

International Students' Intercultural Interaction with Canadian Domestic Students: Observations from Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this review was to intensively review literature about to international students' intercultural interaction with Canadian domestic students. More specifically, the review intends to (1) examine the status of international students' intercultural interaction with domestic students at Canadian post-secondary schools. (2) identify the major challenges that limit the intercultural interaction between international and Canadian domestic students. To this end, various research documents, such as published and unpublished government documents, peer-reviewed articles, PhD dissertations, and empirical studies were consulted. In this review, studies conducted in other most popular study destinations for international students were also thoroughly reviewed to provide additional insight. The findings of this review indicate that at Canadian post-secondary institutions, the intercultural interactions between international and domestic students are few. The review findings further uncovered that English language proficiency and culture qualify as the main challenges for international students to make intercultural interactions with their domestic counterparts. Based on these findings, conclusions and implications were forwarded to hosting countries and institutions.

Keywords: Intercultural interaction, Domestic students, Hosting institutions, International students

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INTRODUCTION

Research indicates that international students have their reasons for seeking to study abroad. For example, international students seek to study abroad to explore a different culture, learn new ways of thinking and behaving, improve their knowledge of English, make new friends, and improve their cross-cultural knowledge and skills (Andrade, 2006; McClure, 2007; Vinther and Slethaug, 2015). In addition, the global patterns of international student flows can be explained by a combination of both pull and push factors. These push and pull factors encourage students to study in overseas institutions. The push factors operate within the students' home or source country and influence their decision to undertake international study, whereas the pull factors operate within a host country to make that country relatively attractive to international students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Drawing on the findings from research studies undertaken in Indonesia, Taiwan, China, and India; for example, Mazzarol & Soutar (2002) identified several push factors that influence students to study abroad. These include: students' perception about the quality of overseas courses of study as compared with local ones, lack of access to special programs, a desire to gain a better understanding of the West, an intention to migrate after graduation, social links (that emerge when a student has family or friends who have studied or are studying in a host country, the reputation or profile of host country (students' general knowledge or awareness of a particular host country), geographic proximity (from home country to host country and vice-versa), costs (living costs, tuition fees) and a host country's environment (weather condition, lifestyle and so on).

The pull factors revolve around the reputation of the host institution. The institution's reputation encompasses an institution's reputation for quality, links or alliances with other institutions familiar to the students, a high-quality faculty and staff, an institution's alumni and word-of-mouth referrals, the number of students enrolled at the institution and whether any certification received from the host institution is recognized by future employers after graduation (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

In a study aiming to examine why Asian students (namely, China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan) choose Canada as a study destination country, Chen (2007) found several pull factors that encourage Asian students. The main pull factors identified in Chen's (2007) study include institutional academic pull factors (high quality of Canadian education, research-focused programs), institutional administrative pull factors (for example, a positive interaction with faculty), the Canadian environment (Canada's reputation for a safe, tolerant, diversified and multicultural society), the economics of Canadian education (a relatively low tuition fee as compared to the United States) and the ease of Visa or Immigration Process.

Canada is one of the most popular study destinations for international students (Robinson et al., 2020). Canadian universities attract and recruit international students from more than 200 different countries. However, at the Canadian post-secondary schools majority of international students come from Asian countries. In the year 2013-2014, the top five countries that send international students to Canadian universities were China (34.1%), France (7.6%), United States of America (6.2%), India (5.7%) and Saudi Arabia (4.5%) (Statistics Canada, 2016).

China sends more students to Canadian universities than any other. In 2016, China accounted for 34% of full and part-time visa students in Canadian universities, totaling just over 74,260 students (Canadian Bureau for International Education [CBIE], 2018a). According to the Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development [OCED], (2019), students from Asia countries comprise the largest percentage of international students, representing 56% of all mobile students across the OECD member countries in 2017. The OCED's (2019) study further indicated that two-thirds of Asian students pursue their education in only five English-speaking and developed countries: Australia, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom [UK], and the United States [U.S.A].

Since Canada is well known for its multiculturalism, Canadian universities and colleges have been experiencing rapid changes in student demographics (Garson, 2017; Reid and Robinson, et al., 2020). Although recruiting a large number of international students at Canadian post-secondary schools further increases student diversity, the level of international students' intercultural interaction with domestic students is not necessarily commensurate. For this review, the phrase 'intercultural interaction' is used to refer to the interaction between students from different cultural backgrounds within a particular context (Fitzpatrick, 2020).

Several recent empirical studies found that frequent and appropriately structured interactions between international and domestic students contribute to better learning outcomes. In the United States, for

example, Bowman (2013) conducted a quantitative study on the relationships between college diversity interactions and first-year student outcomes and found that very frequent diversity interactions were associated with students' learning outcomes. Similarly, a quantitative study conducted at the University of Michigan by Nelson (2005) found that students with more experiences with diversity, particularly enrollment in diversity courses and positive interactions with diverse peers, were more likely to score higher on measures of academic self-confidence, social agency, and critical thinking. In addition, Chang et al. (2006) studied the educational benefits of sustaining cross-racial interaction among undergraduate students and found a positive correlation between cross-racial interaction and students' learning outcomes. Hurtado (2001) conducted a study aiming to examine the link between diversity and educational purposes and reported a significant relationship between diversity and educational outcomes.

Earlier studies in the United States confirmed that frequent and appropriately structured intercultural interaction is not only important for better academic performance, but also it can also lessen anxiety and stress, and improve language proficiency level, mental health, and satisfaction. For example, Garies et al. (2011) examined intercultural friendship; they linked communication variables and friendship success and found that intercultural friendship and satisfaction are significantly related to communicative adaptability, language proficiency, and loneliness. Hendrickson et al. (2011) conducted a study designed to examine the relationship among international students' friendship networks, social connectedness, homesickness, and satisfaction and found that international students with a higher ratio of host nationals in their friendship networks reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction, contentment, and significantly lower levels of homesickness.

Another related study conducted in the United Kingdom by Turner et al. (2008) quantitatively tested a hypothesis of extended intergroup contact proposed by Wright (1997) and found a positive correlation between extended intergroup contacts and reduced intergroup anxiety. In Australia, Neri and Ville (2007) studied social capital renewal and the academic performance of international students and found an association between intercultural interaction and increased well-being. Smith et al. (2016) argued that interethnic friendships are the strongest and most positive means of offsetting ethnic segregation and inequality; they reported, however, that "scholars consistently find that the number of interethnic friendships is structurally lower than the number of possible interethnic friendships" (p. 1224).

Robinson et al. (2020) suggest that since Canada is known for its multiculturalism and is a major study destination country for many international students, more attention should be given to understanding how international students experience and negotiate intercultural contact or interaction with domestic students. Robinson et al., (2020) believe that understanding international students' social integration in Canadian post-secondary institutions will offer important insights into the issues of social inclusion as well as intercultural attitudes. In addition, such understanding will also enable us to identify strategies that reduce constraints to intercultural interaction. Given these recommendations, this review is intended to achieve the following research objectives.

Purpose of the Review

As mentioned earlier, Canadian universities and colleges are known for their multiculturalism and this in turn increases student diversity on the campus. In the diverse school environment, intercultural interaction is one of the important factors to improve the interaction between international and domestic students. Intercultural interaction refers to the behavior (including, but not limited to, verbal and nonverbal communication) that occurs when members of different cultural groups engage in joint activity. Although intercultural interaction is an important factor in improving the communication between international and domestic students, the level of international students' intercultural interaction or communication with different cultural groups is not necessarily commensurate. The main purpose of this study was to intensively review international students' intercultural interaction with Canadian domestic students. More specifically,

the review intends to (1) examine the status of international students' intercultural interaction with domestic students at Canadian post-secondary schools or higher education and (2) identify the major challenges that limit the intercultural interaction between international and Canadian domestic students.

Significance of the Review

As evidenced in the proceeding sections, studies confirmed that intercultural interaction with various cultural groups enhances students' experience sharing among different groups and reduces anxiety. In contrast, low levels of intercultural interaction among different groups restrict students' experience of educational, social, and psychological benefits. This review provides vital and timely information for international students, host university leaders, faculty members, and educational policymakers. The review findings provide information concerning the status of international students' intercultural interaction with host national students in the most popular host countries, including Canada. Moreover, the review provides vital information on the potential challenges that limit their intercultural interaction with domestic students. Similarly, host university leaders, faculty members, and educational policymakers will also benefit from the current review findings because they will learn the level of international students' intercultural interaction with domestic students. Host university leaders and faculty members can then identify and design various strategies and measures to improve intercultural interaction between international and domestic students.

METHODOLOGY OF THE REVIEW

In this study, a systematic literature review was employed. The review followed Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) which is a framework proposed by Moher et al. (2009). The PRISMA framework generally requires the researcher to illustrate the protocol, eligibility criteria, information source, study selection, and data collection process in a flowchart.

In this article, I intensively reviewed research documents that are relevant to my research objective. I used different web searches to get pertinent information to the review. The main web searches that I have employed in the review mainly include the UBC online library and Google Scholar. Through the UBC online library, I accessed pertinent research materials from well-known databases such as science direct Elsevier, EBSCO, Project Muse, Springer Link, SAGE Journals, and the Francis and Taylor Group. The rationale for this choice is twofold: these databases are comprehensive, and provide access to multiple journals and books.

Since I have used multiple databases for the present review, a keyword searching strategy was employed as per the suggestion of Gümüş, and Esen (2020). I then identified the key terms used in searching to further locate the related studies, the initially selected words were 'Intercultural Interaction', 'International Students', and 'Domestic Students'. After validating the keywords, the preliminary search yielded 817 documents: 250 from Science Direct Elsevier, 110 from EBSCO, 150 from Project Muse, 125 from Springer Link, 136 from SAGE Journals and 46 from the Francis and Taylor Group. Upon the completion of preliminary searching, I refined the scope by setting the exclusion and inclusion criteria. Studies published before 2004 were excluded from the review to focus on the recent information regarding students' intercultural interaction with various cultural groups. On the other hand, studies published after 2004 were included in the review. Based on this exclusion and inclusion criteria, a total of 350 research documents were retained. I further refined the retained documents by focusing on only peer-reviewed articles and published and unpublished PhD dissertations were included to improve the quality of the reviewed literature. In the study, poorly designed research works, such as studies that do not rigorously illustrate their methodologies or theoretical backgrounds and conference or proceeding publications were excluded from

the review according to Hammarberg et al. (2016) suggestion. The following figure shortly summarizes the procedures that were followed to screen the documents.

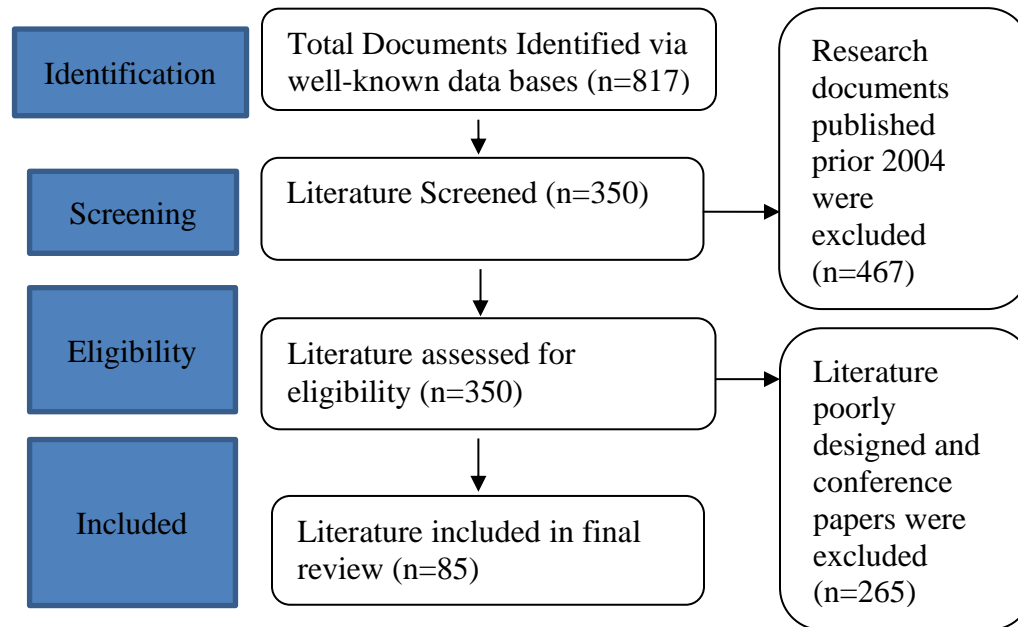


Figure 1. Summary of a flow chart for screening documents (Source: Authors own work)

Through the rigorous implementation of exclusion and inclusion criteria, a total of 85 past studies were retained and included in the final review: 80 peer-reviewed articles and 5 published and unpublished PhD dissertations. The 85 research documents that were finally reviewed for the present study include 36 quantitative, 24 qualitative, and 25 mixed method studies. In the study, studies conducted in the Canadian universities were mainly focused in the analysis as they indicate the context of the study, and little attention has been paid to studies conducted in other Western countries' universities. Based on the study objectives, I thoroughly extracted findings from the reviewed relevant literature. The results were analyzed thematically and illustrated in detail in the following section.

THE LEVEL OF INTERCULTURAL INTERACTION BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC STUDENTS

In Canadian higher education institutions, prior studies indicate relatively little intercultural interaction between international and domestic students. For example, at four Canadian universities, Grayson (2008) reported that only 11% of domestic students made friends with international students, whereas more than 50% of international students reported having difficulty in making Canadian friends. Similarly, Beck (2008) reported that international students were dissatisfied with befriending Canadian domestic students. In conducting a comparative study between universities in Canada and Denmark, Vinther and Slethaug (2015) recognized that although there are home students and international students on the campus, their intercultural interactions are becoming blurred. A most recent study conducted by Thomas et al. (2018) concerning international and domestic student interaction noticed that although there is a significant students' diversity in Canadian post-secondary schools, international and domestic students struggle to interact with each other and develop meaningful connections.

In the other most popular study destination countries for international students, studies also found limited intercultural interaction between international and domestic students. In the United States higher education

institutions, for example, Gareis's (2012) study found that 40% of international students have no significant friendships with American domestic students. In Australia, in dealing with the student experience of internationalization, Leask (2010) found that although students saw cultural and international perspectives as important, domestic students' interactions with culturally diverse peers were little.

In Britain, a study conducted by Osmond and Roed (2010) examined student perception of group work in a mixed cultural setting; they found that although students were generally positive about collaborating on academic tasks, British students thought that working across cultures created more work. Osman and Roed (2010) further identified that home students were conscious of offending in intercultural interactions, which resulted in their avoidance of these interactions.

Harrison and Peacock (2010) found that British students avoided engaging with their international peers for a variety of reasons, including differences in work orientation, language and communication issues, fears of causing offense or being seen as inter-culturally incompetent, and concerns over grades being affected by teamwork. In most Western countries, several other studies indicate that friendship patterns among international and host-national students are often segregated along nationality or other socio-demographic lines (Dunne, 2013; Gareis et al., 2011; Hendrickson, 2016; Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Sandel, 2014; Sawir et al., 2008; Sherry et al., 2010).

In general, inadequate intercultural interaction between international and domestic students can lead international students to feel lonely and socially alienation. Studies (e.g. Lux, 2013; Slethaug & Vinther, 2012) show that international students often feel lonely in the new environment due to a lack of friends and family relations, insufficient knowledge of the local language, yearning to stay within their cultural framework, and feeling alienated when exposed to academic environments operating on varying levels of explicitness, unfamiliar teaching methods, class management and different levels of autonomy and self-regulation. Studying social alienation among foreign students, Owie (1982) found that international students experience a higher level of social alienation than do non-international students. In the United States and Canada, aiming to identify common stressors among international college students, Chen (1999) found that social isolation is a common stressor among international college students. Chen (1999) also noticed that the sense of social alienation may make international students feel unsettled in the new place.

MAJOR CHALLENGES THAT LIMIT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM INTERCULTURAL INTERACTION WITH DOMESTIC PEERS

As noted earlier, extensive intercultural interaction between international and domestic students is vital for international students to enhance educational opportunities and reduce anxiety. In contrast, low levels of intercultural interaction between international and domestic students restrict international students' experience of educational, social, and psychological benefits. So, I attempted to find what limits international students' intercultural interaction with domestic students.

Many studies identified different challenges for international students in engaging in intercultural interaction with domestic students and the surrounding community. Vinther & Slethaug (2015) conducted a study of international students who are pursuing their education at Canadian and Danish Universities and found that English language competency and cultural differences proved to be challenges for international students making classroom interaction with domestic peers, instructors, and wider communities. Andrade (2006) reviewed past studies published between 1996 and 2005 on international students in five different English-speaking countries, (such as the United States of America, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand) and found that English language proficiency and culture constituted the main challenges for international students engaging in intercultural interaction with domestic peers. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, Brown and Holloway (2008), in an ethnographic study focusing on the adjustment journey of

international postgraduate students at an English university, indicated that culture shock and language problems represented challenges for social adjustment.

Basing on my personal experience as an international student, I agree with the above research findings. Cultural differences also influenced me while connecting with Canadians. In Ethiopia, when you are walking alone or in the group on the street, another individual who is walking nearby you passes greetings to you, even though that person may not know you. If you are alone, that person starts chatting with you and the two begin to walk together. I came from such a culture. I want to talk with Canadian people while walking on the street, at shopping centres, and on the bus, on Skytrain, and so on. In my observation, the Canadian people are very polite but silent. In the first few months, I felt confused, and intercultural interaction was somewhat tough. Later on, I would ask others for help, if only to make social interaction. Canadian people proved to be very cooperative and responded to my requests for help. But still, I am struggling to make friends with Canadian peers.

Another cultural difference is the frequency of saying thank you and sorry. In Ethiopia, saying thank you and sorry does not occur as frequently as does in Canada. The extent of using the terms thank you and sorry is greater in urban areas than in rural ones. In Canada, however, people frequently use the term thank you after every service. They also often say sorry even for minor matters. I sometimes forget to say ‘thank you’ after getting services.

In Ethiopia, if someone enters into the restaurant, she/he finds a place by himself/herself and orders. In Canada, in several restaurants that I entered, people wait for someone to show them to their table. During my first few weeks in Canada, I entered the restaurant and took a table by myself. Later, I socialized myself with the restaurant’s rule.

While walking on the street, I noticed another cultural difference. In my home country, people are not strict in following rules while walking on the street. In Canada, people seem quite careful while walking on the street. For example, some people leave a place for someone who is coming in front of the other. Moreover, some others keep a considerable physical distance while walking on the street. I was surprised to see such smooth behavior. I experienced mixed emotions. I asked myself: how can I socialize myself into this culture? And why are these people so very careful about each and everything? These customs seem simple, but they influence intercultural interaction.

Studies find that English language proficiency is one of the most pressing challenges for international students to interact with domestic students. In reviewing the most common stressors among international students studying in universities and colleges in the United States and Canada, Chen (1999) found that second language anxiety, as well as socio-cultural stressors (such as culture shock, social isolation and alienation, racial discrimination and prejudice), constituted challenges for international students to socially interact with domestic students. Smith and Kwahaja (2011) reviewed the acculturation experiences of international students and noted that language barriers can impede international students’ attempts to make friends and interact with locals. Another Australian study conducted by Sawir et al. (2008) aimed to examine loneliness and found that international students reported that cultural loneliness (triggered by the absence of the preferred cultural and/or linguistic environment) is a barrier to social engagement with their domestic counterparts.

I also share the challenge of language in intercultural interaction. English is my third language. My first language is ‘Wolaytattuwa’ which is spoken by Wolaytta people who are found in the southern part of Ethiopia. My second language is ‘Amharic’ which is spoken by the Amhara people who live in the northern part of Ethiopia. ‘Wolaytattuwa’ language belongs to the Omotic language family, whereas Amharic belongs to the Semitic language family. Amharic is the working language of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia [FDRE]. My pronunciation and accent create a challenge when I interact with

Canadian English language speakers. When I communicate with English language speakers, they don't understand what I am saying to them. I thought that I was speaking clearly, but they hardly listened to me. And I am also hardly listening to them. Some English language speakers speak very quickly and their pronunciation is unclear to me. However, I can understand those who speak slowly. To be honest, English language proficiency is one of the very critical challenges in intercultural interaction for me.

Several quantitative studies confirm the positive correlation between international students' English language proficiency level and their interaction with host-national students. In the United States, for example, Barratt and Huba (1994) studied factors related to international graduate student adjustment in an American community and found that international students' English competency increased self-esteem and was positively associated with more interpersonal relations with locals.

Duru and Poyrazli (2011) conducted a quantitative study on perceived discrimination, social connectedness, and other predictors of adjustment difficulties among Turkish international students in the United States; they found that students who reported higher levels of social connectedness, lower levels of perceived discrimination, more years of study in the United States, and higher levels of English language competency also reported lower levels of adjustment difficulties.

Zhang and Goodson (2011) found that English proficiency was a predictor of both psychological and socio-cultural adjustment. Moreover, as evidenced in several past studies (e.g. Dao et al., 2007; Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Poyrazli, et al. 2004; Sumer et al., 2008; Yeh & Inose, 2003) demonstrated that lower levels of English proficiency are a predictor of acculturative stress, and/or depression.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

The main purpose of this review was to review studies of written on international students' intercultural interaction with domestic students. To this end, several empirical studies, peer-reviewed articles, and published and unpublished PhD dissertations were reviewed. I attempted to closely review studies conducted on the international student intercultural interaction with domestic students in Canada as well as other well-known study destination countries for international students, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. The review findings confirmed that there is a low intercultural interaction between international and domestic students at Canadian post-secondary schools. Likewise, earlier studies of other most popular study destination countries for international students (such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia) also showed poor intercultural interaction between international and domestic students.

I continue to review reasons why international students enjoy little interaction with domestic peers. The main reasons appear to be English language proficiency and the host country's culture (e.g. Garies, 2012; Garies et al., 2011; God & Zhang, 2018; Kimmel & Volet, 2012).

I also reviewed research concerning cross-cultural adjustment (e.g. Brown & Holloway, 2008; Cena et al., 2021; Chang et al., 2006; Chaiyasat, 2020; Dunne, 2016; Wang et al., 2018; Yan and Noels, 2013;), diversity interactions (e.g., Bowman, 2013; Hurtado, 2001; Kimmel and Volet, 2012; Lyon & Guppy, 2016; Nelson, 2005; Reid & Garson, 2017; Osmond & Roed, 2010; Sawir et al., 2008), friendship formation and social connectedness (e.g., Hendrickson et al., 2011; Hotta & Ting-Toomy, 2013; Li & Zizzi, 2021; Smith et al., 2016; Renties & Nolan, 2014; Robinson et al., 2020; McKenzie & Baldassar, 2017) and intercultural communication (e.g., Jacobi, 2021; Kobayashi, 2010; French-Sloan, 2015; Sptzman, 2014; Zaharna, 2000).

Finally, I reviewed other associated studies written on domestic students' interaction with international students and intercultural competence (for example, studies conducted by Joh, 2013; Ngai, et al., 2020; Otoo, 2021; Patterson, 2007; Vu, 2021). Similar to those studies directly related to intercultural interaction; these studies also acknowledge that English language proficiency and the host country's culture as factors that affect intercultural interaction between international and domestic students. In addition, studies focusing on psychological issues like depression, stress, loneliness, and anxiety among international students confirmed that lower levels of English proficiency are a predictor of acculturative stress and depression (e.g., Dao, et al., 2007; Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Poyrazli et al., 2004; Sumer et al., 2008).

In the present review, international students' intercultural interaction with domestic students in Canadian universities was examined. The findings of this review cannot be generalizable to other universities outside of Canada that host many international students in their institutions. Further studies should conduct a comparative review or study from different countries to make the findings generalizable to other universities that found outside of Canada and host many international students. In addition, in this review, the influence of students' intercultural interaction on their social life, psychological well-being, and academic performance was not investigated. Future studies should be conducted on the extent of intercultural interaction between international and domestic students and how intercultural interaction affects international students' social lives, psychological well-being and academic performance. Further studies should be conducted to identify other variables that restrict international students from interacting with domestic students. In general, my review findings recommend that university leaders and faculty members work on language improvement programs and awareness-creation trainings on the host county culture.

Implications for Host Institutions

As identified in the review, studies in the most popular study destination countries for international students (such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand) consistently confirmed English language proficiency as the main challenge for international students in making intercultural interactions with domestic counterparts. International students who are originally from non-English-speaking countries and those whose English language is considered as a second or third language may face challenges while connecting with people who fluently speak the English language. Consequently, Vinther and Slethaug (2015) suggest it is important to provide English language tutoring, speaking, and comprehensive writing classes for international students. Thus, hosting institutions should continuously provide English language training for international students so as to improve their English language proficiency and intercultural interaction with domestic peers and surrounding community members.

Research in Australia (e.g., Baker, 2010; Ramburuth & Tani, 2009) acknowledges that transition challenges, principally academic and social, are magnified for international students. Culture is one of challenges that limits international students' intercultural interaction with domestic students. Hence, the host institutions should continuously provide counseling services for international students by recruiting counselors who are sensitive to the challenges international students face. Chen (1999) suggests that counselors' attitudes and expertise are the most important factors in building a constructive counseling service between counselor and international student client.

Pedersen (1995) suggests that the counselor has to be aware of the prejudice and bias of his or her own culturally rooted value system. Cadieux & Wehrly (1986) stress the cultural competency of the counselor. They recommended that the culturally sensitive counselor demonstrate cultural awareness, openness, and respect for different values, as well as tolerance for ambiguity, a willingness to learn, and a genuine concern for people with different values and from a different cultural background. Chen (1995a, 1995b) argues that

although the willingness, openness, and positivity of the counselor's attitude are critical, they are not enough to cultivate a constructive helping relationship. Chen (1995a, 1995b) suggested that counselors need to develop a comprehensive cross-cultural competence that includes cultural sensitivity, knowledge, and skills. In general, cross-cultural competence is not only relevant for practitioners (i.e., counselors, student advisors, and other student service providers) in colleges and universities but is also applicable to other helping professionals working in various cross-cultural and intercultural contexts (Chen, 1999).

The host institutions should build a supportive and facilitative atmosphere that assists international students in forming social connections with their domestic counterparts. As identified in Chen (1999) study, the lack of social connectedness is one of the main stressors for international students in the new country. Pedersen (1991) suggested that providing informal way of counseling services for international students is more productive than counseling encounters in a formal context when helping international students cope with their educational and socio-cultural adjustments. Chen (1999) adds rather than waiting for the individual client to come to the counseling office for help, the counseling center staff may be proactive, organizing activities such as workshops and support groups.

In Canadian and Australian universities and colleges, there are peer pairing programs and peer advisors for international students that aim to improve interaction with domestic peers, with the host culture, and enable educational and social adjustment. In studying the effectiveness of peer-pairing programs in Canadian and Australian universities, Westwood and Barker (1990) observed that a peer-pairing program can help international students adjust more successfully to the host culture. However, the host institutions should provide continuous training for participants in peer-paired programs and peer advisors concerning cross-cultural sensitivity, knowledge, and communication skills (Chen, 1995a, 1995b; Westwood & Ishiyama, 1990). Furthermore, based on personal experiences and observations, Chen (1999) recommended good planning and organization, promoting and recruiting more peers from the host culture, trainings, and finally, coordination and continuous follow-up as necessary tasks for a successful peer-pairing program.

Implications for Domestic Students

Many research findings demonstrate that intercultural interaction with international students is helpful to domestic students. In the United States, a recent quantitative study aimed at examining the educational benefits gained from interacting with international students found that, in comparison to non-interactive domestic students, highly interactive domestic students with international students reported significantly higher levels of development in a wide range of areas across the three cohorts (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013).

In Australia, the other study conducted by Wang (2012) stated that international students bring unique learning styles to the classrooms, which supports domestic students in acquiring different learning styles. The other research work in the United States, by William & Johnson (2011) in their "Why Can't We Be Friends?" study, found that domestic students who engage intercultural interaction with international student friends are more open-minded than those without international student friends. Furthermore, earlier studies also confirmed that intercultural interaction with international students helps domestic students learn how to work in a multi-cultural society (e.g., Trice, 2003; Volet & Ang, 1998). Therefore, domestic students should engage intercultural interaction with international students via different means. For example,

- i. Participating in peer pairing programs. In most universities, there are peer pairing programs. Peer pairing programs create a good opportunity for students to engage with different cultural groups.

- ii. Involving in different social gathering events on the campus. Different universities design social gathering events on campus. Involving in social gathering events enhances students' intercultural interaction with various groups.
- iii. Improving classroom and out-of-the classroom interactions. Students' interactions are not limited classroom, but extended out of the classroom. Both in-and out-of-the classroom interactions are imperative to improving intercultural interaction among diverse groups.

Implications for International Students

Studies confirm that intercultural interaction with domestic students is advantageous to international students too. Despite the fact that having friends from the same ethnic background might be beneficial for international students in promoting positive acculturation, intercultural interaction with domestic students is more advantageous for social, academic, and psychological adjustments. In the United States, for example, studies conducted by Srivastava et al. (2009) and Yehet al. (2008) found that international students who interact with host national students and who are more socially connected adjust faster to the new learning environment and experience less culture shock than those who do not. Researchers (such as Alexitch & Chapdelainem, 2004) suggest that host friendship plays a crucial role in helping international students learn appropriate social norms, and where there is a lack of intercultural interaction, international students may experience more long-standing effects of culture shock.

Furthermore, other studies in the United States (e.g., Lulat & Altbach, 1985; Perrucci & Hu, 1995; Westwood & Barker, 1990) found that international students who have United States friends were more likely to have higher grades and higher retention rates as compared to those who did not have any local friends. Recent studies (e.g., McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Muthswamy et al., 2006; Zuniga et al., 2005) in the same country confirmed that intercultural interaction with domestic students is not only helping international students with social adjustment but also plays a significant role in their academic adjustment as well. Chen (1999) suggested that international students are encouraged to adopt a more holistic view of the interaction between themselves and the environment rather than focusing on individual incidents. Therefore, international students should ensure the consistent intercultural interaction with domestic students by being highly involved in various social events that are organized by host institutions and aim to improve intercultural interaction with local students.

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