

A Study of International Chinese Language Teachers' Stereotypes of International Students

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Teachers' stereotypes of students affect teaching behaviour. Correctly perceiving stereotypes of international students helps teachers to understand the student population more deeply and adopt effective teaching behaviour. This study focuses on the stereotypes of international Chinese language teachers towards international students in Chinese universities and its impact on teachers' classroom management and students' classroom performance. Summarizing the findings, we conclude that international Chinese language teachers have both positive and negative stereotypes of the international student body, and that negative stereotypes account for more than positive stereotypes. On this basis, this study further discusses the importance of international Chinese language teachers being aware of the existence of stereotypes of international students, and makes suggestions to strengthen the positive influences and weaken the negative ones.

Keywords: stereotypes, international Chinese language teachers, international students, intercultural communication

Stereotypes refer to the fixed, generalized perceptions of a certain type of person or thing, believing that all such people or things have fixed characteristics, while ignoring individual differences. Stereotypes have a great impact on our social activities, both positively, as they can simplify cognition, and negatively, as ignoring individual differences can easily lead to cognitive errors, preconceptions, and wrong judgments or behaviour.

In the field of education, different attitudes and expectations of teachers towards their students can produce different educational outcomes. Under the influence of stereotypes, teachers may treat students differently because of their personal experiences or preferences. Although it is true that teachers viewing certain types of students with a particular impression can have positive effects, such as encouragement, and give students confidence, in most cases, teachers' stereotypes of students are more likely to create cognitive biases and form prejudices. The role of the Chinese language teacher is crucial in the process of Chinese language learning for international students. Teachers not only need to have a rich knowledge of basic Chinese language, Chinese skills, and Chinese culture, but also have good intercultural communication skills.

The international student community is not only faced with communication barriers due to language differences, but may also be affected by differences in country, colour, social environment, living habits, history and culture, resulting in psychological and physical discomfort. International Chinese language teachers are one of the first groups of international students to come into contact with and often have a direct impact on them. Therefore, international Chinese language teachers must pay attention to the influence caused by

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stereotypes of international students, build on their strengths and avoid their weaknesses, and help international students master their communicative skills and adapt to Chinese society. Therefore, this paper investigates the current situation of international Chinese teachers' stereotypes of international students and further discusses the impact of stereotypes on teaching and learning, using the topic of international Chinese teachers' stereotypes of international students.

Introduction to the Questionnaire on Stereotypes of International Students by International Chinese Language Teachers

Questionnaire Respondents

The questionnaire was administered to international Chinese language teachers in Chinese universities and to students of Chinese international education who have had teaching experience.

Firstly, international Chinese language teachers are the most crucial respondents of this questionnaire. The teachers' personal experience is the main source of the questionnaire data, which is an important support for maintaining the accuracy and authenticity of the data, and is also the basis for the analysis and conclusion of this paper.

Secondly, practice is an important part of the curriculum for students in this major. Practice includes building language partner relationships with international students, mock internships, month-long internships, as well as student-initiated overseas teaching projects, Chinese and foreign student exchange activities, etc. Therefore, the data provided by the Chinese International Education students are also of great reference value.

Purpose of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is based on closed questions, with open questions added after some of the closed questions, setting questions on factors such as international students' personality, second language immersion, gender, country, discipline, grades, curiosity about sensitive issues, etc. The aim is to collect statistical data and findings through the closed questions, as well as to obtain teaching cases through the open questions, to summarize teachers' and students' perceptions of stereotypes, to provide some inspiration and suggestions on strategies for dealing with teaching problems arising from stereotypes.

Form and Rationale of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was based on the principles of keeping to the objectives, neutrality, and ease of response, combining closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were based on a five-point Richter scale, in which respondents are asked to select a single answer from "strongly agree, agree, average, disagree, and strongly disagree". The open-ended section was designed to collect real-life examples of teaching and learning, and respondents were asked to fill in examples of teaching and learning related to the question.

The questionnaire was designed to divide teachers' stereotypes of international students into three categories: One is the stereotypes that international Chinese teachers have of the international student population as a whole. According to the results of the interviews, reliance on the mother tongue is a prominent problem among international students. In addition, among the questions often raised by international students that are not related to the teaching content, sensitive issues are raised more often. Secondly, teachers' stereotypes of groups of international students from particular countries, i.e., the existence of different stereotypes of international students from different countries. Thirdly, teachers' stereotypes of individual

international students, including stereotypes based on personality, dress, gender, and other factors. In addition, another category of questions investigates the impact of stereotypes on classroom teaching and learning, and is based on open-ended questions.

Questionnaire Analysis of Results

The results of the questionnaires returned: 36 questionnaires for teachers and 32 questionnaires for students, a total of 68 questionnaires. Based on the questionnaires returned, the following results are summarized.

Stereotypes of International Chinese Teachers About the International Student Community as a Whole

International students' indiscipline. Through observation and interviews, it was found that Chinese language teachers generally set up special classroom discipline rules for international students, but the effect is not obvious and many teachers still have a stereotypical image of international students as undisciplined.

From the results of the questionnaire, about 30% of the subjects directly agreed that international students were undisciplined; most of the subjects agreed that international students lacked a sense of time, liked to answer questions directly, and often played with their mobile phones or chatted in class, among which the issues with more than 50% agreement were: no sense of time and not raising their hands to answer questions.

Table 1

Stereotypes Caused by Indiscipline

	There are many undisciplined international students			No sense of time, often late/missing classes/excused absences		
	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree
Teachers	38.89%	38.89%	22.23%	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%
Students	25.12%	56.25%	18.75%	75%	18.75%	6.25%
	No hands up to answer questions			Playing with mobile phones and chatting in class		
	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree
Teachers	77.78%	16.67%	5.56%	38.89%	44.44%	16.67%
Students	74.5%	18.75%	6.25%	56.25%	37.5%	6.25%

In the early international student management system, the management of domestic universities was often guided by foreign policy, and gradually formed the wrong management concept of “foreign guests as the main focus and students as the secondary focus”, and the university management simply treated international students as foreign guests and gave them special treatment. For example, in the daily management, emphasis is placed on international friendly relations, and green channels are opened for minor issues such as students' leave of absence, teaching, and examinations (Q. D. Xiao & W. N. Xiao, 2017). The bias at the management level has two sides: The positive side is that it demonstrates China's friendly diplomatic attitude and makes it easy for international students to adapt to the new learning environment; the negative side is that it leads to loose discipline among some international students, making it more difficult for teachers to teach and manage them. Even if teachers relax their disciplinary standards, problems such as international students' lack of time consciousness, disorderly classes, and lack of respect for teachers still make it difficult for teachers to find effective countermeasures, thus creating some negative stereotypes.

International students have a native language dependency. In language acquisition, mother-tongue dependency refers to learners' unconscious or active reliance on their mother tongue in the acquisition of the

target language. Native language dependence is a long-term, explicit presence that acts on learners' learning styles, learning habits, and second language immersion. Learners with a high level of native language dependency have developed a fixed, habitual pattern of expression and are confused by the unfamiliarity of the foreign language and the awkwardness of using it deliberately (Zhang, 2016).

Second language immersion, i.e., the degree to which learners are immersed in the second language environment. Mother-tongue dependency has an impact on learners' second language immersion. Learners with a high level of second language immersion are more empathic, less dependent on their mother tongue, more adaptable to a new second language environment, able to quickly develop a habitual second language mindset, and even develop a strong interest and motivation to learn and achieve good results. Conversely, learners with low levels of second language immersion may be more dependent on their mother tongue and have more difficulty learning Chinese. On the issue of second language immersion, all the participants agreed that there is a large difference in the second language immersion of international students, which affects their learning outcomes, and that international students with high second language immersion are more motivated to learn Chinese and improve their performance faster. A small number of subjects disagreed that students with low levels of second language immersion had difficulty in developing an interest in Chinese. From the teacher's perspective, the stereotype of the presence of high second language immersion for some learners is beneficial to teaching and learning and is a positive stereotype.

Table 2

Stereotypes Caused by Mother Tongue Dependence

	International students' second language immersion varies widely and second language immersion affects learning outcomes			Students with high levels of second language immersion learn more efficiently and improve their grades faster		
	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree
Teachers	94.44%	5.56%	0%	83.33%	16.67%	0%
Students	81.25%	18.75%	0%	68.75%	31.25%	0%
	When unable to answer a question, students will take out their mobile phones and look it up in the dictionary or answer in English			Students from the same country often come together to study		
	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree
Teachers	72.22%	22.22%	5.56%	83.33%	11.11%	5.56%
Students	81.25%	12.5%	6.25%	93.75%	0%	6.25%

International students like to ask sensitive questions. Due to cultural differences, international students are often confused and perplexed during the process of acculturation, and because international students are less aware of cross-cultural sensitivity, sensitive questions such as religious issues, policy issues, historical issues, etc., are particularly prominent among the questions asked by international students. These questions are more difficult to answer than study questions and teachers are often unable to define the correct answers to these questions, thus creating the stereotype that international students often ask sensitive questions. This stereotype was also shared by the teachers and student respondents, with over 30% of the teacher respondents and 60% of the student respondents agreeing that international students often ask sensitive questions. The behaviour of international students in asking sensitive questions is one of the manifestations of cultural differences. When the culture and history of the target language country is different from that of their own, learners are prone to misunderstandings and misconceptions, which can lead to questions.

Table 3

Stereotypes Caused by Sensitivity Issues

	International students often ask sensitive questions (e.g., the unequal status of men and women in China)		
	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree
Teachers	38.89%	33.33%	27.78%
Students	62.5%	31.25%	6.25%

Stereotypes of International Chinese Language Teachers About Individual International Students

Stereotypes about the character of international students. There was a high level of agreement with personality-related stereotypes, with most subjects believing that students with positive personalities tend to liven up the classroom.

The objective reasons for the diverse personalities of international students are cultural differences and management differences. As mentioned in the analysis above, different cultures have a significant impact on the shaping of students' personalities. The subjective reasons for this are personal values and family influences.

Table 4

Stereotypes due to Personality

	International students have different personalities and their performance in the classroom reflects their character			Extroverted students who are willing to express themselves can liven up the classroom		
	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree
Teachers	88.89%	11.11%	0%	72.23%	22.22%	5.56%
Students	81.25%	18.75%	0%	68.75%	31.25%	0%

Stereotypes of international students' gender and dressing. The majority of subjects chose the "disagree" or "strongly disagree" options, with a few choosing the "average", "agree", or "strongly agree" options. It is clear that both teacher and student subjects rarely stereotyped international students on the basis of gender and dress.

Table 5

Stereotypes Caused by Gender and Appearance

	Female students study harder than male students			Dress-conscious students are less interested in learning		
	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree
Teachers	5.56%	27.78%	66.66%	0%	11.11%	88.89%
Students	0%	25%	75%	0%	6.25%	93.75%

The Impact of Stereotypes on Classroom Teaching

In the field of teaching, teachers' stereotypes of students can be both positive and negative and cannot be simply characterized. Whether positive or negative stereotypes, teachers can make them valuable and apply them to their teaching based on their perceptions and judgement. Of course, stereotypes can also have a negative impact on teaching and learning when teachers' perceptions are biased.

From the questionnaire results, more than 50% of the subjects agreed that stereotyping international students helped them to implement better teaching, but it also happened that the stereotype bias affected classroom teaching. Some of the subjects provided specific cases in the open-ended questions to support the author's options.

Table 6

The Impact of Stereotypes on Teaching and Learning

	Some judgements about international students usually help me to implement better teaching in the classroom			Occasionally, some of my judgements can be wrong and have an impact on the classroom		
	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree	(Very) agree	General	(Very) disagree
Teachers	72.22%	27.78%	0%	55.56%	38.89%	5.56%
Students	75%	18.75%	6.25%	75%	18.75%	6.25%

Analysis of the teaching examples provided by the subjects shows that teachers' stereotypes of international students contribute to the arrangement and implementation of teaching. Some teachers subconsciously ask themselves to be more active when teaching in European and American classes because of the more lively classroom atmosphere in Europe and America, while in Japanese and Korean classes they think it does not matter if they are slightly rigid; some teachers adopt the reminder method of naming more students and asking more questions according to the high frequency of tardiness and absenteeism of African students, so that students can feel the gap with other students and improve their motivation to learn.

Some teachers admitted that when they first started teaching they thought that students who dressed well must have poor grades, but this turned out to be a false stereotype and the teacher transferred the stereotype of most Chinese students to international students. Some teachers criticized an international student who was often absent from class, but to their surprise, the student was absent for visa purposes and came to class in the second period, and the teacher apologized to the student and realized that she needed to be more cautious, especially with students who were not serious about their studies, to find out the exact reasons before making a judgement. The custom of spelling wine was not very good, and to the surprise of the teacher, the students retorted that the teacher should have advised them to follow the customs; most of these teacher subjects offered their own solutions, while some student subjects felt that they did not know how to handle the situation; thus, teachers' qualifications and abilities were somewhat positively correlated with their ability to handle teaching errors.

Insights and Recommendations

Inspiration and Advice for Teachers

Improve intercultural communication skills. In international Chinese language teaching, the main subjects of intercultural communication are teachers and international students. Most researchers tend to focus on the improvement of international students' intercultural adaptation skills, while neglecting the needs of teachers, who should in fact be held to the same, or even higher, standards, in order to create a two-way positive development. Improving teachers' intercultural communication skills and awareness is therefore also an important part of changing the stereotypical image of international Chinese teachers of international students, as follows.

Firstly, understand the students' historical and cultural backgrounds and try to avoid topics such as religion, history, and policies that tend to trigger sensitive topics during language lessons. In cases where it is not possible to avoid sensitive topics, teachers can reassure students first and then discuss them with them later in the lesson.

Secondly, it is important to be aware not only of students' verbal communication habits but also of their non-verbal communication habits, such as gestures, facial expressions, dress, etc. When students' sense of time

conflicts with the classroom rules, they should be reasonably informed that it is the correct behaviour in the Chinese cultural context to follow the classroom rules.

At last, a special cultural sharing class where teachers and students share the folklore, religious beliefs, festivals, etc., of their home countries is to promote teacher-student bonding and deepen the knowledge and understanding of international students and teachers about each other's cultures.

Prevent the deepening of negative stereotypes. Most of the contact between teachers and students comes from the classroom and almost all the stereotypes created by both parties come from the classroom. Teachers should consider the soundness of the material, the appropriateness of the content, and the fairness of the teaching style when preparing lessons, and avoid situations where they only ask questions of high-achieving students in order to achieve a seemingly perfect classroom. After the lesson the teacher should review the apparent failures and hidden contradictions in the classroom and reflect on them. After reflection teachers should also acknowledge their mistakes and make changes to prevent further negative stereotypes on both sides that can affect the effectiveness of teaching and the relationship between teacher and student.

Promote positive stereotypes. When teachers are aware of positive stereotypes about their students, they use them appropriately to reinforce their positive impact. For example, it is more effective for students to learn together in the same country, so teachers can divide groups by country initially, taking into account the small number of students in some countries, and make groups of students from similar cultural backgrounds; or encourage students with high levels of second language immersion to help students with low levels of second language immersion, as they are all in a similar situation of learning in a foreign country, and the student-led effect is often more effective than the teacher-led effect.

Strengthen communication and exchange. Teachers need to strengthen communication not only with international students, but also with other teachers. Regular exchange and sharing sessions can be held between teachers, where experienced teachers with strong teaching skills can use personal cases to guide new teachers, and new teachers can also raise questionable teaching cases to discuss and complement each other's strengths, so that the group of international Chinese teachers can make progress together, improve their teaching, and promote the development of the subject.

Implications and Recommendations for Universities

Improve the management system and gradually achieve the convergence of management for Chinese and foreign students (Fan, 2020). The early management system for international students had certain shortcomings, and its formulation had to take into account the special status of international students as international friends and the development objectives of spreading Chinese culture and strengthening international cooperation, so it was inevitable that it was not meticulous, and some of the rules and regulations intended to help international students adapt to foreign cultures quickly and show diplomatic and friendly manners became "green channels" instead. Some of these rules and regulations intended to help international students adapt quickly to foreign cultures and demonstrate diplomatic friendliness, and had instead become "green channels". These invisible preferential treatments have fostered a culture of indiscipline among international students, causing international Chinese language teachers to form the stereotypical impression that international students are less disciplined, do not respect teachers, and have a loose attitude towards learning, which also hinders teaching to a certain extent. Therefore, the management of universities and even the national authorities that set up the relevant system should regularly check the management of international students in

each university, and also take on board the suggestions of teachers and Chinese students accordingly, learn from the feedback, constantly improve the management system of international students, and gradually achieve convergence in the management of international students and Chinese students. In the long run, the convergence of management will facilitate international students to adapt to the Chinese university environment, integrate into the classroom, make Chinese friends, and eventually achieve the goal of using Chinese as a language for communication.

Encourage Chinese and foreign students to participate in various activities together. Universities can carry out interesting and extra-curricular activities for international students such as Chinese Bridge, Chinese song competitions, and One Stop to the End, which can subconsciously motivate international students to learn and increase their second language immersion. The interaction between the students can be naturally extended on the basis of emotional accumulation and the voluntary formation of Chinese and foreign study groups, then the negative stereotype of teachers' learning style and second language immersion of international students mentioned above may be weakened.

Concluding Remarks

This paper attempts to explore the impact of stereotypes in the teaching of international Chinese from a new research perspective. It has been shown that teachers have both positive and negative stereotypes of international students, with more negative stereotypes than positive stereotypes. When teachers are cognisant of the stereotypes of their students, they can adopt a variety of teaching techniques to transfer the advantages of the stereotypes into their teaching. It is therefore important for teachers to confront stereotypes of international students and to improve their ability to deal with stereotypical influences in a variety of ways. Teachers should also always remember that they are an intercultural communicator and stand in the perspective of intercultural communication with their students.

There are many shortcomings in this paper, such as: the design of the questionnaire with fewer questions on gender and concern for appearance, insufficient data, and limited analysis; the limited number of teacher subjects and the small number of teaching cases obtained; the lack of foreign references and the lack of in-depth understanding of foreign research; the lack of interviews with international students, whose ideas could enrich the research of this paper to a great extent.

As the discipline of international Chinese language education grows, the traditional teacher-centred teaching theory does not apply in most cases. The two subjects in education are equally important, and the study of teachers' stereotypes of international students is crucial and essential. It is believed that with the joint efforts of all researchers and international Chinese language teachers and international students, it is believed that future research in the academic community related to domestic teachers' stereotypes of international student groups will continue to deepen, and more targeted and effective strategies will be proposed to better promote the healthy development of the discipline of international Chinese language education and strengthen the healthy exchange between Chinese and foreign cultures.

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