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THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH ON THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS STUDYING IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The number of Chinese students studying abroad has increased in recent years, with English becoming a mandatory language. Language learning affects cultural identities to varying degrees. This study investigates how English affects the cultural identity of Chinese students studying in Malaysia. A mixed-method approach was used, involving samples of 45 Chinese students from Malaysian universities. Data were gathered using a questionnaire with five sections, exploring participants' attitudes toward the influence of English on their Chinese cultural identity. Interviews were conducted to explore how English affects their cultural identity. Descriptive statistical analysis and content analysis were used to analyse collected data. Results and findings indicate that English does influence the Chinese cultural identity of most bilingual or multilingual Chinese students. However, it is not viewed as a dominant language among Chinese students in Malaysia. This study proved that the English language boosts cultural confidence levels, which could be crucial for future research. However, this study is limited due to the lack of numerical data to support the findings that could represent Chinese students as a whole. This study could be improved by increasing the number and diversity of respondents and conducting further research to support the findings.

Keywords: *Bilingual, Chinese cultural identity, Chinese student, cultural confidence, English, Malaysia*

INTRODUCTION

The trend among young Chinese adults to pursue higher education abroad has become increasingly evident in recent years as a means of gaining an international perspective, improving language skills, and broadening educational horizons (Bodycott, 2009). This trend is partly driven by the intense competition and pressure surrounding the Gaokao National College Entrance Examination (NCEE). Bodycott indicated that due to the extremely fierce competition for university places in mainland China, many students and parents in China view studying abroad as an escape from the intense competition and pressure surrounding the NCEE and seek a more diverse and flexible educational experience.

For the past few years, Malaysia has become a popular country for Chinese students seeking to study abroad (Zhai & Razali, 2022). According to Low, Yang, and Yeoh (2014), five factors influencing students' choice of study in Malaysia include social conditions, university image, and educational cost. Malaysia offers diverse academic programmes and is known for its high-quality education system, affordable tuition fees, and multicultural society. According to the information prepared by Education Malaysia Global Services' (EMGS), the number of applications received has been steadily increasing in the past few years, with Chinese international students representing a large proportion at 69.7% in 2021.

Research Problem

English has emerged as the world's lingua franca (Kim et al., 2010). English is also considered the language of science, technology, and business; therefore, it is regarded as the linchpin of success in these fields. Even though Mandarin has been the world's most widely spoken mother tongue, English has established itself as the strongest language in the globalised world (Seppälä, 2011).

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The influence of language on cultural identity is significant, and globalised English is one of the important reasons for the decrease of the cultural identity of English learners (Alfarhan, 2016). The influence of English on the cultural identity of Chinese students studying abroad has been a widely debated topic in recent years. English proficiency has become a crucial prerequisite for Chinese students to excel academically and professionally in the global arena.

However, Feng (2009) indicated that apprehensions have arisen regarding the potential erosion of Chinese cultural identity stemming from the prioritisation of English language proficiency. Detractors contend that English has caused a neglect of the Chinese language and culture. Chinese students studying abroad may struggle to preserve a robust linkage with their cultural heritage.

However, proponents of learning English and studying abroad argue that exposure to different cultures and languages can enhance cultural identity by facilitating cultural exchange and broadening horizons. By studying abroad and learning English, Chinese students can gain a better understanding of Western culture and values while also sharing their own culture with others. Moreover, they can develop a sense of cosmopolitanism, a concept that emphasises a global outlook while maintaining cultural roots, which can help them navigate the complex and diverse world of today.

Gao's (2011) research highlights the importance of language in shaping individuals' sense of identity and belonging. For Chinese student, Mandarin connects with their cultural heritage and national identity. By affirming their identification with the Chinese national imagination, Chinese students can gain a stronger sense of identity and pride in their cultural heritage, contributing to a greater sense of patriotism. Moreover, Gao's (2011) research highlights the role of language in promoting cultural diversity and understanding and in enhancing an individual's ability to interact and engage with people from different cultural contexts and perspectives.

Currently, the examination of cultural identity in the context of English language use remains a topic of debate. While numerous studies have been conducted on the subject, some lack a thorough and methodical approach to research. Consequently, their findings may not be comprehensive, and specific criteria for the study sample or authoritative support for data analysis may be absent. Moreover, these studies have failed to address the underlying effect of English in the cultural identity of Chinese students in a diverse Malaysian social environment. Therefore, conducting a study on this subject in the Malaysian context would hold significant value in advancing our understanding of this complex issue.

Research Objectives

Drawing on the extant literature by Seppälä (2011) and Gao (2011), it is apparent that a significant gap remains in our understanding of the effect of English on the cultural identity of Chinese students studying in Malaysia. This study aims to narrow this gap by investigating the experiences of Chinese students in Malaysia, a context characterised by its multilingual and multicultural environment. Therefore, this study comes up with two research objectives:

1. To contribute to the discourse surrounding whether the increased demand for English and multiculturalism has affected the sense of Chinese identity among Chinese university students.
2. To examine whether Chinese students' attitudes towards Chinese cultural identity and language have changed following their exposure to English and other cultures.

Research Questions

1. How does the demand for English affect the Chinese cultural identity of Chinese students in Malaysia?
2. How do the attitudes of Chinese students in Malaysia towards Chinese cultural identity change due to exposure to English and other cultures?

Research Significant

The importance of this study lies in advancing the understanding of the potential influence of English and multiculturalism on the cultural identity of Chinese students in Malaysia. By filling the gap in existing research, this study can provide insights into how the use of English and exposure to diverse cultures can shape Chinese university students' cultural identity and attitudes. Such insights can inform educational policies

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and practices that foster intercultural competence and promote the maintenance of cultural identity among Chinese students in multicultural settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the literature on the influences of English on cultural identity among Chinese students, focusing on how exposure to the English language and different cultural values can impact their sense of cultural identity and cultural belonging. It also explores the challenges and opportunities that arise when Chinese students navigate multiple cultural identities in the Malaysian context. This literature review intends to elucidate the relationship between language, culture and identity of Chinese students.

English as A Global Language

Kachru (1992) defines English as a global language due to historical, social, and political factors. On the other hand, some scholars have criticised the treatment of English as a global language. Phillipson (1992) proposed that the spread of English led to Western culture and values dominating other cultures and languages. He suggests that English is being used as a tool of neo-colonialism, where Western countries impose their language and culture on non-Western countries. Similarly, Canagarajah (2006) argues that the spread and globalisation of English have led to the marginalisation of other languages and cultures.

English in China

The development of English in China can trace its roots back to the mid-19th century when British and American traders made their first arrivals in the country. During the early 20th century, English language teaching was established in China's universities and became more widespread. Bolton (2020) indicated that since the "Reform and Opening" strategy was implemented in 1977, English education has been incorporated into China's education policy, English has become one of the core subjects from primary to high school, and the number of universities offering English as a major is rapidly increasing. With the growth of China's economy and its integration into the global market, the demand for English proficiency has also increased. Today, English is widely taught and practised in China, becoming an important tool for international communication, trade, and cultural exchange. Education is the dominant field in China where English is used (Bolton, 2009). According to Seppälä (2011), China today has the largest group of English learners in the world and has become a significant market for English language education, with many foreign language schools and training centres opening across the country.

The English Language in Malaysia

Malaysia is multilingual with a rich linguistic and cultural heritage (Kim et al., 2010). The country is home to numerous ethnic groups, each with its own languages and cultural practices. The official language of Malaysia is Bahasa Malaysia; however, English has become the dominant language in many areas, including education, business and politics (Kim et al., 2010 & Abu Bakar et al., 2021).

The origins and development of English in Malaysia can be traced back to the colonial period. British colonialism brought the English language to Malaysia and established its status as the language of administration and commerce (Kim, 2003). Today, many Malaysians are fluent in the language. However, there are concerns that the dominance of English may threaten other languages used in Malaysia. In recent years, the Malaysian government has implemented policies to preserve and promote the country's linguistic diversity (Hashim,2020). In addition to Bahasa Malaysia and English, Malaysians also speak various other languages, including Chinese, Tamil, and various indigenous languages (Kim, 2003). The majority of Malaysians, especially the younger generation, are bilingual or multilingual, and it is common practice to code-switch between languages. Despite this, the evolution of the English language in Malaysia has also created "Manglish" otherwise known as Malaysian English, which integrates local slang like "lah, loh, gua, meh and ah" (Nicholas, 2021).

Chinese Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is a dynamic, socially constructed phenomenon influenced by various elements, such as language, education and multicultural environment (Su & Ma,2021). One of the central components of Chinese cultural identity is Confucianism, a philosophical and ethical system that has shaped Chinese society for thousands of years. The fundamental value of

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Confucianism is deeply rooted in the significance of familial and blood relations and is greatly respected by the Chinese (Wu, 2015). Many scholars argue that these values continue to influence Chinese cultural identity today, emphasising maintaining social order and respect for tradition.

Collectivism is another important aspect of Chinese cultural identity. The collectivist culture in China has been significantly shaped by the moral values and principles espoused by Confucianism. These moral values emphasise the crucial role of community harmony and the individual's responsibility to society (Kenneth, 2022). Collectivism emphasises the importance of group harmony and interdependence, emphasising family and community values over individualism (Kenneth,2022). Modernisation has also significantly impacted Chinese cultural identity (Steele& Lynch,2012). Rapid economic growth and globalisation have led to significant changes in Chinese society, with many younger generations adopting more individualistic values and prioritising personal achievement over community values (Grassso & Corrin, 2015).

English as a Language of Function and Empowerment

Language significantly impacts cultural identity, and the globalisation of English is one of the major reasons why second language learners lose their cultural identity (Alfarhan, 2016). However, Gao's (2011) research demonstrates that Chinese learners tend to affirm and often demonstrate their identification with the Chinese national imagination, which contributes to a stronger sense of Chinese national identity and enhanced patriotism. The view of English as an empowering language is concluded by many similar studies (Ajmal et al., 2020; Alfarhan, 2016; Alloh & Kilie, 2020; Kim et al., 2010; Lie, 2017). The similarity in findings towards the empowerment from the English language is the perception it helps improve the socio-economic status of the learner. Kim et al. (2010) and Alloh and Kilie's (2020) studies also found that English fluency elevates learners' confidence and status when socialising with others using the English language. Despite a decade of difference in study and location, the empowering effect of learning the English language cannot be overlooked or underestimated. English is also viewed as a language that empowers modern communication internationally compared to national languages that focus on unifying nations or carriers of tradition and history (Lie, 2017).

English as A Means of Cross-Cultural Communication

The impact of the English language on cultural diversity has been a topic of interest and concern for many scholars in recent years. The increasing popularity and dominance of the English language worldwide have led some to argue that it threatens the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity (Baugh, 2009). Otheguy and García (2019) assert that language and culture are intimately linked, and the spread of a single language could ultimately result in the homogenisation of cultures and the loss of linguistic and cultural diversity. Baugh (2009) argues that the loss of linguistic diversity may lead to the loss of cultural values of traditions, a view is supported by a growing body of research.

However, some individuals argue that English serves a significant function beyond facilitating communication. As a lingua franca, it helps eliminate communication barriers between diverse cultures. Several scholars have argued that the ascendancy of English as a lingua franca has positively influenced cultural development by bringing individuals from diverse cultures together, enabling them to share their ideas and cultures. English proficiency represents not only language skills but also cultural awareness and comprehension. This can be attributed to several factors based on the domains identified in Seppälä's (2011) research. Gao's (2011) study highlighted that Chinese learners often exhibit their identification with China and Chinese national identity, strengthening their patriotism and reinforcing Chinese national identity. Seppälä's study revealed that English language proficiency boosted the respondents' confidence in their cultural identity. Additionally, learning English and gaining knowledge of Western culture encouraged Chinese students to return to and promote traditional Chinese culture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The theoretical framework utilised in this study is ethnographic to investigate how Chinese students studying in Malaysia perceive the effects of English and Malaysian multiculturalism on their own cultural

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identity. By adopting a perspective of ethnography, the researchers aimed to capture the complexity and subtlety of Chinese students' interactions with English and Malaysian multiculturalism.

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach with a research instrument adapted from Seppälä (2011) and Gao (2011), including a closed-ended questionnaire as well as an open-ended online interview. The questionnaire has four parts with 38 questions, investigating participants' background information, attitudes towards English, perceptions of the influence of English on cultural identity and the impact of other cultures on Chinese cultural identity. In the questionnaire, a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree') was used to gather participants' views on the impact of English on cultural identity. It is worth noting that the scale was used even though some of the questions were originally designed as yes/no responses, a conscious approach to capture nuanced opinions and perceptions. The Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire scale was 0.816, indicating satisfactory reliability. The online interview included ten open-ended questions to extend the participants' responses to the questionnaire. Content and statistical analyses were used in the data analysis session.

Participants

This study employed a purposive sampling method to select 47 Chinese students from six universities in Malaysia as participants. The selection criteria included participants of Chinese nationality who possessed basic English language proficiency and were able to respond to questionnaires and interviews. The participants comprised 17 males and 30 females aged 18 to 35. Except for one participant whose mother tongue is English, the remaining participants were native speakers of Mandarin or other Chinese dialects. Among the participants were 15 undergraduate candidates, 22 postgraduate candidates, and 10 doctoral candidates. Specifically, 19 participants were enrolled at the University of Malaya (UM), 10 at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), nine at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), seven at International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), one at University College Sedaya International (UCSI), and one at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM).

Data Collection

The data were collected from April 19, 2023, to May 17, 2023, over a period of approximately one month. The researcher used Google Forms to collect the participants' responses to the closed-ended questionnaire. After reviewing the data obtained through the questionnaire, three undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral participants, each with more than three years of study experience at their respective universities, were selected to join the open-ended online interview via the "WeChat" application.

Research Procedure

The research process was divided into four phases. In the first phase, the researchers extended the theoretical framework of Seppälä's (2011) study and adapted the questionnaire and interview questions used in Seppälä's (2011) and Gao's (2011) studies, considering the research objectives and questions. In the second phase, the researchers collected 47 questionnaires that met the requirements by distributing Google forms as quantitative research data. In the third phase, the researcher reviewed the data from the 47 questionnaires, selected seven participants who had studied in Malaysia for more than three years and inquired whether they would be willing to participate in the interview, and finally selected one undergraduate candidate, one graduate candidate, and one doctoral candidate to be the interviewees. Afterwards, the researcher conducted three online interviews via WeChat and transcribed the interview conversations as the collected data.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Analysis

The results regarding participants' background information indicate that 37 of participants' first language is Mandarin Chinese, 9 speak other dialects or languages from China, and only one participant's native language is English. The results for question1.10, "What other languages do you speak?", reveal that out of the 42 participants, they can speak English, 35 can speak other Chinese dialects, and 15 can speak other foreign languages such as Japanese, Korean, Malay, Arabic, and others. This indicates that, except for one

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participant, the rest can be considered bilingual or trilingual speakers.

English Language

The findings from the second section of the study reveal that all participants have at least two years of experience in English language learning. Furthermore, 63.8% of participants indicated they were regularly exposed to English through their daily activities, while the rest were exposed to English to varying degrees. In terms of English language usage, 53.1% of participants indicated frequent use of English in their daily lives, and 17% of participants perceived the frequency of English usage as relatively low. Additionally, 47.7% of participants agree that English is their first choice for communicating with others, and 39.8% disagree. 34% of participants used English more than other languages in social media or social activities, and 31.9% used Chinese or other languages more often in social activities.

The results of question 2.6 show that 61.7% of participants believed that their performance would be different when using English than when using Chinese, 48.9% of participants believed that talking to others in English would affect their impression of others, while 27.7% did not think so. Results of question 2.8 show that 48.9% of participants believe English affects the use of Chinese (*see* Figure 1), while 40.4% believe that the two languages do not influence each other.

40.4% of participants believe that English affects the use of other languages, while 46.8% disagree. Additionally, 75.5% of participants believed learning English affected their behaviour, understanding and experience. 90.8% of participants agree that English will somehow affect their future.

Language and Cultural Identity

Questions 3.1 and 3.2 show that 93.6% of participants have an English name, 44.6% prefer to use their English name, and 27.6% prefer to use Chinese name.

The results of question 3.3 show that 55.3% of participants do not think English has affected their Chinese cultural identity, and 29.8% agree. For question 3.4, 48.9% of the participants do not believe that the increasing demand for English in China will affect their cultural identity, while 38.3% agree. The result of question 3.5 shows that 38.3% of participants believe that English has indeed changed their Chinese cultural identity and views on China to some extent, while 42.5% disagree. 55.3% of participants agree that English has changed their perception of other countries, and 21.2% against it.

Figure 2 shows the results of question 3.7, which showed that 51.1% of participants believed that English enhanced their sense of Chinese cultural identity. The results of question 3.8 show that only 8.5% of the participants believed that English weakened their sense of Chinese cultural identity.

Chinese Culture

Results of question 4.1 show that 55.3% of participants believe that Chinese culture and Western culture are equally appealing, while 40.4% of participants find Chinese culture more appealing. For question 4.2: "What is your opinion on the integration of Western customs

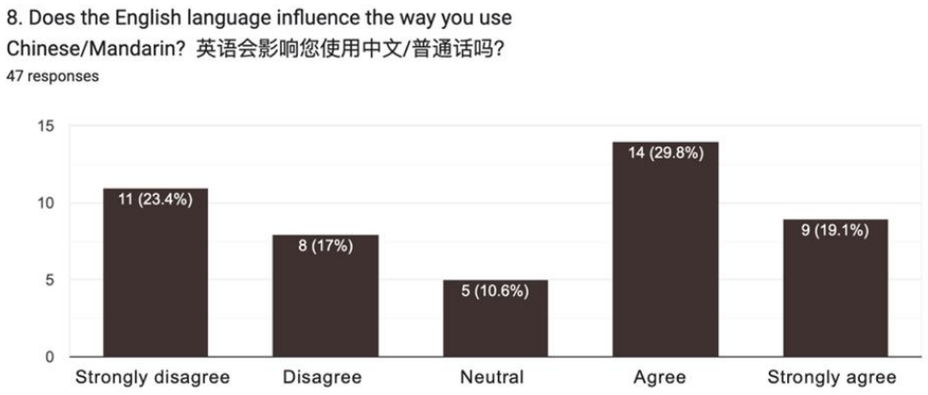


Figure 1 Result of question 2.8

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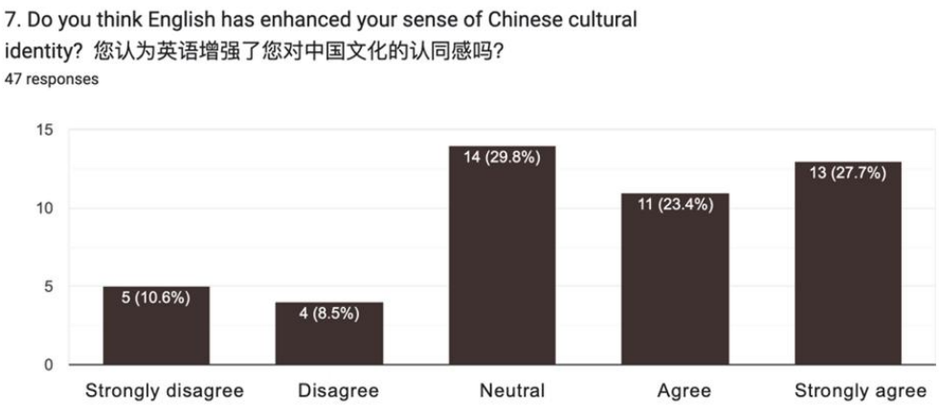


Figure 2 Result to question 3.7

into Chinese culture?" 53.2% of participants are neutral, and 40.6% consider it a good thing. Question 4.3 shows that 51.1% of participants think their cultural identity is the same as most Chinese people's (*see* Figure 3), and 19.2% think their Chinese cultural identity is different from most Chinese people.

For question 4.4, 61.7% of the participants agree that there is a significant difference in cultural identity between them and their grandparents or parents, while only 10.6% disagree. Question 4.5: "Do you perceive a significant difference in cultural identity between yourself and your friends living in China?"The percentage of agreement and disagreement are equal, which is 38.3%. In terms of questions 4.6 and 4.7, 74.4% of the participants agree that they feel more compelled to defend Chinese culture when it is questioned by foreigners (*see* Figure 4), and 78.7% of participants think they are interested in promoting Chinese culture to students from other countries.

Results of questions 4.8 and 4.9 show that 61.7% of the participants think English has enhanced their confidence in Chinese culture, while only 14.7% of them think English has weakened their confidence in Chinese culture.

Qualitative Analysis

In this section, the researcher will analyse the results of the interviews for each of the ten questions in turn. The interviews are divided into three parts, which are:

1. general perceptions of Chinese and other cultures
2. the influence of English on Chinese cultural identity
3. the influence of foreign culture on Chinese cultural identity.

Interviewees were marked with capital letters and numbers, F for female and M for male. The two female interviewees are marked as F1 and F2, while the only

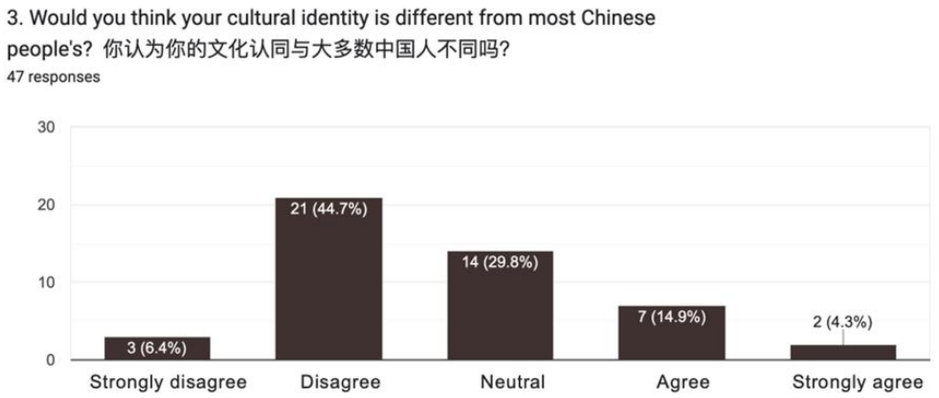


Figure 3 Result of question 4.3

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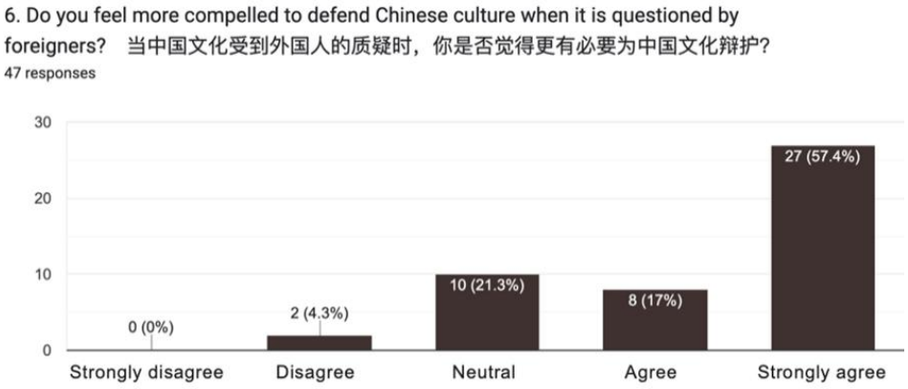


Figure 4 Result of question 4.6

male is marked as M1. The examples in the interviews were transcribed verbatim via WeChat voice and were all spoken by the interviewees.

General Perceptions of Chinese and Other Cultures

The interviews aimed to discover the interviewees' views on Chinese English and foreign cultures. The first question of the interview was: "What do you consider to be part of your 'Chinese culture and Chinese identity?" All three interviewees said that it mainly included traditional Chinese concepts, cultural festivals, customs and Chinese behavioural norms. F1 said: "*For Chinese identity, in fact, I think it should be a carrier of culture. In studying abroad, Chinese identity symbolises the combination of cultures*". F2 said *"China has a 5,000-year history and Chinese culture is a custom that has been passed down from generation to generation".*

In response to the second question, "What do you think is the biggest difference between Chinese culture and the culture of other countries?", all three interviewees agreed that Chinese culture spans a longer period of time than other cultures and is relatively more complete, richer and more diverse. F1 also believed that the difference between these two is also shown in the difference in values. F2 also said that Chinese culture is influenced by Confucianism, focuses on etiquette, family, and collective values.

The Influence of English on Chinese Cultural Identity

The second part of the interview, covering questions 3 to 6, aimed to investigate the potential impact of the English language on the interviewees' cultural identity. Question 3: "Compared with before and after mastering English, how has your attitude towards Chinese culture changed? How has your understanding of the outside world and different countries changed?" All three interviewees said that learning English helped them understand Chinese and other cultures. F1 expressed the view that cultures have a mutually inclusive relationship. She said, *"All kinds of cultures are a mutually inclusive relationship." "I have seen a lot of cultures that are different from China. Well, in fact, most of us have broadened our horizons, understand this culture better, and sometimes even like this culture."* F2 said that this change is reflected in their desire to maintain Chinese culture on social media and in their lives, promote Chinese culture to people from other countries, and express their pride in Chinese culture. In addition, M1 believed that exposure to other cultures while studying in Malaysia has enhanced their sense of belonging to Chinese culture.

As for question 4, all interviewees responded in the affirmative that English has given them a better understanding of other cultures. Question 5 asks: "Do you feel that your sense of Chinese cultural identity has changed under the impact of English?" All three interviewees believed that it had changed to some extent, but the exact degree and direction of change varied based on personal experiences and perspectives. F1 believed that Chinese cultural identity is innate to Chinese people, and learning English will not lead to fundamental changes but will produce some changes in cognition: *"After learning a language, maybe you will change your cognition, and then changed the behaviour, which led to some collisions with some things in Chinese culture."* M1 mentioned that the main change is that English has brought him a new perspective on things,

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making him more tolerant. F2 believes that she was influenced by English and Western culture during high school, thinking Western culture was free and democratic. However, after coming to study in a university in Malaysia, she developed a preference for Chinese culture. *"Especially when Malaysian Chinese celebrate Chinese festivals, the atmosphere gives me a sense of belonging."*

In response to question 6, interviewees were asked whether they felt pressure to learn and use English in Malaysia and whether this pressure had in any way affected their Chinese cultural identity. The results showed that all three interviewees indicated that learning English did not put too much pressure on them. Specifically, F1 and M1 did not think that the pressure from learning English was enough to impact their Chinese cultural identity. They felt that learning English as simply a language-learning process and did not change their cultural identity as Chinese people. However, F2 mentioned that the stress of learning English was mainly in the interaction with lecturers and classmates in the classroom. She was concerned that her English proficiency would make others think Chinese students do not speak English well. Although she experienced stress about learning English, she did not mention that this stress had any substantial impact on her Chinese cultural identity.

The Influence of Foreign Culture on Chinese Cultural Identity

The results of question 7 show that the interviewees all agreed that their identity is that of foreign students, and they need to communicate with the locals in a friendly manner to understand and tolerate more thoughts and cultures. M1 pointed out that understanding and acceptance of multiculturalism can be enhanced through exchanges with local people. F2 believed that as a Chinese, it is difficult to fully integrate into the multiculturalism of Malaysia. However, she is thankful that there are Malaysian Chinese, which makes her feel that Malaysia's multiculturalism is very friendly. She also mentioned that since Chinese students' English proficiency may be limited, they are more inclined to communicate with Chinese or Malaysian Chinese.

The results of question 8 showed that all three interviewees believed that contact with other cultures had changed their Chinese cultural identity. F1 mentioned that exposure to different cultures broadens people's horizons and their values may change. When comparing the advantages and disadvantages of two cultures, the sense of identity of Chinese culture will change. F2 said that exposure to other national cultures enabled her to view the Chinese culture and other cultures from a more objective perspective, which also changed her worldview.

Based on the above results and findings, English does influence to some extent the Chinese cultural identity of most bilingual or multilingual Chinese students. English acquisition not only enhances students' competence in terms of language skills, but also helps them to expand their cultural knowledge and understanding. This can be attributed to Seppälä (2011) study, the spread of English restores and strengthens the national and cultural identity of Chinese students and enhances their sense of belonging to Chinese culture. This finding aligns with Gao's (2011) study, which shows that Chinese learners tend to affirm and often demonstrate their identification with China and Chinese national identity to people from other countries, strengthening Chinese national identity and reinforcing patriotism. Seppälä's (2011) study also highlights that English makes respondents feel more confident about their cultural identity. Learning English and learning about Malaysia's diverse culture inspires Chinese students to return to their traditional Chinese culture and proclaim their culture to the world.

Canagarajah's (2006) study suggests that the globalisation and dominance of English may pose a threat to the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity. However, the findings contradict this view among Chinese students in Malaysia. According to the latest research, English does not weaken their sense of identification with Chinese culture. In fact, most Chinese students see English as an instrumental language, used primarily for study, work, and communication with people from other cultures, rather than as a necessary element that must be used in everyday life. Therefore, the erosion of English on Chinese students' cultural identity can be said to be minimal.

Another reason is that Malaysia has a very tolerant social and cultural environment, which also encourages Chinese students to take a more tolerant view of foreign and Chinese cultures and thus gain a better understanding of Chinese culture. This inclusiveness

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has enabled Chinese students to gain a sense of affiliation with Chinese culture in Malaysia, without worrying about diminishing their cultural identity by using English.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that English can enhance Chinese international students' sense of cultural identity. It provides valuable information for the provision of better support and educational policies. The importance of this study lies in filling a gap in the influence of English and multiculturalism on the cultural identity of Chinese students in Malaysia. The findings of this study enable a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of how English and multiculturalism affect the cultural identity of Chinese international students in Malaysia. However, there are some potential limitations to this study. Firstly, the sample size was small and may not be representative of the views and experiences of all Chinese international students. Secondly, the study relied on self-reported data, which may suffer from subjective bias or inaccurate information from participants. Future research could conduct cross-cultural comparisons to explore differences in Chinese international students' attitudes and experiences of English and cultural identity in different countries or regions. Furthermore, this study only surveyed Chinese international students at a specific period and was unable to capture changes over time. Future research could use a longitudinal design to track changes in the cultural identity of Chinese students over time. The study explored the influence of English and multiculturalism on the cultural identity of Chinese international students but did not address other possible influences such as social support, personal experience and educational background. Considering these factors may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural identity of Chinese students in Malaysia.

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