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Positive Influences of Culture Class on International Students' Cultural Adjustment

by

Hoonam Kwon

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

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Abstract

This study aims to foster international students' understanding of culture shock and cultural adjustment based on what they have learned from culture courses. For students to realize and respond appropriately to the cultural challenges, culture courses provide opportunities for students to comfortably discuss and share their experiences and struggles since it aims to raise cultural awareness by taking into account these in helping students modify or adjust them to be in accordance with the new culture. When courses enable students to talk about how those challenges/struggles may be solved in their classes, it better prepares students for what lies ahead. Furthermore, when students are more informed, they are less likely to be frustrated and overwhelmed which could result in fewer students quitting and return to their home country without achieving original goals. Therefore, the central emphasis of this study is to explore how well international students utilize the knowledge that they have learned in culture classes for better and smoother culture transition. This study aims to address efficacy of culture class on international students' cultural adjustment period.

In this study, I interviewed seven international students who have attended culture classes at the regional public university in the Midwest U.S. in fall 2017 and spring 2018. Twelve interview questions were asked to find out how much the culture classes contributed positively to their culture adjustment process. Based on my research, I have found that regardless the international students' ethnicity or original cultural backgrounds, there are many commonalities in expectations of the American education, and that at the same time, there are exceptions that are unique to people from specific cultures or disciplines. With all people, regardless the differences, some challenges and struggles will be intrinsic and some extrinsic. The more students are prepared for the challenges raised by cultural differences, the better they become successful in transition. Culture classes are consequently as important for the international students as academic class for the students who explore new life in another culture.

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Table of Contents

| | Page |
|--|------|
| List of Table | 6 |
| Chapter | |
| 1. Introduction and Problem Statement | 7 |
| 2. Literature Review | 10 |
| Cultural Shock, Culture Adaptation and Cultural Competence | 11 |
| International Students' Challenges and Needs | 14 |
| Culture and Language Learning | 17 |
| Cultural Identity | 20 |
| 3. Methodology | 25 |
| Participants | 25 |
| Description of Data Collection Instruments | 27 |
| Procedures | 28 |
| Analysis Plan | 29 |
| 4. Results | 30 |
| First Informant | 31 |
| Second Informant | 36 |
| Third Informant | 39 |
| Fourth Informant | 42 |
| Fifth Informant | 44 |
| Sixth Informant | 47 |
| Seventh Informant | 49 |

| | |
|--|------|
| | 5 |
| Chapter | Page |
| Analysis of Interview | 51 |
| 5. Conclusions | 57 |
| Discussions and Limitation | 59 |
| References | 60 |
| Appendices | |
| A. Interview Prompts about Cultural Experience | 65 |
| B. Consent to Participate | 67 |
| C. IRB Approval | 69 |

List of Table

| Table | Page |
|----------------------------------|------|
| 1. Participant Information | 26 |

Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem Statement

Cultural adjustment has become a popular topic for the second language (L2) learning since 1980s because the cultural knowledge of a learner on a target language has an important aspect for fostering his/her success in not only L2 learning but also academic performances. Many researchers have studied L2 learners' experiences during the first few months in a new country and shown the importance of smooth cultural adjustment for their profession and language acquisition (Beltrán-Palanques, 2014; Dorozhkin & Mazitova, 2008; Gao, 2013; Koppe, 1985; Nailevna, 2017). Numerous international students choose unquestionably to board on a flight to the U. S. to achieve English proficiency and build an academic foundation for a future career. They are highly motivated enough to endure culture differences first; however, soon encounter an almost unbreakable glass ceiling of cultural barrier, which usually results in frustration and helplessness.

As soon as they set foot in this country, adjustment to a new culture becomes an immediate concern of international students besides improving language ability. Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) stated that “unfamiliarity with American customs, norms, and values make it difficult for international students to interact with Americans effectively and meet personal and academic demands” (p. 699). The administrators of the U.S. universities have started to recognize that the cultural adaptation of students is one of the critical factors for their valuable international students for better performance (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996). Keeping up with the times, a regional public university in the Midwest U.S. has also started to provide culture courses integrated into its language programs to ease the cultural shock since 1993 under the name of culture classes (Intensive English Center, 1997).

Students come to the U.S. with the high expectation of language progress along with less concerns about culture because they are confident about their knowledge in the Western culture thanks to mass-media, Hollywood movies, and the Internet. Moreover, the students are less likely to expect the wide variances probably raised by not only language difficulty, but also cultural differences. However, this turns out to be something that should be addressed as early as possible. For this reason, students may find it helpful to talk with other students and a teacher in a specially designed class regarding their impressions and cultural expectations. Cultural instruction and feedback from other students can be reassuring and validating. It can also be a comfort for the students to know that they have a supporting system for their well-being in a foreign country.

However, as a prospective teacher in an M.A. TESL program, I discovered that only half of 21 international students from five different countries who had almost completed the Cultural Orientation class saw the class essential to raise culture competence and help their transition to the new culture. Some appeared to see that real-life experience outside school is enough for a smooth transition despite they recognized its critical role in enhancing the cultural understanding. When students do experience discrepancies between their expectations and those of the culture classes, or when expectations do not match up and are not easily reconcilable, it can result in students feeling dissatisfied, disgruntled, and withdraw from the course. An American academic setting itself is unique and special to them, so it is likely to lead to confusion and nonproductive attempt unless their struggles and challenges are not met adequately. Therefore, it is quite obvious that a culture class plays a critical role contributing international students' better academic performance academically along with increasing second language proficiency.

Thus, the study of its impact on students' culture adjustment has a great importance for further discussion about designing curriculum and contexts of the culture course and practicing them but also enhancing the faculty's understanding of international students' experiences at a foreign country. The purpose of the paper is truly on students' perspectives about how the culture class assists their cultural adjustment rather than a course evaluation on a teacher's perspective. This paper aims to explore the influences the culture class has on international students qualitatively by identifying what international students have undergone and how their perception of American culture has shaped through the cultural course provided by the regional university in the Midwest U.S.

The subjects of this study are international students who completed the Culture Orientation courses which focused on cultural adjustment for undergraduate students who have little or no living experience in the U.S. or Canada regardless of the English proficiency (University Catalog, n.d.). This study is to address specific events and interactions to demonstrate how a culture class or cultural instruction effectively promotes cultural adjustment in the classroom if any. This study mostly addresses the impacts of the culture class for international students who have been in the U.S. for the first time and determines if the class is an effective channel to demonstrate the process of cultural adjustment. Throughout this study, the following question will be discussed:

- Does culture instruction practiced in the Cultural Orientation class help international students' cultural adjustment in America?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

At this Midwest University, 1,512 degree or non-degree seeking international students from 85 countries were enrolled in fall 2017 (Center for International Studies, 2017). The overwhelming majority are from Asia; yet, each brings many different cultures and expectations presented in their ways of behavior, interaction, and perceptions. According to Dorozhkin and Mazitova (2008), people from different countries and cultures are often influenced by stereotypical conceptions based on misinformation in that they do not know much about the others. This is highly likely to cause challenges during their cultural adaptation to the extent which demotivates them up to a point to make them want to quit. In this respect, it is necessary that they receive well-refined cultural instruction focusing on social and academic life on a U. S. campus. One of the most critical components of student success is a course that allows students to maintain progress to completion predictably.

To accomplish this goal, the culture class is essential, which is believed to promote international students integrate themselves into US campus life (EAP Teaching Assistant Handbook, 2017). Accordingly, most of colleges and universities in the U.S. have started to integrate a culture program into their language curricula (Byrnes, 2012). Teaching language involves direct and indirect cultural interactions, and that becomes a starting point where L2 learners begin to construct their second cultural identity (Kubota & Lin, 2009). At this point, it is essential to look at the features that culture has on students who study abroad concerning culture shock, culture adjustment and cultural competence. In addition, I will discuss the three main benefits a culture class brings with regards to international students' challenges and needs, culture and language learning, and a cultural identity based on numerous researchers.

Cultural Shock, Culture Adaptation and Cultural Competence

It might be well to bring a great deal of attention to what is cultural adjustment and what students experience through it before going on to consider the impacts of culture classes. It is no doubt difficult for a person to adjust to a new living environment because it implies the change of everything the person has kept as a norm. As a result, most international students suffer mentally and physically from this force of change. Oberg (1960) first acknowledged this anxiety that results from losing all familiar things and learning new ways, and named it as “culture shock” in his article “Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments.” It means that when a person puts a foot in a new culture, not-knowing-much about the cultural norms and the boundary is highly likely to raise the anxiety to the person, which, in turn, affects the person’s life with regards to behaviors and attitudes toward the culture. Culture shock appears to have different degrees depending on many variables like individual characteristics, a similarity between two cultures, and so on, but there is a predictable sequence of stages that people undergo.

Oberg (1960) identified the stages which are sequenced from “Honeymoon stage” in which a person feels awe at the new environment. This, then, leads to “Shock stage” in which the person basically feels shocks at the differences and begins feeling emotional turmoil. And then “Adjustment” and “Acceptance stage” come in, both of which demonstrate the status the person finally accepts differences and starts adjusting to the new culture by learning and integrating into it. At these two stages, the person finally functions appropriately in the new culture getting along with the new set of living conditions. This stage is also called Cultural Adaptation. Researchers exploring “culture shock” point out that most people undergo these stages precisely in the same order once they get into a new culture (Oberg, 1960; Stewart & Leggat, 1998).

It seems that coping with culture shock is a key part of a smooth transition or cultural adjustment since knowing about a culture contributes to both fulfilling foreign life and satisfying academic achievement. Cupsa (2018) examined the stages of culture shock and found that culture shock could facilitate the development of one's expanded, more inclusive identity to reach the point of accepting the diverse world in which we live. America is not an idealized homogeneous community, yet recognition of culture shock arising from cultural differences can assist international students to go through cultural adjustment smoothly and overcome culture shock easily. Since after, thus, culture shock has become a one aspect of a second language learning and studied in the field of education for foreign students' success (DeVors, 2017; Dorozhkin & Mazitova, 2008; Hurtado et al., 1996; Nailevna, 2017). In assessing difficulties and factors in Latino students' transition to college, Hurtado et al. (1996) found that campus culture affects student adjustment in academic, social, personal-emotional, and attachment to the institution through a longitudinal survey of Hispanic student experiences. Dorozhkin and Mazitova (2008) also highlighted the importance of foreign students' sociocultural adaptation for their successful studies and life. In addition to the study on culture shock, Nailevna (2017) studied on environmental factors of culture shock in Russian universities and suggested constant significant support and guidance over international students.

When discussing culture shock and cultural adjustment, achieving cultural competence may be an ultimate goal. According to National Education Association (2018), cultural competence is "having an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about a difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families." It is the ability to understand the within-group differences that make each student unique while celebrating the between group variations. Pratt-Johnson (2006) highlighted the fact

for teachers that lack of cultural competence of students could cause intercultural conflicts inside and outside of them. What makes it worse is their inability of resolving issues which usually links to inability to function normally. Therefore, it can be seen that international students achieve cultural competence at last when they find themselves doing something successfully or effectively in a new culture with less struggle or discomfort using the L2.

What has to be considered when discussing culture shock is the fact that an international student does not necessarily move each stage in order at a similar pace only to reach the final stage of cultural adjustment. Apparently, a person can either revisit the previous stage and repeat the flow of culture shock, or stay at a particular stage for comparatively long depending on individual or environmental issues. When Lysgaard (1955) developed “U model” to demonstrate in U shape the flow of culture shock happening to foreigners during adjustment period in a foreign culture, it had received full attention from the field since it tried to explain a foreigner’s experiences visually. U model described that foreigners begin life with full excitement about all new things, but soon culture shock occurs which decreases honeymoon-like happiness to the point that hits the bottom of emotion. Finally, one slowly recovers by learning and adapting to the new culture where a person can be presumably seen to reach the stage of adjustment. However, human’s emotion and behavior are more complicated than the pattern U model predicted. Therefore, it has expanded to “W model” with the addition of repeating culture shock (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). It is normal that international students have ups and downs commonly so that they inevitably reverse a process of culture shock.

On the contrary to their plausible explanations, both U and W models which are approximately 60 years old, increasingly receive critics. Lack of empirical research and less reflection of numerous cases make them incongruent with individuals showing multiple variables

in modern society (Berardo, 2006). Hence, Berardo (2006) suggested that they need to be used very carefully with full disclosure of its limitations and criticisms. However, it is still worthy of attention in that it attempted to describe the emotional process of cultural adjustment. In these latter days, going zigzag pattern throughout stages of culture shock is agreed as the common way to understand cultural adjustment which tells each stage on the continuum of culture shock keeps coming and going rather than the idea of one completing a stage and moving on to next. Cultural adjustment is undoubtedly likely to give roller coaster experiences emotionally and academically to international students in a foreign culture.

International Students' Challenges and Needs

While international students adjust themselves to a new culture, the most potent obstacle is undoubtedly culture shock which mostly happens within first few months from the arrival. Ever since Oberg (1960) first created the term “culture shock” and defined it as “anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (p. 177), it has been seen as one major factor which hinders one’s adjustment to a new culture. What is interesting to note is that this definition provides a useful tip for international students to recover from culture shock as well. That is learning about the people and culture of the host country through the language that the people in the host country use. On top of that, culture shock can be overcome quickly with less hardship if students receive systematic cultural help in time which includes language lesson. Koppe (1985) emphasizes the importance of cultural instruction in the early stage in that it enables L2 learners, in the beginning, to function well in various social situations in the target language environment, which naturally helps smooth transition as well as language learning. Obviously, it is certain that the sooner, the better when it comes to making cultural adaptation easy.

What mostly accompanies culture shock is emotional insecurity. It is another big issue which challenges international students (Devors, 2017; Nailevna, 2017). Devors (2017) surveyed 16 international students who studied in a university in America regarding acculturation experiences, early cultural perceptions, and their means of coping and integrating to overcome culture struggles. Devors (2017) identified most international students suffered from emotional instability due to language barriers, loneliness, homesickness, and feelings of being a foreigner. Such affective factors are so frequently constructed in social contexts that they prevent international students from being motivated and confident to get involved in meaningful interactions with others using a target language that they aimed to learn. As a result, most students showed delays in progress and some students changed majors or even seriously considered giving-up.

Gebhard (2012) also found out in the study done with more than ten of his international student research assistants that international students, in general, tended to have difficulty in handling emotions. According to his research, academic and social adjustment are so much stressful since rules are different that students became mentally exhausted up to the point to fall in depression and affect physical health as well, all of which unquestionably hinder cultural adjustment. Such psychological effects are huge enough to sway overall living experiences. If they find a place to go talk in which they feel a sense of belonging, emotional fluctuation might be less painful. Indeed, some researchers demonstrated how a class serves as a community in which students can establish a social network for emotional support along with raise cultural awareness (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985). It is certain that an official culture class encourages students' involvement in a new community and help become

emotionally stable by “establishing a support network of friends, usually consisting of co-nationals or friends from similar cultural backgrounds” (Furnham & Alibhai, 1985).

Furnham and Alibhai (1985) questioned 140 international students who studied at the London University or other higher educational institutions in London to check how international students built their social network and whom they interacted most through ongoing culture adjustment by using replicated study of the functional model conducted by Bochner et al. in 1977. Through the research, the researchers confirmed that there is apparently “a preferred culture of companion” among international students, which is the companion from similar geographical location and language similarity or a fellow foreigner if the other is unavailable (p. 715). The result is notable in that this study implies the significant fact that their choice of companion is for emotional help which plays a role of comforting each other at the same time having a cultural bumper before diving into the foreign culture directly.

On top of that, being foreign likewise qualifies to be a companion sometimes because having someone around to share the emotional stress with is all that matters to international students. Consequently, culture class serves a great place to enable students to build the support network throughout sharing similar experiences and struggles with whom they recognize as the same identity as themselves. According to Al-Sharideh & Goe’s research on an “examination of factors influencing the personal adjustment of international students” at Kansas State University (1998), the community formed by the cultural similarities played a key role in building support system among international students, and it surely contributed for them to reach emotional stability. As a result, students who have established strong ties with “coculturals” undergo smooth transition with efficiently easing the adjustment stress (p. 714). It indeed demonstrates that the culture class provides a place for international students to meet and build their comfort

community in which they can interact in a way they feel comfortable with less stress and anxiety of fitting in.

In the same context, Dorozhkin and Mazitova (2008) suggested a clear tip for successful cultural adjustment after exploration of foreign students' adaptation to sociocultural environment in Bashkortostan, Russia. It advised international students to reduce the distance between what is expected and the reality by raising cultural understanding through positive interactions and friendship with the people around. The authors acknowledged that "culture shock consists not so much of any social and psychological disorders, but rather the inevitable clash between home and new cultural norms and values" (p. 28). In that sense, cultural adjustment can be said to be completed based on a knowledge of the language and customs and attitude toward a new environment.

Culture and Language Learning

Besides emotional issues, most students who determine to immerse themselves in the place L2 is spoken naturally put high focus on linguistic ability first because language ability is considered as a prerequisite for transit to the next level of study. However, language and culture are inseparable because language itself is the product and component of culture (Gao, 2013). Moreover, Norton (2000) stated that language should be understood with regard to its social meaning in which it is used (p. 5). Therefore, it could be said that insufficient culture knowledge about the target culture can adversely delay development of language ability. For this reason, the relationship between culture and language learning has been investigated by many researchers.

First, the European Science Foundation (ESF) conducted longitudinal studies in the mid-1980s to see the second language acquisition (SLA) process of adults who immigrated into five European countries for works. The primary purpose of the study was to investigate fossilized

interlanguages and its processes so as to find determining factors of SLA. Among other findings, Bremer, Roberts, Vasseur, Simonot, and Broeder (1996) found and addressed the fact that different culture-specific assumptions about the way of social interaction can quickly lead to misunderstandings between target language speakers and language learners. Either lack of understanding or full of misunderstanding can be highly likely to make learners being unconfident in what they are about to speak or are speaking, which in turn results in preventing them from getting involved in any interactions.

There are many of similar studies showing relatively close results with the study above. In the exploration of cross-culture communication competence of L2 learners, Gao (2013) found out that, with little knowledge of target culture, the L2 learner is likely to struggle in the practical use of L2 and lose contexts, which is not a promising situation for language progress. For instance, topics like age and money may be acceptable in some cultures, on some level it can be considered normal; yet, Americans generally withdraw when faced with these topics due to its private characteristics. Or international students may have difficulties in interactions involving humor and jokes relevant American culture. The examples present that cultural knowledge based on cultural contexts is a key to international students' successful communication in social interactions. Once they know the culture, they can employ the language appropriately.

Also, Tang (2006) studied Chinese behavioral culture reflected in the use of its language and found that Chinese culture is so influential enough to make its way of communication different from the Western style that there is a need to learn English through cultural understanding. The article further stated that Chinese implicit and indirect manner of speaking is uneasy to be translated into Western explicit and direct discourse, which accounts for slow progress in language learning. Thus, she emphasized that students must have "a solid

understanding of the cultural implications of the discourse protocols learned and rehearsed in the classroom” (Tang, 2006, p. 97). The relationships between language and culture are so intertwined that language courses should integrate culture into its curricula and vice versa. In other words, language instruction should be not restricted to linguistic skills of language only. Instead, it is crucial to align with the language program and student needs of cultural knowledge so as to facilitate L2 learners’ social pragmatic communicative competence as well. This type of integration is beneficial to international students to foster and cultivate cultural awareness.

On the contrary, there is a study which demonstrated a positive effect of cultural understanding on language learning. Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) practiced Spanish culture instruction formally to 26 university students who were learning Spanish under a cross-cultural project that was integrated into a course curriculum at San Diego State University. With analyzed interview data conducted two to three times during the semester, the authors found that there is a positive correlation between cultural understanding and language learning since participants demonstrated positive perceptual, affective, and cognitive changes for Spanish learning. Students expressed not only positive attitudes toward Spanish speakers, but also a desire to continue Spanish learning. It is certain that students became aware of the culture in genuine ways as they interacted with representatives of the target language culture (Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996).

Beltrán-Palanques (2014) also found that L2 learners can achieve language learning and develop communicative competence at the same time through the well-structured instructional approach for intercultural competence which integrates accurately cultural instruction in the language classroom. He demonstrated the possibility that the language class can have in fostering both linguistic competence and intercultural competence through the culture instruction

incorporated in the L2 classroom. With respect to the relationship between language learning and culture, Norton and Toohey (2001) also concluded in their replicate research of Naiman et al., *The Good Language Learner* (1978) as follows:

The proficiencies of the good language learners were bound up not only in what they did individually but also in the possibilities their various communities offered them. Understanding good language learning requires attention to social practices in the contexts in which individuals learn L2s. (p. 318)

Many U.S. universities offer language program combined with cultural instructions for their international students with the purposes of improving the quality of their experiences inside and outside of schools along with cultivating cultural understanding and effective participation inside and outside of schools. As discussed above, cultural knowledge plays a critical role as a solid foundation for international students' further achievement. Hence, it should be noted that culture should remain on the table when it comes to discussing international students' language competence and their success in the further performance in a new society.

Cultural Identity

An important aspect of the overall practice of the culture class is a coordinated approach to cultural understanding and awareness while a teacher teaches and students learn a second language at the same time. In the meantime, the transformation of students' identities happens in the act of learning (Scarino, 2010). This teaching and learning gradually lead to enhancing students' emotional stability and language development as well as fostering the construction of the second cultural identity. Norton (2000) used identity to refer how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future (p. 5). Leve (2011) defines that identity is "a

powerful organizing presence in social life today” which reflects one’s ethnic, national, religious, racial, sexual, social or cultural groups (p. 513). Välimaa (1998) describes identity as “the interactive processes between individual and various significant others” (p. 132). These definitions suggest that the identity is changeable, and can and does transform daily into any forms depending on with whom a person interacts and how. In the same context, international students gradually construct the second identity while studying abroad “in order to reflect themselves on the cultural perspectives of academic communities” (Välimaa, 1998, p. 131). This can be seen where a process of cultural adjustment begins to occur. It is that students seem to start moving toward the culture within reach from the culture of origin. Therefore, the newly formed identity should be understood in relation to the cultural adjustment.

Marshall (2010) studied multilingual students at a university in British Columbia, Canada undergoing “re-becoming ESL students” during their first year of university (p. 41). What is interesting to notice in this study is the finding that students struggle to fit into a new culture when their first identity is not well understood, and this may be a cause of an unsuccessful identity shift which results in unsuccessful cultural adaptation at last. Wijeratne (2015) also pointed that difficulty in negotiating between Sri Lankan identity and the identity as an English learner is one of the main demotivating factors to result in Sri Lankan students struggle in L2 learning. With this respect, he emphasized the importance of installing systematic support to promote international students’ building “L2 self” (p. 46). Besides, Jibreel (2015) found through interviews of ten international students who studied at St. Cloud State University that transformation of cultural identity challenged them seriously in a way that it made them reach to the point to lose track of cultural aspects and get confused about it. It is hard to say that students give their L1 cultural identity over L2 cultural identity, but the studies above imply that

a development of stable second identity can bring positive impacts on L2 learners' cultural adjustment.

On the other hand, successful transition of cultural identity can be a key in both L2 learning and cultural adaptation. Shen (1989) explored how his two identities, Chinese and English, are associated with English composition through self-case study. His transition to English identity started with accepting English rules of writing such as "glorify I" and then redefining himself followed by through embodying himself in the values of English composition. He confessed that there were many challenges due to a different ideological system in two writing conventions. However, English writing becomes his second nature once he accepted and combined differences to make it elaborated. All in all, it seems that his second identity emerges spontaneously from English composition and the first identity steps back for a while. It is certain that the process of L2 or its culture learning associates closely with the process of creating and defining a new identity and balancing it with the old identity (Shen, 1989).

As discussed above, it appears that constructing the second cultural identity is as important as cultural adjustment since they help one another. In her book "Identity and Language Learning", Norton (2000) introduced the Boyd's study (1992) about immigrant women in Canada who trapped in their first identity as immigrant women and ended up in being illiterate to the Canadian official language and remaining at the bottom of the socio-economic scale. Social status and low language ability do not necessarily indicate that they failed to blend in the new environment, yet the study became a good example of the importance for connection of second identity with a new culture. Simply put, building a new identity through a new environment enables foreigners to interact with surroundings in a way of promoting them to be a prospective

member of a new community. There is a meaningful research to look at in that it gives us a glimpse of an idea about successful identity shifts.

Jianli (2009) reviewed Lee Kong Chian's life, a public figure in Singapore, and portrayed vividly the process of identity transition having been gone through his life in three ways. Every stage of his life has challenged and influenced on his identity as a Chinese, Singapore entrepreneur and philanthropist. However, it is clear that he considers these changes as a chance to adjust himself to a changing business environment and make the best use of it instead he sees them as challenges to impede his dream. This research has a clear message that, as shown in Lee Kong Chian's life, it is essential for international students to blend in surrounding environment not only physically but also psychosocially, so that they are consequently able to successfully make the leap from a wanderer about the world around to a student who has full idea of surroundings and functions as a member of it.

For this matter, Kim (2012) explored the process of identity formation among international undergraduate students and proposed "six steps of psychosocial identity development model" for international students. Six steps of psychosocial identity development model are stated below:

The first step is *pre-exposure* or *inheriting self* where international students prepare for study overseas with the prospect of experiencing the American educational system. The second step is *exposure* or *opening self* in which students find that their heritage diverges from the unfamiliar educational and cultural environment. The third is *enclosure* or *securing self* in which their extracurricular activities are extremely limited and they withdraw from the outside environment by not socializing with those from backgrounds which are different than their

own. The fourth is called *emergence* or *disclosing self* at which students begin to break their psychosocial closure and seek distinct yet integrated identities. At the fifth, *integration* or *internalizing self* occurs which means that students start to overcome challenges, resolve their identity conflicts, and successfully reconstruct their identities. And finally internationalization or globalizing self is found for students to fully develop the value of pluralism and diversity in multiple aspects.

(pp. 108-110)

It appears that six steps somewhat correspond to Oberg's culture shock stages, but Kim's model provides insight about what international students undergo to develop their second identity from exciting bag-packing moments to arrival to complete cultural adjustment. At the same time, the model indicates that international students should be aware of challenges raised by culture differences and prepare for it. In this respect, direct cultural instruction can be an answer for their well preparedness.

Chapter 3: Methodology

I employed a qualitative study to find out how the culture courses have provided assists with cultural knowledge and made adjustment possible in the classroom. As the study desired to find out the influences the culture instructions had on students' culture adjustment by having them reflecting their experiences, an interview was conducted after courses. For the purpose of gathering specific responses, I employed "elicited narratives" which involves asking participants to tell a story about personal cultural experiences in order to elicit the perception of a culture class (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 96). First, participants were recruited through the Culture Orientation classes after given the permission from the department director. As of spring 2018, three culture courses run at the regional public university in the Midwest. Once participants who showed interests in the study set up an appointment individually to get the interview about whether their perception of American culture has been changed or not after the courses, and how effectively culture instructions provided in the class have helped their cultural adjustment based on specific personal experiences throughout the semester. All interviews were recorded and taken notes.

Participants

Participants are seven undergraduate international students who enrolled in any of the Cultural Orientation classes in Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 run at the regional public university in the Midwest U.S. With permission from the department director of the university, I recruited seven international students from the Cultural Orientation classes. As shown in Table 1, their nationality varies. As all international students who are undergraduate and have no living experience in America or Canada are required to register the Cultural Orientation classes for cultural learning, all the participants are undergraduate students mostly majoring in Computer

Science and Finance, a few of them major in Accounting. Their age also varies, but most fall in the range from 18 to 21. Out of seven, five are female, and one is male. One informant has once traveled to California before the study at the regional public university in the Midwest U.S.

Table 1

Participant Information

| Name | Nationality | Gender(F/M) | Langue Fluency |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Lǐnà | Chinese | F | Beginner-Intermediate |
| Youngsook | Korean | F | Beginner-Intermediate |
| Zhāngwěi | Chinese | M | Intermediate |
| Wángwěi | Chinese | F | Beginner |
| Sonya | South American | F | High Advanced |
| Batsa | Nepali | M | Intermediate |
| Druhi | Nepali | F | Intermediate |

The English proficiency is where they show a big difference in their background, which is expected to have a significant influence on international students' blending the new society. The Cultural Orientation class focused on culture rather than language proficiency. The Culture Orientation Teaching Assistant Handbook describes in its curricular requirements that international students are obligated to take two-credit the Cultural Orientation class unless they have studied at schools in the US or Canada at least one academic year full-time (EAP Teaching Assistant Handbook, 2017, p. 21). It is living experience in US or Canada that determines who should take the course. In short, English ability extremely varies depending on individuals. Nevertheless, looking at their perception change throughout the course is essential to understand

what role the culture class has played in regard of international students' cultural adjustment as they have little first-hand cultural experiences in America.

Description of Data Collection Instruments

Participants were asked to fill out a simple questionnaire about their background, language proficiency and living experience in abroad so as to presume better their readiness to accept and adopt to a new culture (see Appendix A) before the interview started. The interview began with prompts asking about experiences in the United States (see Appendices A and B). The interview consists of 12 prompts and follow-up questions. Questions are carefully made under three contexts which compromise with the research question: challenges, coping strategies, and the culture class. As interviewees are all international students whose L1 is different from L1 of the researcher and among themselves, English is basically the main tool for overall communication.

Given the nature of English as L2, it would be probably a major cause of miscommunication and misunderstanding between the interviewer and interviewees. To reduce the possibility of this miscommunication and increase the elaboration of the produced story, "mini-tour questions" will be immediately followed by, such as "Could you describe to me how you take it at school as an international student?" or descriptive questions such as "Describe how you think about this school" or "Describe a typical day" (Spradley, 1979, pp. 85-88). The purpose of the interview is to elicit stories regarding perceptions and descriptions that reflect a reaction or adjustment they have made while learning culture knowledge in the Culture Orientation class. Therefore, successful elicitation lies on carefully designed follow-up questions as well as pre-prepared interview prompts.

Along with the mini-tour questions, participants were asked “contrast verification questions” to present or confirm/disconfirm the difference between before and after to the question such as “How have you changed since three months ago?” (Spradley, 1979, p. 161). Interviews were all recorded and conducted in a familiar environment. I took notes during the interviews to ensure obtaining any additional information and non-verbal data. The recording was done with the smartphone (LG G Pro) of the researcher, and stored on my personal laptop computer, which is protected by a password for access.

Procedures

I emailed an invitation letter to all possible students who took any of the Culture Orientation classes in Fall 2017 and Spring 2018. The invitation letter had the introduction of the research that I planned to work on so as to recruit 10 participants. Those who have completed the course were also contacted through the directories with the support from the department director and manager. Once they showed interests in the research, they voluntarily responded to my invitation using my contact information. The participants set up an appointment with me individually to talk about their background, perception of American culture, and any changes they have experienced throughout the courses. One-on-one interview was held at a familiar place that the participants felt comfortable enough to open up their thoughts. To ensure the quantity and quality of participants’ responses, each prompt allows a few minutes for them to recall and plan answers if they want or agree to use it. To increase the reliability of what a student may understand and respond to the question, I asked them to paraphrase the prompts in their own words when I sensed that it was necessary at the moment. The style of interview was conversational and the participants took some time to reflect and think about the questions.

Analysis Plan

I first determined key words among the data. Keywords that were pertinent to each interview prompts made context categories such as challenges, coping strategies, and the cultural class. Along with these context categories, “measures of frequency” of descriptive statistics (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 293) were used to determine any connection between keywords and contexts. High frequency of certain keywords can imply a strong connection between the words and the context they belong to, which in turn, became hints for interpretation in that a set of categories is on the basis of cultural perception. In other words, the frequency of keywords is a critical determiner to make an interpretation of correlation between its context and possible perception. This analysis is adopted and adjusted from “a surface analysis which effectively identifies some cultural themes and gains many insights in holistic terms” (Spradley, 1979, pp. 133-134). It makes outsiders possible to write a description the cultural meanings that existed to insiders (Spradley, 1979). Therefore, my task is to uncover the meaning and relationship stored in each of the categories by connecting separate ideas based on keywords and its frequency.

Angrosino (2007) states that interactive components of the interviews apparently carry some meanings to reinforce the interviewee’s ideas. Therefore, the notes about pause or fillers I took during interviews are also coded and included in data to increase the coherence of the interpretation of data. For the capture of perception change throughout the semester, “the similarity and contrast principles” were used as well to find out some features kept across time span and distinguish any change of perceptions (Spradley, 1979, p. 157). Comparison and contrast put a focus on finding similarities and differences in the narratives produced before and after the completion of the culture course. Choice of words, expressions or phrases and the frequency of them are relied on to infer any change in the attitudes toward the cultural class.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter reports on the results obtained through interviews. I interviewed nine international students who have taken the Culture Orientation class at the regional public university in the Midwest U.S. from 2017 to 2018. They are all undergraduate students who have little first-hand experience in America, so the culture class was literally a channel where they could talk and discuss directly what they have found different. However, I had to drop two informants since one person's parent had a business in New York which allowed the person to visit the U.S. regularly and observe American culture even though the person had stayed shortly at a time. The other had a sibling in the other part of America studying. Thus, the person was quite familiar with American culture from the second-hand experience. The results are finally based on seven informants.

I gave a pseudonym to each participant in order to protect their privacy. The pseudonym was given based on the participant's nationality which does not necessarily indicate the person's background. The interview was conducted in English since their L1 was different from the researcher's L1. Participants were informed about the research and then asked to fill out a brief survey. The meeting took place at the school where they currently attend at their schedule convenience. Although the climate of conversation was friendly, most of participants seemed to have somewhat difficulties in finding appropriate vocabularies from time to time since English is their L2. Thus, follow-up questions were frequently employed to encourage the participants to elaborate the story. Interviews were recorded and taken notes by the researcher. There are seven results found in this study regarding international students' cultural adjustment through the culture class at the regional public university in the Midwest U.S. The results address the

perception of the culture class and its impacts on international students' cultural adjustment. The results are laid out one by one in the chronological order.

First Informant

The first interviewee is an undergraduate student from China who has never lived or studied abroad before the study in the Midwest University. Lǐnà, a pseudonym of the person's privacy, expressed the high expectation that she had at the beginning of her study in the Midwest of America, which she confessed mostly came from Hollywood movies and videos on YouTube. She several times repeatedly mentioned her strong belief that Americans are well-educated citizens since America is one of the most developed countries. According to her, she defined citizenship as the well-mannered willing to help others. It seems that she was concerned about safety as a young woman in that she is away from her safety nets such as the family, friends, and home people. Most Hollywood movies depict English speaking Caucasian actors as a heroic citizen who is ready to help those in need and they never fail to save the day. YouTube also contributes to spreading videos which have one-sided perspectives on the western culture. Thus, Lǐnà expected to study in a secured campus surrounding by warm, friendly Americans. Besides, she added that she was excited to learn Americans' open-minded and flexible attitudes too.

On the contrary to her excitement, Lǐnà immediately recognized her introversive personality as an obstacle for her to step forward to mingle with not only Americans but also other international students. She observed Americans, generally speaking, get actively involved in any conversation or activities with total strangers, however she found she barely spoke even about herself. As time went by, she said that she somewhat became active to the point that she could initiate a conversation sometimes rather than wait until being talked to. What is interesting to notice was the point she made at this point regarding her personality change. She seemed to

see this change as a culture-bound one which was only shown in America. She pointed out that it was likely to go back to her introversive character in her home country where she had no need to put efforts to be active anymore.

Another change she made throughout the life in America was the understanding of diverse culture. Lǐnà admitted that she had a stereotypical idea of Americans, and tended to overgeneralize the ideas toward most Americans she had met. Once she had the typical ideas of Americans and their culture, she hardly understood when facing unusual incident like getting stood up for over an hour by her classmate. Since she was taught the importance of punctuality in the culture class, her friend's being way late could not be explained at first. Gradually, however, she became to see that America is consists of diverse ethnics which bring their own cultures in to make American culture unique. Also, she could see that the movies and TV dramas biased her, and she came to accept that every individual is different from each other and being different should be respected as it is. From that on, she could stop comparing American culture with the home culture and start learning the new way of seeing others. She was reminded that the instructor taught her in the culture class about how diverse cultures America has.

Notwithstanding, she was unable to adapt the lesson to her new surroundings until she had a chance to experience it. Lǐnà slowly spelled out each word to ensure that she fully understood the concept of plagiarism and agreed not to violate it when it was discussed in the culture class. She felt quite confident that any violation would never happen during her stay in America since she considered herself an honest person. Soon after the one semester later, Lǐnà had a moment to urgently search through the details of APA/MLA styles when she received the weekly writing journal back from a teacher in her major with the note on it reading she did not follow the rule of in-text citation properly which could result in her being accused of plagiarism.

She appeared to have assumed having references at the end of paper demonstrated her effort to protect the sources so that she ended up minding less on in-text citations. She added the old saying which goes like this: A thousand hearings are not worth one experiencing. She recommended the addition of anecdotes like her story to the cultural concepts which may appeal much better to the international students' needs.

When it comes to talking about the most/least joyful thing while studying in the U.S., Lǐnà regarded tipping as the most unjoyful custom in the U.S. It is understandable since she came from the culture in which tipping is seen as bribery. So, she admitted that she consciously avoided the restaurants which require tipping for the first few months. Second for the unjoyful, she pointed the way of Americans' keeping relationship with others. She confessed that she first felt being left alone on purpose because of her introversive personality, but later she became to understand it was because Americans also barely knew how to start a conversation with her since she kept silence. Taking her roommate, for example, she said that she gradually understood that her roommate was thoughtful and considerate enough not to bother her when she kept silence thinking she might be in need of being alone. Otherwise, her roommate was willing to help her whenever she asked. Overall, she seemed to be satisfied with most of the new things in the US: including American's keeping personal space. Importantly, thanks to the culture class discussion of personal space with situational examples, she could remain calm when she was asked to step back at the local bookstore register.

Lǐnà mentioned her American roommate again when she thought about the most helpful response she had received related to everyday challenges. The biggest help she appreciated from her roommate was language advice by not only providing some practical expressions and idioms, but also checking grammars, proof-reading and suggesting better choices on her everyday

writings. The emails to teachers were also sent out after the review of the roommate. Of course, her culture class became the place she could receive useful tips to respond to the challenges: she emphasized most of the lessons usually ended up in learning the new pieces of knowledge which rarely came to her naturally outside the school. For example, the guest speaker's presentation about alcohol and drugs provided much of information she had never heard of before and it was a good chance for her to learn alcohol poisoning and good Samaritan exception as far as she could recall. It really seemed to showcase typical American campus activities, but she could not relate it since she does not drink. She admitted that she at least kept the lesson for the future use by combining it with the practical experiences such as going to a party with her own water bottle or small snacks, though, now that the roommate was near and easily accessed, she was able to receive direct and immediate feedbacks she wanted like proper amount of money for tip.

The second helpful response she picked was the instructor of the class who was American. When she had questions regarding sensitive issues like racism, human rights, and black history, the instructor provided the only comfort zone to talk about them: the instructor carefully provided words to explain how the US has come up with a rest-room for both genders when she asked the reason of it since she thought the US is going backward. These issues were so sensitive that she did not know how to speak with even a close friend, but she said she received proper attention and moderately adjusted responses over the issues from the instructor. In additions, the instructor properly updated and reminded the events happening around the school; she could keep on track of school activities. The third was the culture class where she could learn all new customs and prepare herself for the new things. For example, she could blend in the thanking traditions well at the Thanksgiving dinner table thanks to the holiday lessons.

Overall, Lǐnà concluded the interview with the confession of the stereotypical bias she had at the beginning. Now, she became respectful to the individual differences based on the understanding of diversity. This understanding mostly came from real life experiences, but Lǐnà recognized the important role of the class as well: the class contributed to extending her cultural experiences by either sharing first-hand experiences or reading/watching second-hand experiences in the class. Hence, she left the message that she wanted to recommend the culture class to the prospective international students. One thing she wanted to suggest was the instructor's awareness of students' home culture and challenges raised by the differences between the home culture and the American culture. For example, the way the instructor managed the lesson was so different from what Lǐnà was used to that it took quite long for her to understand exactly what the instructor expected her to do. She expected to learn knowledge about the topic in the first place, but the instructor expected students to discuss the episode related to the topic and find the solutions on their own. Instead of checking students' understanding with a test filled with multiple-choice questions, the instructor asked students to write a reflection paper about how she had adapted the lesson to her challenges. Lǐnà tried her best to meet the instructor's expectation, but kept receiving the paper back with a comment reading that she needed an example. She questioned about how to write the paper several times, and finally understood when the instructor shared some of other student's journals with their agreement after a month. It is certain that teachers need to familiarize themselves with students' expectations, challenges, and cultures. Thus, the culture instructor can take into account how to help students modify or adjust theirs to get them in accordance with the new culture.

Second Informant

Youngsook provided a slightly different insight into the culture class from the first interviewee. On the contrary to Lina's somewhat positive agreement on the impact of the culture class, Youngsook has shown different opinions. Youngsook came from South Korea upon the wishes of the parents. Although she came to the U.S. involuntarily, she had the high expectation of improved English proficiency and exposure to the new style of learning. She confessed that she had difficulty in studying since Korean education is all about cramming knowledge into students' brain and testing how much they memorize accurately in order to get students to enter prestigious universities. According to her, she could barely answer to her questions in class in Korea. On the other hand, she described the American education as follows: it focuses more on original ideas and creativity by questioning and discussing; students are able to develop problem-solving strategies by themselves. In short, Youngsook seemed to admire the style of American education.

However, Youngsook became confused in the class where active discussion in a small group and presentation are frequently required. Also, she barely understood the class and seldom spoke because of her lack of English fluency. Although the different style of class management surprised her, she told me that she could somehow manage to engage actively in the discussion since other students also had language difficulty. Besides, she could gradually manage the anxiety of presentation as well since it happened in a routine. Notwithstanding the differences in the learning and teaching styles between the American education and the Korean's, what she could successfully keep was her belief in her being able to progress. Therefore, she could say that she developed her own problem-solving strategies through class activities as she wished. Furthermore, she described all Americans she had met were nice and friendly enough to share

their personal stories and willing to learn her home culture. It seems that the positive relationship with them certainly affected her to change her perspectives on Americans and American culture positively from a selfish individual to a caring individual who also has open-mind.

While she was mostly satisfied with the American education system, food and the distance from family challenged her most. Beyond the fact that it was uneasy finding the right ingredients for cooking Korean food, even having it at her place was also uneasy because of her American roommate. Now that she heard many episodes related to the strong odor of Korean food, she was conscious of her roommate's presence and tried to keep the desire of Korean food to herself. Ironically, she pointed food as the least challenging thing, too since she could easily find the alternatives like Mexican or Vietnamese. But, loneliness cannot be replaced by even a good friendship. She said she missed her family so much, but especially when she had a difficult with something even though the friends and instructors were near around her. For example, the instructor let her know where she could see a doctor, but the instructor did not come along with her to the clinic. So the distance felt like she was sometimes isolated.

Whenever she felt she was in trouble, she asked and received support and help from the Writing Center. There is the Writing Center located in the same building of the culture class. It aims to support international students in writing as well as tutoring one-on-one. Her instructor of the culture class introduced and led the short tour around the place during the first week. After then, she frequently visited the place to get her writing revised and were able to build a good relationship with two tutors who consistently supported her with encouragement. She even learned from the tutors about class management skills, tips of note taking, and handling culturally sensitive issues. Although the instructor in the culture class was informative and knowledgeable, Youngsook had difficulty in understanding the fast spoken lecture. On the other

hand, the tutors accommodated the choice of words and speaking speed according to Youngsook, so it was understandable. Moreover, the meeting with the tutors was one-on-one in face-to-face which enabled the instruction to be more effective and direct.

Youngsook seemed to be quite surprised at the topics like LGBT and discrimination based on religion, race, and ethics, even though she expected to learn diverse points of American culture through the class. When she encountered a strangely behaved man who yelled at her at a coffee shop, she doubted his intention as racism later even though she understood it as just his strangeness at the moment. Now that she learned they are quite sensitive issues occurring in America, she became conscious of that which made her hesitate simple questions like about a significant other in casual chit chatting. Hence, she considered the culture class as an informative lecture over American culture rather than providing practical strategies to deal with it. She added cultural events the University sponsored or supported were ten times more effective than the class when it came to experiencing the cultural concepts introduced at the class.

Youngsook admitted that she admired America knowing an only small piece of American culture with little knowledge. In that respect, the culture class contributed for her to widen and broaden her understanding of it, though it seems that she believed in the power of real-life experiences. What is interesting to notice is her categorization of putting the class into the category of the academically American real-life experience. Youngsook said she reached the point of acceptance in which she stopped comparing and started accepting as it is thanks to all the real-life experiences she went through. She confessed that she gave up defining Americans and American culture because she observed many exceptional cases depending on the individuals and situations. Besides, culture has many faces, and she has not seen all yet.

Third Informant

This was another interview rich in new information to consider in my study of cultural influences on international students who came from all over the world. Zhāngwěi is from China. He described his excitement of coming to the U.S. had something to do with English proficiency which is a currently major subject in China. He said he was concerned little about difficulties in communication even if he was a beginning learner since he had a belief in the possibility that language ability was going to improve as soon as he exposed to the English-speaking environment. In this respect, the significant change he had experienced so far was English progress. It did not necessarily mean that he achieved advanced proficiency, but he seemed to feel proud of himself as he managed the interview in English. According to him, at the airport, he barely understood the announcement and kept losing the direction until one American led the way out for him when he just arrived. Even in classes, he literally watched teachers and guessed the topic for the first time. But now he described that he at least understood teachers' lectures and participated in a class activity. Once he ran across his classmates at the Mall, he had a pleasant conversation, which made him feel he is doing well.

He also pointed out that most remarkable progress was his writing. He learned how American writing is done and could finally write a paper in the US style. He said he was happy at his progress although he should put more efforts on it. The second most significant change he mentioned was awareness of American culture. He confessed that he was barely interested in American culture actually since it had nothing to do with him when he was at home in his country. Throughout the culture class, he began to acknowledge the importance of cultural understanding, and he was happy to observe the cases discussed in the class outside the

classroom having felt like he was on a scavenger hunt. When he saw a Solo cup in a casual social party at his friend's, he said he was even glad to see it as if it was his college tradition.

What Zhāngwěi enjoyed most was, of course, a social gathering or so-called non-stop parties no matter weekdays. First of all, his home country does not have anything like it. Second, he lived with his parents' who watched over him. Now that he was away from his parents, Zhāngwěi began to live his life independently. However, he was still under the parents' watch since he relied on them financially. The parents expected to see particular progress and grades from him, which in return burdened him so much that he sometimes felt guilty of having some fun with friends. Ironically, the real challenges came from himself obsessed with the thought that he should do well and make no mistakes. In the meantime, it surprised him most that American students commonly have part-time jobs to be financially independent of their parents at even a younger age than Zhāngwěi. Once the instructor introduced American college students' average life in a matter of generally speaking in the culture class, he was surprised at their total independence by earning money as well as taking the corresponding responsibility.

Food surprisingly least challenged Zhāngwěi since he was fond of the western food like pizza and hamburger except for the fact that they are way much saltier and sweeter than what he used to have at home. Besides, the taste of Chinese food in the U.S. was pretty much disappointing. The fact that the university was located in the suburb, however, somewhat bothered him since he pictured himself roaming around the high-rise buildings in a big city of the US. Public transportation in the Midwest suburb is not as convenient as his home country either which lowered accessibility to grocery stores, restaurants, and entertainment facilities without a car. The bus schedule was quite reliable, but still waiting and walking were inevitable. Cold weather also contributed to binding him to the campus. According to him, the cold winter

became the only reason to make him count the days left. On the other hand, nice Americans seemed to impress him so much that he copied their attitudes immediately such as holding a door for those behind, saying “Excuse me” or casual greetings “Hi,” or keeping a personal space at a public place.

When it comes to the source of cultural knowledge and of the acceptance he developed, the culture class was by far the best, and real-life experience seemed to assist in expanding the instructions. Since he had no interests in American culture except movies and songs, the culture class was the only source which discussed the environment and its people where he stayed. Zhāngwěi admitted that some topics somewhat scared him to be careful in behaving and speaking, though most topics like time-management skill were useful and practical. Once he had a big argument with the roommate over inviting a friend to the shared place. What seemed to make it worse was the different view over having a guest: Zhāngwěi tended to try to explain what made him embarrassed at the unexpected and unknown guest’s visit, the roommate instead approached the subject by arguing it was his place. Because of lack of English ability and the use of different logic, he felt there was no way to make it up with the roommate until he received a reasonable explanation of American speaking styles and values of living place from the instructor. The argument with the roommate solved somehow naturally as the time went by, but he thought the explanation helped him a lot with the understanding of Americans’ thinking system to some degree that he could compromise.

The good relationship with the instructor was so helpful that Zhāngwěi could discuss almost any struggles and challenges he went through since the instructor was obviously the only person who did not look at him with a strange look and ignore the obvious questions. The class itself was also so informative and covered the topics moderately well so that he thought he

learned a lot about American culture in a short time. But Zhāngwěi confessed that he was displeased at the class population who were all international students. Although he recognized the reason for its unique community—the class aims to help international students' cultural adjustment, so the students who register are all internationals—he seemed to think that it was necessary to have a few more native Americans as a cultural pal along with an instructor to enable students to observe various pieces of American culture. Zhāngwěi admitted that the classmates affected him positively in understanding others and he also appreciated their emotional support especially when he was in culturally difficulties, however, he seemed to think that the culture class had to concentrate on raising the awareness of American culture and promoting the cultural experiences.

Fourth Informant

Wángwěi provided a fascinating insight into the culture class which was revealing in many ways. The part that caught most of my attention was the suggestion of including field trips to a local restaurant/clinic/library/bank in the course. Wángwěi came from China and has spent a difficult time until now despite the fact that she was excited to come to the U.S. She was excited to see and experience the new things although she was concerned a lot about English. However, English challenged her way more than she expected from the beginning of the new college life in America. Most classes taught in both her major and culture class were difficult to understand, and she was afraid of speaking English either. She honestly confessed that she started making up plausible excuses to skip the language and culture classes after she got tired of loneliness and disappointment at herself not improving much. Although she regularly attended the classes without using the made-up excuses, it was obvious that she was extremely demotivated from the study. It is no surprise that she had rarely built up the relationship with the other international

students in the culture class since she tried her best to avoid participating in group discussions and studying culture issues individually.

It did not take long for Wángwěi to have a life-changing experience. Wángwěi happened to have a big argument with her roommate concerning the noise level in the shared room. According to her, the roommate had little courtesy when not leaving the room when her roommate made a call to friends and parents. Wángwěi thought it was insensitive to use the phone when a person was right there to listen and be bothered in the same room. When she brought up the issue, she was shockingly told that it was her problem. At first, Wángwěi assumed that the roommate ignored her because of her not-fluent English, but later she became to accept an American value: concentrating on oneself rather than minding others. Now, she admitted that she has also changed to value herself more than she used to, and came to care less about others' opinions of her. She seemed to see this value change either positive or negative since she began to feel some distance from her parents. Considering the old day's her reliance on her parents, Wángwěi became more independent, which gradually made the communication with parents uneasy.

Whenever she struggled in the new life, the first thing she did was hide in her room by locking her inside for a while. Of course, she was readying herself to give up and go back home. She felt no one cared about her. In the meantime, one Chinese classmate she met at the culture class found a way to reach out to help Wángwěi out. Thanks to the classmate, she told me that she raised up the courage to give it a try again. On the other hand, the culture class was no more than a subject that she should study for a good grade because the most issues discussed in the class were so unrelated to her life that it was difficult for her to find any connections to what she found challenging. For example, she had to pretend that she comprehended the reading when one

of the assignments was writing a reflection paper based on reading an article about discrimination based on one's appearance. Not only did the long article make it difficult for her, but also the topic challenged her since she had never been put in the situations described in the reading. In general, it appeared that the culture class delivered numerous knowledge which she could barely use practically at her real life.

For this reason, Wángwěi carefully suggested the culture class has a regular field trip to local public facilities such as a bank, a clinic, and restaurants in which students are able to be exposed naturally to real-life situations of solving ordinary life tasks in a guided way. Since English was a big challenge to her, it appeared that she expected the culture class to be a place where she can learn and practice English more based on a topical situation. As a result, she found the culture class less practical and helpful for her real-life challenges. To sum up, she concluded that the class knowledge had little to do with her new life in America although the class discussed many issues—plagiarism, punctuality, customs, culture shock, etc.—closely bound up with international students' personal and academic life in depth.

Fifth Informant

Sonya came from South America with the excitement for academic progress she would make. To pursue academic achievement in her major, she transferred to the Midwest University in America since she believed in the American education with qualified teachers and affluent resources in America. With the fluent English proficiency, she assumed she would fit in the new environment soon, but cultural differences gave her a different level of challenges including inclement winter weather. She could say that her academic expectation has been met over 100% though, the campus life has been tough enough to teach her the common idea that language

proficiency does not solve all challenges raised by the cultural differences between her Latin culture and American culture.

What challenged Sonya the most was the fact that she was unfamiliar with the cultural boundaries when it came to keeping/respecting personal space, expressing companionship or friendship, using informal language, being honest, and so on. Once, she had made herself embarrassed by approaching her classmates closely to air-kiss as a greeting. She knew that she should let go her classmate's reaction of backing and not take it seriously, but she confessed she could still vividly recall friend's hesitance, which certainly taught her the important lesson that she was the one who should adopt the new way to fit in. She appeared rather sad when talking about this challenge since it was the moment that she recognized she should discard most of her cultural habits. Given the same respect with barely knowing the proper boundaries of cultural manners, she struggled to make some friends, too. What this means is that her being consciously careful to be respectful somehow resulted in making her hesitate in expressing her feelings.

The second most challenge she had faced was inclement weather in the Midwest of America. Actually, most interviewees pointed the horrible winter as one of the biggest challenges, however, their responses to the weather were conceivable considering the geographical location of the school and time at which most interviews were conducted—January and February which are believed the peak of terrible winter weather. In the meantime, what makes Sonya's responses to the weather remarkably bold was the big difference between the tropical weather in her home country and her first experience of Midwest winter. When she had to buy all winter gear first time in her whole life, Sonya spent a hard time to even get used to wearing long sleeves knitwear.

Compared to the challenges raised by mostly the cultural differences from her home, academic challenges were rather encouraging and motivating to the extent that she made the best of all the resources provided by the school for students. Sonya talked about the Write Place, the library, and the cultural class as representative resources. As of the academic writing, the Writing Center provided consistent support with the friendly welcome whenever she visited. Librarians' presentations during the culture class helped her know the best use of the library by the tour and demonstration. In addition to resourceful support outside the class, the culture class was the place which directly discussed the issues related to academic writing—the structure of reflection paper/research paper, citation style APA/MLA, and plagiarism—in detail. Sonya seemed to appreciate all the resources she accessed and concluded they contributed to her academic achievement regardless of the demotivating challenges. On top of that, tips about winter life discussed in the class well prepared her, too.

Throughout the stay in America, Sonya acknowledged the inner change occurred by managing the new life on her own: getting independent. At first, she was scared and excited at the same time about being away from home and parents, soon later the excitement and fear turned into a learning opportunity teaching her the life lessons of being independent. In accordance with the character change, Sonya went through the shift of the view on Americans from being cold-hearted to being understandably warm-hearted on their own ways thanks to close observations. Most importantly, Sonya summarized that she learned to understand and accept Americans as they are since the culture class helped her find the best way to get engaged more fully and differently than what she used to through open discussions and conversations. Therefore, all else being equal, the culture class helped her better transition into the new life.

Sixth Informant

Batsa has also come to the U.S. with a big dream of being successful academically and professionally. According to him, the U.S. is the most preferred and admired country by the students in his country, Nepal, when it comes to the quality of life. Moreover, it is believed that the U.S. offers way better education than his home country, so Batsa was genuinely happy when he had a chance to study in America. He was so excited about making his parents proud of that he has barely thought about giving up, but, like other international students, homesickness soon took place of excitement and depression kept coming back to the extent of making him cry alone. Batsa was confident at first about almost everything regarding a new life in America since he prepared himself by familiarizing himself with the map of school, reading thoroughly all the instructions given to the new students, googling about American campus life, and watching Youtube tips about the U.S., though not-knowing-how things work in America made him frequently frustrated. Especially, automated system by which most things are managed embarrassed him most since he had never been exposed to such a machinery system without seeing a person.

The first challenge Batsa had to manage beyond food and winter was learning the system including communicating through email and online student services. He had to learn the system to register for courses, manage bills, and even rent textbooks. Not only student services but also things outside school such as creating a bank account and grocery shopping seemed to be related to technology without contact to a person which he was not familiar, so he had to frequently check with someone to see if he followed the direction properly or not. Batsa confessed that he could not resist asking confirmation when things were related to money. The tendency resulted from one anecdote that he had to pay 30 dollars to the bank for the reason he did not still fully

understand. In the same matter, second challenge was his recognition of the fact that he could hardly manage to do anything by himself without someone's help. While he was getting used to the online system, Batsa acknowledged that a peer advisor provides him with a big help. In the meantime, it seemed like third party's help bothered him as if he failed to manage his American life by depending on others.

While he was going through adaptation for use of computer technology, homesickness and depression were so severe that he gradually started being late for class, becoming clumsier—losing the house key, his wallet, and then his cell phone—and missing assignments' due dates. These all contributed to bring him to consider himself a failure. Different customs like greeting were continuously troublesome. Lack of ethnic food accessibility also seemed to strengthen his homesickness. The more he missed home, the bigger he felt the differences between home and America. Having considered his parents and family, Batsa was well aware that he should strive to find a way to overcome the culture shock which came to him early on. All he managed to do was to remind himself of his dreams and goals in order to put him back on track. It was not easy, but Batsa tried to motivate himself over and over again. In any case, with many supports that he has received so far Batsa pointed out two as so-called cultural pals: International Peer Advisor and the culture class.

According to the regional public university in the Midwest U.S., Peer Advisor is a volunteer program that offers welcome to new international students through connections with current students who spent a year or so (International Peer Advisor section, para. 1). It aims to help new students' smooth transition into a new circumstance. It is a temporary service occurring during an orientation period, but provides a chance for new international students to learn basically general ideas of school life by one-on-one mentoring. The advisor Batsa met became

his mentor and friend who consistently encouraged him to pursue his dreams. Even though he mentioned above that his reliance on the advisor seemed to make him feel incapable of managing independent life by himself, Batsa admitted the help from the advisor made his first step much easier.

The culture class worked in a different way than he expected when the class began. At first, he expected to be retold what he knew already about America through media and google search. Therefore, Batsa was surprised to get to learn the basis of American culture by discussing many issues he has never heard of before and academic fundamentals like plagiarisms. Through the study of American culture, one big change happened to him was the realization that there was no use of comparing and contrasting between his home and America. Batsa admitted that he consistently compared the two cultures and complained the differences until he recognized the differences barely mattered. When he saw the classmates competing to find the big difference and to put themselves for the top rank of the miserable, he realized that the more important thing was the way he responded to the differences. In other words, he acknowledged that his attitudes mattered most. Since then, Batsa stopped comparison and contrast, and began to value his every single experience as a learning opportunity. Furthermore, Batsa could participate and enjoy the events and festivals people in the U.S. celebrate.

Seventh Informant

Druhi also came from Nepal pursuing her academic success. Druhi described the Nepali education has been suffering from a big discrepancy between public and private schools due to inequitable access to quality resources. Public schools fail to offer quality education to students, on the contrary, private schools attract the wealthy with all the resources including quality teachers based on the westernized school system and curriculum. In addition to the lack of

quality education, inequitable distribution of opportunity is also so serious that girls from poor family are much less likely to advance into a higher education. To make a breakthrough in the low quality of education, Druhi found studying in America the best answer believing American education would guarantee successful entry in a profession in the future. With a high-quality education, Druhi expected to be fully immersed in an English only speaking environment so that she could skyrocket her English proficiency.

The first impression Druhi had from Americans was that Americans were so occupied with the busy work schedule that they seemed to spare little time for food and cooking. Such an impression came from several encounters when Druhi visited school offices since she saw staffs eating cold lunch at the desks. It surprised her since Nepali values eating slow and long. What she was struck by the second most was the independency that students take for their academic progress. From choosing and scheduling the courses to planning the direction of the study, Druhi was involved for the first time in making a decision. The related people provided suggestions and offered valuable advices, but she was the one who decided all things on her own. At the same time, she acknowledged it worked in a way that she was fully responsible for all decision that she has made. This excited her as much as scared her because she had little idea about what could possibly result. With little information about possible cause-effect connection, Druhi became very cautious about almost everything, and independent as well in managing the new life alone away from family's intervention.

When it comes to the challenges, Druhi emphasized the significant impacts of feeling lonely over her life in America. Beyond the fact that she is away from home, Americans seemed to keep certain distance from a stranger which made it difficult for her to build up a genuine relationship with natives. When she found that one native acquaintance invited her roommate to

a social party but not her, she realized that nice greeting does not necessarily mean that the person considers her a friend. With no doubt, Druhi gradually started to spend more time with same ethnic friends to comfort homesickness, which of course reduced the chances of English practice and slowed the speed of English improvements. Overall, it seems certain that emotional uneasiness caused by mostly being lonely should be accounted at the beginning of international students' study because it is highly likely to contribute their malfunction as a student.

Although loneliness has not been completely resolved, it has been mostly managed with the understanding and the support from the culture class and its instructor. Druhi heard the term "Culture Shock" first at the culture class and came to understand what happened to her emotionally was a normal response to the new culture. The culture class have not help get rid of her emotional uneasiness, but what mattered here was the fact that the class guided her to face the feelings objectively and help her find the ways to cope with them. On top of that, the instructor's consistent encouraging helped keep her on track. Druhi described that the instructor was quite sensitive to the different cultures and the challenges international students might go through since the instructor has been in other culture. Through class discussions and conversation with the instructor, Druhi came to learn that the U.S. is a country in which an individual live by his/her own culture.

Analysis of Interview

In the study, I interviewed seven undergraduate international students who attended the Culture Orientation class at the regional public university in the Midwest U.S. between 2017 and 2018. A central issue in the study is how effectively the culture classes assisted international students who were challenged with cultural adjustment. In this respect, the study developed the interview prompts to acknowledge the challenges international students faced first and then

identified how much international students utilized the knowledge learned in the culture class when coping with the culture shock. Overall, interviewees' responses distinguished three main factors contributing to culture shock while adjusting to the new college life: the discrepancy between the fancy images of America and the reality, anxiety, and homesickness raised by being disconnected from what they are familiar with. Moreover, interviewees' stories provided data about which part of the culture class helped them, and which part of the class needed to improve so as to effectively help their cultural adjustment.

International students mostly seemed to be highly excited and motivated about coming to the U.S. by imagining how many great things they get to enjoy. When reality strikes them, however, culture shock is inevitable. Three out of seven informants admitted that they pictured American campus life based on the images depicted in the movies and soap operas. Thus, students were all shocked at how few people were the streets in the evening, and how stores closed at 7 p.m. Contrary to their pictures with crowded high-rise buildings, super sparse areas reduced the degree of excitement of being in America as well. School work and assignments also overwhelmed them from the beginning of the study. Apparently, discrepancy between the fancy images of America established by mass media and the reality faced by everyday life has certainly contributed to the disappointment of international students somewhat at the beginning to the extent to make them hard to accept the reality.

The other factor that created challenges is anxiety caused by the differences between their home country and the U.S. Here, the differences refer to what they see as well as how Americans behave. Lina and Youngsook struggled to adapt to American classrooms in which students' involvement in discussions and presentations are encourage. Sonya struggled to establish a friendship with natives due to confusing cultural boundaries. Worse than others, Batsa

reached the point to develop heavy reliance on a third party's confirmation over decision-making since he recognized he seldom knows about how things work in the US. On average, not-knowing-what-to-expect and how-it-may-result certainly make them fluctuate emotionally. As a result, the emotional anxiety led them to consider the new cultural experiences tiresome.

There is not a single factor on which the students can blame their difficulties, instead all factors work together to make international students feel hopeless as they face challenges. Especially noteworthy, homesickness clearly has considerable potential for exacerbating loneliness. Wikipedia (n.d.) defines that "homesickness is the distress caused by being away from home". As both the differences and anxiety aggravated culture shock, most participants expressed feeling homesick. This can be seen that most informants are at "the stage of regression" in which they reject the new culture, and instead long to return to home (Oberg, 1960, p. 177). They were so preoccupied with the thoughts of home and family that they had difficulty in focusing on study. It seemed that three informants suffered from it in a more serious way. Youngsook felt that she was isolated because of serious homesickness, and Batsa and Druhi went through a very depressing period of their life in which they barely progressed language proficiency and academically. It appeared that most informants neglected to consider homesickness as an influential factor in the process of cultural adjustment in the first place, so they tended to underestimate its symptoms until it misguided them to lock themselves inside their own comfort zone such as an ethnic group. Since homesickness is likely to impact negatively their academics, early intervention seems essential for international students.

As the regional public university in the Midwest U.S. strives to respond to these challenges and struggles that international students experience early on, culture classes are offered to them along with additional cultural-integrated services like Peer Advisors, the Writing

Center, and ongoing cultural activities around the campus. Five of the seven informants provided evidence that the culture class helped them with their cultural adjustment to the U.S. college life, on the contrary two of them thought the class did not do so since they had difficulty in relating themselves to the issues discussed in the culture class. In fact, the culture class helped the international students face the new culture by understanding its diverse characteristics and Americans' values. Moreover, four responded that taking a culture class increased their desire to learn about America more since they could understand Americans, which in turn helped them respect American customs and values. Therefore, they pleasantly agreed that they would recommend the culture class to future international students whose cultural experiences are close to zero.

Because the culture class concentrates on international students' smooth cultural adjustments by raising cultural understanding with proper explanations about common challenges, they were slowly able to integrate their lives in high-pressure American academic settings. For instance, Zhāngwě absorbed all the knowledge and information discussed in the culture class with an open-mind that he could seek compromise in handling most of culture shock including communication with Americans. Sonya also provided positive influence from the culture class on her academic writing. In addition, two informants appreciated their instructors' responses to their cultural related questions; three participants were pleased to become independent in managing a new life; four agreed that the culture class prepared them to behave in accordance with American customs and traditions like respecting personal space and staying calm at a surprising incident at a coffee house.

Apparently, the culture class, on the one hand, helped international students accept the customs and values based on reasonable explanation rather than being forced to follow. On the

other hand, its heavy focus on American culture seemed to be somewhat difficult for international students who came from different cultural backgrounds to relate themselves to the discussions and reflections over sensitive issues. Youngsook expressed that it was not easy to relate her newly started American campus life to LGBT issues when it was discussed in depth. Also, Lǐnà was unable to connect her situation to the religious issue discussed in the culture class when she wished to know the instructor's expectation on students in the culture class. Consequently, these informants felt lost during the culture class. As Druhi mentioned that she found that the instructor's understanding of her challenges and struggles a comfort when talking to the instructor, and that instructors' dedicated interests in international students' backgrounds enhanced class interaction more meaningfully.

Thus, one informant ended up suggesting a field trip during the culture class to public places on a regular basis in order to provide students with real-life experiences. Although he agreed the culture class was informative, Wángwěi appeared to believe that adding situational stories to the knowledge through the field trip would be helpful to involve students directly into the new aspects of cultural experience as well as to develop a coping strategy. Being away from what we know and what we love is extremely difficult, and not having all the information we need about the new place, or having very high expectations of the new place and environment has a lot to do with "culture shock". International college students come here at a very young age, and this may increase the excitement of living by themselves, being independent and experiencing new things. At the same time, many international students seem to have an intensively difficult time coping with new situations and finding new friends. Hence, offering a field experience in which students can associate with others would help balance the focus of culture class.

Overall, as an international student, I expected at the beginning of the interview that language would be a major challenge that international students should overcome first when it comes to adopting to the new culture. Throughout the interviews, however, I discovered that establishing a connection to the new culture plays a more important role than language fluency. It seems that international students who are well connected to Americans or American culture were more likely to accept the new culture well and adjust their behaviors than those who struggled to make a connection with their surroundings. For instance, Lina could endure loneliness and adjust herself to American culture thanks to her American roommate and culture class instructor even though her English kept challenging her in writing emails and papers. On the contrary, Sonya appeared to feel foreign although her English was well advanced since she seemed to struggle to make a meaningful friendship with Americans. Thus, on the limited data available, the overall results indicate that there is a good relation between establishing a connection to the new surroundings and positive cultural adjustment.

Chapter 5. Conclusions

This study explored impacts of the culture class for those who have been in the U.S. for the first time. The study aimed to demonstrate how a culture class or cultural instruction promotes cultural adjustment effectively in the classroom if any. Throughout the study, thus, the following question was discussed continuously: does culture instruction practiced in culture courses help international students' cultural adjustment in the U.S.? The overall results obtained through interviewing seven undergraduate international students indicate that the culture class helped international students positively with their cultural adjustments. Culture shock was inevitable for international students when they first started learning in the U.S. In the meantime, school work kept requiring their full attention. The Culture Orientation class offered by the regional public university in the Midwest U.S. provided key information that international students should know academically and practically when overcoming culture shock and transiting into the U.S. campus life smoothly. Besides, the culture class became the foundation for international students' understanding of American culture and accepting cultural differences.

As many international students flow in the U.S. campus, universities need to consider how to help students modify or adjust to the new cultural environment which could be holding them back. When students come to the U.S., they come with their own specific goals based on their cultural and educational settings. It does not always mean that the new culture will make their new life difficult, however, there is a high possibility of that the new culture does not necessarily match their styles of living. Take punctuality for example. Punctuality reflects the concept of time which in most cases teachers in America value punctuality, on the other hand, students from some cultures accept a few minutes' differences as being punctual. In that case, they may consider tardiness differently from their teachers. These students exposed to the culture

directly might not know what makes any difference because it is what they have come to expect. They might not realize that it has impacted the degree of their culture shock either. There would be better teaching the concept differences. Technically, culture classes strive to raise open-minded cultural perceptions to promote good social skills and intimate relationships necessary for living in the new world international students are currently living in. It is certain that international students need to familiarize and try to connect themselves with the new culture through a formal culture instruction since this can be a major cause of students' dissatisfaction and possible leaving from the campus

The beauty of a culture class lies in the fact that an instructor and students share the same goal: raising cultural understanding for a smooth cultural adjustment. As they congregate to achieve the same goal, their direct discussion about culture is probably the most effective way to let these goals achieved in a short time. Direct discussion allows students to engage in real-life alike situations and help build the possible strategies for the situations through direct touch on the issues. Also, students can receive a teacher's immediate and close responses to the issues. Newly-arrived international students struggle in adjusting themselves to the new culture. Adjusting to a new culture is tough for most incoming international students which is why there are culture courses for their preparedness for the first step in foreign life and academic success. The cultural class becomes a cultural community at which they can be an informant for one another and enrich cultural knowledge through well-structured instructions regarding a smooth cultural adjustment. Through the course, they also gradually optimize their ability to adjust in this country, which, ultimately, empowers them to function appropriately in social contexts and make progress in the profession. It is hard to say what the future holds for international students but it is certain that a solid foundation has been built in the culture class.

Discussions and Limitation

Considering the number of international students enrolling in a culture class—approximately 60 per semester—seven students are nearly 12% of the total enrolled in the cultural classes who are quite enough to represent those who have gone through a cultural adjustment with the class support. Furthermore, they have greater insight since they are all undergraduate students whose most of life experiences center on school and school related activities. However, it should be noted that this study has addressed only the reflection about the culture class after completion. It is expected that comparison between before and after the culture class is highly likely to produce a better evaluation of the impact of the class over international students' cultural adjustment. The interview results this study presented are based on the participants' perception after they completed the course. There is no doubt a possibility of oblivion and blurred memories about first experiences. Notwithstanding its limitations, this study does suggest some insight for the participants in that they had a chance to recognize the strategies in cultural adjustment which will be useful for future use when they face similar situation. In addition, the outcome of this research will be meaningful for American universities in improving the curriculum.

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[Homesickness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homesickness)

Appendix A: Interview Prompts about Cultural Experience

I would like you to tell a story about experience you have gone through so far. The study is intended to benefit the International students studying in the United States. The study is conducted by Hoonam Kwon, an MA TESL student at SCSU. There are no right or wrong answers, and the honesty of your answers will help the researcher arrive at conclusions on the topic. Your participation is voluntary and anonymous. You may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Your contribution is valued and appreciated.

Background Questions

1. How old are you? Check One

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28+ |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|

2. What is your mother tongue?

3. Have you ever lived or studied for over 6 months beside USA or Canada?

Interview Prompts

1. Tell me what got you excited to come to the U.S.
2. Describe any changes within yourself while in the U.S.
3. Describe Americans and their culture based on your experience and observation.
4. Tell me what you enjoy most about studying in the U.S. and what you enjoy least and why.
5. Tell me what surprises you most and least and why.
6. Tell me what challenges you most and least and why.
7. Tell me the support you receive related to the challenges and how you respond to them.
8. Tell me what things you expected to learn from the culture class and was the expectation met and why.
9. What was your relationship with the class? Describe your relationship with an instructor/classmates in the culture class.

10. Tell me what you think the single most important factor that should have been discussed/solved/helped at the beginning of study.
11. Tell me what roles you believe the culture class plays when it comes to raising culture understanding and helping students' cultural adaptation.
12. Tell me the difference, if any, between your perception of the American culture before and after one semester of studying it.

Appendix B: Consent to Participate

Impact of Culture Class on International Students' Cultural Adaptation

I am inviting you to participate in a research study about impact of culture courses on international students' cultural adaptation. Many researchers have found that a culture class is essential to promote healthy and smooth cultural adaptation for international students. It is well known that a frequent cultural challenge is found during the first semester among international students. And this challenge usually ends up demotivating students' learning desire. Hence, universities and colleges in the U.S. provides cultural courses to international students for the purpose of raising cultural awareness and assisting cultural adaptation. In this respect, this study explores the impact that cultural courses bring on international students who arrived newly in America hoping language proficiency and academic success. Furthermore, the study aims to address what international students expect and what they obtain from the courses.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify the impacts of cultural courses on shaping cultural perception of international students throughout the first semester and to address how the courses help international students with their culture adaptation in terms of their perception of American culture.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: You are going to be requested to complete interview for about one hour in a private place at your convenience. You are going to be asked to tell a story as a response to 12 prompts which are mostly about your experiences in America. Your interview will be audio recorded and taken notes by the researcher. Follow-up questions are possible if necessary. I will email transcripts of the interviews, then you will be able to review the record, and make a change if you want. To keep the personal information confidential, pseudonyms random numbers will be used in this research.

Risks

The study has minimal to no risks for the participant as the information will be kept securely to the researcher only. The data will also be kept confidential and the researcher will destroy it after the pursuing degree is awarded.

Benefits

The participants who have completed interview will be entered into a drawing for a coffee gift card value \$10. Three participants would receive the cards by the time the researcher completes all interviews. Furthermore, the outcome of this research will be meaningful for American universities and perspective international students. In addition, you will have a chance to recognize your strategies in cultural adaptation which will be useful for future use when you face similar situation.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the information gathered during your participation in this study will be maintained. Your personal identity will remain confidential. You will not be identified by your name in any published material. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to them. The researcher will use them for the purpose of understanding the subject's

cultural concepts and influences cultural courses have on the subject. All data will be kept on my personal computer, which is protected by a password for access.

Contact Information

If you have any questions related to the research or want to receive the results of the study, you may contact me at hkwon@stcloudstate.edu or my advisor, Dr. Robinson at jhrobinson@stcloudstate.edu.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time, for any reason, without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University or the researcher.

Acceptance to Participate

Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age, you have read the information provided above, and you have consent to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty after signing this form.

Signature

Date

Appendix C: IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Hoonam Kwon
Email: hkwon@stcloudstate.edu

IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION: Expedited Review-1

Project Title: Impact of Culture Class on International Students' Cultural Adaptation

Advisor: James Robinson

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).
- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.
- Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.
- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.
- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Chair:

Dr. Benjamin Witts
 Associate Professor- Applied Behavior Analysis
 Department of Community Psychology, Counseling, and Family Therapy

IRB Institutional Official:

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan
 Interim Associate Provost for Research
 Dean of Graduate Studies

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| SCSU IRB# 1853 - 2373 | Type: Expedited Review-1 | Today's Date: 12/10/2018 |
| 1st Year Approval Date: 12/10/2018 | 2nd Year Approval Date: | 3rd Year Approval Date: |
| 1st Year Expiration Date: 12/9/2019 | 2nd Year Expiration Date: | 3rd Year Expiration Date: |