

# Strategies to Promote Sri Lankan Students' Cross-cultural Adaptation in Chongqing Normal University—Based on Chamot's Learning Strategies

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**Abstract**—With the development of “One Belt And One Road” strategy, foreign students' cross-cultural adaptation in China becomes a hot topic. By questionnaire and individual interview, the research aims to explore the situation of Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation in Chinese cultural context and finds the 4 main factors which influence their cross-cultural adaptation: Individual factors, language barriers, individuals' interaction with local cultural context and different social behavior. Then, based on O'Malley and Chamot's learning strategies, the research gives relevant advice to improve Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptability.

**Index Terms**—Sri Lanka, students, learning strategies, factors, cross-cultural adaptation

## I. INTRODUCTION

The research of language learning strategy firstly dated back to 1960s, which is almost descriptive study. The representative researches use interview, observation and questionnaire to discover the learning strategies used by successful learners, and conclude their common characteristics (Rubin, 1975; Naiman et al., 1978). Then, Ellis (1994) is focusing on the using condition of the good language learners' using strategies in order to popularize these strategies to poor language learners. In China, about the researches of the strategies of cross-cultural adaptation have included Vietnamese students (Ke Lin & Xia Lv, 2005), Japanese students (Yuanyuan Xie, 2010), foreign students from southeast Asia in China (Yaoke Xiao & Lufang Chen, 2012), foreign students from Central Asia (Hongyu Liu & Zhuochao Jia, 2014), etc.

The definition of learning strategy and the classification of learning strategy still aren't unified after 30 years research. Chamot (1987) had an deep-going cognition about learning strategy, which he thought that learning strategy was the techniques, approaches and other conscious behaviors employed by learners in order to optimize learning process, reinforce the memory of language knowledge and information knowledge.

The classification of learning strategy is varied as well. There are three typical categories currently. O'Malley and Chamot (1985) classify language learning strategy into meta-cognitive strategy, cognitive strategy and sociopetal strategy. Meta-cognitive strategy includes advance organizers, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, self-monitoring, self-evaluation and functional planning. Cognitive strategy includes resourcing, repetition, grouping or classifying, inferencing, utilizing images, auditory representation, utilizing keyword, associating, transforming, note taking, brief summary, re-associating and translation. Sociopetal strategy includes question or clarification, cooperation and so on.

Because of the development and requirement of “One Belt And One Road” strategy which put forward by Ministry of Education of the Peoples Republic of China in 2013, the Sri Lankan research center has set up by Chongqing Normal University in order to broaden the channels of international education. Up to now, there are more than 80 Sri Lankan students studying in Chongqing Normal University.

While, there are few researches investigating Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation in China, let alone in Chongqing. Therefore, the survey takes Sri Lankan students in Chongqing Normal University as an example, aiming to analyze influencing factors of Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation in Chongqing and discover the relevant strategies according to O'Malley and Chamot's learning strategy theory, which will enrich the research about Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation, especially in Chongqing. The research will strengthen the development of

education for foreign students in Chongqing and help Sri Lankan students to learn Chinese better and easier and gain the acknowledgment and enjoyment of Chongqing culture.

## II. RESEARCH DESIGN

### A. Subjects & Purpose & Significance

This research largely involves 80 experimental students who are studying in Chongqing Normal University. The survey aims at collecting the data about study, daily life and social communication of Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation in Chongqing Normal University, finding the factors which influence their cross-cultural adaptation deeply, and providing learning strategies to help them adapt better in Chongqing. Based on O'Malley and Chamot's learning strategies, the research try to promote Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation in Chongqing Normal University, at the same time, respond to the national strategy "One Belt and One Road" and upgrade Sri Lankan students' understanding and recognition of Chinese and Chongqing culture.

### B. Methods & Questions & Contents

Questionnaire and individual interview were adopted in this research. There were 80 Sri Lankan students finished the questionnaire. And then the research group chose 30 students of different age, gender, living time in China and Chinese language level randomly to attend the individual interview. The questionnaire, which were divided into two aspects: language learning and cultural customs, is consisted of 20 questions based on the social-cultural theory of Searle & Ward and John W. Berry. The research groups were divided into three groups to do the survey. The research used on-site dispatch and on-site recycling in the process of issuing and filling in the questionnaire to ensure the reliability and validity of the survey. With 80 questionnaires distributed and 80 valid questionnaires collected, the effective rate was as high as 100%. The individual interview was semi-structured and its contents including the learning situation, daily life, social communication and adaptability to Chongqing people's social behavior, as shown in table 1.

TABLE 1  
INTERVIEW CONTENTS

Aspects	Items
Learning situation	Chinese language learning, language exchange, learning content, teaching methods
Daily life	Diet, homesickness, accommodation, traditional art and festivals
Social communication	Cultural discrimination, interpersonal communication
Adaptability to Chinese social behavior	Living habits, civilized etiquette, traffic rules awareness

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### A. Basic Information

The sample reflects the general situation of Sri Lankan students in Chongqing Normal University. The basic information of these students is shown in table 2:

TABLE 2  
BASIC INFORMATION

Contents		Number	Proportion(%)
Gender	Male	24	30
	Female	56	70
Career plan	Hometown	66	82.5
	Chongqing	12	15
	Undetermined	2	2.5
Chinese language level before coming to China	HSK3	13	16.25
	HSK1-2	19	23.75
	Chinese language training or optional courses	37	46.25
	Not at all	11	13.75

The number of girls is more than twice that of boys, which demonstrates the gender ratio is unbalanced. Among these students, the youngest is 17 years old, the oldest is 28 years old and the average age is 21.5. And all of these students are studying for bachelor's degree. There are 70% Sri Lankan students' Chinese language are primary level, and up to 13.75% students haven't learned Chinese before coming to China. On the whole, Sri Lankan students who are studying in Chongqing Normal University just have primary Chinese language level. Therefore, language will be a large difficult for them to overcome.

### B. Factors Influence Sri Lankan Students' Cross-cultural Adaptation

Through the data, research members find 4 main factors that hinder Sri Lankan students from adapting Chinese culture better:

#### (1) Individual factors

First, Cross-cultural adaptation has a certain stage, the length of time is an important factor. It is found that Sri Lankan students in Chongqing Normal University experience at the beginning of a short honeymoon period, that is, the curiosity of new things, they will find in life, learning and social communication and a lot of difficulties, which will produce negative emotions. Students who came to China for 7-12 months were worse than the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students for 1-6 months, while students who came to China for 18-24 months felt a discomfort of the culture. These findings are consistent with U-curve adaptation theory.

Then, the proficiency of Chinese language has a crucial influence on the cross-cultural adaptation of Sri Lankan students in Chongqing Normal University studying in China. At the beginning of the coming year, they feel that Chinese pronunciation is difficult. Most Sri Lankan students have not studied Chinese before they come to China, so Chinese is starting from scratch. In the survey, a number of students talked about their feeling early in China, even if the HSK level reached the intermediate level but the spoken language ability is still very low. The level of learning language affects the level of their language, academic and social interaction, but also affect the students in the Chinese cultural connotation of understanding, such as proverbs, idioms, allusions, etc.

Last, for the majority of students, reading is undoubtedly an important part of Chinese learning, expanding the input, which is also a good way to improve the level of Chinese effectively as soon as possible. A large amount of reading can not only improve the proficiency of Chinese, but also allow students to understand China's rich and colorful culture, so as to better adapt to the environment and culture in China. The survey also shows that students of Sri Lanka who have a large reading capacity would be simpler than those who rarely read in the aspect of studying Chinese. Vocabulary and reading are particularly crucial for language learners. Therefore, students should read more Chinese books and be encouraged to be confident.

### (2) Language barriers

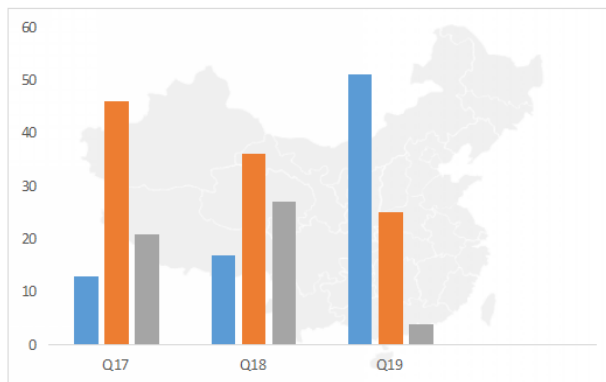
Language obstacle is one of the most primary and critical issues for foreign students to adapt social life and daily study when they arrive in a non-native country. So are Sri Lankan students. The native language of Sri Lankan students is Sinhalese, and their second language is English. Hence, Chinese as Sri Lankan students' third language is apparently difficult for Sri Lankan students to understand and learn. According to the survey, though 86.25% of 80 Sri Lankan students had touched Chinese before coming to China, 60% of them are still at a lower level, with which they still have big problem to understand the courses in class and the conversations and situations in daily life. Therefore, it is extremely critical for them to know and employ Chinese learning strategies to surmount Language obstacle to adapt the daily study and social life in China.

First, Sri Lankan students have insufficient Chinese vocabularies according to the survey. Chinese is one of the principal factors to the understanding and mastery of collocation, grammar, rhetoric, and the crucial situations or teachers' courses. Moreover, Chinese intonation and pronunciation are so complicated that they would easily lack of confidence in mastering Chinese. In addition, some Chinese vocabulary have many different meanings in different sentences and situations instead of a single meaning. Therefore, Chinese vocabularies are difficult for them to grasp the accurate meaning and difficult for teachers to teach as well.

Second, the survey showed that up to 81.25% of Sri Lankan students have insufficient Chinese reading quantity. Chinese reading quantity is vital for Sri Lankan students to understand Chinese vocabularies' correct and proper usages. Reading Chinese materials is quite torturous for them not only because they cannot understand each Chinese word, but also because they cannot understand the meaning without connect each sentence and the situations in Chinese reading materials which are not the ones they acquainted. While reading in China is particularly crucial for them in dialy life and study, they will have problems when surf the internet, buy products they need and read current affairs. Hence, Chinese reading materials are extremely critical for them to gain a better understanding of Chinese and adapt to the study and life in China.

Third, as we all known, language is meant to be spoken. Sri Lankan students who are studying in Chongqing Normal University seldom use Chinese to talk with each other, they usually have conversations with Sinhalese which is their native language or English. Only 6.25% of them consider that they can communicate with others in Chinese fluently. Of course, Chinese as the third language for Sri Lankan students is a tremendous difficulty to speak and communicate with. Whereas if they don't have courage or chance to have conversations with others, no matter classmates, teachers or their Chinese friends, they will certainly be hard to adapt to the social life and study life in China.

### (3) Individuals' interaction with local cultural context



Q17: How many Chinese traditional festivals do you know?  
 Q18: How many Chinese traditional cultures do you like?  
 Q19: For the places of interests in Chongqing, I've been to ( ) of them.

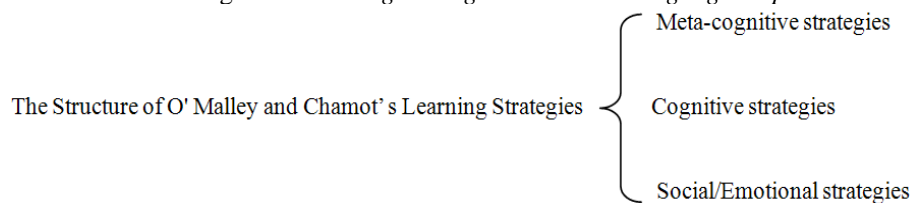
Sri Lankan students are lack of individual interactions with Chinese and Chongqing cultural context. Xiyang Yang and Jiahui Liu (2009) stated that, cultural shock is people's psychological reactions to another unfamiliar cultural environment. In layman's terms, a person from one place to another, the original familiar set of symbols, customs, behavior patterns, social relations, values, etc. replaced by another set of new unfamiliar symbols, customs, behavior patterns, social relations, values, etc. and thus have a psychological loss, confusion, anxiety, and even fear. The survey shows that some Sri Lankan students who have just arrived in Chongqing are not sure about the new environment. So, they always choose to escape the local cultural communication. And a large part of the students prefer to communicate in the small circle of their own people. This quietly shows that they encountered a cultural shock in the interaction with Chinese and Chongqing culture. Social engagement is closely related to cross-cultural adaptation. From the author's knowledge of the situation, Sri Lankan students' enthusiasm to participate in the local social and cultural life is not high and passive participation was more than active participation. 63.5% of Sri Lankan students went to a few local spots, only 5.75% of the students travelled 6 to 9 or even more spots. Regarding to Chinese traditional art and festivals, 57.5% of Sri Lankan students have knowledge about 4 to 6 traditional festivals, and 45% of the students were interested in traditional Chinese art, such as shadow play, drama, etc. Whether it is Chinese language learning or interaction with Chinese culture, active participation is clearly able to help them adapt to China better and get more social support.

(4) Different social behavior

For Sri Lankan students, different living habits, behavior, customs and rituals between Sri Lanka and China caused great distress to cross-cultural adaptation in Chongqing Normal University. In Sri Lanka, nodding means “no”, shaking head means “yes”. The meaning of nodding and shaking head is opposite to that of China's. This typical different behavior leads to many misunderstandings and distress for Sri Lankan students studying and living in China. At the same time, in Sri Lankan customs, people use the right hand to eat and accept. While, in China, people accept things with both hands to show respect and polite. In terms of living habits, in Sri Lankan, three meals a day are separated by a long time, breakfast is generally 6:30, lunch after 13:00, dinner at 21:00 or so. These different social behavior led to the fact that Sri Lankan students who studying in China have great difficulty in learning and living in China, meeting with instructors or teachers and communicating with Chinese.

IV. RELEVANT STRATEGIES

O' Malley and Chamot (1985) divided the learning strategies into meta-cognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and social/emotional strategies in *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*.



A. Cognitive Strategy--Improve Reading and Learning Proficiency

As O'Malley and Chamot (1985) stated, there are several branches of cognitive strategies, they are reference, repetition, grouping, classification, reasoning, use of images, auditory reproduction, the use of keywords, association, transformation, inference, taking notes, summary, re-combination, and translation. For reading, it is mentioned before that a lot of reading is helpful for Chinese learning. However, how to make limited reading to achieve higher efficiency. It is necessary to use appropriate learning strategies, such as cognitive strategies.

Classification: Teachers should firstly teach students to classify articles, such as the category of narration,

argumentation, exposition and so on. Secondly, teachers summarize the characteristics of these types of articles and summarize the common characteristics of each type. When students are reading, they can classify the category of writing first, which is in order to know the characteristics of these kind of writing and to make reading easier understood. So Sri Lankan students need to identify, distinguish and reorganize their learning materials, and need to practice Chinese materials repeatedly.

Association: When the reading material itself is of great significance, teachers should teach Sri Lankan students to use the internal contact strategies-- association, such as metaphor, analogy, similarities and differences. In the teaching of reading, teachers should mainly try the following kinds of internal connection strategy. (1) grasp the "blank" to start associate. For example, the author writes articles that tend to omit some of the episodes due to a need. So teachers should let the students to fill in the "blank" in order to practice their imagination as well as understanding. (2) Reading method. Teachers can let the Sri Lankan students read an article on their own, students can choose how to read this article, read fast or read slowly, which words should be read stress, etc., and then ask students why they choose this way of speaking, which is good for their comprehension and the association of effective promotion of the old and new knowledge between the links.

Repetition and taking notes: Sri Lankan students also need to find ways to remember and use Chinese knowledge. For example, when learning new words and new sentences, they can repeat by oral and handwriting exercises, or making sentences into different contexts used to help new words and new sentences to understand. Alternatively, learners are encouraged to learn the completion of the task when they read a new article, try to write down the notes and focus on notes. There is an old saying in China, that is, "The palest ink is better than the best memory". Taking notes can not only facilitate the memory, but also conducive to understanding. And then try to summarize the highlights, and to try to mark the priorities of the paragraphs. When they do this, they are using cognitive strategies.

#### *B. Meta-cognitive Strategy--Cultivate Vocabulary and Oral Language Skills*

Meta-cognitive strategy has many atomic strategies which includes planning in advance, directing concentration, choosing attention, self-management, self-monitoring and self-assessment, etc. The language obstacles mentioned above need proper learning strategies to decrease blocks to help Sri Lankan students who study in Chongqing Normal University to adapt better.

First, based on insufficient Chinese vocabulary, Sri Lankan students should plan and organize in advance, each student can set up their own vocabularies learning goals daily, weekly or monthly under teachers' direction. Then, self-monitoring and self-management will become an vital factor for Sri Lankan students to carry out their plans of Chinese learning made by themselves. If Sri Lankan students lack an effective self-monitoring and self-management, it will greatly reduce their Chinese learning achievements. Afterwards, they should make a self-criticism about their vocabulary learning methods and cultivate the habit of regular review. When errors occurred on memorizing or using vocabulary, they should be adept in discovering the deviation and errors autonomously in concrete context when applying vocabularies. Besides, learn vocabularies in contexts is an effective approach for foreign students to learn to understand and apply target Chinese vocabularies as well as enhancing learning effects (Yan Fang, 2005). Therefore, it is the most fundamental problem to strengthen the guiding methods for Sri Lankan students to make effective use of learning Chinese vocabularies in context, which needs them to use the metacognitive strategies that are directed attention and selective attention to pay special attention to learning vocabulary in context and it will restrict the practical effect of vocabulary learning.

Second, because of the under-use of Chinese during the daily life Sri Lankan students who study in Chongqing Normal University, according to the factors above, they actually lack of confidence or courage which is the key to communicate with others with Chinese and chances which is the assister to help the speakers have opportunities to express themselves and they will have more experiences to open their mouth in public (Xinqing Wang & Mengying Li, 2013). Hence, if they intend to break through this language obstacle, they should firstly build their confidence and have courage to speak Chinese without fear of making mistakes both by their self-monitoring of controlling their nervousness and fear of making mistakes. As for chances, there are plenty of methods to help Sri Lankan students to create opportunities, as foreign students, they can exchange to teach native language with Chinese students, organize Chinese speech contest with the premise of self-management and hold sharing meeting that can share interesting things happened at their sides. At ordinary times, when they contact your classmates or your teachers, they should try their best to use Chinese to send or reply message. If they think they can, they even can use Chinese to call with their own self-evaluation. All these strategies mentioned above are beneficial for Sri Lankan students to defeat this language obstacle.

#### *C. Social/Emotional Strategy--Increase Interaction with Chinese Culture and Learn Empathy*

In the Chinese environment, in addition to learning Chinese in the classroom, they will communicate with Chinese people at any time and solve learning and living problems in Chinese. Therefore, the social/ emotional strategy is most commonly used for Sri Lankan students to study and live in China.

Firstly, Sri Lankan students should increase interaction with Chinese and Chongqing culture. In the amateur life, students can go with Chinese students to visit the local red tourist attractions, taste the local food and understand the city's history so that they can adapt to China and Chongqing culture better and better. At the same time, students in Sri

Lanka should take participate in social activities other than their own nationals and use Chinese as far as possible. And the school can offer all kind of cultural exchange activities. It can also help them get more Chinese learning and exercising opportunities, making more Chinese friends, getting more social support and improving their cross-cultural adaptation and communication skills.

Secondly, they can adjust their motivation and emotions to get out of cultural shock. In a foreign country, Sri Lankan students will inevitably appear homesickness, anxiety and other negative emotions. And the best way to alleviate is to slow down their anxiety as much as possible, seek help to the teacher and Chinese students. Schools' manage should be diversification as much as possible for foreign students and set up a dedicated student psychological counseling room to understand the student's psychological condition. In order to reduce anxiety, arising from the understanding of uncertainty when learning and using Chinese, students can use the "ambiguity tolerance" strategy, which helps them accept new things easier and have an optimistic attitude.

Moreover, they can be empathy to understand local culture. Because of the differences in cultural customs, pace of life, taboos, etc. Sri Lankan students should stand in the position of the target language country's language, , culture and the folk to communicate and think. Try to look at culture from the perspective of Chinese people, look at things from the Chinese point of view, understand the Chinese people's values, to adapt to the pace of life in China as far as possible. Take a tolerant, non-evaluation of the attitude to look at the behavior of Chinese people, which can effectively avoid the ethnocentrism and cognitive inherent patterns and prejudices. At the same time, in this process, Sri Lankan students can learn and understand Chinese and Chongqing local cultural practices, etiquette, taboo and so on more penetrate and clear. Which will improve their cross-cultural adaptability and cross-cultural communication skills.

## V. CONCLUSION

The problem of cross-cultural adaptation is becoming more and more crucial with the increasing number of foreign students from Sri Lanka. And cross-cultural adaptation research has been given much more attention than previous times. The research mainly analyzes the factors of Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation in Chongqing Normal University. The factors mainly include Individual factors, language barriers, individuals' interaction with local cultural context and different social behavior.

So this study aims to help improve Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adapting ability by analyzing the factors of Sri Lankan students' cross-cultural adaptation and giving some useful strategies based on O'Malley and Chamot's learning strategies, such as carrying out some reading-sharing activities, holding a lot of parties of traditional Chinese culture, setting up a series of optional courses concerning Chinese traditional arts and food. However, there are a few disadvantages, for instance, the data would be more reliable if increased the scale of research. We hope to make up for these shortcomings in future research and make the research more detailed, objective and accurate. In short, Sri Lankan students encountered a cultural conflict, but harvest a lot of useful experience for their own growth.

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