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ABSTRACT

Every day that passes presents massive change to students and instructors at all levels of education. Nowhere are these changes more evident than in the area of instructional technology, especially at the postsecondary level. This scenario is doubly complex when the participants are from countries other than where they were born and raised. Instructors and administrators in universities can take steps to insure a smooth transition from one culture to the next by addressing a multiplicity of levels that impact students and instructors from abroad. This paper addresses the affective domain, and how concerns related to the initial well being of international participants first has its focus on basic survival skills. Taking concepts from Change Theory (Rogers, 1983 and Havelock & Zlotolow, 1995) and combining it with those of the Affective Domain (Martin & Briggs, 1986), the paper presents a cultural adaptation model that may prove useful in working with Asian students in American Universities. (Contains 23 references.) (Author/AEF)

East Meets West Times 2: Impact of Cultural Change at Two Universities on Asian Students

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Abstract

Asian students arriving at American universities are subject to massive cultural change, especially if it is their first time being in the United States. Taking concepts from Change Theory (Rogers, 1983 and Havelock & Zlotolow, 1995) and combining it with those of the Affective Domain (Martin & Briggs, 1986), the authors present a cultural adaptation model that may prove useful in working with Asian students in American Universities.

Introduction

Every day that passes presents massive change to students and instructors at all levels of education. Nowhere are these changes more evident than in the area of instructional technology, especially at the postsecondary level. This scenario is doubly complex when the participants are from countries other than where they were born and raised. Instructors and administrators in universities can take steps to insure a smooth transition from one culture to the next by addressing a multiplicity of levels that impact students and instructors from abroad.

This paper addresses the affective domain, and how concerns related to the initial well being of international participants first has its focus on basic survival skills. We readily acknowledge that subsequent focus will ultimately center on cognitive skills but will reserve most of that discussion for another time and place.

Background

During the 2000 AECT-Denver, a group of Asian students shared their concerns about coming to the United States to study in instructional technology program areas. Using Maslow's Hierarchy as a metaphor, they traced a number of areas of concern, most of which revolved around affective domain issues. These included being accepted by their American peers, working in harmony with teams, knowing what to wear, shopping for ethnic foods, developing an understanding relationship with their instructors, dating, establishing friendships, and more.

Harvard's Dr. Robert Doyle hosted the session and in his summary remarks, indicated that this was one of the most valuable and insightful sessions that he has attended in many years. This paper reviews some of the issues discussed during the Denver conference and connects them more directly to the affective domain and change theory. The work of Bloom (1956), Cotton (1995), Martin and Briggs (1986), Rogers (1983); Havelock & Zlotolow (1995) contain significant implications as to development of viable strategies to ease the transition of international students and instructors into the academic and personal mainstream of the countries in which they choose to study. Multicultural theories cited by a number of other writers connect the dots related to affective and change and thus create a better understanding (Lewis, 2000; Mead, 1998; Morrison, Conaway & Douress, 2000). While these latter authors mainly address multicultural elements related to business, it is our belief that many graduates of instructional technology programs will find themselves facing dilemmas within the context of multinational organizations.

Differing Issues Identified

In the following pages the reader will experience something very remarkable – articulate concerns expressed by a number of students, few of whom were able to speak English with fluency less than two years ago. They are now not only able to write with considerable precision but, when asked to deliver their material verbally, do so with confidence and enthusiasm. Those same students, twenty-four months previous, would have remained mostly mute.

The reasons for such changes are in part, due to caring faculty members who very quickly identify communication problems with their international students. Rogers (1983, p. 321) describes part of the problem:

> Change agent [professors] empathy with clients [students] is especially difficult when the clients are very different from the changer agent; we expect change agents to be more successful if they can empathize with their client. Although there is very little empirical support for this expectation, we tentatively suggest Generalization 9-4: *Change agent success is positively related to empathy with clients.*
>
> Rogers adds:
>
> If empathy is important in change agent effectiveness, how can it be increased? One method lies in the selection of change agents; those who have been in the client's role are better able to empathize with it. For example, agricultural agencies often seek to employ change agents who have come from farm backgrounds.

While we do not advocate that all professors who teach international students mirror the ethnicity of their learners, we feel that a faculty member who has prior international experience is more inclined to be empathetic than one who has not. If a professor has several international students in his or her class, there is a strong likelihood that they reflect an educational experience that has been formal, hierarchal, and pedagogically behaviorist. Martin and Briggs (1986, p. x) describe what the contemporary educator emphasizes when they state: "The stronghold of behaviorism has lessened, and cognitive inquiry, cognitive-information processing, and humanistic and developmental ideologies and theories have been revised, modified, or developed to meet new needs." Indeed, what is an international student to think when confronted with a professor who actually encourages their students to think and do for themselves, to manage much of their own learning?

Martin and Briggs (p. x) articulate the potential for future problems among international students of rigid academic backgrounds when they discuss evolving curricular changes in that "...the focus of curricular and instructional content has broadened. Affective aspects of the curriculum are now being incorporated into lessons and units. Attention to attitudes, values, ethics, morals and the self-esteem of learners is demanding time, energy, and effort, alongside the important cognitive dimensions of curricula." Given these changes in pedagogy, how do our international students view such changes? How do they adapt and subsequently for some, adopt the change in how they view both studies and life in an American university?

Indeed, the following short essays written by several Asian students, all of whom brought with them pedagogical rigidity, provides a near-alarming look at how they perceive their professors and how they have adapted to such change. Appended to some of the essays are recommendations; others declined to offer such.

There is some degree of overlapping ideas presented, primarily due to the reality that many of the affective issues they raise are woven into the larger fabric of work and life outside the classroom.

Interaction with Peer Students
By Corey Lee

Extensive research in effective teaching and learning emphasizes the significance of social interaction. According to Vygotsky (1978) social development theory, social interaction is vital to cognitive development; all higher-order functions originate because of interaction among individuals. In light of this, the amount and type of classroom interaction cannot be ignored when examining Chinese students' learning in the United States.

It has been recognized that Chinese students pursuing a higher education in Western countries demonstrate limited interaction in American classrooms (Tu, 2001). Several factors might contribute to Chinese students' inadequate participation.

First, the foundation of Chinese education is grounded in Confucianism, in which values and morals are much different from Western philosophy (Brooks, 1997). While individualism, assertiveness, and sometimes, aggressiveness are often promoted in Western society, silence and temperance are valued in Chinese society. Consequently in communication, Chinese places the "emphasis... on the receiver and listening rather than the sender or speech making" (Yum, 1994, p.83). Therefore, in a classroom environment, Chinese students tend to be more conservative and quiet than are their American counterparts.

Second, the presence of a rigid hierarchical system, valued in Confucianism, leads Chinese students to regard their teacher as an "all-knowing" savant on stage with absolute authority over the subject matter. One's teacher is the sole source of knowledge in Chinese classrooms. With this mentality, discussion and interaction among students are considered trivial and, sometimes, useless.

Third, even when Chinese students are willing to participate in classroom discussions, they fear expressing what may be erroneous opinions to fellow students, which leads to embarrassment or creation of a negative impression. Therefore, Chinese students are often considered a silent group in the American classroom. Despite the instructor's encouragement, they are reluctant to express their feelings or opinions and to participate in classroom discussions (Tu, 2001).

Finally, reduced or no interaction by Chinese students also originates from their limited ability to speak English, which restricts their participation in the classroom. In Taiwan and China, English language education predominately emphasized reading and writing; little attention was paid to listening and speaking. As many Chinese students come to the United States, they lack sufficient communication skills, which hinders their classroom participation. Moreover, the swift change of discussion topics in the classroom poses an even greater problem in this situation (Tu, 2001). As Chinese students struggle to conceptualize the subject just discussed, the focus changes to the next topic.

Having a cultural background rooted in Confucianism and deficiency in English capability, Chinese students exhibit far less interaction and participation in American classrooms. By being sensitive to these difficulties that face Chinese students, the Western teacher can play an active role in facilitating far more productive interactions between and among Chinese and American students.

Some suggested techniques are:

1. Rather than call on a Chinese student in front of the class, form students into small groups and let the group consensus be reported by one among them, ensuring that the person providing the answer is not always Western.
2. Have students write an answer to a question and randomly call on *all* students in the class, including those who are Chinese. Having sufficient time to frame an adequate response will generate more appropriate replies, thus lessen the loss of face feared by the Chinese student.
3. Have the students create a one-slide Power Point response to a question, assigned in advance. Having prepared before class, (and the Chinese students will invariably have done so), reduces anxiety, and allows all students to contribute equally.
4. Involve Chinese students in panel discussions wherein they are members of a team and, as such, will feel increased responsibility to participate.
5. As the Chinese students become more familiar with other members of the class, and with the techniques listed, they eventually should be called upon individually, to reply in class. When a teacher does not call upon the Chinese students or lets them off with low-order responses, no one is served.

Cultural and pedagogical assimilation for Chinese students can be extremely uncomfortable, especially during the beginning semesters in a Western university environment. The sensitive teacher will accommodate this discomfort by gradually moving their Chinese students into the mainstream of classroom activities. By showing concern for such students from the beginning, the good teacher can make the educational experiences of their Chinese students productive, fulfilling, and yes, even enjoyable.

On Chinese Self-Discipline
By Cheng-Chang Pan

When it comes to self-discipline and its role and impact on multicultural learning environments, Chinese students tend to acquire and value self-discipline. According to Ritts (2000), self-discipline as well as other qualities are passed on to new generations by "training" or Chao-shun, acquired from parents, and rooted in Confucianism.

Confucius' teachings have been conveyed to his descendants culturally and individually, and have had a major impact on the ethnic group. Confucius was temperate and self-disciplined, and he was a man of wisdom and good manners (Beck, 2001).

A perspective of social learning theory holds that individuals learn by interacting and observing others as to how new behaviors are performed. Kearsley (2001) supports this concept when he states that "...individuals are more likely to adopt a modeled behavior if it results in outcomes they value."

Chinese students, given their heritage, are inclined to place authority figures in high esteem. Teachers, for instance, are highly valued by students, which may not be the same elsewhere.

Given the author's experiences in Taiwan, teachers are also highly valued in society. Teaching positions are gaining in popularity as the economy shrinks and slows. Affectively speaking, students honor themselves when listening to the authority's lectures, so they model the authority and follow the authority's teaching. Therefore, they pride themselves in being a follower of the master.

Individually, Chinese students are apt to accomplish tasks designated by the authority to demonstrate their capabilities and thus reflect their potential. They seldom ask questions in class, in part because they feel ashamed to do so. Those individuals are ones who wish they had been better prepared before coming to class.

When Chinese students come to the Western world, they encounter a great cultural impact. While accommodating themselves to the foreign country, they are assimilating themselves into this melting pot, in hopes they will adjust to the new environment sooner and stand out among their fellow classmates. *If they take a hybrid stand and merge self-discipline from the East with assertiveness from the West, Chinese students will have a promising future in the foreign environment.*

Professor-Student Interaction
By Zhengzi Wang

As an Asian student intending to study in the United States, a main concern was how to establish contact with professors in the department. It is well known that professors are key sources of information about assistantships, or even scholarships. E-mail became this author's best method for communication with the professors. First, it was possible to proofread letters to professors and others at the chosen university many times. Secondly, it was fast and there was no need to make an appointment with the professor. Other Asian students had the same experience. Many Asian students begin to communicate with their professors long before they get admitted to the universities in the U.S. The author corresponded over 100 times with her professor before coming to the United States.

The professor is generally the first and the only person that an international student can comfortably contact. Students will probably throw a wide range of questions at their future professors, from admission procedures, to cultural issues, to advice about the apartment rentals. In this case, a professor, who is already busy in daily life, must meet the challenge of efficiently dealing with these inquires. Students should reserve their difficult questions— i.e., how can I get an assistantship? — for professors, while answering simpler questions using the variety of resources available, such as the Internet, friends, books, their chosen university's website, etc.

China's cultural system is based not on the strength of the individual, but on the pattern of relationships maintained by all people. In communication, the Chinese put emphasis on the receiver of messages and on listening rather than on the sender (Brooks, 1997). As Bond & Hwang (1986) have pointed out, "the western starting point of the anomic individual is alien to Chinese considerations of man's social behavior, which see man as a relational being, socially situated and defined within an interactive context."

Due to the utterly different cultural factors, a lot of Asian students experience difficulty when adjusting themselves to the American classroom culture. Silence is not golden anymore. American peers are eloquent, talkative, and humorous in class. Sometimes, we feel much pressure competing with them for the professor's attention. A lot of negative self-talk generally results," I don't understand my professor's words, what shall I do?" " I don't agree with the professor, so should I confront him right away?" "I want to go to the restroom, but can I leave when the professor is talking?" "Oh, she speaks so fast! I couldn't even understand a word!" So, many Asian students, like the author, don't participate in class at the beginning, even if they can speak English well. Consequently, some concerns arise. "What will the professor think about me? Dumb? Slow-learner?" "Does he know I am smart enough to understand what he said, but just didn't speak out?"

There is solid social background behind this thinking. Confucian philosophy permeates the whole of Chinese society. Confucius believed that a hierarchical system was essential to the harmonious well being of society. This, in turn, is reflected in the Chinese classroom. Students regard their teacher as all knowing, and the absolute authority on the subject matter. Due to the rigid teacher-student relationship, Chinese teachers are under severe pressure not to make mistakes, not to misguide students, and not to be criticized. Such behavior on their part allows the teacher to maintain their "all-knowing" and "ever-correct" status. It is the duty of students to give the

utmost respect to their teacher. Thus, to ask questions of the teacher is tantamount to questioning the position of the teacher, and therefore is not a feature of Chinese classrooms. Rigid order and formality are the main features of the Chinese learning environment. Chinese teachers and students know that the classroom is a place where serious knowledge is taught.

The major concern of Asian students is that their American professors think less of them because they don't speak a lot. Professors need to be aware that classroom participation does not always mean "shouting and yelling and hands up". A lot of times, Asian students participate in class in a different way. They do more critical thinking in their minds. Sometimes, it's better to give the floor to Asian students rather than waiting for a general response. On the other hand, students shouldn't get too self-conscious about themselves speaking English with an accent. They should practice English more to overcome the initial fear of speaking English in public.

A rewarding college experience is typically viewed as students in a classroom busily engaged in the pursuit of learning with their professors. Missing from this picture are faculty and students interacting outside of the classroom environment. Yet this less common image is equally important to a successful college experience (Maestas, 2000).

In the author's college days back in China, we seldom had social contacts with the professors. Mostly, we met our professors in class, discussing serious academic issues. Teachers are considered as an authority figure, and it was hard to look at them as a person.

In the United States Chinese students can access their professors through e-mail 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, discussing academic issues. Also, some professors like to entertain international students in their homes, to celebrate special occasions. This is a good time and place to talk to the professors, letting him/her know you as a person. In our program, all the international students are regularly invited as guests to our professors' house to celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chinese New Year, Autumn Festival, etc.

Asian students should establish an academic contact as well as a social contact with the professors. In this way, they can get more attention and demand more interest from professors about their studies.

The fact that all the international students pay far more tuition more than local residents is a reality. Consequently, rightly or wrongly, we expect quality education as well as cultural enrichment. Lack of communication and a restrictive cultural notion of propriety seem to be the major obstacles to professor-student interactions, as each attempts to find ways to balance tradition and modernization. It takes time for both sides to realize the gap and to improve mutual understanding.

The Purpose of Seeking a Graduate Degree in America
By Alan Ku

Every year hundreds of thousands of Chinese students come to America for advanced studies. Why do they choose to fly thousands of miles from home, leaving their families and friends behind to go to an unfamiliar country where language, culture, life style, and language are so different? This essay has a focus on their objectives in engaging in study abroad and examines different motivations between those students studying abroad and their American counterparts.

First, American and Chinese students place different utilitarian value to a graduate diploma. To American students, obtaining a graduate degree means they have more professional knowledge and skills in their field, therefore they have a better opportunity to upgrade their existing position and earn a higher salary. But to Chinese students, a graduate degree, especially from the United States, not only increases the likelihood of employment; but also promotes social status. This is because, in Chinese society, the diploma he or she holds largely determines a person's dignity and value. Therefore, although obtaining a Masters degree takes much time and money, they still choose this path.

The second factor that drives Chinese students is pressure from the family. In the traditional Chinese culture, children receive continuing support from their family throughout their schooling. Chinese parents consider it is their responsibility to do so. In addition, Chinese parents encourage their children to pursue higher degrees and sometimes even make that decision for their children. Most Chinese students follow their parents' wishes when attending graduate school. This is both a natural and inseparable condition in Chinese society.

On the contrary, American students do not expect their parents to pay for their tuition for higher education. American parents, unlike their Chinese counterparts, do not expect their children to look after them in the sunset of their life. The result is that most American students make their own decisions when choosing their major and are not in a hurry to obtain a graduate degree!

The Classroom Environment

By Terry Tao

According to MacAulay (1990), "A classroom environment consists of the intellectual, social, and physical conditions within or exogenous to a classroom that influence the learning situation."

It is not difficult to identify a variety of physical factors that affect how students feel about their classroom environment. Following is a sampling of available information that supports the need to consider many aspects of the classroom climate in order to create an environment for maximum learning.

Environments that are psychologically or emotionally negative inhibit learning (Midjaas, 1984). Studies have found direct correlations between students' cognitive styles and responsiveness to environmental characteristics. In responsive classroom environments, students' achievement increased (Dunn and Dunn 1992). Many classrooms in American universities are better equipped than in other countries. Normally in every American university's classroom, there are projectors, computers, and a central air conditioning system.

Fewer students in a larger instructional space enhance the use of available resources. Spaces where high density and few resources exist add to increased student/teacher conflict and poor student-to-student behavior (Midjaas, 1984). When comparing the population density, United States' class sizes are much smaller than in Asian countries. All these advanced physical classroom environments enrich the quality for studying by international students in the United States.

The amount and quality of classroom light is conducive to 1) greater comfort and contentment; 2) a more cheerful environment; 3) more concentration and a greater desire to work; 4) less fatigue and therefore fewer related side-effects, such as laziness, bad posture, nervousness, and lack of interest; and 5) greater accuracy and neatness (Hathaway, 1983). Use of blues and greens fosters feelings of relaxation. Use of red and orange colors in instructional areas induces anxiety behaviors (Weinstein, 1981). Color affects changes in mood, emotional states, psychomotor performance, muscular activity, rate of breathing, pulse rate, and blood pressure (Hathaway, 1983).

When referring to a cheerful, cozy and comfortable classroom design, there are two minor differences between United States university classrooms and Asian university classrooms.

In American universities, many classrooms have no windows. This amazes me Chinese students when first entering the classroom. There are two primary reasons for this difference: projected visuals will be viewed better without windows and the scene outside of the window will not distract students. Actually, there is no clear-cut relationship between the noises associated with school and student performance on task (Arends, 1994). In Asia, it is very typical construction design to put some windows in the classroom, and plant some trees outside of the window to block the students' view. In most Asians minds, the best place for studying (sometime they call it training) is a place with nice natural environment and fresh cool air. The film "Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon", depicted a good Asian sense as to the ideal training environment.

Another difference is the design of both seats and desks. In American universities, many classrooms do not have desks for students. Frequently there is only a piece of board combined with the chair. However, in Asian Universities, every classroom has desks for students. Asian students received extensive training on how to write when they are growing up. For example, when Chinese children are doing their homework, they are required to sit up straight and put two hands on the paper. In order to adjust the children's study habits and develop good attitudes, correcting their sitting and writing style is a good way in the Asian parents and teachers minds to maintain a positive study attitude. Gradually the connection between desks and writing is solidified. Therefore, some professors will feel curious that many Asian students seldom take notes during the class, when there are no real desks available.

Personally, this author feels that the physical side of the classroom environment is not as big a problem for international students as compared to the "soft" side of the classroom environment.

What is the intellectual and social environment within the classroom? What takes place during the time before the class begins, during the class break, and after class? We can call it social time. Normally in every country, students will cherish it and make friends with their classmates. They will naturally divided into several little groups and chat with each other.

Rogers (p. 71) felt that ..."interpersonal networks among peers energizes the [diffusion} process. He goes on to state that one of the important roles of [diffusion] leaders (professors?) was to interconnect the spatially related cliques of the village" and that" a general conclusion from who-to-whom studies is that space and social distance are the main determinants of who talks to whom in diffusion networks [classes]." Herein lies a sensitivity point for professors to ponder.

For international students, these social times are frequently the most uncomfortable. There are several reasons that lead to them felt embarrassed or uncomfortable. First, the language barrier is the main reason. For international students, English is their second language. There are so many different accents, slang, and terms. Second, unfamiliar topics are another reason. Most of the time, international students feel they have nothing in

common to talk about related to these topics. Therefore, it is not strange that most international students just remain quiet.

This kind of classroom environment will definitely influence the learning of international students. As international students, we need do lots of work from our side. We cannot complain that it is "discrimination". Learning the culture and communication skills is as important as learning academic content. Of course, some times we also need the professors' help to open up some possibilities for students to know each other. It is also very important to establish collaborative learning. Different professors some times really can make a big difference. This author took some courses in which he made several very good friends; and he also took some courses in which he did not know any of his classmate's names.

There are several other things about classroom environment. For example, an instructor's personality often determines the type of classroom environment. Tonelson (1981) had no doubt about the interconnectedness of teacher personality and the learning atmosphere in a classroom. He suggested a mechanism whereby the teacher's personality can affect student-learning outcomes through the psychological environment of the classroom. He believed that this environment was essentially the product of the kinds of interactions teachers have with students. He argued that the character of the teacher is translated into the working social atmosphere of the classroom, which in turn, influences students. That type of atmosphere sets the stage for learning. For international students, an instructor's personality can significantly interfere with their learning. A good instructor must demonstrate a repertoire of appropriate interpersonal and pedagogical skills. In the classroom, students learn knowledge, adapt to the instructor's personality, absorb the culture, and master communication skills simultaneously.

Conclusions

Martin and Briggs (p. 449), in summarizing their seminal work, include the statement that, "we believe that the cognitive evaluations that individuals attach to feelings, the category emotions, underlie the individual's development of attitudes, interests, social competence, and other related affective categories. Feelings, we propose, are generally attached to emotions, at least as the way we have defined them." It is this development within our international students that each of us is charged to cultivate. The essays we include in this article address each of these concerns and more.

The process of interweaving multicultural elements with change and affect theories, while complex in its execution, will hopefully give insight as to the nature of innumerable problems faced by students and instructors when they go abroad for study and teaching. What we have indicated as being problems faced by Asian students are, in reality, those faced *by all students*, no matter from where they may have come.

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