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## An Account Of How Chinese Graduate Students In The United States View The Full Span Of Their Educational Experiences: A Grounded

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AN ACCOUNT OF HOW CHINESE GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE UNITED  
STATES VIEW THE FULL SPAN OF THEIR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES: A  
GROUNDED THEORY INVESTIGATION

by

MING-CHE TSAI

M.S. University of Central Florida, 2002

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Education  
in the Department of Educational Research, Technology and Leadership  
in the College of Education  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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2009

Major Professor: Stephen A. Sivo

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## ABSTRACT

Many teachers of international students in the United States are challenged to address cultural differences in a classroom. International students often experience psychological, physical and cultural stress when they study abroad, due mainly to unfamiliar environments and a diverse culture. The question this study asks is: Are there any strategies that can be used to benefit these students? This grounded theory study will examine a purposefully-selected group of subjects from China and Taiwan who are currently studying at a large metropolitan university in the Southeastern United States. After data collection and analysis procedure, I hoped there are some things valued for international student who just arrived at the new environment and provides the reference to those students and college with the similar situation as UCF all over the world.

In loving memory of my Father,

Jung-Tung Tsai (1941-2001).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My first appreciation to Dr. Cornell because this dissertation is based on an extension of his research study. As his last Asian doctoral student, Dr. Richard Cornell was always concerned about international students like me and offered as much support as possible. I would also like to thank my Chair, Dr. Stephen Sivo, who continually helped me resolve problems, answered all the questions I asked, and guided me on the right track. My sincere thanks also to Drs. Kenny and Bai for their patience in allowing me to finish my dissertation at my own pace.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Background

The number of international students studying in the United States are growing, and Asian students still comprise the largest population of international students. In the year 2008, approximately 623,805 international students were enrolled in United State colleges; over 61% of students came from the Asia region (Open Doors, 2008). The numbers of Chinese and Taiwanese students were among the top five more than other international groups. This is the rationale for the researcher to focus on Chinese students for this study.

As these international students arrive in the United States, they are immersed in a learning environment where instructors use a variety of teaching methods, where activities in class are student centered, and where classes are warm and small. This learning environment is believed to enhance student learning (Biggs & Moore, 1993), helps students explore knowledge, develop critical thinking skills (Morgenstern, 1992; Smith, 1977), and enhance their intellectual development (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). However, learning only takes place when students are actively participating in class, raising questions, giving comments and leading discussions. And this active participation in class activities is observably found absent in students from Confucian-heritage cultures (CHC) (Ho, 1991).

Confucian-heritage cultures (CHC) refers to Asian students from China, Taiwan, Japan,

and Koera who study oversea and share the Confucianism culture, with the focus on Chinese CHC students. CHC students are often quiet, reserved and used to rote learning, rather than think independently. Cornell (2001) also indicated that Asian students usually kept silent during face-to-face lectures and Web-based instruction. Although some Asian students have no problems in lecture classes delivered in English, their characteristic silence is perceived as a weakness by American teachers to their overall performance in United States classrooms.

Because Asian students in their domestic classrooms are silent and used to rote learning, research has shown that these students experienced many issues and problems when they studied abroad.

Ballard and Clanchy (1991) speculated the reason for this lack of participation and being quiet in class was because Asian students were not familiar with the new academic environment and new culture and their adaptation to the new environment is challenging.

The challenges for Asian students studying abroad are that, not only must they master the required content and concepts through a language they may not have fully grasped, but they must also do so within an educational and cultural context quite different from their own. As Bernhardt (1991) noted, Asian students would not understand the meaning of the lecture but had a hard time communicating this problem to their professor due to their limited vocabulary.

In addition, western teaching and learning styles were new for Chinese learners.

Barron (2004) found Asian students have to adapt to the new study ways which were different to their prior learning experiences. Their behaviors were alien to the local counterparts because they lacked appropriate study skills and seldom joined class discussions.

Burns (1991) also reported that Asian students felt they could not easily adapt themselves to the language issues, study skills, examination skills, and time management necessary to be successful in their studies. Choi (1997) found it difficult for Asian students to voluntarily participate in classroom activities. Robertson (2000) made an additional remark that Asian students relied on a particular information source and expected to be told precisely what they will to learn.

Another challenge explained by Ho, Holmes, and Cooper (2005) and Watkins and Biggs (2001) was that Asian students, accustomed to classroom size of over 200, were expected to participate in classrooms of around 20 students by sharing opinions, participating in discussion, and doing independent research --- none of which they ever done before.

As reported by Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas (2000), Asian learners have a hard time in discussion classes and felt the same physical and mental pressure they experienced in their domestic education classes. Steven (2003) noted that local U.S. instructors usually ignored the influence of cultural differences on international students and made few if any accommodations for the international students. Although professors could not become experts of cultural difference, they could find more strategies for international students to



adapt to these new challenges.

### Statement of the Problem

Since more and more international students come to study in the United States, they were likely to encounter a number of challenges of new language, new culture and society in this new environment (Biggs, 1993) as previously mentioned. Their needs are complex.

However, unfortunately there is little research available for Asian students to determine procedures make the necessary adjustments, and to learn strategies that will help them succeed. As Renshaw and Volet (1995) stated: researchers neglected to examine students' adjustments to the new educational context over a period of time, and undervalued the outcome of individual differences among the international population. This study will make an effort to remedy some of the problems identified.

### Research Questions

The research question is as follows:

How were Chinese students' learning in the American classrooms influenced by their previous learning experiences?

### *Sub Questions*

1. What did Chinese students find difficult in studying in the U.S.?

2. How did Chinese students adjust themselves to these differences?
3. What influenced Chinese students' use of strategies?
4. What happened to Chinese students after their learning model changed?

### Significance of the Research

The study seeks to explain how Chinese learners' learning attitudes and learning strategies are impacted by their domestic education culture. The factors that affect Chinese students' current learning and their learning strategies are identified. Through the insights gained through learning experience of Chinese students studying overseas, cause and effect were found to explain that how the new context affects their learning. Thus, the finding of this study extends the current understanding of Asian pedagogical culture and provides insights of how Asian students may familiarize themselves with the new academic environment.

### Definition of Terms

1. Asian student: Refers to Chinese students from either mainland China or Taiwan.
2. Category: A category represents a unit of information composed of events, happenings, and instances (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).
3. Phenomenon: Realize complex condition; create extra case studies (McMillan and Schumacher (1997).

4. Purposeful sampling: Study subjects are selected because of some characteristic (Patton, 1990).
5. Snowball (chain sampling): Study subjects are nominated by the interviewed persons. (Miles and Huberman, 1994).
6. Opportunistic sampling: The chance is the same for each subject (Miles and Huberman, 1994).
7. Domestic education: Learning experiences students had in their native country before coming to study in the United State.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

It is necessary to understand the background of Chinese learners to establish an appropriate empirical foundation for this study. Furthermore, the academic difference between orient and occident, and related adaptation strategies for Asian Students are discussed in this chapter.

### Background of Chinese Education

Biggs(1996) and Ho(1993) observed that under the influence of Confucianism in the Chinese society, teacher despotism and restraint of individualism are rooted in the culture, which results in teacher-centered instruction still common in Asian society even though some people have been westernized for a long time.

In Chinese society, although teachers belong to a low income profession compared to other occupation such as lawyers and doctors, they still enjoy a lofty status and receive respect from students and parents. China emphasizes education very much and teachers are the core of education (Chen & Stevenson, 1995.)

There is an unspoken rule in Chinese traditional society that “He who teaches me may be considered my father-figure for life.” The teacher was viewed as superior and an authority figure. Students were educated to respect teachers and followed their instructions instead of challenging them. Students were not allowed to make noise or talk with classmates in class.

They could only speak while questioned by the teacher. Therefore, the teacher should exhibit good examples to guide students' behavior (Ho, 1993). As I know, Chinese teachers have the moral responsibility to restrict students' behavior everyday. They not only managed the class order but also were concerned about students' behavior inside and outside the school.

A study by Lam (1996) provides an example of Chinese value. Lam (1996) interviewed 690 teachers from 93 schools in Hong Kong. He asked teachers about the characteristics of the ideal student in their minds. As a result, the top five characteristics were honesty, autonomy, respect for parents, responsibly, and healthy. The other characteristics were assiduous, unselfish, modest, and submissive. The conception of the teachers' ideal students just reflected the good child as directed in Confucian values. This study clearly showed that the effect of traditional values was not impacted by western ideas. According to the study by Cortazzi and Jin (1996), Chinese students believed a good teacher should have deep knowledge. They also found that teacher-centered and textbook-based classroom was the expected interaction supported by the teacher's knowledge.

Chinese education is authoritarian when compared to the North American and Western classroom (Salili, 1995; Wong, 1992). For example, traditional parents never make compliments in front of the child in order not to spoil the child. As Wong (1992) observed that when others compliment the child, their parents would speak of the child's shortcomings to express humbleness. Therefore, Chinese teachers seldom praised a child in the classroom.

On the contrary, punishment was considered as beneficial (Ho, 1986). In particular, corporal punishment was seen as the best instruction to educate children (Wong, 1992; Chen, Lu, Hung, & Chen, 1980). The common punishment included standing in the corner, hitting the palm, and extra homework. However, corporal punishment is no longer used in Asian or Chinese schools.

Another traditional education cultural belief was pointed out by Ho (1981); Chinese parents and teachers tended to severely control the child's behavior. They used instruction with coarse language as a means of teaching the child obedience. For example, they would use ridicule to shame a child in front of other students. Hence, Ho (1986) suggested Chinese schools and families using shame and moral education are designed to limit the child's desire to express hostility to those in high position. This might explain the Western viewpoint of Chinese students being seen as passive learners who were frequently silent in the classroom; they did not dare challenge the teacher (Biggs, 1996; Ho, 1993).

Chinese believe the best learning way is through memorization and repeated practice (Biggs 1992, Liu 1984). For example, homework, quizzes, and examinations are ways teachers make sure students have adequate practice and study. A survey conducted by Liu (1984) indicated that the majority of elementary school teachers requested students to memorize all of the lessons in the textbook in Taiwan. A similar situation was found in the junior middle school. Classroom interaction between the teacher and students followed the

traditional Chinese culture (Stevenson & Lee, 1996). Although there were some innovations in education, the traditional cultural values still persist in Chinese classrooms. Generally speaking, it was believed that in order to manage a classroom effectively, Chinese teachers need to maintain a distance from their students. Teachers are not allowed to smile and talk to students about something not related to the conduct of the textbook in each new class.

Chen and Stevenson (1995) found that the examination system was the way the government selects its officials in Asian countries. Yang and Wang (1999) investigated the Chinese examination system and its influence on learning; they concluded that Chinese education is examination education. As a result, such a system caused people to form one kind of thought. Examinations decided people's occupation, their income, wealth, social position and future.

Under the traditional Chinese education system, the purpose of teaching and learning was getting high scores on examinations. Examination was the objective tool for teaching and learning. However, students became vessels with full knowledge, but they have no ideas how to apply their knowledge to real life situations (Watkins & Biggs, 2001).

The reason I reviewed the literature on the ways Chinese teachers teach English is that the prior learning experience was an important factor that affected Chinese learners who study abroad. Harrison (1990) found students' current learning is influenced by one's prior learning experiences. Lin (1998) also indicated that adult future learning stands on the

foundation of past experiences. From the following examples, we might determine the Chinese perception about how teaching and learning has been done.

Portin (1990) described the teaching strategies Chinese teachers preferred. This study showed how new teaching strategies are constricted in English class due to the Chinese National Education Examination. Chinese teachers usually adopt the ways of grammar translation, audio-lingual, and memorization to teach students. In spite of the eclectic pedagogy that is developing, most teachers still fear using new methods. Chinese teachers are afraid they cannot provide the necessary information for the Chinese National Education Examination by adopting new pedagogy in English classes.

Asian or Chinese pedagogy has not improved even if the professor has been trained in west. Although Wang (1999) learned western culture of education, his teaching methods still focus on explaining grammar rules with native language, analyzing the function of words and giving some examples to support explanation. It is obvious that the interaction among teacher and student is passive.

The literature reviewed thus far indicates points characteristic of Chinese education:

1. Chinese teachers control everything in the classroom. Chinese education is authoritarian.
2. Chinese teachers spoon-feed pedagogy and learning is passive.
3. There is limited in the classroom.



4. The examination system decides the future, but kills individual creativity.

In sum, the above opinions and criticisms about Chinese education may not be complete due to the authors' prejudices. They identified the problems of Chinese education, but failed to provide reasons to their interpretation. Furthermore, the ways Chinese teachers teach English cannot represent all education. However, there was not enough related research done in mathematics, science and engineering, sociology, and so on to provide a different perspective.

#### Academic Differences Between Orient and Occident

There were some factors that affected international students' adaptations from various backgrounds confirmed by researchers (Crano, 1993; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). The academic difference between Orient and Occident, in the following section will focus on language, teaching and learning, and socio-cultural issues found in the literature.

#### *Language Issues*

Ballard (1987) confirmed that the language problem was the only one that involved other issues during the transition stage of international students. Language difficulties were regarded as the major problem among international students in many studies (Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Holmes, 2000; Samuelowicz, 1987).

According to the study of Cheng and Clark (1993), the first language which the Chinese students were speaking was one that employed a “tonic” accent that is, when spoken, the words heard depend on pitch rather than stress. The tonicity was monosyllabic which when heard, might sound flat to the Occidental ear. For this reason, Chinese students may experience trouble in distinguishing between a statement and a question, and enthusiasm from indifference. Burns (1991) indicated that Asian students required more time than local counterparts to finish a task due to insufficient English ability and their lack of confidence in expressing opinions. In addition, Asian students found it difficult to participate in classroom activities and worried that they could not understand teachers and local students; they feared others would ridicule their pronunciation (Holmes, 2000).

### *Teaching and Learning Issues*

Mori (2000) also found Asian students were required to reach a given level of language proficiency before they were accepted into college, but their oral comprehension and communication skill usually exposed insufficiency in academic and regular social activities. Li and Kaye’s (1998) research proved that there was a statistic significance between English proficiency and academic progress. Chan (1999) stated that western educators lack the understanding of Asian students’ behavior in the classroom and their learning approach. For example, many Asian students decided not to communicate with their instructors because

such behavior was regarded as rude (Moon, 2003).

Yang (1988) created a communicative theory-based model and used that to examine the junior high school teaching material in Taiwan. She indicated that these English teaching materials did not provide enough content for Chinese students to make full range of communicative ability.

Li (1997) examined difficulties of using communicative strategies in Chinese schools. She considered Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which is typical western learning style difficult for Chinese teachers. The problems she found in using CLT include inadequacy of speaking English of Chinese teachers and students, lack of professional support, pressures from national examinations, and not enough funding for equipment.

Barker (1990) found Chinese students' learning was restricted to listening and writing in the classroom. To communicate with the instructor was not part of the learning process. However, Chinese students kept learning and interacting with each other outside the classroom. Interaction between the instructor and local students was limited to the western style classroom or instructor's time spent in the office (Biggs, 1996). Pintrich and Schunk (1996) indicated there was mutual influence between teachers and students. The teacher's instruction affected students' studying and motivation, and the teacher's behavior also influenced the responses of students in the classroom no matter positively or negatively ways the teacher behaved.

Ways western teachers affected students besides reward or punishment, was through interactive instruction such as group projects, class discussions, and feedback to increase the quality or interaction (Brophy, 1981; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). From the Chinese students' point of views, in order to participate in class activity, they have to reconstruct their communication skills to satisfy the expectations of native English speaker. Zhao (1995) indicated that Asian students reluctance to participate in the classroom discussions was based on the fear of losing face. Thus, in the western instructional style, the Chinese students were involved in a vicious circle; fear of losing face because of poor language skill and desire to please the professor. As a result, their confidence in language usage reduced gradually, and less effort was made to adapt to the local classroom. However, other researchers concluded that international students tended to achieve better when they participated in more classroom activities and they have more interesting to get involved (Ellis, 1993; Portin, 1993; Ward, 2001; Zhao, 1995).

Differing values could be the issue affecting Asian students' learning. Accord to Lingenfelter (1999) Chinese students considered their instructors as being authority figures who they cannot question. In contrast, their counterparts in the western environment envision their lecturer as a facilitator who will gladly accept questions and challenges. Native students are stimulated by individual interest, not by how their performance reflects upon their families.

Stevenson (1996) reported that an elementary school student (level one) spent 77 minutes doing homework which was five times more than western counterparts. Furthermore, Chinese people believed working hard increases individual ability. In other words, diligence controls ability. Their conceptions were different than western students because western learners considered ability is a character lie more stable than achievement (Salili & Hau 1994). Therefore, the values of the two learning styles conflict.

### *Social and Culture Issues*

Hung, Wang and Yuan (2001) identified some sociocultural reasons for educational problems which might affect Asian students' learning experiences. The findings are outlined here.

#### *Sociocultural Reasons*

1. Feudalism increases educational conservatism
2. Traditional educational concepts come from traditional cultural and moral values
3. Traditional cognition restricts traditional educational thought
4. China's policy obstructed the renovation of traditional education by using Chinese learning as a base and western learning as an application.
5. Feudality of education resulted from the mixture of long feudal history and

traditional European education

*Educational Problems*

1. Emphasis is on knowledge delivery, not on personal growth
2. Focus is on the teacher and textbook, ignoring students' interests, subjectivity and creativity
3. Focus on classroom lecture, neglect interaction with students and extracurricular activities
4. Stress is on standardization, not concern for student's individuality and personality
5. Education only aimed at the development of the intellect, other dimensions like moral education, physical education, and aesthetic education were neglected

Samuelowicz (1987) indicated although language mastery is the major issues, other difficulties included culture shock, learning methods, and adaptation to the new environment. Zheng's (2000) research, indicated that the relationship between education and culture was that culture is an extension of education; he concluded the culture difference accounts for the education of difference between Orient and Occident.

Burke (1989) found Asian students usually experienced academic shock and culture shock at the same time. Therefore, Asian students need transitional time. Other researchers also concluded that international students should adapt to culture differences because

diverse cultures refer to various ideas and methods (Holmes, 2000; Mills, 1997; Volet & Ang, 1997). The more cultural distance between Orient and Occident, the more there is created adaptation difficulty for sojourners (Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Ying & Liese, 1990). The difference between the culture of United State and Asian student's original culture is called culture shock or culture stress. It takes times to overcome (Holmes, 2000).

Shik (1995) found the majority of his research participants were students from Hong Kong with no native friends in Canada. In a recent study, Ward and Masgoret (2004) found 70% of international students expect to have more local friends, but 35% of them don't have such friends. Their study showed international students as having a low level of interaction with their counterparts. Furnham and Alibhai's (1985) research examined the best friends preference of 140 international students. Those friends from the same country were their primary. Other friends while international students were second choices and western friends were last choices. The problem then becomes one of their interaction.

From the above studies, I wondered what was the problem with the international students. Chalmers and Volet (1997) felt the restricted connection was probably due to the fact that international students tend to live in student dormitories or rented houses with the other international students. For this reason, they restrict their opportunities to meet students outside of their own culture; if there are classes they attend, they will have class opportunities to interact with their counterparts.

Lack of English proficiency often refers International students' trouble with expressing their opinions or inarticulating ideas, thus local students often cannot understand them (Wang & Cross, 2005). Furthermore, the complex cultural differences result in no connection between international students and native students. In another words, they do not feel comfortable interacting because they are not on the same wavelength, neither do they approach communication in the same way.

A final factor contributing the language issues may be a personal psychological factor; living alone maybe a more acceptable choice than trying to develop social shields needed to engage successfully with other students. Chinese students were found to have more difficulties interacting with local friends, than other international groups (Wang and Webster, 2005). They concluded that Chinese students in Australia were not interested in communicating with native people and social activities.

Other research indicated that international students like to develop more friendships with local students, but they have little opportunity to do so.(Mullins, Quintrell, & Hancock, 1995). International students reported that local students have no interest in making friends with them, the opinions of international students are supported by Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994). They concluded that American students didnt think it was necessary to socialize with foreign students to help them adapt to their new culture Nor did the American students feel it was necessary to change their styles to accommodate the international students.



According to the definition of Ward and Kennedy (1999), Sociocultural adaptation refers to behavior competence; a kind of ability needed to negotiate with the native culture (Kashima & Loh, 2006). Psychological adaptation is related to students' mental health or the pleasure emotion, which is usually connecting to one's perception of a new culture (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Therefore, related theory and strategies for Chinese students' adaptation will be introduced in next section.

#### Related Theories and Strategies for Students' Adaptation

Several years ago, Dr. Cornell, a professor at the University of Central Florida and his team started an ethnographic case study from the examination of Asian pedagogy and its relationship to instructional technology studied, especially focusing on the impact on Asian students who studied in this field. Their research originated after conducting a series of observations as to specific behaviors exhibited by the students in class. "These behaviors, applied not only to Asian students, but also to American and other international students, reflected Asian communication patterns that created concerns among their professors. The concerns related to student silence in face-to-face classes accompanied by little significant participation online when such was required by their professors" (Cornell, 2003).

The results of the study included seven strategies which proved effective for Chinese and Taiwanese students (Cornell, Lee, Pan, Tao & Tsai, 2001).

These strategies included:

1. Give students advance notice of written or oral reports with everything clearly identified.
2. Encourage Asian students to introduce themselves to local students by adopting electronic ways like computer and Web page (blog).
3. Allow students leeway for unforeseen circumstances and latitude in terms of writing, speaking, and communicating during their first semester.
4. Encourage Asian students to do projects with local students so that they have more opportunities to use English.
5. Invite students to professional meetings or social activities outside the school for differing cultures.
6. Produce video-based modules related developing assertiveness (Cornell, Pan, Rendon, Hutton & Sheehy, 2002a).
7. Develop a course related to international issues and the application of instructional technology (Cornell, 2001, 2002).

Liu (2001) used an ethnographic study of Asian students' classroom communication patterns to test the theories about Asian students' reticence to participate in classroom activities. He wanted to prove that not all Asian students in American classrooms are silent.

In his study, both classroom observations and interviews were used interchangeably to

understand not only what the Asian students do in their content courses, but also how they perceive what they do, and why they have those perceptions. He invited 30 Asian students enrolled in his graduate ESL Composition classes in two consecutive quarters to participate in the study. The voluntary students were Chinese from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, and Indonesia. After his struggle to incorporate logic in data description, data analysis, and data interpretation, Liu found four participant patterns for Asian students studying in the United States classroom: total integration, conditional participation, marginal interaction, and silent observation. These patterns are related to both students' perceptions of classroom communication and their participation behaviors during class interaction. It also reflected a decreased level of involvement in classroom communication from total integration to silent observation.

The purpose of Barron's (2004) research was to find learning issues and learning problems of Asian students studying overseas. He examined 10 Asian students who studied Hospitality Management and Tourism Management in Australia by adopting focus group interviews. He analyzed his data using content analysis.

In his findings, learning issues or problems in sequence were participation in class, group work and presentations, language, role play, and nationalities working together. He found the different study approaches for Asian students in learning were focused on understanding, use of references, learning through presentations, the link between theory and

practice, group work, preparing presentations, being asked questions, independent research, and other means of assessment. The last findings he reported included suggestions from Asian students which might improve their learning experiences: lecturers taking responsibility for including international students; providing more practice; offering additional classes; providing assistance with presentations; providing additional skills; and assistance with assessment.

The following findings were strategies or methods from the literature that may help Asian students.

Toyokawa and Toyokawa (2002) found that engaging in extracurricular activities is beneficial to International students. Zheng & Berry (1991) also indicated that appropriate activities could help them to keep positive attitudes to face the challenges. The other important method is interacting with native people so that students can learn social skills and adapt to the new environment quickly (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Ward & Masgoret, 2004). It is appropriate to cite a Chinese proverb “At home one relies on one's parents and outside on one's friends.” which refers to the support of friends and others’ in different environments. However, it is necessary for international students to engage in communication through cultural exchanges, which develops more understanding and easier adaptation to a foreign culture.

Robertson (2000) found many international students adapted the strategies by working

hard, reading extra references, and cooperating with other international students to overcome difficulties.

In summary, the literature emphasized issues such as identifying the affective variables in learning a foreign language, how to learn a language, and determining the kind of teaching strategies that lead to language achievement. There is little research focused on a particular cultural group of graduate students documenting their experiences such as linguistic performance, academic learning, and social interaction. Neither has there been any empirical research that explains how the environment affects students' thinking, particularly the thinking of Chinese students.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the connections between the research questions and methods, sampling, data collection procedures, and data analyses.

### Design of the Study

As Xu (1996) pointed out, the researcher could not determine any important social phenomenon by spending a lot of money on designing questionnaires. He would rather start from several small cases and think over their important qualities. Then examine and consider the social phenomenon to realize the structure, procedure, and its relationship with the environment. This is perhaps a more effective research method.

This study also examined the phenomenon and related environmental elements when Chinese students tense to a strange environment with a different language; what difficulties do they have? Therefore, the current study employed, following the ideas of Glaser and Strauss (1967), the qualitative research approach by conducting in-depth interviews with Chinese students for data collection. The IRB approval form as Appendix C was accepted prior the interview process. While conducting interview, all of the participants voluntarily to signed the student consent form. (Please refer to Appendix A for a sample of the student consent form) The interview data were analyzed following the procedures defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

## Selection of Participants

In order to explore the perceptions of Chinese Students about factors that influence their learning in the US, I purposefully sampled 25 Chinese and Taiwanese graduate students who came to study at the University of Central Florida. There were 9 female and 16 male participants among whom 17 were from China and 8 from Taiwan. At the time the interviews were conducted, the participants' duration of stay in the United States ranged from 10 months to 8 years.

For the selection of participants, an “emerging design” in grounded theory research was adopted. The process of such a design allows the researcher to collect data, analyze it immediately rather than waiting until all data are collected, and then, based on the analysis, the researcher may further decide what data to collect next. Thus, participants of the present study were recruited during three different time settings where they were interviewed individually.

For the first round of interviews, I selected five students through stratified purposeful sampling: two of them are from China and three from Taiwan. All five students in the first round majored in Education. According to theoretical sampling, I regarded these five interviewees as a starting point to seek for the next sampling. After analyzing the first collection of interview data, I had access to the preliminary open coding categories which allowed me to decide that I needed to seek participants who did not major in the College of

Education in order to see if the difference in a major of study may provide additional information on the present issue. At this point, I started to pick out interviewees for the next round of interviews.

The second round of interviewees were chosen out through a “snowball” or chain sampling. There were 13 interviewees in this round and most of them were related to the interviewees of the first round but they were from different programs. For example, the first round of participants studied in the Instructional Technology program in the College of Education, but the second round of participants were from other majors such as the Colleges of Business Administration, Science, Optics & Photonics, Engineering and Computer Science, or Arts and Humanities.

After the second round of interview data was analyzed, I found the open coding categories almost reached saturation. In order to reach the theoretical saturation and increase the study’s accuracy, I continued to recruit 7 participants by opportunistic sampling at a church mentioned by the second round of interviewees. My rationale to have participants from a church was because I was invited to go to church occasionally. I did not know there were many UCF students there. However, I was fortunate to have two participants who were not studying at the University of Central Florida to add richness in my data collection. After the third round of interviews were conducted and data analyzed, I was determined that additional data would not provide any new information or insights for the developing



categories and that 25 participants' interview data reached saturation of categories and was sufficient for the present study. When I finished the interview procedure, I found the ratio of interviewees from China and Taiwan were the same as the ratio of international students who studied in the United States in the academic year 2005-2006, which is 3:1. The sample procedure of this research is shown in Figure 1.

### Data Collection Instrument

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were videotaped, and later transcribed. The interview questions were developed by the researcher and validated by my advisor Dr. Sivo. In order to fully understand the participants' educational background, the interview questions were divided in terms of the level of Education: Each of the participants, whether they were from China or Taiwan, and all of whom were currently enrolled in graduate programs at UCF, were initially asked about experiences they recalled in elementary, junior high, senior high, college, and master's degree if applicable.

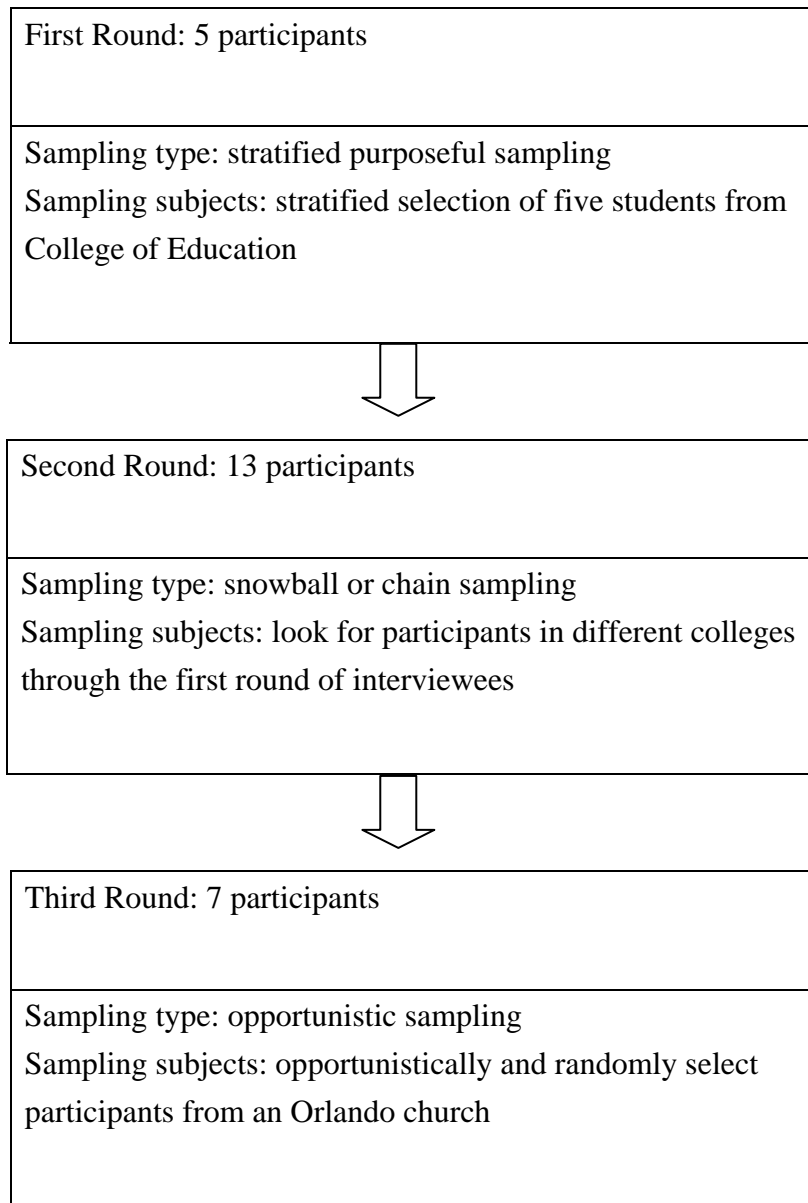


Figure 1: The Procedure of Research Sampling

The questions consisted of 6 items on students' perceptions of good teachers (during their time in grades 1 through university) and preferred teaching styles, 1 item on educational media used, 2 items related to views and interactions with classmates, and 2 items related to learning style. All participants were asked to answer the same 11 questions pertaining to the

different stages of education starting from elementary school to college.

The participants, now all either Master's and PhD level students at the University of Central Florida, were asked 8 additional questions: 1 item on the American education system, 1 on what motivated them to come to the United States to study, 1 on challenges in learning, 2 items related to peers and 2 items related to suggestions for professors and new incoming students. (See Appendix B for interview questions).

Each interview took 30 to 60 minutes and was videotaped with the permission of each subject. Consent forms were signed by all. As interviews took place, most of the interviewees preferred to respond in Mandarin with some English. The translations from Mandarin to English were validated for accuracy of content by an assistant professor from Taiwan, whose major is TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages).

### Data Analysis

This study was based on the grounded theory approach to open coding all of the 25 interview drafts, and then assembling the data in new ways of perception after open coding. The result of this process of data collection and analysis is a theory which is written by the researchers close to a specific problem or population (Creswell, 1998). Table 1 is the example of open coding and its representation.

First, each video interview was transcribed and if in Mandarin, translated into English.

This process involved setting up a data management system so that the 25 interview transcripts, each of which contained verbal responses to 18 questions (some did not answer every question) formed the basis of data.

Each transcript was then subjected to open coding, line-by-line and word-by-word.

Table 1 depicts this action.

Table 1

Example of Open Coding

Interviewee's number: FM01 Date: 2007/04/06 Text number: TEXT-FM01

<p>R Did teacher ask questions? Did they expect students to ask questions? A Yes, 【the teacher asked us to share the similar experiences with others.】 【She would give extra credits to those students to encourage them.】 【For students in Taiwan, if there's no reward, no one would volunteer.】 R How did you learn in this stage? A 【We usually studied for the exam. We have no choice. In order to get good grades, we must study hard.】</p>
--

In the matrix, “R” represents interview question and “A” represents interviewee’s answer. 【】 represents open coding. The information above the matrix is the interview number, interview date, and verbatim translation. The interviewees’ basic information and open coding, axial coding, and selective coding are introduced in the next chapter.

The next step was to move from open coding to axial coding, a process that enables the

researcher to arrange individual words or phrases into contextual groupings. See the diagram that follows to obtain a sense of the typical steps involved.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine when Chinese students adapted to a strange environment with different language; what were their perceptions of what influenced their learning in American classrooms. By using a grounded theory approach, I developed a theoretical model from the data the interviewee provided. Through this theoretical model, it is hoped that insights and appropriate strategies may be provided to help Asian students who plan to study in the U.S.

The research question is as follow:

How were Chinese students' learning in the American classrooms influenced by their previous learning experiences?

### Sub Questions

1. What did Chinese students find difficult in studying in the U.S.?
2. How did Chinese students adjust themselves to these differences?
3. What influenced Chinese students' use of strategies?
4. What happened to Chinese students after their learning model changed?

### Data Analysis

I applied Glaser and Strauss' (1967) data analysis approach to the grounded theory.

In the following paragraphs, I will explain how grounded theory was used to interpret the

data.

After transcribing each of the interviews, verbatim, and translating them into English, I used the NVivo (Non-numerical Unstructured Data by techniques of Indexing Searching and Theorizing) software program to help me with the data analysis as it helped me manage the large data set and made tracking of data analysis easy. I was ready for open coding of the verbatim translations of the interviews. At the beginning, I tried to put similar coding and themes into categories, after open coding, which is called axial coding. Then I found the relationship between axial coding. But, I could not start the story by selecting suitable axial coding because I did not get the core phenomenon to explain the research problem. I could not determine connection to the research questions. Therefore, I reorganized all open coding and placed them into six categories of the Strauss and Corbin (1990) diagram as a figure. Then I assembled the axial coding from the six categories and could begin to reveal my findings.

After opening coding for the data, I printed the transcriptions and re-examined the open coding categories for the next step -- axial coding. I looked for one category that was central to the main theme of the present research, appeared frequently, and one that other categories encompassed in a logical way. I determined that "learning barriers in the U.S." is the category that fits the description and may be identified as the central phenomenon. Therefore, after axial coding, open coding categories were merged into several core categories in the

grounded theory axial coding paradigm. The present study includes: 1) causal conditions (influences factors), 2) central phenomenon (students' learning difficulty in U.S.), 3) context (special factors affect strategies used), 4) intervening conditions (general factors affect strategies used), 5) actions/interactions (resolution strategies), and 6) consequences (result).

In Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the interrelationships of these six core categories.

Strauss and Corbin (1990)

Grounded Theory in Coding from Open Coding to the Axial Coding Paradigm

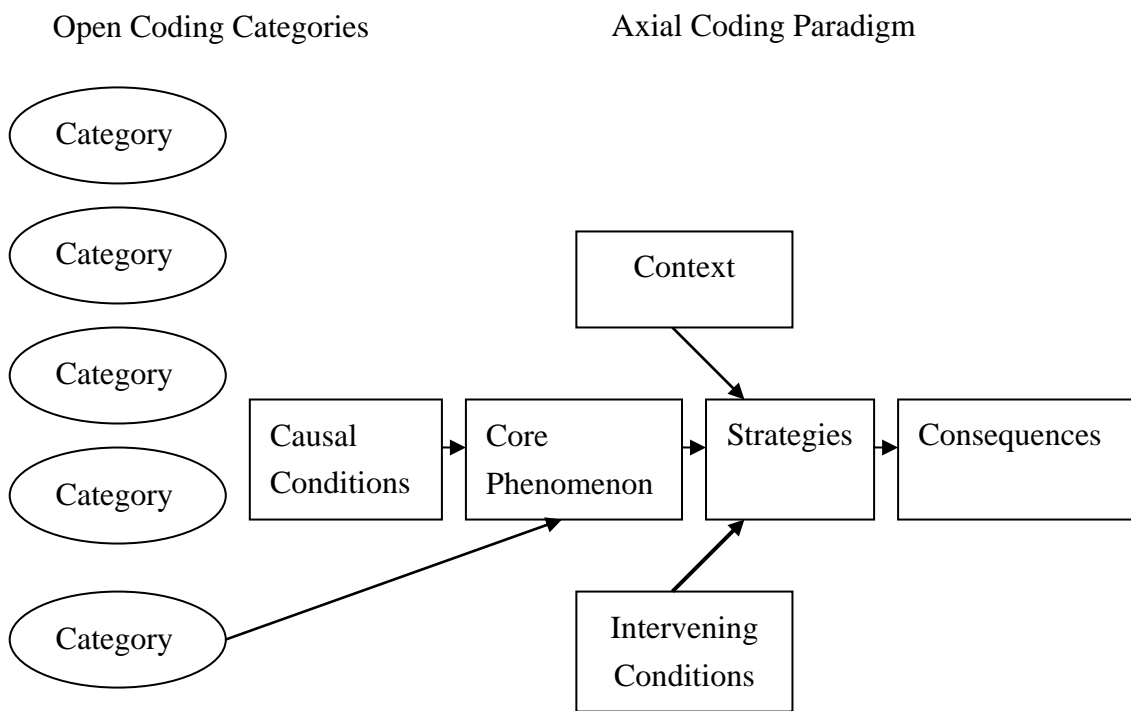


Figure 2: Open Coding to Axial Coding Diagram



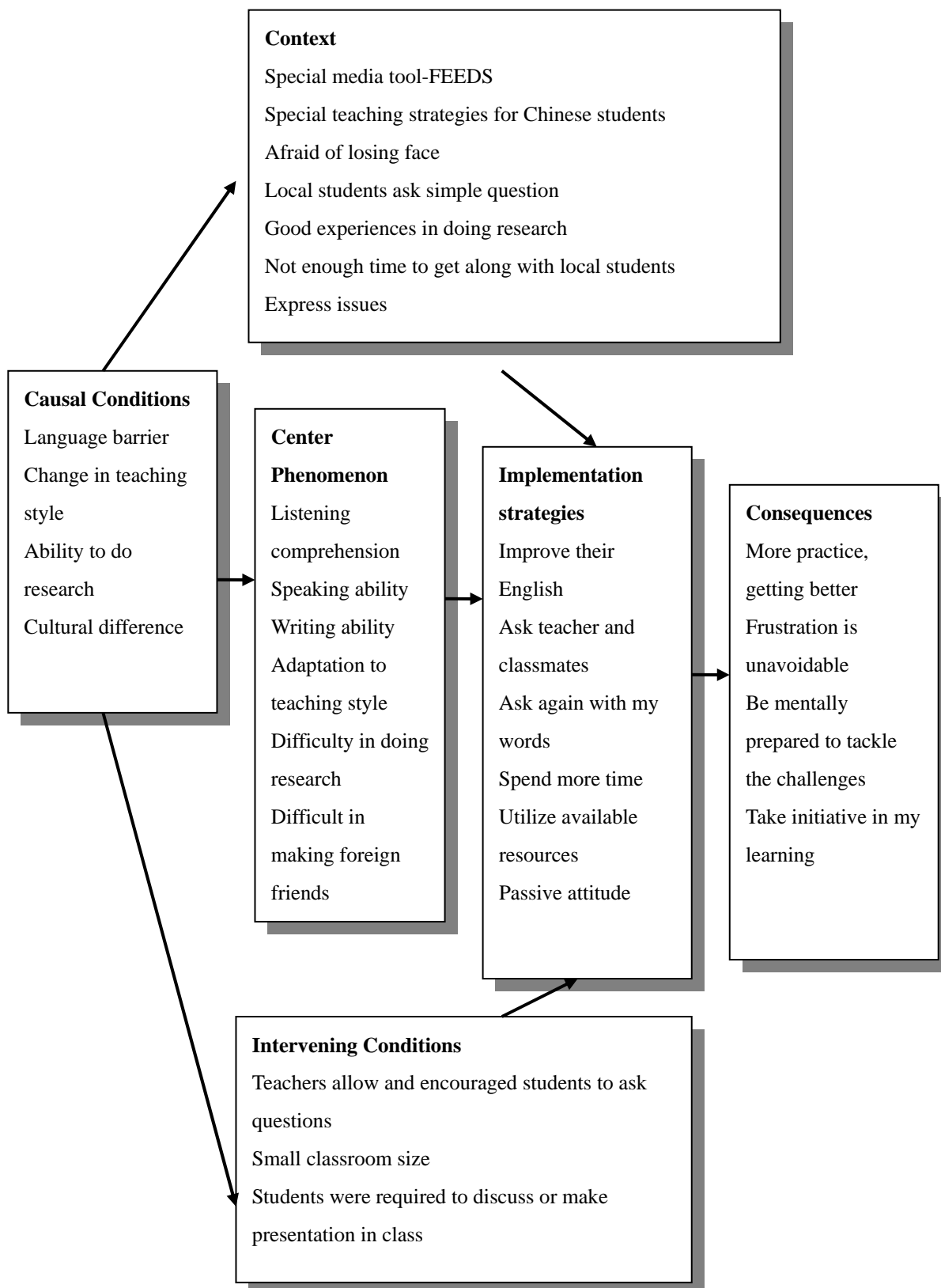


Figure 3: Core Categories

The diagram shows the process of coping with learning difficulties identified by 25 Chinese graduate students studying in the U.S. During the interviews with the students, the researcher learned that students felt challenged and needed assistance in areas of listening, speaking, and writing in English, in adapting to a different teaching style, and in the ability to do research, and make friends with local American students. These were identified as the central phenomenon in the study. While the students addressed their learning difficulties in the U.S., they also explained the reason they faced such difficulties (e.g. language problem, different education approach between the East and the West, and cultural differences.)

Students also addressed the way they coped with the identified problems, which is presented in the “implementation strategy” category. As students tried to use strategies to deal with the learning difficulties, they also pointed out several issues here and there that influenced the effectiveness of the strategies they used. These intervening conditions includes class size, whether discussions or group reports are required, and whether or not the instructor encourage students to ask questions. I found that these intervening conditions also have much to do with causal conditions, which included the education system in which students were brought up and language problems.

Specific factors that influenced the use of strategies were placed in the “context” part of the model. The factors include special teaching strategies for Chinese students, who are afraid of losing face. i.e. learning embarrassed or shamed in front of their collages. These factors are

also related to causal conditions.

In the end, the results of students employing the strategies overcoming learning difficulties they faced in the U.S. are explained in “consequences” category. Based on this visual model shown in the diagram, I will now explain these core categories separately in the following.

### *Central Phenomenon*

#### *Learning Barriers in the U.S.*

As the purpose of the study was to find out students’ perceptions of what influenced their learning in the American classrooms, the core category “learning barrier in the U.S.” naturally became the central phenomenon during axial coding. During the first open coding process, I identified similar ideas that could be grouped into this category. During my second round in open-coding, I specifically searched the data and coded what students had identified as the problems they have encountered during learning. Therefore, under the central phenomenon lie 6 separate sub-categories that make up this core category. They are “listening comprehension”, “speaking ability”, “writing ability”, “adaptation to teaching style”, “difficulty in doing research,” and “difficulty in socializing with people and understanding some words sufficiently depth to make foreign friends.”

### Listening Comprehension

Participants in the current study explained that part of the reason they felt pressured was because of the speech rapidity used by the teacher and students during lectures and class discussions, which undermined their listening comprehension.

Students sometimes missed out on important information because of this.

Student 25 mentioned , “I still can’t fully understand my instructors during lectures.” Student 1 pointed out she felt “the professor was speaking too fast for her to understand” and that made her very nervous. Student 2 complained in a very straight forward way, “The teacher never cared about us at all because he taught the key points using fast oral speaking. It’s not easy for American students to write down let alone for ESL students to listen clearly and take notes.” Because he could not catch up with the speech rate of the instructor, he was not able to understand the lectures fully and was unable to take notes.

### Speaking Ability

As students noticed, there are more interactions between the professor and the students, as well as among the students in an American classroom compared to a Chinese classroom; being able to communicate in the English language became a very important aspect of learning. However, most students pointed out that they lacked the

confidence or even the ability to communicate in the English language in the classroom.

Student 4 was afraid of raising questions in class because she was afraid that the teacher might not be able to understand her question. Student 5 thought it was more difficult to express opinions in English than in her mother tongue. Student 7 thought communicating in class was difficult because his thoughts should be presented in an organized fashion that he found hard to manage in English. Student 24 thought that English speaking ability was very important as he mentioned, “I did not have the ability to communicate with teachers and classmates if I did not speak English.”

### Writing Ability

The last language component identified by the students was their English essay writing ability. As academic writing in English requires a great amount of vocabulary, a good command of grammar, and a clear concept of how ideas are presented in a specific way, students found it difficult to master this aspect of learning.

Student 19 pointed out that “The biggest challenge I had was writing essays in English, which I think most international students also have difficulties with.” And, Student 9 thought that writing was easy and fast for American students but for English as a second language student such as herself, she put it this way: “it’s not easy for us.”

### *Adaptation to Teaching Style*

During the interview, participants compared the different education they received between the east (home country) and the west (U.S.) and explained how they had to adapt to a new academic environment in the U.S.

Students pointed out that they were not used to the openness in the American classroom and the academic freedom which the students had to explore ideas and ask questions. They observed that the role of the teacher in the U.S. was more of a “guide on the side.” They would not tell you the answer to your question directly. A metaphor that was quite commonly used to describe teaching was a metaphor about fishing. If you refer to teaching as fishing, an American teacher would usually hand you the fishing rod and teach you how to fish. They would not just give you a fish. Therefore, students would need to use the tool to fish by themselves. Students in the present study had expressed their difficulty in adapting to this kind of teaching approach.

“I need more specific instructions and guidance. I need someone to tell me what I should do next in research.” (Student 7) American professors will give you some directions but would not tell you what to do. They would like you to come up with what you should do on your own. However, I like to follow other people’s instruction to do things.” (Student 7)

Another aspect of academic openness is that different opinions are welcomed in class. Students learned that it is quite okay to have a different opinion from that of their professors and in fact, some students may even challenge the professor. This was quite contrary to what they were taught back in their native country. Therefore, students indicated that it is difficult for them to become a critical thinker and to actively explore knowledge on their part in such a short time. “In the U.S., students can challenge the teacher if what they say is convincing enough. Professors here encourage students to have different points of views.”

(student 2)

Student 2 was so convinced that “no one should challenge the teacher” as it was instilled in him since he grew up, he was unable to quickly adapt to the change in academic expectations. Student 14 specifically pointed out the contradictions between what he used to believe and what he was taught in the States:

“In China, we were taught that information from textbooks is correct; published essays written by others are correct and once a subject has been researched by another person, there would be nothing left for new discovery. However, after I have come to the US for my Ph.D. I realized that textbooks may be wrong; published essays may be wrong and research conducted by others may have flaws and room for improvement.”

(Student 14)

He thought that the transition from passive acceptance to active exploration and critical

thinking was a bottleneck from him.

Another aspect of teaching that was brought up by the students was group discussions, conversations and interactions between the teachers and the students in an American classroom. Students had actually identified themselves as reluctant to participate in class discussions. They were listening to what was being discussed, but was silent most of the time.

“There were many courses where group discussions were common. At the beginning I was not able to get involved in the discussions.” (Student 8)

“When you have been placed in a group with native students, you may feel like there is nothing you have to say to them.” (Student 20)

The phenomenon that Asian students’ reluctance in contributing to class discussions is well supported by the literature (Renshaw and Volet, 1995).

### *Social Difficulties*

Cultural difference was a factor reported to have influenced students’ understanding of what their American professors and peers expressed. Sometimes, students heard what the instructor said and may have even been able to repeat what was said; however, students had no clue of the exact meaning. Student 16 described “I have problems communicating with others.” Student 2 explained that this was an important factor why, as a non-native speaker



of English, he was disadvantaged in terms of learning: “ESL students could not understand a hundred percent of what was said” Student 16 had the same feeling: “Sometimes I would not understand idiomatic expressions or humor used by my teachers.”

Some students had trouble getting along with local students. Student 1: “I have no idea how to share my experience. I felt a bit of a cultural shock then.” Student 20 said: “When I just arrived in America, I was not good at socializing with people.” The same phenomenon was happening in the classroom too.

Cultural differences influenced both Chinese and American counterparts in their effort to understand and communicate with each other. Students thought that not only were Chinese students unable to understand their American friends in the classroom, they were reluctant to have deep conversation because of this cultural or language difference, and the same situation works both ways. American students were reluctant to spend time to bond with Chinese students as well. Student 5, student 6, and student 10 all expressed similar thoughts: “I still have trouble communicating with American people. I cannot become part of them (local students).” (Student 10) The problem for Student 1 was: “I have no idea how to share my experience. I felt a bit of cultural shock then.” Her statement made me associate these phenomena to cross-cultural differences.

Noticing that in American classrooms, where interaction among students and professors is a common practice, and where learning is done through the act of discussion, cultural

differences have had a significant influence on the quality and quantity of learning on the part of the Chinese students.

### *Ability to Do Research*

One of the last categories in terms of learning barrier in the U.S. is concerning the ability to do research. This category may not be as closely related to their prior educational experience and where students were from, and may be common among all graduate students; however, since it is still a learning barrier, I feel the need to include it.

Chinese students may have relied on their teachers more than American students. Thus, some felt that not enough instruction or support was given during their process in learning to do research. Student 1 mentioned: “The challenge for me is how to do research.”

### *Causal Condition*

During the interviews, students had identified reasons why they had problems with listening comprehension; why they were reluctant to speak in class, and why they have problems in writing assignments. These reasons were in separate open coding categories, but during the axial coding, I grouped them into one core category, called “language problem.” Language problem was identified as one of the causal conditions that affected students’ learning in the U.S. (core phenomenon) in the present study. Besides language

problem, students also explained that changes in teaching style comparing how they were taught before and in the U.S. have also influenced them tremendously. Cultural differences and lack of the ability to do research were also identified as the main causes to the learning problem they have encountered.

In the following I will explain the four sub-propositions that relates to this core category: 1) language problem, 2) a comparison of teaching between the East and the West as students have had experience with in order to explain how changes in teaching style affected their learning, 3) cultural differences, and 4) lack of the ability to do research.

### *Language Problem*

Direct factors that resulted in students' language barriers are due to previous poor teaching strategies. Student 13 described his nightmare as follow: "It would be my English teacher. I feel that he should be responsible for my poor English even till now. He was quite old (about 50-60 years old), and though he had years of experience in teaching, he chose to use teaching materials that he had been using for several decades. ...Reciting passages from textbooks was the only way he taught the class and I felt forced to learn in the way he directed. ...For example, when he taught grammar, he would only tell the students to follow the way he has constructed his sentences without explaining the rules. His lessons were simply lousy."

Student 2 complained he did not learn English well either. He said, “[The] English teacher’s strategy was terrible. He just recited the textbook. Therefore, nobody wanted to listen to his class. As a result, I didn’t learn English well.” According to the story from student 5, the bad learning experience for her was: “The teacher played some movies for students during oral course. Then she tested students on the section of the movies. Since English was not good at the beginning for many students, they could not understand the content. Therefore, many students failed the exam and they could not accept the teaching strategy. They felt that the teacher did not design the course with the students’ language competency in mind.” Student 9 had similar experience as student 5 that her English teacher never studied abroad. Student 9 posted: “The teacher have never studied abroad, she gave the lecture in English. Students could not understand. She also used the textbook in English, as well as other teaching materials. These lectures didn’t make sense for us.” These two examples indicates the teacher has not considered the students' ability. Chinese teachers approached difficult teaching materials for students to learn English. The teacher’s purpose was good, but it is not acceptable for students.

Student 6 was hurt by her teacher and caused her afraid of English, she remembered that: “That must be the English teacher who belittled me. I cried at that time. The teacher asked me to answer a question in class. I did not hear the question clearly, so I didn’t know how to answer. The teacher didn’t repeat the question again. He assumed I was not paying

attention to his lecture and blamed me. He felt I could answer the question if I had paid attention in class. I felt hurt. I think the teacher should give more patience to students.”

Student 16 pointed out a difference in the command of English between himself and his peers, “The main challenge is still language; my command of English is still far behind compared to native speakers in America;” student 15 pointed out he had less confidence in terms of “language and communication with the locals;” and student 5 voiced that she “doesn’t have good enough language ability” which was the major challenge for her.

Student 21 explained how language became a problem that affects his interaction with his classmates: “language is still a problem as well.”

This problem, in general, has a great impact on students’ confidence and may be able to explain why Chinese students are usually silent in class. It was because they were not quite sure whether they fully understand what others say, and even if they understood the conversation, sometimes they could not find the exact words to carry out the dialogue with others. Student 20 pointed out, “I felt less confident when I often did not understand what others said.” Moreover, student 19: “There were many occasions where I wanted to express some ideas but didn’t know the right vocabulary to use.” Student 9,” to write something significant is difficult. It’s tough for me to write the detail which is followed by the outline. It’s not the same as their talking which can be done immediately.”

### *Changes in Teaching Style*

Since Chinese students studied under the Chinese education system, they are used to learning in the traditional teaching style. Traditional Chinese teaching style refers to direct teaching, wherein teachers controlled everything. The main purpose was delivering knowledge as teaching strategies due to the limitation of examination (Examination?-unclear]system. Teachers and students have very few interactions among them for the big class sizes like Student 2's state, "For a big class size around 70 to 80 students, it's difficult to have interaction." As Student 6 posted: "It's always direct teaching. Teachers expected students to listen to the lecture quietly. This was not restricting students to ask questions, because teachers felt bad if students kept asking questions in their lectures. If some students raised questions in class, they could not finish their teaching plans [lecture]. They hoped students could ask after the class. Students should listen to the lecture, take notes, not speak, and not discuss the material with others."

Student 25 has similar answer, he said, "We felt that whatever teachers taught us was right and never questioned that it could be wrong. Teachers represented intellectual authority. They, in fact, did not have much time for students to ask questions. They believed that students could pass the college entrance exam as long as they learned whatever they had taught well. If there were questions, students could ask the teachers after class or

discuss them with fellow students.”

The general concept for Chinese students as student 8 said: “Because my belief in learning is that I am the receiver of knowledge and the teachers should be the deliverer.”

The class is for students to learn from the teacher, and there will be no learning if students keep asking questions. Student 23 described his feelings: ‘Students in China were generally in awe of their teachers. There is a saying, “a person who is once your teacher remains a guiding figure throughout your life.’

Student 19 was more comfortable in United State classrooms. She felt: “The educational system in America is slightly better. I am not saying the system in Taiwan is bad; the main difference lies in the mindset of teachers/instructors. American teachers are not as “stuck-up” as teachers in Taiwan and they are usually friendlier when teaching. Teachers in Taiwan enjoy exercising their authority and they expect students to listen to them. They might be pleased if students asked the right questions, but they are more likely to get upset if students asked questions that were not really appropriate. The situation is better in America; teachers/instructors are gentler in their lectures and interactions with students.”

Student 8 also mentioned, “American’s education environment is better than China no matter the hardware or software. China’s teacher focus on propagating knowledge to students, but are less interactive with students. American teacher do great at this point.”

Student 2 explained that he was so used to this belief that no one should challenge the

teacher until he found out that having a different opinion from that of the professors' is quite okay in the States. In his memory, teaching strategies were different between Chinese and the United States. "If you wrote an essay and the teacher told you that you added too much personal opinion and asked you to rewrite it again, then you should do so because the teacher is always right. No one should challenge the teacher." He continued to explain what perplexed him: "But in the U.S., students can challenge the teacher if what they say is convincing enough. Professors here encourage students to have different points of views."

The following participants complained their learning was limited to preparing for the examination.

"American students focus on their general performance while their Chinese counterparts devote all their efforts to one exam. In the latter case, the pressure is tremendous and there is nothing else but studying. As a result, nothing in senior high school is about life or future and everything is about passing the entrance exam." (Student 25)

"They put too much emphasis on imparting knowledge to students by the most efficient way, the lecture. It was required that students solve some problems quickly, learn things fast, apply the knowledge, all in order to pass exams." (Student 4), "I didn't like the way the teacher had us do tons of exercises every day. But teachers forced us to follow this way. I hate this way. I cannot really comprehend this way. We had lots of exams every week. I personally don't like to learn this way but I can do nothing about it." (Student 4)



“We were under a lot of stress and pressure because of the examinations. Teachers would set various targets for students to reach, and those who didn’t do as well as expected would be physically punished. For example, if the target were to score 90 points for a test, students who didn’t get 90 would be caned once for every point that they needed to reach the target score. Or, the teachers would compare students’ results for a test with their previous results; and students would get caned once for every point of decline. I really think implementations of physical punishment had very limited effects, but that was the situation for students sitting for entrance examinations back then. [The]teacher simply resorted to physical punishment on students who didn’t do as well as they expected. It seemed to be the norm for the whole country.” (Student 13)

“The academic pressure in Junior high school is much heavier. Teaching is still one-way communication. In addition, the system of entrance examination gave teachers pressure to cover a lot in class without paying much attention as to whether students understand the content or not. All that for passing the exam.” (Student 2)

“The teacher put emphasis on the proportion of students entering senior high school. The whole learning environment and campus atmosphere was ongoing studying and taking examinations. Students were punished when they failed the exam. The physical punishment was very terrible at that time. Some students’ legs were badly bruised from flogging.”

(Student 9)

“My school only wanted students to pass exams because the percentage of graduates entering key universities determined whether a school was good or not and concerned a school’s reputation.” (Student 23)

“In China, students are under tremendous pressure. Therefore, teachers mean well when they are very strict to students. For Chinese students, teachers mean well when they demand a lot from students. They would demand nothing if they expected nothing from you. This is paradoxical. Teachers tend to have a bad attitude or reputations when they are strict. Nevertheless, students are fully aware that teachers mean well and want you to pass the college entrance exam when they are strict with you. I could deal with this in the first and second years of senior high school, but felt under pressure physically and mentally in the third year. This is the major difference in the situations between Chinese and American students.” (Student 25)

Competition is quite different in the States. For example, Student 25 reported, “competition means different things between China and the States. The Chinese model is more selfish taking into account one’s own future, only. In the States, competition is positive and benign.”

There is more freedom for students and flexible teaching strategies in U.S. Education. As student 16 said, “It is entirely different from what we have in China. There isn’t a fixed format for classroom teaching and most lessons focused on free discussions, which are

radically different from the education system in China.” Student 25 posted “I was very astonished in my first class here. I wondered why the students behaved so carelessly. There were strong interactions between teachers and students. Students raising questions in class, teaching methods and facilities were the major differences and much better than in China.”

As Student 14 answered, “students in China do not have much choice in their academic career. Once they have declared their major, they would take all the courses needed for their degree and very few of them would go through the trouble of changing their major. Students studying in China who are not passionate about the major they have chosen often feel that after having spent so many years studying the subject, it’s too late for change the path they want to take. In the U.S., students have more opportunities available for them to select courses they wish to study according to their personal interests.”

Student 2 gave other examples to explain the classroom liberty. He said, “The difference is that the Taiwan teacher would ask a question to the individual student, and the American teacher would ask questions to the whole class instead of focusing on one person. Students would not feel much pressure in class. This is related to American culture. In the United States, students are eager to answer questions. In Taiwan, although the teacher likes active students, very few students want to answer questions posed by the teacher. If teachers did not pick someone, no one would to answer. This is neither a teacher nor a student's fault. It is a problem of the whole society.”

There are also some examples talked about in the same situation.

“We are used to listening to what others have to say and we will not speak up when peoples’ ideas are not too far from ours. Chinese students are not used to interrupting when another person is talking, but Americans are just the opposite; they tend to interrupt people and seem to have lots to talk about.” (Student 20)

“The college teachers (local teacher) asked students some open-ended questions that encouraged students to exert more of their abilities instead of telling the students directly that the answer was wrong. They also gave some advice that made you feel that they listened to what you said. The greatest difference was that students felt respected while answering questions in class. I found this very important to students.” (Student 23)

“Some teachers encouraged questions, but I did not know why few students asked questions. Basically, no one did. Taking my own experience as an example, I was not used to asking questions from elementary school, through junior high school to senior high school. Most students were the same.” (Student 25)

“American students like to ask questions. They were active participants in class. They have great interaction with the teacher.” (Student 4)

“Americans have great creativity. It is related to their teaching pedagogy. Chinese teaching pedagogy is rigid and progress is step-by-step. American pedagogy is jumping style. The bad part is it is less organized. The good part is its creativity. If we can combine

the good parts of the teaching, it would be the best.” (Student 4)

Furthermore, creativity is an important factor in U.S. education. Many students have commented about this.

“Comparatively speaking, American students are creative. But, Asian students are better on mathematics and physics. That could be the Chinese teacher’s use of coercive pedagogy to develop students’ thinking. I prefer America’s learning style. Students can learn what they really want to learn. It’s not necessary to study what they are not interested in.” (Student 2)

“The students who U.S.A. cultivates are more creativity.[Students cultivated by the U.S.A. are more creative.]” (Student 5)

“In the United States, strong emphasis has been placed on graduate students’ training on critical thinking, which I think is lacking for graduate students in China, at this point.”  
(Student 16)

“In my freshman year, a foreign teacher rarely lectured and basically said very little. He divided the students into different groups and assigned different topics for the students to discuss in groups. This was mainly to train the students developmental thinking instead of intellectual development. I found this a major difference. The teacher had a great influence on me. Learning influenced by a teaching model was something I had never known before. The teaching model focused on students’ thinking ability. Teachers became

an auxiliary facility while students were the focus of teaching. The model also itemized all the key points of a course. What influenced me more remained the foreign teachers.”

(Student 25)

Chinese students felt they learn fundamental knowledge in China and Taiwan, and they learned how to apply at graduate level in the United States.

Student 11 said, “I prefer the American style, from which the teaching is closer to practice.

The teaching in my country focuses on fundamental theories, which are much more boring.”

Student 21 stated, “Master and doctoral degree programs in America are better than programs offered in China. One advantage American students have over Chinese students is their education system has been designed to cultivate students’ interests. The Chinese education system is severely lacking in this area. Judging from my experience as a Teaching assistant (TA) in the department, the level of American students is slightly lower than Chinese students at the college level.

Student 16 said, “Students’ elementary and junior high school education. I think the traditional education system we have in China is good for reinforcing students’ fundamental knowledge at the lower levels. With the traditional education system, students can benefit from solid training in their primary and secondary education.”

Student 21 posted: “I thought college level education (including elementary and secondary education) is better in China. If you look at students’ level as a whole from

elementary school to university, Chinese students generally would acquire more knowledge compared to American students.”

The last factor was a new topic, which Chinese students never heard. Student 1 reflected how she remembered that she was not able to participate in sharing her opinions due to the lack of knowledge concerning a famous American chain supermarket, Wal-Mart. She recalled: “I remember my first class in United State was a management course. The teacher asked us how we feel while we walk into Wal-Mart. We were told to share our experience with others. At that time I lived in San Francisco. There was no Wal-Mart store around. I have never been in one before.”

### *Culture Differences*

Cultural difference was a factor reported to have influenced students’ understanding of what their American professors and peers express. Cultural differences influenced both Chinese and American counterparts in their effort to understand and communicate with each other. Student 16 stated, “due to different cultural background, I experienced culture shock. I came from a different background, my mother tongue is different, and my culture is different from the West.” Student 20 also mentioned, “When I just arrived at America, I was not good at socializing with people. Various factors such as language barrier, differences in cultural backgrounds, and the education I received back home made it difficult for me to

express my thoughts.” Student 2 felt the cultural difference influenced his learning, he expressed, “and we may miss out on more than half of the information than American students do...especially when it comes to idioms and proverbs, you need the cultural background as reference.”

Student 20 recalled, “When I studied with native students, I found they were really good at expressing themselves. As a result, when you work on your assignment in your group, you may keep quiet and not express your ideas even though you may be on the right track because you are not used to speaking out. I used to listen to other people’s ideas and if they were doing fine without my contribution, then I would keep my ideas to myself.”

And this is the exact problem Chinese students may have when studying here; they may have better ideas than their group members but because they are not good at or used to expressing themselves, they would not speak out if the majority of the group agreed on another idea even though their unspoken ideas were better.” (Student 20)

Students thought that not only were Chinese students unable to understand their American friends in the classroom, they were reluctant to have deep conversations because of this cultural difference, and the same situation worked both ways. American students were reluctant to spend time bonding with Chinese students. As student 1 said, “I felt that they don’t want to have deep conversations with us.” Student 21 felt, “I can befriend Americans and see them as my classmates with no problem, but that’s as far as the



friendship will go because we have different socializing habits and we talk about different things, too.”

### *Lack of the Ability to Do Research*

Chinese students used to follow the teachers' guide, they were dependent. Therefore, student 1 complained, “There is no teacher by your side to show you step-by-step. I feel concerned because I am inexperienced.” Student 7 has the same concern, “American professors will give you some directions but would not tell you what to do. They would like you to come up with what you should do on your own. However, I like to follow other people's instructions to do things.” Student 13 had great experiences working with his undergraduate teacher. He stated, “It would have to be my advisor. I collaborated with my advisor in a special project and it was the first time for me to witness how instructors lead students in their field of specialization. It also provided an opportunity to learn more about their specialization. My advisor was a dedicated teacher who would make it a point to clarify any doubts we had when we approached him. He also held supplementary classes on a weekly basis to see how we were doing with our work. He would also propose plans for outings.”

The other factor was that Chinese graduate students did many chores not related to research, before they go abroad. For example, they were assigned to be teaching assistants

and working on projects for their advisers. Student 12 mentioned, “The education for graduate students in U.S. is better than what we have back home with more examinations and stricter lecturers. Master degree students in China often have to perform various chores for their advisers. As a result, students learn less. In addition, the level of lecturers in China is also generally lower than those in the western society.” And student 21, also posted: “American students would begin conducting their research in their master and doctoral programs whereas few students in China actually conduct research projects in their master and doctoral programs; they are often involved in commercial projects.”

The third factor came from the Chinese teachers because they asked students to do their projects. As student 15 summarized, “I think there isn’t much difference between the systems in the US and China. The main difference is the fact that master degree instructors are more focused on research. Many graduate students in China complained about how their advisers were simply using their students to conduct researches and make money for them and few advisers actually offered guidance to students who wish to conduct their own research.”

However, student 22 expects she can learn a lot from her advisor now, she said, “In China, teachers did not teach us how to learn. In the States, it might have something to do with what I studied. I learned to explore various learning methods and theories. The learning process is to learn how to show teachers what the best way to teach students and design courses according to the different learning features of students. This was what

learning was about.”

### *Implementation strategies*

According to the various barriers which Chinese students have, they offer some strategies which were working for them. I integrated their opinions into four categories as general strategies in language issues, strategies for change in teaching style, strategies for doing research, and strategies for adjusting to cultural differences.

#### *General Strategies in Language Issues*

Student 17, student 19, student 20, and student 24 regard English as their barrier, so they were determined to improve their English. Student 17’s words represented the ideas: “spend more time to prepare for classes in advance and read more often. It was also a driving force to push me to improve my English.”

In order to familiarize himself with the different expectation the professors in the States have for students, which is quite different from the expectations of those back home, student 20 took some additional time to adjust his learning habits and values.

Some students like to interact with local students and friends. Student 17 answer, “try to keep my mind open and be active in communicating and interacting with others.” Student 25 did the same way by more contact with American students and diligent practice. In

addition, student 9 identified the need to: “Be independent, not always get with compatriot. Otherwise, English will not progress.”

Student 25 built up his confidence from others. He stated, “I overcame the difficulty with the encouragement from teachers”.

#### Strategies for Listening Comprehension.

Student 4 would ask the teacher after class just as student 16 said, “I would approach my teachers for explanation after classes were over.” Student 9 did too: “I would ask the teacher questions or ask classmates how to do the assignment and which part should I study.”

Student 2 has used the electronic approach. He sent an email to tell his professor about his helplessness in listening. Another example from student 23 was: “I trained my listening skills by watching TV.”

#### Strategies for Speaking Ability

Student 20 said, “I suggest Chinese students be brave and speak out about their ideas or suggestions during discussions. Since native students are more skilled in communication, you may have to interrupt them just to get the chance to voice your opinions and contribute to the discussion.”

Student 9 was lucky, she got the support from her classmates as indicated by the

following statement “Sometimes my group members asked me to be presenter in order to push me or train me. I did not speak as smoothly as local students in the presentation. I have to speak by watching the handout.”

Another strategy from student 25 is psychological adjustment. What he did was “Ask without hesitation regarding the English language”, and student 20 using the approach as: “I ask with what I know and ask again if I do not comprehend.”

### *Strategies for Changes in Teaching Style*

Time is an important factor in many cases especially in learning. Student 6 mentioned “I would spend more time to comprehend or asked the teacher for the subjects” She felt the local teachers were willing to offer their services. Student 20 also said: “It took some time for me adjust to teaching style.”

While learning from the different teaching methods, student 13 figured out that “There are various resources available in America and you can find the answers and solutions to many problems on your own, if you know how to utilize the resources at your disposal.”

Student 18 said: “Keep your mind open and learn as much as you possibly can. It is natural for foreign students in America to encounter difficulties in getting used to the new environment.”

### *Strategies for Doing Research*

Mainly, students were looking for assistance from advisors. Student 18 said: “When I had trouble doing my research or simply didn’t know how to proceed with my paper, I could seek help from my advisor.” Student 6 and student 14 discussed or consulted with those experienced, as student 14’s statement indicates: “I have more interaction with my instructors. They have spent many years conducting research in their field of specialization and they may have unique tools and methods to impart to their students. Students can then use these tools and techniques to conduct their own research.” Furthermore, as student 25 replied: “Communicate more and keep in contact with teachers so that they know how you are doing.”

Student 14 pointed out the spirit of doing research: “Keep your mind open and learn to utilize all resources available in the United States. There are also many paths you can take to gain more knowledge.” (Student 14)

### *Strategies for Adjusting to Cultural Differences*

The positive way which student 9 used was trying hard to make contact with some aspects of American culture. Student 7 would like to invest time in learning various cultures as “take time adapting to the way of life and culture to get along with Americans.” Student 8 learned something from local students, too.

The passive voice from student 10 was: “I cannot get involved with their lives. So I get along with Chinese students most of the time” Student 6 has no idea how to deal with American culture. She described: “Americans are usually optimistic when greeting to say “hi, how are you?” That’s all. They don’t talk more, so I don’t know what to say.” Student 25 posted: “Do not close yourself. The Chinese people tend to do everything by themselves, when they feel their English is not good enough. No. The first step is to open your mind. Do not feel pressure simply because you are a foreigner here. Here in the States, people become successful through hard work. Do not feel that you are discriminated against because you are Asian. Keep yourself balanced, psychologically.”

### *Context*

There are several factors affecting students’ implementation strategies. I summarized these factors as special media tools, special teaching strategies for Chinese students, Chinese student fear of losing face, native students asking simple questions frequently, previous good experiences, and local students have no time to share with Chinese students.

### *Special Media Tools*

Some students majoring in science and engineering mentioned that there is a media tool which is helpful for their learning. Student 16 described that in more detail: “Mostly

computers and video; instructors would record interaction between students and them in class and put the recorded sessions online for students to download. I thought that was a brilliant idea. The FEEDS (Florida engineering education delivery system) at UCF's Institute of Engineering has become a popular system among the students. Webcams and audio recording equipment have been setup in classrooms to record full lectures, which would then be stored as downloadable files on the campus servers for students to review the course contents."

Student 16 also introduced how the special media tool works: "It is an interesting feature; instructors' replies to questions raised by students can be viewed by all students. In this way, students would be able to see instructors' teaching styles. It is also very useful to students; if students can't attend classes for any reason, they would be able to see what they have missed from the recorded lectures. Or if you have some ideas or questions regarding a test but the instructor is not at the campus to answer your questions in time, you look for what you need by watching the recorded lectures online. It is most useful to part time students who can't attend classes during the daytime."

Student 13 used this media tool in some limited courses. He compared the situation between the States and Taiwan: "UCF provides FEEDS of recorded classes that students can download from the school's website. I believe no schools in Taiwan have adopted similar services. Recorded lectures are available for all electronics engineering courses offered here



at UCF whereas in Taiwanese universities, downloadable recorded lectures may only be available for one or two courses in an entire department. I think it is a convenient feature to have for students who wish to review what they have learned.”

Student 1 posted another media tool during her learning. She stated, “The statistics teacher videotaped the process of SPSS software. I like it because I can repeatedly review while forgetting.”

### *Special Teaching Strategies for Chinese Students*

I summarized some teaching strategies which were identified as affective by the Chinese students.

#### *Post Question in Advance*

Maybe this strategy is not special for local students, but it did help student 1 to resolve language embarrassment. She said: “The teacher wanted everybody to post questions in advance. He would collect all of the questions. Then ask every student’ interesting category which can be discussed in class.” She could post a question online instead of raising questions in class.

#### *Class Debate Model*

Student 7 was motivated from the debating class: “Some courses used the group discussion and debating. I felt it was interesting. The teacher offered the topics and

group did research and prepared for debating. It's very interesting experience to attend instruction.”

### *Students Teach the Class*

Student 2 stated: “Our courses have lots of reading. We discussed in class most of the time. Students played the leading role. Different from the Taiwanese way in which a teacher leads students. Students in United State can learn to have their point and learn how to guide a class.”

Student 18 told the story about her learning experience in American classroom. “Most of the lessons were comprised of discussions and group meetings. We had presentations every semester and reports on course materials as well. We had student presentations for almost every class for that particular course; the instructor would break down one chapter for two students, and they would be responsible for presenting the assigned chapter of the course to the rest of the class. The main point of these presentations was to train students to be able to list the critical points in a specific chapter after reading them instead of reciting the materials word for word. It was a practical exercise for students to have hands-on experience in teaching, and their classmates would play the role of their students. The instructor would simply observe the class and bring up some questions that we might have missed and conclude the

lesson at the end of the classes.” Student 18 continued: “For the next hour, 2-3 classmates would present different teaching styles and methods. For example, in one class, my classmates had to do a presentation on playing games, and they would have to illustrate the objectives of playing games in a classroom setting and what students would be able to learn through games instead of blindly wasting time by letting students play games. We had to cover one chapter every week, which would involve two to three teaching methods. The final part of the course was presentations on research, and the students were divided into groups of 2 or 3 for the presentation.”

#### Study Group Model

Student 4 got her first learning experience from this strategy: “They asked students to read part of the textbook first. Every student should answer the questions from the other students. Whether the student had acquired and absorbed the knowledge in the textbook would be evaluated by teacher. This was my first time to take the discussion class.”

#### Heuristic Method of Teaching

Student 14 indicated that she learned from her elementary teacher, that teacher’s expectations were unforgettable. “My teacher in grade six encouraged me to work hard by telling me that I might be able to attend Tsinghua University in the future. I was a

naughty student back then who disobeyed teachers and always misbehaved in class (such as talking to my classmates). Hearing my teacher's encouragement made me very happy. I told my parents about what my teacher said, and they also encouraged me to amend my naughty ways to do well in school."

The following story was related to how local teachers inspired student 5. She stated: "The teacher who taught the organization behavior course was a good researcher. She kept asking questions during discussion. You've got to think why it becomes, why it works that way and not another way. The teacher encouraged students a lot to participate in discussion. That is part of the grades. Sometimes, the teacher raised some interesting questions to motivate students or requested students to bring some activities for the others students. I have never been experienced such kind of course before."

### Participation

Student 20 said: "Sometimes when instructors asked for my suggestions or opinions, I wouldn't know what to say. In contrast, American students are usually more lively and expansive in conversations and they would propose many suggestions. I would make it a point to ask questions but I was not nearly as active as the American students."

### *Chinese Students Fear of Losing Face*

Student 8 said: “I think American schools have a very open environment in the classroom. When the teacher asks a question, students would raise their hands to answer the question that could be the wrong answer. To my opinion, how come can they raise hand even they didn’t know the correct answer. Most of the time, I used to keep quite even I knew the right answer. This is kind of a Chinese education culture. Once I gave the wrong answer, I lost my face. If I want to answer, I must give the right answer. Otherwise, I will keep silent.”

### *Being Native Students Frequently Ask Simple Questions*

Some participates mentioned the same situation that local students usually asked simple questions in class that made them uncomfortable.

Student 13 posted: “Students here would raise questions immediately without giving much thought. They would ask questions when they have things they didn’t understand without prior thought and they weren’t afraid to ask foolish questions. Some of the questions were really basic and the answers were right there to be found in the textbooks, but they still had to ask anyway.”

Student 17 said: “Perhaps it is because we came from different backgrounds, but I often wonder why American students bother with simple and trivial questions; I

thought asking questions of that type was such a waste of precious class time which could be put to better use if the instructor carried on with the lecture. That's how I felt sometimes but I know it is still good to have two-way communications and interactions."

Student 9 mentioned: "American students will ask any question even if that is a very simple concept. Perhaps, they will describe it again to clarify their thought. Then the professor will agree with them. I cannot understand why they want to speak again that which is common sense and everybody should know. I wonder will students feel confident for their communication in the classroom. Even so, American students never get tired of participating in class."

Student 22 said: "It depends on what questions the other students asked. I found some questions irrelevant and not worth mentioning. I also felt sometimes, "Can't you just shut up in class?" I was not the only one. There were others who shared the same feeling. Some students were real chatterboxes and talked about nothing important. I did not like this."

Student 23 said: "My American classmates often asked silly questions. They expected to make sure what they did were in right track and asked the teacher whenever they did not understand. They did not shy away from asking questions for fear of embarrassment. What I admired most was that the teacher also answered every single

question regardless what the students had asked. Teachers here were very patient.”

Due to this kind of classroom culture, these Chinese students have to change their learning habits.

### *Previous Good Experiences*

Because student 16 has had good experiences before, he likes to follow the same learning style as he took before. Student 16 has had good experiences to do research with his teacher at the undergraduate level. This experience influenced his learning style to future advanced level. This is his narratives statement: “I begin to reinforce my independent learning abilities and set goals for myself. I would gather some reference materials and literature to conduct my own researches and my teacher would give me pointers on my methods. When I had something I didn’t understand, I approached my teacher for further discussion, after classes were over.” He continued: “Professor Tsai at the automatic research institute offered his kind guidance in my graduation project for over a year. I got to know him better during the process. He not only gave me lots of useful suggestions and assistance with his professional knowledge but also was very nice towards his students. He was also took communication with students very seriously.”

### *Local Students Have No Time to Share With Chinese Students*

I found many of the Chinese students tend to be passive about cultural differences because their classmates have no time to share with them. For example, student 1 and student 3 complained they have not enough time to get along with local students.

Student 1 said: “Most of my classmates have their job. They left after class. I can only talk with them during the class break.”

Student 3 said: “For my master’s level classes, my classmates usually left immediately after class. We didn’t have much time to get along with each other as I did with my college classmates.”

Student 7 felt he always got along with classmates during college life but not now. He posted: “Master degree’s students have their jobs and families. It is unlike college where students can hang around together after class. We only meet during class. They left after class. There was no time to get along with them.”

Student 18 has similar description: “I would say I got along with my classmates okay; everybody has their own job outside of class. Most of us were closer with members within the same group and it was not like in Taiwan where students in the same faculty would hang out together and participate in group activities.”

The other reason is due to the ethnic differences issue, so student 25 liked to hang



around with Chinese students. He said: “I was closer to Chinese students than American ones mainly because of the English language. Language and communication is a decisive factor among ethnical groups.”

The final reason is that student didn’t want to change. As student 23 explained: “I mainly associate with Chinese. I have to change myself completely if I want to assimilate into the American circle, but I am reluctant to do so. I prefer the Chinese culture.”

### *Intervening Conditions*

According to Chinese students’ barriers described above, I found some factors which may affect their strategies. These general factors included (1) teachers allowing and encouraging students to ask questions, (2) small classroom size, and (3) students having to participate in class.

### *Teachers Allow and Encouraged Students to Ask Questions*

Owing that local teachers allowed and encouraged students to ask questions, Chinese students would try to become familiar with that teaching strategy. The following voices are their reflections about local teachers and students.

Student 6 said: “Teachers usually encourage students to ask questions. This is an

American style class. Students asked questions voluntary and the teacher was willing to answer too.”

Student 16 said: “The students required no encouragement from the instructors to pose questions and they were allowed to ask questions freely any time during class, even if they might be interrupting the instructor’s lecture. The instructors were also very patient when answering their questions.”

Student 17 stated: “Instructors welcomed questions from the students and didn’t mind being interrupted for it. Every instructor seemed to be perfectly fine with that. There were many teaching methods with two-way communication used throughout the semesters.”

Student 20 described: “I had an instructor who would divide the class into groups for group discussions and projects. We could ask questions freely during his class and he was similar to other instructors in other areas. American students are more active and expansive in conversations and they seem to be able to talk on and on under any situation, be it asking or answering questions.”

Student 2 said: “American students ask questions, without hesitation, when they are confused. It doesn’t matter if the teacher is still teaching; they would raise hands until the teacher saw them. Their questions are related to the courses. It’s a right time for other students to take a break and hear different voices. I can think more deeply about

the questions and have different points of view. I used to listen before the master's level, until now, I have to think about the real meaning."

Student 25 mentioned: "It is great where learning is concerned because questions can be answered right there. Especially in class, the case can be that students have the same questions raised by other students. In many occasions, I knew that I had questions, but other students raised the same questions while I did not. I could therefore get the answers I needed. Many others can benefit from it when students ask questions.

Teachers can also know what questions students have instead of having no idea what students' reaction may be."

Student 21 said: "It depended on the instructor; some instructors would encourage students to raise questions at any time during lectures."

### *Small Classroom Size*

The second reason is the classroom size has been changed. Chinese students are use to taking a big classes of more than fifty students. Now they have classes of ten to twenty students, so they have more opportunity to communicate with local teachers and classmates.

Student 7 recalled: "There were about fifty to sixty students in a classroom, even more than one hundred people before. It's very difficult to interact with students. The

class size was too big for teacher to pay attention to students' feedback or hear students' opinions. When there were only ten students, no more than twenty in a class, the teacher can focus on students' feedback.”

Student 21 said: “The difference mainly came from class sizes with 20 – 30 students per class in America and over 100 students in a Chinese classroom. Classroom interaction is possible here in America because of fewer students and we were able to ask questions. Lessons were mostly comprised of interactions with our advisor; we had weekly meetings and were required to report our progress. We could also talk to him about anything.”

Student 16 felt that it's good chance to know each other.

Instructors created a very relaxing environment in order for both parties to understand each other better. The students understood the theories and experiences the instructors were sharing and the instructors understood the students' needs in specific areas. In short, students and instructors had a better understanding of each other's needs.

### *Students Have to Participate in Class*

The third reason is that students were required to discuss or make presentations in class.

Student 15 seldom made presentations before, but he had to do this now. He said: “I

think American teachers' teaching style is similar to teachers in China, the only difference being that American teachers would often let students present their works in front of the class. Speaking from my personal experience, the only teacher I had that did that was my junior high school teacher. He would often make students speak in front of the entire class or let students assume the role of relief teacher.”

Student 3 said: “Perhaps the Education College has many group discussions, and teachers like students to express their opinions. There were great interaction among teachers and students.”

Student 18 stated: “When I took part in discussions during classes, I had to figure out ways to share and contribute to the group because it would be very weird if I was the only one who kept quiet. I would feel excluded if I did that. It just felt very natural to interact with classmates and be part of the group in America.”

### *Consequences*

This section presents how strategies worked for Chinese students. The following examples depict their changes in language improvement and accommodation to a new teaching style.

### *Language Improvement*

After English improvement, student 13 said: “I have done some presentations here that I would not have been able to if I were in Taiwan.” His reply confirmed that he has been changed, especially in language.

Student 4 spoke her learning process: “My strategy to overcome the barrier is to communicate with my classmates and officemates more to improve my listening comprehension and spoken English. Personally, I think my English needs more practice. This strategy helps a lot. In the first semester, I bought my classmates' notes sometimes. In the second semester, I can make notes by myself and understand better.”

Student 17 used the same strategy by hanging around with local students frequently, which let him making progress in the second language and local culture. He indicated: “You will find it easier to understand the American culture this way and your English will improve faster as well. That would be of tremendous help in your studies.”

Student 19 figured out that spending more time to prepare for class can solve the barrier especially in language difficulty. He suggested: “Don’t be afraid to ask questions; if you find yourself having trouble catching up in class, spend more time to prepare for classes in advance and read more often. Those who have just arrived here may feel helpless with their English, but it will get better once you have sufficient practice.” He thought everything

would be fine by having sufficient practicing.

### *Accommodation of New Teaching Style*

Some students learn to accept the American teaching style, e.g., student 16 made a good attempt to accept the local teaching strategies. He mentioned: “I think the most apparent change I have experienced was that I became more active and more willing to take initiative in my learning.”

Student 14 stressed learning interests; when he had accommodated himself to American teaching style. He thought: “The most important point is to be certain of what you want to learn. If you don’t like the course you are taking, switch to another one as soon as possible until you end up with the one you are truly interested in. Your area of specialization will determine your profession, and this is why you need to be 100% sure about the job you want to have in the future. If you have trouble making up your mind, simply try it out. Look at what people do in their jobs; it doesn’t matter how many jobs you change as long as you find the one that you are truly passionate about.”

Student 18 realized her change came from family. Since she had accepted the local teaching strategies, she became more active now. She stated: “My mom felt I have become much more realistic and practical after having lived in the US for a while because now I would try my best to seek solutions for any problem I have. Before I came to the US, I

thought I wanted to lead a carefree life and as long as I can get by, I wouldn't care about anything else. But now I would take care of things because I feel responsible for my own well-being.”

Student 14 focused on good interaction with his advisor. He believed he can do research smoothly by this way. He explained: “The point of all these interactions and exchanges is to get past the bottlenecks that students may encounter in their studies. Once students have made breakthroughs, they would have to rely on their own creativity to advance further.”



## CHAPTER FIVE: DISSCUSION and RecomendATION for Further Study

Since more and more International students have been studying in the United States, they must accommodate themselves to learning environments different from their own.

Many scholars have focused on quantitative research, but few researchers were discussed how these international students survive. Therefore, the present study investigated this phenomenon using a grounded theory systematic approach. This chapter will discuss the findings, including recommendations for College professors, international students, and related staff.

The purpose of this study was to understand why, when, and how international students adapt to a new language, a different academic environment, and an unfamiliar culture and society; what challenges they faced and how they overcome the barriers. By using a grounded theory approach, information related to each informant's perspectives on the focus questions was obtained by means of conducting face-to-face video interviews with selected UCF students from China and Taiwan. The learning routine of these students from their elementary age to graduate level was investigated.

Through the interviews, transcriptions, and data analysis, categories were created which I reported in Chapter Four to illustrate the changes in learning experiences of Chinese students. The categories included: 1) causal conditions (influences factors), 2) central phenomenon (students' learning difficulty in U.S.), 3) context (special factors affect

strategies used), 4) intervening conditions (general factors affect strategies used), 5) actions/interactions (resolution strategies), and 6) consequences (result). The challenge for Chinese students was that they have studied in a radically different educational environment. All participants' experienced learning difficulty in language, adaptation of teaching style, difficulty in doing research, and difficult in socializing with local students. The influencing factors were caused due to differences in the instructional styles of the East which they experienced from the past and the new challenges they had to face when going to learn in the United State. After identifying the influencing factors, how participants dealt with their difficulties and how their strategies worked were proposed. Finally, along with the analysis procedure, general and special factors that affected participants' decision-making was discussed.

### Findings and discussion

The main research question "How was Chinese students' learning in the American classrooms influenced by their previous learning experiences?" was addressed in all the situations and questions as what difficulties did they feel, how did they adapt to these difficulties, what influenced Chinese students' use of strategies and what happened after their learning strategies changed. The findings of main question are specifically addressed within the summary findings of the sub questions.

The findings for sub question 1 “What did Chinese students feel difficult in learning in the U.S.?” described as following.

Being there are many differences between China and America on education approach, this paragraph summarizes the different points that are worthy of comparison.

### *Obstacles Caused by Language Barrier*

These problems are “listening comprehension”, “speaking ability”, “writing ability”, “adaptation of teaching style”, “difficulty in doing research,” and “difficult in socializing with people and understanding some words in depth in making foreign friends.” As the participants shared their experiences about learning in the American classroom, what stood out to be the major obstacles was “language.”

James Wilkinson (2008) noted that, while Asian students can often get a high score on the TOEFL, they couldn’t speak English smoothly. In view of this, the speaking ability to speak English is the primary difficulty that Chinese students face. From the review of literature in Chapter two, Chinese students’ silence communicates negative performances. I feel that because Chinese students have traditionally accepted the lecture given in Mandarin from primary school to bachelor’s degree, all they listened to and spoke in class was Chinese. When suddenly they study in a new environment, it’s not easy for them to listen and talk in another language. Student 19 and student 20 felt they could not express

themselves correctly because of their limited speaking and listening ability. In addition, several interviewees have both listening and writing difficulties as well. Local Western teachers often do not understand their English writing.

### *Chinese Students Hard to Accommodate in Class*

Chinese students in China or Taiwan are shy, quiet and passive. They sit in the classroom and listen. They ask no questions and do not interact with others; all they do is listen. (Student 6)

Encountering, different teaching strategies is another barrier for Chinese students. Chinese students have been trained how to pass the examination and they prefer thinking about the questions first instead of challenging teachers. When they study in the United States, they have to change their learning attitude such as following the instructions as to how best to participate in class discussion and engage in classroom activities. Learning purposes for them have changed from exam orientation to research orientation, with deriving meaning about content that is taught and practical application being of foremost importance.

The emphasis of education and teacher-student interaction differ greatly between the East and the West. First, American students tend to ask a lot of questions. The Chinese interviewees never experienced such a frequency of talking in class like the local Western

students do. They found that local students ask questions all the time no matter while the teachers were teaching and no matter how easy the answers were. Secondly, they realized the purposes of teaching instructions in the U.S. is to stimulate students' creativity and thinking ability. In addition, local teachers used flexible teaching strategies and usually have continuous interaction with their students. This is very different than the passive learning the Chinese students were accustomed to before. Such difference causes major issues that impact the Chinese students' ability in study. Third, the focus on education outcomes is different. As I know, Chinese teachers focus on their students' academic abilities by training them to pass the exam required to enter the most popular schools. American teachers focus on students' goal by cultivating their learning interests. I prefer the latter; however, I do favor one characteristic in Chinese education: Chinese students were educated to figure out the questions first when they did not get it. After the struggle with thinking, students will ask their teacher for answers. I believe through the search for answers on the part of the students, they have better answers and make sense of unforgettable contents.

#### *Chinese Students Do Not Know How to Do Research*

According to interviewees' opinion, a main problem is that they are inexperienced in how to conduct research. Chinese professors usually tell students what to do, step-by-step. In contrast, Western professors encourage students do what they like. Another reason is that

Chinese professors assigned too many projects not related to the research for students. The result is that students do not have research foundation and framework to construct individual study. That's why Chinese students like to study abroad for learning real research.

I know Western teachers cultivate students to do some projects since they were young. The purpose is to train them with the process of inquiry and to arouse students' interests. Students learn to do research at a very young age. I think this is a great foundation for research. In the meantime, I felt learning in China or Taiwan is inflexible and rigid. All of the knowledge they received was spoon-fed education, this results in students lack of independent thinking and creativity. Chinese education has focused more on the "what" and not the "how;" therefore even students who have received a higher education degree need to be trained in the way to pursue knowledge. Although students have been studying from elementary school to the undergraduate level or even masters level, the upper levels do not guarantee that students are developing an understanding of how to learn. In other words, Chinese students have no ideas as to how to put into practice the textbook knowledge they learned. Consequently, learning how to apply what they have learned into research is an important lesson for Chinese students.

Many interviewees felt they had trouble getting along with local students. They just said hello as a common greeting and that ended the conversation. Besides the language issue, there are major gaps cultural and differences between Chinese and local students. Some factors related to cultural differences include the fact that the conversational teaching style in China or Taiwan is almost absent. Because discussion is not encouraged in Chinese classrooms, students do not need to socialize with their classmates. Neither do they learn how to communicate with strangers. When Chinese students move to a new environment, they have to learn and adjust to new in-class activities such as group discussions and presentation. They felt embarrassed about the change, mainly because their Chinese teachers did not address such skills. The second reason is due to the unfamiliar conversational context that is deeply rooted in American life experience and its past history. Chinese students cannot make sense of American proverbs and the American style of humor. They have little or no idea about some topics related to American history or places. The last reason is a different method of thinking. Although some interviewees regard their English was good enough to express the depth of their opinions as problem, the others did not think so. Even though some Chinese students can speak English fluently, cultural issues usually obstruct intimate friendships.

The findings for sub question 2” How Chinese students adjusted themselves to these differences?” displayed each student’s individual learning model. According to the

messages from interviewees, the strategies were varied. The best strategy depends on the requirement of each one for the different situation one has. However, two kinds of learning attitude groups are generalized from the interview information, which is classified as being either a “conservative” group or a “reformer” group.

The conservative group would like to spend more time studying independently. These students preferred the traditional study methods they were accustomed to in their home country. They believed that congenital deficiency could be made up through increased practice.

To my surprise, most interviewees fell in the reformer group category. They regard the difficulties they encountered as challenges with a positive attitude. This group of interviewees assimilated in the new learning environment and they tried to pursue their studies in a Western approach as did local students. They started asking questions, utilizing available resources, and taking part in social activities. However, while they did so, the Chinese students still focused on English improvement.

Furthermore, I found the language issue was not affecting those majoring in science, engineering, and mathematics programs because numbers and equations are a worldwide language. Students worked on experimentations, so they have no language problem than any other program’s students. Some interviewees even chose the professors from China or Taiwan as their advisers. Anyway, if these strategies worked for the Chinese students, which



can be counted on as being great ideas?

The findings for sub question 3 “What influenced Chinese students’ use of strategies?” can be divide into two categories.

The first category is intervening conditions. I concluded some general points which affected the strategies of interviewees in this paragraph. These points included flexible teaching instruction, small classroom size, and local classroom atmosphere.

Flexible teaching instruction is the first point. Chinese education has been marked as passive instruction and with for less communication between teachers and students. On the other hand, American style instruction is marked by both variety and flexibility. Many interviewees were impressed by local teachers who usually encouraged students to ask questions at any time, used group discussion, and group project. Now they like some interaction in class. It is evident to many of the interviewees that monotonous instruction is unwelcome to these Chinese students.

Secondly, the influences of classroom size on students are obvious. Interviewees mentioned they were used to study in classroom sizes with an average of fifty to sixty students. Sometimes there were more than a hundred students. It is hard for teachers to control such classes. Nevertheless, small classes enable communication between teachers and students. I think class size depends on different levels. Fewer students numbers are normal at the graduate level, not related to region or country. Students have to concentrate

and there will be more opportunity to raise questions or communication in the small classroom. Therefore, with smaller classes, the quality of teaching and learning is increasing.

While the classroom atmosphere is not really “teaching instruction”; it does rose a kind of unobtrusive and imperceptible change for students. When a student comes to new environment, he (she) has to force himself/herself to change in order to get along with others. For example, Chinese students always keep quiet in the Chinese classroom atmosphere. But, the same way is not possible while studying in the Western classroom; all of the participation such as discussion and presentation is part of the grade. If a student does not say something during a group discussion, that will be unusual. Therefore, I set up the Western classroom atmosphere as the last point.

Another category is context where I placed some special points which might influence Chinese students’ decisions.

### *Media Support Learning*

Some interviewees claimed that FEEDS (Florida engineering education delivery system) was very helpful. Why was FEEDS so popular to Chinese students? I found the reason is convenience. For English-as-a-second language students, listening problem can be overcome by watching instructional videos repeatedly. Students will not lose any

information even they can't attend the class. The greatest thing is they can review course contents anytime and anywhere. In addition, Chinese students can learn more about local teaching and learning models. I believe Chinese students would appreciate it if their academic programs have more media support. This media tool (videotaping) not only helps students overcome the language barrier, but also helps accommodate themselves to local teaching styles. From their statements, I realized FEEDS did help Chinese students in many ways. Their language barriers can be resolved by repeatedly watching the video. They can also understand local teaching style. The pity is that the media tool still not available to other colleges.

### *Interesting Classes*

There were some classes that impressed interviewees. Student 7 enjoyed the subject of debate class because he had never experienced this kind of class before. He did research and worked together with group members. The point is that students could feel the same format in instruction gets monotonous. The debate class got their interest. I think to change "learning by reading or listening" into "learning by doing" is necessary. This instruction not only stimulates students' enthusiasm in learning, but also cultivates the abilities of problem solving, voluntarily participation, and cooperative teamwork.

Another example was assigning students to conduct a class or a course. To teach a

course means spending more time on lessons, preparing teaching material, and learning how to teach. This situation is incredible to Chinese students because the Chinese teachers' position is very sacred. Since the role has changed now, students are not just knowledge receivers but knowledge deliverers. They have to consider many details. I think they become for more willing to open their minds from such experiences.

### *Question Issue*

Some interviewees said they would not voluntarily answer a question unless they had the right answer to avoid losing face. I found this is a part of the Chinese education culture. Chinese students used to keep silent even when they knew the right answer. They wanted to maintain the quality of the performance. But, they lacked the confidence to get into the unknown. Therefore, Chinese students were shocked when they saw local students tried to answer questions even though the answer was wrong.

Moreover, many interviewees have the same doubt about why local students usually ask simple questions. According to the statement of Harvard professor Wilkinson (2008), the questioning skills of Harvard students are not good. It is very difficult for students to raise good questions which is an important and fundamental ability. They have been told too many answers before they entered college. They are not curious any more. There won't be much time to think, so they are told the answer. Hence, students' learning efficiency is very

limited.

The findings for the last sub question, “What happened to Chinese students after their learning model changed?” came from the reflections of interviewees.

Chinese students have many barriers as I stated in Chapter 4 Section 1. After all, they have passed many hard times since they came to the United State. I found there were two kinds of learning attitudes among Chinese students. The first one is accepting the frustration.

That’s it. Another attitude is being mentally prepared to face the challenges. However, to compensate for a lack of natural talent by hard work is a necessary principle.

The common key words they voiced were “open mind”. I agree with them. But to know is one thing, to do is another. As I know, local graduate students are usually part-time students. They have jobs and families. They are busy and less patient in getting along with Chinese students. Even though Chinese students would like to be open-minded, there was little or no time for communication.

Some interviewees felt the important of learning aptitudes when they changed learning styles. It is good to know the benefit to Chinese students. In the Chinese education system, students with high exam scores have more choices to select academic programs than others.

In addition, transfer to another major is difficult. In contrast to the American education environment, changing to another academic program is easy. To make sure of what one wants to learn is so important because the area of specialization will determine one’s

profession. That is about the career of the future.

### Limitation

I considered some limitations that might affect the results of this study. First, the early educational experiences of interviewees who could not remember details since it has been a long time since they were in Asian classes. Validity of the study relies on participants' honest responses and clear recall of particular incidents or stressors in the interview.

Furthermore, the current Chinese education system has changed in recent years. For example, some interviewees in Taiwan frequently received physical punishment during the elementary level and junior high school. But this kind of teaching has been abolished by the Ministry of Education. Therefore, the perceptions of young students may be different. In other words, recommendations may not appropriate for the incoming freshmen.

Secondly, I did not considered the psychological condition of interviewees. As I described in Chapter 3, I used video recording during the interviews because I assumed there must be something important in their facial expressions, feelings, or emotions. Unexpectedly, I found nothing during the data analysis procedure. I should have realized some people would feel nervous in front of the camera lens after some students have dropped from the sampling because they didn't like to be video recorded. If I had just taken audio recordings of participants to talk and be more relaxed and felt no pressure; they would

have felt more natural and comfortable.

Third, the interview time might affected the quality of reply. While analyzing the transcription, I found the participants talking a lot at the beginning. When time passed by, they replied short answers after thirty minutes. Perhaps my interview skills were not good enough to guide participants. Perhaps interviewees lost their patience. Anyway, all the participants have finished the interview in the spirit of good cooperation.

Last, the English transcriptions might not represent the real perceptions of participants. Due to interviewees replying in Mandarin for the most part, the good things were they could talk smoothly, spoke clearly, and replied quickly. But, the bad thing was that the English transcriptions might not carry the same meanings of the participants' ideas.

Based on the limitations of this study, some factors were controllable and others were not. For example, I could control what kind of interview recording is comfortable to participants, but I could not control the interviewees' reply. However, I hope these can be reference materials for future research studies.

### Recommendation

The following recommendations were compiled from participations for Chinese students and local teachers. I think these are valued reference materials.

For students

1. Adjust learning strategies to become a flexible learner

Do not try to learn the same way you learned before. The learning environment is different now. Trying to observe and imitate local students such as finding and asking questions. Be courageous to face the problems. If you feel your idea is important and correct. You must raise your opinions.

2. Realize one's interest

Many students do not know what subjects they can take, nor do they have study goals. It is important to find your strength and weakness first, not to select a subject dependent upon a further job or scholarship. The Chinese teaching strategies before did not emphasize these points, students just considered basic need and how to survive. In the past we has no ideas about what we really like. But we have more choices now.

3. Resources utilization

Be independent and try to figure out problems. There are many ways in learning. One should know how to utilize the resources of available hardware and software.

4. Be Open minded

If you do not close your mind, and talk with Americans around you as much as possible, you will understand the culture of the U.S.A. Furthermore, take the



opportunity to join some academic organizations, student's corporation, and have fun in college. Based on Chinese education culture, students belonged to listeners of knowledge and usually passive in learning. I believe that students are supposed to develop an internal desire in learning. Students are supposed to manage what, where, when, and how to learn with available resources. Students can make changes if they want.

### Conclusion

In this research, Chinese students are expected to study in an environment that is reality different from their home country. These students have totally different learning experiences in the dynamic style classroom. In addition, Chinese students are supposed to adopt some new strategies of assessment which they felt difficult and uncomfortable.

Since education differences have been compared in this research, I found parts of American education strategies are appropriate to apply all over the world. Of course, I would not judge which side of education is best. Some Chinese students and Western scholars even consider the most ideal education is to merge the advantages of both education models. Then this kind of education is provided with an even greater foundation and innovation. Asian education that is based on different traditional culture and social backgrounds, it's very difficult to see the mixed education model. However, since Chinese students have studied at

UCF and they have experienced various issues and problems, they also recognized their learning strategies have changed. For this reason, there are some comments for Chinese students. It is better to adapt language and culture for Chinese students who plan to study abroad. For example, keep in touch with foreigners in China or Taiwan and one will be familiar with English and the culture overseas. Furthermore, positive emotion plays an important role in learning the process which complements perception and learning.

I believe most of the Chinese students appreciate the high quality teaching they accepted and they are also impressed by the informal and relaxed interactions between teacher and students. Therefore, there are some comments for lecturers. First, the lecturer's role should become facilitator and content of courses should focus not just on "what" but on "how to teach". Active learning is a tendency through the means of discussion and practice. Students are impressed not only by these strategies, but also realize how much they have acquired. Secondly, adopt the "minute paper" strategy to students after class, asking students to answer two questions in few minutes. The two questions are "what do you think the important concepts are in this class?" and "What do you consider are the problem in this class?" Therefore, the lecturer can evaluate students' learning situation from first answer and improve strategies from the second answer.

In summary, some strategies in this research could be applied by academics or faculty and/or adopted by colleges to make learning more humanistic. Education of international

students is increasingly important to the individual's development as well as contributing to America's revenue. Although Chinese students have experienced various problems at UCF, they eventually adapt to the new mode of learning. However, there still remain some issues and problems waiting for improvement by the University.

## APPENDIX A: STUDENT CONSENT FORM

April 7, 2007

Dear students

I would like to invite your participation in my study which I am conducting at the University of Central Florida as part of my doctoral studies. The purpose for the video interview is to understand your prior and current education so that I can better address your specific needs while studying in the United State. The interview should take about 40-60 minutes. The tapes stored in a locked cabinet with no identifiable information and the tapes will be overwritten or destroyed until they are no longer needed. The data will be kept in a password protected computer and the informed consent documents will be stored in a locked cabinet separate from all other study documents for a MINIMUM of 3 years.

Participation in this research will not affect your grades. You have the right reject to answer any question you do not wish to answer and you can withdraw from the study at anytime without consequences. There is no compensation or other direct benefit to your participation in this study.

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study. If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact me at (407) 278-5668. My faculty supervisor is Dr. Stephen Sivo. His phone number is 407-823-4147. Questions or concerns about research participation rights may be directed to the UCFIRB Office, University of Central Florida Office of Research, Orlando Tech Center, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL, 32826. The Phone number is (407) 882-2012.

Thank you for agreeing to assist in this study.

Sincerely,

Ming-Che Tsai  
Ph. D. Candidate  
Educational Research, Technology and Leadership  
University of Central Florida  
Email: [mctsai@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:mctsai@mail.ucf.edu)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Education:

Elementary School attended \_\_\_\_\_

Junior High School attended \_\_\_\_\_

High School attend \_\_\_\_\_

University(s) attended and degrees obtained \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_ on this date \_\_\_\_\_

Give my permission to conduct a video interview of me and to use the picture and words in support of the research as explained to me by the researcher. I agree that my image and words may be edited to be included as part of a larger video record but that all efforts be made to truthfully and accurately portray my comments in the context in which they were given.)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witnessed by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

First of all, please introduce yourself (where are you from?

What is or was your major in university, master's, and/or doctoral's degree, and how long have you been in the United States?)

In your opinion, please answer the questions from your experience from kindergarten to elementary school.

What do you think a good teacher's characteristics should be for a kindergarten to elementary school?

Who was the teacher that impressed you most? Why?

Did you have a teacher you did not like? Why?

Was the teaching one-way communication or multi-way communications? Please Explain.

What media did teachers like to use in classrooms if the equipment was available?

Did the teacher ask questions? Did they expect students to ask questions?

How did you feel when students asked questions in class?

How did you learn in this stage of learning?

Did you get along well with classmates? How?

Junior high school

How do you think a good teacher should be in Junior high school?

Who was the teacher that impressed you most? Why?

Did you have a teacher you didn't like? Why?

How did the teacher teach? (One way communication or multi-way communications) What



media did they use in class if the equipment was available?

Did the teacher ask questions? Did they expect students to ask questions?

How did you feel when students asked questions in class?

How did you learn in this stage?

How did you prepare for your exam?

Did you ever get commendation or punishment from teacher? What was the situation?

How did you get along with classmates? How did you do that?

Senior high school

What do you think a good teacher in Senior high school is like or does?

Who was the teacher that impressed you most? Why?

Did you have a teacher you didn't like? Why?

How did the teacher teach? (One-Way communication or multi-way communications) What media did they use in class, if the equipment was available?

Did the teacher ask questions? Did they expect students ask questions?

How did you feel when students asked questions in class?

How did you learn in this class?

How did you prepare for your exam?

Did you ever get commendation or punishment from that teacher? What was the situation?

Did you get along with classmates? How?

University

How did you feel about the college teacher?

What do you think a good teacher is like in the University?

Who was the teacher that impressed you most? Why?

Did you have teachers you did not like? Why?

How did that teacher teach? (One-Way communication or multi-way communications) What media did they use in class if the equipment is available?

Did the teacher ask questions? Did they expect students ask questions?

How did you feel when students asked questions in class?

What did you learn in this stage?

How did you prepare for your exam?

How did you get along with classmates? How?

Why did you decide to study in the U.S.A.?

How do you feel about the educational system in the United State? Do you like it? Why?

Master's level

How did you feel the college teacher in United States?

Who was the teacher that impresses you most? Why?

Did you have teachers you did not like? Why?

How did the teacher teach? (One-Way communication or multi-way communications)  
What media did they (teachers) use in class if the equipment was available?

Did the teacher ask questions? Did they expect students ask questions?

How did you feel when students asked questions in class?

How did you learn in this level?

What challenges in learning did you feel in the United States?

Was it easy or difficult to make friends in the United States?

Did you get along with classmates? How?

How did they (peers) influence your behavior?

If you can give advice to teacher, what's your opinion? (What's the ideal teaching strategy you like?)

PhD level

How did you feel about the college teacher was in United States?

Who was the teacher that impressed you most? Why?

Did you have a teacher you did not like? Why?

How did the teacher teach? (One-Way communication or multi-way communications)

What media did they (teachers) use in class if the equipment was available?

Did the teacher ask questions? Did they expect students to ask questions?

How did you feel when students asked questions in class?

How did you learn at this level?

What challenges in learning did you feel in the United States?

Was it easy or difficult for making friends in United States?

Did you get along with classmates? How?

How did they (peers) influence your behavior?

## APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL FORM



THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

*IRB Committee Approval Form*

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S): Ming-Che Tsai (Supervisor: Stephen Sivo, Ph.D.) IRB #: 07-4336

PROJECT TITLE: *An Account of How Chinese Students in the United States View the Full Span of Their Educational Experience: A Grounded Theory Investigation*

- [ X ] New project submission [ ] Resubmission of lapsed project # \_\_\_\_\_
- [ ] Continuing review of lapsed project # [ ] Continuing review of # \_\_\_\_\_
- [ ] Study expires [ ] Initial submission was approved by expedited review
- [ ] Initial submission was approved by full board review but continuing review can be expedited
- [ ] Suspension of enrollment email sent to PI, entered on spreadsheet, administration notified \_\_\_\_\_

Chair

[ X ] Expedited Approval

Dated: 3/28/07  
Cite how qualifies for expedited review: minimal risk and #6, #7

[ ] Exempt

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cite how qualifies for exempt status: minimal risk and \_\_\_\_\_

IRB Reviewers:

Signed: Tracy Dietz  
Dr. Tracy Dietz, Chair

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Craig Van Slyke, Vice-Chair

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Sophia Dziegielewska, Vice-Chair

[ X ] Expiration  
Date: 3/27/08

Complete reverse side of expedited or exempt form

- [ ] Waiver of documentation of consent approved
- [ ] Waiver of consent approved
- [ ] Waiver of HIPAA Authorization approved

NOTES FROM IRB CHAIR (IF APPLICABLE):

*please see email for title change corrected 2/8/07*

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