Transforming Identity from L1 to L2, while Studying Abroad in the U.S.: What Changes are There?

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Transforming Identity from L1 to L2, while Studying Abroad in the U.S.:

What Changes are There?

by

Hwakyun (Moka) Mok

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Thesis Committee:
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Abstract

Studying abroad as international student can be enjoyable, but at the same time, it can be extremely difficult to adjust to a new environment. International students face hardships in order to fit in or change their fixed identities from their home country due to the culture shock they encounter daily as well as their languages barriers. This paper studies the difficulties that international students experienced in their host country, the differences from their countries and how they changed to adjust in the U.S.

In this study, nine Korean international students in an upper Midwest University in the U.S. were interviewed. They were four Korean females and five Korean males who respectively agreed to take part in this study. These students were either enrolled in graduate or undergraduate programs. Ten interview questions were asked to find out the changes Korean students went through, the factors caused them to change their identities and how these factors contributed to the changing identities of the students.

Eight factors are found in this study: having English nicknames, voluntary participation, language barriers, procedures, individualism, gender roles, racism, and future goals. These factors caused Korean students to change who they are in the U.S. compared to who they were in Korea. The participants made efforts to adjust to the U.S. culture by having English nicknames and trying to participate more in the classroom. They even changed their gender role in the United States; however, this could be a temporary change. All participants mentioned that there were more opportunities for the future and they felt comfortable in the U.S. Nonetheless six of them still wanted to go back to Korea after their graduation due to their limited visa status, homesickness and hardship to get a job in the foreign land.
It is worth considering the implications of the above for teaching practice. First, international students struggle to fit in the U.S. by changing their identities. However, if we as teachers know students’ difficulties and how hard it is to change their original habitual culture right away, we can understand why students are doing certain behaviors that are not expected and considered rude. Also teacher training can help teachers in their interactions with international students. Second, teachers can try to listen to their international students more carefully. International students think differently. Many international students do not express their feelings and cannot be themselves. They tried to just fit in the U.S. without saying anything and simply bearing the situation. Third, clearly, teachers need to be aware that international students are putting remarkable effort into their dreams and educations. With a language barrier, international students tend to be passive and feel a lack of confidence in their daily lives. They often need to be challenged and motivated by giving them compliments in the first place from teachers for their accomplishments. Fourth, teachers need to speak clearly in class and try to understand different culture. International students miss many things in class and have misunderstandings about class concepts. They cannot even ask professors about understanding or consideration. If teachers can be aware of hardship for international students not to understand clearly, this can help students learn successfully.
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I can be myself with my family members and ask for help when needed. I could not be myself even in front of my family members. Now I learned how to be happy in front of them, thanks to my parents and family members:

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The life of international students studying abroad, apart from their own countries as second language learners (L2 learners), can be exciting and fun. However, at the same time they are going through some difficulties to adjust to the new environment of a new country. There are various factors that can cause them to struggle to adapt to a new country. They might have differing cultural customs, values, families, socioeconomic status, country of origin, and prior educational experiences. These factors can have a large impact on their behavior. If they behave differently from who they are, while studying abroad, I would like to explore what factors influence international students. These factors might change and transform students’ identities and cause them to behave differently in the classroom and in daily life.

In my case, one factor I noticed in my own life was that I had to change my name each time I studied abroad. I have had three nicknames. I was in Japan, Canada, and America, and I changed my name in each country. First, in 1997 in Canada, I used a nickname “Candy.” I liked this name, because it is the name of a main character of the famous cartoon, Candy Candy in Korea (Mizuki & Igarashi, 1975). I was bright and independent like Candy. It was common for Koreans to use nicknames since it was hard to pronounce their Korean names.

Especially my name, Hwakyun, was even hard for Koreans as well. Second, I changed my English name to Robin from Robin Hood while I was teaching English in Korea in 2000. Every English teacher in Korea had an English name so that students could experience American culture by calling their teachers by their first English names. I kept using Robin in
Japan while studying abroad in 2004. Japanese people called me, “Robin Sang.” Ironically, I did not want to use a Japanese name, but insisted on “Robin”. Lastly, I am currently studying in the U.S and wanted to use my Korean name, Mok Hwakyun. That is how we read and write our names in Korea. But I ended up using only part of my name, Mokhwa not Hwakyun Mok. This is still not my actual name. If I could study abroad again, I would use my full name, Hwakyun Mok, because this is what people call me all over the world and it is a part of my identity. The three names I used relied on the culture and language of the countries where I was. I was giving my personal effort to belong to the group by having a similar name as the natives do. Having a nickname can affect one’s life and identity. I act like a teacher when I am called “A teacher” in Korea. I acted like Candy when I was called “Candy” in Canada.

Becoming aware of difficulties international students might have can help teachers understand what their needs are. In addition, being aware that international students are struggling to adapt to a new system can help teachers to better understand their students.

This paper will explore what concerns international students have and what solutions are available. I am also interested in investigating the relationships between second language use, education, and how identities might transform among female and male Korean students who are studying at a state university, specifically one in the Upper Midwest of the U.S. I will explore how their social interactions and related academic experiences in English impact their identities as Korean female and male students and what changes, if any, have occurred in their self-described constructions of identity as they have progressed through their studies.

In the literature review, I will first discuss what identity and cultural identity are. Second, I will discuss how individualism, gender difference, and racism have affected
international students’ identities in the U. S. Finally, I will discuss possible needs of international students.

This paper examines how four female and five male Korean students’ identities are changing and what factors, if any, cause them to change. This study will help teachers to understand what international students are going through and will help students to think about themselves again. Further, this study will help students to understand where they are and what they want to do after graduation.

**Research Questions**

1. What changes in identity that Korean women and men are going through in an American classroom settings regarding culture from L1 to L2?

2. What are the factors causing Korean international students to transform/change their identities?

3. How do the factors contribute to their changing identity?
Chapter 2: Literature Review

There are six themes in this literature review: identity, cultural identity, individualism vs collectivism, gender differences, racism, and international student needs. In the identity section, I will discuss the definition of identity and transforming identity. In the cultural identity section, the definition of cultural identity and Korean mythology will be discussed in order to provide understanding of gender roles in Korea. Also, three habitual behaviors of Koreans will be stated to describe Korean general identities. In the same section, culture shock will be discussed. The cultural differences between Americans and Koreans in relation to individualism versus collectivism, gender roles, and racism will also be discussed. Lastly, how international students are dealing with their identities and what their needs are will be covered.

Identity

This section describes identity in two main parts: The definition of identity and Transforming Identity. The definition of identity covers what identity is and Transforming Identity covers how international students change their identities to adopt in the U.S.

The definition of identity. Norton and Toohey (2011) stated that in the 1970s and 1980s, identities were considered to be learners’ fixed personalities, learning styles, and motivations in most language research. But recently, research has focused on language learner identity as “fluid, context-dependent in particular historical and cultural circumstances” (Norton & Toohey, 2011). The researchers of this article claimed that identities are not fixed and learners are struggling to adopt other identities. The learners’ identities also might be something fixed in terms of their cultural background without any
awareness on their part. Park (2009) concluded that identity formation is “the development of one’s identity and a fluid concept” (Park, 2009), which means it is an ongoing process.

Berken (2011) posited that social identity is not fixed, but complicated and diversified during the language learning process. Berken’s study was based on these questions: “how is the student’s identity affected and/or reinvented through their cultural interactions outside of the classroom?” and “How did the language learner’s social identity change across time and space?” (Berken, 2011). The researchers concluded that language learning closely interacts with one’s investment and identity. Berken argued that this identity is changeable, depending on the time and space one invests in the outside environments of power (Berken, 2011). She argued that one’s character and investment can give him or her opportunities of power involving to the language network accessibility (Berken, 2011). Her study is connected with this paper’s research question one and research question two.

**Transforming identity.** Marshall studied how multilingual students at a university in British Columbia, Canada, experience “re-becoming ESL students” during their first year of university (Marshall, 2010). The researcher highlighted that multilingual students are regularly faced with a ‘deficit remedial ESL’ identity which means they might struggle to fit into U.S. culture, because their original identities are not accepted or understood. The researcher also described their identities, and how students perceive “re-becoming ESL” (Marshall, 2010). Marshall’s study can help my research to find out how my participants are changing themselves and adapting to the U.S. society.

Norton focused on her critical literacy research in Canada, Pakistan, and Uganda to argue that literacy is about relationships between “text and reader, student and teacher,
classroom and community, in local, regional, and transnational sites” as well as about reading and writing (Norton, 2010). The research argued that, while studying abroad, learners are already involved in changing and transforming identities.

Taniguchi (2010) explained how he changed his identity in the United States in 1971, as an exchange student, when he was 18 years old. The researcher described factors of effecting changes and his thoughts of changes.

First, factors effecting changes come from people surrounding the student who had different understandings of who he was. Their perceptions made him change his beliefs and identity which left some traits permanently embedded in his identity (p. 210). Second, the student felt the changes because he was becoming aware of his identity while interacting socially with others. He was experiencing the change of his identity, his understanding of himself, and began sensing the loss of words (Taniguchi, 2010). He added in this study that he is still feeling identity change after going back to his country. Taniguchi’s study explains what I hypothesized in my paper – that international students experience a stage when their identities are transformed even though some of them might strongly believe that they are not. Even though his study was focused on Taniguchi’s own individual experience, we can still examine it and see similar patterns.

Given this information, it is of interest to discuss how one’s identity changes when one travels to a different society. It is a fact that one’s identity will change in order to fit the external environmental or social changes.

In the same matter, Liu (2010) described how he dealt with the challenge of living in the U.S. He lost his Chinese identity in U.S due to the entirely different surroundings,
pursuing his Ph.D. at Ohio State University. His most difficult challenge was not knowing if he would be hired to teach English with Chinese citizenship in the U.S. (Liu, 2010, pp. 127-130). The following study in this section will explore what other factors can change international students’ identities other than surroundings.

In addition, Park (2009) investigated how three Korean female international students interacted with their former academic advisors to adapt to the U.S school system. Some difficulties they faced were dealing with the difference of teaching and learning style, the different academic standards, gender inequality, and teachers’ lack of understanding about ESL (English as a Second Language) students.

Kim (2012) proposed six steps of a new model of psychosocial identity development of international college students. The first step is to prepare for studying overseas in the United States. In the second step, international students experience some struggles from cultural difference and try to adjust to a new external environment, after getting started in the U.S. In the third step, students are going through extreme restrictions of their daily life activities due to the difference from their background experience. In the fourth step, ‘identity emergence’, students try to understand other cultures but they do not yet accept them fully. In the fifth step, identity integration students overcome to adopt different identities. They transform themselves by reshaping their own identities with others. The final step is the fully grown state of international students’ identities in a multicultural context. One gets involved in accepting all diverse groups with respect in educational and cultural contexts (Kim, 2012). Kim also suggests that further study needs to be done on the various factors that affect identity development. This study implies that teachers should be aware of international
students struggling and adapting in a new environment and try to help them through their challenges, not only academically but also in cultural contexts. In my paper, I would like to explore what international students in higher education are going through while studying abroad in the U.S.

**Cultural Identity**

In this section, cultural identity will be defined. Korean mythology, Korean cultural habitual behaviors and culture shock will also be described.

**The definition of cultural identity.** Jameson (2007) stated that cultural identity is the feeling of self, shaped by the group to which the self belongs and social norms related to “beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions, and ways of life”. He argues that a broad conception of cultural identity needs to be in a harmony with “vacation, class, geography, philosophy, language, and the social aspects of biology.” He also mentions that cultural identity shifts over time and reveals feelings. It is interrupted by authority and control, influenced by close relationships, and mediated through communication.

Similarly, Ferdman (1990) claimed that an ethnic group’s cultural identity refers to the sense that the group has agreed upon common cultural features that reveal and represent the group.

On the other hand, Jin (2007) argued that there is no specific identity. Jin (2007) argued that identity as an ideological terminology infers that Korean students may well make and conserve certain value systems. In this century of diverse values, it is awkward to say that there is a certain form that Korean culture needs to have. “Identity” discourse often tends to transform a certain powerful person’s subjective value into an objective social norm.
However, Jin (2007) says that identity is one specific person’s personal ideology within his or her power. It means that only one person can make his or her own identity in his or her culture. For example, imagine the Korean president says that Koreans should eat Kimchi with bread instead of rice. This might lead to the eating of Kimchi with bread becoming a new form of cultural identity for Koreans.

**Korean mythology.** This section discusses the Dan-Kun myth in order to demonstrate gender roles propagated through Korean lore.

The national founding ideology of Dankun story is stated below:

> A bear and a tiger wanted to become humans. They should eat only garlic and a Korean herb (Suak) for 100 days in a dark cave to become humans. What happened was that the bear became a nice woman, named Wong-Nyu within 21 days with patience and a long waiting without complaining. And the tiger who supposed to be the Man couldn’t bear, ending up escaping the dark cave. Whan woung and Wong-nyu got married and had a baby, called Dan Kun who became the King for the Korean national foundation(Ko-Jo-Sun). (Wang, 2014)

Jang says that Hongikinkan is “the national founding ideology of Dankun”. “Hon gik in kan”: “弘, 益, 人, 間” means that we will make the whole human world happy (Wang, 2014). Jang (2004) translated this ideology as “the devotion to the welfare of mankind: expanding heaven’s reason and grace on the terrestrial world”.

This myth above tells Korean mother’s gender role that she needs to be patient, not to complain and please others. This reflects that Korean women are passive and need to obey by listening to their husbands.

**Korean cultural habitual behaviors.** Jin (2007) stated that identity and national character can be called “Habitus” (습속) in our language and in our culture. It is the overall
mixture of structure and emotions, modes of behaviors and values from certain members of the group. Jin also states three Korean Cultural Habitual behaviors below:

- **Workaholic Culture.**
  
  Jin (2007) mentioned that, in Korea, the average working hours per week, in 2003, is 47.6 hours. This is the highest level of hours worked per week in the world. It is because of the pressure to work more hours from corporations (p. 27). In addition to that, the hours of operation for stores in Korea are greater than anywhere else in the world. He adds that there are 24-hour restaurants everywhere in Korea. It seems Koreans live to work not to live (Jin, 2007).

- **Fast Paced Culture.**
  
  Jin (2007) emphasized that Koreans are fixed in “Fast Fast culture”. For example he experienced that the bus leaves at the moment his legs were detached from the stairs on the bus, even before they landed on the ground safely. What would have happened if they were late 0.1 second then his body would have flown in the air?

  Korean buses are not concerned about people. People are concerned about buses. People need to fit in the bus which needs to go faster. If people are late to be seated or to get off, they are often rushed by the bus driver and the passengers are on the bus side who are trained to fit into the habit of “Fast Fast culture” (p. 62).

  There must be good points for Fast Fast culture such as the speed of having computers repaired. “It took few hours in France but in Korea, just for one hour done” (Jin, 2007, p. 67). But it is hard for workers to get that done so fast, because customers request quick services. If workers are too slow, they will lose customers. This makes workers work extra hours.
Personally, I like my experiences working in the U.S. There seems to be a bit more understanding that some tasks take a long time, and this is alright, if it allows for the work to be done thoroughly.

- **Alcohol Culture: Bomb Cocktail.**

  Bomb Cocktail is a popular Korean drink made with beer and whiskey together for the sake of getting very drunk. We mix it with So-Joo, a traditional Korean drink of around 25% alcohol made with rice. Author Jin (2007) said that we drink it to get drunk, not for enjoyment. To me, going out should mean to enjoy the time, but “enjoy” has been replaced by “getting drunk as quickly as possible.” This alcohol culture is directly tied to the *Fast Fast* culture. Working as a tour guide in Germany, Jin was shocked by the Korean tourists who would quickly get drunk and treat him like an entertainer, by saying, “Hey Guide, you sing, make a joke and please us while drinking alcohol in a tour bus” (p. 65). Koreans have some habitual behaviors and these behaviors can be considered portions of their identities. When Korean students study abroad, they notice that they think and behave differently from their host culture. When they experience this, they get “culture shock”.

  **Culture shock.** “Culture shock” was defined as the shock from arriving in a new environment in a different culture (Stewart & Leggat, 1998). This implies that living in a new foreign culture is not simply a happy moment, but might be full of surprises and shock. When people experience a different culture, they might experience negative feelings towards the new environment. “Culture shock” was used as “cross-cultural adjustment”, a duration of time where people feel anxiety and frustration when they move into a new culture (Stewart &
Leggat, 1998). Oberg (1960) employed the term “Culture shock” first and described symptoms below:

Excessive washing of the hands: Excessive concern over drinking water, food, dishes, and bedding: fear of physical contact with attendants or servants: the absent-minded, far-away start (sometimes called “the tropical stare”); a feeling of helplessness and a desire for dependence on long-term residents of one’s own nationality; fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations; delay and outright refusal to learn the language of the host country; excessive fear of being cheated, robbed, or injured; great concern over minor pains and irruptions of the skin; and finally, that terrible longing to be back home, to be able to have a good cup of coffee and a piece of apple pie, to walk into that corner drugstore, to visit one’s relatives, and, in general, to talk to people who really make sense. (Oberg, 2006, pp. 142-213, reprinted out of 1960)

**Individualism vs Collectivism**

This section describes the definitions of individualism and collectivism. Also, the *characteristics* of individualism and collectivism will be stated, relating to Korea and America.

Hofstede (1980) suggested that individualism is a custom wherein the society values the single person’s opinion, not the overall opinions of the larger society. Collectivism is a custom in which the society deems the group’s opinions to be more telling or valuable than individually-held beliefs or opinions. He listed the characteristics of an individualistic society:

“l” consciousness, autonomy, emotional independence, individual initiative, right to privacy, pleasure seeking, financial security, need for specific friendship, and universalism. These qualities seem to govern social structure in the U.S.

Hofstede (1980) also listed the tendencies of a collectivistic society: “We” consciousness, collective identity, emotional dependence, group solidarity, sharing duties and obligations, need for stable and predetermined friendship, group decision and particularism.
He mentioned that Korea is much less individualistic than the U.S. regarding work-related values. Also, Cho, Kwon, Gentry, Jun, and Kropp (1999) mentioned that Korea is a typical collectivistic culture and the U.S. is the most individualistic culture.

**The Differences in the Gender Roles**

In this section, gender differences will be discussed, along with how they can affect international students’ identities in the U.S. Gender roles in Korea.

**Gender differences.** Tran (2010) said that gender differences in the ESL classroom are normal. It implies that teachers should be attentive to female students. Tran gives suggestions. First, teachers should know some signs by students’ body gesture. Second, teachers should get familiar with the concept of sexism and language. Third, teachers should plan time for students to share their feeling. It is hard to know how teachers can recognize students’ feelings while teaching. I agree with Tran’s study in that teachers should be aware of these concepts of sexism and language. Knowing students’ languages and gender can help them academically and in understanding their identities:

Overall, this literature review has clearly indicated that the issue of language and gender is by no means a novel topic, and gender differences in the classroom is also not new; however, research on gender and language use in the English as a second language (ESL) classroom has not seemed to be investigated in a systematic manner. In the process of conducting the literature review, no study has been found to address this issue specifically. Thus, more empirical research is much needed to shed further light on gender differences in the use of English in the ESL classroom. (Tran, 2010)

Ghorbani (2009) studied three mostly used ESL textbooks in the U.S. (Interchange, Side by side and Person to Person). The researcher found out that those three books are male-oriented. They have more figures related to men’s jobs with male pictures. For example, male social roles are broader than females in EFL/ESL textbooks. While males’ jobs are used by
overall social roles, female jobs are limited to students, secretaries, nurses, instructors, and so on. Ghorbani’s (2009) study implied that textbooks still have gender bias towards women. Thus, a better understanding of sexism is needed. This is something I will discuss further in my study. I will explore how women feel about gender differences in the ESL classroom context.

Gembol (2009) stated that teachers should know there can be less opportunity for female students. They should design their classes carefully for balancing patterns of interaction. If students are missing chances to practice in class, there will be less chance for them to be a successful learner. Cochran (1996) argued that teachers in an ESL classroom setting need to be more attentive to gender while teaching.

**Gender role in Korea.** There is a concept called “男尊女卑: Nam John You Bi” in Korea. The idea of “Nam John You Bi” states that men command respect, while women are often regarded as helpless (literally “Men Respect Women Obey”). This is the ideology for women’s roles in Korea (Kim, 1999). Cochran (1996) described that “Nam John You Bi” is a tradition that has been in Korea for a long time. “Nam John You Bi” implies that whenever there is a gathering, only women cook, do all of the house chores and get sick as a result of working so hard. Nevertheless, men play cards, drink alcohol and go out meeting friends. Koreans take this for granted (Kim, 1999). When Thanksgiving or The New Year Holiday comes, Koreans visit the husband’s side of the family on that day. The following day, they go to the wife’s side of the family. Some people do not visit the wife’s parents due to lack of time. Even at the wedding, grooms do not prepare their houses and the brides often have to pay for the furniture. This suggests that Korea is still a male-dominated culture.
Racism towards International Students

In this section, racism is defined and how international students experience racism is described. Malott and Schaefle (2015) defined racism as the way a dominant group (for example, Whites in the U.S.) practices their privilege over those who have less power. Smedley (2014) also defined racism as an ideology holding that humans are separated into different traits with inherited physical traits called “races” and some races are innately inferior to others. Lee and Rice (2007) argued that international student are going through “inadequacies within the host society”. Many international students face discrimination from the beginning of their U.S. lives. They are confronted with difficulties which they never experienced in their home countries. Lee and Rice added that some students even changed their faculty advisors due to the difficulties for the students to deal with cultural intolerances that the advisors had. The researchers argued that it is surprising to know how unprofessional the faculty are since they are educated. However, Lee and Rice emphasized that minimal to no discrimination was found from the international students from Western and English-Speaking countries such as England, Australia, etc., compared to students from other regions. Jones (1972) defined prejudice as “a negative attitude toward a person or group based upon a social comparison process in which the individual’s own group is taken as the positive point of reference” (p. 3). Holmes (1970) defined prejudice as “unfounded, overgeneralized, stereotyped thinking formed without a solid assessment of the facts” and discrimination as “prejudice transformed into action” (p. 1). Sniderman and Piazza (1993) highlighted that most blacks argue that racial discrimination continues today. Even thoughtful Americans, Black or White, have a thought that much has disappeared and yet the issues exists still
(p. 168). Racism is not solely created by the American society. Race exists clearly as an essential agenda in American politics. It is obvious that there has to be a debateable issue about a new kind of racism in politics (p. 175)

Barker (2011) stated the importance of racial connections for Black doctoral students. There were agreements from many advisors and students that Black doctoral students need to have connection with same-race peers, mentors, or faculty. He mentioned further need for cultural connections with greater diversity among faculty ranks and doctoral students. It is beneficial to have diverse faculty for the majority students as well as for Black doctoral students. He concluded that “race is still prevalent in doctoral programs regardless of recent social movements (e.g., colorblind ideology) and that it impacts cross-race relationships between White faculty and Black doctoral students.” This study implies that undergraduate and graduate students need same-race peers, mentors, or faculty.

**International Students’ Needs**

This section explains international students’ academic achievements. Also, it describes the importance of having ownership of English. In addition, what kinds of support they have and need in the U.S. college system will follow in this section.

**Academic achievements.** Carson (2002) explored whether international students are receiving poor academic grades. In a study conducted at a university in the Upper mid-west, the results showed that they have better GPA’s for introductory undergraduate English course. Even if they are going through difficulties, they do not always know that they are performing better than American students. International students performed lower than American Students in three courses. In those three courses, there was not much difference
between the international and American students. In contrast, international students performed better based on final grade:

The results of the data show that whenever there exists a significant statistical difference between two students’ groups general education course, the international students do academically better (according to the averaged GPAs for each student group from Spring 1999 through Fall 2001). (p. 37)

Carson concluded that a first-year composition course is the course in which there was a significant statistical difference between American students and international students. The composition course showed that international students are getting better grades than American students as stated in the averaged GPAs of the student groups. Even though international students are performing better academically, they are not aware of how good they are while studying abroad. Though international students can be better academically, they need support. Whelpley (2002) studied what Bangladeshi students were going through while studying abroad in the U.S. Their English proficiency was their first concern while financial concern came second. The other concern involved incidents of racism. Whelpley believed that there needed to be a more supportive international program for lowering the cultural barrier.

Ownership of English. Le Ha (2009) argued that every student should have ownership of English. It is obvious that their voices need attention in order to produce and reproduce their identities of who they want to be, who they are and what they could become.

American students speaking English as a world language have privilege compared to international students. Thus, it is obvious that international students need attention from professors for their lack of English proficiency as a second language learners. In the
Interview questions, some questions will be asked about how the professors can help their students with issues as second language learners.

**International students' needs.** Breen and Abdo (2007) argued that teachers should make an effort in the context of TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) to become familiar with students’ backgrounds and cultures. Irish (2012) argued that the religious and cultural identities are so intimately connected for Saudi Arabian students, that each identity must support the other.

The concept of cultural identity for Saudi Arabian males was discovered to be closely linked with their Muslim identity. Interviewees expressed the desire to accommodate externally while preserving their internal beliefs and values. Participants did not feel resistant to the culture, instead their Muslim teaching compelled them to interact and explore US culture. (Irish, 2012)

Irish added that Saudi Arabian students in the U.S. have close interaction to Muslim identity and cultural identity. Participants learned how to accept other cultures through Islamic teaching while respecting their internal beliefs and the U.S. culture. The researcher argued that the religious identity can support students in interacting with and exploring the U.S. culture.

Ortecho (2008) suggested that teachers should support the international students to feel comfortable in the U.S. The researcher mentioned that the role of the teachers should be as a mentor, which means not only to be a teacher academically, but also the person who can care about them to go through all the confusion to adapt to new environment. Teachers have an important role for the international students to get a good university experience.

Schlueter (2007) found that cultural distance and difference were the factors that international students struggled to adapt to in the U.S. The study said money, climate and
living situations have an impact on the adjustments. Schlueter said that money had influence on the quality of international students’ lives and climate issues disturbed cultural adjustment in the beginning (p. 67).

Pederson stated that, even though international students are having difficulties academically, the main concerns they face are “culture and the nature of specific course requirements” (Pederson, 1998). He argued that international students’ needs according to their ESL program are not properly provided. The study shows that dissatisfaction appears in terms of “the academic utility of ESL pedagogy and a perception” (Pederson, 1998). He emphasized that much attention to the international students is needed such as counseling according to their majors. In other words, making a clear understanding of their academic requirements will help the international students to be successful learners.

Lama (2013) argued that language, finance, employment, and lack of social support are the factors Asian students are confronted with. Thus, universities should provide support regarding those issues so that all international students can be successful learners.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The method of this paper to collect data is interviewing via qualitative interviews. The interviewing method has been used by Park (2009). This section describes participants, instruments, procedures and analysis method.

Participants

Four Korean female and five male undergraduate and graduate students, respectively, who are studying abroad in the U.S., were selected for this research study. I interviewed five undergraduate and four graduate students in order to compare data for the similarities and dissimilarities. I interviewed 11 Korean students. I had to drop two of them because one of them was Korean American immigrant and the other was Korean European. The criteria for selection are nine Korean students: (a) Who has been pursuing studies at American universities (B.A or M.A) for a minimum of 6 months, (b) who had studied in Korea over a year, (c) Who experienced studying abroad in the U.S. as international students.

Instruments

I attached ten interview questions in an appendix at the end of my study. I used abbreviations, Q1 to Q10, to refer to interview questions 1 through 10. Also, RQ 1 to RQ 10 refer to research questions 1 through 3 in the appendix.

My research questions are;

1. What changes in identity are Korean women and men going through in an American classroom setting regarding culture from L1 to L2?
2. What are the factors of the changes which cause them to transform their identities?

3. How do the factors contribute to the changing identity?

There are 10 interview questions conducted for materials. These questions are designed to address the aforementioned research questions. For the majority of the interview questions (Q2 to Q9), I drew from Park (2009), who pursued a similar study. She conducted those interview questions to get the best answers for international students’ life styles, life values, women’s perspectives and identities in the U.S. The remaining questions, Q1 and Q10, are designed by myself. First, Q1 is designed to answer how participants changed their Korean names into English nicknames, why they did it and what factors made them change their names. Second, Q10 is intended to answer how their future goals can affect the role of the students’ identity. Thus, eight of the interview questions (Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, and Q9) are planned to answer research question one. These questions deal with how they fit in U.S. society regarding cultural differences, life style and identity change. Eight of them (Q1, Q3, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, and Q10) are aimed to answer research question two. These questions seek to ascertain what factors cause the participants to change identity in various surroundings in the U.S. Finally, five of them (Q2, Q4, Q7, Q9, and Q10) are designed to answer research question three. These questions attempt to define the various factors that contribute to the changing identity. The interview was conducted face-to-face for one hour. Eight participants were interviewed in Korean and one interviewee in English. I recorded the interviews and transcribed them later.
Procedures

1. I received approval from the IRB (Institutional Review Board).
2. I contacted the subjects and got the individual consent.
3. The subjects were interviewed from a state university in the Upper Midwest in the U.S.
4. In the interview meeting, a study room at the library was reserved or any place my participants preferred: at the park across from the library, at the coffee shop on campus, at the park by the river, at a church or at an ice cream store.
5. Before participants had the interview, explanations about any problems when being interviewed were given. They signed an IRB consent form in English and Korean both.
6. Recording was conducted with the sound recorder on my laptop.
7. I made transcripts in English after interviewing nine participants in Korean and sent all of them to review the transcripts for accuracy. All of them replied to me for confirmation.
8. I conducted the analysis based on the transcripts solely.

Analysis of Methodology: Narrative Study

In this section, I analyzed the data by coding the participants’ narratives regarding the topic. This study is not so much of a narrative study as an interview study. However, participants were telling their stories when giving examples, which is influenced by narrative study.
Park (2009) said that narrative study can be the best methodology to deliver a researcher’s message about participants’ identity (p. 66). Also, Johnstone argued that stories can be called “language”, which can have an effect on “social power and authority” (Johnstone, 1990, p. 126). I analyzed my transcription process into four stages according to Park’s study. First, transcription was coded. Second, the data collected in Korean was translated into English. Third, I performed a member check, which means to take the transcripts back to the participants to ask them to confirm after transcribing the interviews. Some of them replied with their corrections. Forth, relevant information in comparison to my research questions was collected. Relevant information means the data mentioned more than once to compare similarity and dissimilarity among participants. Last, I intended to find the result and discussion related to the topic (Park, 2009).

Data was examined for transforming identities from L1 to L2 among nine Korean graduate/undergraduate students in the United States. The data from the interview was saved in files.

Data was classified by the difference of classroom setting, life value, life style, and women’s and men’s perspectives in order to find how international students try to change in the U.S. Second, I compared male participants’ data to female participants’ data to know if there are any similarities or dissimilarities in the patterns and trends. The data showed what participants have experienced while transforming their identities and how their gender role has had an effect on them.
Chapter 4: Results

I interviewed nine Korean students who have experienced studying in Korea and in the U.S. for over 6 months each. They are five undergraduate and four graduate students, among them four female and five male students. Six of them have lived between 6 months and 24 months and three of them between 2 years and four years in the U.S. I interviewed 11 Korean students but I had to drop 2 data because one was European-Korean and the other had immigrated to the U.S.

I changed their names to Korean vowels in order to protect participants’ identities. Their names are Ga, Na, Da, La, Ma, Ba, Ah, Ja and Cha. Also their last names have been changed in this section. I interviewed eight students in Korean and one student, Cha, in English. Cha’s quotations will be found in standard font. Korean quotes are original and italics indicate my translations. Eight of the informants came to the U.S. to pursue their BA or MA degrees; however, Cha started studying abroad from her high school.

There are nine results found in this study regarding international students’ identity changes. The nine results describe how the identities of international students changed and how they feel about changing their identities in the U.S.

First Result

“I use my English name for others often.” Na.

Six out of nine interviewees have English nicknames. They have their English name either for Americans to remember their name easily or for themselves to avoid saying their name several times. Since Korean names are hard to pronounce correctly right away, they decided to have nicknames after they experienced difficulties when introducing their names
to Americans several times. The interviewees got their names from former English teachers at school in Korea, their parents and friends. They said that they feel different with their English and Korean names. For example, one of the interviewees has his English nickname, which means “pleasure”. Then he felt that he needs to be joyful when he is using his English name. On the other hand, with his Korean name, he said that he could be more like himself. His comment implies that having a different name can change one’s identity. Thus, having an English nickname can be the factor that Korean students change their identities.

For an example, Na has his English nickname because it is inconvenient for him to repeat his Korean name due to the difficulty to pronounce it for Americans.

한국이름을 쓸면 불편해서 영어이름을 쓰지. 왜냐면 여러번 얘기해지면 애가 쉬워야하니까. 애들이 발음을 제대로 못하면 그건도 듣기 싫고 서로를 위해서 쓰는데 주로 남을 위해서지요. 그것이 나를 위해서가 아닌가? Na

I use my English name because it is inconvenient to use my Korean name. I have to repeat my Korean name several times to Americans. Americans do not pronounce it right at the first time. It is irritating … I use English names for others often. Isn’t it for myself as well? Na

In addition, Da said that he has an English nickname. He uses three names: his English name, his last name and Korean first name. He noticed that it is hard to pronounce his first name; his friends often try to call him by his last Korean name which he likes better.

아무래도 미국이 강대국이다 보니까…..나도 하나쯤가지면 좀더 편리하지 않을까 해서 만들었는데요. 여기서는 영어이름이 있기는 하지만 대부분 한국이름 불러주고요. 힘들면 Lee 라고 불리달라고 해요. 미국사회에 맞추려고 만들기는 했지만, 그 이름에 익숙하지 않고, (미국) 아이들이 (한국이름이 어렵워도) 발음 해서 불러 주기도 해요.

I made an English nickname because I thought it would be convenient to have one since America is a powerful country….. Even though I have an English name, most
likely people try to call me by my Korean name. I sometimes say to call me by my last name, if they have hard time pronouncing my Korean name. Da

Ma also stated that he feels like an outsider when he uses his Korean name in an American group.

Likewise, Ja received his English name after he got to the U.S from his Malaysian friend. His new name is easy to remember and pronounce. He said he could be himself with his Korean name but not with his English name. He could not express his feelings well and convince others well.

I used an English name right after I got here. At a Malaysian party, a friend of mine here from Malaysia made my English name. I made it only for Americans. Not for me. I was thinking of my nickname, something like famous American sports players’ names. But I did not. I got it by chance. Ja

Summary. Six out of nine participants used their English nicknames for themselves to avoid inconvenience to repeat their names again when introducing themselves. They got
their names from their friends, family members and teachers from English schools. Some of them got their names from their Korean names: Min out of Min-Su or Peter out of Pe-Won. Thus was because they wanted to avoid feeling embarrassed when someone mispronounces their Korean names. One of participants said that he feels different when being called by his English name. He said he feels freer and more delightful when being called by his nickname. They needed time to get used to their names in the U.S. Thus they changed their identities by having a different name.

Even though two of the participants, Ga and Cha, said that they are using their Korean names, they are using part of their Korean names. For example, they use Jin out of Jin-Su. However, Ma and Cha think that they use Korean names but they are still not their Korean full name. Thus, eight out of nine participants use different name here in the U.S.

**Second Result**

*“I see often voluntary participation in graduate classes. But we are not used to it.”*  
Ah.

Five participants mentioned voluntary participation in the U.S classroom. There is a lot of questioning and answering in American classrooms and they felt comfortable talking to their professors. Therefore, one of the factors that can affect Korean students changing their identity is voluntary participation. In Korea, students do not participate much like here. They feel like participating here more as Americans do. Korean students feel freer in the environment where students participate more freely.

As an example, Na said that the main difference is that it is possible to have an open relationship with professors in the U.S.
The main different thing here (from our culture) is that students feel free talking to their professors. It is easy and less difficult to communicate to the professors...In Korea, we do not even ask anything.... comparatively free to ask questions and less difficult. Na

Also, Da stated that every Korean may feel similar to the way he does about participating freely in the U.S., and it is important to participate well in classes.

I think that most Koreans feel the same way. We feel freer here. Even professors come in the class with causal clothing. There are lots of questions and answers in class. In Korea, students ask questions when required. Students spend much time to make assignments and presentations look respectable.....However here, students participate naturally with freedom...Here, class participation, quizzes and discussions, seems more important than mid-term and final. ... It is so hard but we learn a lot. In Korea, only midterms and finals are very important. Da

Likewise, La said that she is engaged in an ongoing process in voluntary participation in classes. She mentioned that here in the U.S. students are encouraged to ask questions, even though they can be common sense. However, Korean students are not even encouraged to ask questions and may hesitate to ask questions so as to not be considered lacking of knowledge.
First of all, students here ask lots of questions. They are encouraged to ask questions. We Koreans tend to find questions by ourselves because we do not want others to know what we do not know. But here, professors have high expectation to get many questions, even if students can get blamed for not knowing common sense from other students, they are highly motivated and expected to ask any questions during the class. 

In the same manner, Ba said that there is freedom in classes in the U.S. If students try hard, then they can be successful academically with clear explanations, such as rubrics. In contrast, Korean classrooms do not stimulate and motivate students because of the relative evaluation system. Only the top few percent of students can get A.

There is freedom during classes... in terms of the way we study and the atmosphere. Korea has a relative evaluation system... Only few students can get A+.....It is impossible to get a good grade even if we try hard.... But here, we can make it work. I feel a different sense of accomplishment compared to the one I felt when I studied from Korea.... I became a hard working student with such an environment...Ba
Once, during the class, one of my classmate brought her 2 kids. They were about 2 and 5 years old. They were sitting at the back and stayed till the period. No one was complaining or telling them not to be in the class. It is an American culture. It does not bother students to have kids in the class here. Ba

Furthermore, Ah commented that voluntary participation is good, even though she cannot participate well yet. This is not only because of her low English proficiency but also because her educational background that lacks voluntary participation stops her from giving her opinions.

I see often voluntary participation in graduate classes. But we are not used to it. Students are voluntarily giving their opinions by raising their hands freely. I can’t do it well. Even if I have a thought, I just give up on it. Korean students tend to do it when being forced. I like it here. Ah

In addition to the previous idea stated above, Ja said that voluntary participation also is important here to get a good grade in addition to the assignments. He added that it is essential to participate well in the workplace.
It was hard to attend the classroom. It is hard to participate. In Korea, students are passive. Here if I am not participating to give my opinions, it is considered lazy. Korea is more passive. Here people put their importance in participating and communication skill. So I try to fit in here. I changed here. In Korea, usually we ask questions at the end of class but professors do not like to finish later than on time. Ja

At the same time, Cha mentioned that unlike in Korea, where teachers have power over students in classes, here in the U.S., she felt comfortable and relaxed to ask and answer the teachers freely. I interviewed her in English.

I was relaxed and comfortable in the U.S. but in Korea, we just sit …In the U.S. teachers always ask students (to participate in the class) “why (do you think so)” But in Korea, students always say (passively) “Yes I see. I will memorize for the test to their teachers.” Maybe because students are shy and feel awkward to raise their hands to ask questions. Teachers are not ready to listen to their students in Korea. The teacher has some authority to control the classroom. I liked Korea and here but for me I like it here better. Cha

I respect the teachers. In the U.S, I try to understand the concept and try to keep my identity but am still kind of changing. Now it is okay. But at the beginning when I was in High school in the U.S., it was rough. Because my instructor gave me no excuse and no exception for me (as an international student). She treated me as a normal American student. Cha

Summary. Five participants mentioned the difficulties they experienced while participating in class. Either due to the language barrier or to the difficult communication style, they could not participate well in class. They said that there was freedom during classes, which they enjoyed, but found difficult to adjust to. In these classrooms, students are encouraged to ask questions voluntarily and professors expect their students to participate well by sharing their opinions. Korean participants wanted to give their opinions, but they could not, due to their language barriers and the simple fact that they are not used to posing
their opinions in their home countries. Thus Ba, La and Ah needed to change their cultural identities to get better grade by trying to participate more in the U.S.

Third Result

"Due to the language barrier, I feel like being treated like a child." La.

Seven interviewees felt a language barrier in their everyday lives. With lack of English proficiency, they are having difficult times communicating with peers and friends because of common miscommunications. They feel anxiety and depression, especially in the classroom. One of participants even felt that she was being treated like a child and was viewed as a weak person. Thus, the language barrier is one factor that can change the role of students’ identities. Their language barriers can make students feel anxiety towards communicating with native English speakers in the classroom. This aspect changes the feeling of status and students’ reaction in the classroom.

Ga did not hesitate to say that it is the language barrier that makes him change who he is. He had to focus on what the professors were saying to understand. He said that he is busy comprehending his class well so he cannot give his opinions due to his lack of language proficiency. He added that it would be better for him to understand professors if they could speak slower.

언어죠. 장벽이 너무 높죠. 제 전공분야는 미국에서 공부한 교수들이 한국에 계셔서 다른 부분은 비슷한데...여기서 의사표현을 온히 못하는..자절감...anxiety 가 있는것 같아요. 수업에 집중해야하는데 영어를 듣고 이해해야하는다는 강박관념이, 수업에 집중하기가 힘들어요. Ga

The language barrier is the factor that gives me a hard time. Here, I feel depressed and anxious when I can’t express well. The obsession that I need to focus on comprehending English distracts me from the class. With the language barrier, I feel
anxiety and frustration in the class. The anxiety to comprehend English better in class
distracts me from participating the class, making me not focus on the concept in class
but trying to understand what professors are saying. Ga

He wanted to participate but he could not due to the language barrier. He could not be
himself. He has to change in order to participate. Wanting to participate more will change his
identity later on as his English improves more. He will change in a good way.

The most difficult part during the class is the time when professors are speaking so
fast. It would be great if professors can speak slower and clearer. If they speak fast, I
cannot understand the contents in class well. Despite the willingness to participate
voluntarily, I cannot due to the language barrier. Ga

Moreover, Na thought that he would be able to make his argument clearly if he had
enough time. He did not feel comfortable taking up class time with his arguments since he
does not speak as fast as American students do.

I have many things to say in classes…. I have to bear with it, (not saying things that I
want to say). I would make my argument clearly, if there were enough time to wait for
me during classes. I cannot catch up to the speed... I have to give up on it not to
disturb the class...Na

In addition, La said that she feels like she is being treated like a child because she
speaks at the same level as a child or the powerless person. This is a great example of the co-
construction of identity, where both individual and community are contributing to the
formation of identity.
First of all, due to the language barrier, I feel like being treated like a child or a weak person rather than an adult. I live a life, being protected like a weak person. La

Furthermore, Ja said that he has restrictions when he wants to appeal something strongly to Americans due to the lack of his English. Although, Americans sometimes irritated him, it was hard to explain and convince them well.

There are restrictions to appeal myself strongly to Americans due to my lack of English proficiency. Though Americans make me frustrated, I can’t explain and make them convinced well.” Ja

Similarly, Da said that he is passive in class due to the language barrier. Even in his daily life, he has lots of restrictions when attempting to express his wants to his roommates. He ended up saying “Yes” even though he did not mean it. It is interesting that he enjoys writing online discussion instead and participates actively in this medium. Perhaps, due to the language barrier, he prefers this instead of raising his hand in classes and getting too much attention.

The language barrier makes me passive here. If I could speak better English, I could appeal my identity better .... I just say “Ok, Ok”.... even I can’t express myself when I want to play games ....etc....Having no freedom to express myself clear enough makes me give up saying that I want often. Da
Da mentioned that people may say he is showing off if he gives his opinions in Korea.

This is another example of the theme of freedom. In the U.S. people do not think that he is showing off.

On the other hand, Ma said that he did not feel that there is as much voluntary participation as he expected in the U.S. He does not participate himself, due to perceived lack of English skills, anyway. But still he does not feel that American students participate well in his liberal art classes.

It is hard here in classes due to my lack of English proficiency. Nevertheless, I like it here because professors explain things well and kindly. In Korea, I felt like that I took classes from graduate assistant teachers often.
Due to my lack of English, I tend not to participate in classes well...to compare to the ones in Korea...I do not feel that students in America participate well... It depends on classes. I take Liberal arts classes...I do not feel that students participate a lot here. Ma

To get rid of the fear for the language barrier, Ba explained that she feels comfortable saying she is from Korea. Telling others that she is from Korea implies that she can get an excuse not to be able to speak English well. She wants to be comfortable instead of being nervous due to her lack of her English proficiency. She emphasized that she explains her native background not because she has lack of confidence but for others to consider if there is anything that they do not understand due to her second language.

I feel inconvenient due to the language barrier. I say who I am and where I am from. Usually, we can say who I am only but I tend to say to make sure that I am from Korea. I feel like to say that English is not my first language and I am from a different country. Ba

During the group discussion in classes, I felt comfortable after telling the group to excuse my English. They pay attention to me more. Even for the presentation, I just say in front of everyone about my language barrier, then I become comfortable and I feel that they try to understand me more. Ba
It does not mean to excuse me due to my lack of my English proficiency but it means that others should know if there is some parts they do not understand due to my lack of English skills, ask me. I do not belittle myself but care about others to understand more. Ba

Furthermore, Ja said that he could not express himself due to the language barrier. He is having a hard time explaining and convincing Americans.

Talking to Koreans and Americans is different.... I can be myself with Koreans. I am myself as Korean with Korean nature which is me. But with Americans, I can’t be myself because my lack of English. There are lots of limitations to express myself strongly. When I get annoyed by Americans, it is hard to convince them with good explanations. Ja

Summary. Korean international students want some help with their language acquisition from their professors. Ga specifically mentions that it would be better if the professor could speak slower so that he could understand better their lessons. Da says that he likes to participate online discussion. Since there is no restriction to speak well and fast enough, students might be confident to participate well and more freely online. Thus, the language barrier is a large factor that changes students, makes them feel worried and also makes them feel restricted and unable to participate confidently in classes.
Seven interviewees mentioned experiencing communication problems in the U.S. regarding cultural differences and language barriers. For example, in the U.S., it is very common to assert one’s expectations or feelings quite plainly. An American might simply say, “No, I’m not hungry”, while Koreans tend to think of others when they say “Yes” or “No”. One interviewee said that it was hard to express meanings for “Yes” or “No” directly without considering others’ needs. When this informant wanted to eat food, she considered others in her family. Once, her friend told her to eat and take some food home. She simply said, “No, I am not hungry”. She took all the food home to her family. Another participant said that Americans say things directly for what they want for a favor, when we, Koreans, consider it rude to ask for a favor directly. The other informant said that she is overreacting when she talks to Americans to deliver her message clearly.

Often during classroom interactions, a person’s writing skills, grammar, and structure are on display for everyone to see and read. Yet this does not seem to be as much of a barrier as speaking in class. Why? Because students can get help from the writing consultants from the university writing center on campus or have enough time to organize thoughts and write correctly with their dictionary on line.

Fourth Result

“If I do not follow procedure in the U.S., then I am out of the U.S. society.” Ga

Three interviewees said that America deems “procedure” important. They said that in the U.S., the culture and society is in order so that people know their expectation and responsibilities. In the U.S professors focus on “procedure” so that there are certain rubrics for students to follow. Korean students feel that they have better chances to do well
academically as long as they follow the rubrics with logical progression. Korea has procedures as well but they are not strict enough. Therefore, procedure is one factor that affects students to change the role of their identities. They can be motivated more to do better academically. If they follow the procedures, they can expect good grades.

For example, Ga explained that the procedures are the most important factors to fit in the U.S. There are certain procedures that we need to fellow in the U.S. Unlike the U.S, Korea has rules everybody agrees upon, but these are not clearly stated so that there is always flexibility.

In American society, they deem procedure important. If we do not follow it, then we are out of the society. We also have it but here they state clearly on the paper. We in Korea have it implicitly but not state it clearly. Ga

In the same manner, Ma said that Americans follow rules so that there are more chances to be successful without background status. But in Korea, with social connection and academic background status, everyone can be successful.

For example, in Korea, my father is one of the executives, then I can get a job... Here, there is outline. It is hard. There is outline in Korea, but... still weak... with taking a serious view of academic ability... school relations... they want to help out each other..... I am a doctor? Then you are a doctor too... Ma
삼성.보세요. 완전 이씨 집안사람들이자나요...완전 이씨집안 삼성...삼성 뿐만이 아니예요. LG… 그게 미국이랑 다른것이죠. STEVE JOBS, Apple CEO 랑 Tim Cook 현재 CEO 이랑 연관 없잖나요. 여기 사람들은 사고 방식 자체가… 딩도 아들도
것은 나꺼 내것은 내것 부모와 자식간에도요… 우리는 아들 “돈
필요해 내가 줄게”. 좀 다르죠. Ma

Look at Samsung company (Korean biggest company)... It is owned totally Lee family members... Completely Lee’s family Samsung.... It is not only Samsung.... but LG.... that is what is different from the U.S. Steve Jobs, former Apple CEO, does not have a family connection with Tim Cook, current Apple CEO. People here have a way of thinking itself...It is son’s, daughter’s...Mine is mine and yours is yours even with parents....but in Korea, my son, you do not have money, here it is. It is different.....Ma

In addition, Cha mentioned that organization in order is important more here than in Korea. Americans respect the rules, having no flexibility.

Being on time and putting things in order are more important in the U.S. Once, at the bank, I was waiting for one hour lining up, they shut down the door saying” we close because it is time to close” OMG Even at the airport, the flight has been canceled, and they closed the desk. Saying “we closed sorry we cannot open today” OMG Security and Privacy. Once, my friend wanted to meet her roommate after contract. But the landlord did not let her meet her roommate because of the roommate’s privacy. Cha

Summary. Three participants mentioned that they have difficulties understanding the procedures at the beginning. They are stricter than the ones in Korea. Even though students felt frustrated when reading instructions and rubrics thoroughly first, they now feel it is fair for everyone and they are motivated to study hard for better grades. Therefore, Korean students changed to adjust to the stricter procedures in the U.S. Even though Korea has procedures and rubrics, they are flexible and not organized to follow rules for grading.
Fifth Result

“*Americans are too individualistic. You are you and I am me*. La

Individualism is the factor that changed students’ identity in the U.S. Hofstede (1980) described that Korea is much less individualistic than the U.S. related to work-related values. Individualism is defined as the tendency to deem the single person’s opinion important rather than the group’. Individual characteristics are “‘I’ consciousness, Autonomy, Emotional, dependence, Individual initiative, Right to privacy, Pleasure seeking, Financial, Security, Need for specific friendship, and Universalism’”. On the other hand, Hofstede (1980) defined Collectivism as the tendency to deem the group’s opinion important than the single person’. The characteristics are “We consciousness, Collective identity, Emotional dependence, Group solidarity, Sharing, Duties and obligations, Need for stable and predetermined friendship, group decision and Particularism.”

In contrast to collectivism in Korea, eight students mentioned that people here in the U.S are self-centered and self-focused, which means they seem to enjoy their lives more than people in Korea. Korean people tend to consider the group’s life rather than the individual’s life. Americans express what they feel, what they want to do, and what they are going to do. All the participants had positive perspective toward individualism in the aspect of life in the U.S. Even one participant said that Americans seem not to prepare for their future lives, but focus on enjoying the moment. He likes that Americans put their current life first since Korean people tend to sacrifice their present life for the better future.

Thus, individualism in the U.S. leads students to take more initiative, which means they feel free to say and do whatever they want. They can be self-centered and self-focused,
talking more and expressing more with less hesitation. Individualism is the factor to make them change the role of identities.

For example, Na said that Americans enjoy the present and Koreans tend to try to prepare for the future. Americans tend to spend all the money they have.

Americans tend to enjoy the moment, Koreans tend to enjoy preparing their life for the future. It seems Americans are apt to spend if they have savings. If they do not, they work. If they still do not have enough money, then they get support. I would rather say that I allow myself to adopt the U.S. culture temporally than I changed. Because I should go back to my country. Na

It is interesting that Na thinks that he changes his identity in the U.S. and then he will change again when he goes back. He knows some changes will not be accepted in Korean culture.

Rather, my father in law changed a lot. He got shocked after visiting the U.S. He still works over 10 hours a day... but here people around his age are mowing the lawn and going boating...Na

Again, Da said that he feels like he can enjoy his life more fully in the U.S. He wants to study and obtain his Ph.D. here in the U.S. Further, he added that people here know how to enjoy the finer moments in their lives.
I can enjoy my life a lot more here. After work at 5 pm, they go to the gym and spend their free time. I thought that it would be nice to live in the U.S in order to live life in abundance for the rest of my 50 years. So I am thinking of doing my PhD here. I will do my MA in Korea and PhD in the U.S. As long as there is a passion, I can survive here. Da

I think that Americans deem their present life important. But Koreans put grades important. .....In the U.S. ... riding on a skateboard ...they think the joy for the moment and with friends is important. Koreans tend to sacrifice present for the unpredictable future. Da

Americans go traveling actively and going to the parks, swimming and doing activities ... Because they have a good infrastructure. The society itself values enjoying their lives important. Da

Even though La emphasized that Americans are too individualistic, interestingly, she still likes the way individualism characteristics make her feel free in the U.S.
anyone more not to disturb others, but they do not want to get disturbed. They do not want to be involved in others business...Indifferent... too much indifferent... With the indifferent life pattern, my life changes here... and I like it. People who do not know me make me feel freer. La

In addition, Ah said that Americans’ thoughts are different from Koreans’. Americans are self-centered, which implies individualistic tendencies. They care about themselves first. But Koreans are group centered. They put things for a group first, which can force an individual to sacrifice for the group.

There are many things different from the U.S. Language itself is different. The basic thought is different. We say “our plan, our husband, and our house” But here, often, people care for themselves first. Americans say “My plan, my husband, my house.” We consider the community culture important. Ex) When we are having a meeting, we wait till the end even when we want to leave. But here, Americans consider themselves first, they just say and leave. Ah

여기는 철저한 개인주의이고. 철저한 자본주의의 이지요. 하지만 우리나라라는 공동체적 문화지요. 우리는 단일민족이였자나요. 같은 말 같은 피부색…반면, 여기는 melting spot 이자나요. 우리는 밑바닥에 깎려있는 단일민족적인 공동체문화가 있지 않나 생각해요. Ah

America is a concrete individualistic and capitalist country but Korea is a community centered country. Korea has one root...A homogeneous country...... Only one same language...... The same skin color.... On the other hand, America is a melting spot. I think that we, Koreans, have one rooted community group centered culture deep inside us. Ah
Also, Ma stated that Koreans have a strong bond in a group activity that everyone should attend after work. Even though he likes gathering for sports, he hates alcohol culture after work at a company in Korea.

한국은 단체생활이죠. 회식문화도 ...일의 연장... 너희는 무조건 (참석) .....(회식 때) 술 마시는 것이 일의 연장이죠 .. 저는 단체생활 좋아하는데...축구도 좋아하고...하지만 (술 문화 회식문화는 싫어요) 하지만 여기는 일과 사생활 즉, 사적인 것과 공적인 것이 분리되어 있죠... Ma

Korean deem group life important. Dining out after work is even an extension of work. All employees need to attend. Drinking alcohol is part of work. I like group activity a lot like soccer. But I do not like the alcohol culture in Korea. Here, things for private and work are separated. Ma

Summary. Five participants mentioned that the cultural difference was the factor that made them change in the U.S. They pointed out that individualistic aspect in their daily lives in the U.S. makes them feel confused. This is because Korea is considered a collectivistic country (Hofstede 1980). Ironically, with all the difference, they prefer individual life over the group-centered Korean culture due to them having more freedom. Thus they changed to adapt to the individualistic culture, even if temporarily.

Sixth Result

Women are freer here.

Gender role differences frequently provide for culturally shocking and stratifying experiences, as six of participants suggest. Here in the U.S., female participants felt less passive and felt empowered to engage in various sports activities. Even in class, women seem not to care about being a leader of the group project. In Korea, women tend to be the second leader to help the leader of the group.
For example, Na mentions that Korean female students tend not to be a leader for the group project but to be an assistant. However here is not like that.

여자들이 수업시간 때 보면, 한국에서는 그룹 프로젝트를 할 때 여자들은 리더가 되고 싶어하지 않고 보조적인 역할을 하려는 경향이 있는데 여기는 그렇지 않고. Na

_During classes, female students tend not to be a leader for a group project in Korea but to be an assistant for the leader. However, here is not like that....Na_

In the same matter, Ma pointed out that female students work out at the gym a lot in the U.S. but he never saw any female students at the gym in Korea. This implies that Korean female students are passive in sports. In women’s role, Ma changed his thought that he needs to help with house work such as cooking and cleaning. He felt “Yeah right, this is right to do house work together if I get married... This is the way to help... I should admit it to do it together...I should do it...” Thus Ah and Ma have changed their thought toward gender and accept the different gender roles in the U.S.

여자들이 여기는 운동을 많이 하자요. 헬스장에서도요. 한국에서는....... 헬스장에서 여자들을 본적이 없어요. 동등한 여자들이 운동을 해야 하자요. 동등한 여자도 날씬한 여자도 한번도 본적이 없어요. Ma

_Here, female students work out a lot....at the gym.... In Korea...I have never seen any female students. Fat women should work out. But I have never seen either fat or thin women at the gym in Korea. Ma_

한국은 남자들이 설거지 같은 것은 안 하자요. 남자면 설거지 같은 것은 안하고. 부엌일은...그렇게 생각 했는데 여기서 함께 식사준비하고 그러면...내가 결혼하면은 이렇게 도와 주는 게 맞는 거구나..인정하게 되는 게 맞아..그렇게 해야 해... 굉장히 많이 한국문화에 관해서 기숙사에서 친구들이랑 이야기해요. Ma
Korean men do not do the dishes. Men are not meant to be doing dishes. I thought so. Than here, I prepare meals together…This makes me think that I should admit myself to help my wife cook after my marriage…and that is the correct way…I should do it…This is the right way…. I spend much time talking this agenda with my roommates at my dorm. Ma

**Summary.** The different gender roles changed the role of identity so that women students play less passive roles and developed an interest in becoming active both in the classroom and outside it.

**Seventh Result**

*I changed the perspective toward racism.*” Da

Smedley (2014) defined that racism is an ideology that humans are separated into different traits with inherited physical traits called “races” and any action, practice that shows some races are innately inferior to others.

Racism is the factor that five of nine students mentioned. Korean students changed their perspectives about racism. They had beliefs that they are different and do not want to talk to African-Americans. Most of them did not have any foreign friends in Korea, especially African-American friends. One participant felt uncomfortable when Africans talked to her in the beginning of her stay in the U.S., but later she became good friends with African-American in her homestay. Another participant mentioned that he was afraid of encountering racial discrimination because he was a Korean. He said that he was a racist towards Africans. But after living in a dorm and having friends in the U.S., he changed his thoughts about Africans so that he feels less racism. Thus, racism is an important factor that causes international students to change their identities. For example, Na felt negative toward Somalis at the beginning of his stay in the U.S. after he saw his son crying because of his
son’s Somali peers at school. However after a while, his son and his Somali peers got to know each other, then they became good friends. This aspect made Na think about his perspectives about racism one more time.

I have lots of Somali neighbors. Somalis and Americans live in different areas in my village. They do not get along well. Somali students mainly cause problems. After I saw my son crying, I had bad perspective toward them at the beginning. Then, my son said that he had a hard time with them; he hated them at the beginning. Later on, he became good friends with them... My son changed after getting to know them. Na

In addition, Da said that he changed his perspective toward racism after he experienced more diverse culture. He was worried about being discriminated against before coming to the U.S., but now, he is comfortable to be with all races after experiencing Americans treating him equally.

I changed the perspective toward racism. I changed my life perspective now. I realized that everybody is equal. I was worried about getting discriminated in the U.S. I experienced that Koreans discriminated South-East Asians in Korea. But here I feel thankful that Americans invite me to their houses and say hi to become a friend in the first place. I learned a broader aspect that everyone is equal. Da
In the same manner, Ja said that students get education from high school or earlier in the U.S. After experiencing diverse culture, he is comfortable with Africans. It is hard to interact with diverse culture in Korea.

There shouldn’t be racism. Here they learn this from the university and high school. We do not learn this at public school. Because we are not educated. Here America is a multiracial country so they learn and experience diverse culture. Ja

Likewise, Cha mentioned that she became friends with African-Americans after being friends with them in the U.S. Cha spoke in English.

I felt offended to meet African American (at the beginning in the U.S.). Their skin is black and kind of fatter. I had never seen them before. Now I am okay after having my African American sister (at home-stay family). Cha

Summary. Five students mentioned that they changed their perspectives about racism. Due to their lack of the knowledge regarding race and racism, they had a negative attitude towards Africans and felt uncomfortable talking to them. After making good friends from racial minorities, they changed their perspectives and now think that every race is equal.

Awareness about different cultural identity is important. Knowing and learning what other ethnicities are can change one’s behavior toward them and make them feel comfortable to talk to.

Eighth Result

“Having a goal certainly helps me.” Ga

Five participants said that their goals have an effect on the role of their identity. Some of them have their goals so that they can be motivated to study well and stay well in the U.S.
Also, temporary status with their visa as international students could make them change their identities. They are highly motivated to finish their degrees and pursue their employment. Having a goal can be a factor that could change or influence their identities.

As an example, Ga was highly motivated to do better academically to pursue his goal. He tries hard and go through hardship here in the U.S. to make his goal come true.

_Having a goal certainly helps me. What I am studying is related to what I will become afterwards. What I study is connected to my goal. That is how it has an effect on me._

_Ga_

**Summary.** Having a goal is good motivation for identity change for the international students. Since their visa states are limited for the academic years they are abroad, they tend to study more and try not to waste their tuition and pursue their success.

**Ninth Result**

_“I will go back to Korea for sure 100%.” Na_

Six interviewees wanted to go back to Korea in the near future after graduation. Two out of nine interviewees wanted to stay in the U.S. and only one had not made a decision yet. Even though, overall, they seemed to like the environment in the U.S. better than Korea, many of them want to go back because of their family and friends.

For example, Ja said that it was his destiny to go back to Korea, even if he thought it was good for him to stay in the U.S. and liked the working environment here after his graduation.
Yes I changed my thoughts. There is no personal life to those who work in Korea. I thought that I should work in Korea without no reason. I think it is good to get a job here too. But I have parents in Korea. I kind of changed to stay here and get a job. I had 0% chance to get a job here. But I still do not think I would stay here even the working environment is awesome. It is kind of my destiny I can’t explain. Ja

In the same manner, Na mentioned that he would go back to Korea. He would stay here if his friends were here. He pointed that having and making good friends is important.

I will go back to Korea for sure 100%. There are more merits here and lots of things that I can’t give up. People we hang out with are important. If my Korean friends came here, I would live here. Making good friends is important. Na

Summary. Six participants wanted to go back to Korea after graduation, even though there is merit to them working here in the U.S. They thought it was their destiny for them to go back to their home countries or they would miss their home country, friends and family.

They changed themselves to fit in within the U.S. temporarily. One participant wanted to go back because he has his family and job in Korea. One of them said he wanted to stay but he did not find many job opportunities due to his language proficiency and visa status. Others were thinking of going back to Korea because they thought they might have a better life in Korea, even though they prefer the freedom of U.S. individualistic culture.
Overall Summary

Korean students use English nicknames to fit in within the society and try to change to be a voluntary participator in classes. They feel extreme restrictions due to the language barrier and the U.S. strict procedures. They need to learn about the U.S. individualistic culture and different perspectives of gender roles and racism in the U.S.

Overall, they try to overcome their hardship by pursuing their goals. They want to go back to their home country after graduation, even if there are many opportunities here for them. It implies that they miss their home even though they enjoy their daily life in the U.S.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

This section will describe what I found through this research by answering three research questions:

1. What changes in identity are Korean women and men going through in an American classroom setting regarding culture from L1 to L2?
2. What are the factors of the changes which cause them to transform their identities?
3. How do the factors contribute to the changing identity?

1. What changes in identity are Korean women and men going through in an American classroom setting regarding culture from L1 to L2?

There are seven changes Korean international students have experienced when trying to adjust and fit in while studying abroad in the U.S.

First Change

I label myself differently by changing my name into an English name.

Six participants changed their names into an English name. They needed time to adjust to their new names, which is their new identity. They changed their identities into different ones. They changed who they are. They view themselves differently. After getting used to their new name, they feel freer. Korean names come with certain suffixes such as “Si”, “Euni”, “Oppa”. Korean uses “Si” after their names to show respect to the person with whom they are talking. For females, if other female friends are older, Koreans call them “Euni”. But if they are older brothers, then Koreans call them “Oppa.” With these suffixes, Korean can distinguish certain ways of speaking to others based on gender and seniority. However, English names do not require these kinds of distinctions.
As Norton and Toohey (2011) mentioned, identities are not fixed and learners are struggling to adopt other identities. Seven out of nine interviewees changed their identities to fit within the U.S. by changing their names. Their identities changed with their new names.

**Second Change**

*Voluntary participation in the U.S. made me participate more.*

Cho et al. (1999) stated that the U.S is the most individualistic culture, and Korea is a typical collectivistic culture. Korean students changed to adapt to the U.S. culture with individualistic characteristics: individual initiative, independence, autonomy and “I” consciousness (Hofstede, 1980).

Five Korean students adopted the different discourse of discussion in the classroom by participating more. They tried to talk and give their opinions more to fit in with the different style of education in the classroom setting. Yet they still feel intimidated due to the language barrier and different classroom environment.

**Third Change**

*The language barrier made me an outsider in the U.S.*

The Korean first language learners became international student second language learners in the U.S. Seven participants experienced a language barrier with anxiety and frustration. They had difficulties with miscommunication and lots of restrictions in their daily lives due to lack of English proficiency. Whelpley (2002) mentioned that a main concern for international students is English proficiency. My study also states that the language barrier and the communication difficulties are important reasons participants changes their identities.
Fourth Change

*I don’t want to be an outsider in U.S. society*

Three interviewees mentioned that they changed in order to conform to norms in the U.S. There are certain rubrics to follow in classes. With clear rubrics, three participants were highly motivated to do their best to get a good grade. In Korea, the relative evaluation system and vague rubrics did not seem to challenge students as much. Particularly, Ma mentioned that, with a clear procedure to get a job, people in the U.S. have better chances to be successful without educational or familial references as long as they try. While Korea has procedures to get a job, they are not always documented clearly and it is not uncommon to get hired as a result of school or family connections to a company. For example, Ma said that Samsung and its branch companies are owned by Lee family members.

Fifth Change

*I like individualism over Collectivism now because I am in the U.S.*

Since Korea is considered a collectivistic country which deems groups’ decision important (Hofstede 1980), Koreans are group-centered. The students felt that they considered others more before they came to the United States. Ah said that the Korean language itself is group-centered as well. We often use the pronoun, “our”: “Our house, our husband, our family” but in the U.S. people use the pronoun “My”: “my house, my husband, my family”. In Korean society, it is important to follow group rules, even if we have our own tastes and favorites. That is why there are lots of group events with family members, friends, as well as coworkers and bosses. Korean students enjoy some aspects of individualism but they also feel loneliness. La said that people in the U.S. look lonely, but she prefers to be
alone. That makes her want to stay in the U.S. longer, because she is not forced to participate in events like she was in Korea.

**Korean people work more hours than Americans and participate in social drinking often.**

Jin (2007) mentioned Korean’s workaholic culture, arguing that Koreans worked 47.6 hours per a week in 2003, the highest level in the world. Da said that he could spend the rest of his life more pleasantly in the U.S. because he would have free time after 5 p.m. He added that he could enjoy his life much more working fewer hours, so he may study for his PhD here. Na also said that his father-in-law still works over 10 hours per a day in Korea, but here people around his father-in-law’s age are leisurely mowing the lawn and going boating. Jin (2007) added that Koreans are expected to participate in social drinking out of obligation rather than for enjoyment, in addition to the hours they work. Ma said that he did not like feeling obligated to drink after work. He said that drinking alcohol with one’s supervisor is a part of work, with all employees being required to attend. Ma and Na only became aware of their dislikes of this ‘drinking culture’ after living in the U.S.

**Sixth Change**

**Different Gender roles gave me more freedom allowed me to express myself.**

Kim (1999) described the ideology of Nam John You Bi: men command respect, while women are helpless in Korea. She argued this ideology has been in Korea for a long time. Six students experienced different gender roles in the U.S. compared to Korea. According to the spirit of a Korean myth, a bear became the mother of Korea after enduring 21 days in a dark cave, eating only garlic and the Korean bitter herb, Suk. Then she married a
god, Whan-Wong, who is considered the father of Korea (Wang, 2014). From this ideology, women’s gender role is to be patient and obey men without complaining.

Ma mentioned that he sees more female students participating in sports activities and classes freely. Ah sees female students show their confidence, wearing tight shirts while pregnant, for example. Ah said “I was impressed to see students being pregnant on campus. Even being pregnant, they look free and I see them wearing a tight T-shirt”. Ma said that in Korea, even married pregnant women tend to wear loose clothing. Thus, the participants of this study became aware of women being treated equally because they participate in many kinds of activities and raise their voices on campus. Ma also changed his gender roles after seeing men help with house chores and cooking, which are considered mainly female’s work in Korea.

Seventh Change

*I was a racist but not anymore.*

Since South Korea does not have a diverse culture, Korean students did not have a chance to meet people of different ethnicities. That made them feel afraid to talk to people from different cultures. Especially with African-Americans, some of Korean students felt uncomfortable to talk to them in the beginning. It is because they never experienced talking to people of other races or ethnicities in Korea. Racism is the ideology that some races are inferior to others (Smedley, 2014). Five of the participants figured out that they had been racist because they discriminate against other ethnicities without being aware of it. However, after making good friends with people from diverse cultures, they became comfortable and
have a better understanding of them. In addition, they became comfortable that they were not being discriminated against for being Korean.

2. *What are the factors which cause them to transform their identities?*

The factors that cause international students to change their identities are having English nicknames, voluntary participation, language barriers, procedures, individualism, gender roles, racism, and future goals. All these factors are different from Korean culture and made Korean students think and act differently in the classroom and in daily life. They experienced a different culture and got culture shock, and then changed to fit in to U.S. culture. However, changing identity is still an ongoing struggle for many of them.

3. *How do the factors contribute to the changing identity?*

Korean students saw themselves change in the new environment in the U.S. because of the factors provided above in research question 2. This section explains how the factors contribute to change the international students’ identities with Kim’s (2012) 6 steps. Kim proposes 6 steps of a new model of the psychological identity development of international college students. The findings in my study have similar results to the changing identity in Kim’s study. There are explanations about phase 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 below from the finding in this study. This study does not use Phase 1 from Kim’s (2012) 6 steps.

**Phase 1** is to prepare for studying overseas in the United States. Nine participants didn’t mention the changes they had before coming to the U.S.

**Phase 2.** This stage describes that international students experience some struggles from cultural difference and try to adjust in a new external environment (Kim, 2012).
My participants said that they had some struggles to adjust with the change of living in the U.S. One of the factors can be changing names. They needed to get used to their new names. One of the participants said that she did not even recognize her name for a while. She said it took a year to get used to her name. The other factor is a language barrier. Changing the environment itself can be hard to adjust in a different culture, but in addition to that, if their English language proficiency is not good enough to communicate with others and participate in class discussion, they would feel discouraged and depressed. One of the participants said that she felt that she was being treated like a child with her English barrier.

**Phase 3.** This stage is that the students are going through extreme restrictions of their daily lives due to the differences from their background experience (Kim, 2012).

Some of my interviewees had restrictions in a classroom setting. Na wanted to appeal his argument in his class but the speed of the flow, his language barrier and voluntary participation environment contributed to him not having further argument. He stated that he would have appealed more in his class if he were in Korea and had more time. Thus if he believes that he would have contributed to class in Korea, this suggests a change in not only identity but in learning ideology. Yet this is surprising because Korean students do not participate in class discussions, but professors give lectures and students just listen.

In addition, even in daily life, Ja mentioned that taking a bus is inconvenient. She argued that Korea has better system in public transportation. She also mentioned that doing laundry is so hard here. Since everybody has their own laundry machine in Korea, she did not need to do it outside before. She noted the inconvenience of grocery shopping without having a car in the U.S. She may have experienced this restrictions because she is a student.
Phase 4. This stage is ‘identity emergence’. Students try to understand other cultures but not yet accept them fully (Kim, 2012).

Most of the Korean participants are aware that voluntary participation is good for them and they wanted to give their opinions in classes. But they all said it was hard due to their language barrier and the class speed. They needed time to get used to the environment to adjust to the different culture.

Phase 5. Students overcome cultural differences to adopt different identities. They transform themselves by reshaping their own identities with others (Kim, 2012).

This stage is that students experience things in the U.S. that they do not in Korea. In the greeting culture, Na was embarrassed when his son’s friend greeted him “Hi, Na” with his name. He got culture shock in the beginning. In Korea, a father is not greeted with “Hi”; there is a certain way to show respect, bowing to a friend’s father in Korea. But after a while, he is fine now. He thinks that he needs to put aside his culture in this certain type of situation.

Phase 6. The final step is the fully-grown state of international students’ identities in a multicultural context. One gets involved in accepting all diverse groups with respect in educational and cultural contexts (Kim, 2012).

With regards to gender roles, Ah said that she changed her perspectives on lesbian and gay people. In the U.S., people are more open about their sexual identities.

한국에서는 성 소수자들에 대해 잘 알지도 못했고 편견이 있었는데, 여기 와서는 다양성을 존중하고 있는 그대로 받아들이는 문화를 배웠어요. Ah

I didn’t know about sexual minorities and had prejudice in Korea, but here I learned to respect diverse culture and accept them for what they are and who they are. Ah
Ah was biased about people of sexual minorities, largely due to lack of understanding. However, she learned that she needs to respect diverse culture and accept them without assuming prejudices.

In each step, Korean participants experienced different cultures, then tried to make a decision what to adopt or not. Sometimes it takes time and sometimes it does not. It is better for Korean international students to find a balance in order to benefit from two cultures. They should not simply change their identities from one to the other, instead they should keep their own identities and learn a different culture to adopt later on.

Implications for Research

First, further research is needed regarding cultural and racial exposure and how international students feel about race. Three of my participants thought that they were racists, due to their feelings of unease when talking to racial minorities at the beginning. They were comfortable to talk to Asians and Americans but not African-Americans, due to lack of knowledge and experience of race in Korea. According to Smedley (2014), racism as an ideology holding that humans are separated into different traits with inherited physical traits called “races” and some races are innately inferior to others. My participants thought that they preferred talking to Asians or Americans compared to African-Americans. After having friends from racial minorities, my participants changed their thoughts to be comfortable with all races. This also implies how important it is for teachers to educate students to accept and learn from racial minorities. Experiencing diverse culture is a good lesson for students to learn about racism and to challenge themselves to look beyond skin color, language and ethnicity.
Second, since this study is focused on Korean students, further study is needed to research other international student populations that came to the U.S. for study in higher education. Hofstede (1980) said that Americans are individualistic and Koreans are collectivistic. If this study can be compared with American students who are from individualistic culture and studied abroad as international students, the results could be different. Also, as Americans could be able to speak English in other countries, there would be different factors that affect changing their identities to adapt to a new environment.

Third, with interviewing international students who work in a company, the results could be different. My participants are students who are on campus and have better chances to see good attitudes toward racial minorities. My results say that there are more chances to be successful in the U.S. with concrete hiring procedure and no discrimination from school and family relations. It would be interesting to compare the results on campus with the ones in real working places.

**Implications for Teaching**

This section has seven implications for teaching international students, regarding how instructors might help them by supporting their identity changes.

**First. International students struggle to fit in the U.S. by changing their identities**

Multilingual students are faced with changing their identities to adjust to the U.S. because their original identities are not accepted (Marshall, 2010). My participants experienced that they needed to adapt to the U.S., otherwise they would not be able to survive. Ga said, “If I do not follow procedure in the U.S., then I am out of the society.” Of course, international students need to obey and follow America’s rules since they are here to
study its culture. However, if we, teachers, know students’ difficulties and how hard it is to change their original habitual culture right away, teachers can understand why students are doing certain behaviors that are not expected and considered rude. Also teacher training can help teachers in their interactions with international students.

**Second. Teachers can try to listen to their international students more carefully.**

*They think differently.*

Ortecho (2008) mentioned that teachers should support the international students as a mentor. With the language barrier, Da said that he cannot express his feeling “Yes” or “No” in his daily life with even his roommates. Ja said that even he gets annoyed by Americans; he cannot even try to argue with them. This implies that many international students do not express their feeling and cannot be themselves. They tried to adapt to the new culture without saying anything and simply tolerating the situation. I personally had some difficulties to talk to my advisor in the beginning. I was neither comfortable sitting with my advisor in his office, nor making an appointment by email. I was not used to it. Once, I made an extra effort to check his class schedule and went to his class 10 minutes before to ask just one simple question. I thought that I was helping him and it was better for him not to email and sit with me. But it turned out that I misunderstood the procedure to make an appointment with professors. I feel comfortable emailing and talking to the professors now. I changed.

**Third. International students’ graduate rate is higher than Americans.**

Carson (2002) argued that international students have better GPAs for introductory undergraduate English courses. Carson adds that they are not aware how good they are academically. Six of my interviewees wanted to go back to Korea after graduation. They
have certain specific goals after graduation with their major. This can motivate them to adjust in the U.S. and challenge themselves academically. Even though they need extra time for reading their textbooks and for going to the writing center to check their writing, they are highly motivated to do well academically. Since their status with their student visa expires after graduation, they need to make their goal firmly ahead of time. Six participants said that their goals had an effect on the role of their identities. While interviewing them, they were not aware that international students were highly motivated academically and performed better.

From a state university where I did my research in the Upper Midwest in the U.S., the graduation rates for international students were higher than non-international students in 2009 and 2010. Non-international students graduated 34.4% in 2009 and 18.2% in 2010 vs International 57.1% and 27.7%. Thus, international students’ graduate rate in the fifth year of their enrollment is 22.7% higher in 2009 and 9.5% higher in 2010.

Clearly, teachers need to be aware that international students are putting remarkable effort into their dreams and educations. I got motivated when my advisor gave a speech in a class that we, international students, graduate more than Americans. With a language barrier, international students tend to be passive and feel a lack of confidence in their daily lives. They often need to be challenged and motivated by giving them compliments in the first place from teachers for their accomplishments.

Fourth. *Korean international students want to go back to their countries after graduation.*
Six out of nine want to go back to Korea, two want to stay and one has not made a decision yet. Even though there are a lot of merits that Korean students can enjoy for the freedom in the U.S., they want to go back to their home country where they grew up. They have their family and friends there. They have their favorite food and life pattern that they are used to. It implies that they are missing their home land all the time in their current life in the U.S.

Fifth. *Please speak slowly and clearly in class and try to understand our culture.*

Some of my participants gave some comments for professors of international students. For example, Ga said that he wished that the professor could speak slower so that he could understand more. He does not really mean to speak slowly for him only. My interpretation is that international students miss many things in class and have misunderstandings about class concepts. They cannot even ask professors about understanding or consideration. If teachers can be aware of hardship for international students not to understand clearly, this can help students learn successfully.

저한테는 제일 힘든 것이 빨리 말하는 것 이예요 선생님이 너무 빨리 말하면 분위기나 컨텐츠는 알겠는데...(잘 이해가 안가요)...교수가 좀더 천천히 얘기 해 주면 정말 좋겠어요. 참여를 하고 싶지만, 언어적 장벽 때문에 많이 참여 못 하는 것 이 있죠.” Ga

*The most difficult part during class to me is the time when professors are speaking so fast. It would be great if professors would speak slower and clearer. If they speak fast, I can’t understand the contents in class well. Despite the willingness to participate voluntarily, I cannot, due to the language barrier. Ga*
In the same manner, Cha gave a comment about professors. They should know diverse culture for better understanding about students from different cultures. Cha’s quotes is in normal fonts due to the fact that Cha was interviewed in English.

If professors can understand that we have been used different language for our entire life before we came to U.S. at first. It is hard to learn different language and convert it to our normal life. So, if they can understand and try to encourage us, this would be so awesome. And I hope they don't underestimate us or make a stereotypes because we're from Asia.

I am proud that I am from Asia and it is really stupid idea that white people are still superior to other racial people. All people in the world are equal and same. So, if they try to have open-minded to other nation students and encourage them as much as they can, it would be so much better. Cha

On the other hand, La said if professors are giving exceptions for the international students for grammar mistakes and helping them to be paired up with Americans, this can keep them from challenging themselves academically.

The fact that professors give “accommodations” to the international students can give the student less chances to try hard or challenge themselves more. Sometimes, professors are generous to the grammar mistakes for international students or give the group project with American students to be paired up, due to the language barrier. La

Summary. The reason why many of my participants use their English names is because they want others to remember their names easily. They sometimes use their shorten names. Like myself, I made my name Moka out of Hwakyn Mok. Three interviewees out of nine made their shortened names. As a teacher and student, when I was in Japan, Canada, and America, I changed my name in each country. I do not think it is good to be called by a
different name, label ourselves differently and take one or two years to get used to it. Students need to use their Korean names, because most of them wanted to be called by their Korean names.

What can teachers do? Teachers cannot listen to what international students are saying all the time. Ma says that he needs to use his cellphone to use the dictionary during class but it is hard for teachers to let students use their cellphones. Ga said that he wants his teacher to be more understanding of grammar mistakes on his papers. If the paper is for chemistry and other science classes, the concepts might outweigh the English grammar. However, La says that if teachers give international students too many accommodations for grammar mistakes, this can stop them from challenging themselves. It is hard to balance what international students want, but if teachers can have a chance to talk about their classes at the beginning openly, the teachers can get some idea about how they can help their students and become aware of their needs.

Limitations to the Study

My source material explores what international students are going through while transforming their identities and what factors cause them to change. The first limitation was the total sample of participants—only nine Korean students: four female and five male students respectively. They were interviewed from only one state university in the Upper Midwest in the U.S. A larger number of studies will be needed for further evaluation. This study will help teachers to consider what their international students are going through and their pedagogical approaches should be discussed.
It is also important to consider the limitations of the students’ perspectives. They have not experienced the real working world outside of university. Thus the answers could have been different with international students who had experience of a work environment in the U.S. Since they are all students studying on campus, their perspectives can be limited by being in this somewhat closed environment.
References


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Appendix

Background Questions

Gender: Female ___________________ Male ___________________

How long have you studied in the U.S? _____________Korea? _____________

Type of Student: Graduate___________ Undergraduate _____________

Email address: ___________________ (only if you want to receive the results. Your address will remain anonymous)

Interview questions

1. Did you have experience to change your name into English nickname? If any, what was it? Why? How do you like it? How does it affect to your identity? (RQ2)

2. Describe what changes you have gone through in the classroom in the U.S. (RQ1).
   Your reflections on your English influence. Any anecdotes. What difficulties you have? (Park 2009). (RQ3)

3. Describe what the difference is in terms of individualism compared to your country. How do you adjust to it? (Park 2009). (RQ1, RQ2)

4. Please think about discourse styles which refers to how you interact with others in the United States. (RQ1) How do you express yourself differently in the United State? For example, “Do you feel comfortable to say, Yes or No?” (Park 2009). (RQ1, RQ3)
5. Please describe what you think about feminism, racism or gender difference here. How is it affecting to identity changing? (Park 2009). (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)

6. Describe values, roles, norms, and social expectations about women and men if you noticed any change in their perspectives about this matter before and after living in the United States (Park 2009). (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)

7. Please describe any changes within yourself while in the U.S? How does that affect your identity in the United States? (Park 2009). (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)

8. Please describe your relationship with Korean students. Do you think it is important to put aside your culture to fit in American society for shaping your new identity? (Park 2009). (RQ1, RQ2)

9. If you have experienced that people position you differently from what you think of yourself here in the U.S., please describe what they are and how you react (Park 2009). (RQ1, RQ2,RQ3)

10. Do you have a future goal? If yes, how does it affect to your role of identity? (RQ2, RQ3)