# Cultural Identity Anxiety of English-Majored Senior Students

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**ABSTRACT**

In today's era of globalization, the integration and collision of Chinese and Western cultures have raised significant issues pertaining to cultural identity and cultural identity anxiety, particularly among English majors in domestic universities who are often immersed in Western cultural education. The present study examines the phenomenon among 110 English-majored senior students at the Guangzhou Institute of Science and Technology. Utilizing quantitative research methods, questionnaires, and statistical analysis via SPSS 22.0, this investigation addresses three questions. The findings reveal that English-majored senior students exhibit a strong identification with Chinese culture, yet they also experience cultural identity anxiety. Three primary factors contributing to this phenomenon are gender, personal experience, and foreign language proficiency. To mitigate this anxiety, the author recommends three strategies. This study holds significant implications for the education of English majors, providing valuable insights into how educators can design curricula and teaching practices that foster a positive cultural identity while also alleviating anxieties associated with cross-cultural encounters. The author further proposes several practical strategies, based on the research findings, to help alleviate students' cultural identity anxiety.

Key words: culture identity; cultural identity anxiety; English-majored senior students

## 1. Introduction

Due to the rapid proliferation of globalization, encompassing both economic and cultural aspects, cross-cultural communication has gained immense significance. As a result, globalization has played a pivotal role in shaping Chinese culture, ushering in a crucial stage of cultural identification for humanity. This process not only facilitates the dissemination of Chinese culture, but also reinforces cultural confidence among individuals. However, against this backdrop, conflicts between Chinese culture and other cultures, particularly Western cultures, have emerged as a common occurrence. These conflicts arise from the diverse values, traditions, and thinking patterns that characterize different nations, resulting in a complex interplay of cultural elements.

In the era of globalization, which encompasses both economic and cultural aspects, cross-cultural communication has gained unprecedented significance. This phenomenon has propelled Chinese culture into a pivotal role in the global arena, marking a pivotal stage in cultural identification for humanity. While globalization fosters the dissemination of Chinese culture and enhances cultural confidence, it also introduces challenges due to the conflicts between Chinese culture and other cultures, particularly Western cultures, which stem from differing values, traditions, and thought patterns.

Amidst this backdrop, an increasing number of individuals are exposed to Western culture, necessitating the construction of a new cultural identity. While there is a wealth of research examining cultural identity and conflicts among immigrants, there is a paucity of studies exploring cultural identity anxiety among senior English major students in China. These students, as primary learners of foreign cultures, are particularly vulnerable to the influence of the values they absorb, which could potentially shape their cultural identity.

Therefore, this study aims to shed light on the cultural identity anxiety experienced by English-majored senior students who have studied English for over four years in China. This research not only provides a novel

perspective for exploring cultural identity but also broadens the scope of related studies. Additionally, the quantitative methodology employed in this study offers valuable insights for future research. Moreover, this study holds significant social and practical implications. By delving into the cultural identity anxiety of these students, we aim to assist them in developing a healthy perspective on cultural identification and identity. Furthermore, we hope to contribute strategies to alleviate cultural identity anxiety in foreign language teaching, thereby promoting cultural harmony and cross-cultural understanding.

## 2. Literature Review
### 2.1 Definitions of Cultural Identity Anxiety
Cultural identity anxiety refers to a psychological state of unease or distress stemming from issues related to one's cultural identity. Researchers have approached this concept from diverse perspectives. Williams, John Kino Yamaguchi, and others (2002) investigated cultural identity and anxiety among Japanese Americans, revealing that Japanese cultural behavior was not significantly correlated with anxiety levels. Qiu (2019) focused on the Beichuan Qiang people, demonstrating that natural disasters can exacerbate their cultural identity anxiety as they grapple with questions of self-identification. The problem of cultural identity anxiety is thus a globally relevant concern that affects diverse groups and individuals worldwide.

### 2.2 Influencing Factors of Cultural Identity Anxiety
Previous studies have identified various factors that contribute to cultural identity anxiety. These include gender, personal experiences, hometown background, and academic stage. Rahman, Z., & Witenstein, M. A. (2013), through a quantitative study, analyzed that females had higher conflict level means for the majority of sociocultural decisions. Zhao (2018) surveyed college students and found that urban students demonstrates higher cultural identity anxiety than rural students. Betti, M. J., & Hashim, Z. K. (2021) believed that females outperform males in request comprehension and expression and they perform poorly in Arabic monolingualism and monoculturalism, students perform better in English monolingualism and monoculturalism than in other request characteristics, and students' English monolingualism and monoculturalism identities are more evident in request comprehension than in expression. Dikmen, M. (2021) perceived that there is a correlation between cultural identity anxiety and learner's language performance. Fatmawati, A. (2021) assumed that the role of culture from different country is considered as a moderator variable on the formation of anxiety. Chaliawala, K. S., Vidourek, R. A., & King, K. A. (2024) concluded that demographic factors such as gender, age, and English proficiency may also influence anxiety levels among Asian international students.

### 2.3 Cultural Identity Anxiety of Chinese College Students
The issue of cultural identity anxiety has become increasingly significant for Chinese college students. Over the past years, numerous scholars have delved into this phenomenon and offered various strategies to mitigate it. Han (2014) investigated the cultural identity anxiety experienced by English foreign language learners in China and proposed two key strategies. Firstly, he advocated for reforming the English teaching syllabus to reflect a more balanced approach, integrating both Chinese and foreign cultural perspectives. Secondly, he emphasized the importance of incorporating Chinese cultural input into foreign language teaching to foster a sense of cultural balance and confidence.

Jia (2019) analyzed a crisis of cultural identity construction of EFL learners, emphasizing a critical eye on different cultures plays an important role in the process of reducing cultural identity anxiety. Specifically, Jia proposed that EFL learners are supposed to maintain national dignity and self-confidence, and to send out Chinese culture in intercultural communication and enhance China's cultural influence in the international arena.

Chen (2020) delved into cultural identity anxiety in the realm of intercultural communication. He advocated for enhancing Chinese cultural education in intercultural communication courses and international exchange programs to help students reduce anxiety and better navigate cultural differences. According to Wang (2020) , by improving education policies and curricula, increasing Chinese cultural content, and providing students with rich cultural experiential opportunities, Chinese college students can be better equipped to handle the complexities of cultural diversity. This approach not only alleviates cultural identity anxiety but also boosts students' cultural confidence, enabling them to grow and develop healthily in a globalized context. As international education continues to expand, it is crucial to prioritize cultural education that fosters a sense of belonging and pride in one's own culture while fostering respect and understanding for other cultures. Hu (2022) also proposed that schools can hold Chinese and foreign cultural exchange lectures, and for students, they should take their own changes seriously.

In summary, these studies highlight the importance of fostering a balanced cultural education that values both Chinese and foreign cultures. By integrating Chinese cultural elements into curricula and promoting multicultural education, Chinese college students can develop a stronger sense of cultural identity, enhance their cultural confidence, and better navigate the complexities of cultural diversity.

Based on the previous and current research on cultural identity anxiety from different groups, there is a pressing need for more research and theories about Chinese students' cultural identity anxiety. This study investigated the level of cultural identity and cultural identity anxiety among English-majored senior students, analyzed significant difference among them when grouped according to profile variables, and proposed some strategies to alleviate

their cultural identity anxiety. The framework for analyzing cultural identity anxiety among Chinese college students integrates multiple dimensions, informed by a comprehensive literature review. This analytical model synthesizes the definitions, influencing factors, and specific contextual elements related to Chinese college students to understand and mitigate cultural identity anxiety effectively.

## 3. Methodology

On the basis of previous literature, the author would introduce the research purposes and questions, research significance, participants, instrument, data collection and analysis about the present study.

### 3.1 Research Purposes and Questions

The present study aims to investigate the level of cultural identity anxiety among English-majored senior students and propose strategies to alleviate such anxiety in language teaching. Drawing from previous research, which has primarily focused on the relationship between cultural identity and cultural identity anxiety among diverse learners, this study takes a more targeted approach. The specific research questions are:

(1) What is the level of cultural identity among English-majored senior students?

(2) What is the level of cultural identity anxiety among English-majored senior students?

(3) Is there a significant difference among English-majored senior students' level of cultural identity anxiety when grouped according to profile variables?

(4) What strategies do you suggest to alleviate cultural identity anxiety in the language classroom for English- majored senior students?

### 3.2 Participants

The participants of the present study are English-majored senior students from the Guangzhou Institute of Science and Technology. Based on the collected questionnaires, a total of 119 students participated in this investigation, with 110 valid questionnaires returned. Regarding gender distribution, 13.64% of the participants were male, while 86.36% were female. This gender imbalance is common in English language majors, reflecting the general trend in language education.

With respect to language proficiency, approximately half of the participants (48.18%) had passed CET4, indicating a basic level of English proficiency. A smaller number of students (28.18%) had achieved a higher level of proficiency by passing CET6, while 13.64% had passed TEM4, which is a more specialized test for English majors.

In terms of overseas experience, the majority of students (not specified in the provided text) have not lived abroad. This is not unexpected, given that the study was conducted among students in a Chinese university. However, it is important to note that even without direct overseas experience, students can still experience cultural identity anxiety due to the demands and pressures of learning a foreign language and engaging with foreign cultures.

The choice of Guangzhou Institute of Science and Technology as the sample university is strategic. As a private university in Guangzhou, it allows for the collection of effective information, given that the author is also a student at this institution. While the findings of this study may not be directly applicable to all universities in Guangzhou or beyond, they can provide insights into the cultural identity anxiety experienced by English major students in similar colleges. This information can then be used to develop strategies to alleviate cultural identity anxiety in language teaching within the context of the author's college and other similar institutions.

### 3.3 Instrument

The primary research instrument employed in this study is a questionnaire, which comprises four distinct parts. The first section collects demographic information about the participants, such as gender, language proficiency, and overseas experience. The second part assesses the level of students' cultural identity, focusing on how they perceive and identify with various cultural norms, behaviors, languages, and values. The third section explores whether students experience anxiety related to their cultural identity, particularly in the context of learning a foreign language. Finally, the fourth part examines the methods or ways students utilize to input and incorporate cultural knowledge.

To quantify students' responses and facilitate analysis, each question in the second and third parts of the questionnaire offers five choices: A for "totally agree," B for "agree," C for "uncertain," D for "disagree," and E for "totally disagree." For instance, in the second part, question 1, selecting "B" would indicate that the student agrees with the statement that many people in Western cultures prefer the value of equality.

The questionnaire was adapted from Han's (2014) doctoral dissertation, with modifications made to align with the specific purpose and participant population of this study. Additionally, some questions were drawn from Gao's (2004) questionnaire. The revised questions cover four main areas: social norms, cultural behavior, language, and values.

Given that the questionnaires are revised versions, it is crucial to establish their reliability and validity. Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the questionnaire's measurements, while validity ensures that the questionnaire accurately measures what it purports to measure. Standard statistical techniques, such as

Cronbach's alpha for reliability and factor analysis for validity, can be employed to assess these properties. Conducting a pilot test with a small sample of participants can also help identify any issues with the questionnaire and refine it further before administering it to the full study population.

**Table 1** The Reliability of The Questionnaire

| Reliability Statistics | |
|---|---|
| Cronbach's Alpha | .903 |
| N | 32 |

Table 1 shows that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of this scale is 0.903 (>0.8), which proves that this scale is reliable.

**Table 2** The Validity of The Questionnaire

| KMO and Bartlett's Test | | |
|---|---|---|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .783 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 1834.342 |
| | df | 496 |
| | Sig. | <0.001 |

Table 2 shows that KMO is 0.783 (>0.7) and Sig. is 0.000 (<0.001), which indicates that this questionnaire is suitable for factor analysis.

### 3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

To ensure that the data collected for this study is representative and reliable, the questionnaire will be administered to English-majored senior students in Guangzhou Institute of Science and Technology in January 2024. At this time, most senior students have secured employment and developed stable perspectives and emotions, which is conducive to conducting this research. A total of 115 students will be randomly selected to complete the questionnaire.

Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the author will provide a brief introduction to the study's objectives and ensure that students understand that their responses are for academic purposes only. Once all questionnaires have been completed, a rigorous proofreading process will be conducted to identify and eliminate any invalid data. This step is crucial to ensure the quality and integrity of the data set.

After the initial data cleaning, a total of 110 valid questionnaires will be entered into an Excel spreadsheet for further analysis. Excel's capabilities in organizing and manipulating data will be utilized to prepare the data for statistical analysis.

Finally, all the data will be imported into SPSS (22.0), a widely used statistical software package, for in-depth analysis. SPSS's robust suite of analytical tools will allow the author to conduct descriptive statistics, correlations, and potentially other inferential statistical tests to draw meaningful conclusions from the data. This analysis will provide valuable insights into the students' cultural identity, anxiety levels, and preferred methods of cultural input, ultimately contributing to the understanding of how these factors impact their language learning experiences.

### 4. Results and Discussion
### 4.1 The Level of Cultural Identity of English-majored Senior Students

To address the first research question, the questionnaire includes 20 questions in the first part, designed to assess students' cultural identity from various perspectives. The level of cultural identity is measured using an average score, where a higher score indicates a higher degree of identification with Chinese or Western culture.

Based on the descriptive statistics analysis of the questionnaire data collected from English-majored senior students at Guangzhou Institute of Science and Technology, the following results are presented regarding the basic level of Chinese cultural identity:

The average score for Chinese cultural identity questions indicates the overall level of students' identification with Chinese culture.

A high average score suggests that students have a strong sense of identification with Chinese culture, while a lower score indicates less identification.

The distribution of scores can also provide insights into how widely varying students' cultural identities are.

The descriptive statistics analysis in SPSS 22.0 will be used to process the data and generate the necessary statistics to evaluate the students' level of Chinese cultural identity. It is important to note that similar analysis will also be conducted for the Western cultural identity questions to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' cultural orientations.

**(1) The Level of Chinese Cultural Identity**

**Table 3** Descriptive Statistics of General Chinese Cultural Identification

|  | Chinese Cultural Identification |
|---|---|
| N | 110 |
| Minimum | 1 |
| Maximum | 3 |
| Mean | 2.38 |
| Standard deviation | .496 |

**Table 4** Descriptive Analysis of Chinese Cultural Identity

|  | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Norms | 110 | 1 | 5 | 3.13 | .886 |
| Cultural Behaviors | 110 | 1 | 3 | 1.89 | .495 |
| Language | 110 | 1 | 3 | 1.91 | .583 |

Based on the provided data in Table 3 and Table 4, we can draw the following observations and discussions regarding the Chinese cultural identity of English-majored senior students:

Table 3 shows general Chinese cultural identification. From this table, the mean score for general Chinese cultural identification is 2.38, which is close to the median value of 3 (assuming a 5-point scale where 3 represents a neutral or moderate position). This suggests that the English-majored senior students tend to have a moderate level of identification with Chinese culture. The standard deviation of .496 indicates a moderate spread in the scores, meaning that while most students have a similar level of Chinese cultural identification, there is still some variation.

According to table 4, the different dimension of Chinese cultural identity have been analyzed. In terms of social norms, the mean score of 3.13 suggests that students tend to identify strongly with Chinese social norms. This indicates that they value and follow Chinese societal customs, traditions, and behaviors. For the cultural behaviors, the mean score of 1.89 is closer to the lower end of the scale (assuming a 3-point scale), indicating that students identify less strongly with traditional Chinese cultural behaviors. This could mean that while they value social norms, they may be less likely to adhere to traditional cultural practices in their daily lives. The indicator of language has the mean score of 1.91, which is also closer to the lower end of the scale, suggesting a moderate level of identification with the Chinese language. This may reflect the fact that as English majors, students may focus more on English language learning and use, resulting in a lower level of identification with the Chinese language.

The moderate general Chinese cultural identification suggests that English-majored senior students are neither overly identified with Chinese culture nor distant from it. This could be due to their language major, which focuses on English language and culture, potentially leading to a balance in their cultural identifications.

The strong identification with Chinese social norms but less so with cultural behaviors and language suggests that students value Chinese societal values and customs but may not always practice traditional cultural behaviors or use the Chinese language in their daily lives. This could be attributed to the focus of their language major, which likely involves more English-language activities and less emphasis on traditional Chinese cultural practices.

Educators and policymakers should consider these findings to promote a balanced cultural education that values both English language skills and traditional Chinese cultural knowledge and practices. This could help students develop a more comprehensive cultural identity that encompasses both their English language major and their Chinese cultural roots.

**(2) The Level of Western Cultural Identity**

**Table 5** Descriptive Statistics of General Western Cultural Identification

|  | Western cultural identification |
|---|---|
| N | 110 |
| Minimum | 1 |
| Maximum | 5 |
| Mean | 2.75 |
| Standard deviation | .622 |

**Table 6** Descriptive Analysis of Western Cultural Identity

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Norms | 110 | 1 | 5 | 2.70 | .684 |
| Cultural Behaviors | 110 | 1 | 5 | 2.78 | .691 |
| Language | 110 | 1 | 5 | 2.66 | .791 |

Based on the data provided in Table 5 regarding the western cultural identification of the 110 English-majored senior students, we can make the following observations and discussions.

Table 5 shows general western cultural identification. As is shown in the table, the mean score of 2.75 indicates that the students tend to have a moderate level of identification with Western culture. This score is close to the median value of 3 (assuming a 5-point scale where 3 represents a neutral or moderate position).

According to table 6, the different dimension of western cultural identity have been analyzed. In term of western social norms, the mean score of 2.70 indicates a moderate level of identification with western social norms. Students may be aware of and value western societal customs and traditions. About the indicator of western cultural behaviors, the lowest mean score of 2.78 suggests that students identify least strongly with western cultural behaviors. This could mean that while they value Western values, social norms, and language, they may not actively engage in traditional Western cultural practices in their daily lives.The indicator of western Language has a mean score of 2.66, the students identify moderately with the western language. This is likely due to their English major, which requires proficiency in English and familiarity with western linguistic practices.

The dispersion degree, measured by the standard deviation, is highest for cultural behaviors and lowest for language. This suggests that there is a wider range of opinions and perceptions among students regarding Western cultural behaviors, while their views on language tend to be more similar.

The moderate level of western cultural identification among English-majored senior students reflects a balance between their native Chinese cultural identity and their English language major, which involves exposure to Western culture. The stronger identification with cultural behaviors and social norms compared to language suggests that students may be more drawn to Western cultural behavior, while being less likely to actively engage in western ideologies and linguistic practices.

Educators should consider these findings to foster an inclusive and balanced cultural education that values both Eastern and Western cultural traditions. This can help students develop a more global perspective and appreciation for diverse cultures..

**(3) The Difference Between the Level of Chinese and Western Cultural Identity**

Based on the information provided, here is a revised and expanded discussion of the differences between Chinese and Western cultural identity among English-majored senior students:

**Table 7** Paired-Samples T Test between CCI and WCI

| | t | p |
|---|---|---|
| Chinese Social Norms and Western Social Norms | 4.060 | .000 |
| Chinese Cultural Behavior and Western Cultural Behavior | -10.178 | .000 |
| Chinese Language and Western Language | -10.001 | .000 |

The data presented in table 7 indicated that English-majored senior students exhibit both Chinese and western cultural identities. However, a closer examination of the average scores reveals that their Chinese cultural identity tends to be stronger than their western cultural identity. This finding is further supported by the results of the paired-samples t-test between Chinese cultural identity (CCI) and Western cultural identity (WCI) dimensions.

Specifically, the t-test results show significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in social norms, cultural behaviors, and language between CCI and WCI. This suggests that, while the students identify with both cultures, they have a deeper connection and stronger sense of belonging to their native Chinese culture. This is evident in their stronger identification with Chinese social norms, cultural behaviors, and language compared to Western counterparts.

There are several factors that may contribute to this finding. Firstly, the students are Chinese nationals who have grown up in a Chinese cultural environment. This immersion in Chinese culture from a young age has likely shaped their values, beliefs, and behaviors in a way that aligns more closely with Chinese cultural norms.

Secondly, as English major students, they are exposed to Western culture through their studies and interactions with native English speakers. However, this exposure may not be sufficient to overshadow their deep-rooted Chinese cultural identity. In fact, previous studies have shown that cultural identity is often resilient and resistant to change, even after extensive exposure to a foreign culture (Berry, 2005).

Finally, the students may also have a sense of responsibility and pride in maintaining and promoting their native culture. As representatives of Chinese culture, they may feel a duty to uphold its values and traditions, even as they learn and adapt to Western culture.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the study of cultural identity among English-majored senior students reveals a fascinating duality. While these students have been exposed to and influenced by western culture through their English language studies, their Chinese cultural identity remains dominant. This finding aligns with previous research by Li et al. (2018) and Zhao (2018), which similarly showed that Chinese university students maintain a

strong sense of cultural identity despite the influence of Western culture. This duality is crucial for understanding the cultural identity of university students and its influencing factors, especially in the context of globalization. As educators and policymakers, it is important to recognize and foster this cultural duality in order to cultivate globally competent yet culturally rooted individuals.

**4.2 The Level of Cultural Identity Anxiety of English-majored Senior Students**

**Table 8** Descriptive Analysis of Cultural Identity Anxiety

|  | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Norm | 110 | 1 | 5 | 3.03 | .896 |
| Cultural Behaviors | 110 | 1 | 5 | 2.67 | .663 |
| Language | 110 | 1 | 5 | 2.87 | .801 |

The analysis of the data in Table 8 provides valuable insights into the cultural identity anxiety of English-majored senior students. Based on the descriptive analysis, we can draw the following conclusions: In terms of social norm anxiety, the average score for social norm anxiety is above the median (3.03 out of 5), indicating that English-majored senior students tend to be relatively anxious about social norms related to cultural identity. This may stem from the constant exposure to Western cultural norms and values, which can create feelings of dissonance or uncertainty when comparing them to their own cultural norms. For the cultural behaviors anxiety, the average score for anxiety related to cultural behaviors is below the median (2.67 out of 5), suggesting that senior English major students are less anxious about cultural behaviors. This could be explained by the fact that they are often exposed to and practice various cultural behaviors, both western and Chinese, through their studies and interactions with people from different cultures. This exposure may help them feel more confident and secure in their ability to navigate cultural differences. And the indicator of language anxiety has the average score for language anxiety is also below the median (2.87 out of 5). This finding is not surprising, given that senior English major students are typically proficient in English and have likely developed strategies to cope with language-related anxiety. However, it is worth noting that even though the average score is below the median, there is still a degree of anxiety present, indicating that language remains a factor in their cultural identity anxiety.

In general, senior English major students show a certain level of anxiety about cultural identity, with social norms being the most anxiety-provoking aspect. This anxiety may stem from the tension between their own cultural values and norms and the increasing influence of Western culture. However, they appear to be relatively confident in their ability to handle cultural behaviors and language, which may help them mitigate some of the anxiety related to cultural identity.

The data suggests that while there is indeed a degree of cultural identity anxiety present, the level is not exceptionally high. This finding aligns with previous research by Bian and Gao (2004), who argued that foreign language learning can indeed lead to changes in culture, values, and cultural identity, potentially resulting in cultural identity anxiety. Moreover, the consistency with the results of Han's (2014) and Du's (2015) studies on college students' cultural identity and anxiety further strengthens the argument that cultural identity anxiety is a prevalent issue among English majors and other college students who are engaged in foreign language learning. This knowledge can help educators and policymakers design targeted programs and strategies to support students in navigating the complexities of cultural identity and reducing anxiety levels.

**4.3 Difference among English-majored Senior Students' Level of Cultural Identity Anxiety**

Based on the data provided in Tables 9 and 10, we can analyze the factors influencing cultural identity anxiety (CIA) among English-majored senior students, specifically focusing on gender differences.

**Table 9** Descriptive Analysis of Sub-factors of CIA in Terms of Gender

|  | Gender | N | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social norms | Male | 15 | 2.70 | .727 |
|  | Female | 95 | 3.08 | .912 |
| Cultural behaviors | Male | 15 | 2.54 | .659 |
|  | Female | 95 | 2.69 | .664 |
| Language | Male | 15 | 2.60 | .799 |
|  | Female | 95 | 2.92 | .797 |
| Cultural identity anxiety | Male | 15 | 2.59 | .631 |
|  | Female | 95 | 2.82 | .668 |

**Table 10** Independent T Test of Sub-factors of CIA in Terms of Gender

|  | N | t | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social norms | 110 | -1.670 | .107 |
| Cultural behaviors | 110 | -.818 | .420 |
| Language | 110 | -1.424 | .164 |

Table 9 shows the descriptive analysis of sub-factors of CIA by Gender. In term of social norms, female students (M = 3.08, SD = .912) have a higher mean score than male students (M = 2.70, SD = .727) in terms of anxiety related to social norms. This suggests that female students may experience more anxiety in adhering to or adapting to social norms in relation to their cultural identity. For the cultural behaviors, while the mean scores for both genders are close (Male: M = 2.54, SD = .659; Female: M = 2.69, SD = .664), female students still show a slightly higher level of anxiety related to cultural behaviors. Regarding to language, female students (M = 2.92, SD = .797) have a notably higher mean score than male students (M = 2.60, SD = .799) in terms of language-related anxiety. This indicates that female students may face more challenges and anxiety in using the foreign language, which can impact their cultural identity.

The overall mean score for female students (M = 2.82, SD = .668) is also higher than for male students (M = 2.59, SD = .631), indicating a general trend of higher anxiety levels among female English majors.

Table 10 displays the independent T test of sub-factors of CIA by Gender. The results of the independent samples t-tests show that while there are differences in mean scores between genders for all sub-factors, these differences are not statistically significant at the conventional levels (p > .05). This means that while female students tend to score higher on average in terms of anxiety, this difference is not large enough to be conclusively attributed to gender.

The descriptive analysis suggests that female students may experience higher levels of cultural identity anxiety than male students, particularly in relation to social norms and language. However, the independent t-tests indicate that these differences are not statistically significant.

This could be due to several reasons, including the relatively small sample size of male students (15 compared to 95 female students), which may not provide enough power to detect significant differences. It could also suggest that other factors, beyond gender, may play a more important role in determining students' cultural identity anxiety.

Future research with a larger and more balanced sample size could provide more insights into the role of gender in cultural identity anxiety among English majors.

**Table 11** Descriptive Analysis of Sub-factors of CIA in Terms of Experience

|  | Abroad learning experience | N | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social norms | Yes | 15 | 2.53 | 1.093 |
|  | No | 95 | 3.11 | .841 |
| Cultural behaviors | Yes | 15 | 2.54 | .778 |
|  | No | 95 | 2.69 | .645 |
| Language | Yes | 15 | 2.78 | .861 |
|  | No | 95 | 2.89 | .795 |
| Cultural identity anxiety | Yes | 15 | 2.61 | .777 |
|  | No | 95 | 2.82 | .645 |

Based on the data provided in Table 11, we can analyze the effect of abroad learning experience on cultural identity anxiety (CIA) among English-majored senior students. (Yes means have abroad learning experience, No means have not)

Table 11 shows the descriptive analysis of sub-factors of CIA by abroad learning experience. In terms of social norms, students without abroad learning experience (M = 3.11, SD = .841) tend to have a higher mean score for anxiety related to social norms compared to those with abroad experience (M = 2.53, SD = 1.093). This suggests that students who have not been abroad may experience more anxiety in relation to social norms and cultural identity. For the cultural behaviors, the mean scores for both groups are similar (Abroad: M = 2.54, SD = .778; No Abroad: M = 2.69, SD = .645), indicating no significant difference in anxiety related to cultural behaviors based on abroad learning experience. Regarding to language, students without abroad experience (M = 2.89, SD = .795) tend to have a slightly higher mean score for language-related anxiety compared to those with abroad experience (M = 2.78, SD = .861), but the difference is not substantial.

The overall mean score for students without abroad experience (M = 2.82, SD = .645) is also slightly higher than for those with abroad experience (M = 2.61, SD = .777).

| | N | t | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social norms | 110 | -2.142 | .046 |
| Cultural behaviors | 110 | -.763 | .452 |
| Language | 110 | -.478 | .636 |

Table 12 displays the independent T test of sub-factors of CIA by abroad learning experience. The results show that there is a significant difference in anxiety related to social norms between students with and without abroad learning experience (t = -2.142, Sig. = .046 < .05). This indicates that students without abroad experience tend to experience more anxiety in relation to social norms and cultural identity.

However, there are no significant differences in anxiety related to cultural behaviors (t = -.763, Sig. = .452 > .05) or language (t = -.478, Sig. = .636 > .05) based on abroad learning experience.

The results suggest that having abroad learning experience may help reduce anxiety related to social norms and cultural identity among English-majored senior students. This could be due to increased exposure to different cultures, improved language proficiency, and better adaptation skills gained through living and studying abroad. However, abroad experience does not seem to have a significant impact on anxiety related to cultural behaviors or language proficiency. This could be because other factors, such as personal characteristics, language learning strategies, or cultural background, may play a more important role in determining these aspects of cultural identity anxiety.

Overall, the findings indicate that abroad learning experience can be a valuable resource for reducing anxiety related to cultural identity among English majors, particularly in relation to social norms.

To support these findings, Chen (2020) believed that there is also a significant difference in terms of students experience, while the conclusions of previous studies are different from this study. Chen (2020) found out that students who have abroad learning experience shows higher cultural identity anxiety, which also prove the conclusion of Guo and Yan (2007) study on overseas Chinese that they have higher cultural identity anxiety than those who have not been abroad.

Based on the additional information provided, we can analyze the effect of foreign language level on cultural identity anxiety (CIA) among English-majored senior students.

**Table 13** Descriptive Analysis of Sub-factors of CIA in Terms of Foreign Language Level

| | Foreign language level | N | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social norms | < CET 6 | 58 | 3.03 | .957 |
| | > CET 6 | 52 | 3.03 | .831 |
| Cultural behaviors | < CET 6 | 58 | 2.79 | .760 |
| | > CET 6 | 52 | 2.55 | .512 |
| Language | < CET 6 | 58 | 2.94 | .822 |
| | > CET 6 | 52 | 2.80 | .779 |
| Cultural identity anxiety | < CET 6 | 58 | 2.87 | .748 |
| | > CET 6 | 52 | 2.70 | .553 |

Table 13 shows the descriptive analysis of sub-factors of CIA by foreign language level. In terms of social norms, students who have not passed CET 6 (M = 3.03, SD = .957) and those who have passed CET 6 or above (M = 3.03, SD = .831) have similar mean scores for anxiety related to social norms. This suggests that foreign language level does not have a significant impact on anxiety related to social norms. For the cultural behaviors, students who have not passed CET 6 (M = 2.79, SD = .760) tend to have a slightly higher mean score for anxiety related to cultural behaviors compared to those who have passed CET 6 or above (M = 2.55, SD = .512). However, the difference is not substantial. Regarding to language, students who have not passed CET 6 (M = 2.94, SD = .822) tend to have a slightly higher mean score for language-related anxiety compared to those who have passed CET 6 or above (M = 2.80, SD = .779). Again, the difference is not significant.

**Table 14** Independent T Test of Sub-factors of CIA in Terms of Foreign Language Level

| | N | t | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social norms | 110 | -.018 | .986 |
| Cultural behaviors | 110 | 1.934 | .056 |
| Language | 110 | .886 | .378 |

Table 14 displays the independent T test of sub-factors of CIA by foreign language level. The results show

that there are no significant differences in anxiety related to social norms (t = -.018, Sig. = .986 > .05), cultural behaviors (t = 1.934, Sig. = .056 > .05), or language (t = .886, Sig. = .378 > .05) based on foreign language level.

The results suggest that foreign language level, specifically whether students have passed CET 6 or above, does not have a significant impact on cultural identity anxiety among English-majored senior students. This indicates that factors other than language proficiency, such as personal characteristics, cultural background, or experience abroad, may play a more important role in determining cultural identity anxiety.

However, it is worth noting that the mean scores for anxiety related to cultural behaviors and language are slightly lower for students who have passed CET 6 or above. This could suggest that, although not statistically significant, higher language proficiency may provide students with some advantages in navigating cultural differences and reducing anxiety related to cultural identity.

Based on the analysis, we can conclude that foreign language level does not significantly affect cultural identity anxiety among English-majored senior students. However, having higher language proficiency may provide some advantages in reducing anxiety related to cultural behaviors and language use.

In connection with these findings, Han (2014) also believed that there is no significant difference in terms of foreign language proficiency and students who have passed TEM8 showed lower cultural identity anxiety. Thus, the higher language proficiency students have, the lower cultural identity anxiety they have.

**4.4 Strategies for Alleviating Cultural Identity Anxiety in Language Teaching**

Under the trend of globalization, western culture gradually encroaches on traditional Chinese culture, diminishing people's aspirations towards Chinese culture and triggering cultural identity anxiety among the younger generation. In foreign language classrooms, students learn a language that differs from their native tongue and cultural background, exposing them to unfamiliar cultural norms, values, and practices. Based on the findings of the current study, here are some strategies to alleviate cultural identity anxiety in language teaching.

Firstly, since students without overseas learning experience tend to exhibit higher cultural identity anxiety, it is advisable for universities to provide more opportunities for short-term study abroad to enrich their international experiences. On one hand, studying abroad enables students to understand and know various countries and cultures, enhancing communication and friendships with international peers, and promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding, which can mitigate cultural identity anxiety among university students. On the other hand, studying abroad exposes students to different education systems and learning methods, helps them appreciate the diversity of the world, increases their knowledge, and broadens their horizons. Currently, GZIST has implemented a series of overseas study programs, including at Macau University, Oxford University, and Wittenberg University of Applied Sciences. However, only a small percentage of students have overseas study experience, and universities should encourage more students to participate in such programs.

In addition, students with a lower level of foreign language proficiency tend to experience higher levels of cultural identity anxiety. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to enhance students' foreign language proficiency. Through English learning, students can gain access to literature, film, and television works from diverse cultural backgrounds, fostering a deeper understanding and respect for different cultures, thus alleviating confusion and anxiety regarding cultural identity. Simultaneously, improving students' English proficiency boosts their confidence in self-expression in a multicultural setting, enabling them to participate in cultural exchanges with greater assurance and establish connections with individuals from various cultural backgrounds. This positively impacts the alleviation of cultural identity anxiety. Consequently, it is crucial for colleges to assist students in enhancing their comprehensive English abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

**Table 15** Ways to Know Traditional Chinese Culture

| Indicators | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Movie | 82.76% |
| TV | 75% |
| Internet | 69.83% |
| Chinese Class | 38.79 |

**Table 16** Ways to Know Western Culture

| Indicators | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Movie | 79.31% |
| TV | 72.41% |
| Internet | 60.34% |
| English Class | 56.03% |

Finally, as evident from Tables 15 and 16, the survey reveals that the primary channels for students to acquire both Chinese and Western cultures are movies, television, the internet, and Chinese and English classes. Specifically, for Chinese culture (Table 14), the proportions indicate that 82.76% of students learn through movies, 75% through television, 69.83% via the internet, and 38.79% through Chinese classes. Similarly, for Western

culture (Table 15), the breakdown is 79.31% through movies, 72.41% through television, 60.34% via the internet, and 56.03% through English classes.

**Table 17** Teaching Contents in English Classroom

| Indicators | Percentage |
|---|---|
| English expressions of Chinese culture | 56.03% |
| English expressions of Western culture | 53.45% |
| Compatibility between Chinese and Western cultures with Chinese culture as the main body | 82.76% |
| Compatibility between Chinese and Western cultures with Western culture as the main body | 23.28% |

When it comes to the teaching contents in English classrooms (Table 17), a significant number of students prefer to learn about the compatibility between Chinese and Western cultures, with Chinese culture as the primary focus (82.76%). The proportions also show that 56.03% are interested in English expressions of Chinese culture, and 53.45% in English expressions of Western culture. Comparatively, only 23.28% prefer learning about the compatibility of Chinese and Western cultures with Western culture as the main body.

In light of these findings, it is imperative for teachers in foreign language classrooms to tailor their teaching contents to students' interests. By doing so, they can not only inspire students' cultural confidence but also alleviate their cultural identity anxiety. This approach ensures that students are not only equipped with linguistic skills but also gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of both Chinese and Western cultures.

## 5. Conclusion

In this study, the key findings are summarized. Data were analyzed using SPSS 22.0, primarily through questionnaires, and the following conclusions were drawn. Firstly, the general level of cultural identity among senior English major students at Guangzhou Institute of Science and Technology indicates a higher identification with Chinese culture compared to Western culture. However, the difference between the two is not significant. Secondly, regarding cultural identity anxiety, senior English major students exhibit a certain degree of this anxiety, though the anxiety level is not high. When considering gender and foreign language proficiency, no significant differences were found in terms of cultural identity anxiety. However, there was a significant difference related to students' experience. Lastly, regarding strategies to alleviate cultural identity anxiety in language teaching, three effective approaches were identified. These include providing students with more short-term study abroad opportunities, enhancing students' foreign language proficiency with the assistance of teachers, and designing teaching content that aligns with students' interests.5.3 The limitations of this study and suggestion for further studies.

Despite the valuable insights offered by this study, it is essential to recognize some key limitations that serve as a basis for future research. First and foremost, the study's sample size and generalizability are constrained. As the study focused specifically on English major students at the Guangzhou Institute of Science and Technology, the findings may not be fully applicable to English major students at other institutions or in different regions. Second, the study focused primarily on senior students, whose levels of cultural identity and anxiety may differ from those of freshmen or sophomores. Lastly, the data collection method, namely self-reported questionnaires, may be subject to biases such as social desirability bias and recall bias. Students may have responded in a way they perceived as favorable rather than reflecting their true feelings and experiences.

In conclusion, while this study has made valuable contributions, there are opportunities for future research to build on its findings and address its limitations.

## 6. Recommendations

For future research, firstly, a broader sample encompassing various institutions and locations would help ensure the study's external validity. Secondly, future research could include a wider range of academic years to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural identity develops throughout the undergraduate period. This would allow for a more nuanced analysis of the relationship between cultural identity, language anxiety, and language proficiency. Lastly, it could employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups. This would allow for a deeper exploration of students' perspectives and experiences, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena studied.

Accordingly, by expanding the sample size and scope, employing a mixed-methods approach, and including a wider range of academic years, future research can further enhance our understanding of cultural identity and its implications for language teaching.

(2) Guangdong Province General Higher Education Young Innovative Talents Project (2022WQNCX088)" — "Research on the Coupling Relationship between College Students' Cultural Identity Construction and Ideological and Political Education in the Post-Globalization Era"

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