there are no academic terms... included in the curriculum. This program focuses on English language improvement on everyday living. Writing and grammar parts fit better for students whose major related to social science.

**Lack of oral English training.** Chinese international students commonly reported they lack of spoken English abilities. According to **Z**, he struggled with his oral English: “I never spoke in... public using English before I came here. Presentation is the most challenging task for me. I really do not know what to say and how to impress my opinions.” However, **Z** did not feel the training for English presentation in ELIP was adequate enough to help him become a functional English speaker. **M** specifically reported:

For presentations in ELIP, there is no actual presentation skills and knowledge training. It is just practice. Teachers just provide several topics, and each student chooses one. Students need to search information and prepare it by themselves, and then present their topics in turns during the class. Teachers give student scores based on their presentation performance.

Even though **M** had presented for many times, he still confused about sentence structure and had a limited vocabulary.

**Course content is easy but examination is hard.** Both **D** and **Z** reported that the ELIP content was very simple, but that the examination was too difficult. **D** offers a summation on this issue, suggesting that ELIP had a conflict of interest and was looking to maximize the profits it generated from international students:

I think that ELIP failed us on purpose to earn more money. The learning content in ELIP is so easy, so I thought that the examination must be simple too. Thus, I did not try my best to learn because I thought I was good enough to pass. However, it turns out... I was wrong.

*F* and *M* also reported that the curriculum was too easy, and the program was not adequately functional for them. This was a central factor that contributed to participants dropping out of ELIP.

**Students do not know the program's criteria.** Most participants mentioned that they did not have detailed information about how their teachers marked their papers and decided upon their final result. *D* expressed his concerns about the lack of transparency:

I am not satisfied with this program because I do not know the criteria... Teachers always told me that if I work hard, I would pass. However, they did not tell me which part of learning needed to be improved and how can I worked on to improve it. I feel I worked hard, and my language proficiency was good enough to pass, but... I failed several times and eventually lost my faith to ELIP.

**Unfair evaluation.** This issue led each of the interviewees to report that the program was not fair. They believed that there would be a certain amount of students failed in each class, and ELIP tended to fail potential undergraduate students rather than master students. *D* offered his explanation:

ELIP treats potential graduate and undergraduate students differently. They tend to fail students who are going to take the undergraduate programs in the university rather than master programs. It is not just my personal opinion. All my friends who

used to be potential undergraduate students in ELIP failed more than once and complained that it was unfair.

*F* had similar observations: “Each class has at least three to four students failed in the final and they would all be students who were going into undergraduate programs at the university.” In addition, interviewees reported that the evaluation was not fair. *D* stated:

Teachers... have the power to decide who can pass this program. Thus, the passing rate of each class is different based on their teachers. Some teachers are nice; all the students can pass the program. Some teachers are hard, and more than half of the students cannot pass ... but if students’ English language ability is similar, and if the teacher is a nice one, they will certainly pass this program.

Based on his experience, *F* reported that students’ relationship with teachers influenced their final results:

I had a really good relationship with ELIP 2 teacher, and she gave me really high scores even though I always absented from class. However, in ELIP 3, I got lower scores than other students due to the fact I had a bad relationship with the ELIP 3 teacher.

Three other interviewees agreed with this sentiment.

**Changing teachers frequently significantly influences student progress.**

Because the instructors of the ELIP classes are often different, students often struggle to acclimate to the varied teaching styles. *Z* highlighted this concerns with a personal narrative:

I was in ELIP for four terms. All four terms' had different teachers... It takes time for the teacher to get to know me and provide targeted help. One term is not enough for teacher and me to get used to each other.

**K** also reported that ELIP changed their teacher each term, and he sometimes did not have enough time to get used to the new teaching style.

The teaching styles are really distinctive from teacher to teacher in ELIP.

Changing teachers... each term... influences my learning. I would not have time to adapt to the teaching style, and then would change again. If the teacher was the same one for a period, I believe I could make more progress. For example, I took one teacher's class for two terms. She knew me well and always asked me to answer questions during the class. I learned more... that time... and after a period of time teaching, she knew that writing is my weaknesses, so she always gave me extra-help with writing and helped me make great progress.

### **Interviewees' Comments on Teachers**

Participants reported that they seldom interacted with teachers during or after class. They all believed that whether they can pass the program was based on their teachers. **D** believed that the passing rates are quite different from class to class:

Some teachers are nice and let the whole class... pass that level. However, some teachers are strict, and almost half of class failed. In fact, students' English language ability is similar, but the passing rates are distinctive based on different teachers.

Based on his own experiences, *F* concluded that the relationship between the teacher and student determined whether the student could pass the program. He said:

I had a good relationship with the ELIP 2 teacher. Even though I was frequently absent from the class, I still got really high grades in the examinations. The director did not allow me to attend the final examination because I had missed too many classes. My ELIP 2 teacher talked with the director and finally let me take the final examination. However, the ELIP 3 teacher was not like the teacher in ELIP 2. The relationship between ELIP 3 teacher and me was not good. I found that one of my classmates wrote lower quality essays, but got higher grades than me. Besides, she gave me lower grades than others for the in-class performance. I only raised my hands and answered the question she asked if it is no one answered in the class. Even though this does not necessarily mean that I am the best...it does suggest that I am not the worst in the class.

*K* emphasized the importance of teacher-student relationships and illustrated how it influences his learning motivation during the program of study:

Of the five teachers who had taught me, the one that I like was really kind. She paid more attention to me during the class and always asked me to answer her questions. I really liked taking her class and I learned more... in her class. I did not like the one who was a very strict teacher. I remembered that one day I did not prepare enough for the presentation and requested to do it the next day. She told me that if I present next day, I would lose five pinots for the presentation test. It makes me think that she cares nothing except for scores.

**Z** expressed his dissatisfaction with the instructors, noting that there were cultural differences, and that one teacher engaged in an argument with him in front of the class:

I really do not like the teachers in ELIP, especially... the last one who... taught me. Teachers here are not as patient and kind as teachers in China. Meanwhile, ELIP teachers do not understand Chinese cultures and our educational backgrounds, so that they do not know us very well. Especially, the teacher I had in my last term... she blamed me in... class and I argued with her. After that, I decided to leave ELIP.

This comment underlined one of the reasons he dropped out of ELIP, and also emphasized the important role of teacher-student relationship influenced on students.

## **Challenges and Support**

### **Challenges**

Some of the challenges that participants experienced were related to learning in ELIP, while others were related to their social life. These challenges continued influencing participants' study and life due to the fact that they did not receive adequate support from the dominant society.

The five interviewees reported that the difficulties related to their learning in ELIP were presentation and writing. They mentioned that in general, Chinese students did not speak English as well as they read, wrote, and listened because Chinese education pays little attention to oral English. They explained that they seldom presented ideas in English before. This was especially true for **Z**, who had never tried conducted a presentation in

English until he entered ELIP. Even though some participants graduated from international high schools and had their high school education delivered by English native speakers, they still found it difficult to present using English.

Writing was also a challenge for participants, and poor vocabulary and grammar negatively influenced their writing. They found that Chinese writing strategy and format is significantly different from English writing, and they were confused between the two-languages. Moreover, citation was perceived as a major challenge for academic writing. *F* stated that he “did not write any papers in high school” and thus “had to learn citation, and learn everything from the very beginning” and that he still does “not know how to cite properly and reference resources.”

In terms of questions that that students had with respect to assignments or in-class learning, participants tended to ignore them and seldom asked teachers for answers. Even though instructors were available at their office for one hour per week, during which time students could ask questions, most interviewees never asked questions during that period. This was one of the cultural barrier, *D* explained: “I did not ask questions because I did not know how they would solve the problems. Teachers in China sometimes blamed me when I asked questions, so I am afraid of asking questions”. Had the instructors been aware of this socially conditioned reluctance to ask questions, they could have made an effort to make the Chinese less apprehensive about coming forward with questions and encouraged them to consult their instructors if they were unsure about anything.

With respect to challenges in their social lives, the participants reported that, at first, they had difficulties finding accommodations and knowing where to eat or buy

things, as well as how to register for classes. Fortunately, Chinese international students from upper grades provided support. Likewise, some participants reported that because they did not have enough close friends to associate with in their spare time, they felt homesickness and lonely. They tried to make friends with local students and international students from other countries, but language barriers prevented them from building relationships and they finally chose to stay at home by themselves.

### **Support from Family and Institutional**

All five interviewees' tuition fee and living expenses in Canada were paid by their parents. *Z* said that he never concerned himself "about my tuition fees and living expenses" because his family gave him everything they could to support his studies. None of them ever took part-time jobs or had other responsibilities except for studying. *F*, for instance, stated that he spoke with his parents about taking on "part-time jobs to connect more with society, but" that his parents did not allow him to because "the most important task for him was to study and get the degree", and that if he took on a job, it would negatively impact his studies.

According to interviewees' statement, all of them would solve problems and go through difficulties by themselves. They would not tell their family about their struggles in Canada because they did not want them to worry. When asked about institutional guidance and support, they all reported no one in ELIP had ever helped them. *F* stated that one of the reasons he was "not satisfied with ELIP was that they never helped students or even asked about their difficulties." Moreover, one interviewee reported that prejudice



and discrimination took place in the university at least three times. He did know where to ask help and seek support.

### **Suggestion for ELIP improvement**

This section addresses several improved strategies offered by the participants interviewed that could have facilitated their learning experience in ELIP. The strategies and recommendations include modifying ELIP curriculum and teaching approaches, modifying assessments, actively motivating students, caring-about students and providing personal attention, and assistant, and considering culture differences and making efforts to address them.

#### **Modifying ELIP Curriculum and Teaching Approaches**

While all the participants described ELIP as a pre-university program that could improve international students' language abilities for the academic purpose, they still insisted that the curriculum is not functional, and the learning content is not related to their subject learning at the university. *D* clearly described how he thinks ELIP operates:

Actually, I think ELIP failed students for money. Even though I did not pass the program, my English language proficiency is good enough to pass it. I believe ELIP should help students better understand university teaching so that they can successfully adapt to university learning. ELIP is not valuable for students whose majors are related to science. For science students, as long as they can pass the writing exam, they can still pass the course even if they do not understand teachers' instruction during the class. Thus, ELIP can lower the standard ... for science students, so that they can save more time and enter ... university earlier.

**Connecting curriculum to university learning.** According to participants, knowing where to get reliable information, understanding the university process, and having some basic academic knowledge are essential to providing a positive start for their university learning. *F* expressed his frustration with the learning content in ELIP and made a recommendation concerning academic language:

The learning content in ELIP has nothing to do with the university studying. Thus, ELIP needs to upgrade their curriculums. For example, they should add more academic terms into the everyday teaching, so that we can understand professors' instructions when we first came in the university.

**Separately educating students in terms of their major.** *D*, who is in an engineering program, believed that different majors have distinctive concerns. He proposed;

University learning is quite different based on different majors. For example, majors related to social science have more presentations and essay writing. However, majors related to science and mathematics need more problem solving and hands-on abilities. Separate education that has different concentration and academic language usage would be better suited for students' university learning.

**Modifying writing teaching strategies and focusing on improving students' spoken English.** All the participants reported that they lacked oral English abilities and needed more targeted guidance in this area. They commonly believed that oral English component of ELIP would focus more on practicing rather than improving. *F* expressed his concerns about his English spoken capacity: "Most of the Chinese international

students lack spoken English abilities. I believe ELIP needs to put more effort and time into improving oral English in class”. He suggested that this might be accomplished by having each student make a short presentation every day before class.

Significant writing differences exist between Chinese and English writing, as has been revealed by participants during the interview. They commonly stated that they were sometimes confused by the two distinctive writing style and format, and it took a long time for them to get used to the new one. They stated that the instruction for writing in ELIP was not clear or functional, and asked for more targeted writing structure and format. *F* summarized his concerns:

In university, we are always required to write essays and reports. I found a problem that the writing strategies that I learned from ELIP are not functional. Actually, writing structures in Chinese are significantly different from English. We are always confused between Chinese and English writing formats. ELIP teachers did not give us a clear writing structure. They need to provide a clear writing format for essay and reports writing. The English writing strategies that I use in the university now are still from my high school learning. Thus, ELIP needs to upgrade the writing curriculum and to be professional.

### **Modifying Assessments and Actively Motivating Students**

All the participants were unsatisfied with ELIP’s assessment process and regarded it as unfair. They requested that ELIP to modify its assessment and make it more fair and consistent. In addition, they believed that ELIP teachers failed to effectively motivated students. *D* shared his opinions and suggestions in regards to this concern:

ELIP teachers are not supportive enough ... Sometimes, I feel that whether we can pass the program is none of their business. For example, some of the Chinese schools set teachers' salary based on how many students in their class and pass the exam. It put more pressures on teachers, but good for students. Besides, the ELIP examination assessment is not fair... Teachers sometimes give... students they like higher scores than others. ELIP can change their exam assessment process and make students anonymous, or exchange teachers to assess the examinations.

Likewise, *M* offered his thoughts about assessments and motivating students:

Learning in ELIP is not as functional as learning in Chinese schools. In China, teachers put all their efforts on improving students' learning score as much... as they can. Every day, teachers ask students to remember a certain amount of vocabulary words and sentences, and they will test students after day. It is a very useful method to inspire students to keep-learning... ELIP also can use this method to motivate students.

### **Caring-about Students and Providing Personal Attention, Assistance**

Participants mentioned that they wanted to feel cared for, and wanted to feel that there was someone they could go to for personal attention and assistance. Based on Karp (2011), students who feel their intuitions care about their success are more likely to stay in their programs. However, participants in this study reported that teacher-student relationships in Canada significantly differ from China, and most of them were unsatisfied with their teachers. *Z*, who had negative experiences with teachers, which led to him to drop out of ELIP, shared his thoughts:

Teacher-student relationships really influence our learning motivation. If we like the teacher, we are more likely to actively learn in the class. Relationships between teachers and students in China are quite different from here. Chinese teachers always tend to push students to study and more willing to communicate with students. However, I found that ELIP teachers seldom communicate with us like friends. We went through a lot of challenges when we first came here. If they are more willing to understand our situations, we may more successfully adapt to the new environment.

Furthermore, participants also regarded communication and encouragement as a way of feeling cared about. **Z** also expressed his feelings about this:

Students with poor English foundation need... teachers' encouragement and affirmation. It makes students more willing to communicate with teachers.

Besides, the communication with teachers really influences students' learning in ELIP. More communication with students can promote students'... confidence so that they are more willing to participate in the class.

Meanwhile, **K**, who was held at ELIP's basic level for five terms, asked for extra target assistant:

I think students with low English language skills like me need targeted help. The whole class has different levels of students. In fact, we learn less in normal class because teachers sometimes cannot pay attention to us and give us extra help. It is better for us to have some workshops designed specifically for us.

### **Considering Culture Differences and Making Efforts to Address Them**

Cultural differences also serve as an impediment for students. *M* believed that ELIP teachers need to learn more about Chinese culture in order to better help international students and offered his own recommendation:

The amount of Chinese international students in the class is significantly higher than students from other countries. Almost 70-80% of students in ELIP are Chinese international students. Thus, I believe it is really valuable for ELIP teachers to learn more about Chinese cultures. In fact, Chinese international students have distinctive learning habits and methods. However, teachers in ELIP do not know enough Chinese students in class. Thus, ELIP teachers really need to make an effort to learn more about Chinese international students and establish... good relationships with us. For example, they may try to learn something about Chinese education.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

By examining the experience of Chinese international students who dropped out of ELIP, this study highlights the academic and social challenges faced by international students and explains Chinese international students' retention and dropout behaviors. This study also intent to explore functional strategies and supports to better help Chinese international students successfully integrate into the new educational system.

The qualitative findings in this study describe Chinese international students learning and life experience in Canada and the narratives that led to their exits from ELIP. Thus, this chapter provides the findings of the research questions.

1. How do Chinese international students who dropped out of pre-university ELIP describe their learning and life experiences in Canada?
2. What were the challenges faced by these students during their programs of study?
3. Why do Chinese international students withdraw from pre-university ELIP?
4. What are meaningful strategies and services that could better serve and support Chinese international students so that they can successfully integrate into the Canadian educational system?

After exploring these questions, a critical reflection of the researcher, scope and limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research is discussed.

## Findings and Discussion

### Learning and Life Experiences in Canada

**Pre-university schooling.** According to Donald and Jackling (2007), students' learning styles are culturally based. Before international students go abroad for higher education, they have already fostered their own learning styles and beliefs in education in their native country. Thus, international students may face certain difficulties in adapting to the host country's educational environment. Before they entered ELIP, four of five participants in this study finished their high school learning in Chinese international high schools where the learning content and environment are similar to the learning in Canada. They commonly felt comfortable in terms of social life and experienced less adaptation challenges when they first came in Canada, because their international high school learning had already helped them adapt to the new learning style and environment before they came to Canada. According to Tinto's longitudinal model of dropout (1975), individuals enter higher education institutions with various pre-college experiences that directly or indirectly influence their performance in college. Thus, their pre-university experiences in high school help them to integrate successfully into the new learning environment.

**Time Allocation.** Literature in higher education often focuses on students' choice of an institution or their decision to continue or dropout (DesJardins & Toutkoushian, 2005). However, little attention has been paid to students' allocation, both sociologically and economically (Fernex, Lima & de Vries, 2015), and a limited number of models have analyzed and explained the choices students make between three major activities: study



(academic activities), leisure (cultural and social activities) and paid work. Based on rational choice model (DesJardins & Toutkoushian, 2005), individuals are able to understand and assess the advantages and disadvantages of their actions, decisions, or beliefs. Individuals will choose according to an assessment of the costs as well as the advantages or risks of each action. Tinto applies this theory to students' allocation of time in order to investigate dropout behaviors, and he believes that individuals would invest their energies in activities for a long period if they think it will maximize the rate of benefits.

In the current study, participants spent most of their time on online gaming. It turns out the addiction to online gaming is a possible contributing factor for students' dropout behaviors. According to George et al. (2008), students' GPA are negatively related to passive leisure time, such as watching television, watching movies, or hanging out with friends. Thus, spending too much time on passive leisure activities may contribute to students' low academic performance. Meanwhile, a positive relationship has been found between study time and students' academic performance (Brint & Cantwell, 2008; Chow, 2007; George et al., 2008), and Dolton et al. (2003) point out that both formal study time and self-study time are significant factors that can determine students' exam scores. It means that students are required to have enough time to study both during class and outside of class if they want to pass the program. Participants reported that they seldom studied after class or even before the final. Therefore, both passive leisure time and less study time likely contributed to the academic failure that leads Chinese international students to dropout of ELIP.

**Socialization.** The socialization of participants in Canada primarily focused on Chinese schoolmates, and all of them reported they had no native friends due to the language barrier. Failing to establish friendships with local students, participants might have magnified feelings of loneliness and homesickness. Participants regularly contacted their family members back in China, and they used videos, social media, and phones to report their life and learning experience in Canada. However, they never told parents about their difficulties and problems to avoid giving them cause to worry.

International students who bring distinctive cultures to host countries are more likely to experience homesickness, culture shock, prejudice, and discrimination compared to native students (Zhou et al. 2008). Like other international students, many Chinese international students bring high expectations of making friends with natives (Jiao, 2006), but find that it is difficult for them to establish relationships or make close friendships with individuals in the host country (Montgomery & MacDowell, 2009). Most studies suggest that international students primarily socialize with individuals who are of the same culture (Bochner, Hutnik. & Furnham, 1985; Jiao, 2006). The same result has been found in this study: Chinese international students only socialize with international students from China or immigrants who share the same background. They were seldom in contact with natives or students from other backgrounds due to the language barriers. Based on Jiao (2006), only socializing or seeking help from individuals who share the same culture does not help Chinese international students gain learning and social experience from the host country. Thus, limited contact with the native culture hinders international students from improving their English language capacity, while students with poor English proficiency experience barriers when socializing with natives

that lead them to lose the opportunity to gain host country experiences and language capacity. Under this circumstance, Chinese internationals become entrapped in a feedback loop of limited language ability and cultural contacts.

The ethnicity and nationality of parents have been highlighted as something that could significantly influence an individual's social development (Gloria et al., 2005; Meeuwisse et al., 2010). Thus, international students who bring a distinctive identity have challenges when socializing with individuals who come from different backgrounds. Berry (1997) states that acculturation strategies, which include assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization, significantly affect how international students deal with these challenges. In this study, Chinese international students reported that they initially tried to communicate with individuals from the host country but later avoiding communicating with natives after they found natives could not understand what they were talking about. In this context, they turned to socializing with individuals who are from the same culture, or used social media to communicate with their friends back in their home country. Thus, they choose separation acculturation strategies after they came across some communication difficulties. It turns out that Chinese international students in this study prefer to utilize avoidance-oriented coping strategies when dealing with their problematic acculturative experiences.

**Teacher-student relationship.** Chinese international students reported that they were unsatisfied with the relationship they had with ELIP teachers, so that it was a significant factor in choosing to dropout. Dao et al. (2007) notes that some Chinese students have been impacted by traditional Chinese culture and education since

childhood, which develops the habit of raising hands to answer questions. They observe that while being brought up in the Chinese education system, Chinese students were taught not to question their teachers, and should they wish to respond to a teacher's question, they must raise their hand and wait for the teacher to call upon them. In contrast, Canadian students are encouraged to question their teachers, and will often speak out without being called upon or raising their hand. When Chinese international students are still deciding whether or not to raise their hands to speak, other students have already said the answer. As a result, when the two groups share the same classroom, Chinese students are far less likely to participate than Canadian students due to the differences in their educational upbringing (Dao et al., 2007). Over the time, the teacher might develop some perceptions that Chinese students cannot answer questions appropriately and result in some inaccurate assumptions. These inaccurate assumptions are possibility become a form of cultural discrimination against students' learning styles, or the antiquated image of Chinese students misunderstanding the convention, which creates more barriers for teachers and students.

The teacher-student relationship patterns are distinctively based on different cultures. Chinese education philosophy has its roots on Confucianism, so Chinese students greatly respect older people and teachers (McInerney, 2005), and they are always regarded as modest and diligent (Park, 2000). The relationship between teachers and students in China is highly hierarchical, and teachers have absolute authority. Even though the teacher-student interaction is restricted in a class, where there is usually a dull and authoritarian studying atmosphere, students tend to seek a closer interaction with teachers after class (Chen, 2007; Zeng, 2006). Most of them prefer to ask

questions after class rather than ask directly during the class because the Chinese teacher-student relationship is casual beyond class. Moreover, Chinese education contains more family-like interactions between teachers and students. For example, it is common that teachers visit parents to understand students' needs and learning difficulties. Schools also have formal regular meetings between teachers and parents in order to let parents know about their children's school performance and learning achievement (Sit, 2013). ELIP teachers are sometimes unaware of the different relationship patterns, thus there is a lack of interaction and efficient communication with students in or after class. Consequently, students may feel teachers do not care about them, which may act as a barrier to their academic progress.

### **Challenges and Support**

**Challenges.** Even though learning in international high schools had already prepared participants for studying abroad, they still need someone to help them better adapt to the new environment, such as guide who could show them where to eat or buy household items, as well as how to register for school. With respect to learning, interviewees commonly reported that spoken and written English served as barrier to their academic progress. Not having close friends to associate with in the spare time made them feel homesick and lonely. A lack of fluency in spoken English prevented them from building friendships with natives and international students from other countries. Meanwhile, interviewees reported that prejudice and discrimination sometimes happened around them, while there was no place or institution where they felt comfortable asking for help.

Limited studies have been carried out within Canadian universities to investigate the language needs of international students. Chacon (1998) conducted surveys among international students at the University of Alberta and found that 37.7% of international students regarded speaking and writing as a ‘problem’, while 36.7% regarded them as a ‘big problem’. Similar results have been found in this study after interviewing the participants about their academic difficulties. They reported that speaking and writing were the central impediments to their academic progress. In terms of speaking, they frequently reported that they lacked strong spoken English training and practice under Chinese education. Even though most of them had their high school education in English and their courses were mostly taught by English native speakers, they still found it hard to communicating in English. Additionally, they believed the instruction for oral English in ELIP was not functional and their speaking capacity were not fully developed during their programs of learning. After they entered university, their limited oral English ability lead participants have difficulty communicating with instructors and peers in the class. This also hindered them actively participating in the group discussions and expressing their ideas. Thus, they suggested that ELIP modify its teaching approach.

With respect to English writing, participants reported that the writing style in English are significantly different than Chinese, and they were often confused between Chinese and English writing formats. According to Mullins et al. (1995), there is a drastic difference between Asian and European writing in terms of the coherency of writing. Meanwhile, citing and referencing, especially APA style, is also a major problem for Chinese international students. Asian ESL students start their academic writing by coping; consequently, they often lack training with respect to citing and referencing

(Pecorari, 2008). The findings of the current study also support the notion that even though the Canadian curriculum is taught in the international schools that some of the participants had graduated from, the writing ability of these students was not adequately developed (Zhang & Zhou, 2010). Thus, international students need support services, such as targeted advice and culturally responsive preparation services, with respect to the required structure and formats of writing to successfully prepare themselves before they enter into the universities. Otherwise, students also need to take their own responsibilities to learn and gain mastery of the new writing style and format as they prepare to live and study in another country.

**Support.** When interviewees faced challenges and problems in Canada, they all attempted to solve them by themselves and did not tell their parents so as to avoid giving them cause to worry. All the participants' tuition and living expenses are coming from their parents. Parents of Chinese international students often provide enough financial support to their children so that they can concentrate on studying. They do not allow their children to take part-time jobs or engage in social activities, as they are afraid it would be a negative influence on children's studies. Contrarily, though Chinese international students from upper grades gave participants support and helped them fit into their new learning environment, participants still lacked adequate support from friendship networks due to the fact that their social circle was comprised exclusively of people from their native culture. Participants reported that they were unsatisfied with the support from ELIP offered and were disappointed that ELIP teachers did not notice or ask about their difficulties. This made them feel as though the teachers did not care about them and were not invest in the success of the students.

Appropriate academic and social supports could enhance international students' learning outcomes and help them to better integrate into the new living and learning environment (Baba & Hosoda, 2014; Russel et al., 2001; Zhou et al., 2008). When investigating the academic support provided from ELIP, all five Chinese international students reported that they receive inadequate support. Based on the literature, educational institutions provided distinctive support tailored to specific learning situations, and academic support commonly related to classrooms, tutorials, and learning support. Chinese international students' learning style preferences differ from students from the host country due to the cultural differences (Holtbrügge & Mohr, 2010). Thus, programs like ELIP must understand the different academic styles employed by international students and offer support tailored to their individual needs in order to effectively facilitate their academic progress.

Social support significantly influences individuals' acculturation process. Positive and supportive relationships, which both relate to heritage culture and settlement culture, indicated the most successful adaptation results. The social networks for interviewees primarily focused on students or individuals who were born the same culture. These students tend to develop a social circle, which contains individuals from a similar culture who create a sub-culture within the environment of the host culture. They tend to maintain a strong ethnic orientation and take on less of the host culture, and it impedes them from gaining learning and social experience from the host country. Thus, they commonly lack of efficient social support from their friendship networks.



Support from family is another factor that could influence international students' acculturation process. Participants in this study reported that they received adequate support from their family. Their families supported them financially so that they can fully concentrate on their studies. However, support sometimes causes problems. Though parents of Chinese international students commonly provide adequate financial support for their children's studies, some of the students improperly use their parents' money or even dropout from school without telling their parents. Moreover, adequate financial support sometimes causes stress among Chinese international students because Chinese parents sometimes put pressure on their children by reminding them that they are spending significant sums of money on their education. This can cause anxiety for their children. They also insist that their children do not take on part-time jobs so that their children can concentrate on learning. Lacking contacts with the host society also hinders Chinese international students from improving their language proficiency.

### **Causes of Dropout**

Participants dropped out from ELIP for two reasons central reasons: academic failure and regard ELIP learning as a waste of time. This study posed several possible causes of students' academic failures: low learning and integrative motivation, lack of time management and self-regulation, and an inability to adapt to distinctive learning and teacher-student relationship patterns.

**Low learning and integrative motivation.** Chinese education and the demand of job market have significant influences on interviewees. Most of the participants' expectation of studying in Canada is to earn a bachelor's degree to secure a stable job in

the future. More specifically, the participants studied abroad following their parents' wishes and expectations. Even though some of the participants have their own interests and are not interested in learning, their parents pushed them to follow their instruction. As a result, they often lacked learning motivation when studying in Canada. According to the qualitative data collected via the interviews, five Chinese international students determined to study abroad largely based on their parents' wishes and suggestions. With regard to the expectation of studying abroad, they all reported they only desired to get the degree so that they can secure a better job in the future. In this context, the fad of studying abroad is strongly "push-oriented" (Wang, 1992), and they commonly lack of learning motivations. According to Brzezinski (1994), who explored the underlying reasons that drive Chinese students to study abroad, there are several attractive factors that have been discerned and may influence what Chinese students decide when studying abroad: increased prestige, intrinsic personal attraction, and access to a system perceived as more fair. Actually, Chinese society is likely to "attribute a form of cultural capital to intellectuals with an experience abroad" (Brzezinski, 1994, p. 17). Both Chinese society and the Chinese manpower system of promotions encourage students to study abroad (Brzezinski, 1994). The diploma, for instance, earned in Western countries, is generally regarded as superior to the equivalent degree earned at a Chinese university (Yan & Berliner, 2011). Moreover, the status and social respects are viewed related to education achievement and prestige among Chinese students. Thus, if one wants to have a respected position within Chinese society, Western knowledge and international experiences are required to maximize individuals' potential. Under this circumstance, parents of Chinese international students may be more inclined to push their children into studying abroad in

order to secure a bright future for their children. Similar to the teacher-student relationship in China, parent-child relationships are also significantly influenced by the Confucianism. Parents have absolute authority and children need to obey their parents' orders (Chan & McNeal, 2003). Thus, some of the Chinese international students eventually go aboard, even if they are not willing to, and commonly lack of learning motivations.

Another factor that may cause Chinese international students dropout from higher education is low integrative motivation. Based on participants' description, they spent most of their time playing online video games at home and seldom socialized with the host society. They often lacked motivation to actively integrate into the new environment, and motivation is a vital factor that could determine a learner's success in language learning (Dörnyei, 2005). It is especially true of integrative motivation, which plays a positive role in determining a successful adaptation, in particular for ESL students. Integrative motivation is a complex of attitudinal, goal-directed and motivational attributes. It concerns a positive affective disposition towards the Second language (L2) community and the desire to achieve L2 proficiency in order to get a sense of belonging to the L2 community (Yu, 2010). Thus, students with intensive integrative motivation would actively interact or communicate with members of the L2 community using the L2. In this situation, students will not only improve their L2 language proficiency, but also successfully adapt to the new living environment. In contrast, students with low integrative motivation constantly stay in the same social circle, which only contains the culture that they were born. This pattern hinders them from making progress with respect to the L2 language and raises acculturative problems that can even cause them

withdrawal from education.

**Lack of time management and self-regulation.** All interviewees in this study spent too much time on negative leisure time activities, particularly online gaming, and spent time seldom engaging in autodidactic learning after class. They did not manage their time and commonly lacked of self-management abilities.

Lack of time management skills is a possible factor that contributes to Chinese international students' academic failure. Claessens et al. (2007) define time management as "behaviors that aim at achieving an effective use of time while performing certain goal directed activities" (p. 262). Students' time is primarily comprised of activities such as studying, leisure activities, and spending time with families. How students manage their time influences how much time they spend on studying, which affects students' learning result. Literature has revealed that better time management skills are associated with higher academic results (Britton & Tesser 1991; George et al. 2008). It means that students' time management skills are an important factor that could affect learning success. In a study that compared the time allocation among ethnic majority and minority students, Meeuwisse et al. (2013) found that ethnic majority college students were more organized in time management with respect to things like setting aside a time and place to study. The participants in this study failed to effectively manage their time and wasted most of their time on passive leisure activities. This phenomenon may be another cultural issues as time management skills are not emphasized in Chinese education, and Chinese students commonly do not have the habit of organizing time. In Chinese students' mind, the more time they put into their studies, the better academic result they would get.

However, there is no definite relationship between study time and academic results have been proven. Thus, Chinese education needs to focus more on cultivating students' time management skills so that they can learn efficiently rather than simply investing excessive hours into ineffective study methods.

Another reason that may contribute to Chinese international students' academic failure is lack of self-regulation. Children in China rely on parents heavily, and most of them study under parents' supervisions. Consequently, when Chinese international students live abroad and out of their parents' reach, some of students who lack of self-regulation start to paly online games or even dropout from class due to online gaming addiction. Psychologists and educators have emphasized the significance of self-regulation in explaining academic achievement, and also revealed the relationship between motivation and self-regulation. According to recent research, students with a positive attitude and high motivation are more likely to demonstrate self-regulation and achievement-oriented behaviors, and thereby see more achieve academic success (Green, Nelson, Martin, & Marsh, 2006; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Thus, students with high self-regulation likely allocate less time to leisure activities and maintain more organized attitudes toward studying. In contrast, students who are unable to effectively self-regulate may spend most of their time on leisure activities. George et al. (2008) state that students' GPA is negatively correlated with passive leisure time, such as watching television or hanging out with friends. Thus, a lack of self-regulation is a factor that contributes to Chinese international students' academic failure.

One serious problem that arises from this research is online gaming addiction.

Under some complicated challenges and stress, participants tried to use online gaming as a psychological escape. Online gaming became a method for participants to cope with learning and life problems. With playing online games, participants' anxiety was suppressed and they forget about the stressors associated with their academic studies. Thus, they used gaming to avoid unpleasant moods and stressful situations. For some participants who delayed or withdrawal at home for years, the online gaming addiction became increasingly serious. It is similar to a drug addiction in that individuals use drugs to escape problem that they are not able to solve (Young, 2009). In this context, the sooner support is being provided to these online gaming addicts, the more benefit they will get.

**Distinctive learning preferences and teacher-student relationship patterns.** As culture has an impact on students' learning and shapes their leaning preferences (Holtbrügge, 2010), international students with distinctive culture backgrounds perceive their learning environment differently (Koul & Fisher, 2005). One factor that may contribute to learning biases that lead to Chinese international students dropping out from ELIP is distinctive learning preferences. Chinese students' relied heavily on repetitive rote learning and memorization (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991), particularly in language learning. Chinese language teachers always provide a clear format or model for students to memorize and interpret. However, Western teachers regarded rote learning as a surface approach to learning (Watkins & Biggs, 1996). Learning in developed countries employs technology, which emphasizes students' use of deep approaches to learning, and active participation in the classroom activities. Apparently, Chinese international students have difficulties adapting to the new learning patterns and eventually failed their exams.

The other learning preference that Chinese students are accustomed to is passive learning. Chinese students not only absorb knowledge, but also seek closer interaction with teachers. They commonly prefer to ask questions after class and wait for teachers to proactively anticipate and understand their learning needs and learning difficulties (Chen, 2007; Zeng, 2006). This kind of learning pattern encourages them to wait for teachers to pay attention rather than proactively interacting with teachers in class. Chinese international students in this study were unsatisfied with ELIP teachers because these students failed to adjust to the Western pedagogical approaches employed in ELIP and eventually withdraw from the program.

Distinctive learning preferences for Chinese international students also impact the teacher-student relationship, which could contribute to a high dropout rate. Influenced by the Confucianism and their previous learning experiences, Chinese international students are more likely to listen and learn rather than speaking during class (Dao et al., 2007; Edwards & Tokin, 1990). This different learning preference may sometimes cause biases for Canadian teachers, or even eventually become a form of unintended discrimination that negatively colours the teachers' perceptions of students learning ability, which negatively influence teachers-student relationship.

Student/teacher relationships in China are drastically different in Canada. Students in China are considered to be acquiring knowledge through participating in activities and sharing their independent thinking, and the relationship between teachers and students is more egalitarian (Cortazzi & Jin, 2001). However, Canadian education emphasizes equalitarianism, individual development, independent and critical thinking, and

cooperation. The relationship between teachers and students are free and casual. Thus, the different relationship patterns lead Chinese international students to assume that their ELIP teachers do not like or care about them. Some participants dropped out from ELIP due to the fact that they perceived there were an uncaring or even antagonistic relationship between themselves and their teachers. These perceptions were potentially caused by distinctive learning preferences and culturally different student/teacher relationships.

### **Suggestion for ELIP Improvement**

Chinese international students dropped out from ELIP in part because they perceived the program as meaningless. All the participants used the word of “unsatisfied” when they were asked to make some comments on ELIP, and they also raised specific reasons, which included concerns that the curriculum was unconnected to university learning, that there was a lack of oral English training, that learning and testing materials were not aligned, that the passing criteria was unclear and evaluations unfair, and that there was a lack of consistency with respect to who was teaching and what each teacher’s standards were. Meanwhile, participants generally believed that the relationship with teachers influenced their learning in ELIP. They did not seem to engage in communication with teachers during or after class, and teachers did not know enough about Chinese international students’ cultural backgrounds, which led to inactive learning, and a high dropout rate.

In this study, the researcher asked the participants to offer suggestions for ELIP based on their own perspectives. Five participants proposed some suggestions and



improvement strategies for ELIP to better assist Chinese international students. These suggestions included modifying ELIP curriculum and teaching approaches, modifying assessment and actively motivating students, caring about students, providing personal attention and assistance, and considering the culture differences. However, some of the suggestions were proposed based on the Chinese education system. It turns out again that participants have difficulty adapting to new teaching approaches and education styles.

Chinese international students proposed that ELIP take some actions to modify the program curriculum, teaching methods, as well as the learning assessment. Specifically, they required ELIP modify the curriculum to one that is directly connected to the university learning. They hoped to get some English from their majors so that they can start their university learning more smoothly. Cummins (1980; 1981; 1996) argues that ESL students must learn two kinds of English language proficiency: basic interpersonal conversational skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). He refers BICS as skills that students need when they utilize in face-to-face conversation in social settings. Otherwise, CALP is the language proficiency found in written contexts in the content areas such as math, science, and social studies. BICS English is characterized as context-embedded, and it only takes 2 to 3 years for ESL students to obtain; while CALP English is characterized as context-reduced, and it takes 5 to 7 years for ESL students to be proficient in CALP English. In other words, BICS English is easy to learn and can be obtained in a short period of time, whereas CALP English require a long-term learning to attain.

In order for ESL students in ELIP to read and comprehend textbooks and perform appropriately in the academic environment, they need CALP English takes them beyond of the BICS English. Short (1993) states that traditional ESL classes spend most of the time on “how-to-says” under imagined situations that concentrating on social English language capacity, while Content-Based ESL Curriculum (CBEC) provides purposeful, meaningful, and authentic opportunities for ESL students to develop their language competency from all aspects. In this context, CBEC is recommended by this study in order to better prepare international students for university in academic purpose. In Canada, some immersion programs have been designed to teach English-speaking students French through subject matter. Many studies report that students in these programs consistently acquire equivalent or even higher levels of second language capacity, and they learn as much as or even more second language knowledge than students in traditional ESL classes (Dubé & MacFarlane, 1991; Krashen, 1985). This evidence supporting the use of CBEC could integrate subject matter and language and turns out to be more effective.

Content-Based ESL Instruction has diverse models such as Sheltered, EAP/ESP, and thematic-unit based models. In these models, the EAP/ ESP is developed to help adult English learners who are preparing to get admissions of higher education, because this model heavily emphasizes on grammar and specific registers essential to content in fields such as engineering, economic, and chemistry. Otherwise, the thematic-unit based model can also be utilized in the ELIP classes. This model has an important component on the use of thematic units that revolve around one specific topic. These thematic units can help ESL students explore each theme thoroughly instead of “covering ground”

(Brown, 2004a). Therefore, ESL teacher in ELIP can select several units based on the mainstream curriculum that are comprehensible to their level of English, so that students are presented with more opportunities to acquire academic discourse.

Chinese international students also suggested that ELIP instructors to be more aware of educational differences and recommended that teachers make some changes in relations to these differences. This suggestion is consistent with the findings of Cummins et al. (2005) and Guo (2003), who suggest that ESL teachers should be aware of the importance of students' prior knowledge, especially for the first language learning. Even though many researchers have emphasized that students' learning outcomes are influenced by not only teachers' teaching styles, but also their prior knowledge that includes their first language, culture, and personal experiences (Swain & Lapkin, 2000), no one in ELIP had ever mentioned about students' prior education experiences. Thus, efforts need to be taken to understand the international students' previous learning experiences and education style when they enroll in ELIP in case misunderstandings occur.

Chinese international students in this study were generally unsatisfied with the support from ELIP, both academically and socially. Consequently, they suggested that administrators and teachers in ELIP be more active in motivating, caring about students, and providing personal attention to students. In this context, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) can have positive effects on international students. According to Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994), CRP is a way not only acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures, but also offer full equitable access to education from all

cultures. This approach bridges and explains culture from dominant society, and valuing and recognizing students' own culture at the meanwhile. As students come to ELIP with preferred learning styles, distinctive life experiences and abilities, CRP helps students build their self-esteem (Banks & Banks, 1993), as well as make them feel their culture, language, and lifestyle is valued as same important as other students' from dominant country.

Cultural difference can cause anxiety in Chinese international students when studying in ELIP. Transformative Teaching Pedagogy (TTP) is a possible strategy that can promote student learning, especially for language learning. Gill (2007) suggests that when students enter a new intercultural learning environment, they begin to reflect upon the current learning experiences and make comparisons to their previous learning experiences. This approach can lead them to have a deeper understanding of meaning from the experience and also provide students with a capacity to enhance further learning experiences. Moreover, the transformative learning experience can offer students a chance to rethink their pervious learning experience systematically, and adapt to a new educational system critically. Cummins (2005) argues that most of the bilingual programs believe that the two languages should be kept rigidly separate. Teachers commonly stated that the instruction should be carried out exclusively in the target language without resource to students' first language (L1). Translation between first language (L1) and second language (L2) has no place in the teaching of language or literacy, and encouragement of translation in L2 teaching is viewed as a regression to the discredited translation method. Thus, Cummins (2005) encourages bilingual programs and teachers to accept a wide variety of instructional opportunities. He also suggests some bilingual

instructional strategies that could encourage students' cross-language transfer and the development of language awareness, which include the creation of dual language multimedia books and sister-class exchanges.

### **Implications**

The current research found that Chinese international students drop out of ELIP primarily due to academic failure. Various factors contributed to Chinese international students' failure in ELIP courses. One important reason is that they commonly lack the motivation to learn in Canada. Most participants in this study simply obey their parents' order without question, so parents play an important role in the decision-making process of studying abroad. As parents, they should give their children enough freedom to choose what they are really interested in, rather than what the parents believe to be the most useful trends. As for children who heavily rely on parents, families should adopt every possible communication tool, such as FaceTime and international phone calls, to talk about daily happenings and maintain a strong emotional connection. To better help children successfully integrate into the Canadian society, parents should encourage children to go out and make as many friends as possible. Moreover, Chinese international students whose interest mirrors these of the participants often lack of self-regulation and allow online games to usurp their time. To combat this, parents should pay close attention to their children's studies and daily lives.

Another factor that may significantly influence Chinese students' abroad studying decision-making is student recruitment agencies (SRA). According to Peng (2004), 85 percent of Chinese applicants chose study abroad agencies to help them apply to

Canadian schools. The reason why they choose SRA for consultation is that they had little knowledge of the application process and the cost of the entire process (Jiang, 2015). A number of Chinese students had difficulty deciding whether or not they should spend the necessary funds to study abroad. Often the agents would persuade students to study abroad (Jiang, 2015). Thus, if students who do not meet the entrance requirements heavily rely on the consultants' suggestion without enough information, they may have some misunderstandings.

For the SRA, consultants should provide reliable source of information, which involve in academic institutions and program information. Particularly, if students do not meet the language proficiency entrance requirement, consultants need to provide the detailed information of language program, which include curriculum, program duration, and graduation requirements, so that students are fully aware of the language learning process before they arrive at the destination country. Further, SRA can improve their service by gaining a deeper understanding of students' perspectives. In some cases, students who do not know what to study would prefer consult agents to choose their preferred programs. In this context, SRA play an important role in the students' decision-making process. SRA not only need to provide variety choices, but also should ensure the quality of consultations.

For students, learning time-management and self-regulation is essential. Chinese international students' lack of self-regulation leads to them spending too much time on negative leisure activities that can result in dropping out. In China, parents supervised their children's learning and control the time children play videogames. However, when

parents are in another country, the children do whatever they want to do without self-regulation. To successfully pass the ELIP and enter the university academic program as soon as possible, students need to cultivate self-regulation abilities and be more efficient managing their time. More importantly, students need to find assistance when facing emergent issues, such as withdraw, rather than not letting others know their struggles. Parents and students should take proper actions and pay attention as early as possible in order to obtain ideal results. It would be beneficial if students and parents sit down together to proactively come up with solutions to potential challenges before they even leave their home country. Otherwise, they should carefully determine what could be done about culture shock, such as mental and physical symptoms, and how to help students better integrate into the new environment.

ELIP administrators and teachers should attach more attention to the culture of Chinese international students, and communicate more about learning difficulties. As Chinese international students tend to seek closer attention from teachers, ELIP teachers should more actively interact with students in and out of class. They could also provide individual assistance for each student so that Chinese international students might feel more comfortable expressing their challenges. Moreover, teachers need to realize the different learning preferences and teacher-student relationship patterns of Chinese international students so that they can find better ways to educate as well as establish satisfying relationships with students. To better improving students' language abilities, teachers are required to modify their writing curriculum and add more functional oral communication strategies. More importantly, ELIP needs to pay more attention to the students who dropout. For example, if ELIP contact students who dropped out to ask

about the reasons for their withdrawal and provide help accordingly, some students may be willing return to ELIP to continue their education.

A lack of learning motivation is not just limited among Chinese international students; it is common throughout the whole Chinese education system. Chinese education emphasizes the exam scores and degrees too much. Consequently, many students only learn just to help find a satisfying job rather than absorbing knowledge or developing potential abilities. Thus, Chinese education needs to put effort into helping students find their own learning goals. Furthermore, Chinese education values hard work and encourages students to invest most of their time studying in order to secure exceptional academic results, but they seldom help students develop their time-management skills and self-regulation. To better cultivate students' independent learning abilities, Chinese education should provide students more time-management and self-regulation strategies.

### **Critical Reflections of the Research**

This study has allowed an exploration into the learning experiences of Chinese international students in ELIP and developed a fundamental understanding of the nature of why Chinese international students drop out from ELIP. By conducting one-on-one interviews, the researcher could communicate with Chinese international students who dropped out of ELIP and listen to their stories. The students freely expressed their feelings and opinions without discomfort. This study has helped the researcher develop research skills and also build confidence to pursue her further studies among Chinese international students.



As an international student, the researcher was able to better understand participants' difficulties and the challenges raised in the interview. Some of the challenges are those that she has experienced. This study highlights some of the common problems and difficulties that are experienced by Chinese international students and gives a voice to the feelings and opinions of these students. It allows educators to develop assistance for future students who face similar risks.

The researcher used to be a teacher in China and expecting to be a teacher in the future. This study has given the researcher a new view of students. By analyzing the possible causes of students' academic failure, she was impressed by the importance of time management and self-regulation. This study remind the researcher that as a teacher, she should not only transmit knowledge to students, but also help them develop abilities required for them to become successful independent self-learner. In addition, she should see the students' ethnic and culture background rather than dominant culture. She will try her best to share findings with Canadian teachers so that they can better assist international students. At the mean time, she will also share the findings with Chinese teachers so that they can focus more on cultivating students' independent learning skills.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations in the present study. The first one deals with the ability to generalize the results beyond the context of this research project. This study was carried out in U of W. Even though this study provides a specific insight into the setting of ELIP pre-university program, it only draws on a limited sample from a small community and the results may not accurately represent the learning experiences and

perceived challenges of Chinese international students in other cities, province, or the whole country. It is difficult to generalize findings broadly and across different or a larger Chinese population.

The second limitation deals with the accuracy of information provided by the participants during each one-on-one interview. Because of the sensitivity of the research topic, participants might provide inaccurate information during the interviewing process. They may be afraid of letting others know about their retention experiences and of being treated differently. Thus, they would tend to protect themselves and maintain their privacy. In addition, it was hard to find participants who were in the process of withdrawing or had recently withdrawn from ELIP. Thus, those individuals who have pre-university ELIP retention or experiences with dropping out were selected and were asked to recall their experiences. Even though guided questions were utilized to improve the information accuracy for each one-on-one interview, the experiences and information they remember before a long time may be inaccurate.

In order to improve the research data's credibility, the researcher developed an early familiarity with the culture of the participants before the first round of data collection. Each participant has been given the opportunity to refuse to participate in the project. This was done to ensure that the data collection sessions would include people who were "genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely" (Shenton, 2004, p. 66). While doing the data collection, field notes were taken to ensure the accuracy of the data. Otherwise, the researcher used probes to elicit detailed data and iterative questioning, in which returns to matters previously raised by an informant and extracts related data

through rephrased questions. In this context, where contradictions emerge, falsehoods can be detected and the researcher may decide to discard the suspect data.

The third limitation deals with two specific challenges faced by researcher that have been highlighted by Maxwell (2005). One is potential researcher bias encountered by any study. The researcher is a Chinese international student at U of W, and there are possibilities that she may know or have relationships with some of the participants before this research. This could impact how and what participants share with the researcher and even who participates in the study. However, the researcher managed this bias by offering confidentiality. Participants' identifications were highly protected by the investigators, and any information that could link to the identifications had been deleted when the researcher transcribing the data.

The other bias that related the present study is the concept of reactivity. The researcher is also an international student in Canada and has had experiences that may potentially influence how participants react or respond to questions during interviews. In order to manage this bias, the researcher continuously reflected upon and remained open to understanding participants' own feelings and views, and avoided projecting her own perspective onto theirs.

The last limitation deals with the inaccuracy of translations. All the interviews were conducted in Chinese and the transcripts were translated by the researcher. Although the researcher was cautious, there still might have some misunderstanding and incorrect translation being produced. However, the researcher checked over the transcripts multiple times in order to reduce mistakes.

## Future Research

The findings of this study indicate that Chinese international students who drop out from ELIP commonly face a long delay before they can begin their university programs in Canada. There is therefore a need for studies to find effective ways to support students at risk of dropping out, and help those who have dropped out integrate back into the Canadian education system.

This study only draws upon on students' view about their dropout behavior and expresses their learning experiences and personal narratives surrounding the reason as to why they dropped out. To develop a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to the dropout rate, teachers' views and comments need to be examined. Future research can learn about average tenure of teachers in the programs, and try to answer the questions such as what are teachers' background/qualifications, what are their views, what limitations do they see, and what problems are they trying to overcome.

This research also focused exclusively on Chinese international students in ELIP. The learning experiences, challenges and dropout narratives may share similarities and have differences with Chinese international students in other educational institutions. It is helpful to explore Chinese international students' learning experiences, challenges and dropout stories in broader place such as universities.

The current study demonstrates how the lack of self-regulation, time management, and distinctive learning preferences have contributed to students' academic failure. In this study, all participants were male Chinese international students. Based on Berry's stress-

coping Framework (1997), there is a need to examine the correlation between dropout behavior and gender, age, schools' type, length of stay, major, and degree being pursuing.

### **Conclusion**

#### **Question 1. How do Chinese international students in pre-university ELIP describe their learning and life experiences in Canada?**

Chinese international students were unsatisfied with their learning experience in ELIP for several reasons: the curriculums were unconnected to university learning, there was a lack of oral English training, the learning content and testing difficulties were not consistent, the passing criteria was unclear, the evaluation process was unfair, and there was a lack of consistency with who was teaching, and how they evaluated students.

During the programs of learning, they also lacked contact with teachers and spent most of their time engaging in passive leisure activities while neglecting opportunities in self-learning after class. Moreover, they often socialized exclusively with individuals who shared the same culture and language, and had difficulty making friends with natives because of language barriers.

#### **Question 2. What are the challenges faced by Chinese international students during their programs of study?**

Chinese international students experienced difficulties in finding accommodations, and knowing where to eat or buy things, as well as how to register for school when they first arrived in Canada. Their former education experiences did not help them fully develop English writing and communication skills, so they regarded English writing and

presentation as challenges during their programs of learning. Not having close friends to associate with, participants felt homesick and lonely. Language barriers were the main factor that impeded them from establishing friendships with natives and international students from other countries.

**Questions 3. Why do Chinese international students withdraw from pre-university ELIP?**

Chinese international students dropped out from ELIP primarily due to two reasons: academic failure and regard ELIP learning as a waste of time. Several causes of Chinese international students' academic failures have been identified in this study, which include low learning and integrative motivation, a lack of time management and self-regulation, and inability to adapt to distinctive learning and teacher/students relationship patterns.

**Question 4. What are the meaningful strategies and services that could better serve and support Chinese international students so that they can successfully integrate into the Canadian education system?**

Chinese international students proposed that ELIP should modify its curriculum and teaching approach, modify assessments, actively motivate students, care about students and provide personal attention and assistant, and that teachers should notice cultural differences and make changes to their approach accordingly. In order to foster students have a deep understanding of the meaning, the study recommends the Content-Based ESL Curriculum, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, and Transformative Teaching

Pedagogy to better foster international students successfully integrate into the new academic context.

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## Appendix A

### *Background Information*

1. What are your backgrounds: education, family, etc?
2. Please describe you education and life experiences before you came in Canada?
3. When did you apply for the University of Windsor?
4. Why did you choose Canada as your study destination? Who came up with this idea? And why did you choose the University of Windsor?
5. What were your goals and expectations?
6. How did you apply for the University of Windsor?
7. What are the admission requirements for the University of Windsor?

### *ELIP Learning and Life Experiences*

1. Please describe your learning life in ELIP?
2. How were you class performance at that time? Do you often voluntary to answer questions?
3. Did you study after class? How long for a day?
4. Did you have troubles on understanding what the instructor taught in class? If so, what did you do?
5. Describe your steps for studying for your exams?
6. Describe your steps for completing home assignment?
7. What do you think of the courses in the ELIP program? Do you think ELIP courses are functional?
8. How many teachers who used to teach you in ELIP? Makes some comments on everone
9. How were the relationships with teachers?
10. What do you think of teachers' teaching in ELIP? Are you satisfied with it?
11. What are the difference in English teaching and learning between Canada and China?
12. What are the differences in learning environments between Canada and China (education values, pedagogical approaches, etc)?
13. What did you usually do after class?
14. Describe how you manage your daily time in ELIP?
15. Please describe your socialization in Canada?
16. Where are your friends primarily from? Do you have native friends?
17. Did you have trouble socializing when you were in ELIP?
18. How often do you contact with your family when you were in ELIP? What are you usually talked about with your family?
19. Did your family know your learning experience in Canada? How did they know?
20. Did your talk with your family your life or learning troubles in Canada? What are they?
21. Please make some comments on ELIP based on your own experiences?

### *Challenges and Support*

1. Were there any barriers preventing you from succeeding in ELIP? What are they?
2. How did you deal with your barriers? What kind of help did you seek to deal with these barriers?

3. Whom did you talk to about your barriers inside the ELIP environment? How helpful were they?
4. Whom did you talk to about your barriers outside the ELIP environment? How helpful were they?
5. What has been the most challenging portion for you in Canada?
6. What has been the most academically challenging portion of your immersion experience in the Canada?
7. What other facets of this experience have been challenging?
8. How did you deal with challenges at that time?
9. Did anybody help you to go through these challenges at that time? Who was that?
10. Did ELIP teachers or administrators had ever provide you any help when you were studying in ELIP? What are they?
11. Were you working while you were a student in ELIP?
12. Did you have other responsibilities when you were studying in ELIP? What was that?
13. How did you pay your tuition fees and living expenses in Canada?
14. Was there anything not mentioned here that influenced your decision about attending ELIP?
15. Did you parents supervise your learning when you were in China? How did they do?
16. Did you parents supervise your learning in Canada? How did they do?
17. What are your learning motivations and expectations in China? Were there any differences after you came to Canada?

#### ***Reason of Drop-out***

1. Describe how you made the decision to leave ELIP?
2. Did you have any main responsibilities after you stopped attending ELIP? If so, what were your responsibilities? Describe your responsibilities?
3. Did you talk to anyone about your decision not to enroll in ELIP? (family member, friend, instructor, classmate) What did they say about your decision? How important was their input in making your decision about leaving ELIP?
4. Does your family know what your study life in Canada is? If yes, explain how do they know?
5. Did you have any plans for after you leave ELIP? What are they?
6. How did you feel when you decided not to enroll in ELIP? How do you feel now about that decision?
7. How do you feel about coming back into the ELIP?
8. Describe how important money was in your decision not to enroll in ELIP?
9. Describe how important the following areas were: lack of time to attend class, family opinion, lack of transportation, understanding coursework, bad relationship with teachers?
10. Could you describe your life after leaving the ELIP?

#### ***Improved Strategies and Services***

1. What could ELIP have done to improve your experience as a student?
2. What type of help could have assisted you to passing the ELIP?

3. If you had to enroll again at the ELIP, what would you do differently?
4. What advice would you give to a friend who is about to start classes at the ELIP?
5. What advice would you give to teachers and administrators in ELIP to better help Chinese international students?
6. What type of advice would you give to Chinese students who are preparing to study abroad?

## Appendix A

### 基本情况

1. 你来自于哪里?
2. 请你描述一下你来加拿大之前的学习生活与经历?
3. 你是何时申请的温莎大学?
4. 为什么来到加拿大留学? 谁提出的这个想法?
5. 你为什么选择温莎大学?
6. 你的目标是什么? 期望是什么?
7. 请谈一下你是如何申请温莎大学的?
8. 学校当时是怎样选拔学生的? 有什么要求?

### 在 ELIP 的学习以及生活情况

1. 请你描述一下 ELIP 的学习生活? (读了几期, 上课时间, 课程内容, 考试, 考试频率, 最终成绩评判, 平时作业, 平时的考试成绩如何)
2. 你认为你在课堂上的表现如何? 愿不愿意主动回答问题?
3. 平时有没有利用课余时间学习? 一天平均多久?
4. 上课听老师讲课有没有困难? 如果有, 你怎么处理?
5. 请你描述一下你准备考试的步骤? (learning style)
6. 请你描述一下你完成作业以及老师布置的任务的步骤?
7. 你认为 ELIP 的课程怎么样? 学习效果如何?
8. 如果你做作业以及练习遇到问题会怎么办? 会找谁帮忙? 有帮助么?
9. 在 ELIP 有几个老师教过你?
10. 你对这个位 ELIP 老师的印象如何?
11. 你与老师的关系如何?
12. 你认为老师的教学质量如何? 满意么?
13. 请你谈一下 ELIP 的学习生活于国内的学习生活有何不同?
14. 你认为加拿大与中国的教育有何不同? 更喜欢哪一种? 为什么?
15. 课余时间除了学习还做些什么?
16. 请描述一下你在 ELIP 一天中是如何安排时间的?
17. 你在加拿大有没有朋友? 他们主要来自于哪里?
18. 有没有外国朋友? 多不多?
19. 是否愿意主动结交外国朋友? 为什么?
20. 在上 ELIP 时, 社交方面有没有困难?
21. 出国后多久和家里人联系一次? 交谈的内容是什么?
22. 谈论不谈论学习?
23. 家里人了解你在加拿大的学习状况么? 如何了解?
24. 生活和学习遇到困难会和家里人说么? 会说一些, 还是一点也不说? 具体说明
25. 请你谈一下你对 ELIP 的总体印象? 满意还是不满意?



### 经历的困难和帮助

1. 你认为阻碍你通过考试的主要困难是什么？
2. 你当时是如何处理这些困难的？你针对这些困难寻求过哪些帮助？
3. 你在大学环境里会和哪些人探讨这些困难？
4. 你在大学环境外会和哪些人探讨这些困难？
5. 请谈一谈你来加拿大最大的困难是什么？
6. 学习方面最困难的地方是哪些？其他方面的困难呢？（社交，生活）
7. 当你遇到困难时你会怎样处理？
8. 有没有像哪些组织或个人寻求过帮助？那些人帮过你？
9. ELIP 的老师以及领导有没有给过你特殊的关注？具体是什么？
10. 上 ELIP 是有没有兼职打工？
11. 你上 ELIP 时需要兼顾其他的事情么？你是如何兼顾的？
12. 你在加拿大的花销主要来源于哪里？
13. 你有没有担心过自己的学费和生活费？详细描述
14. 有没有其他没有提到过的事情可能影响你 pass ELIP？
15. 你在国内时家人有没有督促你学习？详细描述
16. 你来加拿大后家人有没有督促你学习？
17. 你的学习动力在国内主要来自于哪里？在加拿大呢？有什么不同？

### 从 ELIP 辍学的原因

1. 请你描述一下你是如何决定不上 ELIP 的？
2. 你再离开 ELIP 之后有没有主要的责任？如果有，是什么？
3. 你有没有向其他人提到过你要离开 ELIP 的这个决定？（家人，朋友，老师，同学，领导）他们对你的这个决定说了什么？他们是否在你下定这个决定中起了作用？
4. 当你决定离开 ELIP 时有没有计划？
5. 你在决定离开 ELIP 的时候有什么样的感受？
6. 你现在对于那个决定有什么样的感受？
7. 你回到 ELIP 之后有什么样的感受？
8. 请你描述一下金钱在你决定离开 ELIP 的决定中起了多大的作用？
9. 其他方面呢？（没有时间上课，家人的想法，没有交通工具，语言不流利，听不懂老师的讲课，不喜欢老师）
10. 请你谈一下离开 ELIP 之后的生活？
11. 你怎样评价你当时的那个决定？如果在可以选择一次，你还会做那样的决定么？

### 给 ELIP 提一些改进建议

1. 你认为 ELIP 做些什么能够改善你的学习生活？
2. 你认为 ELIP 给予你什么样的帮助可以促进你通过考试进入大学？
3. 如果你在回到 ELIP,你会做什么与以往不同的事情？
4. 如果你的朋友也即将来 ELIP 学习，你会给他什么样的建议？
5. 为了更好的帮助中国留学生，你会给 ELIP 老师以及领导什么样的建议？

6. 请你给一些准备来加拿大留学的中国留学生一些建议，使得他们在来之前做好充分的准备？
7. 请你给一些准备来 ELIP 的中国留学生一些建议，使得他们在来之前做好充分的准备？
8. 如果你要给加拿大政府提出建议，怎样才可以使得中国留学生满意以及有效的完成学业？

## Appendix B



Dear Students,

Recently an announcement about international students study will be conducted in the University of Windsor. This study focuses Chinese international students' acculturative experiences and challenges, and is being conducted as a one year research project through the Department of Education under the supervision of Professor Gorge Zhou. As you may know, international students go through a lot of challenges when studying in a new environment. Particularly, those international students who have insufficient language ability struggled more than others. Because you have the experience of ELIP learning, your opinions may be important to this study. Thus, I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about this.

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

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Windsor Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Thank you for your assistance with this project.

Sincerely,

Student Investigator

Peiyu Wang

## Appendix C



University  
of Windsor

### LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: *Chinese International Students from a Canadian Pre-University English Language Improvement Program: Acculturation Experiences and Challenges*

#### ***PURPOSE OF THE STUDY***

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of Chinese international students who study in Pre-university ELIP. The study also seeks to explain the Chinese international students' retention and dropout in this program. This study will draw upon multiple case studies with the intent to discover academic and social challenges faced by Chinese international students. The objective is to explore some strategies and support services to help Chinese international students successfully integrate into the new educational system. With this understanding and attention, researchers can isolate variables and develop model about dropout behavior. Administrators and teachers can then develop more supportive services to address this issue.

#### ***PROCEDURES***

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate several interviews. Each interview will be guided by interview questions

#### ***POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS***

There are no anticipated risks for participants involved.

#### ***POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY***

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

#### ***COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION***

There will be 30 dollars for each participant.

#### ***CONFIDENTIALITY***

The interview is anonymous. Any information might lead to the identification of a participant will be kept confidential. Interview data will be analyzed in an aggregated

manner and information that is associated with any particular participant will not be included in the study report.

***PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL***

The interview is voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not before final data reporting. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study.

***FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS***

Brief summary of the research will be access to participants.

***SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA***

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications and in presentations.

***RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS***

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

***SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR***

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix D



### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: *Chinese International Students from a Canadian Pre-University English Language Improvement Program: Acculturation Experiences and Challenges*

#### ***PURPOSE OF THE STUDY***

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of Chinese international students who study in Pre-university ELIP. The study also seeks to explain the Chinese international students' retention and dropout in this program. This study will draw upon multiple case studies with the intent to discover academic and social challenges faced by Chinese international students. The objective is to explore some strategies and support services to help Chinese international students successfully integrate into the new educational system. With this understanding and attention, researchers can isolate variables and develop model about dropout behavior. Administers and teachers can then develop more supportive services to address this issue.

#### ***PROCEDURES***

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate several interviews. Each interview will be guided by interview questions

#### ***POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS***

There are no anticipated risks for participants involved.

#### ***POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY***

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

#### ***COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION***

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The interview is anonymous. Any information might lead to the identification of a participant will be kept confidential. Interview data will be analyzed in an aggregated

manner and information that is associated with any particular participant will not be included in the study report.

***PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL***

The interview is voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not before final data reporting. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study.

***FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS***

Brief summary of the research will be access to participants.

***SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA***

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications and in presentations.

***RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS***

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

***SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE***

I understand the information provided for the study Chinese International Students from a Canadian Pre-University English Language Improvement Program: Acculturation Experiences and Challenges as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR***

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix E



### CONSENT FOR AUDIO TAPING

Research Subject Name: Chinese International Students

Title of the Project: Chinese International Students from a Canadian Pre-University English Language Improvement Program: Acculturation Experiences and Challenges

I consent to the audio-taping of interviews, procedures, or treatment.

I understand these are voluntary procedures and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that the taping be stopped. I also understand that my name will not be revealed to anyone and that taping will be kept confidential. Tapes are filed by number only and store in a locked cabinet.

The destruction of the audio tapes will be completed after transcription and verification.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and that the audio tape will be for professional use only.

---

(Research Subject)

---

(Date)



**VITA AUCTORIS**

NAME: Peiyu Wang

PLACE OF BIRTH: Baotou, China

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1990

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