

Cross-Cultural Adaptability of Chinese Students in Ireland

--A Case Study of University College Cork

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ABSTRACT. *This research explores the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students who are studying in Ireland. The methodologies for this research are divided into two parts, questionnaires and interviews which involved 50 Chinese students from the University College Cork, Ireland, and the results are used for data collection and analysis. Research results demonstrate that the overall cross-cultural adaptation (social and cultural adaptation and mental health) of Chinese students in Ireland is at the upper-middle level, and the adaptation state is favorably related with social support and the level of cross-cultural adaptation; besides, factors such as language ability, the motivation and purpose of studying abroad, the level of intercultural communication all exert a profound effect on the cross-cultural adaptation of international students. This research, to a large extent, enriches the research of cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students studying in Ireland, and at the same time, provides conducive advice and guidance for Chinese students who are about to start their study abroad and career in Ireland.*

KEYWORDS: *Cross-cultural adaptation, Chinese overseas students, Ireland, Studying abroad*

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In recent years, the rapid development of China's economic strength, together with the increasing international influence and pressure of domestic education has made it quite common for Chinese students to study abroad. After going abroad, Chinese students' physical, social and cultural environment have undergone relatively large changes. Problems concerning cultural adaptation brought about by cross-cultural differences affect their psychology more or less. Chinese students will inevitably face a series of difficulties and problems in the aspect of cross-cultural adaptation in western countries.

1.2 Reason for Choosing the Topic

In the summer of 2019, one of the authors participated in a project from the university, and therefore was fortunate to have a two-year study abroad life at the University College Cork, Ireland. In this year of life, she learned abundant knowledge about cultural conflicts and cross-cultural adaptation. After nearly a year of study and life at the University College Cork, Ireland, she was more certain and determined about the choice of researching this topic. Especially at the rapid growth of Chinese students at the University College Cork, Ireland, today we need a better solution of life and study in Ireland in order to help them who want to understand Irish culture and living conditions as soon as possible to quickly adapt to Irish society so as to better fulfill their dreams and realize the value of life.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Historical Status of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

The concept of “acculturation” was first proposed by the American anthropologist Redfield, Ralph Linton and Melville J. Herskovits in 1936. They drafted the memorandum for the study of acculturation together. In this book, for the first time, they made a clear explanation of the concept of “acculturation” which refers to the result of communication between two groups of different cultures and cause to the cultural change. (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936). Ashford and Taylor (1990) defined “acculturation” as the process by which people adapt their behavior to an organizational environment through learning and negotiation.

2.2 Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theories

With the gradual deepening of research in the field of acculturation, the theory of “cross-cultural adaptation” has gradually emerged. cross-cultural adaptation refers to the process of improving our ability to adapt to the new cultural environment. Huge pressures caused by inadaptation and differences in the national culture.

2.3 Influencing Factors of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

2.3.1 Demographic Factors

The demographic factors in this study include gender, age, education level and length of stay in the host country. Some studies have shown that young people can adapt to new environments faster than older people as a consequence of their good receptivity. Differences in residence time in the host country can also affect cultural adaptation. The study of Caligiuri and Lazarova (2002) pointed out that in cross-cultural adaptation, women need more social support and interaction than men.

2.3.2 Intercultural Experience

It is generally believed that students who have had intercultural experience before will possess some intercultural knowledge and skills and have relatively high cultural sensitivity, which is beneficial to their cross-cultural adaptation again.

2.3.3 Social Support

Social support is very essential for the life of international students. Effective social support can help them alleviate the pressure and negative emotions caused by cross-cultural adaptation. Cobb (1976) pointed out that social support is a kind of information that can make people feel that they are loved, cared for and respected by others, what it is more, they belong to a social group that bears mutual responsibility.

2.3.4 Personality

Beginning in the 1960s, scholars began to pay attention to whether personality of individual would affect the cross-cultural adaptation. Gardner (1962) put forward the concept of “universal communicator”, pointing out that “universal communicators” have a highly integrated personality, extroverted, hold a value system that is inclusive of all values, and treat others with great cultural sensitivity, as a result these people encounter fewer obstacles when adapting to other cultures.

3. Research Design and Process

3.1 Research Methods

This research uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. In the past research, people only used qualitative or quantitative research which could not fully describe the state of cross-cultural adaptation for international students. After all, there are many differences and uncertainties among international students. Therefore, the researchers decided to use a combination of the two ways, initially, conducting a questionnaire survey among Chinese students in University College Cork then selecting five people who are studying or have already graduated from University College Cork to conduct in-depth interviews, so as to have a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of more details and psychological feedback in intercultural life. This research mainly uses literature research method, questionnaire survey and in-depth interview.

3.2 Research Questions and Assumptions

This study focuses on the following issues:

1).What is the situation of Chinese students studying in Ireland in cross-cultural adaptation?

2).How do social support factors affect the cross-cultural adaptation among Chinese students in Ireland?

3).How does personality factor affect the cross-cultural adaptation among Chinese students studying in Ireland?

4).Do demographic variables affect the cross-cultural adaptation among Chinese students in Ireland?

In order to solve the above problems, the researchers proposes the following assumptions:

Hypothesis 1: The more social support a Chinese student receives, the higher cross-cultural adaptation ability they have.

Hypothesis 2: extroversion, pleasantness, due diligence, emotional stability, openness to cross-cultural adaptation has a positive influence.

Hypothesis 3: The longer a Chinese student stays in Ireland, the higher cross-cultural adaptation ability they have.

Hypothesis 4: High level of English helps their cross-cultural adaptation and has a positive correlation.

3.3 Object of Research

The research subjects have the following conditions: (1) Chinese nationality; (2) Study in Ireland for more than 3 months; (3) International student status in Ireland; (4) Native language is Chinese while English is the second foreign language. The questionnaire is distributed to Chinese students in Ireland in the form of an electronic questionnaire. Relying on the “Wenjuanxing” website as the questionnaire platform. The Chinese students in Ireland are mainly contacted through social media such as WeChat, Facebook. In this study, a total of 50 questionnaires were returned, of which 50 were valid, and the effective recovery rate was 100%. Among the 50 valid questionnaires, 19 (38%) are boys and 31 (62%) are girls. All of them are UCC students: 10 (20%) are undergraduates, 40 (80%) are postgraduates, the length of stay in the Ireland: 2 (4%) students in Ireland for more than 3 years, 5 (10%) students in Ireland for 2-3 years, 15 (30%) students in Ireland for 1-2 years, and 28 (56%) students in Ireland for 6-12 months. 11 (22%) students had other overseas study experienced before studying Ireland. In terms of English proficiency, 30 (60%) students chose average, 15 (30%) students chose proficiency, and 5 (10%) students are beginners.

3.4 Design and Content of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire contains five parts which include demographic factors, social support, cultural adaptation, mental health adaptation and personality factor. The design process referred to the corresponding questionnaires of many intercultural

adaptability surveys, and also made further adjustments to the specific conditions among Chinese students study in Ireland.

The researchers took two ways to distribute the questionnaire. The first was to contact the classmates and friends who are studying at the University College Cork we know from Facebook page, the next was to briefly introduce the purpose of the survey before sending the questionnaire link to the WeChat group of the Chinese student in UCC, they completed the questionnaire through the Wenjuanxing online platform.

3.5 Interview Design

3.5.1 Participants

The selection of in-depth interview objects is an important part of the interview. Based on the principle of selecting the objects as comprehensively as possible and having established a good communication relationship with the participants, the researchers selected four students from the questionnaire and one person who had already graduated from University College Cork two years ago. There are two undergraduate students, two postgraduate students who had work experience in China before studying in Ireland. One is a postgraduate student after finishing the bachelor's degree in China, and the other one has already lived in Ireland for six years.

3.5.2 Interview

Before the interview, the researchers and the participants often communicated through the social media to let them fully understand the intention and purpose of the interview which also helped author know as much as possible of each participant's situation, thus creating a relaxed atmosphere for the later interview. The researchers and the participants made a appointment on a certain time for a face-to-face or online interview by Wechat with each person for one hour.

3.5.3 Interview Outline

This research was conducted from January 2020 to March 2020 in Cork, Ireland. This study uses Semi-structured in-depth interviews. Before the interview, the researchers prepared the interview outline and the demographic information questionnaire and the participants need to filled out a demographic questionnaire first, which included some basic information of the participants: age, gender, status of studying abroad, major, preparation before going abroad (language training or exam), the academic situation completed in China, the time when they came to Ireland, whether they have any cross-cultural adaptation experience in the past, and whether they plan to back to China in the future. The outline of the interview mainly collected data from three aspects: adaptation status, influencing factors of cross-cultural adaptation, adaptation strategies and suggestions.

(1) Adaptation status

Understand the participants' lives filled with difficulties and maladjustment in Ireland, involving all aspects of the clothing, food, housing, transportation and climate; the difficulties encountered in the Irish learning stage and comparison with Chinese teaching methods; whether they have experienced and how to solve it when they were in a bad mood or had a lot of pressure, and who can share with. Living in Ireland and have experienced the huge differences between Chinese and Irish culture; how to develop intercultural relationships, and the difference between Chinese and Irish friendship; participants plans for the future, etc., mainly to understand the difficulties and processes of psychological and social adaptation from all aspects of life.

(2) Influencing factors of cross-cultural adaptation

This part of the interview focuses on the factors that affect cross-cultural adaptation and comprehend whether these factors play an important role in the adaptation process of international students. For example, what is the motivation and purpose of coming to Ireland; what attracts them most in Ireland; what were their expectations and imaginations before coming to Ireland; what were the real feelings after coming to Ireland, was it different from the imagination? If so, how to overcome the psychological differences, etc.; when the participants first arrived in Ireland, how were their English levels, whether they were afraid to speak English, whether they were so nervous and how to get through the initial unfamiliar stage, etc. Through this part, we will have an in-depth understanding of the motivation of foreign students who choose to study in Ireland and their psychological state and reaction when they first arrived in Ireland.

(3) Adaptation strategies and suggestions.

In the last part of the interview, the purpose is to know the participants feelings after several years studying in Ireland. What did they acquire in these years and what were the impact on lives; how to handle the differences between Chinese and Irish Cultures. Furthermore, giving some personal suggestions for students who are going to study in Ireland.

3.5.4 Participants

For privacy reasons, real names will not be used in this thesis. All the direct quotations were translated from the Chinese transcripts. The following section will report the findings of this investigation.

1). Danny, male, 22 years old, postgraduate student. After graduating from a university in China in the summer of 2019, he went to Ireland as a postgraduate student, majoring in Civil Engineering. He decided to study abroad from his sophomore year then he took the IELTS test in his junior year. When he applied for a college, he did not focus on ranking, and instead focused on the employment development of the college. Therefore, he chose the University College Cork, Ireland. Compared with other popular countries for studying abroad, there are not

many Chinese students in Ireland. The school system lasts for one year and he had no previous experience of studying abroad. Due to his major, the local employment rate is not bad. After studying abroad, He has been studying seriously and diligently looking for an internship, however due to the situation of Coronavirus he has to back to China directly after graduation. The researchers felt he really has clear goals and works hard during the conversation. “ Life in Ireland for a year is very bitter and lonely, but I always encourage myself I will have a bright future.”

2). Eddie, male, 26 years old, postgraduate student in the summer of 2019, he began to study in Ireland after two years of work. His major is Business and Economics and as a postgraduate student this year. He had no other overseas study experiences before. He had IELTS training in China and then participated in the IELTS test. Whether to return to China in the future is still uncertain, but there is no plan to return to China at this stage. He is mature enough and has good personality. He is enthusiastic and willing to make friends, at the same time, he is a confident, thoughtful, well-planned, dare to try, not afraid of failure person. Among these participants, he is a student who is sensitive to intercultural communication and can introduce me some Irish culture he experienced from every aspect. He was living with 7 Irish students during his study in Ireland and he could get along well with them. He has applied for an internship in Ireland. In the process of finding a job, although he faced many difficulties, he always adhered to the spirit of being positive and never giving up. He has also experienced many blows, very anxious and collapsed, however he believes that as long as he can keep working hard and step by step, he will have a bright future after all.

3). Ashley, female, 28 years old, postgraduate student majoring in Nursing and Midwifery. After graduation from her university in China she was working as a nurse in a hospital in Guangzhou. She wanted to become more professional therefore she decided to study abroad after working for four years. She applied for the college in the summer of 2018 with no overseas study experience before. The second semester she began to look for internships and was working at the Cork University Dental School and Hospital for one year, the internship was temporarily ended after the outbreak. She is a serious person, conscientious and careful in her work, and has always ranked among the best in her academic study. During the interview, she said she was prepared to have more work experience in Ireland for a few more years and then back to work in China.

4). Beatrice, female, 24 years old, undergraduate. After graduating from high school, she went to Ireland to study as an undergraduate student majoring in Chemistry. She has lived in Ireland for six years and is the longest participant in Ireland in the authors' interview. This participant had excellent English level in high school and at the second grade of high school she decided to study abroad and take the IELTS test. Her has hearty, generous, optimistic character and can get well with others. Since she was only 18 years old when she went to Ireland, the initial cross-cultural adaptation was more difficult than those who studied abroad after graduating from universities. Despite the many difficulties she met, she quickly adapted to the Irish environment. For her, who has lived in Ireland for six years, she has already in a mastery stage, has a feeling of enjoyment, developed independent

attitude, behaviors and a level of competency.

5). Teresa, female, 24 years old, undergraduate, went to Ireland to study in the 2 + 2 project from her domestic university, majoring in Food and Science. Studying in Ireland is mainly as a consequence of her home university undergraduate project. She lived mainly in the group of Chinese students. Obstacles first appeared in the language, most of them can not understand the lecture, and they could not communicating with foreigners fluently. The language barrier prevented them from many social activities. However, as she continued to practise and forced herself to talk with native speakers, she gradually adapted this new environment. This girl is more cheerful and willing to communicate. Now she has gradually adapted to life in Ireland and has begun to have new plans and expectations for her future.

4. Analysis and Discussion of Research Results

4.1 Questionnaire Research Results

Through the analysis of the results of the questionnaire, we found that 63% Chinese students study related majors in science and engineering, the remaining 37% choose the majors in literature, history and arts. It can be seen that current development and construction of China still needs a lot of science and engineering talents to build the country. According to the analysis of statistical data for the purpose of studying abroad, 5% Chinese students for immigration, 75% Chinese students go to study in order to get a higher diploma and enrich their own experience, and the rest 20% Chinese students want to learn foreign languages or other reasons.

Data analysis on social and cultural adaptation shows that 82% Chinese students can quickly and harmoniously integrate into the new environment on the contrary only 17% of students think that it is a little difficult. This shows that Chinese international students have strong ability of adaptation, but only 30% of the Chinese students have good social conditions, while the social situation of the vast majority of Chinese international students is not satisfactory. In fact, it is not difficult to find out that in connection with China's traditional ideology and culture, "quiet and restrained" have become the "genes" in their bodies. Therefore, Chinese students can easily integrate into the new environment, but interpersonal social skill is indeed a challenge for them.

4.2 Interview Research Results

4.2.1 Social and Cultural Adaptation

Most of the participants experienced an obvious honeymoon period when they first arrived in Ireland. They were curious when they first got off the plane, full of longing and expectation for a new life. The surrounding environment, people and language had all changed.

“In the first week when I arrived in Ireland, I always felt in a trance not a trance for negative emotions, but an unbelievable one. I couldn't believe that I was on the streets in Cork, I couldn't believe that I was no longer in China.” (Eddie)

“When I just got off the plane, I was a little bit surprised because the school is located in a very small city. There are lots of bungalows surrounded by the airport what made me suddenly feel like I was in a rural area, but at the same time I still full of expectations for my new life.” (Danny)

When they first arrived in Ireland, language was the first obstacle they had to face. They said that even if they felt that they was able to speak English in China, they still could not understand what natives were talking about especially Irish English has a special Irish accent. Faced with these difficulties, different students also gave various ways to solve it.

“I had good English ability when I was in China but I still could not understand when I first came here, I realized it due to the lack of sensitivity to the language. As time went by, I have found that language is no longer an obstacle. I am confidence to say that I am not afraid of making mistakes. More communication should be the main reason for my adaptation.” (Ashley)

“I did not want to speak English when I first came here. I was afraid of making mistakes, and I did not know how to express myself. Even when I went to the school cafeteria I was very nervous. I just could say ‘I want this and this and this’ ... Then I made some friends from European countries when the semester started which made me gradually adapt it.” (Teresa)

Most Chinese students had language barriers when they arrived in Ireland in the first few months. This is a normal phenomenon in the process of cross-cultural adaptation. As long as they are willing to speak and work hard, they will overcome language problems. In fact these students have sufficient language learning experience in China before coming to Ireland, however there is no opportunity to use it. When they mentioned the difficulties in clothing, food, housing and transportation, all of the participants could not stop sharing. After all, it is a huge challenge to live in a country where no one can help which means they have to do everything by themselves and rely on themselves. How to make friends from the same country and support each others at this time is an important part to help them adapt the environment as quickly as possible.

“Cork's basic transportation is very poor and expensive, most of the time I have to go many places on foot. The city is also very small, and there is no place for entertainment.” (Eddie)

“I have lived in Ireland for more than six years and have been able to adapt most of things now, however the only one thing I can not stand is the climate. No matter spring, summer, autumn or winter, it is always cold and wet, with strong winds and heavy rain what is easy to make me in a bad mood” (Beatrice)

The campus life in Ireland is rich and colorful with various clubs and pubs what attract the attention of Chinese students most. This is also the most efficient way for

them to get familiar with Irish culture. In the same time it is a process of cultural integration for international students. From the complete exclusion at the beginning to the free movement between the two cultural consciousnesses, they have become intercultural people with strong cultural awareness, however the international students have suffered huge psychological challenges. But over time, they will gradually integrate into a new culture. For example, Ashley, who has been in Ireland for nearly two years, has so many European friends: “My friend circle started with Chinese students who came to Ireland together. Later, when I started internship in Cork College hospital, they were all foreigners and I felt very uncomfortable and insecure. I did not know how to communicate with foreigners and made friends with them. It seemed that there was nothing in common among us. Later, after living in a local environment for a year, I gradually adapted to communicate with foreigners. At the second year I felt that I could really integrate into the European students groups, and could truly make friends with them. I tried to have positive attitude with foreigners from the beginning, so I understand and adapt to their life style and culture faster.”

4.2.2 Academic Adaptation

A large part of the Chinese students lives in Ireland is to complete their studies. In addition to facing language barriers and cultural differences, they must also learn how to adapt to completely different Western education systems and methods. As we all know, there are huge differences between the Chinese and Western education methods, assessment methods and learning methods.

“Irish universities are not as easy as universities in China. The courses in Irish universities are very heavy. There are many projects that require everyone’s participation. Exams also rarely memorize things but are extremely flexible.” (Teresa)

It can be seen from the interview that the courses in Ireland have huge part of students’ participation and teacher-student interaction. Although the academic load is heavy, participants said they really learned a lot from lectures. The students strongly claimed that the language ability directly determines the effect of communication with classmates and teachers. Many times the frustration of learning comes from not being able to make others understand them well.

4.2.3 Psychological Adaptation

In the process of the interview, the researchers found that these five students began to experience strong negative emotions and psychological pressure when they first arrived in Ireland for about half a year. After the initial honeymoon period, the sense of freshness receded, replaced by the alienation of the national culture and the inability to truly integrate into the culture of the host country.

“Looking back now, I was extremely depressed in the first year of Christmas. During the Christmas holidays I felt lonely and bored. Due to cultural differences I can not really feel the joy of Christmas and at the time I had already been abroad for

half a year. I often thought a lot whenever all is quiet in the dead of night. At that time, I was dying to talk with about my emotions and problems with parents and my friends in China, I was gradually out of depression and negative mood thanks to their help. "(Danny)

"I flew back to China in the first winter vacation what to a certain extent relieved my emotional discomfort. With the encouragement of my parents and my friends, I felt relaxed." (Teresa)

4.2.4 Influence of Cross-Cultural Adaptation Factors on Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Talking about the motivation and purpose of studying in Ireland, most of the students mentioned the level of Irish higher education, what is more, good natural, cultural environment and so on. One of the most important points is that everyone feels the atmosphere of freedom in Ireland. Teresa came to Ireland because of her home university "2 + 2" project. At that time, the reason why she planned to study abroad was that most of her friends chose to study abroad. She preferred Ireland, and with the help of the school project finally successfully studied in Ireland. Most students still want to take advantage of their youth to look at the outside world, increase their knowledge, and enrich their life experience. As a result of these students knew their purposes and goals before going abroad, they have been working hard to achieve their goals after going abroad. Compared with students who did not know why they studied abroad, their cross-cultural adaptation abilities would be faster and better.

4.2.5 Gains from Studying Abroad and Suggestions for Future Students

Talking about the gains from studying in Ireland in the past few years and the ideals for your life, everyone has a lot of thoughts. "Although I have only been in Ireland for nearly two years, these two years have really changed me a lot, they expanded my horizon, my ability to handle things has been greatly improved, my mind has become more mature, although I know that I will meet many difficulties again in the future, I am confident to overcome them." (Ashley)

4.3 Discussion of Research Results

This research analyzed 50 questionnaires filled by Chinese students studying in Ireland, mainly investigating the correlation between cross-cultural adaptation and social support, multicultural personality and demographic factors. Subsequent interviews primarily discussed the adaptation process of five Chinese students studying in Ireland, psychological changes in the process and overall feelings and gains from studying in Ireland.

4.3.1 Cross-Cultural Adaptation Status of Chinese Students Studying in Ireland

Conclusion 1: Research results demonstrate that the overall cross-cultural

adaptation (social and cultural adaptation and mental health) of Chinese students in Ireland is at the upper-middle level

4.3.2 Relationship between Social Support and Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Conclusion 2: Social support has a significantly positive correlation with the level of cross-cultural adaptation, the more social support an international student receives, the higher the level of cross-cultural adaptation.

In a completely unfamiliar environment, support from the outside world is undoubtedly important and positive for international students. Getting support from local people in life will help them better understand Irish culture; counseling from classmates and teachers in learning will help them adapt to Western teaching methods as soon as possible; talking with friends and parents will relieve psychological pressure and loneliness in a foreign country.

In short, social support comes from all aspects, and all of them have played an especially active role in international cultural adaptation of international students.

4.3.3 Relationship between Multicultural Personality and Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Conclusion 3: Multicultural personality and cross-cultural adaptation have a positive correlation. Among them, emotional stability is significantly positively associated with the social and cultural adaptation and mental health of international students. Openness can affect the social and cultural adaptation of international students.

During the interview, five international students believed that five factors were positively linked to the level of cross-cultural adaptation: cheerful personality, positive and outgoing students will have a relatively strong ability to adapt to the environment, emotional stability and flexible personality when faced with difficulties and setbacks, the adjustment will be faster and easier to recover. Students with strong social initiative will pay more attention to intercultural communication with people around them. In this way, the adaptation process will be faster.

4.3.4 Influence of Demographic Factors on Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Conclusion 4: English ability is significantly linked to the level of cross-cultural adaptation of foreign students.

The analysis results from questionnaire or interview show that English ability significantly affects the level of cross-cultural adaptation of international students. In life, proficient English can enable international students to express their ideas accurately and thus they can integrate into local life faster without joining in diverse social activities.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this research is to understand the cross-cultural adaptation status of Chinese students in Ireland, investigate their difficulties in cross-cultural adaptation, and study factors that affect cross-cultural adaptation, in order to explore strategies to help them adapt to Irish life quickly so that future Chinese students studying in Ireland are able to get information earlier, and develop their study abroad life better and faster.

This chapter first and foremost summarizes research conclusions, and then puts forward some suggestions for future students studying in the United States, research limitations and research prospects for future research are also presented at the end of this paper.

5.1 Research Results

Conclusions obtained from the quantitative analysis questionnaire are as follows:

- 1).A positive correlation exists between social support and the level of cross-cultural adaptation.
- 2).Multicultural personality is positively correlated with the level of cross-cultural adaptation.
- 3).The length of staying in Ireland is related to the level of cross-cultural adaptation positively.
- 4).Language ability is positively related to the level of cross-cultural adaptation.
- 5).The cross-cultural adaptation (socio-cultural adaptation and mental health) of Chinese students in Ireland is at the upper middle level, and the adaptation status is particularly excellent.

Conclusions obtained from the qualitative analysis in-depth interviews are as follows:

- 1).The motivation and purpose of studying abroad affect students' cross-cultural adaptation. Students with a clear purpose reveal a faster cross-cultural adaptation.
- 2).Language ability tremendously influences the cross-cultural adaptation of international students.
- 3).The level of intercultural communication affects the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students.
- 4).Studying in Ireland produces a huge impact on their life and character.

In summary, these conclusions answer and validate questions and hypotheses raised at the beginning of the study. At the same time, research results may provide some information and references for the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students studying in Ireland in the future.

6. 2 Suggestions for Future Students Studying in Ireland

1) Strengthen language learning and improve English abilities

People should fully realize the significance of language before going abroad. As reflected from interviews and questionnaires, language ability plays a crucial role in cross-cultural adaptation. Many students are accompanied with inferiority and negative emotional reactions because of communication barriers in the early stage of studying abroad, which seriously affected their life and study status.

2) Improve cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural adaptation skills by means of receiving cultural adaptation training

There is a huge difference in Chinese and Western cultures, Chinese students should attach great importance to getting acquainted with Irish cultural and social customs, communication ways before going abroad. Furthermore, the participation in intercultural knowledge training can effectively improve students' intercultural knowledge and skills. Chinese colleges with exchange programs can set up training courses to assist Chinese students to have a deeper understanding of the differences between China and Ireland, and master sufficient intercultural knowledge. Students generally deem that they have attended some intercultural classes which can provide strong theoretical support for their cross-cultural adaptation.

3) Understand the differences of teaching and learning culture between China and Ireland, and accordingly adjust learning methods

Students should adjust their learning methods and habits, actively take part in group study discussions, communicate more with teachers and classmates, express their views and integrate into the learning atmosphere of the class as soon as possible.

4) Maintain an optimistic spirit

All international students had experienced the stage of cultural shock, difficulties and frustrations in language, study, life and psychology in Ireland. Students should have strong confidence that these difficulties will finally be overcome through their perseverance and hard work.

6.1 Research Limitations and Prospects

This paper primarily studies the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students in Ireland through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. However, owing to limitations of survey resources and research methods, this paper still has many deficiencies and needs further research and improvement in the future. To start with, because of the Coronavirus outbreak during the investigation, many Chinese students returned to China, which made it difficult to collect questionnaires, leading to a small number of sample questionnaires, as a result, many projects may not have objective and comprehensive response problems, which limits the reliability and representativeness of the sample. It is recommended that later studies pay attention to extending the period of collecting questionnaires, and adopting more ways to expand the sample size. In addition, due to the epidemic situation, the researchers

can only interview international students in the form of video chat from WeChat. Such interviews are difficult to conduct, which greatly limits the number of interviewees. It would be better if future research can achieve all face-to-face interviews if possible, thereby making the interview the sample content more in-depth and comprehensive. Future research can supplement and re-modify the content and quality of the topic so as to better strengthen the relationship between response variables and cross-cultural adaptation.

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