

# A Qualitative Case Study on the Academic Experience of Overseas Chinese College Students under Academic Probation in Korea\*

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## <ABSTRACT>

The study aims to explore the underlying experience of Chinese college students receiving academic probation in Korea. To this end, the paper conducted a qualitative case study on eight overseas Chinese students being placed on academic probation at A University in Seoul from mid-March, 2017 to mid-June 2017, with the method of in-depth interviews on their academic experience. The results of the analysis are clarified into four major themes: cultural and environmental changes, language barriers, psychological difficulties, and new interpersonal relationships. The research provides a reliable frame for understanding the differences between Chinese and Korean education, as well as the fundamentals for overseas students' adaptation to a foreign culture and academic life. Besides, it provides a basic reference for developing relevant countermeasures and programs to help future overseas college students in their adaptation in Korea.

★ **Key words:** academic probation, overseas Chinese students, qualitative case study, academic experience

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## I . Introduction

According to statistics from South Korean Educational Development Institute, the total number of overseas students in Korea had reached 97 thousand by 2018, nearly quadrupled compared with 10 years ago, nearly 57% of them came from China. After the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Korea, more and more Chinese students choose to study in Korea because of the increasing exchanges between the two countries, territorial proximity and influence of "South Korean Fad".

Although most Chinese students can well adapt to the academic study and life in Korea, a few of them still suffer physically and mentally from their academic problems and life troubles. According to previous studies, there are three major problems in the life adaptation of Chinese students in Korea. First, economic problem. Lee (2006) pointed out that 63.3% of the Han students and 59.7% Korean-Chinese students choose to solve economic problems by working as a home tutor or finding jobs in restaurants, factories, etc. For overseas students, work experience in a foreign country can play an important role in understanding another culture and enhancing individual ability of adapting to the new environment. However, it could also cause adverse effects on them because of language barriers, lack of communication and work stress. Second, academic problem. Ra and Kang (2010) put forward that, students who are satisfied with their school life have greater self-confidence and motivation to complete their studies, while those unsatisfied are less motivated in learning. As a result, some students have given up their studies or worked under illegal employment. Third, the problem of interpersonal relationship. Kim (2016) expressed that, the quality of overseas interpersonal relationship directly affects the students' adaptation to their study, work, and life and so on. In addition, a person's character, marital status, educational background and religious belief will also affect such adaptation.

As Chinese students spend most of their time in school, the adaptation of campus life has a great impact on the life of overseas students. The Chinese students in Korean colleges are not only required to accept a different way of learning unlike what are they familiar in high school, but also have to experience cultural differences in a foreign country. There were even some Chinese students who couldn't adjust themselves in Korea and returned to China with their study abandoned. Baker & Siryk (1989) mentioned that students' adaptation to college

life can be roughly divided into academic adaptation, social adaptation, emotional adaptation and environmental adaptation. Of which, academic achievement is the basic standard to assess their adaptation to campus life. Studying abroad is not only for knowledge and skills, but also for the experience in a foreign country. The pressure from cultural adaptation would affect students' accomplishment in their studies. When being placed on academic probation due to poor academic performance, overseas Chinese students would feel devastated (Kim, 2016; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). In Korean universities, a student failing to get the minimum credits required by the school would be placed on academic probation, and generally the student would be persuaded to quit school if being placed on academic probation for more than 3 times. Originally the academic probation is designed to set a standard of minimum achievement, in order to encourage students to arrive at certain achievement. Even if they fail to get there, such a constraint can stimulate them to work hard to overcome their academic difficulties. But in Korean universities, academic probation is usually seen by students as a punishment (Hanger et al., 2011; Jang & Yang, 2013). They would blame the warning for their laziness in learning, and tend to have more negative evaluations and cognition on themselves (Hanger et al., 2011). After obtaining the academic probation, students tend to think negatively about themselves, which impairs their self-concept (Jang & Yang, 2013; Hanger et al., 2011). They would feel ashamed, suffer from a sense of failure and lose the confidence in their own future and academic ability. Some students even get caught in depression and isolate themselves from others if things go on like this. The intensive feelings of guilt and frustration and the impaired self-concept caused by academic probation act as a drag on the students' learning motivation (Hanger et al., 2011; Jang & Yang, 2013; Sage, 2010; Peterson & Barrett, 1987; Weiner, 1985). In this way, it will result in consecutive academic probation when those students surrender to continuous depression in their college life (Kang et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2014; Jun et al., 2015; Hanger et al., 2011).

There are many reasons for overseas Chinese students to get academic probation. In the research on problems faced by Chinese students in campus, Jiang (2016) conducted a questionnaire survey on teachers of overseas Chinese students, and the results showed that there were three major learning problems for Chinese students, i.e., unwilling to pose a question in classroom; reluctant to respond to the teachers; and poor expression in writing a report. The first two

problems are caused by the poor Korean level of Chinese students more than their tacit characters. And the third problem reveals their writing inability. Language is a huge barrier to cause them inconveniences in school and social life. At present, Korean universities mainly teach by lecture, representation, discussion, assignments and examinations, so it requires students to be proficient in listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, most overseas Chinese students only have about one year of language learning before they enter a Korean college, and language lessons cannot effectively interface with the courses in Korean universities in terms of teaching forms and contents, thus posing a challenge for Chinese students studying in Korea.

To sum up, the overseas students under academic probation have their own personal reasons or even secret sorrow. Though situations vary in different regions, there are Chinese students under academic probation in almost every Korean college. Even so, there are not enough research related to academic probation faced by overseas Chinese students, and mostly are studied in a quantitative way. Since the Chinese students as a minority group cannot effectively express themselves because of language barriers and cultural differences, this paper adopts a method of qualitative study to explore the underlying cause behind academic probation placed on overseas Chinese students according to their respective background. Based on existing studies, a deep contact with them was conducted to understand and find out the Chinese students' secrets, life in Korea, cultural adaption, etc. In addition, the paper chose overseas Chinese students as the research object because they occupy the mainstream of overseas students in Korea. At A University where this study took place, the number of overseas students exceeded 1000, over 80% of which were Chinese students. But they are still a special minority group in Korea, and those under academic probation are an even smaller group that needs special attention. If not appropriately handled, the academic probation may jeopardize those students' future studies in Korea and pose a challenge in their life.

This paper aims to investigate the reasons and experiences of Chinese students obtaining academic probation through the method of in-depth interviews, and to provide a reference to develop relevant programs for helping Chinese students both in their academic and college adaptation in Korea. At the same time, it plays a positive role in promoting the internationalization strategy of Korean universities and maintaining the number of foreign overseas students. For this purpose, the

study mainly focuses on the question of what are their academic experiences in Korean university.

## II. Method

### 1. Research Method

The study is purposed to explore the underlying reasons for Chinese students receiving academic probation in Korea. Qualitative study can be used to analyze the interaction of realistic factors and its practical significance, so as to capture the attitude of specific groups or individuals as well as the formation of their awareness (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Qualitative study focuses on the meaning of understanding between people, human interaction, life experience and on-site scenes, and it gets to comprehend the attitude and behavior of research participants in a natural way. This study method pays more attention to the relationship between phenomenon and background, emphasizing the evolution of the phenomenon as well as the significance of phenomenon and behavior for the behavioral subject. That is to say, the main objective of qualitative study is to understand social phenomena in depth. For this reason, the research resorts to the method of case study, which is commonly used in qualitative study as an approach to further understand and explore the themes or problems that arise from the phenomena and the context (Seok, 2016). Since the cases cannot be analyzed without the broad context, case study is a unique way to analyze what happens within the context and what are the essential factors for an in-depth analysis of the case (Lincoln & Guba, 1993). Compared to quantitative research, the method of qualitative study adopted in this research can help understand the actual experience of overseas Chinese students who have obtained academic probation in Korea, and the representative method of qualitative study for data collection, i.e., in-depth interviews, is adopted in the process. In-depth interviews act as an effective way to understand the distinct experience of others and extract meanings from it (Seidman, 2009). Through the storytelling of the participants, researchers can have an intersubjective understanding of that person and analyze the meaning of what being told.

## 2. Research Participants

8 Chinese undergraduates, including 6 boys and 2 girls, at A University in Seoul were selected as participants in the study. The following aspects were taken into consideration when choosing participants. First, in order to have a deeper understanding of overseas students' experience in Korea, we chose students who had stayed in Korea for more than 2 years, considering that they could better know the Korean culture with longer experience in Korea. Second, all selected students had received academic probation for more than 2 consecutive times, because they are more representative as students under academic probation and surely have a deeper understanding in this regard. In order to get a more accurate understanding of the information conveyed by the research objects, Chinese language was adopted in the interviews, so the participants can express their experience in Korea more precisely and deeply by using their mother tongue. Brief information of research participants is shown below.

<Table 1> Information of Research Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Major	Years in Korea	Korean strength	Times of receiving academic probation
A	Female	International Commerce	3	Middle level	3 Times
B	Male	Economics	4	Middle level	3 Times
C	Male	Business Administration	4	Low level	2 Times
D	Male	Business Administration	3	Low level	3 Times
E	Female	English Education	5	Middle level	3 Times
F	Male	Economics	3	Low level	2 Times
G	Male	International Commerce	4	Low level	2 Times
H	Male	Game Studies	5	Middle level	3 Times

### **3. Data Collection and Ethical Consideration**

From March 21, 2017 to 17 June 2017, eight overseas Chinese students were interviewed for three times in the language of Chinese and each interview lasted 40–60 minutes, and data was collected through the method of semi-structured interview with each individual. Firstly, the interviewees were asked by some simple and easy questions about their basic personal information and recent life. Then two major questions were addressed to each of them, i.e., “What is the reason for your academic probation?” “What did you go through in the process?” Based on the interviewees’ answers, more questions or supplement questions would be asked further. When an interviewee was confused or additional explanation was needed in the process, the researcher would promptly make more detailed inquiry about the interviewee’s answer so as not to miss important information. The interviews were recorded with prior consent of the participants, and notes were taken on the noticeable expressions, body movements and intonation. Meanwhile, ethical principles were taken into consideration, and the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants, and promised that the information collected from them will be used for no other purpose so as to keep their privacy safe. All participants involved had agreed to participate in the research and signed the letter of consent before the research. When referring to the personal information of participants, their privacy was protected by marks and pseudonyms.

### **4. Data Analysis**

As for case study, the cases can be studied overall or be deeply analyzed in a specific aspect. There is a detailed description for those cases with internal themes. The themes were analyzed based on different cases, the significance of which was proposed and studied (Creswell, 2012). The researcher made a transcription of the recordings collected through interviews during the study by computer. The transcribed data were repeatedly read and examined and in the process the researcher developed new questions which were reflected in later interviews. In order to make an analysis of the records of observation, the method of thematic analysis proposed by Spradley (1980) was used in this study, i.e., the collected data are subject to the process ordered as transcription, thematic coding,

and thematic generation. The collected data were extracted into four major themes, i.e., Cultural and Environmental Changes, Language Barriers, Psychological Difficulties, and New Interpersonal Relationships. Then the contents under major themes were analyzed and sorted into 11 sub-themes.

## **5. Consideration of Research Validity**

With an enthusiasm for qualitative research, this researcher has participated in graduate-school courses of qualitative research taught by a professor specialized in qualitative method. While making plenty of literature research on academic adaption, the researcher also practically and adequately discussed the issue with overseas Chinese students. In order to ensure the validity of the research, the paper has been instructed by the reviewer who has more than 15 years of experience in counseling and academic research about the adaption of college students. All through the course, the method of thematic analysis proposed by Spradley (1980) was applied to classify themes. The reliability and validity of the classified themes were discussed and improved through repeated meetings. At the same time, the research contents have been shown to the participants to get their feedback for a supplementation of the research results, so as to ensure the validity and objectivity of the study. And the researcher would go back to the participants for a confirmation when uncertainties occurred during the research to ensure the correctness of contents.

## **III. Research Results**

The research participants have experienced cultural and environmental changes, language barriers, psychological difficulties and new interpersonal relationships in their academic adaptation. Therefore, this study focuses on these four major problems suffered by overseas Chinese students under academic probation. The paper will center on the interviews and have in-depth analysis on the difficulties experienced by those students, the way they handle it, and the meaning derived from such a process.

## **1. Cultural and Environmental Changes**

### **A. Lack of Parental Supervision in A New Environment**

When Chinese students come to Korea for study, they will experience a sudden transition from a learning environment under the supervision of parents to a foreign unsupervised environment relying on their own self discipline and planning. Some students begin to slack off in their studies. They play games and lead an irregular life, and such habits have a negative impact on their learning and psychological state.

“There was no supervision of parents after I came to Korea, so I did all the crazy things that I used not in order to do to deal with my boredom. For example, I played games into late night or for the whole night, so I would be late for school the next day. I was tortured by self-accusation, but truancy repeated because I couldn’t get up for the class in the morning. Sometimes I simply kept myself stay up to the morning and went straightly to the class in the second day, then back to sleep after class over.”  
(participant F)

Most Chinese students are just high school graduates when they first come to Korea, so they are usually overwhelmed by the sudden transition from their familiar high school environment to college education in a foreign country. They have to adapt to not only a new learning mode, but also a new culture. Such changes make them feel lost and they usually choose online games to escape from pressure. But their addiction to online games would have a negative impact on the academic and physical health of overseas Chinese students. This vicious circle can be a huge torture.

### **B. Difficulties in Adaptation to A New Campus Culture**

Chinese students have to adapt to the new school life in a foreign country with different national conditions and cultures. China’s campus life and administrative system are different from that in Korea. For example, in China’s universities, students are divided into class groups for organization, and a counselor would be

assigned to each class. But in Korean colleges, there is no concept of class groups, so the overseas Chinese students lack a sense of belonging in such passive environment. Some Chinese students gather into small groups separated from the Korean students, thus making them miss some important information and feel a sense of isolation in the heart.

“In China, college students are divided into class groups, and problems can be solved within a class, so students won’t feel lonely in such an organized group. According to what I heard from my friends in China’s universities, each class group has a counselor for providing consultation to each student. This is good! Students won’t feel left out when they have a sense of belonging to a collective, and problems can be solved within the class. But there is no concept of class collective in Korean universities, where students are only divided into different departments. Because there is no class collective, making friends is not a convenient thing. Besides, there is a feeling of strangeness between Korean and Korean students, so we lack the initiative to find Korean friends. Usually, Chinese students gathered into small groups, and we seldom talked with Korean students. As a minority group with a limited social life, sometimes we couldn’t get messages in time and therefore felt isolated.” (participant G)

When in need of help, they are more likely to seek help from Chinese students than Korean friends. However, the phenomenon that overseas Chinese students only mingle with their own group and basically have no communication with Korean students will be an obstacle for them to adapt to their life in Korea.

## **2. Language Barriers**

### **A. Difficulties in Understanding the Learning Content**

Due to language barriers, some overseas Chinese students have difficulties in understanding the learning content, especially the professional knowledge lectured by professors who teach Chinese students in the same way as they teach Korean students. All these will psychologically affect Chinese students and thus jeopardize their studies. To deal with it, some Chinese students will go to find

Chinese-version textbooks, or seek help from other Chinese students in the same class. Sometimes they even decide whether to choose a class according to whether there are other Chinese students in the class.

“I couldn’t understand the lectures, especially the terminology. Sometimes I buy a Chinese-version textbook for aided reading. And Korean professors won’t slow down for the sake of overseas Chinese students. I will become more anxious if there is no other Chinese student in the class to help me. This will fall into a vicious circle, and I will finally give up the course chosen by no other Chinese. However, we will feel safe and less pressured when the class has other Chinese students whom I can seek help from when I couldn’t understand the course. In this case, I would see if there are other Chinese students every time in the demo class, and if not, I would delete the course directly.” (participant A)

“I am very interested in my major, and want to learn some real skills and knowledge in college for future career. But language is really a huge barrier. I couldn’t understand the professors in class, especially when it came to the professional vocabulary. After class, I would open the textbook and look up those words one by one. At the beginning, there was a passion to drive me forward, but then the time-consuming process of looking up so many words made me exhausted. In the end, I only read several pages and then gave it up totally.” (participant B)

These overseas Chinese students under language constraints tend to feel anxious when they cannot understand the learning contents. To deal with this, they buy and read Chinese-version textbooks instead. In addition, they are also emotionally affected by the matter of whether there are other Chinese students in the same class, because they would like to ask a countrymen in their mother tongue than to ask a foreign student or teacher in a foreign language when they cannot understand the courses or requirements of the professor. Language directly affects students’ understanding of the class. For some overseas Chinese students interested in their majors, they want to make a deeper exploration in their professional fields, but language barriers present a challenge for them and make them feel tired of their learning.

## B. Difficulties in Understanding School Notices and Information

Korean universities usually apply SMS or mails to give information of usual activities and academic notices, but overseas Chinese students cannot fully understand such information as Korean students due to language barriers. At the beginning, they tend to carefully read the notices and look up the new words one by one. But because there is a lot of trivial information, slowly they don't care that much anymore. So when there comes an important new notice, they usually miss it. Besides, the curriculum is not introduced in Korean, so many overseas Chinese students cannot understand the content and requirements of the course.

“The school sent e-mail and SMS in Korean, so we couldn't fully understand it. At first, I would look up the new words in a dictionary. Then I found that there was much unimportant information, so as time passed, I simply gave up reading those notices, and thus missed a lot of important information. In addition, the curriculum is written in Korean, so I didn't know what a certain course was about and just randomly chose some courses. Then I felt regretted, but it was too late.” (participant D)

For the overseas Chinese students who have just entered a university, some of them are still in the early stages of adaptation, especially for the language. The language environment in Korean language school is quite different from that in a college. Therefore, for the Chinese students who are not very good at Korean language, there will be some wrong understanding of the information provided by the school. Since they haven't formed a mature system for Korean language, their mother tongue will interfere with their understanding. Even they have found the meanings of all new words, they may not be able to fully understand the notices or academic information. In this way, they would miss some school activities or choose wrong courses due to a lack of understanding of the curriculum. Some Chinese students have been mired into a vicious circle and their attitudes of learning become more and more negative.

## 3. Psychological Difficulties

### A. Loneliness and Overindulgence

Chinese students in Korea face a new environment isolated from their family and friends, and they need to deal with many things all by themselves, so it's natural to feel lonely, and many overseas students indulge themselves in the games to find a sense of belonging since online games could involve people into communication.

“In fact, compared with the game itself, what we really seek is a kind of participation and communication. If playing games alone at home, it has no attraction for me at all, but it would be far more interesting if hanging out with my friends in a net bar to play games with social interaction. Besides, if a friend asks you to go for an online game and you refuse it for several times, then your friend won't ask you again and you will feel left out. To escape from the loneliness of being alone in Korea, we go to games to build our social relationship.” (participant F)

In this case, they are easy to be trapped in online games, which connect those lonely students with the same hobby and seemingly alleviate their loneliness. Besides, overseas Chinese students are afraid of experiencing loneliness in Korea, so they turn to the social circle of online games to avoid such a feeling. That's why overseas Chinese students cannot help playing games.

## **B. Insufficient Self-confidence and Expression Troubles**

Presentation and examination can be regarded as an important part of college life that every student must experience. But compared with the Korean students who speak their mother tongue, overseas Chinese students have to express themselves in a foreign language. As a result of the language barrier, some overseas Chinese students have troubles in expression of their meaning. In addition, Chinese students tend to lose their confidence when they cannot speak Korean fluently in front of Korean students who speak their mother tongue. Language affects the psychological state, which in turn influences the language. Besides, Chinese students and Korean students are under the same evaluation system in Korean universities, so many Chinese students feel it's unfair to have them compete with natives and that attitude also influences their learning.

“For each time I made a representation in class, I was worried that I can’t convey my meaning accurately in Korean before a class of Korean students, and it destroyed my confidence when stammered at my speech. Without confidence, I didn’t dare to open my mouth, and therefore my language cannot get effective improvement.” (participant B)

“Both overseas Chinese students and Korean students are under the same standard for performance evaluation. But no matter how hard we study, it is almost impossible to chase up the Korean students who study by their native language. We have to use Korean to answer the exam paper, and sometimes our points of view are subject to language restrictions. In the end, we are basically at the bottom of the evaluation. Although we work as hard as the Korean students, our final score is still behind theirs, so we would feel psychologically imbalanced. I even heard a Korean friend say that he wouldn’t worry about his score when there are Chinese students in the class to be at the bottom anyway. I felt quite uncomfortable at these words.” (participant E)

When Chinese students need to express their own opinions in a foreign language, their psychological factors play a big role in the process. If the overseas Chinese students successfully expressed his opinions by foreign language in an inclusive environment, their self-confidence will get increased and in turn activates his language learning. But if the Chinese students experienced negative emotions like anxiety and self doubt in their language expression, such mood would reduce their learning motivation and trap them in a vicious circle.

### **C. Lethargy Caused by New Environment**

Due to the transition from a familiar environment to a foreign country, the psychological state of Chinese students in Korea is accordingly influenced by the new environment, leading to depression that leads to a negative impact. It seems that the new environment is a key to open up the door of psychological problems of overseas Chinese students. Different environments create different psychological states, which directly or indirectly affect the life and study of overseas Chinese students.

“In my freshman year, I became so depressed and spiritless that nothing held my interest. Then I went for a diagnosis and found myself suffer from depression. I didn’t want to go to classes or talk to people. I just wanted to return home quickly. Finally, I went back to China during my holiday and felt better afterwards. But the depression came to me again when I returned to Korea after the holiday. It repeatedly happened. Such psychological emotions negatively affected my learning. Sometimes I even escaped the class and just stayed in the dormitory.” (participant A)

In this way, external environment affects the psychological health of overseas Chinese students, and their psychological health can go back to influence their academic life.

#### **D. Passive Academic Attitude**

Most overseas Chinese students feel excited when freshly entering a college, so they would like to go to classes at the beginning, and do just well in their freshman year because the school usually helps freshmen to select courses. However, as time goes by, Chinese students gradually lose the feeling of freshness and become careless in the learning. Such passive academic attitude surely affects their academic performance.

“I did well in my freshman year, mostly B or above. I felt interested and fulfilled at first. But such enthusiasm lasted only for one year. Then I lose interest in my study and began to play games, hang out, and skip classes, so I failed many exams in the sophomore year. I didn’t care much at that time, and never expected it would have so serious consequences.” (participant D)

“In fact, my major was chosen by my family, and I went to college just for a diploma. In my freshman year, most courses were liberal arts that seemed interesting. But in the sophomore year, there were more and more specialized courses. Since I didn’t like my major, I lost interest in my studies and began to laze away.” (participant H)

Most Chinese students just graduate from high school before they come to

Korea for study. At the beginning of their college year, they usually feel that college life is more interesting than the monotonous study in high school and language school. But after entering the sophomore and junior year, they gradually lose the feeling of freshness and go for other exciting things such as online games. Besides, a lot of students lack a clear goal for learning, resulting in decline in their academic performance with even an academic probation. Those students receive academic probation not because they don't have learning ability, but due to environmental factors that suppress their ability to learn.

## 4. New Interpersonal Relationships

### A. Relationship with Professors and Academic Attitudes

The attitude of Chinese students in Korea is also related to the lecturers. That is to say, if they like the lecturing professor, they will work harder on that specific course. The attitude of the professor to overseas Chinese students will affect the impression of those students on that professor, which will in turn affect their attitude to the class.

"I feel some professors were deliberately against overseas Chinese students. They named us to answer something we didn't understand much in the class, and asked that "you don't understand it?". I felt so disgraced that I didn't want to answer the question anymore. But some professors were very nice and considerate. Even if we didn't understand his lesson, they wouldn't press further on us, but patiently guided us. It was so touching and we would be very attentive to that professor's class." (participant E)

Sometimes, in the subjective consciousness of overseas Chinese students, the professors' words seem to be purposefully aimed at them, so they feel embarrassed and shy. On the contrary, some professors' special attention to Chinese students will give them warmth and loving care. When overseas Chinese students develop such subjective consciousness of his relationship with professors, their perception on professors will have a direct impact on the their mutual relationship, which will in turn influence the students' attitude to the course and further play a role in their academic performance.

## **B. Difficulties in Making Close Friends with Koreans**

A few Chinese students can make close friends with the Koreans through club activities, but mostly they feel distant from Korean students and have no deep communication with them. In addition, situations are different for different genders.

“I have no Korean friends and their circle is not easy to get in. I made a few Korean friends before, but only superficial contact. There was always a feeling of gap between us. However, girls are much better. They are more likely to make Korean friends and integrate into Korean culture. But boys are afraid of losing face or worried about being refused by the Koreans.”  
(participant C)

With the help of friends, it is easier for overseas Chinese students to accomplish their studies, and it is particularly important to have a friend for sharing their pain in life. When having troubles in school, the Chinese students will suffer a lot if there is no one to give a hug. It will be good if they have made friends with local students, but the reality is usually on the contrary.

## **C. Changes in Family Expectations and Academic Attitudes**

As time passes in their college life, overseas Chinese students become more adapted to the language, culture, and education in Korea. Many of them find that the academic probation they received earlier is jeopardizing their future graduation. Coupled with the coming fact that their parents expect them to graduate soon, they begin to realize how serious the problem is, and try to make it up by every possible means with more positive attitude.

“My family want me to graduate sooner and go back to find a job. That’s also what I want, so I tried to make up for previous academic probation by attending classes in earnest and taking vacation courses to get more credits. I changed my attitude, became more attentive in classes, and did my best in my homework. Now I just want to graduate quickly with a diploma, not let my parents down.” (participant C)

“In my freshman and sophomore years, I didn’t think much about the future, and I never had a clue of academic probation. At that time, everything was new, and I just played all day long since I couldn’t understand the lectures and didn’t know how to choose courses. In the junior year, I got successive academic probation which directly caused a delay of my graduation. I didn’t realize how serious the problem was until this time. Now my language gets better, and I become more experienced in choosing courses, so I’m studying hard and trying to graduate soon.” (participant H)

In order to fulfill their parents’ expectations, the overseas Chinese students, who carry the hope of their family, get to study hard in their senior year so as to graduate soon and go back to their parents.

<Table 2> Themes for Academic experience of Overseas Chinese college students

Major themes	Sub-themes
Cultural and Environmental Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Lack of parental supervision in a new environment</li> <li>· Difficulties in adaptation to a new campus culture</li> </ul>
Language Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Difficulties in understanding the learning content</li> <li>· Difficulties in understanding school notices and information</li> </ul>
Psychological Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Loneliness and overindulgence</li> <li>· Insufficient self-confidence and expression troubles</li> <li>· Lethargy caused by new environment</li> <li>· Passive academic attitude</li> </ul>
New Interpersonal Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Relationship with professors and academic attitude</li> <li>· Difficulties in making Korean friends</li> <li>· Changes in family expectations and academic attitudes</li> </ul>

## IV. Discussion

This paper conducted a qualitative study on overseas Chinese students being placed on academic probation at A University in Seoul through in-depth interviews on their academic experience, and explored the impact and significance of such experience on individuals and society. The following results have been obtained through the study on the reasons for the academic probation of overseas Chinese students.

First, Chinese students studying in Korea would experience cultural and environmental changes. In such a new environment away from the supervision of parents at home, they are likely to indulge themselves in unhealthy habits that adversely influence their studies. This is basically consistent with what has been found by Fu & Kim (2014) and Joo & Kim (2013). After coming to Korea, the overseas Chinese students are more addicted to online games than when they are at home, and these habits would have a negative influence on their academic performance and health. In addition, Chinese students cannot feel the sense of belonging to the class in a campus culture different from China, so they cannot well integrate into the Korean campus culture and interpersonal relationship. According to previous studies, interpersonal relationship has a maximum influence on overseas Chinese students among all kinds of difficulties they have experienced in a foreign country (Heo, 1999). In the face of a new and unfamiliar environment, Chinese students would feel lonely and depressed, and they cannot well integrate into new campus life. Such case will give them more pressure and more difficulties in their adaptation (Zhang, 2005). The differences in educational and cultural systems between China and Korea are directly or indirectly affecting the life of Chinese students studying in Korea. To address the problem, only the efforts of Korean government and schools are not enough, the Chinese counterparts should also develop some early adaptation programs for their overseas study, and prepare them for a new environment in advance, thus reducing some of their inadaptability abroad. Since each country has its unique educational system, the reasons for overseas students' in-adaptation in a foreign country are complicated (Yoon & Portman, 2004). It's necessary for us to know the varied and diversified educational system in a foreign country for reference, in order to reduce the problems in cultural adaptation when studying abroad.

Second, language barriers. Among the Overseas Chinese students under academic probation, some are motivated to learn at the beginning, but language barriers have become a gap between them and knowledge. Over time, their enthusiasm for learning fades away. Moreover, Chinese students usually cannot well understand the information about school's notices and course description since it is written in Korean, and such language barriers often make them miss important notices or choose wrong courses that affect their studies and bring them academic probation. This is consistent with the findings of Guofang, W (2001) that foreign students' proficiency in the local language plays a major role

in their adaptation to the local living culture. Overseas Chinese students tend to use the system of their native language to process an unskilled foreign language (Corder, 1975), but the differences between languages and culture often hinder their understanding of information in a foreign language. The correct mastery of information. In recent years, the enrollment of overseas students, especially those from China, in Korean universities has been on the rise, so Chinese students account for an increasingly large proportion in Korean universities, and their number even exceeds that of Korean students in some majors. But it is observed that the Korean government and schools are not well prepared for this occasion (li & lee, 2014). Most policies and benefits in the school are developed in consideration of Korean students, but have overlooked the increasing number of overseas Chinese students who find it hard in their academic adaptation. In the face of a new cultural environment, Overseas Chinese students under academic probation suffer from language barriers and problems in their interpersonal relationship and cultural adaptation (Baker & Siryk, 1989), and those inflictions further affect their mentality and life. As for Korean universities, it is particularly necessary for them to develop new policies and facilities to help overseas Chinese students better adapt to the campus life. For example, they should increase the number of courses lectured in Chinese, hold more Sino-Korean cultural exchange programs, and promote a series of projects and activities for adaption, including school notices written in the students' native language, Korean tutorial classes, etc.

Third, psychological difficulties preying on Chinese students are also a cause of their academic probation. Some Chinese students miss their parents and feel lonely in Korea. Such loneliness leads them to overindulgence in the internet and online games. Zhang (2005) also pointed out that most Chinese students studying abroad in Korea are prone to fall into loneliness. Without friends to share their suffering, they find it difficult to adapt to studying in Korea under mounting psychological pressure. Besides, it is difficult for Chinese students to fully express their opinions in a strange environment. Even although they are as hardworking as Korean students, the Overseas Chinese students cannot do as well as native students when it comes to academic performance, resulting in their lack of self-confidence, which in turn hinders their language expression. This is basically consistent with previous research by Krashen (1981). Unlike the direct expression of mother tongue, the foreign language has to experience an affective filter in the

process before expression. Therefore, the ability to learn and express in a foreign language also has a great correlation with the psychological state. Psychological emotions such as anxiety, self-confidence, learning motivation may have a positive effect on the learning of foreign language, but the lack of those positive emotions sometimes would lead to a negative effect. In addition, the overseas students are subject to psychological inadaptability when they get away from their homes and come to a different new environment. They are academically affected by pressure from cultural adaptation, depression and other dejected emotion inflicting their mental health. During the process of overseas Chinese students adapting to life in Korea, most Chinese students can survive the hardship and set themselves onto the right track. But there are some Chinese students who cannot adapt to the new environment and suffer from acculturative stress. They tend to fall into depression. Compared to other students, the depressed students may have problems in school life with poor academic performance (Son, 1987). There are also some Overseas Chinese students who are not fully prepared for the study before entering the school. They are unclear about their motivation for learning, and gradually lose their interest in learning after the initial feelings of freshness. Some overseas Chinese students feel confused in their studies and future. Besides, a lot of students lack a clear goal for learning, so it is easy for them to have psychological tiredness in learning (Wen, 2016). Among those under academic probation, some part of them go to college just for a diploma, or for obeying their parents who choose the college and major for them, but they don't know what they really want. It is resulted from the early education in China, which gives no emphasis on one's independence. In the absence of motivation, the Overseas Chinese students have no interest in learning even when schools and teachers try to help them. In the face of these problems, Korean schools need to dig into China's education system. While giving those students the help in their academic adaption, they should care about their mental health, help them explore the value and motivation of life, make them understand their psychological difficulties and what they really need, so as to improve their mental health and increase their initiative in learning. Korean universities can also set up more psychological counseling centers to help them in trouble, and provide free majors to those students, allowing them to choose their major after really knowing about themselves and their specialty through career planning rather than to regret choosing a wrong major.

Fourth, new interpersonal relationships also have an impact on the academic performance of overseas Chinese students. The relationship with the professors will directly affect their attitude towards the course. This is consistent with the findings of Bae and Hong (2013) that the interaction between overseas Chinese students and professors in Korean universities largely determines the passion of those students in the class. In making friends, overseas Chinese students usually play with those from the same country, and it is difficult for them to get into intimate friendship with Korean students. Lim (2009) also pointed out in previous studies that there is a natural gap between overseas Chinese students and Korean students. In addition, the expectations of family members also affect the attitudes of Chinese students studying in Korea. After repetitive academic probation, many students in their senior year begin to reexamine themselves and get serious about their studies. When overseas Chinese students enter into the senior year of their college life, they begin to face all kinds of pressures, e.g., applying for a postgraduate school, finding a job, so that they have to reset their goals for study and work (Wen, 2016). In addition, because of the family planning in China, most overseas Chinese students of this generation are the only child within a family. Unlike the doctrine of traditional Chinese Confucianism that advocates filial piety, now the children in China are "little emperors" at home (Jiang, 2015). Chinese parents expect their children to step up to graduate and return home, and such expectation also prompts the overseas Chinese students to re-examine themselves and pick up their studies. In summary, different students have different understanding and attitudes when facing the same situation of academic probation (Hwang et al., 2016). In this regard, the Korean government and schools need to provide Chinese students under academic probation with more opportunities and channels for communication with others, which will support them to get a full exchange with professors, Korean students and their families, thereby enhancing mutual understanding to help them overcome academic probation. On the other hand, some overseas Chinese students were placed on academic probation for several times, and some never got it again for a second time. In the former case, those students didn't care about it anymore after consecutive times of academic probation. They even gave up a try. For such students, they need not only academic help, but also appropriate psychological counseling to help them regain confidence. For those students who never got a second academic probation, there could be interviews with them to find out how they overcame the academic

probation, so as to draw experience from them to develop relevant programs. It can provide an essential reference for preventing students from being placed on academic probation and instruct them to get it over.

The study selected some overseas Chinese students under academic probation in a university, so it has limitations in the representativeness of the research population and the scope of research topic. And a certain degree of subjectivity exists because information can only be collected from the discourses of participants through one-to-one interviews. Besides, the research theme focuses on the academic issues of Chinese students studying abroad. In the follow-up studies, more extensive research objects and topics can be collected from multiple levels to gather information and intelligence. But even so, compared with the studies concerning the social, emotional, and environmental adaptability of Chinese overseas students, this research is focused on those students' academic adaptation. The interviews with Chinese overseas students who have difficulties in adapting to their studies show that, it is necessary for the society and schools to give more support to the academic adjustment of Chinese overseas students. It is expected that these issues will receive attention from the society and effective measures will intervene so as to help more Chinese students studying or preparing to study in Korea to have a good academic life abroad. This study provides a reliable reference for understanding the differences between the educations in China and Korea as well as in-depth reason for foreign students' cultural and academic adaptation.

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<국문초록>

## 학사경고를 받은 중국인 유학생의 학업경험에 관한 질적 사례연구

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본 연구는 학사경고를 받은 재한 중국인 유학생들의 대학생활 경험을 심층적으로 탐색함으로써 중국유학생들의 대학생활 적응과 관련된 요인을 살펴보고자 하였다. 이를 위하여 A대학교에 재학 중인 중국유학생 8명을 대상으로 2017년3월 중순부터 2017년6월 중순까지 심층면담 후, 녹음 자료를 전사하고 그 내용에 대한 질적 사례분석을 실시한 결과, 중국인 유학생들이 대학생활 동안 경험하게 되는 핵심적인 어려움을 문화 및 환경의 변화, 언어적 장벽, 심리적 어려움, 새로운 대인관계이라는 네 가지 주제로 범주화할 수 있었다. 본 연구는 중국인 유학생들이 한국의 대학생활 동안 어떤 경험을 하게 되는지 그들의 목소리를 통해 보여주었으며, 이러한 연구결과가 재한 중국인 유학생들이 대학생활에 효과적으로 적응하도록 돕는 교육 및 상담적 접근에 시사하는 바를 논의하였다.

★ 주제어: 학사경고, 중국인 유학생, 질적 사례연구, 학업경험