

Linguistic and Cultural Experiences of Female Chinese International Graduate Students at State
University of New York at Fredonia

By

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CERTIFICATION OF PROJECT WORK

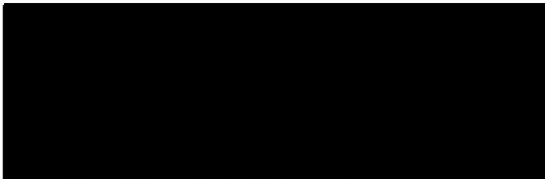
We, the undersigned, certify that this project entitled *Linguistic and Cultural Experiences of Female Chinese International Graduate Students at State University of New York at Fredonia* by John Irish, Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, TESOL, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language: K - 12, is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this project.



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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
List of Tables	vi
Introduction.....	2
Significance of Study.....	3
Purpose of Study.....	5
Literature Review.....	6
Graduate Students and Undergraduates.....	7
Life Stage and Emerging Adulthood for Female Chinese Students.....	8
Age discrimination.....	12
Gender discrimination.....	13
Family Relationships, Adult Roles and International Study.....	15
Parental support and achievement for female students.....	17
Time Constraints and Language Proficiency.....	19
Acculturation and Culture Shock for Chinese Learners.....	21
Chinese Students as Individuals, Apart from Culture.....	25
Methodology.....	29
Step One: Find a Research Topic.....	29
Step Two: Conduct Literature Review.....	29
Step Three: Identifying Participants.....	30
Step Four: Justification for Using a Qualitative Research Design.....	31
Step Five: Select Questions.....	33
Step Six: Interview Protocol.....	35

Recording and confidentiality.....	35
Time and location.....	36
Step Seven: Human Subjects Review Approval.....	36
Step Eight: Conduct Interviews.....	37
Step Nine: Organize Results.....	37
Step Ten: Analyze Data.....	38
Expected Themes.....	39
Step Eleven: Identify Limitations.....	39
Results.....	41
Participant 1: Summary of Results.....	42
Participant 2: Summary of Results.....	46
Participant 3: Summary of Results.....	52
Participant 4: Summary of Results.....	57
Participant 5: Summary of Results.....	61
Participant 6: Summary of Results.....	66
Participant 7: Summary of Results.....	69
Participant 8: Summary of Results.....	75
Discussion and Recommendations.....	81
Limitations.....	81
Suggestions for Future Research.....	82
Factors Affecting Acculturation and Adjustment.....	83
Recommendation 1: Improved food choices.....	83
Recommendation 2: More consistent transportation.....	84

Recommendation 3: Increase American cultural understandings.....	84
Chinese International Graduate Students and American Peer Interactions.....	85
Recommendation 1: Make the purpose of lectures and events clear.....	86
Recommendation 2: Promote events through social medial.....	87
Recommendation 3: Offer Chinese Courses, Mentoring, and Language Exchange to the Campus Community.....	88
Help Available in ESL and Writing.....	89
Recommendation 1: Understand students’ expectations and experiences...	89
Recommendation 2: Provide information in Chinese at orientation.....	91
Recommendation 3: Encourage use of tutoring services early and often...	92
Culminating Recommendations.....	92
References.....	94

List of Tables

<u>Table</u>		<u>Page</u>
1	Factors affecting the success to the success of university schooling for Graduate Students.....	32
2	Interview Questions / Framework.....	34
3	Participant 1.....	44
4	Participant 2.....	49
5	Participant 3.....	54
6	Participant 4.....	59
7	Participant 5.....	63
8	Participant 6.....	67
9	Participant 7.....	72
10	Participant 8.....	78
11	Recommendations to Improve the Linguistic and Cultural Experiences of Female Chinese International Graduate Students at SUNY Fredonia.....	93

Linguistic and Cultural Experiences of Female Chinese International Graduate Students
at State University of New York at Fredonia

The problem this Master's Project focuses on is the mismatch between services provided by university graduate programs and the needs of female Chinese international graduate students at one university. International graduate students in the United States are an important to American higher education for a number of reasons, including economically, but also for the standing and reputation of the universities they attend. In 2006 alone there were 564,766 international students, 46% of whom were graduate students (Ren, Bryan, Min & Wei, 2007). Of these international students, 58% were from Asia (Ren et al., 2007). International education is a major export service of the United States, adding billions of dollars to the American economy every year, both directly in school fees and living expenses and, often indirectly, as teaching assistants (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). Despite their crucial role in higher education, international graduate students are not well represented in research when it comes to problems of acculturation—an important factor to their success. This is especially true in regards to their English language ability, which is both a help and hindrance to this process (Zhou, Frey, & Bang, 2011).

Graduate students from East Asia face many potential obstacles to success. These include problems that may arise from living in a different culture and adjusting to a new lifestyle, such as getting used to new food, language, and cultural norms (Zhou et al., 2011). While the time needed to acclimatize oneself to a new environment may vary by individual, English language ability has been consistently shown to be an important predictor of success (Ren, Bryan, Min, & Wei, 2007; Halic, Greenberg, & Paulus, 2009; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). English ability has

also been linked to the self-esteem and other emotional issues (Halic, et al., 2009). Students making cultural adjustments often need emotional and psychological support as well as academic support, but often do not take advantage of the opportunities for available help for reasons such as culture and simply not knowing what help is available (Mau & Jepsen, 1990).

Significance

According to Halic et al. (2009) English is seen by international students in the US as both a barrier and channel to achieving their academic and social goals. English proficiency has also been shown to be one of the main factors that affect Chinese students' success while studying in North America (Li, DiPetta, & Woloshyn, 2012). Many international students may believe that because of their successful training in English in their home country that they can succeed socially and academically in their host country, but this is not always the case. There may be issues preventing these students' exposure and opportunities to communicate with native speakers of English while studying in their university, such as a lack of communication skills, cultural understanding, and differences in values and beliefs (Liu, 2011).

An inability to communicate affects not only affects their ability to socialize, but also on classroom participation for the international student; which can impact grades in classes that require students to interact with each other and the teacher. Language proficiency also has an affective impact on how native English students' perceive their academic abilities (Halic et al., 2009). Students who feel personally responsible for their lack of English proficiency can also have issues regarding how they perceive their own cognitive abilities, or become concerned about how their mental abilities are perceived by others (Halic et al., 2009).

Another aspect of success in any college setting is the ability to handle stress, especially for graduate students (Poyrazli, & Kavanaugh, 2006). Isolation due to difficulties with the

language can lead to feelings of stress. Faculty members interviewed by Trice (2007) identified the following factors that may be contributing to these feelings: weak language skills, strong ties with co-nationals, cultural differences and preferences, and a lack of time to spend developing friendships.

Professors need to address academic problems, but also must consider negative feelings related to English level and other issues of adapting to a foreign school and living environment (Halic et al., 2009). Raising English language proficiency will help students raise their GPAs (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). Lower GPAs can help faculty to identify at-risk students and create programs or classes for them, to help improve their academic performance (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). According to Hennebry, Lo and Macaro (2012) non-native speakers felt that in order to participate in classes, they needed to have, “strong listening skills, participate in class discussion and ask questions of the instructor, these being the activities that cause students most concern” (212). Creating a compassionate learning environment that fosters and is understanding of the issues that affect the emotional, physical, and academic well-being of students should be the first priority of a higher learning institution that wishes to attract international students (Zhou et al., 2011).

Researchers have reported many suggestions for universities to improve their services for international students. Zhou et al., (2011), recommended that a) universities should survey international students to understand their needs; b) institutional support should include equal opportunities for participation in activities for all students; c) universities should provide counseling services and career assistance particularly for international students; d) schools should consider lightening international students’ workload; and e) individual departments and faculty can work to get international students more involved with research.

Finally, students should have access to special workshops or information regarding counseling services, as they may not be aware of the help that is available to them (Zhou, et al., 2011). Chinese students in particular may not perceive their difficulties as problems, and may have some culturally based or individual opinions of counseling services that may prevent them from getting help with the cultural and academic adjustments that they may need (Mau & Jepsen, 1990).

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of Chinese female graduate students about how their needs were met at State University of New York (SUNY) at Fredonia. The researcher investigated perceptions regarding the amount of English as a Second Language (ESL) help available to them, campus environment, how language ability has helped or hindered their attempts to adjust to the differences in their host country's culture, and expectations about achievement. Each interview question was followed with the researcher asking for suggestions for the university to improve.

Given the importance of graduate students to universities and previous researchers' recommendations regarding the importance of understanding the needs of students, studies into the satisfaction, attitudes and beliefs of students are timely and useful endeavors (Zhou et al., 2012). Qualitative methods have been used in studies that examine and understand a problem or phenomenon through the lens of the participants' opinions and view of the situation (Zhou et al., 2012). The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of Chinese female graduate students about how their needs were met at State University of New York (SUNY) at Fredonia. Each interview question were followed-up with the researcher asking for suggestions for the university to improve.

Literature Review

The international student population and the general university population differ in ways that must be taken into consideration by higher education instructors, advisors, and administrators. It is important for both ESL teachers and other Higher Education instructors to understand their students in order to provide the best possible learning environment for them both academically and socially (Kelly & Moogan, 2012). This literature review will focus on the contributing factors that relate to academic success or failure for Chinese students, such as differences in culture, learning styles, expectations, with a special focus on showing how English language ability can shape the Chinese international graduate students' experience. Suggestions for "responding effectively to the geographic and cultural diversity of foreign students" (Shen & Herr, 2004, p. 16) in the literature regarding the specific academic and social needs of international graduate students will also be discussed.

Stress can be an issue for all students in higher educational institutions, but it can be a major concern for international graduate students. In addition to the greater number of academic and social pressures inherent in graduate study, graduate students in general often have a larger number of personal, academic, and social responsibilities, due to their age and position in society. These can lead to feelings of stress that can be exacerbated in international students, as they often cope with the same stressors that their American peers do, but have to do so with the disadvantages of not having a strong social support system, away from family, all the while coping with a new academic and social culture. All of these potential sources of conflict and pressure must be dealt with while conducting their coursework and many daily interactions in their non-native language (Offstein, Larson, McNeill, & Mwale, 2004).

Graduate Students versus Undergraduates

The same principles involved in effective teaching practices, for ELLs (English language learners), such as keeping classes relevant and interesting, may broadly apply to students of all ages. Adult students differ from their younger counterparts in some ways which need to be considered (Todd, Stinson, & Sivakumaran, 2011). Andragogy, or the teaching of adults, is different than pedagogy. Andragogy is both the study of the differences between adult learners versus younger learners and the study of creating environments where adult students feel supported and accepted in the learning environments that they are engaged in (Huang, 2011). For example, one of the advantages that adults have when learning a language is metacognition, which can be understood as “language learning strategies” (Huang & Nesbit, 2012, p. 2). In other words, a learner that understands his or her own learning needs can take steps on their own to make learning more fun, efficient more useful in a wider variety of situations. (Huang & Nesbit, 2012). In order to maximize the effectiveness of instruction, teachers should encourage and teach their adult students how to learn in addition to what to learn. International graduate students especially need this kind of support (Kelly & Moogan, 2012).

A key difference between undergraduate students and graduate students is that, because of their maturity, they are typically more driven by concrete learning and career goals than the undergraduate population. This makes them more likely to know what they want to study, and to have higher expectations of themselves and their learning outcomes. Unfortunately, this drive to succeed often gives them an extra sense of pressure due to their high expectations for themselves (Offstein et al, 2004). For example, while an undergraduate student might be interested in exploring his or her options regarding career goals and learning more about themselves, an older graduate student may have a desire to succeed based on life experiences, such as career or

personal satisfaction (Offstein et al., 2004).

There is a further motivation to succeed for these students because they understand that their Master's degrees are optional. They are seen as an expensive and important investment in one's career, so success in graduate school is directly related to a professional goal. As well as being motivating, the conception of themselves as professionals may put extra pressure on adult graduate students to perform at a high level (Offstein et al., 2004). This tension is in addition to the pressure added by demands from their social, personal, academic and work responsibilities that exist for most of the graduate student population.

Chinese international graduate students have a different variety of pressures than those that are often associated with being older graduate students (children, spouses, jobs, etc.) Chinese graduate students are a special case as a group because they are overwhelmingly "traditional" learners (i.e., they typically begin their graduate studies immediately or very soon after receiving their Bachelor's degrees) for a number of complicated and interconnected cultural and practical factors (Huang, 2012), which were discussed in this literature review. The reasons for the decision of Chinese students to begin graduate school immediately after they graduate school are complex and have implications for students in terms of their personal relationships (Huang, 2012), and cognitive development (Steinberg, 2013).

The three main conflicts for all international graduate students were summarized by Offstein et al. (2004), as being, "Life stage, international study, and limited time" (p. 404), which are discussed in the following sections with an explanation of how they affect this unique group.

Life Stage and Emerging Adulthood for Female Chinese Students

The definition of whether one is an adult or an adolescent varies from culture to culture and from generation to generation, but societies typically view adulthood as being related to

cultural and economic considerations such as marriage, family, and financial independence (Huang, 2012). “Traditional” graduate students, i.e., those that go immediately from completing their Bachelor’s degrees to start their Master’s degree, are typically around 22-23 years old when they begin their graduate school experience, and finish in their mid to late twenties.

The fact that Chinese graduate students are overwhelmingly younger people has important implications for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and instructors. This stage of life, between the ages of 18 to approximately the mid-twenties, signals the final move away from adolescence and towards maturity, both in terms of societal role, self-perceptions and how the brain functions. Arnett (2007) was the first researcher to hypothesize that there was a unique stage of development between adolescence and adulthood with its own characteristics, that took place in industrialized societies (the US, Canada, Australia, etc), which he named emerging adulthood. Arnett (2007) defined emerging adulthood as “. . . the *age of identity explorations*, the *age of instability*, the *self-focused age*, the *age of feeling in-between*, and the *age of possibilities*.” [Italics by author] (p. 69). Greater social cognitive maturity, increased self-esteem, and feelings of well-being were also described as being connected to emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2007).

The term and concept of emerging adulthood is controversial. Some researchers believe that adolescence finishes around the age of twenty, and others believe that adolescence and when one becomes an adult is a culturally defined phenomenon, emerging adulthood does seem to have a valid biological basis (Steinberg, 2013). Emergent adulthood as a *social* theory of development should not be confused with cognitive changes that occur during this time, which might be considered to be the final stage of cognitive development in adolescence. Research into the brains of young people between the ages of 18 to mid to even late twenties suggests that

changes in the brain that occur at late adolescence signal the final move away from adolescence and towards full maturity (Luna, Padmanabhan, & O’Hearn, 2010). Luna et al. (2010), characterize this stage of life as being a time when people are more prone to sensation-seeking behaviors which may lead to risk-taking (i.e. dangerous) behaviors. This time is also identified with the emergence of mental illnesses, such as depression and bipolar disorder (Luna et al., 2010).

The age of most undergraduate students and graduate students (18 to 25) coincides with the full development of adult cognitive control of the brain and maturity, though how much of an influence these biological changes on behavior may be minor compared to the differences in the individual and his or her environment or culture (Luna et al., 2010). For example, Chinese students may view common dangers of emergent adulthood or late adolescence, such as excessive drinking, drug use or illegal activity as not just being a purely individual concern. Doing these activities and their consequences, such as getting arrested, are seen as causing one to “lose face (i.e., shame oneself and one’s family)” (Nelson et al., 2004, p. 34). This social dimension of behavior then would motivate students to conform to norms and be less likely to engage in harmful or unsafe activities.

Most societies and individuals do not define adulthood in terms of degree or level of maturity of cognitive development, at least not directly; their conception of adulthood is more typically rooted to ideas of social responsibility, family obligations, economic independence, and so on (Steinberg, 2013). An example of the differences between the perceptions of different values was found in the study of criterion of adulthood as identified by Chinese university students conducted by Nelson et al., (2004) who found, perhaps contrary to popular conceptions of a monolithic conservative Chinese culture in the West, that students most popularly designated

criteria that were similar to American students'. These were to "accept responsibility for the consequences of your actions, learn always to have good control of your emotions and become financially independent from parents" (p. 33).

The authors of this study had two explanations for the similarity in responses. First, American cultural attitudes, such as independence and individualism, are taking hold in China due to greater number of cultural and economic connections between the two places. The other explanation is that the similarity between belief systems is only at a surface-level, and that the decision to select these criteria was actually rooted in Confucian beliefs in the importance of harmony. For example, controlling one's emotions could be related to peaceful co-existence with other people; accepting responsibility for one's actions could be about the "self-regulation in that they believe that the choices that they make may directly influence their relationships with others" (Nelson et al., 2004). Financial independence is also a commonly shared value, but unlike American students who may focus on the independent aspect, Chinese students perhaps understand adulthood as being able to take care of one's parents (Nelson et al., 2004).

The reasons why the vast majority of Chinese international graduate students are "traditional" students (i.e., in their early/mid-twenties) instead of older professionals is due to their culture's ideas and understanding of the roles of students versus their culture's understanding of the traditional roles that define adulthood.

Unlike students in the US, who are mostly free by culture, higher learning institutions and the law to pursue higher education no matter their age, marital status, career, or family obligations, the Chinese cultural norms are fairly rigid in regards to who can and cannot (or should not) be a student. Students are expected to devote their efforts exclusively on their studies. It was, until very recently, against nation-wide regulations laid down by the Chinese

Department of Education for students in a university at any level to get married, even if they were of legal marriageable age (Huang, 2012). Nelson et al. (2004), described the law in China thusly, “In 1990 the Department of Education enacted a law that forbade a person to enter college who was older than 25 or married, and (2) dismissed any student who married before completion of his or her degree” (p. 34). The law was changed in 2001 to leave the decision of whether to expel married students or admit older, “continuing” students (i.e., those with a gap of several years between the time they graduate from high school or their Bachelor’s degree programs) they students, up to universities (Nelson et al., 2004). These laws are mentioned as examples of how the Chinese educational system has discouraged or prevented the mixing of study and adulthood responsibility.

Although some researchers have found that married couples can both help a learner in terms of emotional and social support or, conversely, negatively affect social interaction by isolating the student (Poylatzi & Kavanaugh, 2007), much of this research does not apply to Chinese university students, because they are not expected to be married when going to school (Huang, 2012). In addition to cultural responsibilities, there are two very real practical considerations that a female student planning on working in China must take into consideration when considering the timing of her career path: age discrimination and gender discrimination.

Age discrimination. One’s education is supposed to be finished before someone starts his or her career, which is typically around 30 for students at the doctoral or Master’s degree level; earlier is better for those who hold Bachelor’s degrees. Although technically illegal, and indeed contrary to the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, discrimination is a fact of life for many workers, including discrimination based on gender, location of one’s hometown in China, disabilities, health, ethnicity and religion, political affiliation, HIV status, Hepatitis B

status, sexual orientation, appearance, height, and age (Lu, 2009). According to the Hong Kong NGO, the Chinese Labour Bulletin, discrimination of all types is:

. . . pervasive and tolerated, practiced by both private employers and government institutions. Laws and regulations are hampered by technical shortcomings, ineffective law enforcement and conflicting legislations and government policies that appear to promote . . . discriminatory practices (China Labour Bulletin, 2012).

Recruitment ads for both white collar and blue collar workers very often have age requirements (and height requirements). Ads for blue-collar type jobs typically request that applicants be between the ages of 20 to 30; workers are often not re-hired after exceeding that range (China Labour Bulletin, 2012). Many professional companies and organizations will not hire someone over the age of 35 (Huang, 2012). In a recent study conducted by Lu (2009), which analyzed over 29,639 job advertisements for service providers, administrative and managerial positions, and professionals, it was found that 85.6 percent had age restrictions and of that number, professionals had the highest number of age restrictions in the ads. In the data as a whole, 91.3% of those ads with age requirements wanted someone under the age of 40, and 78.2% wanted someone who was younger than 35 years old. The researcher concluded that there was little doubt that 25-35 years old was the most popular age for hiring for most organizations (Lu, 2009).

Gender discrimination. In a climate where discrimination against people of age exists, so does discrimination of other types, including that against women (Lu, 2009). Women in countries throughout the world unfortunately experience some type of discrimination and China is no exception (Lu, 2009). The effects of gender based discrimination can be felt at every level,

from the idea that older women will be less productive and therefore replaceable at the factory environment (Chinese Labour Bulletin) to the lack of women in high level positions within companies or comparatively higher paid jobs (Lu, 2009). Bulger (2000) cited several reasons given by those that hold these beliefs to justify the different treatment of men and women; these included: women's supposed lack of leadership skills, male workers' inability to accept working under a female boss or manager, and inferiority in comparison to men in terms of physical strength or intellectual ability (p. 355).

Bulger (2000) explained the origins of these ideas regarding the differences between men and women in terms of traditional Chinese Confucian conceptions of the women's primary responsibility as being in the home and for her family. Bulger (2000) reported that since women working full time also typically deal with the majority of housework and care of children, most companies, "would rather hire, promote and pay higher wages to men because male employees work performances will be less effected by the demands of home and children" (p. 355).

These views permeate every level of employment for women. The income gap between men and women is widening, and women suffer first when it is time for companies to lay off workers (Lu, 2009). Gender discrimination exists even for the most highly educated. As an example, Lu (2009) cited a 2007 report from one of the top scientific academic institutions in China, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), 93.8% of female scientists in the organization believed that they had been the victims of sexual discrimination or harassment. The report was also criticized the hiring practices of the Academy, noting that of the over 3,000 academics in the CAS, only 5% were women (Lu 2009).

The alternatives to the "traditional" student career path, i.e., Bachelor's degree, then graduate or postgraduate education are unavailable or undesirable for most Chinese students,

regardless of gender. As previously discussed, employers prefer young people to work for them, especially in starting positions (Lu, 2009). Delaying education is especially risky for women, given the expectations put on them by their society's understanding of the proscribed gender roles for women as wives and mothers. When we take the ageist policies of many employers and add them to a widespread sexist assumptions about the inability of women to perform her job duties as well as a man (Bulger, 2000), it becomes easy to imagine how young women would feel a tremendous pressure to finish their studies as quickly as possible and settle into their dual roles of career woman and mother, which one can imagine would leave very little extra time to pursue further education—even if a non-traditional education path were culturally normative and realistic option.

Despite the unfortunate existence of these discriminatory practices, many young Chinese people remain optimistic regarding their futures. While “entry into the labor market is often stressful and frustrating” (Arnett, 2007, p.71), especially if one has limited to no practical experience, many Chinese young adults are optimistic and excited about their futures--a common characteristic of emergent adulthood (Nelson & Chen, 2007).

Family Relationships, Adult Roles and International Study

For reasons discussed previously, while it is relatively common to see non-traditional students, i.e. those who complete their education later in life in America, this is completely impractical for most Chinese students. Huang (2012) summarized the situation that Chinese graduate students face in comparison to their American classmates as follows:

Students face the dilemma of transitioning to adulthood while studying in the United States. On one hand, a wide variety of restrictions . . . prohibit them from assuming adult responsibilities. [While most traditional] graduate students are still

experiencing the exploration and instability of emerging adulthood . . . exploring job opportunities, locations to settle down, and [the future of romantic partnerships]. . . most Chinese graduate students are under the pressure of social norms, expectation and traditions to seek ways to fulfil these obligations” (Huang, 2012).

These obligations can bring much pressure and stress to a student. Offstein, et al. (2004), defined life stage as being “the number of intimate relationships present in their lives that represent significant responsibility” (p. 404). These can include relationships which include not only romantic partners like husbands, wives, and significant others, but also include family such as children and dependent parents (Offstein, et al., 2004).

The physical distance between people with whom the student has strong relationships (and obligations) to was referred to by Offstein, et al. (2004), as the second of the three contextual factors (i.e., “international study”) that contributed to postgraduate student stress. Marriage, can help alleviate some of the symptoms of culture shock and homesickness because it provides emotional and other support to the student while they are studying (Offstein et al. 2004). While the great majority of Chinese graduate students are not married, adult children in China are responsible for creating and maintaining good, close relationships with their family, especially their parents.

There is no doubt that being able to support one’s parents financially and physically is a key qualification for adulthood in traditional Chinese culture (Huang, 2012). The Confucian concept of filial piety, that is, the belief that the root source of virtue and goodness comes from a love and respect for one’s parents, elders, and ancestors (Hwang, 1999), can still be seen in the attitudes of young people in China. In a

survey study which compared the differences between how Chinese college students and their American counterparts defined adulthood, Nelson, Badger, and Wu (2004) found that 91% of the total student population said that being able to take care of one's parents was an important criterion of adulthood whereas American students ranked it as being among the lowest in terms of importance.

Chinese graduate students who study abroad are not able to physically be with their parents. This situation creates feelings of stress and tension while going through the transitioning process while adjusting to the academic and social demands of graduate school (Huang, 2012). In other words, while Chinese students are not expected by their parents to focus on their careers or jobs while studying, the dissonance between the idealized self of the good daughter or son and the realities of being an international student may conflict and cause stress for students whom are unable to care for their parents in the way or degree that they might prefer (Huang, 2012).

Parental support and achievement for female students. Although many students experience stress and homesickness due to their separation from family, especially their mothers and fathers, the decision to go abroad for one's education is strongly supported in the Chinese family. This is true for both male and female students. According to Wang (2007) "education is regarded as a first choice investment before the house and car for many Chinese families . . . this belief comes from traditional Chinese culture" (p.43).

Chinese society, before the Chinese revolution of the early 20th century, had a system in place that based qualification for civil service and most governmental positions on one's ability to achieve high marks on a test based on the Confucian Analects (Elman,

1991). This test was not available to women, whose place was seen to be in the home, not in the government. Unfortunately, these ideas give both a historical and traditionally based credence to discrimination that still impact the perception of women's roles today (Lu, 2009). Even after this system had been gone for many years, higher education for women for most of the twentieth century was seen by many Chinese parents as a poor investment compared to that of male offspring as women make less money, are the first to be laid off or fired, and, once married, leave the family unit (Bulger, 2000).

The One Child Policy had a huge impact on Chinese society. This controversial set of legislation and laws, among many other changes, eliminated the necessity for parents to favor one child over another for any reason, including gender (Tatlow, 2012). All of the support, effort and resources that a family of limited means might have expended to help their son or sons is now given to the female offspring in single-child homes (Tatlow, 2012).

Education is important in China and has a high cultural and status value. Children are expected to "have as much education as possible, regardless of family income, socioeconomic status or geographical regions" (Chan, 2014, p 10). Parents in China spend much money, time, and effort to help their children succeed in school and get to the best universities that they can. An example of this fact can be seen in the explosion of "shadow" education. Shadow education is professional tutoring, unrelated to regular schooling, which is designed to help students get better grades or achieve better scores on ultra-competitive college examination exams or tests (Chan, 2014). Organizations that provide these services can be thought of as "cram schools", which some have criticized as both increasing the gap between the economic classes in China, because they give a

very important advantage, when it comes to standardized testing, to children whose parents can afford to pay for these courses (Chan, 2014).

The result of the care that parents now give their daughters may have been just one of the causes for the recent development of what could be described as a gender gap in education in China. Female students as a group now have higher exam scores and admittance rates into more programs for then their male counterparts (Tatlow, 2012). This has prompted some universities to set up illegal, yet pervasive and widespread discriminatory practices such as requiring higher exam scores for entry into universities than those required by men (Tatlow, 2012). If there is a bright side to this situation, it is that these policies, where they exist, are mostly a response to the incredible success of female students, which may have been impossible just a few decades ago (Tatlow, 2012).

Time Constraints and Language Proficiency

The final contextual factor that Offstein, et al. (2004), found to be a stressor for graduate students was simply the time constraints placed on students by their multiple roles, such as worker, student, parent, etc. While international graduate Chinese students may be relatively free in comparison to some of their peers when it comes to their lifestyles while living in the US, especially in regards to their immediate family obligations (i. e., spouse and children), the fact is that the time necessary to complete academic tasks will be greater for non-native speakers of English than native speaking students (Hung & Hyun, 2010), leaving them feeling especially pressured.

While it is true that stress can come from many sources, much research has been done to suggest that for Chinese international students, the greatest cause of stress and failure to succeed academically stem from a lack of English language ability (Xue, 2013). Low or undeveloped

English proficiency has been linked to dissatisfaction with graduate programs and perception of the overall experience as a graduate student in the host country (Ren et al., 2007).

Carson (2008) summarized the language learning for graduate students as follows:

In addition to simple communication, language can form a barrier because the meaning of words is often culturally-based. Words do not always mean exactly what the dictionary says, and assumptions can be unspoken. Thus, proficiency is . . . an acculturative process (p. 12).

Hung and Hyun (2010) were very critical of colleges and universities support systems for international graduate students and their ability or willingness to understand and adapt curriculum to the needs of these learners. First, many graduate students, especially those that have a career or personal identification as a professional, may experience stress in adapting to their roles as students. Unfortunately, it is assumed that because they have attained a high level of technical ability that they are able to completely engage as easily as their native English speaking peers in their academic tasks; however, content knowledge is not the same as an ability to communicate or adjust to the demands of their new roles as active participants in a new academic setting (Offstein et al., 2009).

While it is assumed by many universities that a passing or satisfactory grade on a standardized English proficiency test such as TOEFL or IELTS indicates a level of English language ability that would allow a student to cope with the pressures and demands of the American university environment, research has suggested that this is not in fact the case (Hennebry et al., 2012). Hennebry et al (2012) summarized current research into this area thusly, “the ‘general English’ taught in the home country may differ greatly from the discourse used by

academic staff. . . . especially [in] classroom interaction where both academic language and idiomatic expressions may occur in quick succession” (p. 212).

This means that the general skills English taught in most schools or for TOEFL or IELTS preparation may not be enough (Lee, 2009). Hung and Hyun (2010) described the situation for East Asian students in American universities as follows, “International students . . . [have a] burden resulting from their inability to speak English fluently and their lack of experience discussing discipline content specifics in English (i.e., academic English literacy) . . . ”(p. 341). This may lead to feelings of vulnerability and anxiety, which are discussed later in this literature review.

Another important issue that must be considered is the fact that students may be assumed to have background knowledge or expertise about a topic that may not actually have. Carson (2008) described a situation where an international student was not able to effectively engage in a higher level course he was placed in because he was assumed to have a background in knowledge which had never, in fact, been exposed to; the way the subject had been taught, and its content were completely different than what the student had expected. Assumptions such as this can create a sense of frustration and failure for students in their academic work, which can negatively affect their ability to learn (Carson, 2008).

Acculturation and Culture Shock for Chinese Learners

All of the factors mentioned thus far: feelings of stress from social pressures, time constraints and deadlines, frustration regarding language proficiency and pressure related to an individual’s life stage can be compounded by feelings of culture shock, which can occur to anyone who visits another culture for an extended period of time and undergoes the process of adjusting his or herself to that culture (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). This process is typically

one of “disorientation, insecurity and incomprehension that may last weeks, months or even longer” (Kelly & Moogan, 2012). Defined more specifically, culture shock is anxiety that comes from losing touch with familiar social and cultural markers, such as food, weather, accommodation (i.e. mode or conditions of living arrangements) family and friends (Liu, 2011).

International students in particular may be more prone to anxiety or stress regarding the “language challenges, social isolation . . . role and status change, and a different education system” (Liu, 2011), as well as having to adapt to different “social values and norms, modes of behavior and verbal and nonverbal communication.” (Alazzi, & Chiodo, 2006). Culture shock can lead to students experiencing stress or psychological issues such as depression, loneliness and anxiety, all of which can negatively affect learning (Zhou et al., 2011).

Culture plays a significant role in the learning and adaptation process for international students. In fact, some researchers suggest that success in adapting to culture (both academic and in a broader social context) may play the most important role in achieving success for these students, above even language proficiency (Hennebry, et al., 2012).

Much research has been done showing that culture, and the way the students are accustomed to learning, often has a profound effect on students of all ages. Culture reflects the society’s history, values, philosophy, and is thus tied to the ways a society approaches learning and teaching (Chuang, 2012). In this vein, researchers have pointed out that being educated in one of the traditionally “collectivist” or “Confucian” cultures of Far Eastern countries (i.e., China, Japan, and Korea) affect the way these students prefer to learn (Chuang, 2012, Xue, 2013; Hung & Hyun, 2010.). Many researchers believe that being brought up in a Confucian-influenced learning environment also shape how students behave in the classroom and in regards to expectations regarding the teacher and student relationship (Huang, 2012).

No matter which country they are from, an international student must understand and adapt to the differences between his or her expectations and preferences to meet the needs of his new university's learning environment to be successful (Shen, & Herr, 2004). Kelly and Moogan (2012) believed that a transitional period was an evitable part of the international graduate school experience. This transitional period is when students learn to navigate the differences in expectations that they have regarding their education and eventually adjust to their new academic environment. In summary, this transition period is about overcoming “education system distance . . . the gap between assumptions within a host country education system and those of the international student’s home country . . . the difficulties may be less or greater [depending on expectations] (Kelly & Moogan, p. 27).

Asian students, however, may have more difficulties in regards to adapting to the American or Western educational model than other groups, such as European students, because of the wider differences between Asian and American culture and language (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006), especially Confucian or collectivist values of Eastern Asian students (Hung & Hyung, 2012).

Chuang (2011) noted that students who come from Confucian societies typically put a greater emphasis on social harmony, relationships and morality or virtue than Western culture, which tends to focus on individualistic goals and problem-solving. It is important to note, however, that a student from one of these societies may act or prefer to learn in a more individualistic style in some situations and more collectivist ways in others. Other researchers (Wang, Martin, & Martin, 2002) have stated that the “Asian educational system emphasizes uniformity. Students are not encouraged or expected to question information being presented [by authority figures such as teachers]” (p. 99). While it may be true that Confucian learners “avoid

face-to-face conflict with the instructor and deal . . . with the conflict by self-adjustment . . . they [also] expect the instructor to possess wisdom and act as a role model to the students” (Chuang, 2012, p 489); so the expectations of the teacher may be very high.

Some researchers believe that the idea of Asian students being universally reticent and passive in class may need to be reconsidered (Marlina, 2009). Marlina (2009) argued that since Confucianism has changed over the last 2000 years of its existence and is continuing to change and adapt within the Chinese cultural landscape, “the perception of the teacher as an authority, in the presence of the evaluative significant other which encourages student to become submissive and reluctant to speak may not be the case in contemporary classrooms in some East Asian countries” (Marlina, 2009, p. 237).

Nelson and Chen (2007) reported that the relatively recent creation of China’s market economy has necessitated a focus away from traditional Confucian ideas and towards focus on the self. Researchers have also noted that changes in technology such as the internet allow young Chinese students to see how emergent adults in America or other Western cultures live, learn and interact with each other, which may influence their decisions, behaviors and attitudes (Nelson and Chen 2007). Furthermore, studies of school children conducted in China in 2002 linked shyness to problems with school, rejection by peers and depression (Chen, Cen, Li, & He, 2005, cited by Nelson & Chen, 2007). This study’s result suggested that “in one decade, shyness and sensitivity shifted from being linked to positive outcomes to being linked to extremely negative ones” (Nelson & Chen, 2007).

The essential message of these researchers has been that changes have occurred or are occurring, that should challenge the perceptions of those who are tempted to consider all Chinese learners as coming from one homogeneous, “Confucian” group. Other researchers that have

suggested that East Asian student reticence or shyness is not necessarily due to Confucian ideals of humility, respect, and so on; but is rather due to an adherence to other social norms, such as uncertainty avoidance (Hung & Hyun 2009).

Hung and Hyun (2009) reported that people who come from cultures that value uncertainty avoidance:

. . . prefer more rules, regulations, and structures to reduce the social ambiguity of human enterprise [which] may cause even more stress and uneasiness among [Asian students] who constantly encounter unclear messages and unclear social situations. . . [when] facing comprehension challenges in Western culture and language and the lack of experiences in an American European academic system. (p. 342).

An environment with rules, regulations, and structures can be very comfortable for those who know what the rules are and are used to a structured. Teachers who expect students who come from cultures that value uncertainty avoidance to engage group participation and oral presentations are often frustrated by what they perceive as being student shyness (Kim, 2005). This issue has become more and more prevalent in recent years because, in general, classrooms have become informal, and include more student-to-student interactions and fewer lecture-style classes (Kim, 2005).

In conclusion, while it is important to understand where students may be coming from in terms of their expectations and culture, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that these students are all individuals (Hung & Hyun, 2009).

Chinese Students as Individuals, Apart from Culture

The reasons for success or failure in a language, or any academic endeavor, are complex;

it must be kept in mind that while it may be possible to generalize about Chinese culture and conflict due to differences between “Eastern” and “Western” learning styles, the reasons for a student’s success or failure may be due to a combination of culture mixed with his or her uniquely personal characteristics, such as “individual differences in managing challenges, [his or her] maturing process when studying abroad, motivation to learn, identity and self-efficacy” (Huang, 2012, p. 139.).

Xue (2012) reported that some researchers found that Chinese students prefer to work individually, to have more control over their assignments, while other researchers suggested that these students prefer to work in small groups to collaborate on assignments in informal environments, but dislike or feel uncomfortable working in groups in formal class settings. As Huang (2012) suggested, it is important not to overlook individual differences or to over-generalize when discussing or studying this group of learners.

Self-efficacy, as defined by Mills, Pajares, and Herron (2007), is the sum total of beliefs that students have about their ability to learn and how they organize and complete assignments and academic tasks. Students with low self-efficacy will not take risks. They are more likely to not put effort into completing projects, or might choose the easiest topics to study. In other words, self-efficacy is related to empowerment of the student to make decisions about his or her learning; and has been suggested to be more important to predicting student success than “prior accomplishments, skills, or knowledge” (Mills et al., 2007, p. 419).

Mills et al. (2007) reported that self-efficacy is vitally important for learning because:

[s]tudents with a strong sense of academic self-efficacy willingly undertake challenging tasks, expend greater effort, show increased persistence in the presence of obstacles, demonstrate lower anxiety levels, display flexibility in the

use of learning strategies, demonstrate . . . greater intrinsic interest in scholastic matters, and self-regulate better than other students (p. 418).

Self-efficacy in language learning is also related to the idea of self-confidence, which comes from the quality and quantity of interactions with people of the first language community; self-efficacy comes from the meta-cognitive abilities of the individual and self-confidence is socially constructed (Mills et al., 2007).

Self-confidence is also related to yet another concept, perceived competence, which is “negatively associated with language anxiety and positively associated with language learners’ willingness to communicate (Mills et al., 2007). In other words, language success leads to greater confidence which raises levels of perceived competence, which encourages and motivates students to interact more with the host culture (Mills et al., 2007). It can then be understood that students that are less introverted (shy/introspective) and more extraverted (outgoing) will have more opportunities to interact and have more success at the language learning, be more engaged with the host culture, have more friends and have an easier time adjusting to American university life and academics (Carson, 2008).

This literature review was to discuss the cultural, historical and individual characteristics relevant to female Chinese graduate students, studying in an American college setting. Much has been written about the personality of Chinese learners and the characteristics that they share, academically and socially as well as how stereotypes and common conceptions may be inaccurate.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of Chinese female graduate students about how their needs were met at State University of New York (SUNY) at Fredonia. The researcher investigated perceptions regarding the amount of English as a Second

Language (ESL) help available to them, campus environment, how language ability has helped or hindered their attempts to adjust to the differences in their host country's culture, and expectations about achievement.

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of Chinese female graduate students about how their needs were met at State University of New York (SUNY) at Fredonia. The researcher investigated perceptions regarding the amount of English as a Second Language (ESL) help available to them, campus environment, how language ability has helped or hindered their attempts to adjust to the differences in their host country's culture, and expectations about achievement. Each interview question was followed with the researcher asking for suggestions for the university to improve.

Step One: Find a Research Topic

The researcher investigated this topic during one of the initial courses in the TESOL program. The researcher also had a personal connection to this topic. First, he spent over eight years in China working with many students in an EFL context, many of whom went abroad to study. Furthermore, his wife was a new Chinese graduate student at SUNY at Fredonia and he witnessed the mismatch mentioned in the problem statement first hand. In addition, the researcher has experience with several international students from China through social and academic interactions with them in SUNY Fredonia.

Step Two: Conduct Literature Review

The first steps of the literature review began in a previous class focusing on Educational Research for teachers. The great majority of the literature review portion of this project was conducted in the Reed Library on the State University of New York campus, utilizing research databases accessed through the University Library website (www.fredonia.edu/library).

The databases primarily used included the ERIC (Educational Resources Information

Center), PsychINFO, and Google Scholar. Google Scholar connected the researcher to an even wider range of resources. Care was taken to ensure the quality of the articles (i.e., from peer reviewed, academic journals). Instead of using the publically available ERIC resources, the researcher's Fredonia connection was used to access the SUNY Fredonia's connection to access more full-text articles. PsychINFO and Google Scholar, again, using the Reed Library/SUNY Connect access were also used to find articles and resources.

The researcher found a number of resources available that investigated the experiences of Chinese undergraduate students, but many fewer related to graduate students. Graduate students are a different population of students, and research focused on undergraduates may not be applicable to them. Many key terms were used to discover studies specifically targeted at this unique group. Especially useful terms included: "graduate students", "international students", "Chinese", "acculturation", "academic achievement" and others.

Step Three: Identifying Participants

All Chinese female students at SUNY Fredonia were asked to, and agreed to participate in this study. Through social networks such as the SUNY Fredonia Chinese club, participants were informed about their potential participation in this study. Participants in this study were eight Chinese graduate level students who completed all levels of education up to and including their undergraduate (Bachelor's) degrees in their home country or China. Students who have spent an extended amount of time in the United States, such as those who completed their high school or undergraduate coursework here, were not the focus of this study. Students in this situation are more aware of the American educational system, academic expectations, and would feel less pressure or stress during their transition into their roles as graduate students.

Due to the fact that the majority of Chinese national students who go to university for

graduate degrees are “traditional” students (i.e., those who enter their graduate programs soon after graduating their Bachelor’s diploma), the students who took part in this study will most likely be in their mid-twenties (Huang 2012). The students came from a variety of regions in mainland China, but due to the limited sample, students from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan did not participate in this study.

Step Four: Justification for using a Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative studies aim to create a detailed, written description of an experience from the point of view of the study’s participants (Xue, 2013). A phenomenological study, such as this one, aim to describe how participants “describe their lived phenomenal experience” through a qualitative (as opposed to quantitative) analysis of data that has been collected in a narrative format (Waters, n.d. p 1). A deep, personal description is what is required for good data in this type of study, and as such, “a trusting and respectful” relationship must be cultivated between the researcher and participants (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, p. 12).

The specific data collection method that was utilized was interviewing. Interviews have the advantage of being able to obtain information that cannot be retrieved through observation alone, such as: information about past events, thoughts and feelings of participants, attitudes, etc (Gay et al., 2009). This research design was deemed to be the most appropriate method available to explore this topic because of the flexibility and details it provides the researcher. There was a greater possibility of discovering important themes and topics using this type of study that might be important to an understanding of the topic that a quantitative study, due to its more rigid, formal design may not have been able to find or address.

Step Four: Select Framework

The framework used in this study derived from both the literature review and personal

experience. The framework includes four important factors to the success of university schooling. The first factor is perceptions regarding the amount of English as a Second Language (ESL) help available to them. The second factor is the quality of the campus environment. The third factor of the framework is language ability, in particular, how language ability has helped or hindered their attempts to adjust to the differences in their host country's culture, and the final factor is expectations about achievement from both professors and students (see Table 1).

Table 1

Factors affecting the success to the success of university schooling for Graduate Students

Number	Factor for Success	Research Support
1	Amount of ESL help available	(Liu, 2011) (Marlina, 2009) (Wang et al., 2002)
2	Quality and amount of campus help	(Zhou et al., 2012) (Mau & Jepsen, 1990) (Offstein et al., 2004) (Rose-Redwood, 2010) (Shen & Herr, 2004)
3	Language ability helping and hindering adjustment	(Halic et al., 2009) (Ren et al., 2007) (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh 2006)
4	Expectations about achievement from professors and students	(Hennebry et al., 2012) (Lee, 2009) (Todd et al., 2011) (Wu, 2013)

Step Five: Select Questions

The goal of the interview process in a phenomenological study, which is a narrative description of an experience. The questions were constructed so as to both encourage the participants to describe their experiences in learning and engaging in SUNY Fredonia's ESL context. In order to get a variety of answers that provide the maximum amount of information and make sure that the questions are understood, questions included both closed (i.e., convergent) and open ended (i.e., divergent) questions (Gay et al., 2009).

The questions were framed so as to encourage detailed responses to describe the essential theme of the experience that may include, among other factors “. . . the social interaction between the different characters (or groups), the type of activity, the outcome, the descriptive elements . . . “of the experience (Waters. n.d., p. 1). An important aspect of consideration when selecting interview questions and performing the interview is for the researcher to avoid leading questions or trying to influence responses the participants to give in any way (Waters, n.d). The researcher, other than giving the participants the questions based on the framework described (see Table 2, below), was careful not to ask leading follow-up questions, and only repeated questions, reworded them in case the respondent did not understand. Any manipulation of the interview would be contrary to the purpose of a phenomenological study, which is to discover how the participants view and understand their experience as actors in the experience (Waters, n.d.; Gay at al., 2009).

The instrument itself include a small number of questions regarding demographic information such as age, and TOEFL/IELTS score, to aid in the analysis of the data (Wu, 2013). The main body of the interview consisted of four categories of questions, divided into two parts. The first question relates their experiences directly to the previously described framework (see

above, including Table 1), then a question asking the participants to give their thoughts and opinions about how SUNY Fredonia can improve services to this group of international students.

The following table shows the relationship between the alignment between interview questions and framework:

Table 2

*Interview Questions / Framework**

Number	Interview Question	Framework Factor
1	What do you think about the amount of ESL or other academic help available for international students?	“Amount of ESL help available”
2	How can Fredonia improve the quality of ESL or academic help for international students?	
3	What do you think of the activities and other services that SUNY Fredonia has to help students become part of the campus community?	“Quality and amount of campus help”
4	What more do you think Fredonia could do to assist Chinese student living and learning outside of class?	
5	How has living in an English-speaking environment been difficult for you, in terms of communicating with American people or your adjustment to living here in the US?	“Language ability helping and hindering adjustment”
6	What do you think that Fredonia can do to make adjusting to living in America easier for Chinese	

- students?
- 7 How have you found that your expectations about what university classes should be like are different than your professors’? “Expectations about achievement from professors and students”
- 8 What do you think professors or SUNY Fredonia as a whole could do to improve communicating what is expected of international graduate students?

*See Table 1 for Framework description and research

Step Six: Interview Protocol

Recording and confidentiality. The researcher collected data through formal, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. In order to be transcribed and properly analyzed, the interviews needed to be recorded accurately. The interviewer had an interview protocol that was followed and the conversation was being recorded electronically. Participants were informed that the interview was to be recorded. The recording device was a popular USB microphone (specifically a Blue Yeti USB microphone), connected to the researcher’s laptop, and tested before the interviews actually began. A video recording was deemed unnecessary for the purposes of this study, as no pertinent information would be derived from a video of the interviews. Additionally, video recording was determined to have potentially negative effects as it may inhibit the responses the participants might give due to the extra stress created by the video recording process itself, and concerns over anonymity. The researcher also made notes throughout the interview with a pencil and notebook for ideas that may have needed to be revisited either during the interview itself or during data analysis.

Due to the small size of this population at SUNY Fredonia, confidentiality is a high

priority. No student names or identifiable information were reported in this study. The participants were informed ahead of time of the confidentiality of their responses. Specific demographic questions were restricted to the most relevant in order to prevent guessing at a participants' identity and to help preserve privacy. The data used in the final version of this study was carefully edited in order to avoid revealing any identifying information, such as the mentioning specific professors or departments. Participants were assured that their participation is completely voluntary, and that their responses were used only for research purposes. Participants were not compensated for their participation in this research.

Time and location. The researcher has estimated that the interview process will take between thirty minutes to an hour per participant. In order to arrange for this interview, participants were contacted a week before the research was scheduled to begin and notified in advance regarding the estimated time of their participation, and be asked to make time in their schedules with this in mind. The time frame for the interviews was between the second and third weeks of October, 2014.

In order to create a comfortable environment for the participants, the interviews were conducted entirely in one the University library's private study rooms, which were checked out ahead of the appointed time. Each of the rooms has a number of comfortable chairs, whiteboards, electrical outlets, and are quiet enough to conduct and record interviews effectively.

Step Seven: Human Subjects Review Approval

The purpose of this study was to explore the thoughts and opinions of adult subjects through an interview process that was deemed to be non-harmful to participants. The researcher received email notification from the supervising professor of approval from the Human Subjects Review Board that this study was exempt from review on April 14th, 2014. "The following

student projects have been determined Category 1, Exempt, under the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46, 46.101, Subpart A (b) (1) and/or (2).”

Although I have modified the title from “John Irish- Qualitative Study- Interview: Help-Seeking Behaviors of International (East Asian) Graduate Students” to “Linguistic and Cultural Experiences of Female Chinese International Graduate Students at State University of New York at Fredonia”, the type of study being conducted, i.e., a qualitative research, nor the instrument (semi structured interviews) or the participants (adults) has changed.

Step Eight: Conduct Interviews

The interviews were conducted and data was collected for this project in second, third, and fourth weeks of October, according to the aforementioned protocols regarding scheduling, recording, consent, and confidentiality. Besides simple questions regarding demographics, the questions were few in number, eight in total. As is typical in a semi-structured qualitative research study, in order to obtain more data, the questions had to be followed up with more specific questions. The researcher was careful to monitor his tone in order to avoid leading the participants into a conclusion or type of answer or theme.

Identifying themes is an important part of a qualitative study. While conducting the research, the author made notes of potential issues that may have been relevant to the purpose of the study but was cognizant of the need to maintain rapport with the participants.

Step Nine: Organize Results

After the data was collected in October, the process of organizing data took place in the first two weeks of November. In order to go to properly analyze data it must be put into a format that is easy to read and reference. The recordings of the interviews and the notes taken during the interviews were transcribed via a word processing program and saved into a Microsoft Word

document. The researcher took the time to read and listen carefully to the interviews several times in order to write the transcriptions accurately. The notes taken during the interview to help identify potential themes was also analyzed.

Step Ten: Analyze Data

After being transcribed, the documents were analyzed to determine if any relevant themes had emerged that would need to be described and researched further to help develop and understand the phenomenon. Analysis of qualitative study essentially has three steps: “place raw data into logical, meaningful categories [described in Step Nine of this methodology]; examine them in a holistic fashion; and to find a way to communicate this interpretation to others” (Hoepfl, 1997). Taking the data and organizing it into smaller sections is a necessary step and is done by giving a code to the themes that are revealed when reviewing the data. The data is then broken into parts based on this code. For example, utterances in the transcription identified as concerning Factor One, (see Table 1) regarding the amount or quality of ESL services available, received a code number for theme and identified for potential use for the discussion of the factors in the framework as a quote, or for information. This step of the coding process is called open coding (Hoepfl, 1997).

The next step was to re-examine the categories or themes that emerged during the study in order in another, closed coding process, where the categories were re-organized and re-considered, in order to see if there was a connection between the different themes. This step was done to see if the themes were able to be combined in order to start finishing the final steps, which was to assemble the final presentation of the qualitative study. The final analysis of the project was to assemble the themes, quotes, and voices into a coherent picture of the phenomenon, the ESL experiences of Chinese female graduate students at SUNY Fredonia.

Themes

Based on a review of literature from studies with similar research questions, several themes or issues that impeded or encourage English language development and mastery at the graduate school level were expected to emerge. These themes included culture shock, adjusting to a new “cultural personality” (i.e., new modes of behavior in the American culture) and to new academic expectations placed on them in the US from previous experiences, out-of-class learning experiences and interactions with American students (Liu, 2011, p. 80) and, finally, the students’ opinions of student-professor interactions (Hennebry, Lo, & Macaro, 2012).

The researcher expected to find three main themes emerge based on a review of the literature into this subject. First, IELTS and/or TOEFL preparation courses that they took part in truly prepared the participants for the realities of living in the United States or going to school here (Lee, 2009; Chan, 2014). Second, the participants would be able to describe their difficulties with academic work here in the university to be only partially related to language proficiency; much of the problems will most likely come from what Kelly and Moogan (2012) described as “educational distance”, that is, the difference between culturally based expected educational experiences and actual experiences here in the US. Third, it was expected that participants would be able to offer suggestions and advice about what the school could do to improve services to international students.

Step Eleven: Identify Limitations

While including the entirety of this population at SUNY Fredonia, the size of the sample is still a small purposeful sample. This sample is too small and specific to generalize about the graduate school experience of all East Asian students going to this school, and the circumstances of this university may be different than other universities. Furthermore, while the experiences of

Chinese students may be, in some ways, more similar to the experiences of Korean students than American students, they are not the same. It is critical to remember that race is not national origin.

Also, the potentially limited number of representative students studying subjects in the sciences, technical fields, medicine, etc may have impact on the generalizability of the study. There may be differences in the perceptions of English as a Second Language amongst students who are studying in one of these fields compared to education, music or the other popular majors at this university.

The final consideration is that of gender. At the time of writing this literature review, (Fall, 2014) the entire population of graduate students from China studying at this university at the graduate level are female. This, again, is most likely due to the lack of graduate level courses for more stereotypically masculine academic subjects such as business, computer science, economics, etc., and thus it may not be possible to generalize about the male international student experience.

Results

A total of eight people were asked to participate in this qualitative study. They represented the total population of the University's Chinese international graduate school community. All of the following results were created from interviews conducted in a two week period in the middle of October, then a summary of the responses per minute by the participants was written into table format by the researcher.

Though the great majority of the research and responses were conducted in English, the Chinese language was used by participants on occasion. Chinese was typically used because the respondent was nervous or simply forgot how to phrase her response. The researcher was able to confidently translate what the respondent had said, then confirm his translation with the participant.

The summary transcription took place in the middle of October, after each interview was taken. The system of transcribing the results was to use an audio playback and editing program named "Audacity" to slow down or speed up the recording of the interview. The researcher then was able to identify and summarize the statements made in one sentence increments. The responses and summaries below are either statements made verbatim by the respondents, or slightly altered for clarity. Therefore, personal pronouns were used in the tables below (see Tables 1-8). They are not, however, complete word-for-word transcriptions of the interviews.

Due to the small population of students in this study, and the small size of their programs, any identifying characteristics, such as names, have been removed. Further, any specific person mentioned by the respondent has been given a pseudonym. Although the participants did not mention any advisor, professor, or any member of the university's staff negatively, university staff have also been given a pseudonym or had their names redacted. Specifically, the two people

that appear most often in the interview process were given pseudonyms: The ESL Teacher refers to one person in the ESL department of the University, and Dr. Brennan is a pseudonym for a professor in the Music department that has been of great help to this group of students, and consistently appears throughout the interviews for those participants who were music majors.

Participant 1: Summary of Results

Participant 1 met all qualifications for participation in this study and is a female student from the People's Republic of China who graduated with a Bachelor's degree in her home country. Participant 1 moved to the US for the express purpose of studying her Graduate degree, which was in the Education department. She was in the final semester of her program. She took the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score was 6. IELTS is a popular standardized English proficiency exam, which, though more widely used in the UK and Australia, is also accepted by many schools in the USA. A score of 6 (of 9) indicated a level of "Competent", which is considered a satisfactory score for many institutions. The new IELTS requirement of 6.5 from the University for Direct Enrollment has not yet been put into place when she enrolled (International Graduate Student Requirements, n.d.).

The strongest themes in this interview were, for Questions 1 and 2 (those focused on "Amount of ESL help available" and suggestions for the university), the need for one-on-one tutoring for graduate students and the need for career guidance and help applying for PhD programs, as well as job interviews and opportunities available.

For Questions 3 and 4, (which were about the "Quality and amount of campus help" and suggestions for the university) the participant offered suggestions on how to get more of the graduate students involved in community and campus events, as well as students to understand more about Chinese culture. Participant 1 also suggested that the University be able to assist

international students in locating off-campus housing, especially online, before they arrive to the United States.

The strongest themes that emerged in Questions 5 and 6 (that is, those questions that addressed language being a help or hindrance to adjustment and how the university may be able to assist students) were about how to adjust to the cultural differences between the US and China, including food, communication styles, and the help that she received when she first arrived to campus. Interestingly, she stated that one of the positive things about living and attending the University was that there were few students from China attending; this allowed her, or forced her to speak English. Perhaps she would not have learned English as quickly if there were a larger community of Chinese people with whom to speak Chinese with. Finally, the respondent identified some of the different expectations that she had before she came to the University. These included that she thought there would have been more Chinese professors that she could talk to about her papers and a language lab.

Overall, Participant 1 is satisfied with her experience at the University. She enjoyed the teacher-student relationship here, which is one of the stronger themes identified in this interview. However, she does suggest that the professors understand more about the students, including the fact that they often do not have the access to the law and teaching culture of the US, which many professors assume they have. Finally, as she is a student in the education department, she had ideas about how the Clinical Field Experience could be adapted, including bilingual students, or perhaps providing transportation, or carpooling. Transportation was also mentioned because she had no access to public transportation during the holiday season, when the bus system stops. Other participants made similar statements.

Table 3

Participant 1

Questions 1 and 2

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
1:00	I know there is an ESL Class for international student undergraduates, but I don't think there's anything here for graduate students.
2:00	Other students and professors help, in the beginning, when I started my program here. One professor fixed my paper four times. She helped me with my grammar, gave me ideas, suggestions for oral English.
3:00	I didn't understand the content of my courses, when I first started. The ESL Professor* sometimes provides tutoring for Graduate students, to help grammar and composition issues, but she doesn't help for content.
4:00	Should there be more help available? Yes. There is not enough tutoring. The one-on-one tutoring is for international students fixing papers, but not writing them, really.
5:00	Future study, future development, research how to find jobs. Most international students struggle to use internet, research in English.
6:00	Want to know more about information about the US Cultural differences and differences between China and US. Applying for Jobs on the internet, like in the US, versus simply going in person to interviews and applying for jobs in China.
7:00	Library resources are good. One day I used the new scanner machine in the computer center, and no one could help me. I am not sure how much they can help me. More training for the library staff, maybe?
8:00	There should be different levels for students, school should have more classes . . . for graduate students, research and English proficiency. Graduate students are not undergraduates.
9:00	Career development and future development. . . Fredonia's not the end for these students, like me.
10:00	Students should get more advice about how to look for jobs, and apply for PhD Programs.
11:00	Students may not know cultural differences between job finding process or PHD program.

*Pseudonym to maintain anonymity

Table 3 (continued).

Participant 1

Questions 3 and 4

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
12:00	The campus clubs and activities, sports, and so on are good. Students may not know about American culture, for example, football, so we don't know how to participate in discussions and conversations about it.
13:00	Invite students to be part of the community, American culture.
14:00	Colorful advertising, email to invite students, introduce why we have the event, why it's important and why should they participate. The events should be well-prepared.
15:00	Chinese holidays: school can provide events, introduce the event and why it is being celebrated.
16:00	Activities for graduate and undergraduate activities should be different, not the same.
17:00	There should be special activities for graduates, such as workshops, and events. Graduate student activities should be different, more professionally orientated.
18:00	Regarding the housing situation in China, how do we know where to go? There is no housing agency, and no department or recommendations or help about how to live outside campus.
19:00	I didn't know if I could stay on dorm or find another place before I came. I hope SUNY Fredonia can provide or recommend an agency online.

Questions 5 and 6

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
20:00	I felt a lot of difficulty communicating with people.
21:00	For example, when friends are laughing and talking while eating dinner, and I didn't understand. After two years, I have about 80% and can now share ideas.
22:00	If there were a lot of Chinese students here, I wouldn't have as many opportunities to speak English. When people first come, they feel nervous to speak English. I felt the same way, making friends helped a lot.
23:00	I got lost in all of my classes when I first came. My professor repeated and showed many examples.
24:00	I can understand and communicate now, and can write my thesis, but I have some problems, like my pronunciation.
25:00	For the English language, there should be more specific language classes and tutoring, Chinese food choices help adjustments. Provide more events to help students adjust to life inside the USA.

Table 3 (continued).

*Participant 1*Questions 7 and 8

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
26:00	I thought there would be more Chinese professors, and classmates All of my classmates are not Chinese, no Chinese professors in Fredonia to help.
27:00	I didn't feel like anyone could help me figure out what was going on in the Chinese language.
28:00	I found that the professors really care about the students, not like China.
29:00	Many universities in China have a lab to do research in, called a language lab. I expected something like that here, but there isn't one.
30:00	In second language education, there are second language labs, for students to research and improve English
31:00	In China, there is a receptive style of teaching, where students sit. We need to participate here in the US with student centered activities
32:00	Satisfied, comfortable with student-centered learning style, no conflict between what's expected and what school in the US is like.
33:00	Department should provide more academic support inside of the major for the education tests. I am taking the teacher certification tests, but am still confused. I want to know how to pass, materials to study.
34:00	Professors should try to meet the student's needs, differentiation, try to know more about students.
35:00	I still miss some aspects of content because of lack of background information . . . assumed that I understood a lot about laws and culture regarding major.
36:00	I like the campus, but I don't like the winter. I hope the school can provide transportation during holidays.
37:00	If we have no car, how can we have a good holiday? We can't get food, or buy our stuff. Especially in winter.
38:00	I hope I could get the chance to teach Chinese students in Chinese bilingual schools, but we have no service. I don't understand Spanish.
39:00	I hope our school can provide more accommodations, no car for us for the Clinical Field experience.

Participant 2: Summary of Results

Participant 2 has met all of qualifications for participation in this study and is a female student from the People's Republic of China who graduated with a Bachelor's degree in her

home country. Participant 2 moved to the US for the purpose of studying her Graduate degree, which in the Education department. She is in the third semester of her program. Unlike Participant 1, Participant 2 had taken the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam. The TOEFL exam is the most widely used college and university entrance examination in the US and internationally. Her score was 80, which is equivalent to an IELTS score of 6.5 (out of 9), demonstrating a “competent” to “good” level of ability. This is generally acceptable score for admission into most universities, though many top-tier schools, such as Harvard, MIT, etc require a score of 100 (Test of English as a Foreign Language, 2014). Fredonia currently accepts a score of 78 (to be 79, for the summer, 2015 session) for direct enrollment (International Graduate Student Requirements, n.d.).

The themes were strongest in this interview were, for Questions 1 and 2 (those focused on “Amount of ESL help available” and suggestions for the university), was that there is not enough help for graduate students when it comes to ESL, and that more classes should be opened, especially writing courses. The ESL Professor helped her with papers but this is not enough, and like other participants, Participant 2 thought there should be a language lab, which is a space that is like a writing tutoring center for students. The only academic help that she used was the tutoring assistance offered by The ESL Professor. The participant also receives help from the Speech Pathology and Audiology department of the University, which she found helpful, which she found out about through a friend, and recommended that the school do more to promote this option to students, especially those international students in her department—she only learned about it from her friend who was in the program.

For Questions 3 and 4 (which were about the “Quality and amount of campus help” and suggestions for the university), Participant 2 mentioned her familiarity with the International

Student Services and the Graduate Studies Office, but that she is usually too busy to participate in the activities. Furthermore, this student offered her insights into the International student experience, describing her perception of how she is perceived by the campus community. She feels as though there is little connection between her and the campus community, especially a lack of understanding between the Chinese and American cultures. Although she does not think anyone has been directly unwelcoming, she believes that there is a superficiality in the communication, and an unwillingness to learn about cultures that Fredonia could consider addressing.

The strongest themes that were mentioned in Questions 5 and 6 (that is, those questions that addressed language being a help or hindrance to adjustment and how the university may be able to assist students) were that speaking and listening made adjustment difficult, and so does homesickness, a lack of friends, and cultural differences. These cultural differences can cause misunderstandings and stress.

Finally, the themes addressed in Questions 7 and 8, (which addressed “Expectations about achievement from professors and students” and suggestions for the university or professors) were that there are a number of differences between American and Chinese schools. For the most part, Participant 2 likes these differences, which she saw as being more equitable in terms of grading (especially the use of rubrics), and interactions between professors, and peers. She is also satisfied with the library resources. She did, however, believe that professors could understand her learning style and where she is coming from more; this would help adjustment to the American educational system. She did not know what the teacher wanted her to do, or what the expectations were when she started the classes. Like other participants in the Education

department, Participant 2 thought it would be great to be able to use her language in the classroom; this would make the Clinical Field Experience more relevant for her.

In conclusion, Participant 2 did like the University. Also like other participants, Participant 2 thought one of advantages of studying here was that it was small enough to create a positive environment for studying. Specifically for Participant 2, the lack of “temptations to do things other than study . . . like in New York or California”, meant that she could focus more on her academics.

Table 4

Participant 2

Questions 1 and 2

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
1:00	Fredonia doesn't have a lot of ESL help, compared to other schools.
2:00	Fredonia doesn't have as many international students, at least for graduate students: not enough help. They should open ESL courses.
3:00	Other colleges have ESL courses for international students, for free. There is the Language lab. I've heard that there is help available from the library.
4:00	More writing help should be given. Actually, is there any help provided in the library? I'm not sure. Sometimes I don't know how to express my thoughts in English for my proposal. I don't know who to ask for help.
5:00	If the school provided writing help once or twice a week, that would have been helpful.
6:00	Undergraduate International students have ESL courses, but there are none for graduate students. The first semester I The ESL Professor, and she helped me with my writing.
7:00	I didn't benefit from or use any other academic help.

Questions 3 and 4

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
8:00	Some students take a trip with the International student group. It's good for students to develop relationships with Americans. International office tries to create more activities. That's helpful.
9:00	I try to take advantage of activities, but I can't take part. I can't because I have class. For example, coffee hour. Most activities are for undergraduate students anyway.

Table 4 (continued).

Participant 2

<u>Questions 3 and 4</u>	
<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
10:00	Graduate students have Happy Hour; that's all I know for graduate students.
11:00	We have student teaching, why don't we have teaching activities in China in my program? We have them in Mexico and the USA, but not in China. That would be helpful for me.
12:00	I don't feel part of the campus community. The people are nice, but the reason is culture, race. I don't think that I can be part of the community, because I am different.
13:00	Most of the people are nice to me, the professors are nice, but I can notice that they don't want to communicate with me. I don't feel they treat me equally. I felt this way strongly when I first came, but I feel better now. Due to English and maybe culture.
14:00	I can't give an example, but I feel this way when we talk, we have no conversation; it seems very superficial. "How are you? I'm fine" that's all.
15:00	Fredonia could do something to promote understanding about Fredonia and culture
16:00	For example, my research partner for class once said, "I'm not interested in any cultural thing or any other language", which surprised and hurt me. Even though we weren't talking about China, it was like she wasn't interested in learning about me.
17:00	She didn't mean anything mean, but it still surprised me. Americans can learn more about Chinese language.
18:00	If you have the filter, or the wall, "I don't want to talk about other culture" then any workshop or activity will be useless.
19:00	Many people are interested in Chinese culture, though.
<u>Questions 5 and 6</u>	
<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
20:00	Speaking is difficult and cultural differences make adjustment difficult.
21:00	Cultural mores, such as differences in Chinese and American culture. Rules regarding restaurants, waiting in offices. We don't need to wait in line to ask someone simple questions, for example.
22:00	Even though I learned English in China for a long time, I just cannot understand what American people say, it's very different from what I learned.
23:00	That is one thing that was difficult for me when I first arrived. American speaking is totally different. My listening was also a problem.

Table 4 (continued)

*Participant 2*Questions 5 and 6

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
24:00	Speech therapy helps. I'm receiving the service and I think it's been very helpful. They also help me understand language, idioms, grammar.
25:00	My friend majors in Speech Pathology, she recommended it to me. I need to improve my pronunciation for my degree, so this might be very useful. I don't know why my friend, who is also studying education, didn't tell me about this program. Maybe Fredonia could tell us more about the program, instead of just hearing about it from friends.
26:00	There were many things making it hard to get used to living here: speaking, listening, and cultural differences. This leads to homesickness, and not having friends.
27:00	Food, friends, culture--missing these things has made it hard to live here.

Question 7 and 8

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
28:00	There have been a lot differences between American and Chinese schools. In China, the students stay in the same in the same group of people for undergraduate classes and have the same graduate class for their entirety of their program. I thought the classmates wouldn't change, here it changes all the time, and every class is different.
29:00	I didn't think there would be so much free resources like the library
30:00	We don't have printers in the library, we have to go to a special printing store. It's very convenient here. Starbucks is great. Good facilities.
31:00	Chinese classes and American classes are different. Chinese classes are all lectures.
32:00	American courses are all different, I didn't know what to do. American classes require students to express their opinions, not just memorize your book or what your teachers say
33:00	I think Rubrics are very useful, a standard. Teachers in China can just give students whatever grades they want.
34:00	Chinese teachers can be biased. It doesn't matter how good the students are.
35:00	I didn't know what the teacher was looking for when I first started classes.

Table 4 (continued)

*Participant 2*Questions 7 and 8

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
36:00	Teachers can take more care of international students, Asian students are passive, do not want to show their thinking or opinions, Teachers can ask if they understood the lesson
37:00	I think a workshop would be useful.
38:00	Orientation did not give any hints about what to do for international students and American style of education. Maybe that could be useful.
39:00	There may be bias . . . some people may not like my culture, or my speaking ability, maybe they don't want to communicate with me.
40:00	I would recommend my friends to come here. I think it's good for us to study, it's quiet, there are not many temptations to do things other than study, and it's not like New York or California.

Participant 3: Summary of Results

Participant 3 has met all of qualifications for participation in this study and is a female student from the People's Republic of China who graduated with a Bachelor's degree in her home country. Participant 3 moved to the US for the purpose of studying her Graduate degree, which in the Music department. She is in the third semester of her program. Her TOEFL score was 75, which corresponds to an IELTS score of 6, "competent" (Test of English as Foreign Language, 2014). She was admitted into the school for direct enrollment before changes in requirements for TOEFL changed to a 78 and, next year 79 (International Graduate Students Requirements, n.d.).

The themes were strongest in this interview for Questions 1 and 2 (those focused on "Amount of ESL help available" and suggestions for the university), were the need for ESL help, especially with grammar and writing papers. Unlike several participants, this student used the Learning Center in the library. The issue with the Learning Center, according to Participant 3,

was that they are undergraduate students so that they are not familiar with how to correct or give suggestions about how to write a Graduate school-level paper. Furthermore, as many music majors said, music requires a fairly extensive specialized vocabulary and background knowledge (especially history) of which many people do not have knowledge. Generalized help, such as that offered by The ESL Professor, though very welcome, is of limited use. She does go to the Music Hall learning center, but does not have time to visit with The ESL Professor this semester.

For Questions 3 and 4 (which were about the “Quality and amount of campus help” and suggestions for the university), the participant described her experiences interacting with American students. She interacts with her co-workers at a campus eatery where she works, and her friends in the Music department. She also has a relationship with a campus Christian community, and a local church. She has had the opportunity to visit student and professors’ homes. She is very interested in American culture, including America’s culture and ideas. She suggested that many Chinese students would like to attend lectures about American History and other events.

The strongest themes that were described for Questions 5 and 6 (that is, those questions that addressed language being a help or hindrance to adjustment and how the university may be able to assist students) were about the differences between American and Chinese teaching methods and communication methods. The participant reiterated that writing papers in English, from a Chinese perspective is difficult. Participant 3 also mentioned that the University was the first place she has been to outside of her country, and that it was difficult to get used to living here, at first.

Finally, the strongest themes in Questions 7 and 8 (which addressed “Expectations about achievement from professors and students” and suggestions for the university or professors) was

that America and Chinese educational styles are very different. In general, Participant 3 was satisfied with the teaching style here, although it was difficult for her to get used to discussions and writing papers. She was surprised that there were so many rules about papers and academic honesty, for example. Some habits of her classmates caused her annoyance, such as eating in class and talking in the library. The suggestion that the participant has regarding the school is that, first, American and Chinese students should interact more. Second, professors should assist students by knowing more about the learning styles and backgrounds of their Chinese students, such as background knowledge of the subjects. Professor Brennan is mentioned as someone who has volunteered his time to help the Chinese students learn more about the readings they are asked to do in Music Theory and other topics (see Table 5, below).

Table 5

Participant 3

Questions 1 and 2	
<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
1:00	We need help with our grammar and our paper. The ESL program will help. Especially for papers.
2:00	I go to the Library 4 th floor Learning center, it helps with grammar, and my professor helps with us. Music is different. I go to Mason for help. Theory is different, the content is different. Vocabulary is different in music too, it's specialized.
3:00	Music history. Our professor helps us, and is difficult for many of us. It requires special knowledge, there should be more help.
4:00	When I go to the learning center, they don't know much about the language of music. I would like more help for those problems. The different majors have different problems. No help for music students, at least not graduate students.
5:00	There can be a big class for Asian students, tell about complex sentences, grammar. There should be an academic center, workshops on academic language.
6:00	I go to The ESL Professor* for help with my paper. She helps us with new words and the meaning of specific paragraphs and logic of writing an American paper.
7:00	I don't have any time to take an ESL class. I go to Mason and the learning center but I don't see that ESL teacher this semester. I used to go, but I have no time now.

Table 5 (continued)

*Participant 3*Questions 3 and 4

<u>Time in Recoding</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
8:00	I work in Tim Horton's, sometimes they talk about things that are different. They drink, play cards, and go to parties. Americans seem to like Korean culture a lot.
9:00	Sometimes people ask me about China and pandas, culture, and food. They ask me about bowling. We will talk about differences in cultures. I can learn from them, and they can learn from me. I like these activities.
10:00	I take part in other activities, I go to the church with some friends, and I go to other students homes.
11:00	Most of us talk about music. I go to the church in Dunkirk, go to dinner with the members of the church. We do some activities with the church.
12:00	Chinese club the Graduate student activities. I went last semester, I forgot it.
13:00	Music majors are different than other majors, we have less time to spend with others.
14:00	TESOL is better than ours in that way, because they teach, and communicate with other people.
15:00	We want to learn more about American culture. We can go to lectures, talk about American lifestyle. What is living in America like? Parents, family. We can talk about history about America.
16:00	Many Chinese students would come if we have a lecture about American culture and ideas. We would like to know more about how to speak with American students.

Questions 5 and 6

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
17:00	I think that talking with Americans can help our language. We can speak about the course with the professors and students
18:00	Writing has been especially difficult for us. Sometimes we can't express our ideas, our professors sometimes use a Chinese logic
19:00	Sometimes we search from words from Google and the dictionary, and it doesn't work. Sometimes we use a different logic, it's not direct.
20:00	America is direct. Professors in America encourage students, Chinese professors do not.
21:00	We want to read news and other sources, but sometimes we can't. Sometimes Americans speak too quickly.

Table 5 (continued)

*Participant 3*Questions 5 and 6Time in Recording Summary of Statement

22:00 Sometimes I can't pick up what American people are saying. I feel better now. The University is the first place I went to outside of China, I felt very nervous not being in a place where I could speak and use Chinese.

Questions 7 and 8Time in Recording Summary of Statement

23:00 America and China are very different.

24:00 I thought America is very free.

25:00 I don't think America is very free. If you find something in another book, you have to give credit to the author.

I think I'm special because I have a professor that isn't from America.

26:00 If you make a mistake about three times, he will stop your class, and you can't return. He also doesn't encourage me. I'm surprised that there are so many rules about papers.

27:00 I didn't think that discussion was very important before I came to the USA. It's very important. Professors speak less. Students can show their ideas. Students can eat in class, which I don't like.

28:00 Students come to class on time. I didn't know that before.

I am comfortable with the style

I like discussion in class. In China, students don't speak, only the teacher does. Americans speak in class, but I don't like students speaking in the library.

29:00 I didn't go to America for my undergraduate degree, there are many things I didn't take or understand now.

30:00 Teachers need to help us understand the background knowledge, in English, which I didn't know before.

There is a professor in Mason, Dr. Brennan* that helps us with Music history.

31:00 He is very kind and knows that it is difficult. We have a lot of reading to do in our classes. He helps us know what the meaning of these. This is one professor, helping us and volunteering his time.

32:00 He is just helping, not part of a program.

33:00 American and Chinese students need to interact more.

*Pseudonym to maintain anonymity.

Participant 4: Summary of Results

Participant 4 has met all of qualifications for participation in this study and is a female student from the People's Republic of China who graduated with a Bachelor's degree in her home country. Participant 4 moved to the US for the purpose of studying her Graduate degree, which in the Music department. She is in the third semester of her program. Her TOEFL score was 74, which corresponds to a score of 6 on the IELTS exam, "competent", and is a common score for admission into universities (Test of English as a Foreign Language, 2014). She was admitted before the score of 78 to 79 score for direct enrollment in Fredonia was put into place.

The themes were strongest in this interview were, for Questions 1 and 2 (those focused on "Amount of ESL help available" and suggestions for the university), was that while Participant 4 was auditing a course (which is very useful); there is not enough help available for Graduate students. Participant 4 also commented that she did not have enough time to take other classes to improve her English. While she is in the ESL class, she only was able to speak with her classmates about assignments; other students like to speak with each other in their own language. Participant 4 stressed that the most important aspect of help that she needed was for papers. This suggestion is in line with what the other participants have said. Furthermore, like the other music majors interviewed, Participant 4 believed that there was enough of a difference between music content and other majors to warrant separate, specialized help.

The strongest themes identified in Questions 3 and 4 (which were about the "Quality and amount of campus help" and suggestions for the university) were that the cultural differences between American and Chinese students caused some stress, especially the lack of knowledge about American customs. An advantage to ESL programs for Graduate students would be that

they could address cultural issues, such as those that arise between American and Chinese students. This kind of knowledge would make her more comfortable and confident.

For Questions 5 and 6, (that is, those questions that addressed language being a help or hindrance to adjustment and how the university may be able to assist students) Participant 4 believed that linguistic differences made adjustment difficult. She was annoyed that no one seemed to be able to pronounce her name correctly. She wishes she had more opportunities to speak with more American students. In classes, professors sometimes ask questions that are too difficult, because the student hadn't thought about the answer before. The possible solution offered by Participant 4 is to have the teacher ask the questions in email or preview the questions in class.

Finally, the strongest themes identified in Questions 7 and 8 (which addressed "Expectations about achievement from professors and students" and suggestions for the university or professors) was that the lack of time available to make friends and participate in activities has been disappointing for her; time management is also an issue. Communication with her professors is not as good as it could be; she is not sure if her professors and her piano instructor are satisfied with her work or not. This lack of communication could be a result of a lack of knowledge about how to communicate with American professors on the part of the Chinese graduate students (or vice versa).

The small number of Chinese students, from her perspective (unlike for Participants 1 and 2), is not good because it means that the Chinese are not enough of a factor to affect change—The University should do more to encourage a more international environment, for international students to come and be welcome.

Table 6

*Participant 4*Questions and 1 and 2

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
1:00	I'm in an ESL class with The ESL Professor*, she taught me some basic grammar form, basics
2:00	She taught us how to write an essay. She was very helpful. We're not use to writing so many essays, long essays.
3:00	The ESL teacher is from China, so she can easily communicate and understand where we are from. She can explain things in Chinese and knows the differences. The school suggest that we take these courses.
4:00	The class was audited, we could take the course and if we had time. The ESL Professor let me audit the class. The Graduate department suggested this based on my score.
5:00	I only took the one class, but there are other classes.
6:00	I think there are enough for undergraduate students, but not graduate students. If I want to improve more, or get more skills, I should take more classes, but I don't have enough time.
7:00	Communication is the most important thing, we can only talk about assignments. For example, we could only speak with other students, South Korean students only spoke to each other in Korean.
8:00	In my opinion, the most important, useful thing was about the papers. Some students have other professors' help, but I don't have an advisor. I do know another professor that can help me.
9:00	The best way to help would be if each major had its own ESL program that would be perfect. Some of the people want to help, but the amount of help in my major, music cannot help because they aren't familiar with the content.
10:00	More specific help in content, for music.

Questions 3 and 4

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
11:00	I live off campus. The first year I was a graduate assistant, but I had more opportunities to communicate and find problems.
12:00	Our schools have activities for grad students, different cultures have special days. Some of the activities are good, some are boring.
13:00	Some of the cultures have different cultures and languages, it's hard to find something to talk about.
14:00	Graduate students should have ESL classes, we should have class to help us deal with the professor. I don't know what the professor wants.

Table 6 (continued)
Participant 4

Questions 3 and 4

Time in Recording Summary of Statement

15:00 I don't want to make people feel uncomfortable, perhaps ESL classes can teach us about the culture to make us more confident

Questions 5 and 6

Time in Recording Summary of Statement

16:00 It's hard to express my ideas, some words can't express exactly what I want to say. Some words are different, it's just not the same.

17:00 I've lived here for year. Some people can never remember how to pronounce and spell my name. I feel everyone else's names are the same.

18:00 I seemed like no one could help me when I first arrived

19:00 I didn't live on campus. After I went to the international center, I got some help, like registering for classes, and I felt Americans were welcoming and friendly.

20:00 Conversation using English with people who speak other languages and from other cultures is difficult sometimes.

21:00 I wish I could speak more to American students.

22:00 A small group or mentoring program would help students adjust, especially if two people have the same major.

23:00 Professors ask questions, and sometimes it is too hard, and difficult to answer. We can only sit there if the professors send the questions to us with email, maybe give us a preview of the questions in class, it may be better for us.

Questions 7 and 8

Time in Recording Summary of Statement

24:00 (Researcher explains question)

25:00 I thought school was going to be like the movies. I thought I would have more free time to make friends and have fun, but I am always busy.

26:00 I thought the school would have many activities and things, but I don't know about what is good to do; I don't know what the famous activities are.

27:00 Professors want us to balance our time well, have study, half practice, it seems like he is satisfied with me. I already did my best to practice.

28:00 My advisor is my major and performance instrument instructor, but I don't know how he is satisfied or not.

Table 6 (continued)

*Participant 4*Questions 7 and 8Time in Recording Summary of Statement

29:00	There are only a few Chinese students. Chinese people need to communicate the speaking style, to help them understand us. Asian students need the same help.
30:00	Students should try to create a more international environment
32:00	SF should encourage more international students to come and welcome them.

*Pseudonym to maintain anonymity.

Participant 5: Summary of Results

Participant 5 has met all of qualifications for participation in this study and is a female student from the People's Republic of China who graduated with a Bachelor's degree in her home country. Participant 5 moved to the US for the purpose of studying her Graduate degree, which is in the Music department. She is in the first semester of her program. Her TOEFL exam score was a 79, which corresponds to a score of 6 on the IELTS exam, "competent", and is a common score for admission into universities (Test of English as a Foreign Language, 2014), including Fredonia, for direct enrollment (International Graduate Students Requirements, n.d.).

The themes were strongest in this interview were, for Questions 1 and (those focused on "Amount of ESL help available" and suggestions for the university), was grammar and paper writing. This participant mentions Dr. Brennan as a major influence on her studies and adjustment. Dr. Brennan (a pseudonym), is a professor in the music department who has volunteered to explain tasks and difficult music theory and music history issues to the Chinese students for the university; he also advocates for Chinese students among other professors. He meets with the Chinese students every Friday, and in the case of Participant 5, introduced her to

ESL help (i.e., The ESL Professor). This begs the question: without his help, would she have ever found help for her papers?

In Questions 3 and 4 (which were about the “Quality and amount of campus help” and suggestions for the university), the participant described her desire to make a connection with her American peers, such as through a Chinese language class. If there were such a class, she might have been able to be an assistant or volunteer, but there isn’t. Further, many international students just speak with each other in their home language, so the International office events do not automatically lend themselves to making connections in the broader campus community. If there is not a Chinese class, perhaps the school could provide language partner activities or cultural events.

For Questions 5 and 6, (that is, those questions that addressed language being a help or hindrance to adjustment and how the university may be able to assist students) themes that were identified were mostly about language and cultural differences between American and Chinese students, such as humor. Linguistically, the lack of vocabulary to describe everyday life in the U.S. was surprising for these students, who never imagined that they would need to learn so much for their daily lives. The differences in education were also surprising, such as the difference writing styles between the US and China. Participant 5 suggested that perhaps both ways of writing be accepted and understood.

Finally, Participant 5 provided, for Questions 7 and 8 (which addressed “Expectations about achievement from professors and students” and suggestions for the university or professors) an explanation of the differences between American and Chinese education. She was surprised that simply playing the instrument that she is majoring in is not enough; she must take courses as well, about subjects that are not required in China, such as Bibliography, music

history, etc. The teachers, she said, Teachers in the US, according to Participant 5, require students to know more background knowledge, have different requirements, and generally make her feel that the professors are very strict about academics. This is good, as they are also involved in education of their students, whereas in China, the professor simply requires a student to memorize a book, American students need to know more. Finally, Participant 5 said that she sometimes has communication issues with her professor, with whom she sometimes has disagreements regarding how pieces should be played; however, she thinks that her professors (though strict) are actually quite nice.

Table 7

Participant 5

<u>Questions 1 and 2</u>	
<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
1:00	I didn't take ESL class.
2:00	Maybe it can help. For music students, grammar is a big problem. My semester is very busy. The ESL Professor* helped me correct my paper
3:00	I need to write papers for music history, the grammar is a big problem, sometimes I can't write well, The ESL Professor helped.
4:00	Monday and Wednesday in the afternoon, she helps graduate students. She welcomes everyone to come 1-4 every Monday and Wednesday.
5:00	I emailed The ESL Professor to help me. Dr. Brennan* helped me find The ESL Professor he also helps us with our course
6:00	I was afraid I couldn't understand what people say before I came here.
7:00	Dr. Brennan helped me a lot, introduced the campus and some people. Always asked if I needed help. Professors know that the courses are very hard. Analysis of Opera pieces is very hard, I never studied Opera before.
8:00	Our music history professors always ask us if we can understand. Every Friday, we meet with Dr. Brennan to see if we needed any help.
9:00	I am very busy with my major, I don't have time to communicate with others, and I hope we have more programs for people to help them communicate. My professor asks me, "Do you have any American friends?", and I say that I only have one.
10:00	We hope we can make a lot of American friends, but we need opportunities to do this.

Table 7 (continued)

*Participant 5*Questions 3 and 4

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
11:00	I wanted to find an assistant for my academic class, but I found there wasn't a Chinese language course. This class would help people understand Chinese culture. I found some Americans want to understand American culture.
12:00	Maybe the school could ask if there is interest in a Chinese culture class.
13:00	The international assistant has a program to communicate, but there are not a lot of people here, but many people just speak their home language with each other (Korean)
14:00	If the school could help us find a partner or language activities and culture events.
15:00	Sometimes I feel that the teachers help, and like to help, but students sometimes don't.
16:00	Coffee time, other events welcome both graduate and undergraduate students, I feel welcome. I know there are other events on campus

Questions 5 and 6

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
17:00	Perhaps there should be more events on campus.
19:00	Sometimes I don't understand American humor because of cultural differences. Staying more in the US will improve communication. We need other people to do this, we can't improve our communication skills by ourselves.
20:00	We need to improve our vocabulary. We study 10 and more years in China, but not speaking. We need to improve our speaking. When I am in the market, I learn a lot of words, in the environment.
21:00	Before I came to the US, I didn't know all of the words that I need for everyday life, there was a difference in education between China and the USA.
22:00	Putting American and Chinese culture together might be a good idea. For example, we have a story, then tell the result. The point of the essay, the topic sentence is actually often in the end.
23:00	In America we say what the point is, then describe it, give details. Neither way is right or wrong. Perhaps we can use both ways?

Questions 7 and 8

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
24:00	I thought it wouldn't be difficult to be a Master's degree student for music.

Table 7 (continued)
Participant 5

Questions 7 and 8

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
25:00	I thought just playing piano would be enough, but it's not. We have history and other topics too, there's a lot of writing and studying.
26:00	If you can't do something in China, it's your problem. In America, it's the professor's problem, sometimes. They like to help. This is very good.
27:00	Besides piano class, everything is surprising. No Bibliography class in China! The educational style is totally different, memorizing the book is enough in China. Here you have to use your own way to understand the book in the US.
28:00	I like the class, but it is hard for me, such as the academic background. We need to know more. If I studied as an undergraduate here, I would be comfortable.
29:00	The education is different here, so we need to know more. I feel like I'm starting all over.
30:00	Maybe we can make an activity for the same major's student, like party or dinner, to know more people and know other people's ways of thinking.
31:00	I've been here for two months, but I don't know many of my classmates and colleagues names. I feel the teachers are very strict about the academics.
32:00	Sometimes we are not accustomed to the American teaching style. Strict for us is better, we need to learn more. It's good, but I'm not used to it.
33:00	Professors have been communicating what they want.
34:00	Sometimes I have a different opinion than my piano instructor, but sometimes I don't feel like I can talk to him. He speaks very fast. I record and review what he says. Sometimes I find I have different idea.
35:00	Sometimes I am afraid that I am wrong, so I just follow him, or if I disagree, I compromise with what he says.
36:00	In music everyone has a different opinion, sometimes the emotion is different, that's OK, it's about personality. So, sometimes we can keep my idea.
37:00	I should ask my professor about my opinion.
38:00	I was afraid of the professor and thought that the professors would be very scary and strict, actually they are very nice.

*Pseudonym to maintain anonymity.

Participant 6: Summary of Results

Participant 6 has met all of qualifications for participation in this study and is a female student from the People's Republic of China who had graduated with a Bachelor's degree in her home country. Participant 6 moved to the US for the purpose of studying her Graduate degree, which in the Education department. She is in the first semester of her program. Her TOEFL exam score was a 74, which corresponds to a score of 6 on the IELTS exam, "competent", and is a common score for admission into universities (Test of English as a Foreign Language, 2014). She was admitted before the recent changes to IELTS and TOEFL score requirements of 78 (to 79, in summer 2015) in Fredonia for direct enrollment (International Graduate Student Re

The themes that were strongest in this interview were, for Questions 1 and 2 (those focused on "Amount of ESL help available" and suggestions for the university), the need to have help with music. Again, Dr. Brennan is mentioned as someone who assists the students, volunteering his help to Chinese graduate music students. Participant 6 had not utilized any other help. She did not audit or take any ESL classes because she did not have time. She does suggest that a separate ESL class could be made specifically for music majors, because Music was seen as being different than other majors in that more specific knowledge of content was necessary to write effectively. The Music Hall does help with some content, but not enough for grammar, writing, and research. Writing was identified as the area that Chinese students need to work on the most.

The strongest themes that were identified in Questions 3 and 4 (which were about the "Quality and amount of campus help" and suggestions for the university) were the activities available on campus, which Participant 6 believes Fredonia is doing a good job with. She, like most of the participants, specifically mentioned a desire to learn more about American culture

and holidays. She blames herself for not being able attend the activities, stating that “I think that Fredonia’s doing well, it’s that I am either too lazy or too busy [to go]”.

For Questions 5 and 6 (that is, those questions that addressed language being a help or hindrance to adjustment and how the university may be able to assist students) the strongest themes that were described Participant 6 were difficulties understanding the informal language used by her coworkers at a university dining facility in which she worked. She also mentioned that American food has taken her some time to get used to, as it is very different than Chinese food. More Asian food choices would make adjustment easier, but there were no other specific problems mentioned by the participant.

Finally, in Questions 7 and 8 (which addressed “Expectations about achievement from professors and students” and suggestions for the university or professors) the respondent mentioned the differences between American and Chinese schools, such as class sizes and teacher expectations. American teachers want students to think about, and understand, the material presented. The participant had two suggestions. First, the questions that the teachers ask to Chinese students, because of their lack of background information, should be specific and based on things that have been studied in the book. Second, this student was very interested in learning more about American schools and how music is taught in them. She would have liked to go to an American university to observe classes or to have had a field experience of some kind.

Table 8

Participant 6

Questions 1 and 2	
<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statements</u>
1:00	I didn't take an ESL class before; I think it would be useful for us. I've heard some people say that it would be good.
2:00	I was too busy, it was too difficult, and I needed to take time to focus on my classes. That's why I didn't take any ESL classes.

Table 8 (continued)

*Participant 6*Questions 1 and 2

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statements</u>
3:00	The learning center, I went there when I was writing the paper, I wanted to find someone to help me fix my grammar, but I thought it was very surface level help. They are undergraduate students, perhaps they couldn't help too much.
4:00	I will take Music analysis class and I will get help from Mason Hall. I haven't needed any help for music. Dr. Brennan* has helped me with my music history class and helps me understand the articles.
5:00	Dr. Brennan is not my professor, he is not involved in teaching international office. Sometimes we can't understand the material, he wants to help us.
6:00	He has just taken an interest in our progress I haven't used any other help.
8:00	If it's possible, establish a writing program for music.
9:00	Chinese music students need more help. Sometimes the regular help does not know enough about the music side. Mason helps with music theory, but not research, vocabulary and how to write papers.
10:00	We need to translate our ideas into English. We need writing help the most.

Questions 3 and 4

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
11:00	(Researcher explains question to participant)
12:00	The international students and GSO have activities, I know.
13:00	I don't go to them, I want to go, for example, Halloween.
14:00	I want to know more about American culture. I never had the experience of American culture and ideas, so I want to go.
15:00	I think Fredonia is doing well for activities.
16:00	I also go to the Christian program, if I have time on Friday. I think Fredonia's doing well for activities, it's just that I am either too lazy or too busy.

Questions 5 and 6

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
17:00	The most difficult thing is language. Actually I feel pretty good about living here.
18:00	Sometimes I can't understand everything. Sometimes in the dining center job, sometimes they have an accent to put their words together, making it difficult to understand what they are talking about.

Table 8 (continued)

*Participant 6*Questions 5 and 6

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
19:00	When I speak to students, I feel OK, but when I speak to the people working in the dining center job, I don't understand. The food takes a long time to get used to.
20:00	I felt everything in America tastes sweet, and too much meat. There is very little Asian food here. Also, the snow is terrible.
21:00	Make more Chinese food for adjustment to be easier.
22:00	There have been no other specific problems for me.

Questions 7 and 8

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
23:00	I like the differences between American and Chinese schools.
24:00	I thought I would have to take a music theory test, but the school didn't make me take one. I thought there would be one, many schools. It's not necessary for music history for me (music education).
25:00	Every class is very small, less than 10 students. I expected a much larger program. I want to have more opportunities to observe research, join or see what it is like to see what the classes are like: the real education system in America, not just the book.
27:00	Everything is a surprise, I want to know more about America, especially in the education system
28:00	I think the professors want us to learn. They want us to follow them. They need to take care of us, we can't understand everything.
29:00	Chinese students are not used to thinking, They want that we can use what we learn in the class in our lives
30:00	The music history teacher will ask questions outside the book, which was very hard. I want to follow him and answer the questions, but my ability is only in what I read. I can't answer his questions because I don't have enough outside knowledge about the lessons.

*Pseudonym to maintain anonymity.

Participant 7: Summary of Results

Participant 7 has met all of qualifications for participation in this study and is a female student from the People's Republic of China who graduated with a Bachelor's degree in her home country. Participant 7 moved to the US for the express purpose of studying her Graduate

degree, which in the Education department. She was in the third semester of her program. Her IELTS score or TOEFL score was not available.

The themes that were strongest in this interview were, for Questions 1 and 2 (those focused on “Amount of ESL help available” and suggestions for the university), that there is not enough ESL help for students available. There is a graduate level ESL course, but this may not be suitable for music students. Professor Brennan was mentioned, again, as a person whom the Chinese students can turn to for help understanding what professors have asked of them in their assignments, and to explain certain points of history of music theory. Dr. Brennan does not, however, help with grammar and error correction or how to conduct research. The Learning Center in the library is staffed with undergraduates who are not qualified to help with Graduate level papers, especially not in music.

Participant 7 had much to say about the lack of help available to students regarding how to conduct research. The music program has a higher academic requirement than the students had expected, but preparation is quite minimal. Participant 7 stated that there was only one class in her Bibliography course that addressed how to cite papers, for example. The most pertinent comment that Participant 7 made in her discussion of Questions 1 and 2 was this: “Grammar is the next step, but the most important thing is just understanding the question and what the teacher wants us to do, which can be difficult”.

The strongest themes identified in Questions 3 and 4 (which were about the “Quality and amount of campus help” and suggestions for the university) were that the activities available on campus, specifically how to encourage students to come to events. Specifically, sending emails may not be enough, or the way that they are sent makes it look like official emails which are

typically ignored. She also discussed how she was invited to go to some parties and other activities in professors' homes, which she found to be a very nice experience.

For questions 5 and 6, (that is, those questions that addressed language being a help or hindrance to adjustment and how the university may be able to assist students) Participant 7 discussed her adjustment to the American university. She described how difficult it was for her to get around campus and how often she was late for class, and how she was late to pay tuition. Adjustment was also made difficult because the transportation around the community was difficult to navigate, and that she didn't feel as though she did not have anyone to talk to about her experience, or who to turn to for help, when she first arrived. She reported that she felt that she did not have anyone to help her with her courses or advisement. Finally, transportation was described as being very important for adjustment. She suggested that a system of driving or shopping would be helpful, even if only to shopping areas in the local area.

For Questions 7 and 8 (which addressed "Expectations about achievement from professors and students" and suggestions for the university or professors), Participant 7 described the differences between Chinese schools and American schools in terms of professors, expectations and peer relationships. She was surprised by the amount of academic work that is required of her, as she is in a performance-related major. She was also surprised at her relationships with her classmates, which seem to be less academic and collaborative than she had anticipated. Finally, her American professors, when compared to Chinese professors seem to be a lot more focused on questions and being able to answer them, rather than simply memorizing the book. She explained that her educational experiences in China did not adequately prepare her for the academic challenges that she found that she was required to undertake at the University. These challenges were made all the more difficult due to what Participant 7 perceived to be a

lack of guidance from her professors—she is often unclear as to what the expectations being placed on her are. She wanted more guidance about how to use computers to engage in work, such as how to use ANGEL, the University’s online course communication program.

In conclusion, Participant 7 suggested that perhaps some workshops and other services be provided to help students understand and transition more easily into the American graduate school experience, including how to communicate with professors and how to write a good paper. Participant 7 mentioned that Chinese students often do not ask questions to professors in class, and that professors should encourage and support Chinese students more by understanding this, and by not assuming that they are familiar with how to use computers, conduct research or can guess about instructions for papers--instructions should be clear. Unclear or ambiguous instructions are very stressful.

Table 9

Participant 7

Questions 1 and 2	
<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
1:00	There is not enough ESL help for graduate students.
2:00	The ESL program only has classes for undergraduates, one for graduates, but these are not for music majors. The music program does not have a course for music majors, which is a different program. There is a teacher who volunteers to help Chinese students with their work, but there is not enough time in the week for help.
3:00	Each person has a very short time. There is a learning center, but those students are not qualified to correct our papers because they are undergrads. Even after they correct our papers there is still a lot of grammar mistakes, they can't find these problems.
4:00	Dr. Brennen helps with the class, but does not correct the grammar, just the ideas and how to put the class together. We have a bibliography class, there is one class in one course to teach how to cite in a paper.
5:00	The library will help us do research, but not how to write a paper. There is a lady that will help us, but that is not her job. That's not a service the school provides, it's just one nice lady.

Table 9 (continued)

*Participant 7*Questions 1 and 2

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
6:00	The school could help students by not allowing students that are too low a level. They can't just take a course or two and become good at English. Especially if the ESL course is not directly related to their program. I heard so many people say that we should have a writing center. I have never been to any writing center before.
7:00	Students have problems reading and writing, the professor that helps us is really helpful. This only started this semester, and it's not even his job; we are not in class. He can explain the points to us, and what the teacher wants us to do, to help us in the right direction. Grammar is the next step, but the most important thing is just understanding the question and what the teacher wants us to do, which can be difficult.
8:00	The writing center needs to be able to address the needs of the students.

Questions 3 and 4

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
9:00	There are a lot of activities in the school, but the International office sends emails to students, which are ignored, which looks like official emails, but the students don't understand what the activities are about. The international office should maybe tell professors and they can tell us.
10:00	I see a lot of workshops available to students, like in the library, I usually don't go. If the International Office sends emails, a lot of time they will be ignored. The GSO [Graduate Student Organization] has a hang out once a month. Some students don't like to drink. Sometimes it's hard for us to make it.
11:00	I can't think of any activity to get involved with the community.
12:00	Chinese only hang out with Chinese, Americans with Americans. How can we meet more American students and be friends with them? It's very hard, especially in the music program, where everyone is so busy. The professor who volunteered let the students to know many cultural things.
13:00	Other professors have invited us, we can see what a house looks like inside; this kind of party is very cool. The activities on campus, really, I don't know about how useful they are. They can't help us understand what American culture is really like.

Questions 5 and 6

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
14:00	Right now, I stayed long enough to adjust to America and the American university.

Table 9 (continued)
Participant 7

Questions 5 and 6

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
15:00	In the beginning with no friends, it takes a long time to get to class and will be late, sometimes we will be late for a course, or pay for the tuition late, and makes a lot of mistakes. How to live here, I don't know.
16:00	If we live on campus it's no problem, but off campus, we have to learn so much like how to get a bus, or get food. There are not that many things available for Chinese students.
17:00	I think the food is so bad. Chinese food. Maybe more clear directions, printed in Chinese, with some important information, if you really want to make Chinese students welcome.
18:00	Help the Chinese get to know one or more professors to advise them, someone to talk to. In China, we trust our friend. If each department has one person to talk to in Chinese, that would solve a big problem.
19:00	Transportation is important, so if some people could volunteer to go shopping or drive with us that would be very helpful, maybe we could make some friends.

Questions 7 and 8

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
20:00	Master's degree is very hard, that's my expectation; students take things seriously.
21:00	All students talk about is their learning. . . it seems like some are, they don't want to study outside by themselves
22:00	It's hard to find someone to talk to about their experience. I feel we don't talk about our studies at all. Everyone is so busy. In China, everything is competition, and we are always trying to be the best, so we exchange ideas so that we can improve.
23:00	Here, everything is based on the individual person. It's very different.
24:00	Every professor is different, I can't compare them.
25:00	(Researcher repeats and explains question).
26:00	Every professor is so different. There is no American education system. Everything is so different, it's all different. It seems like the teacher doesn't teach anything, it sometimes seems. The teacher just gives us a lot of things to read, and we read it then come to class, without a lecture, really. Really, though, the teacher wants us to be able to participate in class, bring questions. It's different than China, where teachers teach everything and then give you a book to memorize.

Table 9 (continued)

*Participant 7*Questions 7 and 8

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
27:00	Not every class is like that. Some class is different. History and theory are different, you need the teacher for everything. Music major has two points. Performing and academics.
28:00	China's education system didn't prepare us for performance or academics because they are so different, but it did help with technique and the experience of performing. Everything is different, opposite, like writing a paper. I didn't expect that before I came to the USA.
29:00	The teachers don't tell you exactly what to do. The teacher expects you to write the paper well, but I don't what the teacher wants us to do.
30:00	Professors should learn more about the cultures of the international students. Assume that the students don't know anything. If you don't tell them exactly what they should do, the students have to guess. They will not know. American teachers always ask questions about the student's opinions, asking questions like, "What are your thoughts?" Please give very clear directions.
31:00	In China we never use computers, we don't know how to use computers, and we need a lot of help with them. Maybe treat us like 4 year olds, at least in the beginning. Maybe the school could have an extra class about how to write a paper. There is a file in ANGEL*, but they might not understand.
32:00	Workshops before the school started would be a great thing to do, might be very helpful. Maybe tell the students in Chinese that they can ask. We don't feel comfortable asking questions, like in class.
33:00	Maybe there is some way to tell students clearly that they can ask questions. Tell them that they can ask questions, and that they are there to help.
34:00	Not only help students' academics, but also tell them how to communicate in the correct way, like with professors.
35:00	I don't think most people have time to be a part of the society.
36:00	Every student likes bubble tea, don't just sell coffee. That would be great.
37:00	Sell dim sum, and more Chinese food!

*ANGEL is the University's online course delivery system.

Participant 8: Summary of Results

Participant 8 met all of qualifications for participation in this study and is a female student from the People's Republic of China who graduated with a Bachelor's degree in her

home country. Participant 8 moved to the US for the express purpose of studying her Graduate degree, which in the Education department. Her TOEFL exam score was a 74, which corresponds to a score of 6 on the IELTS exam, “competent”, and is a common score for admission into universities (Test of English as a Foreign Language, 2014). She was admitted before the recent changes to IELTS and TOEFL score requirements of 78 (to 79, in summer 2015) in Fredonia for direct enrollment (International Graduate Student Requirements, n.d.).

The themes that were strongest in this interview were, for Questions 1 and 2 (those focused on “Amount of ESL help available” and suggestions for the university), were a description of the overall impression that the participant had about the quality of the services available to international students in terms of activities, but qualified that by stating that she did not feel as though there was enough help directly related to ESL. She did not feel as though enough students knew about the Learning Center or other resources on campus. For example, she participates in Speech Pathology training, but she does not think that other students know about it; this training is only available 50 minutes a week, so it is not enough anyway. She is also aware that The ESL Professor (a pseudonym) is available to help, but she does not think that Monday and Wednesday meeting times are enough. She suggested that a system of mentoring or language partner system could be arranged to help. One reason that students do not go for help is that they are already doing everything in English, and that going and doing more things in English, such as tutoring, may be too stressful.

For Questions 3 and 4 (which were about the “Quality and amount of campus help” and suggestions for the university), the participant described why she believed why the International Student Services office was doing a good job providing a variety of activities to campus community, but little for the outside community. She reported that she had expected to be able to

make more American friends at the University. She explained that one reason that the students were not coming to the events was the language and cultural barriers. Chinese students often feel challenged by the fact that American students do not know how to communicate with them—they do not slow down their speech, or explain what they mean, for example.

In Questions 5 and 6, (that is, those questions that addressed language being a help or hindrance to adjustment and how the university may be able to assist students) Participant 8 described some of the difficulties that she had in class understanding and getting used to the American style of teaching and group work. She also hoped that the school would provide more opportunities for the students to communicate and to understand each other's cultural differences. She wonders if Chinese students are ignored because they do not comprise a larger percentage of the student population.

Finally, the themes that developed in Questions 7 and 8 (which addressed “Expectations about achievement from professors and students” and suggestions for the university or professors) dealt with the participant's American university experiences. Overall, she has appreciated the variety of approaches that the professors take to teach students and to get them engaged with the material. She is, like Participant 7 (See Table 9, above), sometimes finds using technology for assignments difficult. Participant 8 believed that there should be more research about how to address the needs of international graduate students. Different, more formal workshops and events could be held to discuss the academic expectations of the University. In the end, Participant 8 wondered if the University really cared about Chinese students because they are such a minority of the total undergraduate and graduate population, and if the school just “put [Chinese students] all into one group--Asian” (See Table 10, below, p. 78). She hoped that the University could do more to get Chinese students involved in the campus community.

Table 10

*Participant 8*Questions 1 and 2

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
2:00	SUNY Fredonia is doing a pretty good job. We have field trips to schools for my major and other events.
3:00	International Students are receiving support from the school, help with problems with accommodations and program issues. They care a lot about us getting involved in the community.
4:00	My teachers really take care about us, to make sure that I understand what is going in the class, they answer questions in email, good feedback, and I never expected that. I feel paid attention to.
5:00	I think we don't get a lot of help. I am getting speech therapy help for my speech
6:00	It's not a common thing that every student knows about. I heard about it from my friend. My friends who are freshmen ask me, but they do not know how to get help from any American.
7:00	Chinese students may not know how to use the learning center and resources. Students have to get used to all the problems in life, so they forget about the things that can help us.
8:00	Sometimes we get so tired of doing everything in English, we are very tired and don't have energy. I don't know any other things that could help me.
9:00	I heard the undergraduate students already have a professor from China.
10:00	No assignments and ESL services is not enough. I don't think it's enough. Monday and Wednesday classes are not enough.
11:00	English level should be higher, there is no assistance for our literacy skills. Speech Pathology is all that's available, and that's only 50 minutes a week.
12:00	Maybe we could have a partnership between international graduate students, a mentor or language partner.
13:00	Most graduate students are too busy to help other graduate students.

Questions 3 and 4

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
14:00	The International Office to make sure that they feel a part of the campus community, trips and coffee hours, do not help with getting together with the local community. We can only chat with the international students.
15:00	We have a lot of activities to help make friends, but still only with international students. I don't have a lot of opportunities to participate with local students.

Table 10 (continued)

*Participant 8*Questions 3 and 4

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
16:00	Before I got to the US, I thought I would have more time, and more friends, the language barrier, I don't really know many students. I expected to make a lot friends.
17:00	The International Students office should be connected to the rest of the school, there could be more invitations to other clubs. As far as I know, Chinese students are not getting involved with activities.
18:00	I asked some students, they say it's boring. The activities are boring because of the communication barriers, The local Americans may not think that the Chinese students do not know how to communicate, so they do not explain or slow down their speech, so you feel isolated.
19:00	We are all part of the Chinese club, not too many others. One of my friends went to a horse-riding club, and said that it was so-so. She didn't go again.

Questions 5 and 6

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
20:00	I think living in Fredonia is easy to access. It is OK to communicate. Sometimes, I have a hard time to studying that was different from what is going in in the course.
21:00	The content is OK, but sometimes the teachers use techniques in teaching that I don't understand.
22:00	Sometimes it's hard to do group work, and I have to work very hard to follow my partners, and try to keep up. I have to keep my attention the entire time.
23:00	The cultural differences are important, we have different cultural perspectives.
24:00	Thing happen every day. We have a lot of international students, I don't really encounter problems like this.
25:00	The population of Chinese students is very small, maybe they don't pay attention to us. I hope the school could provide more opportunities for us to communicate. I hope it happens every day. I we have more opportunities to communicate, it would be better.
26:00	We should have a Chinese class that could offer interested students a chance to communicate.
27:00	Sometimes American students want to know more about American students Graduate students could teach class in Chinese. This might give us a chance to talk to others about our club.

Table 10 (continued)

*Participant 8*Questions 7 and 8

<u>Time in Recording</u>	<u>Summary of Statement</u>
28:00	I think there were a lot of different things that are different. In China, we just sit down and listen to what the teacher says.
29:00	In America there were a lot of different ways to learn.
30:00	In China we just sit down and listen to what the teacher says. In America we have things like field trips, writing reflections, interviews, group work, etc.
31:00	We use a lot of technologies to do work in our class. Sometimes I need to take a lot of time pm how to do the assignment. I learn a lot more than I do in the classes in China. The American classroom tries to use a variety of approaches, to give us a better understanding of what we're learning.
32:00	I really want to learn more about the American education, so that I can learn more about why the system is better.
33:00	It was very hard for me in the beginning, I'm still getting used to the life here, I think I can get better gradually.
34:00	Perhaps there could be a meeting. Since we are adults we do not need to get parents involved, like in international schools. We can deal with communication problems with ourselves.
35:00	Everyone can express their own opinions in a class meeting, so that we can meet with the international students, more formal, so that students can think more seriously about what their problems are, rather than just a party.
36:00	Investigations into the situations of International graduate and undergraduate students
37:00	They think that all the students are the same, I think the biggest problem is the graduate students from china, is very small population, if you are not in the majority, they just don't care about us. They cannot just make a big program for us, because we are in the minority, such a small number of us.
38:00	We don't have that many people, so something like that won't make sense.
39:00	They don't have a specific program to help Chinese, because they put us all into one group. I hope The University can do things to get us all involved in the campus community.
40:00	Actually Fredonia is doing a lot like the American family program to help connect us to the families in the community, to help us feel better and learn more here.

Discussion and Recommendations

The four factors, based on the theoretical framework and discussed in the Results section of this paper were condensed into three general categories for the purpose of discussion and recommendations to the university: issues affecting acculturation and adjustment, interactions with peers, and ESL help.

Limitations

The researcher believed that more of the students would have agreed to direct questions regarding these topics, had they been asked in that manner. Instead, the following responses arose spontaneously from the participants through the open interview process, from the questions listed in Table 3 above. One of the limitations of this study is its brevity—only one interview was conducted with each participant, and no follow up interview was made. In other words, the method itself and the method (one semi-structured interview) could not have garnered exhaustive responses. It is entirely possible that more participants would have agreed with the following recommendations and themes in a second, follow up interview or if asked in a more structured (direct) manner.

Another limitation of this study was its small population size of eight people, and much of its findings are specific to the University in which the research was conducted. Like most qualitative research, care must be taken when attempting to generalize based on data retrieved from a small sample. Fortunately for this study and its generalizability of findings in the university in which it is located, the researcher fortunate enough to be able to interview the entire population of female Chinese graduate students in Fredonia who got their Bachelor degrees in China.

The researcher is also aware of some of the many recent changes in personnel, admission requirements, English tutoring help, and attempts to make Fredonia more welcoming to International students. A limitation of a study as this one is that there is always the potential of not incorporating recent changes which may have been important or would have affected results. Most of the recipients did not have access the benefits of these services when they were interviewed (October, 2014).

Finally, the researcher's personal connection to the subject, his life experiences in China, race, mother language, and gender may have created unintentionally created a difference in the research that another researcher conducting the same research, such as a member of the population being studied, (i.e., a Chinese female graduate student) may have been able to avoid. The concept that one's life experiences or personal characteristics (race, gender, etc.) may unconsciously or unavoidably alter qualitative data collection is known as positionality and is a common in qualitative research.

Positionality is not the same as bias, which is intentional or due to faulty design. The researcher has tried his best to avoid bias in recording and reporting data. The researcher agrees with Bourke (2014) who stated, regarding his potentiality as a White man studying the feelings of minority students in higher education, "my positionality is not a limitation . . . The research in which I engage is shaped by who I am, and as long as I remain reflective throughout the process, I will be shaped by it, and by those with whom I interact" (p. 7).

Suggestions for Future Research

The researcher believes that the opinions and an understanding off international students should be continually sought out in educational settings. In-depth qualitative studies could be done in incremental periods to see how the Chinese international graduate students feel about

their experiences in Fredonia. Other researchers could conduct similar studies with other international graduate school students perceive their experiences here in Fredonia.

Changes could be made to the questions used in order to improve the flow of the interview, and to make the process less stressful or awkward for the researcher and participant. Specifically, the researcher found that the seventh question of the framework was especially difficult to communicate to students. “How have you found that your expectations about what university classes should be like are different than your professors” (see Table 2, above) almost always needed to be explained in greater detail. Future research could do a pretest with a similar population of ESL students, such as undergraduates, before conducting the interview steps of the research.

Future research could take a more rigorous, detailed approach to the methodology, and data collection methods, including transcribing (rather than summarizing) statements, for example. This would make research more rigorous and its findings more reliable. The researcher looks forward to pursuing such a project later in his academic career.

Factors Affecting Acculturation and Adjustment

Chinese graduate students have a number of factors affecting their experiences in the US. Perhaps the greatest is language, which affects the quality and quantity of academic and social interactions. Chinese graduate students, also being away from home, have to make major life adjustments in a short period of time while adjusting to a different academic system. These adjustments include food, transportation, and cultural interactions.

Recommendation 1: Improve food choices. Four of the eight participants in this study specifically mentioned food as being an aspect of cultural adjustment that they believe the University could improve upon in order to make Chinese Graduate students more welcome. The

students could be consulted about which food items would be the most appealing. One participant (See Table 9, above), mentioned alternatives to coffee, such as “bubble tea”, which is a popular drink made of tea with milk, to which black balls of tapioca have been added. The researcher informed several of the participants of the bubble tea available in one café area of the campus, and they were pleasantly surprised. It may be a good idea to inform international students of these changes to the menu or food that is available with the international student body, through campus signs, emails, or other means.

Recommendation 2: More and consistent transportation. Transportation was mentioned by two of the eight participants (see Tables 3 and 9, above). The great majority of international students do not have their own transportation. Typically, this is not that much of an issue, at least during regular operating times for the Campus Shuttle, which makes daily trips around the Town. When the campus shuttle is off its route for holidays, students, especially those on campus, have few options. Perhaps, as suggested by Participant 7, a type of transportation or carpool email list can be put into place on campus for students to meet with people on campus (students or faculty) to go grocery shopping. This might lead to greater interactions between the Chinese students and the American campus community and, as Participant 7 said “that would be very helpful, and maybe we could make some friends”.

Recommendation 3: Increase American cultural understandings. Three of the eight participants mentioned working on campus (Participants 3, 4, and 6). They were generally positive about their interactions with their coworkers. Some were not sure about how to communicate with them, however, which echoed a common theme through many of the interviews regarding how to interact with Americans. Participants 2 and 6 mentioned a wish that the school could provide some idea about how to interact with professors or others through ESL

class or other training, such as a workshop. Participant 2 did not feel confident in her ability to communicate with English speakers (including professors) due to cultural and racial differences, which is very unfortunate. She, like a number of her fellow participants, she was also unclear about some of the cultural differences in America, citing a specific incident in which she was treated poorly in an office situation due to her misunderstandings about how interactions in that setting were expected to work.

The researcher believes that a certain amount of cultural understanding is needed by all members of staff, no matter what their positions. Those that may reasonably be expected to interact with international students, including those in Student Accounts, dining facilities, and so on, should be aware of the international community on campus. This cultural awareness should extend to behaviors that Americans might perceive as rudeness, but are culturally acceptable in other places. Participant 2's story was about how she asked a question without waiting in line first, which is actually perfectly normal in China (as the researcher can attest). No one who moves to another culture, especially for the first time, can be expected to navigate every interaction in the new environment immediately, and with complete accuracy. Orientation or ESL classes, presentations, YouTube videos or workshops regarding how to conduct oneself in America, designed by people who are familiar with China's customs and manners and delivered in a constructive, sensitive way, would be of great help to these students. This could help students build confidence which may help them build relationships in the increasingly international campus community.

Chinese International Graduate Students and American Peer Interactions

All of the eight participants had something to say about the quality and number of interactions that they were able to have with their American counterparts. They all wanted to

make American friends, but were not sure how. Others, such as Participants 2 and 7, were concerned about the quality of their interactions (superficiality for Participant 2, lack of scholarly collaboration for Participant 7). Communication with American students were seen to have a number of benefits, including an increased cultural understanding, English fluency, cultural exchanges,

The events available for international students were appreciated, but four of the eight participants believed that the programs did not automatically lead to interactions with the broader campus community. International students, according to Participants 4 and 7, break off into cliques based on nationality, and only really speak to each other; this is because of language or culture. According to Participants 2 and 7, American students do the same thing, and hesitate to interact with international students. Participant 8 summarized the situation with American and Chinese student activities by saying that the communications barriers make students feel isolated and bored.

It is the researcher's opinion that the way around communication difficulties comes from a combination of organized events and more organic, mutually beneficial programs designed to meet student needs. In other words, there should be an incentive for participation and interaction. One of these, the carpooling/transportation email/social media group is described above. Other suggestions are discussed below.

Recommendation 1: Make the purpose of lectures and events clear. All of the participants expressed a desire to know more about American culture. Participants 1, 3, 7, and 8 offered advice about how to present activities to graduate students. Specifically, two students mentioned offering explicit, detailed information about what the event was, and why it was important. Graduate students are very busy; the majority of participants mentioned the lack of

time that they had to participate in activities. They need to know and understand why things are useful. Two participants, (1 and 8) mentioned that there should be more formal, academic events regarding culture available to students to address specific problems, rather than less formal settings such as parties and casual events. These are adult, professional people, some of whom, like Participant 1 plan on attending a PhD program. According to these participants, events need to have purpose: either to instruct or to provide information, and it would be more attractive to them if that purpose were explicitly stated.

Recommendation 2: Promote events through social media. In addition to explaining the purpose and value of the events, the method that they are communicated to the students should be considered. According to Participant 7, emails are ignored, because they are impersonal. All of the students have Facebook, which is a great tool to communicate, but because of the fact that as of writing this Master's Project (winter, 2014), the Chinese government has blocked Facebook from being accessed by Chinese citizens. Some Chinese students have accounts, but rarely use them. In any case, the lack of a Facebook page for international students is unusual. The only Facebook presence regarding international students in Fredonia is for a student-run organization, and Christian church groups for the campus community. Fredonia as an institution should be involved in promoting its international students offices and organizations more through social media.

Events can be shared by groups of students using Facebook, but perhaps the best, most personalized way to address the Chinese Graduate student community specifically would be to create a WeChat account. WeChat (Weixin in Chinese) is a texting/twitter-style app that is extremely popular at the time of writing. There is little chance that a Chinese International student does not have an account. Using this free, easy to use app, an organization such as the

International Student Services office could be sure to communicate with these students in an effective, culturally relevant way that shows that they are valued, which a mass email might not be able to do. One participant also suggested that professors could be made aware of the events and pass the information along to students, face-to-face.

Recommendation 3: Offer Chinese courses, mentoring, and language exchange to campus community. Three of the eight of the participants reported that their classmates and coworkers were interested in the Chinese culture. Participants 1 and 2 wanted to have the chance to be able to use their language abilities to assist their students. Participants 5 and 8 anticipated that they would be able to take part in a language exchange or assist with a Chinese language course, but were surprised to learn that there was no such program available.

These students are aware of their language's impact on American culture and increased interest in the language, making the Chinese course's absence even more puzzling. Participants 2 and 5 believed that a language course would help students share their culture, because it would generate interest in it. To summarize the situation, the Chinese students want to exchange their languages and cultural ideas, but there is not really an organized, adult, academic forum in which they can do so. None of the participants mentioned Chinese Club as being a useful source for them.

The creation of a Chinese language course would be a welcome addition to the University's course offerings, at least from the perspective of the Chinese graduate community. A Chinese language course could utilize the help available from Chinese graduate students, who would be compensated monetarily, perhaps, but might be happy to volunteer. Others might appreciate a letter of recommendation from the University for their services, or for job experience. Education majors (those in TESOL) need to show that they are involved in the

community volunteerism for their exit Portfolios. Perhaps such a tutoring or instructional opportunity could help reach this requirement.

Another possibility for international students at the graduate level would be to create a mentoring program for first year international graduate students. The university could pair an international student with an American Graduate student for help, support, explaining the American educational system, and so on. There could be a way to incentivize this involvement, perhaps through portfolio development or resume' building, as mentioned.

Help Available in ESL and Writing

None of the participants thought that there was enough help available for International Graduate students. All participants mentioned the need for some kind of language lab or writing center. The Learning Center was consistently recognized by those who went to get help (two of the eight participants) as being of little value because it was staffed by undergraduates who typically did not understand the finer points of research, APA format, or how to write graduate-level academic work.

Recommendation 1: Understand students' expectations and experiences. All of the students expressed a desire to improve their writing ability. The general consensus among the participants was that writing compositions, more even than interactions with American peers, was the most urgent ESL need. While all students were required to take an IELTS or TOEFL score, these tests do not lead to an ability to confidently write compositions at the graduate level, and this ability should not be taken for granted.

It should also not be taken for granted that student have any ability to use ANGEL (the University's course delivery system at the time of writing). As Participant 7 mentioned, because of how different their educational experiences were to American students', nothing should be

taken for granted about their ability to understand directions for papers or how to use technology. A majority of participants reported being unfamiliar with what was expected from them in class.

While some students said that they were not used to the American style class room, they enjoyed the different, student-centered methods used to encourage them to engage with the material. However, an understanding of where the students are coming from could help them differentiate lessons, as suggested by Participant 1. Others, especially in the music department (Participants 3, 4, 7) reported that they had did not know what the professors expected of them, or that this wasn't communicated to them very clearly. Sometimes, a cultural or legal background is assumed for assignments or classroom interactions that the students have not had experience with (Participants 4, 6, 7).

Directions on how to do things like write papers, do projects, engage in online discussions, and posts on ANGEL should be explicitly taught to graduate students, simply because they typically have not had experience with these kinds of projects and assignments. As Participant 7 stated, "Professors should know more about the cultures of the international students. Assume that the students don't know anything. If you don't tell them exactly what they should do, the students have to guess". Guessing about what is required for assignment would be exasperating for anyone but, as mentioned previously, may be very disquieting for a student from a risk-avoidance culture such as China (Hung & Hyun, 2009).

Some of the music majors involved in this study stated that they were surprised that there was so much academic work necessary for their major (Participants 6 and 7); they just thought it would be about practicing and performance. All of music majors explained that while there may be some content area help at the music hall there was little help available when it came to writing for bibliographies and other research based classes; this group believed that the demands of

music, in regards to their subject's specialized vocabulary and technical aspects made general information of limited value. Graduate students who are familiar with both music and graduate level research should be sought out. Students interested in working as a tutor, or less formally as a volunteer, should be made available at the music hall, either at scheduled time or as someone students can meet with informally for help. While there is a professor available in the music department who generously provides support, and advocates for students' needs, these regular meetings are not individualized and do not involve help with composition.

Recommendation 2: Provide information in Chinese at Orientation. Plagiarism and academic integrity: these concepts are typically covered in undergraduate level courses, but it cannot be assumed that students are familiar with them, or that this material will be covered in every class (nor should it be). Some of the students in this study (such as Participant 4) were surprised to learn that plagiarism, or not citing sources would be taken so seriously in American universities.

In order to be completely confident that students are *completely* aware of the consequences and what these concepts entail, information should be provided in English and Chinese explaining them in detail. Simply having explanations available on ANGEL, in English, for example, does not guarantee that the students understand. A bilingual Chinese and English learning contract, however, would achieve this aim and have the benefit of emphasizing the importance of these concepts and setting high expectations. Other information regarding ESL help, tutoring assistance, some of the expectations that the professor has for students, and so on could be presented in Chinese as a kind of "Welcome Fact Sheet" for students to make them comfortable and welcome to the school and to make it clear that their comfort and confidence

while adjusting to the academic and social demands of their new home is a priority for the school community.

Recommendation 3: Encourage students to receive help early and often. When a writing center or more graduate student-level tutoring help is available, every professor, the international students office, and anyone involved in the education of these students need to encourage students to go as soon as possible. Merely mentioning the existence of such a program is not enough. Times and specific benefits of tutoring (not limited to writing but also to clarifying directions, how to use computer/email technology, etc.) should be brought up, often. Because this help would be available, presumably, to the entire graduate student population, professors need not hesitate to suggest it to all. Professors could, perhaps, make some kind of assignment or meeting with the Graduate tutoring office a required activity or for extra credit. Even something as simple as getting a paper signed, or a worksheet that requires help to complete might be helpful. A similar activity could be done for meetings with library staff. This type of activity would help get the students familiar with the university and its services.

It should not be taken for granted that these students will be comfortable independently going to an American student whom they do not know for help, especially in the beginning of their program (the exact time when tutoring might be most beneficial). Participant 8 explained that this was due to a sense of being stressed and tired with English; more English interaction seemed even more overwhelming. Tutoring, workshop, videos and other services should be encouraged, and a friendly welcoming academic atmosphere should be created.

Culminating Recommendations

It is his hope that the recommendations detailed above will be considered useful. Most, with the exception of the suggestions regarding food, transportation, and a writing center would

involve little or no cost. The primary investment is in time and effort spent with the goal of making the experience of cultural and academic adjustment easier for these students.

Table 11

*Recommendations to Improve the Linguistic and Cultural Experiences of Female Chinese International Graduate Students at SUNY Fredonia**

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Example</u>
Acculturation and adjustment	1) More food choices	Advertise new offerings. Involve students in taste testing. Improve stir-fry.
	2) Improve transportation during holidays and breaks.	Carpool program. Volunteers. Continue services through holidays.
	3) Promote cultural understandings among Fredonia's campus community	Workshops, conferences, or other events to build confidence in communication. Promote cultural sensitivity among all staff.
Quality and quantity of interactions	1) Make the purpose and value of presentations and activities clear.	Explicitly state value of events, such as career development, culture, etc. Professors directly promote useful events.
	2) Promote International Student events through social media.	Increased International Education presence: Twitter, Facebook, etc. Use WeChat (Twitter-type app) to invite students (email less likely to be read).
	3) Encourage interactions between American and Chinese students.	Chinese language courses with graduate student tutors or volunteers. Language exchange. Mentoring program.
Help Available for ESL and writing	1) Understanding of student experiences and expectations.	Most important: directions for activities and assignments should be given with care. Many have very limited experience writing. How to use technology and good writing for message boards, etc. also should be taught.
	2) Provide important information in Chinese and English text.	Important information: how to write papers, academic honesty, plagiarism, emergency information, etc. provided in Chinese. Bilingual "Academic Honesty" contracts. "Welcome To Fredonia" facts and info sheet.
	3) Encourage use of writing center.	Promote Graduate tutoring, early and often. Include: hours, benefits, etc. of tutoring. Create activities to incentivize going for help, such as field trips, assignments, etc.

*note: full description of recommendations is available in narrative (p. 83-93).

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