

## Review

# Reconsideration of Cultural Differences: Strategies for Better Intercultural Communication with International Students from China and the United States

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**For effective and appropriate intercultural communication with international students from China and the United States in the globalized new world, this extensive review provided major research results, different challenges, and strategic solutions. First, international students have been making outstanding contributions in all key sectors in both China and the United States. Second, what used to be considered difficulties and barriers for smooth communication across cultures such as foreign language proficiency and cultural values need to be reconsidered and reevaluated in the new globalized world. Third, there exist three major generally-accepted but frequently-misunderstood aspects of differences between the Chinese and American international students. Finally, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) five value orientations and Chen's (2005) global communication competence can be applied as the strategic solutions.**

**Keywords:** literature review, international students, misunderstandings, strategic solutions

## INTRODUCTION

No matter whether you like it or not, the waves of globalization on the wings of technological advancement have increasingly been shrinking the world into a global village (supply a source). By global village, we refer to the spaceless and timeless globe interconnected by an electronic nerve system or media network as predicted by McLuhan (1994). Globalization here refers to the supply of "high value products and services from around the world that are designed by talents from many countries for markets all over the globe" (Jain & Chelminski, 1999, p. 7). Friedman (2000) further defined globalization as "the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before" so much so that individuals, corporations, and nation-states can reach all corners of the globe and vice versa "farther, faster, deeper, cheaper than ever before" (p. 9). Thus, we are now, submerged in a world where desired products and services from talented designers and ideal manufacturers are flowing across borders in a bigger scale and at a much faster speed unprecedented in human history.

In terms of higher education, especially educational exchange between China, the biggest developing country and the United States, the biggest developed country, both the inflow and outflow of high value educational products and services have been on the rise for years. For instance, what is stated in the US-China Joint Statement as a result of President Obama's state visit to China from November 15–18, 2009 best demonstrates this momentum:

The two sides are pleased to note the continued increase in the number of students studying in each other's country in recent years. Nearly 100,000 Chinese are now studying in the United States, and the US side will receive more Chinese students and facilitate visa issuance for them. The United States has approximately 20,000 students in China. The United States seeks to encourage more Americans to study in China by launching a new initiative to send 100,000 students to China over the coming four years. China welcomed this decision by the United States. (Office of the Press Secretary, 2009, para. 12)

It is clear that an increasing number of Chinese students keep pouring onto university campuses of the United States. According to the Reports on International Education Exchange issued annually by the Open Doors (Institute of International Education, 2001; 2010), the number of Chinese students studying at universities and colleges in the United States kept increasing from 63,211 in the 2001/2002 academic year to 127,628 in 2009/2010, with an increase of 101.9%. Although the number of American students in China is comparatively smaller and President Obama's official initiative to send 100,000 American students to China may not actually materialize within four years, we do observe educational exchange programs between the two countries growing dramatically in number and variety. This includes the establishment of Confucius Institutes and the launching of 1+2+1 or 2+2 China-US undergraduate student exchange programs from the Chinese side. By 1+2+1, it means that those

Chinese students on the exchange list will spend the first and last years of their undergraduate study in their universities in China and the second and third years on American university campuses. As for 2+2, the students will spend the first two years of college life in China and the last two years in the United States. Meanwhile, there have been Fulbright Program of scholar exchange, US Volunteers Program of English teacher exchange, Middlebury College in China for language learning, and SCAD (Savannah College of Art and Design)-Hong Kong as satellite campuses, as well as various short-term study abroad programs in China from the US side, to name just a few.

To facilitate all those concerned to maintain effective and appropriate communication with international students from both China and the United States, we aim to conduct an extensive literature review of the research results on the major differences between Chinese and American students, the generally-accepted but frequently-misunderstood aspects of differences, and some strategic guidelines for competent interactions with these international students. However, we will start off by introducing the scholarships on the contributions of international students to China and the United States and the growing concern over international students from Asian countries, especially China so as to clarify the rationale of our study. By international students, we refer to those students who are away from their homelands and study at universities or colleges in foreign countries for further study or higher degrees.

### **Contributions of International Students to China and the United States**

First, the contributions of international students have been highly recognized and greatly appreciated in China and the United States. Both countries have made very

positive assessment of and favorable policies for the international students. According to a report of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (PRC):

The returned students and scholars play a leading role in areas like education, science and technology, high-tech industries, finance, insurance, trade and management, and serve as the driving force for the country's economic and social development. At the same time, many students and scholars staying abroad take initiatives to make contributions to China through various ways, such as giving lectures during short-term visits to China, having academic exchanges, conducting joint researches, bringing in projects and investments and providing information and technical consultancy. Accordingly, governments at all levels as well as enterprises and institutions have all come up with supportive policies in this regard. (Para. 8)

Similarly, the Institute of International Education of the United States (2009) reported in its news release, "international students contribute \$17.8 billion to the U.S. economy, through their expenditures on tuition and living expenses.... Higher education is among the United States' top service sector exports" (Para. 12). There is also a study indicating that the presence of international graduate students in the United States raises U.S. innovation by 4.5% in patent applications, 6.8% in university patent grants, and 5.0% in non-university patent grants with a 10% increase in the number of foreign graduate students (Chellarai et al., 2008). Besides economic and innovative contributions, many other scholars (Altbach, 1991; Chandler, 1991; Lambert, 1993; Mak, 2008; Yang, Harlow, Maddux, & Smaby, 2006) also noted, international students have provided cultural diversity to American campuses by familiarizing American students with different cultures without leaving the border. Since most of them represent the brightest in their countries, international students thus help in raising the standards at of education institutions by providing a healthy dose of competition to American education. Most importantly, upon completing their studies in the United States and China, international students return to their home countries usually with a sense of good will towards the United States and China, which will definitely benefit both U.S. and China's political and business interests globally.

As can be seen from the above, it brings benefits in a variety of ways to both China and the United States to send out and take in international students. Upon completion of their studies abroad through untold challenges due to geographical, linguistic, and cultural differences, most of the returned students are regarded as pivotal talents of their nations and ambassadors of the common folks. Even those who keep staying in the host countries or go to any of the third countries after graduation still continue serving their home countries in one way or another directly or indirectly. In fact, the

increasing flow of international students across borders has become not only a regional phenomenon in-between several countries but also a global phenomenon involving almost all nation-states.

### **Growing Concern over International Students from Asia**

For decades, the flow of international students has been predominantly westward to Euro-American countries plus Australia and New Zealand. Although this is still the trend today, there have been a growing number of studies on international students from East Asian countries, especially Japan and China, two leading economies of Industrial East Asia since the 1960s and Socialist East Asia since the 1980s (Tu, 2000). Earlier scholars (Beauchamp, 1991; Cummings, 1989; Cummings & Altbach, 1997; Shields, 1989) explored the attributing factors to the high performance of Japanese students and the relationship between the Japanese flourishing education and booming economy. Later on, scholars (Eisenstadt and Schluchter, 1998; Henkin, 1997; Stevenson & Sgigler, 1992; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Tu, 2000) searched for the learning motivation, social environment, and cultural factors for the impressive achievements of the Chinese students and other Asian learners in international educational comparisons. They discovered that “Asian or Confucian values, like Enlightenment values, are universal too” (Henkin, 1998, p. 314) and found it necessary for “the West, especially the United States, to transform itself into a learning as well as a teaching civilization” (Tu, 2000, p. 207). For instance, many Westerners used to find it hard to believe in the Confucian insistence on the significance of “equality rather than freedom, sympathy rather than rationality, civility rather than law, duty rather than rights, and human-relatedness rather than individualism,” but now there is a world-wide need for “social justice, reciprocal empathy, mutual understanding, responsibility, and a sense of togetherness” (Tu, 2000, pp. 199-200.)

More recently, scholars (Chen, 2005; Gan, 2009; Lum, 2006; Mak, 2008; Rao, 2006; Zhou, Knoke, & Sakamoto, 2005; Zhang & Zhu, 2008) focused on Chinese students in comparison with US and other Asian learners in terms of their changing characteristics and determining factors on their motivation for and strategies to learning. For example, Chinese students have been traditionally depicted as intelligent and diligent but reticent and “reluctant to adopt active roles in classroom discussions” (Zhou, Knoke, & Sakamoto, 2005, p. 288). However, studies found that, like Euro-American students, Asian students including Chinese students also “question the traditional authority structure of the classroom” and “wish to participate actively in exploring knowledge in class” (Gan, 2009, p. 44). Moreover, it is also urged that Chinese students or learners should be understood as a

dynamic and changing concept because they, like their counterparts in other countries, “are different in ability, motivation and effort” under the influence of “their background characteristics such as socio-economic status and gender” (Mak, 2008, p. 259). This means that education providers and all other relevant administrators and instructors for international students in China and the United States should not only pay great attention to the major differences between the students of the two countries, but also face the challenges faced in the management of classrooms with the rapidly changing cultural diversity of students.

### **Major Differences between Chinese and American Students**

With regard to the major differences between students from China and the United States, there has been abundant scholarship both in a sporadic manner and more systematic way. For instance, with regards to language acquisition, Chan (2004) noted that many Chinese students had difficulties mastering the appropriate usage of the English language because the Chinese language belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family while English is a Germanic language within the Indo-European language family, thus resulting in differences in “phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics as well as pragmatics” (p. 33). Compared with the American students who are trained to be critical and dare to challenge even the authorities, Yang, Harlow, Maddux, and Smaby (2006) also noted, “even after they have experienced American culture for a substantial period of time,” Chinese international students still hold onto their strong traditional value of showing “respect and reverence for the older generations, viewing their academic advisers as authority figures, and the opinions of authority figures are meant to be accepted without question” (p. 31). In contrast with Chinese students, American students usually “associate academic failure with feelings of frustration and disappointment over failed goals and missed opportunities rather than shame or embarrassment over a loss of face with family and friends” as the Chinese students often do. This is because the latter often “view an individual’s distressed emotional state as disrupting the harmony of the social group” (Mortenson, 2006, p. 130). Even when they decide to seek counseling or advisory services, Chinese and American students are different in their expectation of the process. While American students seek advice from their counselors or advisers but still make decisions on their own, Chinese students “are more likely to expect counselors or advisers to provide direct and immediate answers and to make decisions for them” because they “tend to view counseling or advising as a directive, paternalistic, and authoritarian process” (Mau & Jepsen, 1998, p. 192). This list of differences can still go on, but

we'd like to turn our review to the more systematic scholarship, due to the restraint of space.

In a more systematic way, Zhou, Knoke, and Sakamoto (2005) found, through a qualitative study, five primary factors for the Chinese students' reticence and lack of participation in the classrooms of American and Canadian universities. The first factor is the poor English proficiency, especially with those in their first year of study. The second is the Chinese students' concern about how their professors and peer students will react to their English proficiency. The understanding and consideration from professors and peers often times "make Chinese students feel safer in a class and in joining class discussions" (p. 295). Third, Chinese students' classroom participation is "also compounded by their unfamiliarity with the educational context as well as the Western culture and knowledge base. Fourth, class participation holds different meanings to Chinese and US or Canadian students. While the latter seem to behave casually in class by seating themselves in a leisurely way and cutting in discussions any time, the former tend to take each class very seriously and remain silent unless they are completely ready to speak or answer questions. Finally, Chinese students tend to restrain themselves from speaking out before they become familiar with their peers because "familiarity with peer students may increase trust, motivation and feelings of comfort and safety in the classroom" (p. 297). Thus, these scholars have contributed new interpretations to the Chinese international students' classroom reticence and passivity, which are situation specific rather than culturally predetermined.

In addition, Littlewood (2001) summarized the research results of previous literature on intercultural differences between Western and Asian learners and proposed the following ten predictions about Asian learners based on the three prevalent perspectives of cultural influence, i.e. which are collectivism and individualism, power and authority, and different motivation towards achievement. The ten predictions are:

a To the extent that Asian students have a predominantly collectivist orientation:

- Prediction 1: They will have a strong inclination to belong to groups that work towards common goals.
- Prediction 2: They will be eager to engage in activities that involve discussion within groups.
- Prediction 3: They will be concerned to maintain harmony within their groups.
- Prediction 4: In the open classroom, they will be reluctant to 'stand out' from the group by expressing their views or raising questions.

b To the extent that Asian students have a high degree of acceptance of authority:

- Prediction 5: They will perceive the teacher as a figure whose authority should not be questioned.

- Prediction 6: They will see knowledge as something to be transmitted by the teacher rather than discovered by themselves.

- Prediction 7: They will expect the teacher, as the holder of authority and knowledge, to be responsible for the assessment of learning.

c To the extent that Asian students have strong, socially-oriented achievement motivation:

- Prediction 8: They will show strong motivation to complete learning tasks, provided they perceive the practical value of these tasks.

- Prediction 9: Their motivation will be strengthened when success contributes to the goals or prestige of significant in groups.

- Prediction 10: They will be very concerned to perform well in what they do in class. (pp. 7-8)

To test these predictions, Littlewood (2001) designed a 12-item questionnaire based on the three perspectives of cultural influence and conducted a survey of 2656 students in three European countries and eight Asian countries. He found that most students in all the countries in his study actually "question the traditional authority structure of the classroom, see themselves as active participants in the classroom learning process, and have a positive attitude towards co-operating in groups in order to achieve common goals" (pp. 21-22). Thus, Littlewood (2001) commented, "the differences in the means of 'whole countries' and 'whole cultures' are considerably less than the range of variation between individuals within each country or culture" (p. 22).

Gan (2009) followed up and re-examined the above ten assumptions of the Asian learners through a survey study of 619 university students from Mainland China and Hong Kong. The findings are in discord with quite a few predictions listed above. Except for Prediction 2, Prediction 8, and part of Prediction 9, the rest run contrary to the present situation of the Asian learners, including the Chinese students. Prediction 9 was found applicable only to secondary school students but not students at the university level any more.

The authors also tested the above ten (10) predictions among twenty (20) faculty members and admissions staff during their orientations for working at a new American university campus in Hong Kong. Out of the twenty (20), three (3) come from Hong Kong and one (1) from Mainland China, and the rest are directly from the United States. All of them were tested with the ten (10) predictions in August, 2010 and again in February 2011. For the purpose of this study, a comparison was done between the results of just the sixteen (16) Americans. When tested the first time, more than fourteen (14) of them agreed with all the ten predictions except Predictions 6 and 8 of which they were not sure. However, nearly half a year later, 15 of them just agreed with Predictions 2, 8 and 9.

What are the chief reasons for the above similar findings? On the one hand, each of the differences in the three perspectives of collectivism and individualism, power and authority, and different motivation towards achievement “refers in reality to a continuum rather than a clear-cut distinction: there exist different degrees of individualist or collectivist orientation, acceptance of authority, socially or individually oriented motivation” (Littlewood, 2001, p. 6). On the other hand, “the cultural stereotypes of Asian students as rote learners, being prone to teacher authority and having a strong inclination for group learning have been over-generalized,” because it is the “institutional contexts and social environments rather than cultural traditions that tend to determine students’ attitudes towards (?) and strategies in learning” (Gan, 2009, p. 53). Therefore, no matter whether it is the Chinese international students’ classroom reticence and passivity or traditional stereotypes concerning Asian students as a whole, we need to hold a changing attitude according to the change of time and contexts. Otherwise, we may hold onto some outdated assumptions that are actually misunderstandings.

### **Generally-Accepted but Frequently-Misunderstood Differences**

Apart from the above, other scholars (Biggs, 1996; Gan, 2009; Littlewood, 2001; Mak, 2008; Matalene, 1985; Wang & Lin, 2008) have discovered some serious misunderstandings regarding the existing generalizations or stereotypes about the differences between Chinese and American students. For instance, there has been a paradox of the Chinese learners from the Western misperceptions of students from the Confucian-heritage cultures (CHC) including China, Japan, Korean, and Vietnam. On the one hand, CHC learners are depicted as passive and obedient learners who employ rote learning mainly for passing examinations oriented towards low-level cognitive goals. On the other hand, CHC students consistently outperform their counterparts from Euro-American countries in international education assessments. The key to the paradox is that rote learning, a strategy often condemned by Western educators can also function as deep learning, which is “part of the Confucian tradition of memorizing prior to understanding, reflection and questioning” (Biggs, 1996, p. 59). To illustrate, Mak (2008) observed, “the learning climate in the Chinese classroom is warm and cooperative. CHC students may be repetitive learners but they do not necessarily rote learn more than Western learners (p. 256). Matalene (1985), who taught English writing in China, added, “for the Chinese students then, the fourth art of rhetoric, memory, the one we ignore, is and always has been more important than any other,” and “they memorize not just the characters of their beautiful and difficult written language; they memorize

the culture itself” (p. 792).

Related to memorization, two other places of misunderstanding or serious headaches to many Euro-Americans are the indirectness in their communication and their frequent and bold borrowing of others’ language and ideas without the habit of giving due credit. When comparing the Americans and Chinese, Hsu (1953) remarked: “Being individual-centered, the Americans move toward social and psychological isolation. Being more situation-centered, the Chinese are inclined to be socially or psychologically dependent on others” (p. 10). Cheng (1998) further noted, the primary goal of Western education is to develop the students’ individual potentials by guiding them to figure things out instead of dictating or molding the young minds. In contrast, the primary goal of Eastern education is to mold individual students to become responsible, obedient, and qualified social members. As a result, Americans emphasize originality, creativity, and directness in their interactions while the Chinese keep referring to their tradition and relying on accepted patterns of expression. No wonder, in both their spoken and written interactions, most Chinese “expect their audience to infer meanings rather than to have them spelled out” (Matalene, 1985, p. 801).

Moreover, what is regarded as stealing or plagiarism in the United States and other Western countries is taken as necessary imitation or sharing in China. For instance, before a Chinese student of art has the painted bamboo in the mind and recreates it to perfection in the hand, he or she is usually trained or educated to learn the established forms of painting a bamboo in the eye through repeated imitation of master painters. The same applies to the learning of Chinese calligraphy and other types of learning. Thus, Chinese education emphasizes the cultivation of creativity through heavy dosage of imitation, modeling, and uniformity whereas American education stresses original creativity through self-exploration, self-expression, and self-actualization. To some scholars (Biggs, 1996; Cheng, 1998; Gardner, 1989), both the Chinese emphasis on basic skill mastery and the American stress on fostering creativity may be conducive to the long-term innovative success of the students. Apart from this, since the traditional Chinese culture emphasizes family or institutional honor and collective sharing while deemphasizing the importance of the individual, lots of artistic products bear no names of the original creators, and other works of wisdom are open for imitation with little concern of credit recognition. However, citing references is a cultural practice based on individualism in the West. This is because “Western writers want careful credit for their ideas and Western readers need the information that enables them to continue with their own inquires (Metalene, 1985, p. 803). This is perhaps why copying as a form of theft—a view widely held by Western copyright holders and academia—is not commonly shared by the general public in China.

The last misperception and misunderstanding concerns the relationship between the students' self-concept and academic performance. According to Wang and Lin (2008), it is generally believed among many educators in the United States that "students' self-perceived feelings about themselves are positively associated with students' academic performance" (p. 154). As a result, most American teachers tend to compliment their students to enhance their self-concept and, by so doing, hope to improve their academic achievement. However, this assumption is seriously challenged by the research findings of several international comparisons (Programme for International Student Assessment, 2004; Schriber, 2002; Wilkins, 2004). The research findings demonstrate that students in countries including China with higher Mathematics performance reported lower student self-concepts in Mathematics learning while students from countries including the United States with lower Mathematics performance revealed higher self-concepts in Mathematics learning at all levels. The findings suggest that the increase of self-concept does not necessarily guarantee academic achievement whereas students' academic achievement is "positively related to the actual intellectual effort invested in their learning" (Wang & Lin, 2008, p. 168). We do not mean to advocate the old practice of "sparing the rod, spoiling the child;" nevertheless, it might be more effective to harvest ideal student performance through genuine compliment and strict assessment criteria.

### **Strategies for Better Intercultural Communication**

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the world is increasingly becoming smaller and more integrated as a global village due to the rapid advancement in technology, especially information and communication technologies. To receive the best possible education for the satisfaction of their different needs and various interests, about 100,000 Chinese students and 20,000 American students are studying at the universities and colleges of each other's country, thousands of miles away from home. These students represent the Chinese and American cultures while presenting their idiosyncratic characteristics and shifting their worldviews in a way that motivates them to take values from both their home and host cultures" (Yang, Harlow, Maddux, & Smaby, 2006, p. 34). Values are deeply-held beliefs that are invisible and intangible but they determine the type of worldview or way to look at the world of a person or a group of people. Cultural values, just as Martin and Nakayama (2007) defined, are the worldview of a cultural group or the core symbols of a particular identity.

To seek the cultural commonality and variations of people from different cultures, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) assumed that all human societies must deal with a

limited number of universal problems, the solutions to these problems are universally known and limited in number, and different cultures have different preferences for the solution to each problem based on their cultural values. The problems universal to all human beings derive from: 1) human nature (evil, neutral, good-and-evil, good); 2) man-nature relation (subjugation-to-nature, harmony-with-nature, mastery-over-nature); 3) time orientation (past, present, future); 4), activity (being, being-in-coming, doing); and 5) human relationships (lineality, collaterality, individualism). Continuous efforts in dealing with the five universal problems result in five value orientations common to all human beings. As for the terms which are used to describe the features of the five value orientations, those in 1) and 2) are self-explanatory. With regard to the rest, according to Kohls (1984), in 3), past orientation is regarded as tradition-bound, present as situational, and future as goal-oriented. In 4), the being mode places little emphasis on personal achievement being-in-coming stresses inner development such as through meditation, and doing is clearly action-oriented. Finally, in 5), refers to an authoritarian mode, where dominant-subordinate subordinate relationships are clearly defined. Collaterality treats a person as a member of a group in which decisions are collectively made. Individualism, which emphasizes personal autonomy, belongs to the egalitarian mode.

Based on the above five value orientations, scholars (Chen, 2006; Ihle, G. M., Sodowsky, and Kwan, 1996; Kwan, Sodowsky, and Ihle, 1994; Sodowsky, Maguire, Ngumba, and Kohles, 1994; Yang et al., 2006) found that those Chinese international students who have been staying in the United States for less than a year "perceived human relationships to be significantly more individualistic than do the European American students" and those with a substantial cross-cultural exposure of more than four years "were found to be significantly more future-oriented than the European American students" (Yang et al., 2006, p. 51). Previously, however, the Chinese international students had been labeled as group-bound and past-time oriented. The reasons for these surprising findings lie first in the dramatic economic growth and rapid privatization process during the past several decades in China, which resulted in an increase in value orientations of individualism and achievements. Personally, those Chinese international students who had more experience in the United States gradually fitted into the American cultural values and began working even much harder than their American peers towards set goals and outstanding accomplishment for a better future.

Similarly, those Chinese international students with an exposure of more than four years to the American culture were also found the value of mastery- or control-over-nature significantly more than the European American students. This dramatic shift from the dominant Chinese traditional value of harmony-with-nature to the strong

Euro-American value of control-over-nature is another surprising finding. According to Yang et al. (2006), there are two possible explanations for this shift. One is the Chinese international students' strong respect for the American state-of-the-art science and technology, which is meant to exert control over nature. Another may result from their well-defined goals and ambitions for the academic pursuit and future career. Again, what the Chinese international students have been seeking in the United States match the American cultural values of overcoming various barriers to achieve personal goals. To this end, they are usually much more diligent than their American peers, even at the costs of their holidays plus evenings and weekends.

However, as mentioned earlier, the Chinese international students do not reject what is still valuable in their home culture while absorbing what is useful from the host culture. For example, while taking in individualism as an increasingly more important cultural value, the Chinese international students were also found to "perceive human relationships to be significantly more linear and hierarchical than did the European American students" (Yang, Harlow, Maddux, & Smaby, 2006, p. 30). They held onto this strong traditional Chinese value even after having experienced the American culture for more than four years. This relational system of linearity and hierarchies based on generation and age is deeply rooted in Confucianism and in the blood of the Chinese students wherever they are. It is such strongly-held Chinese cultural values that determine the unique behaviors of the Chinese international students. For example, parents' opinions are still influential enough as to influence these students' decisions to choose majors and future careers. For another example, most of the Chinese international students tend to be silent in class because they regard professors as authority figures and expect them to conduct more excellent lectures and provide more insightful guidance. For still another example, many of them seldom take initiatives in class discussions, voluntarily offer their opinions or critical remarks in seminars, and almost never challenge their academic advisers because, while observing the principles of linearity and hierarchies unawares, they tend to humble themselves before peers and the elderly and would rather make repeated compromises to shun away from any possible conflicts than harm the harmonious relationships with peers and professors.

Although some scholars (Gan, 2009; Mak, 2008; Zhou, Knoke, and Sakamoto; 2005) argued that cultural values are not the only determining factor that shapes the changing patterns of the international students. Quite a number of scholars (Chen, 2006; Ihle, G. M., Sodowsky, & Kwan, 1996; Kwan, Sodowsky, and Ihle, 1994; Sodowsky, Maguire, Ngumba, and Kohles, 1994; Yang et al., 2006) proved the five value orientations proposed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) still useful and meaningful. To apply the five cultural values into

everyday interactions between the international students, international education providers, administrators, and instructors ought to master both the essential knowledge and basic skills that account for "global communication competence" (Chen, 2005, p. 1).

According to Chen (2005), a well-known scholar on intercultural communication, global communication competence consists of four dimensions. First, to get rid of the inaccurate stereotypes and prejudices towards students from different cultural background, international education providers, administrators, and instructors should nurture a global mindset which may help them broadening and expanding their perspectives. Second, they should be good at unfolding themselves by ceaselessly edifying, liberating, and purifying themselves to foster a sound and open self-identity for collaboratively building an integrative and holistic future. Third, they need also to map the culture by acquiring knowledge and characteristics of their own and the students' third culture to reach a cognitive understanding of cultural similarities and differences. Finally, to align their interactions, they ought to foster the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural contexts without violating their counterparts' norms and rules. This means that international education providers, administrators, and instructors should get to know their students as changing and dynamic groups and individuals, who are "striving to develop a third culture worldview system whereby they integrate and transcend worldviews deriving from both Chinese and American cultures" (Yang, Harlow, Maddux, & Smaby, 2006, p. 35). To fully understand the third or new worldview system of the international students, they should find out what dimensions of cultural values the international students are absorbing from their host culture and what aspects of the cultural values they are reinforcing and holding on to from their home culture. In other words, they are expected to approach the international students flexibly with sufficient concern over their new worldview system while implementing the same criteria of academic assessment as found on the main campuses of their home countries.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to facilitate international education providers, administrators, and instructors to maintain effective and appropriate communication with international students mainly from China and the United States in the globalized new world by providing them with new research results, different challenges, and strategic solutions. Through an extended and thorough literature review, we have critically summarized and creatively categorized the following research findings. First, globalization has made it possible that approximately 100,000 Chinese students and 20,000 American students are studying at the universities and colleges of each

other's country on an annual basis with possible increase on both sides. Studies have shown that international students have been making outstanding contributions in all key sectors in both China and the United States. Studies have also revealed a proportionate relationship between the emphasis on international students and the growth of economies in countries like Japan, China and the United States. Most importantly, many of the international students who return to their homelands after their education hold pivotal positions in their fields and maintain good will to the countries where they received their advanced education or training.

Second, due to the rapid development of communication and information technology, the world around us is getting increasingly interconnected as a global village, and the villagers are experiencing times of great change and transformation. In the field of international education exchange, what used to be considered difficulties and barriers for smooth communication across cultures such as foreign language proficiency and cultural values need to be reconsidered and reevaluated. Difficulties in verbal and nonverbal application of the foreign language in the foreign classrooms may still be an issue for effective communication, but the psychological and emotional desires for being encouraged, cared, and trusted prove to be more important factors for consideration. Research and test results of Littlewood's (2001) 10 predictions on intercultural differences based on the three cultural perspectives of collectivism and individualism, power and authority, and different motivation towards achievement between Western and Asian learners turned out to be mostly contrary to the reality. The first reason is that the three prevalent perspectives of cultural influence are in reality a continuum rather than a clear-cut distinction, and the second reason is that the students' motivation towards achievement, today, has more to do with the institutional contexts and social environments rather than their traditional cultural values. Most importantly, scholars noted that, like their Euro-American counterparts, Asian students including Chinese students are equally critical in their learning by challenging the traditional authority in classroom discussions and participating actively in sharing and contributing knowledge in class. Since time changes, Chinese international students should be understood as a dynamic and changing concept.

Third, scholars have also discovered three major generally-accepted but frequently-misunderstood aspects of differences between the Chinese and American international students. First of all, rote learning often adopted by Chinese and other Asian students is not just for low-level cognitive goals like passing examinations but also for deep learning. While Euro-American students ignore the Aristotle's fourth art of rhetoric, i.e., the Chinese students memorize both their beautiful language and rich culture. Then, as for the indirectness in the

Chinese spoken and written interactions and the bold borrowing of others' language and ideas without giving due credit, they are closely related to the long Chinese traditions of keeping harmony by making various compromises and learning through copying the works of masters. When the Chinese international students become familiar with the linear thinking pattern of the Euro-Americans and when they realize the seriousness of avoiding plagiarism, they are usually more than happy to accept and follow the academic rules on American university campuses. The last misconception concerns the relationship between self-concept and academic performance. Research findings suggest that students' academic achievement is positively related to their actual intellectual efforts. Thus, ideal student performance should be achieved through genuine compliment and strict assessment criteria.

Finally, facing the continuous change in the globalized world, we introduced Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) five value orientations and Chen's (2005) global communication competence as the strategic solutions for effective and appropriate communication between international education providers, administrators, and instructors and their international students from China and the United States. Theoretically, the five universal issues of human nature, man-nature relation, time orientation, activity, and human relationships can be used to understand, interpret, and appreciate the different value orientations of each culture no matter how it is changing under the turbulence of globalization. Practically, the four dimensions of global communication competence, that is, i.e., fostering a global mindset, unfolding the self, mapping the culture, and aligning the interaction, may serve as specific guidance for daily cross-cultural interactions.

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