Acclimating Acculturation of the International Students in the USA

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Abstract: Each year, universities in the United States receive a high number of students from different countries globally. Most of these students underestimate the challenges they could encounter while in the United States. The main goal of this essay is to examine the complex components of acculturation and shine light on important ideas that prospective international students should be fully aware of before they travel. This study will thus examine the methods used by overseas students to deliberately familiarize themselves to the American culture, language, and traditions, thereby enhancing their intellectual prowess and personal development. In order to determine the issues faced by international students at the University level in terms of acculturation, an online survey was conducted in the context of foreign students studying in the US, with a particular emphasis on students within educational institutions where English is the primary language of teaching.

The data was collected and analyzed on Minitab for possible correlations between questions that were related to the three hypotheses guiding the study. The first hypothesis proposed that students who can communicate well with native and non-native speakers are likely to learn the language and acculturate faster. This hypothesis was accepted based on the statistical analysis conducted on the data. The second hypothesis argued that students who do good research about the university and are prepared mentally will adapt to the situation more easily than those who do not. This hypothesis was rejected based on the statistical analysis conducted on the data. The final hypothesis proposed that students who are more open toward the host country's culture will eventually adjust better. This hypothesis was accepted. This study concluded that proficiency in the host country language and cultural tolerance lowered the probability of getting acculturative stress. From the study's findings, it was proposed that Universities should increase opportunities for international students to socially interact with students and citizens of the host country to make them more tolerant to the host country's culture.

Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the most important components of successfully adjusting when studying abroad is cultural acculturation. Notably, inadequate English proficiency presents a substantial barrier for overseas students, negatively affecting their success in school as well as in their personal and professional lives (Darwish, 2015). International students frequently experience difficulties acclimating to American culture in the areas of education, interpersonal relationships, and society. These difficulties lead some people to look for relocation to other states where they can discover communities with comparable cultures, friends, or family in an effort to establish a more comfortable setting. According to Berry and John (1997) acculturation refers to the psychological and cognitive changes that people experience as they interact with various cultures. This research intends to explore how international students deal with acculturation difficulties and the methods they use to do so, revealing potential areas for development. The knowledge gained from this study

project is meant to provide helpful advice for overseas students, easing the process of acculturation inside the United States.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Every year, a sizable influx of students travel to the United States in an effort to advance their professional knowledge, linguistic skills, and intellectual power with the overall objective of promoting improvement back in their own countries. By 2015, there were an astonishing 7 million students studying abroad, a stunning increase in the trajectory of international education (Hoover, 2015). This scholastic journey is not without its difficulties, particularly those related to acculturation, where students must deal with complex problems involving economy, education, culture, and religion.

International students frequently find themselves at a crossroads of acculturation upon arrival in the United States, traveling through a complex web of adjustments and adaptations. These difficulties range widely, touching on topics like education, cultural assimilation, religious beliefs, language quirks, and economics. Some international students experience emotional distress, which prompts them to seek solace by transferring to universities where a semblance of familiarity awaits—be it in the form of friends, family, or a community representing their home country. While many international students diligently prepare themselves to anticipate and overcome potential obstacles during their stay in the US, some encounter emotional distress.

Berry (1997) explains a key acculturation phenomenon in which people may actively choose to uphold the ethos of their home culture (C1) while rejecting the dominant culture of the host country (C2). Some overseas students use this intentional decision as a coping strategy as they struggle to strike the right balance between assimilating into the new culture and holding on to their heritage. Additionally, Schumann's model of acculturation emphasizes the crucial roles that social and physiological elements play in the complex process of acculturation. Notably, the fundamental differences in cultural norms and behaviors that exist among countries account for the majority of this occurrence. Understanding how these differences are successfully negotiated in the context of acculturation serves as the main focus of this study's investigation and sheds light on the coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies used by international students in their quest for comprehensive acculturation.

Language learning, cultural comprehension, social integration, and academic norm adjustment are only a few of the complex variety of experiences that make up acculturation (Ward & Masgoret, 2004). It includes a number of significant aspects, each of which is essential to the acculturation process. Acculturation entails a comprehensive adjustment to a new cultural milieu, encompassing vital dimensions. Language acquisition stands at its core, extending beyond linguistic proficiency to include a grasp of idiomatic expressions and communication styles specific to the culture. Adept language acquisition underpins effective communication, academic excellence, and seamless social integration. Equally crucial is cultural understanding, delving into values, beliefs, customs, and social norms, deciphering the intricacies of interpersonal dynamics, gestures, and etiquettes.

Moreover, acculturation emphasizes social integration, fostering a sense of belonging by actively participating in community events, forming relationships, and engaging in social activities. Integration into the social fabric is instrumental in navigating the new culture with ease. Finally, adapting to academic norms is paramount, entailing a thorough grasp of the educational system, teaching methodologies, grading criteria, and academic expectations. Successful acculturation hinges on aligning study habits, time management, and learning approaches with the academic culture, essential for achieving academic milestones. These dimensions collectively define the journey of acculturation, shaping a holistic and meaningful integration into a new cultural landscape.

1.3 Statement of Purpose

The goal of this study is to investigate the several factors that prevent overseas students from blending in easily. While a sizable influx of students look to the United States for higher education

possibilities, some misjudge the difficulties they will face once there. The main goal of this essay is to examine the complex components of acculturation and shine light on important ideas that prospective international students should be fully aware of before they travel. It is interesting that while students who have access to scholarships may be able to lessen some hardships, other students may have a harder time adjusting.

According to Schumann's 1997 acculturation hypothesis, the process of acculturation is sped up by forging strong ties with the host country's culture. This essay will carefully examine the methods used by overseas students to deliberately try to become more used to American culture, language, and traditions, thereby enhancing their intellectual prowess and personal development. Berry's seminal study, published in 1997, classified the many aspects of acculturation into four separate approaches: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. This essay will carefully examine how these divisions might act as pillars of support for international students as they assimilate into American culture. A crucial goal of this essay is to examine the acculturation process and determine whether the two models that have been presented fall short of accurately describing the entire acculturation process.

1.4 Research Question

Focusing on the international student's main acculturation issues following research question was created.

➢ What are the issues faced by international students at the University level in terms of acculturation?

1.5 Order of Presentation

There are six chapters in the study. The introduction will come first, then the literature review. The methods of data collection and the study participants will be discussed in Chapter 3. Data will be evaluated in chapter 4, and chapter 5 will include a detailed discussion of the findings. Chapter 6 will provide a summary of the entire thesis, along with limits and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction.

Cultural acclimation is an important part of adapting to life while studying abroad. Lack of English Proficiency represents a significant barrier for international students to become academically, personally, and professionally successful (Darwish, 2015). Students who come to the US face acculturation difficulties: such as educational, relationship, and with societal norms. These difficulties cause them to transfer or move to different states where they have their own culturally similar communities or friends and family. Acculturation can be thought of as the psychological and mental adjustments that people make as they interact with different cultures. (Berry and John, 1997). This study will investigate how international students are dealing with acculturation in the US.

2.1 Acculturation

Acculturation is the process of assimilating into a new culture, which has an impact on one's health, eating habits, and level of activity (Allen et al., 2014). In terms of language, an individual can learn a language but still can be in confusion during a conversation with native people as he/she is not aware of the social norms of the host country. Traditions, social interactions, media, cultural beliefs, and behavioral preferences are all aspects of acculturation. According to Brown (2007) culture is the ideas, customs, skills, arts, and the tools that help shape the character of a group of people. Over a period of time, a group of people can adapt to a new culture if they pay attention to things like traditions, social interactions, media, cultural beliefs, and behavioral preferences. Even though this is a continuous process and for some people it takes time, specifically for people who are from a conservative society. Another thing is that, sometimes the host country's culture also changes (Robinson-Stuart and Nocon, 1996). There is a fact about language that language is inherently

social, and it can be different even in the same country (Holmes & Wilson, 2022) and it is also similar with culture that culture is changeable. Culture is a comprehensive system of overt and covert patterns that includes many aspects of life, including ideas, customs, and behaviors, (Diaz-Rico and Weed, 2006). Patterns that are passed down through shared experiences created by families and societies are referred to as implicit patterns, (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006).

2.2 Second Language Acquisition

Acculturation, according to Schumann, is the process of a student becoming socially and psychologically assimilated into the community that speaks the target language. Second language acquisition, (SLA) is one component of this process, and the rate at which it occurs depends on the learner (Schumann, 1978). So, more involvement with L2 creates more space to acculturate. It is obvious that social norms of the US are different than many Asian, middle eastern and African countries. For individuals from different cultures and regions, the acculturation model of Schumann, 1978 is well known and better understood. In 1978 Schumann ran a study on a 33-year-old Alberto who came to the US from Costa Rico. It was a 10-month long case study where Alberto's activity was extensively observed. The study revealed that Alberto was not showing enough improvement compared to his stay in the US. Seeing this, Schumann started investing what is hindering Alberto from the acquisition of English language. Schumann found that Alberto was living in an environment that belongs to his home country's people. He was living with his home country community. He had less connection with English community, culture, and people. His dominant language was L1 which was supposed to be English, his target language. That is what was affecting his language acquisition and brought his language acquisition to a halt (Ataullah Nuri, 2018). Following acculturation model was the result of his investigation about the role of culture and language in acculturation.

Schumann's research on Alberto found a link between language acquisition and acculturation.

According to Schumann's acculturation theory, social factors include eight sub factors: 1) Social Dominance, 2) Integration Pattern, 3) Enclosure, 4) Cohesiveness, 5) Size, 6) Cultural Congruence, 7) Attitude, 8) Intended Length of Residence.

Social dominance: It accounts the extent of equality between the target language country and guest language country. If the learner group is politically, culturally, technically, or economically dominant or inferior to the host language group, among these two groups social connection won't be enough to learn target language. For example, a learner from conservative society to an open and free mixing society will take time and self-motivation to engage with the people and culture. Secondly, if the social status is almost equal among the learner's group and host group, then there will be more contact among the two groups and as a result acculturation of the host country will be faster. To cite an example, international students from European countries tent to acculturate faster than Asian, middle eastern, and African students (Schumann, 1978).

Integration Pattern: In order to learn a second language, the best way is considered when learner takes into account with the host culture. Second best way is when L2 learner group try to adapt with the target language for only communication but do not assimilate the culture. Lastly, when a learner group wants to be separated from host culture and people and it is the unfavorable setting for learning the intended language (Schumann, 1978).

Enclosure: The degree to which learner group share social institutions such as: schools, churches, mosques, workplaces, clubs, and many other things. The more they share, the easier it gets for the learners' group in terms of acquisitions (Schumann, 1978).

Cohesiveness: The learner group tends to stay together as we have seen earlier. The smaller and less cohesive the learner group, the more chances the interaction with the host group and faster the process of learning target language and culture (Schumann, 1978).

Size: The likelihood of intragroup communication increases significantly with increasing learner group size. On the other hand, if the size of the learner's group is smaller then, the situation is opposite and contact between outer group is (Schumann, 1978).

Cultural Congruence: It refers to the similarities between the learner's group and host's group culture. The more similar the culture groups are the more likely to have social contact and as a result much faster acquisition (Schumann, 1978).

Attitude: Refers to the attitude towards the target language group whether learner group have a positive attitude towards host culture or not. For instant, people from North Korea's attitude towards the USA and people from Japan's attitude towards the USA are not same. Japanese learners are less likely to fail in language and culture acquisition while learners from North Korea will hardly make it (Schumann, 1978).

Intended Length of Residence: If the learner group intends to live longer time in the host environment, it is more likely that they will feel the need of learning host culture and language. Learners staying for a short period of time are less likely to adopt the host community's language and norms (Schumann, 1978).

Above mentioned factors indicate how important it is to engage with social factors to learn a language and the culture. Their acculturation and subsequent second language learning are significantly impacted by the significant social distance between the host group and the target language speakers and culture.

2.3 Psychological Distance

Schumann's study on Alberto also found psychological distance from target language. Psychological distance is also involved with the comfortlessness of a learner's surrounding social factors. Psychological distance can hamper several ways that can even stop them from taking full advantage of the social elements. He divided psychological factors into four sub-factors (language shock, cultural shock, motivation, and ego permeability) and they are elaborated below:

2.3.1 Language Block

The concept of "language shock" is a recognized phenomenon in the realm of second language acquisition (SLA). When learners encounter a new language, they often experience confusion and disorientation due to the unfamiliar structures, syntax, and phonetics. This initial difficulty is well-documented in literature that explores the challenges faced by foreign language learners. One prominent work in the field is Gass, S., & Selinker, L. (2008). This source delves into the cognitive and affective aspects of language acquisition, shedding light on the complexities of adapting to a new linguistic system. Learners may find themselves grappling with grammar rules, sentence formations, and pronunciation variations, contributing to the language shock phenomenon.

2.3.1.1 Cognitive and Affective Aspects

When people face language shock, it means they have to adjust their thinking a lot. This is because learning a new language involves changing the way their minds work to understand a different structure of words and sentences. It's not just about thinking; it's also about feelings. Learning a new language can bring up emotions like frustration, feeling unsure, and even being scared of making mistakes. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2013) talked about this in their work. They looked at the psychological side of learning a language, focusing on how our emotions play a big role in the process. Understanding how our feelings can affect learning is important, especially when we're just starting to learn a new language.

2.3.1.2 Overcoming Language Shock

To get used to a new language, it's important to use a variety of methods. One way is to be around the language a lot – like talking with native speakers and using materials that are real and natural. Lightbown and Spada (2013) talked about this in their work. They explored good strategies for learning a language, saying that being surrounded by the language and talking with people who

speak it are key to getting comfortable with it. This helps create a supportive environment for learning. Understanding how language shock works is super important for both teachers and students. It helps them figure out the best ways to teach and learn a new language, especially in the beginning stages.

2.3.2 Cultural Shock in Cross-Cultural Adaptation

When someone goes to a new place with a different culture, they often face a big challenge known as "culture shock." This means feeling stressed, anxious, fearful, and confused because everything is so different – the way people do things, what's considered normal, and what's expected. In 1960, Oberg, in his important work, talked about this and explained how people go through stages of getting used to a new culture. He also looked at how people emotionally react to encountering a new culture. Another helpful source is the work by Ward, Bochner, and Furnham in 2001. They looked at the psychological side of culture shock, giving ideas on how people can deal with stress and anxiety while adjusting to a new culture. Understanding these challenges is crucial for anyone facing a new cultural environment.

2.3.2.1 Navigating Challenges and Building Resilience

Recognizing and dealing with language and cultural shock is really important for teachers, counselors, and students. There are helpful ways to tackle these challenges, like making supportive spaces, promoting understanding of different cultures, and giving useful tools for adapting well. In their 2013 work, Lightbown and Spada talk about good language learning strategies. They say that immersing yourself in the language and interacting with others are key to overcoming language shock. Another useful source is Berry's work from 2005. He shares smart ideas on how to adjust to a new culture successfully, building strength and skills for understanding different cultures better.

2.3.4 Motivation

The remaining two psychological factors as motivation and ego permeability. Motivation can be defined as the inspiration behind learning a language could be prestige, career, religion, and many others. A major factor in the process of acquiring a language is motivation. Without a clear understanding of the connection between motivation and language acquisition, language teachers are unable to teach a language in an efficient manner (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011). A person's inherent aims and ambitions, sometimes referred to as passion, are the fundamental source of motivation. Proficient learners possess self-awareness regarding their inclinations, abilities, and shortcomings, and manage to leverage their advantages and offset their disadvantages. The learner's passion is correlated with successful language acquisition (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011). In order to make progress and stay motivated to learn a language, learners require high-quality education, input, engagement, and opportunities for meaningful output (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011). Thus, in addition to discovering methods to integrate intrinsic motivational elements into the classroom, a skilled teacher must also be able to access external motivational sources. This is especially critical when students consider passing exams to be the only reason they need to learn English right now. It is crucial for teachers to recognize the requirements and goals of their students and to create effective motivational techniques because different students have various reasons for studying a language (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011). It is important for students to comprehend the reasons behind exerting effort, the duration of an activity, the level of difficulty involved, and the motivation behind pursuing their goals.

2.3.5 Ego Permeability

Ego Permeability on the other hand is the capability of being involved with a new culture and community in connection with joining a new speech society. Ego-permeability, or a learner's lack of inhibition and "openness to TL input," is the last emotive aspect Schumann addresses (Schumann, 1986). Once more, a lot of this is agreed upon before a student even walks into the classroom. By facilitating role-playing exercises where students pretend to be someone else, a teacher can help pupils develop ego-permeability.

According to the above-mentioned factors, it can be said that inadequate engagement with target language may result in slow or low acculturation, and they are always stuck at the primary level of acquisition.

Some scholars have conducted tests based on Schumann's acculturation theory to determine whether or not his model is accurate. Graham and Brown (1996) ran a study in a small town in Mexico on native Spanish speakers who could speak like native like English. Questions based on Schumann's acculturation model were asked to everyone who could speak fluent English. The study's findings did match several of Schumann's acculturation model's elements. They gained native like English proficiency mainly for three reasons: 1) they enjoyed friendly relationships with their English-speaking peers and friends; 2) they had a good attitude toward the English language and its traditions; 3) they had assistance from the school that provided Spanish and English language help.

A study by Golden (1978) found that cultural backgrounds play a vital role in acculturation. The aim of the research was to determine if diverse cultural backgrounds have the same underlying personality structure. Cattell's 16PF was used as a research method in this research. 101 Caucasian or European & 116 Japanese ancestry were the subject of the research at the University of Hawaii & all were undergraduate students. Each student was tested in the 196768 Edition of the 16PF (Form A) published by the Institute for Personality & Ability. The factor structure for the Japanese was significantly different from that of the Caucasian group. That means American Japanese Ancestry (AJA) were behind adopting culture in Hawaii. On the other hand, The Caucasian results did not differ from those reported by Cattell and his associates. So, American European Ancestry (AEA) did better than AJA in the cross-cultural diversity of the Hawaiian Island.

Berry's Model on acculturation

Schumann's concept made a distinction between two acculturation types. In Type 1, The individual fits into society by making friends with L2 speakers who can offer him guidance while still upholding the values and customs of his own culture. This is similar to Berry's (2004) ideas of motivation. Berry divided acculturation factors into four sub-factors: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. They are discussed below:

Integration: Integration occurs when individuals adopt target language yet maintain their own (biculturalism).

Assimilation: It happens when the learner group gives more priority to acquire the culture, language and norms of the target language more than their host country's.

Separation: Separation happens when the individual rejects the host country's culture and language in favor of preserving their own countries.

Marginalization: Worst factor for a learner is when marginalization takes place. It occurs when individuals reject both target language group and own language group.

Berry's classification allows for the potential of little to no contact between groups, however both of Schumann's categories need that the learner and members of the target culture have social contact.

Keeping Schumann and Berry's model of acculturation in place, this paper also wants to see some other studies that found similarities and dissimilarities as well. A study by Rivas et al., (2019), aimed to find out international students' experience and their sense of belonging on an American college campus and their role in it. This study was conducted by interviews & qualitative data was collected. Research method added two questions that is what factors impact international students' sense of belonging and connectedness with American students; and what are international students' perceptions of culture and social interaction in America. 17 international students from various educational levels and ethnicities were interviewed among them 10 were males and 7 were females. The result showed the Americans having a sense of superiority, they are conservative, and they are hard to develop close relationships with. Also, international students had a closer connection with international peers since they could understand each other. Even the participants found different

education systems in the US. Faculty and staff are also responsible for fostering a culture of learning that is meaningful and for creating long-term comprehensive strategies to gain a more profound understanding of the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the students they teach and advise (Glass et al., 2015).

Negative contacts may be more destructive to a person's psychological well-being (Lincoln, 2000). Learner individual once having negative feedback trying to interact with the host culture and people will hardly try again to communicate in future. It can be included that the attitude towards the learner group should be positive and co-operative from host language culture as well. Otherwise, it is more likely that the learner group will either stay with their community member or will seek friendship with similar groups who are struggling. As a result, it can delay or lower their acculturation process. It is tough to create a social connection with the USA people mainly for international students who face cultural differences (Trice, 2004).

Another study by Williams & Johnson, (2011) aimed to understand the lack of cross-cultural social reciprocity from U.S. students at a mid-sized Southern university. Also, they looked at how students' multicultural personality traits, intercultural attitudes, and multicultural experiences, such taking a study abroad course, varied between those with and without international friendships. Participants were aged between 18 to 27 years and among them 28men & 52women in total 80 students. This study used The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) (Zee & Oudenhoven, 2000) to describe behavior when one is interacting with people from different cultures. MPQ included 5 personality factors: cultural empathy, open-mindedness, emotional stability, social initiative, and flexibility. The result showed 43% of participants had one or more international friends and 57% had not any international friends. Students with international friends had higher open mindedness than those without. The second hypothesis, that individuals with international friendships reported lower degrees of fear in intercultural situations than participants without foreign student ties, is supported by the data about levels of intercultural communication apprehension. In addition to improving U.S. students' global competency and sensitivity, programs that promote openness and lessen apprehension will also increase the likelihood that international students will obtain vital American social support, (Williams & Johnson, 2011).

2.4 Conclusion

The US is a study hub for millions of students around the world. All the largest companies of the world like: Apple, Google, Amazon, Ford and many others are located here. It is a multicultural country where students tend to gather practical knowledge for their future life. In the process of doing it, they face many challenges in acclimating acculturation. It could have been quite easy on them if they knew and prepared themselves mentally and physically before coming. Some facts like culture, language, group size, norms, willingness to communicate with host people could make it easy.

This paper tried to find out some of the factors that could be major issues for international students in acculturation. Well established and world-renowned researchers like Schumann and Berry's models were discussed. Also, some other researchers ran research based on their model. Result showed that there are similarities, and their model was effective in terms of acculturation. Additionally, apart from Schumann and Berry, some other topics were also introduced about acculturation where host group also had some responsibilities to help learner group and acculturate them better.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

Cultural acculturation is one of the most crucial elements of making a good adjustment when studying abroad. A significant hurdle to success in school as well as in one's personal and professional life for international students, according to (Darwish, 2015) is a lack of English language skills. However, in terms of education, interpersonal interactions, within their host society, international students frequently struggle to adapt or acculturate to American culture. To create a

more comfortable environment, these challenges prompt some people to search for migration to other states where they can find communities with similar customs, friends, or family. Acculturation is defined by (Berry and John, 1997) as the psychological and cognitive changes that people go through as they encounter each other. To identify potential areas for improvement, this study aims to investigate how international students deal with acculturation challenges and the strategies they employ. The information gleaned from this research effort is intended to offer beneficial guidance for international students, facilitating the process of American acculturation.

3.1 Setting

The study was conducted through an online survey. As an online survey the local setting that each participant used is unknown, however the global setting is within the context of foreign students studying in the US, with a particular emphasis on students within educational institutions where English is the primary language of teaching. This made it possible for the study to focus on how foreign students acclimated to an environment where English was the main language of communication. The participants were foreign students who had enrolled in academic programs that were predominantly conducted in English and had attained a specific level of language competency. This made it possible for the study's criteria to be in line with the context of acculturation experiences in an academic environment where English is the primary language, offering insightful information about how foreign students adjust to and acculturate inside the American educational system.

3.2 Participants

The study focused on foreign students who were pursuing different academic levels in the US. The participants ranged in age from early 20s to mid-30s and included both male and female students. During their study abroad experiences in the United States, all individuals actively participated in acculturation processes for varied lengths of time. They came from various cultural and linguistic origins and represented many nations. Their ability to successfully negotiate the linguistic and academic aspects of acculturation depended on their proficiency in English. The study also included participants from different states around the U.S as will be seen in the following section to capture a diverse range of experiences and viewpoints in the participants' journeys to adapt to American culture and the educational system.

3.3 Instruments

The research employed a quantitative approach utilizing survey methodology. The survey, consisting of a total of 24 questions, commenced by verifying the participant's status as an adult international student. The questions encompassed two main sections: background information and the survey inquiries. In the consent segment, participants confirmed their comprehension of the study's objectives and expressed their willingness to partake in the survey. The background questionnaire (c.f. Appendix A for a complete copy of the survey questions) delved into pivotal aspects such as age, nationality, time of arrival in the US, and their accommodation specifics. Following this, the survey delved into content-related questions. The subsequent set of questions (6 to 9) sought insights into students' preferences and their residential choices within the university vicinity. These questions fall under the category of social preferences and cultural integration. It aims to understand the extent to which an individual has formed friendships with people from their home country. The response options provide a range from strong agreement to strong disagreement, allowing respondents to express the intensity of their experiences. The question is likely included in a survey to gather insights into the social dynamics and cultural connections of the respondent within their living or social environment.

Questions 10 to 13 probed their pre-departure preparations and the extent of research conducted about their respective universities in the US. The subsequent set of questions focused on their engagement with university activities as a means to acculturate themselves to the US culture. These questions are designed to assess the respondent's comfort level in communicating with American individuals. It reflects aspect of cross-cultural communication and adaptation within the U.S.

environment. Question 12 and 13 are: "12. I was mentally/psychologically prepared before coming here." & "13. I feel comfortable talking to American people and students". The response options allow the respondent to express the degree to which they feel at ease interacting with American people and students. In the context of U.S. culture, effective communication and social interaction are crucial for a positive experience. These questions help gather insights into the respondent's cultural adjustment and their ability to engage with the local community. It is relevant for understanding how well individuals feel integrated into the U.S. culture and how comfortable they are in cross-cultural communication.

Questions 14 and 15 pertained to their perceptions of the university's services and their initial reception by the institution. These questions pertain to the respondent's satisfaction with the services provided by the international admission office of their institution. Question 14 & 15 are: "14. I am satisfied with the service of my institution's international admission office." & "15. I feel orientation provided me with information I needed to be successful." It is relevant in the context of evaluating the support and assistance that international students receive during the admission process. The Likert scale allows respondents to express the intensity of their satisfaction. It is crucial for institutions to understand the level of satisfaction among international students with the admission office services to continually improve and tailor their support mechanisms.

Questions from 16 to 18 revolved around the accessibility of the university and the local weather conditions. These questions aim to assess the respondent's overall satisfaction with their university's community and living environment. The Likert scale allows the respondent to express the degree to which they enjoy residing in the community. Question 17 & 18 are "17. I find it easy to navigate/get around my community." & "18. I like the weather here." It delves into the social and environmental aspects of the university's location. In the U.S. culture, the experience of living in the community surrounding a university is a significant factor in the overall student experience. The question addresses the cultural aspect of personal satisfaction with the local community, considering factors such as social life, amenities, and the general environment. It helps institutions understand how well students integrate into the broader community and whether the surrounding area aligns with their preferences.

The final six questions aimed to gauge the level of satisfaction the students derived from their decision to study in the US, as well as their likelihood of recommending the same institution to others. This question focuses on the perceived opportunities for practical knowledge and career benefits provided by the university. The Likert scale allows the respondent to express their agreement or disagreement with the statement, indicating the degree of alignment with their expectations regarding practical education and career preparation. Question 19 & 22 are: "19. I think my university is giving me opportunities to gain practical knowledge that will be beneficial for my career." & "22. I think I learned a lot about the culture and norms of the US by participating in the events arranged for international students." In the U.S. culture, there is often an emphasis on universities providing practical and career-oriented education. This question reflects the cultural value placed on the connection between academic learning and real-world application. Understanding students' perceptions of the university's role in their career development is crucial for institutions to enhance their educational offerings. Responses to all questions were graded on a scale encompassing 'strongly agree,' 'agree somewhat,' 'disagree somewhat,' and 'strongly disagree.'

3.4 Procedure

After formulating the research proposal in collaboration with the principal investigator, the researcher proceeded to submit an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application to request approval for conducting human subject research. Upon receiving the necessary IRB approval, an email was dispatched to engage with international students within their institutions. Following authorization, a consent form link and the questionnaires were emailed to eligible international students enrolled in various academic programs. Google Forms administered through a platform Google Form, was designed to take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete. Participants were provided with a week's timeframe to fill out the questionnaires. This recruitment method was chosen for its efficiency in

engaging participants across diverse U.S. educational institutions, removing geographical constraints and reducing associated costs. Moreover, employing online survey platforms Google Form ensured ease of access for participants while maintaining their anonymity.

3.5 Analysis

The data collected from Google Forms provided a comprehensive array of tools for analyzing survey responses efficiently. Upon completion of a survey, Google Forms automatically generates a summary of responses, offering basic statistical insights such as the total number of responses, average scores for rating questions, and percentage breakdowns for multiple-choice queries. Moreover, the platform facilitates visual comprehension of data trends through the creation of charts and graphs. Once the data was collected, the three hypotheses that were set at the beginning of the study were tested using Minitab. This software gave p values and correlation coefficient r. In order to use this correlation, p-value must be equal to or less than .05. A p-value of less than .05 means that the probability of obtaining the correlation by chance was 5 in 100 or 1 in 20. A p-value of .25 means that we cannot rely on the correlation to which it is connected because there is 25 out of 100 chances, or 1 in 4 probabilities, that the result was a chance result and not a real correlation. Correlation coefficient on the other hand establishes whether there is a relationship between two variables and how strong the relationship is. It is stated in terms of what is called an r-value. Simply put, for publishable studies, researchers generally need an r-value of .7 or higher. In studies which use a low number of subjects, only need an r-value of .3 or above is required.

3.6 Conclusion

This section delineated the procedures utilized to gather and assess data for the research. The research's primary objective was to evaluate how international students adapt to acculturation in the United States, focusing on both its advantages and obstacles. The research encompassed participants enrolled in various U.S. universities, and they were provided with a 24-question survey. The data was collected using google forms and the hypothesis tested using Minitab.

Chapter 4: Finding and Analysis

The purpose of this study is to look into the various barriers that international students face when trying to fit in. Although a significant number of students seek higher education opportunities in the United States, some need to pay more attention to the challenges they will encounter there. This research seeks to shed light on significant concepts that prospective international students should completely understand before departing on their travels while also examining the intricate elements of acculturation. Intriguingly, certain students may be able to decrease some challenges while others may find it more difficult to adjust. This is especially true for students who have access to scholarships. The research question that guided this study was: What are the issues faced by international students at the University level in terms of acculturation? Consequently, the below hypotheses guided the study.

Hypothesis 1

I think students who can communicate well with native and non-native speakers are more likely to learn the language and acculturate faster.

Hypothesis 2

Students who did good research about the university and prepared themselves mentally will adapt to the situation more easily than those who did not.

Hypothesis 3

Students who are more open towards the host country's culture will eventually adjust better.

In order to build inclusive and encouraging educational systems, it is essential to comprehend the difficulties faced by international students as they attempt to adapt to a new academic and social environment. The present research explores the diverse obstacles encountered by international students in their quest to integrate successfully into their new nations. The study tries to clarify the

complex nature of the integration process by concentrating on elements including cultural differences, linguistic ability, academic expectations, social interactions, and institutional assistance. Through a thorough analysis of these obstacles, we may pinpoint opportunities for enhancement in educational policy, support services, and intercultural communication tactics, eventually promoting a more welcoming and stimulating learning environment for international students across the globe. This introduction sets the foundation for a detailed examination of the study's conclusions and their implications for improving international students' well-being and integration.

4.1 First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis proposed that students who can communicate well with native and non-native speakers are likely to learn the language and acculturate faster. This hypothesis was tested by correlating two questions (9 &13), "I think at this moment my dominant language is English." and 13, which states: "I feel comfortable talking to American people and students." For question 9, 47% of all the participants agreed to some extent that English was their dominant language. Those who agreed completely comprised 45% of the participants. However, 8% and 1% disagreed to some extent and strongly disagreed that English was their dominant language. The meaning and mode for this question was 3.

On average, the participants agreed that English was their dominant language at 3.32. It was thus expected that the majority of the students would be comfortable speaking English to the American people and students, as shown by the statistics (3.5). For this question, the mean and mode were 4, implying that the students could communicate effectively with the natives. Additionally, approximately 60% and 34% of the participants strongly agreed that they can communicate with natives and agreed relatively, respectively.
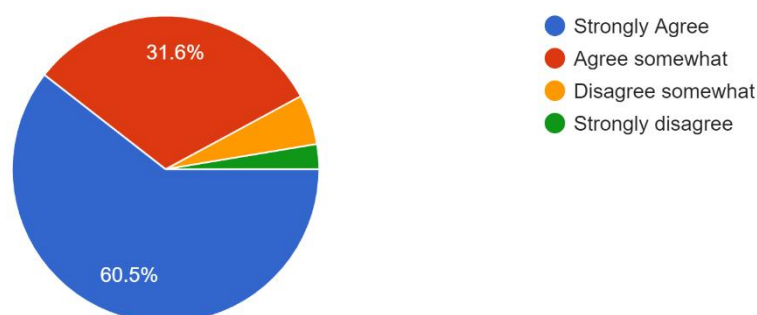
I think at this moment my dominant language is English
38 responses
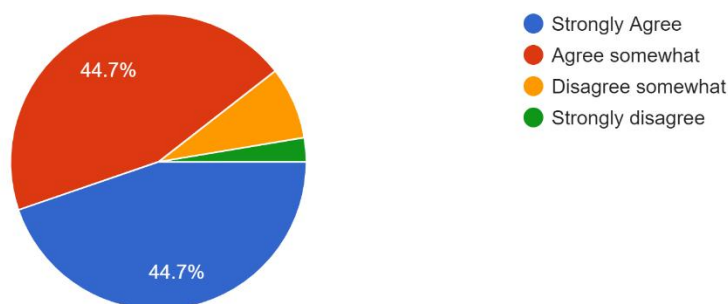
I feel comfortable talking to American people and students
38 responses

These two variables were correlated on Minitab and gave a correlation coefficient of 0.655 and a p-value of 0.000. Data supports that the two variables are strongly correlated, and the first hypothesis will thus be accepted.

The findings of this study are in line with a study conducted by Akhtar and Kröner-Herwig in 2015. In this study, it was established that proficiency in the host language is associated with a lower likelihood of experiencing acculturative stress. The reverse is also true, as poor proficiency in the host language prevents academic integration and communication with locals, Berry and John (1997). These findings align with the communication and cross-cultural adaptation theory (Kim, 2012) as well as the acculturation hypothesis. Instead of predicting psychological adaptation that is felt stress and well-being, Wong et al. (2017) proposed that social skills predict sociocultural adaptation. The acculturation theory has been supported by a number of qualitative studies that explain how the language barrier affects sociocultural adaptation by preventing students from forming meaningful relationships preventing them from establishing contacts with host nationals (Schumann, 1978), and reducing opportunities for cultural learning (Trentman, 2013).

Furthermore, adequate host-language competence increases student satisfaction since it makes it difficult for them to communicate, interact with others, and comprehend lectures in academic settings (Campbell & Li, 2008). Language also has an impact on academic adaptation for students who struggle to communicate with domestic students (Berry and John, 1997); additionally, language can be a weapon in power struggles, preventing students from speaking up in class, taking part in discussions, or making decisions (Darwish, 2015). Students who struggle with the language often communicate with other foreign students, which makes them feel even more isolated from their home peers (Sawir et al., 2012). The ideas of acculturation (Ward et al., 2020) and communication and cross-cultural adaptation are reaffirmed by these results (Brown, 2007).

We discovered contradictory findings on the influence of foreign language proficiency on students' satisfaction and adaptability with reference to the acculturation theory. In particular, these effects were not statistically significant in regression models according to certain studies (Sam et al., 2015). The indirect influence of language on adaptability could be one reason for this result. As an example, Yang et al. (2006) found that the psychological and social adjustment of students in Canada was related to interaction with host nationals but that the link was mediated by host-language competency. According to Swami et al. (2010), Asian students in Britain who had more contact with host nationals also had greater host-language proficiency, which predicted their adaption. As for Chinese students studying in Belgium, Meng et al. (2018) discovered that global competence, also referred to as "intercultural competence" or "global mindset," fully moderated the association between foreign-language proficiency and social and academic adaption.

In terms of language acquisition and acculturation, students who are proficient communicators with both native and non-native speakers are likely to benefit greatly. There are various important advantages to being able to bridge the gap between various communication styles. First off, it can enhance a student's general language comprehension and expression. While non-native speakers frequently talk more "properly" than native speakers, they might not have the same fluidity, slang, or cultural allusions (Taviano, 2018). Comprehending and utilizing formal as well as informal communication channels can improve a learner's language skills.
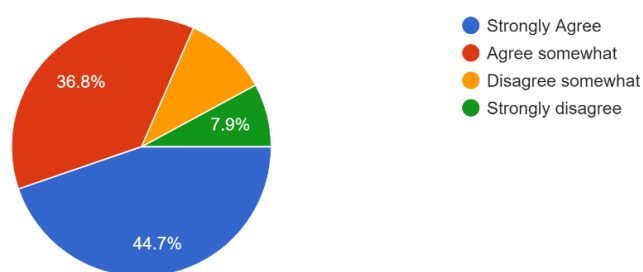
Furthermore, the ability to modify one's communication style might help integration and inclusion go more smoothly (Morina, 2019). When it comes to being heard or understood, non-native speakers can occasionally find it difficult, especially when compared to native speakers. Learners can more successfully integrate into social and professional situations and have their voices and experiences acknowledged by developing their communication skills with a variety of audiences. Lastly, learners with varied communication abilities can contribute to the process of acculturation by exhibiting cultural sensitivity and adaptability (Stasel, 2022). The capacity to modify one's communication style to fit various circumstances demonstrates contextual sensitivity and can aid in a learner's assimilation into the target culture. We may learn a great deal about the benefits that proficient communication in both native and non-native contexts bring to language learners by

investigating research on this subject (Berry and John, 1997). This knowledge will help us develop support and instruction plans that are more successful.
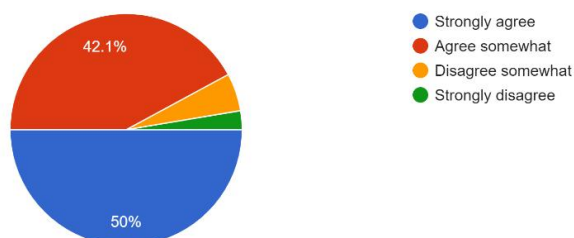
4.2 Second Hypothesis

This hypothesis argues that students who do good research about the university and are prepared mentally will adapt to the situation more easily than those who do not. This hypothesis was tested by correlating two questions, questions 10 and 12: "I think I did good research about my campus area before coming here" and "I was mentally/psychologically prepared before coming here." For question 10, the average response was 3.18 with a mode of 4, which represented 45% of the participants. Those that somewhat agreed comprised 37% of the participants. Those who strongly disagreed were the least and represented 8% of the participants. The other variable was assessing whether the students were mentally/psychologically prepared before joining the university. Just like the other variable, many of the participants strongly agreed with this statement at 50%, while the minority were those who strongly disagreed at 3%. Those who somewhat agreed were 42% of all the participants. This is shown in the pie charts below.

I think I did good research about my campus area before coming here
38 responses

- Strongly Agree
- Agree somewhat
- Disagree somewhat
- Strongly disagree

I was mentally/psychologically prepared before coming here
38 responses

- Strongly agree
- Agree somewhat
- Disagree somewhat
- Strongly disagree

It was expected that there would be a strong correlation between these two variables. Statistically, the r value was 0.172 with a p-value of 0.301. This implies that the two variables do not correlate statistically. Therefore, the second hypothesis will be rejected.

Smith & Khawaja (2011) established that the ability of a student to acculturate, that is, adjust to a new intellectual and cultural environment, can be greatly aided by careful preparation and study, contrary to the findings of this study. Students who take the time to thoroughly investigate the potential culture of the university, academic standards, resources, and support networks might lessen their feelings of confusion or disorientation upon arrival. Additionally, well-informed students are better able to look for pertinent networks and resources to help them transition, like student groups, language aid programs, and cultural orientation programs.

Choosing an integration strategy, which involves incorporating into the dominant or host culture while maintaining their cultural standards, may be more likely in students who have done a thorough study on the university and have psychologically prepared themselves for the

acculturation process (Wu et al., 2015). This approach, which is frequently used interchangeably with biculturalism, has been shown to provide the best psychological results for people assimilating into a host culture. However, a lack of preparation or research may make students more inclined to choose a separation strategy, which is rejecting the host or dominant culture in favor of maintaining their own culture (Walker & Barnett, 2007). As a maladaptive coping mechanism and acculturation process, marginalization might result from this strategy.

Consequently, it can be argued that students are more likely to adopt a strategy that will facilitate their adjustment to the host culture, such as integration, rather than a strategy that may lead to marginalization if they have done thorough research about the university and mentally prepared themselves for the acculturation process (Walker & Barnett, 2007). Proactive research and mental preparation give students the tools they need to traverse the acculturation process while also boosting their confidence successfully and more easily.

4.3 Third hypothesis

This hypothesis states that students who are more open toward the host country's culture will eventually adjust better. This hypothesis suggests that there will be a strong correlation between question 16, which states: "I enjoy living in the community where my university is located." and 22, which states: "I think I learned a lot about the culture and norms of the US by participating in the events arranged for international students." 50% of the participants agreed strongly that they enjoyed living in the community where the university is located, while approximately 45% of the participants agreed somewhat. Those that disagreed represented 5% of the population. This information is shown in the pie chart below.

I enjoy living in the community where my university is located
38 responses
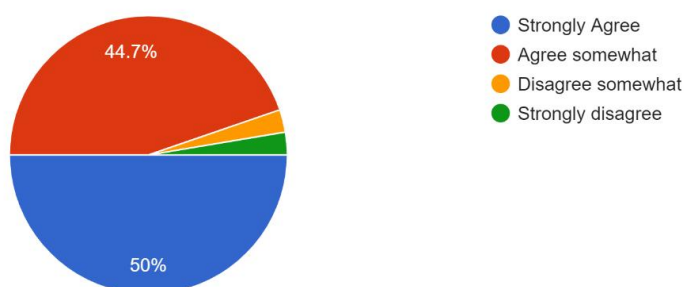
For the second variable, the majority of the participants agreed that they learned a lot by participating in the events arranged for international students. Approximately 32% strongly agreed, and 42% agreed somewhat. Those who disagreed strongly represented 7.9% of the participants, while those who disagreed somewhat were 18.4%.

I think I learned a lot about the culture and norms of the US by participating in the events arranged for international students
38 responses
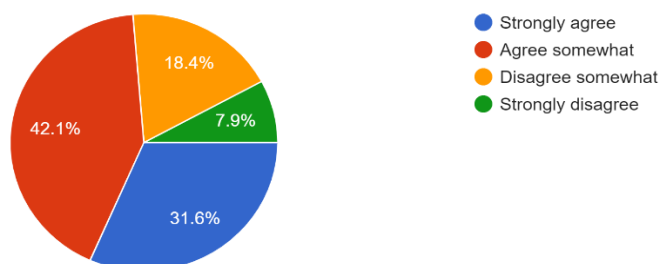
Statistically, these two variables correlate as the correlation coefficient r = 0.364 and p = 0.025. These findings agree with studies found in literature.

The participants that were open towards the host country's culture can be referred to as culturally adapted. Cultural adaptation can be defined as the process by which people who are moving from their home culture to some new, unfamiliar contexts try to "establish and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal and functional relationships with those environments" (Kim, 2012). The idea of "cultural adaptation" is associated with the phrase "culture shock" and refers to the generally transient state of unease, confusion, and anxiety that people encounter when residing in a foreign culture (Furnham, 2019). Cultural shock and adaptation, together with all the problems that they raise, including adjustment, integration, acculturation, learning a new culture, and so on, have been the subject of an enormous amount of research during the past 50 years. Cultural adaptation's dimensions and processes are at the heart of some of the recurring problems.

Most of the research that has been done so far divides the process of cultural adaptation into a number of linear steps. For instance, according to Lysgaand (1955), the process of cultural adaptation can be broken down into a U-shaped curve that begins with an exhilarating phase at the entry point (stage 1), moves through a period of crisis (culture shock) at the contact point (stage 2), a period of adjusting to the unfamiliar environment (stage 3), and ends with a period of regained adjustments (stage 4). According to Chiang (2014), the experience of transitioning to a new and distinct culture is marked by contact, dissolution, reintegration, autonomy, and independence. These elements indicate a shift from a condition of low self and cultural awareness to a highly developed level of both. Although the duration of each phase may differ among individuals, the adjustment process is generally believed to take around a year (Chiang, 2014).

Studies by Malay et al. (2023) have shown that cultural adaptation falls into two major categories that are psychological and sociocultural. The likelihood of successful cultural adaptation is higher for students who are willing to adapt to the host culture; conversely, less willing students may struggle more socially (Malay et al., 2023). Moreover, research has demonstrated that irrespective of how similar the host nation's culture is to its own, Chinese students, in particular, encounter major cultural obstacles while studying overseas (Luo et al., 2021). Consequently, colleges must offer assistance and materials to aid Chinese students in assimilating into the host society, such as possibilities for English language study and cultural courses. Additionally, studies have shown that the length of stay in the host nation is associated with lower rates of separation and marginalization views because extended stays give international students greater opportunity to engage with the local way of life and acquire the language (Luo et al., 2021). Thus, the likelihood of a favorable acculturation experience is higher for students who are receptive to and eager to interact with the host culture.

4.5 Conclusion

This study sought to shed light on significant concepts that prospective international students should completely understand before departing on their travels while also examining the intricate elements of acculturation. The first element that was studied was language and acculturation. The hypothesis was accepted as there was a correlation between 'I think at this moment my dominant language is English and 'I feel comfortable talking to American people and students. The findings were in line with previous studies reviewed above. The second hypothesis proposed that students who conducted previous studies at the university were mentally prepared to join the institution. This preparation was termed as an integration strategy, and it was expected that students who prepared well adapted well according to the studies reviewed. This hypothesis was rejected according to the data that was collected. The final hypothesis was about students who were open to the culture in their universities and how they adapted. The hypothesis was accepted as the data agreed with it. This finding was also supported by the various literature that was reviewed.

Chapter 5 Discussion

The first hypothesis tested whether the international students who can communicate well with native and non-native speakers are more likely to learn the language and acculturate faster. From the findings of the study participants, this hypothesis was accepted. In terms of language acquisition and acculturation, students who are proficient communicators with both native and non-native speakers are likely to benefit greatly. There are various important advantages to being able to bridge the gap between various communication styles. First off, it can enhance a student's general language comprehension and expression. While non-native speakers frequently talk more "properly" than native speakers, they might not have the same fluidity, slang, or cultural allusions (Taviano, 2018). Comprehending and utilizing formal as well as informal communication channels can improve a learner's language skills.

Furthermore, the ability to modify one's communication style might help integration and inclusion go more smoothly (Morina, 2019). When it comes to being heard or understood, non-native speakers can occasionally find it difficult, especially when compared to native speakers. Learners can more successfully integrate into social and professional situations and have their voices and experiences acknowledged by developing their communication skills with a variety of audiences. Lastly, learners with varied communication abilities can contribute to the process of acculturation by exhibiting cultural sensitivity and adaptability (Stasel, 2022). The capacity to modify one's communication style to fit various circumstances demonstrates contextual sensitivity and can aid in a learner's assimilation into the target culture. We may learn a great deal about the benefits that proficient communication in both native and non-native contexts brings to language learners by investigating research on this subject (Liu, 2012). This knowledge will help us develop support and instruction plans that are more successful.

The second hypothesis stated that students who did good research about the university and prepared themselves mentally will adapt to the situation more easily than those who did not. It should be noted that this hypothesis was rejected from the statistical analysis. A study by Wu et al. established that choosing an integration strategy, which involves incorporating into the dominant or host culture while maintaining their cultural standards, may be more likely in students who have done a thorough study on the university and have psychologically prepared themselves for the acculturation process. This approach, which is frequently used interchangeably with biculturalism, has been shown to provide the best psychological results for people assimilating into a host culture. However, a lack of preparation or research may make students more inclined to choose a separation strategy, which is rejecting the host or dominant culture in favor of maintaining their own culture (Stasel, 2022). As a maladaptive coping mechanism and acculturation process, marginalization might result from this strategy.

Consequently, it can be argued that students are more likely to adopt a strategy that will facilitate their adjustment to the host culture, such as integration, rather than a strategy that may lead to marginalization if they have done thorough research about the university and mentally prepared themselves for the acculturation process (Stasel, 2022). Proactive research and mental preparation give students the tools they need to traverse the acculturation process while also boosting their confidence successfully and more easily.

The third hypothesis stated that Students who are more open towards the host country's culture will eventually adjust better. This hypothesis was accepted. Most of the research that has been done so far divides the process of cultural adaptation into a number of linear steps. For instance, according to Lysgaand (1955), the process of cultural adaptation can be broken down into a U-shaped curve that begins with an exhilarating phase at the entry point (stage 1), moves through a period of crisis (culture shock) at the contact point (stage 2), a period of adjusting to the unfamiliar environment (stage 3), and ends with a period of regained adjustments (stage 4). According to Chiang (2014), the experience of transitioning to a new and distinct culture is marked by contact, dissolution, reintegration, autonomy, and independence. These elements indicate a shift from a condition of low self and cultural awareness to a highly developed level of both. Although the duration of each phase

may differ among individuals, the adjustment process is generally believed to take around a year (Chiang, 2014).

Studies by Malay et al. (2023) have shown that cultural adaptation falls into two major categories that are psychological and sociocultural. The likelihood of successful cultural adaptation is higher for students who are willing to adapt to the host culture; conversely, less willing students may struggle more socially (Malay et al., 2023). Moreover, research has demonstrated that irrespective of how similar the host nation's culture is to its own, Chinese students, in particular, encounter major cultural obstacles while studying overseas (Luo et al., 2021). Consequently, colleges must offer assistance and materials to aid Chinese students in assimilating into the host society, such as possibilities for English language study and cultural courses. Additionally, studies have shown that the length of stay in the host nation is associated with lower rates of separation and marginalization views because extended stays give international students greater opportunity to engage with the local way of life and acquire the language (Luo et al., 2021). Thus, the likelihood of a favorable acculturation experience is higher for students who are receptive to and eager to interact with the host culture.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Each year, universities in the United States receive a high number of students from different countries globally. Most of these students underestimate the challenges they could encounter while in the United States. The main goal of this study was to examine the complex components of acculturation and shine light on important ideas that prospective international students should be fully aware of before they travel. This study examined the methods used by overseas students to deliberately familiarize themselves to the American culture, language, and traditions, thereby enhancing their intellectual prowess and personal development. In order to determine the issues faced by international students at the University level in terms of acculturation, an online survey was conducted in the context of foreign students studying in the US, with a particular emphasis on students within educational institutions where English is the primary language of teaching.

The research encompassed participants enrolled in various U.S. universities, and they were provided with a 24-question survey. The data was collected using google forms and the hypothesis tested using Minitab. This study looked at the complex aspects of acculturation while attempting to clarify important ideas that prospective international students should fully comprehend before leaving on their travels. The first topic covered was acculturation and language. The hypothesis was approved because there was a correlation between the statements, "I feel comfortable talking to American people and students," and "I think my dominant language at this moment is English." The results agreed with the earlier research that was previously examined. According to the second hypothesis, students who had previously researched the university were psychologically ready to enroll there. According to the reviewed studies, this preparation was referred to as an integration strategy, and it was anticipated that students who prepared well would adapt successfully. The information gathered led to the rejection of this hypothesis. The final hypothesis concerned how students who were receptive to the culture of their universities adjusted. Given that the data supported the hypothesis, it was accepted. A variety of examined literature sources also corroborated this conclusion.

a.   Limitations

This section enumerates and explains the limitations encountered in the present study. The first limitation for this study was that it only covered international students in the United Sates. While the US receives an influx of students worldwide, it would be better to include international students studying in other continents such as Africa. The other limitation is that there was no comparison of the made between the US natives and the international students in terms of acculturation. This comparison would bring a new perspective to the study.

6.2 Future Studies

This study opens several avenues for future research to build upon the findings and address the limitations noted. To enhance the diversity and depth of data, future studies could expand the sample size to include a broader range of universities that have a high number of international students. This would help in capturing a more comprehensive perspective on acclimating acculturation of the international students at the USA.

Incorporating mixed methods in future studies, such as combining surveys with in-depth interviews or focus groups, could provide richer insights into the experiences and perceptions of teachers. This approach would allow for a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in acculturation.

Moreover, future studies should assess the impact of age on acculturation. It is expected that international students who moved to the United States while young acculturate faster than the older people due to prolonged exposure to the culture of the American citizens.

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