ABSTRACT
        This research tries to determine effective intercultural
classroom communication in the American higher education setting. Theories on
classroom communication and intercultural communication (Uncertainty
Reduction and Communication Accommodation) are used to build the framework.
Subjects were four professors from three different academic departments (who
were interviewed) and 38 international students who had been studying in the
United States for at least one year and who completed a questionnaire. It is
shown that effective intercultural communication could be attained in
classrooms if teachers understand the process and develop an intercultural
communicative perspective toward it. The conclusion includes some pragmatic
principles for teachers teaching in the college/university multicultural
classrooms. (Contains 32 references. Appendixes contain the interview guide
and the questionnaire.) (Author/RS)

Effective Communication
in Multicultural Classrooms

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This research tries to determine effective intercultural classroom communication in the American higher education setting. Theories on classroom communication and intercultural communication (Uncertainty Reduction & Communication Accommodation) are used to build the framework. It is shown that effective intercultural communication could be attained in classrooms if teachers understand the process and develop an intercultural communicative perspective toward it. Field studies and survey questionnaire are conducted to collect the data. The conclusion will include some pragmatic principles for teachers teaching in the college / university multicultural classrooms.

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I) Introduction

As it is now well known, immigrants from different parts of the world have been bringing ethnic and cultural diversity into the US society for a long time. Earlier, both the U.S government and the immigrants consider the states to be a "melting pot" of ethnic cultures. Yet so many years later, it is seen that too little has been "melted". Now people believe that the metaphor does not apply and has little relevance to our thinking. Each ethnic group in the States still retains its own "flavor" a great deal that turns the U.S. into an image of "tossed salad" instead: a nation of people who are foreign diverse ethnic origins. The 1990 US census reveals that nearly 20 million persons residing within the borders are recent foreign extraction; 8.7 million of these arrived between 1980 and 1990. Some 32 million Americans speak a mother tongue besides English.

Besides the immigrants, the presence of international students in U.S. higher educational institutions has been increasing in last few decades. The students' various cultures help to make the classrooms they are in multicultural ones. Their presence not only adds cultural colors to the US educational settings and provide more available high quality personnel source to the nation, it also bring considerable financial benefit to the schools they attend because they pay much more tuition than the domestic students do. This is why they have been welcomed so much to enter the States even though both the American and the students from other countries experience some hardship in adjusting to the cultural differences in the classroom.

Significance

The above discussion indicates that cultural unification is considered difficult to be derived (Fisher, 1979). For the "newcomers," the host culture is not a dinner party that they could simply join in. So it is inevitable that many diverse cultures co-exist in the US.

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Multiculturalism is changing American demographics and will affect every aspect of life in the US. It is reported that there will be more non-mainstream workers in the workforce and immigrants will make up the largest share of it (Johnston & Packer, 1987). These demographic trends will define classroom and workplaces that are of no predominant ethnic culture. The tributaries of various races, nations, tribes and languages will flow into the mainstream classroom and workplace. Multiculturalism will become the norm of the society, but not the exception. Then a special challenge that US society has to face is: people, both mainstream and non-mainstream, must be educated to obtain certain intercultural communication skills so as to adjust to multiculturalism in the classroom and workplace or neighborhood.

Obviously, the classroom is the best place to start this educating process. However, the previous research in this area mostly focused on analyzing "cultural shock," the problems that international students encountered, and concluded with strategies for them to survive in U.S. colleges and to reach their academic goals, which all are one-sided. Distinctively, this research emphasize the multicultural setting in which various cultures coexist and intercultural communication will be studied. The prefixes *inter* and *co* suggest that the effectiveness of communication in relationships should be two-sided efforts. It is not good enough for only the minority groups (the guests) to struggle in the issues (as shown in the former research), the majority (the hosts' side) have much more to do with that besides awareness and acknowledge of differences. As Broome (1991) points out, everyone can respond to the actions of "others."

International students' experiences in the U.S. could be good examples to refer to study multicultural issues in classroom. For American students, who associate with the foreign students, the interactions would provide a great opportunity to acquire personal experience of encountering the other cultures. For teachers, who help the international students attain satisfactory educational outcomes, the interaction would provide a good chance for the teachers themselves to explore better educational approaches to meet the need of multicultural trends in the classroom and accomplish satisfying educational goals. The study of "effective communication in multicultural classrooms" is designed to serve the above purposes.

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Terms

There are several terms need to be clarify because they are used frequently in this study:

Effective communication refers to the effective classroom communication in American college / university multicultural settings. Based on the definition made by Spitzberg et al (1984), effectiveness in the educational environment refers to the favorable teaching / learning experience and fulfilled academic outcome that successful communication brings out.

Classroom communication is the complex information sharing process that consists of verbal and nonverbal transactions between teacher and students and between / among students (Cooper, 1995).

Multicultural classroom specifically refers to the classroom communication setting in which both the American and international students attend.

Intercultural communication: It focuses on the study of interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds (Chen & Starosta, 1998), such as interactions between people from the U.S. and China, or between people from Russia and Japan.

International students / Foreign students refers to the students from other countries (regions / districts) outside the U.S. territory. Their backgrounds are culturally differentiated; their presence is a major manifestation of multiculturalism in the classroom. They represent the multicultural students.

Theoretical construction

When thinking about how to make the intercultural communication effective, the process of communication should be examined first. Symbolic interactionists helped us to understand that human beings are capable of actively contributing to the creative development of human societies through symbolic activities (Burke, 1935; Goffman,

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1961; Mead, 1934). Indeed, based on this theory, all human beings, even those from different symbolic systems, can communicate with each other through interactions with others and recreate shared social realities. It seems that all the intercultural communication issues can find reasonable explanations from this theory.

Although the "melting pot " is only a wish, human beings have always been interdependent, which means: no one can leave each other alone (Casmir, 1991). When people communicate with one another, diverse groups from different cultures have to make more effort to communicate with one another interculturally in multicultural settings, compared to communicating with people from the same culture. Intercultural communication is to communicate with strangers who may speak other languages, hold other beliefs, and / or have other values. Even though you probably know some of their languages, there will still be occasions when you have to figure out what happened when your expectations are violated.

To build the future of a multicultural society requires everyone to understand and practice principles of communication so as to make it possible that a creative effort which is based on more than knowledge and awareness (Casmir, 1991) can establish a mutually satisfactory environment for everyone. Responding to this call, the current study seeks to determine the possible way(s) for improving the effectiveness of intercultural classroom communication. The theoretical work includes a discussion of the classroom communication process as well as theories in intercultural communication. Through reviewing the related literature, a model of achieving effectiveness in multicultural classroom communication is set up to guide the field study. When getting into the field, the model serves as direction in data collecting process. The data serves to test the model and provide sources for the researcher to explore the existing issues in the field or the successful strategies that may enrich the model.

Research design

This study employs a field research plus a survey questionnaire conducted on the campus of a medium-sized Midwestern university. The field research includes participant

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observation in the classrooms and intensive interviews with the instructors. As for the international students, a survey questionnaire was mailed to collect information on their general perceptions about their learning experiences in the United States. An institution of higher education institution was chosen as the research site due to the following: college students are considered adults, which means that they are supposed to have rather complete cultural norms, knowledge and certain communication skills. The impact of cultural differences on the classroom communication process can be more obvious to see in their case, in the college / university classrooms.

Since communication always occurs in contexts, to frame the research on the relational level, intercultural communication study could systematically reveal significant in depth information. Relationships are based on not only the exchange of information but also on interpersonal perceptions, which are affected by individuals' values and cultural norms. That is why Gudykunst et al. (1991) argued that intercultural interactions have facets similar to interpersonal communication.

Based on the above argument, the observations looked at the dynamics of the teaching / learning relational communication and the interactions between the participants in multicultural classrooms to get a real life picture of the communication. The interview questions and some of the questions in the questionnaire are generated from the observations, in which the data can be used to minimize validity threats. The intensive interviews conducted with the instructors focused on the instructors' experiences in multicultural classrooms and their perceptions on effectiveness in communicating with students from multiple cultural backgrounds.

Data obtained through the questionnaire serves to evaluate the effectiveness of intercultural communication in the classroom and identify the existing problems so that specific pragmatic recommendations can be addressed to improve the situation. Data gained from the interviews serves to provide experiential strategies to enrich the theoretical model. And last, the study will employ textual analysis to identify the main themes of the data as results.

II) Review of Literature

The theoretical framework used to structure this study is based upon the work on general classroom communication done by Kathleen Kougl (1997), merging with uncertainty reduction theory and communication accommodation theory to analyze the particular situations of this study in the multicultural setting.

The rationale is stated first to draw out the focus areas (three components within the classroom communication system) for this study and the potential difficulties. The theoretical framework section introduces the literature of both classroom communication and relevant intercultural theories, which serve to gain understanding and to explore solutions for the possible problems. Then the chapter further discusses the concept "Effectiveness" in the multicultural classroom and how to achieve it theoretically by applying two intercultural theories to the three significant components of the communication system (communicators as cultural carriers, nonverbal and verbal channels, the classroom climate). This section then ends with a theoretical model for the field study. Based on the theoretical framework, the last part of this section formulates the research questions.

Rationale

In this Information Age, current educational thought views classroom teaching as an active process of two-way interaction between teachers and students instead of one-way information transferal from the teacher to the students as in the past. This shift means that communication becomes the way to teach / learn (Kougl, 1997). It is vital to understand that the successful process of teaching and learning depends on effective communication between the teacher and the students. Since teachers have the authority in the classroom as the intellectual guides, coaches and organizers, effective communication will more likely occur in classrooms when the teacher masters the complexities of the

communication process and develops a communicative perspective toward it (Kougl, 1997). Consequently, when the classroom is culturally diverse, teachers therefore need to understand the intercultural communication process and develop an intercultural /cross-cultural communicative perspective toward the communication in their classroom. Moreover, teachers need to continually apply the understanding and the perspective while teaching (Kougl, 1997).

To meet the communication needs that teachers have in multicultural classrooms, the process of intercultural communication in classroom and several factors related to it have to be discussed. According to Cooper (1995), classroom communication as a system has six components. They are: communicators (teachers and students), message (mostly informational), noises (including physical ones, psychological ones and source inhibition to the communication), environment (the relational atmosphere), communication channels and feedback. To serve the purpose of this study: effectively communicating in multicultural classroom, the classroom communication system needs to be adapted to the multicultural situation with the perspective of intercultural communication. According to Chen and Starosta (1997), intercultural communication mainly involves four concerns of cultural differences: perception / values, language, nonverbal cues, and relational development. Applying these four concerns to the classroom teaching, three components of the six are found significant to this study because they are strongly culturally related and will affect effectiveness in multicultural classroom communication a great deal. The three components are:

1) The communicators. In multicultural classroom, the communicators are the carriers of diverse cultures. They hold various values, perceptions and norms etc, which all have great impact on their communication styles, especially the learning and teaching styles in this case. They are more likely to be not consistent to one another than otherwise. This can cause major problems in the communication process.

2) The communication channels. In intercultural contexts, people from different cultural backgrounds have different coding systems for verbal and nonverbal behaviors. While they communicate with each other, the different systems may generate barriers for

achieving shared meaning and cause miscommunication, especially when the nonnative

speaker's English proficiency is limited.

3) Classroom climate, the relational atmosphere. The climate in a social group

involves interpersonal relationships, which develop with the communication process.

Since the communication process in multicultural classrooms has difficulties as discussed

above, obstacles to foster a good climate in it are obviously inevitable.

In order to obtain understanding of all these potential difficulties that have just been

addressed above and explore the possible strategies to break the obstacles, the theoretical

framework will include one theory in effectiveness of general classroom communication

and two in intercultural communication to draw out a theoretical model on multicultural

classroom effectiveness for this study.

Theoretical framework

<u>Classroom communication & Intercultural perspective:</u>

Teaching is a communication-intensive profession. The essence of the teaching-

learning process is effective communication (Cooper, 1995). To teach effectively requires

an understanding of the dynamics of classroom communication process – according to

Kathleen Kougl (1997), who introduced this idea, to be an effective classroom teacher,

"you must develop a communicative perspective". Kougl explained the concept of

communicative perspective as:

> It is a critical habit of mind. It is self-reflective while at the same time attuned to the other people
>
> involved in the process. It considers the key ideas about communication and recognizes the need to
>
> be flexible. Someone thinking with a communicative perspective examines what is occurring in the
>
> communication process and then makes choices in order to be effective. A person with a
>
> communicative perspective understands how the choices made now can affect current meanings and
>
> the future relationships (pp. 17-18).

For teachers, this concept involves thinking analytically about their students, their

interactions with the students and their communication options so as to make appropriate

choices while teaching. Kougl further claims that having a communicative perspective

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allows a teacher to plan, monitor, and evaluate his/her choices when communicate with the students. Planning involves thinking about the message that you are giving before communicating, trying to understand the classroom situation, as well as yourself and the students as the communicators, making an effort to create clear messages, to anticipate possible noises and / or adjust to them. Monitoring means adjusting your verbal and nonverbal behaviors as you communicate, and looking for feedback to ensure that your intended meanings are getting through to the students. Evaluating is analyzing the outcomes after the communication ends for future interactions.

In other words from an intercultural communication approach, the above discussion can lead to the following conclusion:

Teaching effectively in multicultural classrooms, teachers need to develop an intercultural communicative perspective. That means they need to be sensitive about the intercultural communication process and the communicators as cultural carriers (cognitive level awareness) in order to plan / monitor, and they need efforts to make adjustments including verbal and nonverbal behaviors (behavioral level accommodation) to ensure communicating effectively. In short, an intercultural communicative perspective involves both cognitive awareness and behavioral accommodation in the process and keep positive teaching / learning relationship for the future interaction. Responding to these two necessities for "effectiveness", two theories in intercultural communication will be studied to gain further understanding about the process and practical principles up to the point.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT)

URT is one of the few communication theories systematically extended to explain cross-cultural variations in and intercultural communication (Berger, 1987). It is aimed at explaining both the motivation and the methods for communication in interpersonal relationships. As detailed by Berger and Calabrese (1975), the theory proposes that when strangers meet, their primary concern as communicators is to understand both the self and the other in an interaction situation. Communication generates that understanding (a reduction of uncertainty) and thus serves as the basis of relationship development. The

desire for uncertainty reduction is particularly strong in the early stages of relationships when the participants know little about one another. They need to increase predictability about the behavior of both themselves and others so as to be able to choose appropriate behaviors for interacting with one another.

Underlying the theory is the assumption that individuals attempt to reduce uncertainty in initial interactions with who they will be encountered in the future. Uncertainty is reduced when people are able to understand what is occurring in the interaction (retroactive confidence) and feel more confident about their behavioral choices in interacting with another individual (proactive confidence). At the beginning of an encounter, interactants try to predict the other's actions; and develop causal explanations for observed behaviors as well. In this model, the perceived similarity reduces uncertainty. As uncertainty is reduced, the participants feel more comfortable with each other and thus like each other more, resulting in more intimacy.

Intercultural research (Gundykunst, Chua, & Gray, 1987) further indicates that uncertainty reduction theory is useful in explaining communication between people from different cultures. It becomes more practical after Clatterbuck (1979) introduced the concept of Attributional Confidence as a measure of uncertainty reduction. He defined the concept as the perceived adequacy of information with which to explain the occurring behavior and to predict appropriate future behavior.

For this study, URT helps conclude that in order to communicate effectively in multicultural classrooms, teachers need to be aware of and understand the potential obstacles concerning the cultural differences in the communication process so that uncertainty can be reduced to minimum, and that foundation of the positive relational atmosphere in this kind of classroom can be formed.

Although URT is strong at explaining the cognitive awareness necessity, it is short at describing behavioral accommodation process and intercultural relationship development. Thus the Communication Accommodation Theory is introduced to the discussion.

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Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

CAT is concerned primarily with the communicative moves speakers make in interactions, which is particularly relevant to analyzing the complex processes underlying intercultural communication (see Giles, Mulac, Bradac, & Johnson, 1987). When Giles (1973) originally presented it as Speech Accommodation Theory, he introduced the concepts of convergence and divergence (and later, maintenance, see Bourhis, 1979) as strategies that speakers could use to signal their attitudes toward each other. Convergence involves changing one's language /dialect/vocabulary/speech style and so on) or paralinguistic behavior (tones of voice, speech rate...) so as to be more similar to one's conversational partner, in order to enhance comprehension or seek approval or show solidarity. Divergence is the converse of convergence: speakers emphasize differences between their own and their partners' speech. Maintenance refers simply to continuing in one's own style in interaction, sometimes without reference to the partners ' speech and sometimes as a deliberate reaction to it. Generally, evaluative responses to maintenance are found to be negative which is similar to those to divergence. On the other hand, convergence is considered positive within limits. So it is argued that convergence tends to increase attraction between intercultural interactants and divergence tends to inhibit it (Giles & Powesland, 1975).

Based on that, Coupland et al (1988) developed Communication Accommodation Theory. As a combination of speech accommodation theory and ethno linguistic identity theory, it is very useful to explain the relationship development in the process of intercultural encounters by examining the communicative moves that interactants make in social and psychological contexts and how it is related to personal characteristics.

CAT describes three principles of intercultural interaction. First, the initial orientation of intercultural encounter is affected by one's personal and social identity a great deal, which leads one to view the interaction in certain particular way. However, the situational constraints (such as norms, topics, and competitiveness) of each interaction will change the initial orientation of interactants. Second, people begin to utilize different strategies to identify themselves as speakers or to react to their partners. Those strategies

may include 1) individual factors, such as stating personal goals (e.g. to seek approval or to promote group solidarity) or sociopsychological orientation to each other (negative or positive), 2) socialinguistic and behavioral skills (e.g., interactional management and interpersonal control) in encoding process and labeling the speaker's behavior or making attributions about the speaker's effort and intent in decoding process. Third, in the last stage of intercultural interaction, people evaluate their own and their partner's behavior to judge if the interaction is viewed in interpersonal terms or intergroup ones. This will function to change or reinforce the initial orientation in the next interaction.

For the purpose of this study, the theory has provided a strong theoretical foundation to delineate the pragmatic principles for positive intercultural interactions in teaching / learning relationships.

Effectiveness in multicultural classroom communication:

Effectiveness was proposed as one criterion of communication competence by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984). It refers to the degree to which communicators achieve shared meanings and desirable outcomes in a given situation. In the situation of this study, the "Effectiveness," thus refers to both the perceived favorable learning / teaching experience as the shared meaning and the fulfilled academic outcomes that successful communication brings out, not regarding to the academic program itself (also see the *Terms* section on page 5). From this point, at least two criteria can be set for this study to evaluate the "effectiveness." Since the American education system is learner-oriented, the criteria can be phrased as two questions for the international students in this study:

1) Do they perceive their learning experience in American classrooms as favorable ones?

2) Are they satisfied with what they have learned in the American classroom?

Based on what have been discussed so far, if the answers tend to be affirmative, the multicultural classroom communication is considered effective. If the answers tend to be negative, it indicates that teachers have something to do about it. The reason for this conclusion was also discussed in the introductory section. The following will discuss how to improve (guided with two theories URT and CAT) multicultural classroom

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communication if it needs to be, and what the teachers can do about it considering the three significant components: communicators as cultural carriers, nonverbal and verbal behavior, and classroom climate.

A) Communicators as culture carriers

Communication starts with oneself. This "self" operates in certain ways of perceiving experience, with a distinctive learning style, and with expectations about the way the world works. Since each "self" has his/her unique personal perspective, both "perception" and "learning style" are affected by one's culture, which is a set of values, beliefs, norms, patterns and rules...Therefore teachers need to understand the frame of these references in terms of cultural differences since they are important to be counted in the initial stage of intercultural communication considering uncertainty reduction. Learning styles are especially important at this point due to their determinant traits in educational process.

Learning style refers to the way in which a learner learns and processes information. Keefe (1987) defined it as "cognitive, affective and physiological behaviors that serve as stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment." According to Dunn et al (1989), no learning style is better or worse than another, the better the match between a learning style and a teaching style, the higher the student's grade point average. Cooper (1995) further asserts that teachers needed to identify their students' learning styles (p91). Concerning culturally diverse learning, Hollins et al (1994) suggest that all learning styles are found within ethnic groups to a varying degree but with a dominant style for each ethnicity.

As the result, teachers in multicultural classrooms need to be aware of the impact of cultural differences on their teaching effectiveness and have two kinds of knowledge to respond to what may occur in their classrooms and make proper communication choices:

1) Knowledge about cultural differentiae in general for them to understand the possible issues including perception bias and the learning style bias due to specific cultural differences.

2) Knowledge about the unique learning styles coming from other cultural backgrounds so that they can match with them through appropriate teaching.

B) Nonverbal and verbal behavior:

Nonverbal behavior sends messages about attitudes and feelings that impact on the emotional and academic relationship between communicators. Since nonverbal behavior is learned and culturally determined, it is important to understand the types of it and its potential for influencing classroom communication (Kougl, 1997). Among many types, kinesics (eye and facial behavior, body movement), proxemics (interpersonal space), haptics (tactile behavior), and chronemics (how time is perceived and structured) are more culturally determined. In multicultural classrooms, teachers need to monitor their own nonverbal behavior for its impact on students and try to understand the meaning of the students' nonverbal behaviors from their points of view.

Verbal behavior in multicultural classrooms primarily involves breaking the language barrier. The effect of language differences has been understood as a factor that makes intercultural interactions more difficult than intracultural interactions. Thus language variables of host community members and their nonnative partners are the major focus. These variables include the nonnative students' competence in the host language and the native partner's tendency to accommodate his/her style to that of the nonnative partners. Since nonnative partners do not have enough bilingual skills sufficient to freely command their second language, it is often the native partner who has to accommodate his / her speech. The native partners' effort to accommodate will be interpreted favorably by the nonnative partners as a sign of positive attitude, which will lead to increased attraction to the native partner (Kim, 1991). Moreover, even if the nonnative students have English proficiency, miscommunication still often occurs because individuals use cultural-laden habits and assumptions to interpret each other's verbal messages and verbal styles (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Therefore, teachers in multicultural classrooms are in the role of native partner in intercultural interactions. They need to be aware of the possibilities of those cultural miscommunications in order to accommodate their nonverbal and verbal behaviors consciously and appropriately. The more similarity created in their classroom

communication, the better teaching-learning relationship and classroom climate can be developed.

C) Classroom climate:

Climate in the classroom is the social-emotional atmosphere that develops as a result of the dynamic interplay of interactions within the group. The dynamics of the group result from the interpersonal communication and the relationships that develop. When communication goes more interpersonal, people are able to understand and predict behavior based on personal information that has been shared so the classroom interactions may become more conducive to learning (Kougl, 1997). For the teachers, teaching students at an interpersonal level makes it easier to foster a positive classroom climate that brings more benefits to educational outcomes, because a positive climate is the kind of relational atmosphere in which people feel accepted, cared, valued and supported (Cooper, 1995). Thus a supportive classroom climate promotes fuller development of students' positive attitudes that they are more likely to make desirable cognitive and affective gains. Furthermore, the climate is created, developed and shaped by the people involved in the interactions. Our choices of words and actions mold the climate, so it is within people's control (Civikly, 1992). In the classroom, the teachers, more than any others, are the people who set the climate (Cooper, 1995).

Since it could be more difficult to build a positive climate among culturally diverse people, teachers in multicultural classrooms thus need to make an extra effort to develop interpersonal teaching / learning relationship with their foreign students, and this effort should be integrated with the necessary cultural background knowledge as well as their accommodation to the international students, as shown in the previous discussion.

A theoretical model

Up to now, using URT and CAT as the guide, an applicable model can be drawn out at two levels because both cognitive effort and behavioral effort are needed as shown in the discussion. It is obvious that cognition only cannot deal with the obstacles existing in communication channels and the difficulties concerning classroom climate.

On the other hand, the theoretical discussion has also shown that it is inevitable for teachers in multicultural classrooms to not only obtain necessary awareness / knowledge base but also make adjustment / accommodation including verbal and nonverbal behaviors Therefore, the model for effective multicultural classroom communication would consist of the following assumptions:

At the cognitive level, or regarding to uncertainty reduction, teachers need to:

1. Be aware that cultural differences carried in by international students affect the classroom communication, and impact on educational outcomes.

2. Be aware of the possible biases and develop a sensitive attitude towards them:

   - Let the students know more about their teacher (e.g. your values, expectations, requirements, policies etc.)

   - Often clarify yourself and watch for feedback

3. Gain necessary knowledge about the communicators as culture carriers in multicultural classroom, which includes

   - Knowledge of cultural differentiae in general or specific culture exposed in your classroom

   - Understanding of nontraditional learning styles and communication styles other than your known traditional ones

   - Learn some unique nonverbal cues so that you can accommodate to it properly.

At the behavioral level, regard to accommodation / adjustment, in order to achieve effectiveness in multicultural classroom, teachers need to:

4. Try appropriate convergence strategies to invite nonnative speakers' interaction.

5. Use a variety of teaching methods to cope with different learning styles

6. Make an effort to foster interpersonal teaching / learning relationships across cultures and set supportive classroom climate for all students.

All the assumptions will be examined and open for revision when the data gathered through field studies and survey questionnaire are discussed.

The purpose of this study is to determine how to achieve effective communication in multicultural classrooms. Gail Sorensen (1989) suggests that although there is much research in multicultural issues, little of it is helpful in guiding teachers. The latest publication in the field containing most related topic to this study that the researcher can find is the work done by Calloway-Thomas et al. (1999). In chapter 11, which is titled Culture and Pedagogy, Hofstede's cultural dimension theory is introduced and learning styles are discussed from cultural perspectives. The last section of the chapter is titled Effective Intercultural Communication in Education Environments (pp.204-205), which provides a 5-item list of considerations on classroom intercultural communication issues and a 6-item outline of preparing ways for those who teach diverse groups. They are quite helpful to educators in terms of uncertainty reduction. However, in the researcher's opinion, such an important topic needs a thorough review from theoretical concepts to real world investigation.

This study proposes to explore a pragmatic principle model based on theories, which may help teachers in the field. Now that the model has theoretically been shaped, its feasibility and validity needs to be tested in the real world. To direct research in the field, three research questions based on the assumptions have to be answered:

1) What are the instructors' perspectives (e.g. perceptions and attitudes) regarding their teaching in multicultural classrooms?

2) What have the instructors done to respond to multicultural classroom teaching? What are their efficient solutions for dealing with cultural issues?

3) What are the students' perspectives regarding their learning experience in multicultural classrooms?

   a) Are the majority of the international students satisfied with their learning experience on this U.S. campus?

   b) What are their unfulfilled expectations / needs?

III) Methodology

This chapter will discuss the rationale for using a qualitative approach in this study. Methods of participant observation, intensive interviews and the questionnaire employed in the field research are included. Then the chapter will explain selection of research settings and informants. The pretest of this research (pilot study) and validity concerns are also illustrated at the end of the chapter.

Qualitative approach

A qualitative approach is used for the study. Qualitative research has the strength on its inductive approach; it focuses on specific situation and/or people, and emphasizes words and meanings. It helps understanding of subjective experience and particular context. It can help to identify unanticipated phenomena and influences, too. All of its strength meets my purposes of doing this study. It will help me get to understand the intercultural communication process in classroom systems, to begin to develop causal explanations for the possible issues in the events and find out the strategies that can be worked out.

In this study, the field research and survey questionnaires are designed to collect data. The field research includes participant observation and intensive interviews with the instructors (teachers). In order to get first-hand resources for the interviews and survey question formulation, participant observation is conducted. Data obtained through the observations also serve to minimize validity threats in the study.

Participant observation is used to study social situations from an insider's perspective. It is useful for collecting data and for generating hypotheses and theories (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997). With this method, the researcher investigates the

particular communication phenomenon by being in the field to observe teachers and students interacting as they ordinarily do while carrying out everyday activities.

As a current full time international student at a Midwest university in the U.S., the researcher has the convenience and opportunity to adopt this method as both an observer and a participant acting in the actual field. The greatest advantage of this method is for the researcher to gain first-hand knowledge by watching the interactions between teacher and students in their natural setting and experiencing the climate. It can provide data rich in detail and subtlety. Because of the opportunity for careful examination, the observer is allowed to identify the otherwise unknown variables (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997).

Although the participant-observer may have certain difficulty to remain unbiased due to the self- involvement (Frey, 1991), it would not apply to this study. The fact that the researcher used to be a teacher in multicultural classroom would allow her to see things from the instructors' point of view as well. Since the observation designed in this study lasted for two months in spring, 2000, it may also serve as part of the triangulation. It can cross-check the information gathered from the other channels, to find out if there is confirmation or significant contradiction between what is said / replied in the interview / survey questionnaire and what is actually presented in real situation.

Intensive interview is a qualitative, face-to-face conversation used to gather in-depth answers of "why" and "how come" questions. It might explore communicative behaviors of personnel directors in organizations (in this case: the teachers in classroom) and probe communication attitudes and behaviors such as reasons for interacting with others (Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 1996). Interviews allow one-on-one contact between the researcher and the respondent for longer periods of time. Interaction can be more in-depth and allow the flexibility to follow up and probe reasons for certain attitudes and responses. But it is very labor and cost-intensive (Wimmer & Dominick, 1991), so it can only be done with limited numbers of people. That is also the reason that the questionnaire was chosen for gathering information from students, whereas the interview was chosen to collect data from teachers.

According to the above discussion, in-depth interviews with instructors who teach in multicultural classrooms serve the goal of this study. These interviews will help to find

out the teachers' perspectives of the intercultural communication effectiveness, and the difficulties they experienced or their success in detail, so that the first two research questions can be answered.

Questionnaire: The type of survey research method is often used to serve the everyday decision-making processes (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997). It should be able to survey the everyday communication choice-making made by the teachers in this study. Respondents, representing a specific population (in this case, the international students in U.S. classroom), are asked questions concerning their perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors surrounding the intercultural communication issue. Then their answers can be analyzed to describe their characteristics. It thus provides the researcher with an efficient means for gathering data from large numbers of population (Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 1997). Therefore, one type of survey, a mail questionnaire will be adopted to provide an understanding of the common difficulties and concerns that many international students have in the US classroom. It may also contribute to the additional objective of making explanatory assertions about the international students' problems as well (Babbi, 1973).

As for the weakness of survey: no causal relationship, seems a superficial treatment for this complex study, there are the other two methods: participant observation and intensive interview that can make up the shortcoming. The whole design procedure will minimize the possibility of biased wording questions and the low rate responding. Furthermore, the survey used in this study is just a supplement. The minimized bias would not impact the whole study.

The mail questionnaire sent to the international students is used to obtain unobservable information such as the students' perceptions (about the US classroom, their learning experience, teachers...), concerns and needs. The information will serve as a supplement to the data gained through observations. Based on the joint data of these two, the third research question would be answered.

Selection of the setting and informants

The research is conducted on the campus of a Midwestern medium sized university, in which approximate 600 international students from 59 different countries / regions are enrolled in various academic classes. It is just on its way towards cultural diversity. This study focuses on regular academic classrooms with more than five percent of the international students attending (out of about twenty-five students). This study does not take into account the English as second language classrooms because the communication dynamic is very different and because the attendants' major concern is language acquisition. Besides, there are no American students in it, which is not the site for this study.

The observation was conducted in two classes in the Communication department in which the researcher is a graduate student. One of the two professors was selected as the interview informant.

Four professors total from three different academic departments recommended by their international students were selected as interview informants. Before the faculty interview, three international students had been informally interviewed to locate the faculty informants who are from the departments other than the one where the researcher is located.

One hundred international students who have at least one-year study period on the campus were randomly selected to be the questionnaire informants. They are academic students from various cultural backgrounds, including African, Asian, European and Latino. Their majors are mostly (ninety-five percent) humanities subjects who care much about the cultural influence in learning. The samples were selected from *the academic international students name list* (Provided by the International Services Office of the institution).

Pilot study and validity concerns

Pilot study As an international graduate student in the department of communication studies, the researcher observed two multicultural classrooms in the department for two months as an actual participant from the first meeting. One was a

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regular undergraduate class, and the other was a graduate class because these two types of class are different in terms of teaching styles and goals. The first one tends to be more lecturing and the second one tends to be discussion-oriented. During the observation period, the researcher took specific notes on the significant interactions and conversations.

The interviews with faculty were formal but unstructured and took place in their offices. The questions were mainly about their perception of teaching experiences in multicultural classrooms, their understanding and / or knowledge of cultural differences, the problems that they encountered, the pros and cons of having international students in their classes, and their perceived efficient strategies of handling the situations. Most if the questions were descriptive ones, only few of them were contrast questions due to the nature of this research topic.

A list of predetermined questions was used just as a reminder during the interviews with flexible openings. Each interview slot lasted one hour or so depending on the respondents' individual situations. Audiotaping was used with the permission of the informants.

The taped interviews were transcribed and filed for textual analysis. Textual analysis focuses on what has been narrated rather than paying attention to the frequencies. It takes context into account even when the same person changes opinion in different contexts and allows the researcher to categorize the themes of the transcripts, seeking explanations of how the meaning of the content is culturally constructed (Rubin et al., 1996).

Validity concerns

As for the informants: the instructors who were interviewed are professors teaching in three different departments and including both male and female. They all have experience of teaching in multicultural classroom for at least six years and have ample information that can serve this study. Being recommended by their international students to the researcher, they are considered good at managing the intercultural issues in teaching and to be able to provide experiential teaching / classroom managing tips that can be included to the pragmatic strategy list of this study.

The informants selected to answer the questionnaire are the international students who have at least studied in the U.S. for one year. They have already passed the ups and downs in a new environment and adjusted to the host culture. Without the influence of cultural shock, they are able to follow the daily routine of campus life or class schedules, and also are more objective and thoughtful about what they have been experiencing. This means that the information provided by this group of the students would be reliable and appropriate for this study.

About the interviews: All the interviewees volunteered to participate by previously setting up appointments. Having the experience of teaching in the multicultural classroom before, the researcher has the basic sense to identify some of the concerns and significant moments that the informants may have in their teaching. Even though the questions asked were unstructured, guided with the theoretical model and the researcher's basic sense, the crucial information can still be elicited.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted in the informants' offices thus the researcher was able to observe the informants' nonverbal cues closely to ensure that the informants were talking sincerely and not to comfort the researcher as a student. Discussing the interview data with some other students and other professors without revealing the informants' names allows reducing the possible personal bias of the researcher. On the other hand, it can be checked whether the faculty informants told the truth by either tracking back with what the researcher observed in their classrooms or checking with their students.

IV) Findings

Based on the filed interview transcripts, textual analysis has shown that the following themes are central to the instructor perspectives concerning multicultural classroom teaching:

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<u>Cultural diversity benefits teaching and learning</u>

All the instructors informants stated that they felt the international students have uniqueness to share in the classrooms and consider them as special contributors bringing different insights and ideas to classroom discussions. For example, Dr. A said:

The international students bring many different perspectives to class discussion. It is always helpful and useful not only because they are from different countries and cultural backgrounds but also because they grew up with different social arrangement. They can provide different interpretations…Most of the students here are from homogeneous social backgrounds, I found, in class discussions; it is hard for them to see the alternatives. The international students provided testimony, alternatives of social arrangement and /or life arrangement in their countries.

On the other hand, the American students, and even the instructor are benefited from the culturally diverse students because their ethnocentric worldviews would be challenged and they learn to be more critical about their own beliefs, as Dr. G stated:

It is wonderful to have them (international students) all in my class, because they present different cultures and subcultures in the field (PR). It is great that all of us come together and make up a team; I mean we learn from each other. When we work together, we learn even more. We learn that what we do / think is not the only right thing. I hate the arrogant Americans who think their way is the best…

For Dr. S, who does not regard cultural diversity as contributor to his field (Business Management) but considers the general principles more important, the international students provide unique examples of application under specific circumstances. He explained during the interview:

We try to teach the universal principles in management that can apply to any kinds of business and industry, no matter in which country. Fifty percent of the students in my MBA class are from the other seven countries. Instead of addressing their cultural differences, we want every student learn general principles in management. The international students do provide information about different applications of some principles in different cultures, though. That is enrichment to the class, enriches the understanding…

Dr. E provided similar opinion on this point. She said: "no matter whether their (international students') cultural backgrounds contribute to my teaching or not, they present diversity. They are the opportunity for students to learn the concept (diversity) and prepare for the same kind of encounters in their near future..." Although the informants placed differing degrees of appreciation on their international students, they all agreed that having international students in their classes is positively significant in many ways. When the subjects are related to cultural diversity, an instructor "can even take advantage from the foreign folks by asking them to give lived testimony to verify some points." In short, the international students are all very welcome by the instructors because the cultural diversity they bring into the classroom benefits both teaching and learning. Another reason probably lies in the instructors' perceptions about the "foreign folks."

"They are good students but very little problem"

According to the instructors who have been interviewed, most of the academic international students are good students: "they are very serious about study and what's been taught"; "All of them work very hard"; "they have high language skills, not much difficulties talking with them than talking with the American students"; "they have got pretty good GPAs"; and "they are very respectful, especially respect their instructors". Overall, the international students are perceived as good students and nice in general. Dr. E offered her explanation about the point of view:

As far as I know, the international students who can come to study here in the U.S are all considered excellent in their home country. They had to get good scores in TOEFL, GRE or GMAT, stuff like that, which are not easy, you know. They are selected from the average. The majority of our American students can not compare to them because the majority are average students. I expect them to perform well in my class and get good grades, and they are really doing well in my class except for some little problems.

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When asking what are those "little problems", the following three points were made repeatedly from one informant to another. It is obvious that these little problems are common and significant ones regarding to classroom communication:

1) Often need more effort to clarify or explain things for the international students, and sometimes it is hard to understand their speaking too. For example, Dr.A "had a hard time to explain things to some foreign students", because they are "very conscientious, especially about the assignments, and they usually come up with clarification questions about what has been said in the class. Dr. S has to make extra effort to clarify his lectured points and to understand some international students' speaking by "often trying to paraphrase both what I said and what they just spoke out".

2) Common understanding is not always achieved. Dr.G stated her experience in her class: "even though we are using the same word, I mean it differently from what my foreign folks mean." Dr. E affirmed: "it is the reality that there are barriers existing. What makes sense to us does not necessarily make sense to the foreign students or make different sense to them. When we laughed, they may be puzzled..."

3) They can rarely cut in when open discussion gets lively in the class. For example, Dr. G notices, "When the foreign students could not understand the context in which the main topic was discussed, you have to go back all the way to explain from beginning". "They would say nothing but watch when the American kids were engaged in exciting debates. Then I knew the conversation went too busy for them to catch up", Dr. S said. "However, if I leave time for them to speak, they often do have things to say..." which is true according to the observation in Dr. G's class.

There are some other "little problems" such as avoidance of eye contact with instructor, lack of informing about personal changes, failure of being punctual or necessarily responsive, getting too close or touching unexpectedly while talking, etc. Regarding these, the informants claimed either "no big deal" or "understand there are different norms in other cultures." Since these problems do not seem to affect the effectiveness of the classroom communication, this research does not count them in.

Instructors all have made certain adjustment

No matter at what degree, regarding multicultural classroom teaching, all the instructors reported that they had done something specially for teaching in this unusual circumstance..

Dr. A does not see "much difference in the multicultural classroom in terms of the classroom context", and "feel not much difference communicating with the international students and with the Americans." The only adjustment that she had is: "to be more conscious about cultural sensitivity." She would be cautious not to make any international students in her class uncomfortable when talking about their culture or country. "No other special adjustment for them other than explanation the assignments and requirements of the course more in detail," since all the students "should be treated equally" and besides, "they are all doing fine." However, the researcher found from participant observation that the same international students were relatively quieter and less involved in her class than in the others.

Dr. E thinks that international students have special needs studying in the U.S. Even though they have certain level of English proficiency, "they always need more time to think / write. So I often slow down my pace when there are students from other countries attending in my class. They really do have a lot to say and to ask." "Class discussion does not work very well with the second language speakers because many of them are much better at reading and writing, I leave them another chance to write couple pages of response sheet for me after class so that their good ideas can be known." "I also encourage them utilize the free tutoring service on campus to improve their writings before bringing in to share with the class." "They are all so willing to share their cultural thoughts in education and inspire ours in return. By minimizing the impact of language barrier, educational outcomes are maximized."

Dr. G believes that teachers should not only teach the course content, but also teach the person... "Culture is part of a person, it is necessary to learn. The knowledge can also enhance my teaching in many ways that I enjoy it." The things that she has done to adjust to multicultural teaching including: verbal accommodation and special classroom stimulation technique. In her own words: " I try to speak slower and clearer to the foreign students, I would be cautious to pick up words when asking them questions. In my class,

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I often leave time for the foreign folks to speak and they do have things to say, it's just worked well." "As for the classroom atmosphere, I always encourage the American students to ask for evidence of those alternatives or examples from their international classmates, and the international students are invited to ask about the U.S. So they both learn and enjoy each other." This was seen in the observation, too.

As for Dr. S, who has ten-year experience of teaching multicultural classes, it is crucial to employ special techniques to facilitate interactions between the American students and the international student in classroom. He does not necessarily get any advantage for the subject that he teaches from having cultural diverse students in class. However, by assigning international students into two / three people project groups with the American partners, he makes the students experience the real business world, which is a cultural aggregation. In his own words, "within the culturally mixed groups, there are more various perspectives being shared and learned among the members. Both learning and teaching experiences were enriched, which is very different from before when I did not do anything about it."

As the result, the data shows that no matter how much, all the instructors have made some adjustments to multicultural classroom, and what they have done really made difference in terms of the effectiveness.

International students' perspective

One hundred copies of the questionnaire were sent out the in mid-September 2000, Thirty-eight were returned by the last week of October. There are 5 Africans, 19 Asians, 11 Europeans, and 3 Latinos. Results of the returned questionnaires show: 32.10% respondents agree that "I should have learned more than what I actually do," which means that 67.90% of them are fairly satisfied with their learning outcomes. However, 86.68% of the respondents acknowledge that their learning experience is a "hard working one", and 71.11% of them agree that they make the best effort to learn the host culture. This result indicates that the fairly satisfied learning outcomes are mostly the consequence of "hard-work", and that some of them are still not satisfied even though

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they work hard because the percentage of "hard-workers" (86.68%) is greater than those who are satisfied (71.11%).

On the other hand, 74.29% of the respondents agree that "the classroom climate needs to be improved," even though 68.42% check that it is "friendly and supportive" These two numbers show that there are needs of making perceptible improvement in the classroom because it is considered good, yet not enough.

The most common unfulfilled needs of these international students emerged from the questionnaires are the following:

1) Need caring instructors who "understand the cultural problems", and "can address cultural differences properly in their teaching" (60.53%)

2) Need to get "chances to share own perspectives/experience/knowledge with the class" (57.89%)

3) Need American classmates who "are willing to interact (talk) with" them. .

4) Need written materials (board-writing, overhead, handout) to aid their understanding of course content and class discussion. (55. 26%)

The other concerns and needs regarding to learning / teaching styles vary in many ways. Most of them are specific culture oriented or personality oriented, which need specific attention and discoveries.

V) Discussion

Through the field research and the questionnaire, both the instructors' perspective and the international students' perspective toward the multicultural classroom communication have been investigated. Reflecting on the research questions, the following points emerge for discussion:

Firstly, all the instructors think that it is a beneficial to have the foreign students in their class for both teaching and learning, and is especially good for the American students in Communication field / Education field to expand their worldviews. Since the

foreign students provide lived examples for the course content and share unknown alternatives in social events, their attendance in humanistic subject classes really enrich the classroom discussion. Besides, the international students are good, they have just little problems, which may implicate that they and their teachers only need to make little effort to deal with the little problem.

Secondly, according to the data from questionnaires, the international students mostly work hard and make the best effort to learn in the foreign cultural environment, to accomplish their educational goals. They are doing fine because their intelligence is beyond the average level and of their hard work. They hope getting more help and support from the educational society to achieve full satisfaction, even though the current situation is fairly good. The implication behind the data is that they deserve more than just a fine GPA, they also deserve enjoyable learning experiences besides hardworking.

Thirdly, based on the interpretation analyzed above, there is a gap between instructors' perception of the foreign students' learning experience and what the foreign students are actually experiencing. The foreign students feel a lot more need for help from the classroom society than the instructors expect, even though they are doing fine. As a matter of fact, they get good grades because they work hard and deserve it. If their unfulfilled needs in the classroom (the multicultural ones) can be met, it will make the classroom communication process more effective so that they are fully satisfied with their learning in this environment, then both they and their host party (the American students and the instructors) would be more benefited.

Fourthly, to achieve more effective multicultural classroom communication, the classroom instructors have all the rights and responsibilities to make improvement in the process to meet the special needs. As what the theoretical model indicates, the instructors need necessary knowledge, understanding and awareness at cognitive level concerning different cultures and issues, which is also the top unfulfilled need of the international students in this study. This indicates that only personal experience and random reading seems not enough. To meet the other unfulfilled needs of the foreign students in this study, the instructors need to employ certain teaching techniques or strategies at behavioral level. Regarding this point, instructors can either adapt their own methods

guided by the CAT theory or learn from those who are experienced in the field. For example, the faculty interviewees in this study have provided some tips.

Fifthly, based on the previous discussion, there are two concerns to be addressed. As Condon (1986) argues, the classroom culture in the U.S. is an extension of mainstream American culture. For example, the values of the American classroom are those of independence, individualism, and concern for relevance and application. As a result, students whose backgrounds are different from this dominant culture may have a difficult time adjusting to the classroom culture. Since most teachers are not trained to work in multicultural settings, the educational environment would be fraught with intercultural stumbling blocks (Calloway-Thomas et al, 1999). As a result, special training programs for the teachers teaching different subjects in multicultural settings should be required in the near future, just like what more and more organization are doing for their employees. The other concern is about further study. Further study on this topic needs to be cultural-specific oriented so that the different learning styles and various issues based on different cultural backgrounds can be taken care of.

VI) Conclusion

As the conclusion of this study, effective intercultural communication can occur in multicultural classrooms if teachers understand the process, prepare themselves with necessary knowledge and awareness, develop an intercultural communicative perspective toward it, and employ certain teaching techniques to meet the special needs of the culturally diverse students.

The research results verify that the Uncertainty Reduction Theory and Communication Accommodation Theory are useful for the study by providing guidelines and research direction. The theoretical model developed from the theories is feasible in seeking effectiveness of multicultural classroom communication since it mostly matches

what has been found in the field. It is also concluded that the field research method is highly appropriate for this topic because it helps to dig out the unknown facets and complex realities within the classroom communication process.

Another conclusion about this study is: since this is a culture-general oriented study, different cultural impacts on learning styles and non-verbal communications can not be specified. This conclusion suggests that further research on this topic can focus on investigating different subject oriented class with intercultural communication impacts, or the different dynamics in teaching students from different cultures. In short, there should be more studies in cultural-specific oriented or subject-specific oriented areas on this topic.

The results from the questionnaire confirm that English proficiency is not a major concern of the academic students as they have quite high language skills. The concern lies in how to achieve common understanding and the awareness of possible biases in verbal channel. It was a correct decision not to include the students who are in ESL program because the purpose of this study is to explore the broader cultural impacts on the classroom communication process.

The final conclusion of this study is about the need of special intercultural training programs for teachers in multicultural settings. The program can be as specific as it is needed and should be based on further studies, such as culture-specific oriented research, subject-oriented research and so on. Thus, all teachers can have more insights and pragmatic principles when they step into multicultural classrooms, which will be more and more common in the U.S.

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Appendix A Interview Guide

For each interview, there were approximate 12-15 questions asked. Most of them are descriptive questions; only few of them were contrast questions.

The descriptive questions include:

Grand Tour Questions: 1) What are your overall impressions about having international students in your class? 2) Can you tell me all the names of the countries that those students come from? 3) How would you describe your understanding about cultural differences? *Example Question:* 4) Can you give me some examples of the cultural differences that you have perceived or that have certain impact on you? 5) Would you explain why (or why not) you make efforts to learn about your students, as for international students, their cultures?

Mini-tour Questions: 6) If you try to get knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of the international students in your class, how would the knowledge help your teaching? 7) What are the special reactions that you have made for the international students in responding to those cultural differences if you have? 8) Can you explain why (or why not) you encourage the US students to interact (associate/work) with the international students, and how you do so?

Experience Questions: 9) Can you describe any effective adjustment(s) that you especially made when the international students are presenting in your class and that you wouldn't when none of them show up? 10) If you had a hard time with international students, would you explain how and why?

Contrast Questions: 11) Is there any difference that you perceived between the climate of regular classroom (the classes without international students) and that of the multicultural one? Please describe if the answer is yes. 12) Can you tell me any differences between the interaction patterns of the international students towards you and that of the US students towards you?

Dyadic Contrast: 13) what are the distinct significances to your teaching that you see / perceive between having international students in your class and not having them? 14) Do you see any different significance to your US students between having international students and not having them?

15) Overall, what would you comment about teaching in a multicultural classroom?

Appendix B Questionnaire

·This questionnaire is designed to collect information about your learning experience as an international student in the U.S. colleges. The purpose is to better understand your concerns about studying in the U.S. and promote the instructors' educational communication process. By completing this questionnaire, you are voluntarily giving information, and your anonymity will be guaranteed. Your careful consideration and your precious time will be highly appreciated.

SECTION I: Please fill in the blanks or circle the answers that reflect your reality.

Your gender: A. male. B. female;
your major: _____.
Year of your arrival in the U.S._____.
Your cultural background:

A. Asian   B. Latino   C. African   D. European
   E. Other_____
5. Your status at UNI.

A. Freshman   B. Sophomore   C. Junior   D. Senior
E. Graduate   F. Others: _____

SECTION II:
Please indicate the degree to which you agree to the statements by placing the number from the scale in the place provided to the left of each statement.

<u>1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree.</u>

1. My expectations for studying in the American colleges/universities:
___ A. The most advanced higher education in the world
___ B. The fun experiences
___ C. The opportunity to learn newest technologies.
___ D. The democratic atmosphere and freedom
___ E. The challenges
___ F. Concern that I would be frustrated, isolated and alone

2. My perception of the classroom climate at UNI
___ A. Culturally diverse
___ B. Democratic
___ C. friendly, supportive
___ D. Ethnocentric
___ E. Too casual
___ F. There is room for improvement

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3. The difficulties I have in studying here in the U.S. are

___ A. Follow instructor's lectures

___ B. Participate in class discussions

___ C. Understand the other students' speaking in class discussion.

___ D. Understand what instructors require for assignments.

___ E. Work with American students on group projects.

___ F. Complete reading assignments before classes

___ G. Other activities, such as _____.

4. I feel uncomfortable/anxious in class when

___ A. I experienced American students' avoidance of interacting with me.

___ B. My opinion was ignored without being considered in discussion.

___ C. People kept speaking fast although I had expressed my difficulties in listening.

___ D. People teased around or made jokes in class that I cannot take part in.

___ E. People stared at me steadily while I was speaking.

___ F. Students talked too much without focus.

5. I would like the instructor more if he/she

___ A. Cares about how much the international students learn from the class.

___ B. Encourage American students to interact with me.

___ C. Can address my cultural differences properly in classroom teaching/discussion.

___ D. Grades my paper using the same standard as to the Americans

___ E. Accommodate his/her speaking when interacting with me

___ F. Asks me specific questions related to my own experience in class discussion.

6. I would like the class better if

___ A. American classmates are willing to interact (talk) with me.

___ B. I have chances to share my perspective/experience/knowledge with the class.

___ C. I am invited to speak or ask questions to the class.

___ D. I can get a good grade.

___ E. People leave me alone and do not bother me with questions.

___ F. People are sensitive to some of my special needs for better learning.

7. I was generally a good student in my country, while here in the U.S.

___ A. I doubt my intelligence and learning abilities.

___ B. I am as good as I was in my home country

___ C. I am even better than I was in my home country.

___ D. It takes me much more time to achieve the same than I did in my country.

___ E. I can contribute to the American classrooms while I am studying.

___ F. I am like a dumb bird in classroom.

8. In the U.S. college/university classroom, I feel

___ A. I've learned more than what I did in my home country classroom

___ B. I've learned less than what I did in my home country classroom.

___ C. I should have learned more than what I actually do.

___ D. It is the same amount of learning as in my home country classroom.

___ E. I have not learned anything / very little.

___ F. It is very hard to really learn something in these casual classrooms.

9. When I don't understand the lecture or the questions asked in class,

___ A. I do not mind and just let it pass.

___ B. I hope the instructor can slow down.

___ C. I hope that someone can paraphrase/explain for me right away.

___ D. I hope the questions for me can be repeated.

___ E. The outline or key words were written on board or handouts

___ F. I would raise my hand and ask for clarification.

10. I need extra time from instructors

___ A. because of the language barrier

___ B. because of the cultural difference

___ C. because I paid out-state tuition.

___ D. because of the difference in school systems.

___ E. because of the difference in teaching styles between my country and the US.

11. My attitude toward learning about American culture is best described as:

___ A. shyness

___ B. don't care

___ C. low self-esteem

___ D. pessimistic

___ E. cynical

___ F. ambitious to merge into it

___ G. make my best effort to learn

12. Overall, I perceive my learning experience in the America as one that is

___ A. hard working and worthy

___ B. fun and easy

___ C. full of learning opportunity

___ D. frustrating

___ E. great achievement

___ F. depression, frustration, isolation

___ G. meaningful and challenging

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SECTION III

For the questions in this section, please indicate your preference order by placing numbers in the space provided to the left of each item. Please use the scale:

1 favorite, 2 likable, 3 just fine, 4 dislike, 5 hate.

13. The teaching strategies that I prefer
___ A. Lecture to the class
___ B. Discussion
___ C. Activities
___ D. E-tech (movie watching, computer mediated teaching)
___ E. Reading/writing (individual tutoring)
___ F. Group advising
Other:_____

14. The ways I prefer to interact with my instructors:
___ A. Speak up in classroom
___ B. Talk to her/him in her/his office
___ C. Make phone calls
___ D. Use Email
___ E. Before/after class in classroom
___ F. To interact with them as little as possible
The reason(s): _____

15. The classroom activities that I prefer (am familiar with):
___ A. Open discussion (large group)
___ B. Small group discussion
___ C. Individual presentation
___ D. Group presentation
___ E. Lab activities (e.g. using Web CT)
___ F. Group projects, workshops
___ G. Fun Games
Other: _____

16. The interactions that I would prefer with my classmates in the classroom:
___ A. Listening to other students' opinions and questions
___ B. Making my classmates listen to me
___ C. Collaboration with other students
___ D. Just saying whatever I think, I don't care if they listen or not.
___ E. Arguing with the other students
___ F. Only with the students who I am familiar with or who are sitting nearby.
___ G. Passive interactions with them

COMMENTS:

17. Please indicate the importance of the following categories in enhancing your classroom learning by using the scale:
1 very important, 2 somehow, 3 neutral, 4 somehow unimportant, 5 very unimportant

   ___ A. teaching strategies/styles
   ___ B. interactions with the instructors
   ___ C. classroom activities
   ___ D. interactions with other students
   ___ F. instructors' attitudes and other characteristics
___a. personality,
___b. approachability,
___c. perspectives on different cultures,
___d. showing concerns to students,
___e. fairness,
___f. availability

18. If you have any other SPECIFIC concerns or suggestions other than the questions asked above, please make comments below:

Thank you very much for your participation

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