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International students' perceptions of intercultural communication apprehension

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Ling Liu

August 2007

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ABSTRACT

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION

By Ling Liu

This thesis investigates international students' perceptions of intercultural communication apprehension (ICA). The research is conducted from an interpretive paradigm by engaging in autoethnography and long interviews. By deeply analyzing international students' experiences and understandings of CA and ICA, this research reveals the relationships between ICA and language, ICA and situational conditions, as well as ICA and culture.

The research findings indicate: many environmental factors (e.g., language ability and cultural familiarity) could affect ICA; there is no significant order difference between ICA and CA in terms of five situational conditions (in public, unfamiliar group, familiar group, with a stranger, and with an acquaintance), and CA in the host culture is not always higher than CA in the home culture. For reducing ICA, three types of strategies are suggested: improving language ability, enhancing cultural familiarity, and developing psychological readiness for the host environment.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Education is a communication process. Students must use speaking, listening, and writing communication skills to receive instruction, clarify their understanding, and demonstrate learning. Yet, some students are handicapped in the classroom by severe anxiety about communicating. (Barker, 1982, p. 122)

Often when we meet people in our own culture, we are able to predict and explain others' behavior because we are familiar with the norms and rules of the culture. The norms and rules could provide us sufficient information to guide our behavior in the situation. However, we might not always be aware of them. On the contrary, when we interact with people from other cultures in a novel situation, we feel more uncertain and anxious. Gudykunst (1994, p. 49) declared that we become aware of the influence of our cultural identity on our communication when we find ourselves in another culture. I have had strong feelings about that since I came to the United States.

As an international student, I am now studying at San José State University (SJSU). The people here are friendly and the environment is beautiful; however I have more uncertainty and anxiety than I had in my native country. I was like a "new kid on the block" when I began my studies here.

Nowadays, numerous international students study in American classrooms. And most of them have experienced the same problems as me. Due to language barriers, cultural uncertainty, unfamiliarity with the environment, and so forth, they have more anxiety than in their home countries or than native American students have in the class. I recognize this is a very common phenomenon of intercultural communication: intercultural communication apprehension (ICA).

An Overview of CA and ICA

In my review of the literature, I found that numerous studies have illustrated this experience or phenomenon from different perspectives, such as communication apprehension (CA) (Chesebro, et al., 1992; Condit, 2000; Horwitz, 2002; Hsu, 2002, 2004; McCroskey, 1970, 1977, 1984, 1997), anxiety/uncertainty reduction (Berger, 1987; Gudykunst, 2005), environmental influences (Lewin, 1936; Pandey, 1992), cultural influences (Hall, 1992; Triandis, 1992), the biology of communication (Beatty & McCroskey, 2001), and so forth. Some scholars (e.g., Jung & McCroskey, 2004, Neuliep & Ryan, 1998) directly addressed this phenomenon as intercultural/interethnic communication apprehension.

The study of CA has a long and distinguished history, yet serious social scientific investigation into the issue was not undertaken until the middle of the 20th century. Originally, CA was viewed as “a broadly based anxiety related to oral communication” (McCroskey, 1970, p. 269). Later, it was defined as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78). During the past several decades, hundreds of studies have been conducted on the development, causes and etiology, consequences, and remediation of CA. At the end of last century, Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) introduced another context in which people may experience CA: that is, intercultural communication. They defined ICA as the fear or anxiety associated with communicating with people of different cultures and/or ethnic groups (p. 147). The present study will utilize this definition.

Heredity and environment are the two basic contributors to our destiny, but these two factors have led to some debate in the communication research forum: So far, researchers have been arguing whether or not CA/ICA is inherent (a question of nature or nurture), whether or not environment or situation affects CA/ICA, and whether or not CA/ICA can be reduced.

From the 1970s through most of the 1990s, most communication researchers held a “nurture” view and agreed that CA is learned through the environment. The vast majority of work has centered on reinforcement patterns in the family and school (Ayres, 1988; Beatty, Plax, & Kearney, 1985; Daly & Friedrich, 1981; Hsu, 1998). Some scholars suggest that a lack of skill produces CA (Philips, 1968) and that improving one’s communication skills should effect a reduction in CA (Kelly & Keaten, 2000). On the contrary, some researchers allege that CA can be unlearned and have developed interventions to instruct people in how to cope with CA (Ayres & Hopf, 1993). Since the late 1990s, some scholars have shifted their nurture view to a “nature” view, and transferred from the learning-based explanation of CA to a genetic-based explanation of CA. For example, Beatty, McCroskey, and Heisel (1998) proposed the communibiological paradigm, which emphasizes the role of neurobiological structures in the development of CA. They declare that environment has only a negligible effect on interpersonal behavior and those certain aspects of CA may have biological origins and are resistant to change.

Thus far, research has emerged that supports this claim (e.g., Beatty & Valencic, 2000; Bodary & Miller, 2000; Jung & McCroskey, 2004) as well as research that is less

supportive or wholly divergent (e.g., Ayres, 1997; Condit, 2000; Dwyer, 2000; Gudykunst, 1997; Kelly & Keaton, 2000).

Among the disagreements toward the nature/genetic view of communication traits, Gudykunst (1997, p. 327) argued that culture and communication influence each other reciprocally. The culture in which individuals are socialized influences the way they communicate, and the influence of cultural individualism/collectivism on individuals' communication behavior is mediated by their values, self-construals, personality orientations, uncertainty orientations, and power distance. Ayres (1997) also disagreed that CA is largely determined by genetic factors. His component theory of CA hypothesizes that an individual's CA is a product of the interaction between his or her self-perception of communication competence, negative evaluation and motivation in a certain situation. Concerning with environmental factors, Condit (2000) denied genetic causes as the primary sources of CA and called for a multi-causal model that includes both biological and environmental factors. She urged researchers to abjure the debate about whether nature or nurture is more influential in shaping human characteristics, and advocated they study both socio-cultural and biological inputs in order to get on with the task of exploring the ways in which human biology interacts with human coding capabilities.

About the Present Study

After reviewing the extent research, with some doubts and perplexed feelings, as an "ICA insider," I would like to engage in the forum to further that research and express

my understanding and interpretation of ICA. This research is an attempt to further the discussion on ICA of non-native English speakers.

Although there are numerous studies on ICA or related topics, only a few of them directly discuss the problem as ICA. Most of these scholars employ a discovery paradigm, while few studies engage in an interpretative paradigm. Since “a quantitatively oriented survey is not enough to provide in-depth data from the students” (Liu, 2001, p. 49), for my research, I embrace qualitative methods. My purpose is to comprehend and unveil the relationships between ICA and CA, and ICA and environment. I explore international students’ experiences and understandings of ICA, and their CA/ICA and situational conditions. I also discuss how non-native speakers of English perceive the relationship between CA and their home culture, and the relationship between CA and the host culture; and possible strategies for reducing ICA. I develop my research by using autoethnography and long interviews.

I propose this study to understand the etiological factors (heredity and environment) of ICA among international students who are non-native English learners – in order to more fully locate the etiology of ICA for non-native speakers of English so that these insights may help them to address and reduce their ICA, and become better prepared for new learning environments. Also this study may provide guidance to people from the host culture in constructing learning environments that facilitate intercultural communication among international students and teachers, host students and others as well.

The research findings indicate that many factors (e.g., language ability, familiarity of the host culture, language attitude, and self-confidence) could affect international students' ICA; and CA in the host culture is not always higher than CA in the home culture, which related to communicating situation/atmosphere/environment (e.g., evaluation, equality, and freedom for speaking). Therefore, ICA is not wholly genetic; on the contrary, it could be learned and be reduced.

Chapter Descriptions

I will briefly preview the following chapters. In Chapter 2, by reviewing the theories on the etiology of CA/ICA; the theories of environmental influences on the process of communication; Speech Community Theory; Uncertainty Reduction Theory; the four research questions of current study are raised respectively. In Chapter 3, the research methods (autoethnography and long interview) are explained, and the details about the interview procedure and questions are given. In Chapter 4, I describe my own experience of learning English, and my understanding of CA and ICA throughout my life history. In Chapter 5, by interpreting the data of the interviews, international students' experiences and understanding of CA and ICA are demonstrated firstly. Then the situational conditions when non-native speakers experience ICA are discussed. Third, how international students perceive the relationship between CA in their home culture and CA in the host culture is analyzed. Finally, strategies for reducing ICA are drawn out. In Chapter 6, I conclude the analysis in regard to the research questions and draw implications for the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the first chapter, an overview of previous research on CA and ICA, and the descriptions of present study were provided. In this section, in order to elicit international students' experiences and perceptions of CA/ICA, by reviewing the theories and etiology of CA/ICA, my first two research questions will be raised. Then, the theories of environmental influences on the process of communication, speech community theory, and uncertainty reduction theory will be employed to address my third and fourth research questions.

The Etiology of CA/ICA

As mentioned in the first chapter, CA was originally viewed as “a broadly based anxiety related to oral communication” (McCroskey, 1970, p. 269). Later CA was updated and presented as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78). And the CA construct has been considered to encompass both trait and situational views.

Types of CA

McCroskey (1997) divides CA into four types: traitlike CA – “a relatively enduring, personality-type orientation toward a given mode of communication across a wide variety of contexts” (p. 16) can be viewed as invariant characteristic of an individual; generalized-context CA – “a relatively enduring, personality-type orientation toward communication in a given type of contexts” (p. 16), such as CA about public

speaking, about speaking in meetings, in classes, in group discussions, or in dyadic interaction; person-group CA – “relatively enduring orientation toward communication with a given person or group of people” (p. 17); and situational CA – “a transitory orientation toward communication with a given person or group of people” (p. 18). The first two types are viewed as personality based; the other two are not, but rather as a response to situational constraints generated by the other people in the groups. In addition, since the previous four types of CA do not discuss different types of people, McCroskey (1997) recommends pathological CA – “abnormal levels of CA” (p. 21), to reference every individual who is affected by each type of CA to different degrees.

Etiology of CA/ICA

McCroskey's Thoughts on the Etiology of CA

For the etiology of CA, McCroskey (1997, p. 23) believes that both explanations of heredity and environment could contribute to our understanding: an etiological explanation “may be applied to all types of CA” (p. 23). And “without discounting a possible role for hereditary predispositions” (p. 36), McCroskey regards “communication behavior, as other human behavior, as a learned response to one’s environment” (p. 36). He also suggests that “basic competencies and basic skills cannot be separated from the problem of high CA” (p. 38).

For the causes of traitlike CA, McCroskey (1997, p. 23) suggests we consider the influence of both heredity and environment. This means that we can be born with CA and we can learn it as well. He mentions that, although no one has argued that children are born with certain personality predispositions or tendencies, reinforcement patterns in

a person's environment, particularly during childhood, are dominant elements. In other words, if a child is rewarded or praised for communicating, the child will communicate more; on the other hand, if the child is discouraged for communicating, the child will communicate less.

The major elements in a situation that can increase CA are novelty, formality, subordinate status, conspicuousness, unfamiliarity, dissimilarity, and degree of attention from others (McCroskey, 1997, p. 25); and according to McCroskey, in most cases, the opposite of these factors could lead to decreased CA in the situation. Novelty refers to an unfamiliar situation, which presents people with increased uncertainty about how they should behave. This might make the individual(s) become more apprehensive. Formality is usually "associated with highly prescribed appropriate behaviors, with comparatively little latitude for deviation" (McCroskey, 1997, p. 25); thus CA is also increased in formal situations. Related to formality, CA of subordinates might be increased because most appropriate behaviors are defined by the person holding higher status in superior-subordinate communication situations. As familiarity and similarity, McCroskey (1997, pp. 25-26) declares that, in general, the degree of CA decreases while the degree of familiarity increases, and similarity has a similar impact. In addition, the most comfortable situation for most people is to get a moderate degree of attention from others; with too much or too little, we can feel very uncomfortable.

In sum, McCroskey (1997, p. 26) states whether or not individuals have high, moderate, or low degree of CA, there are various elements that can cause our CA to increase in different communication situations.

Biological Predisposition and CA

Recent advances in neuropsychology have led some scholars to investigate the relationship between biological predisposition and communication anxiety. They reconceptualize CA as an expression of inborn, neurobiological structures, which are “superior to alternative social learning models in terms of predictive power, comprehensiveness of explanation, and parsimony” (Beatty et al., 1998, p. 212). Beatty et al. (2001, p. xi) assume that “all communication is genetically determined”; “neurobiological structures are completely responsible for behavior”; and “environment or ‘situation’ has only a negligible effect on interpersonal behavior.” They state five paradigmatic assumptions (Beatty et al., 2001, p. 128):

1. Temperament, personality, and intelligence vary as a function of an individual’s genetic programming.
2. Specific communication behaviors are not genetically programmed, but temperamental tendencies towards types of behavior (including communication behavior) are.
3. Communication behavior is primarily an expression of temperament, personality, and intelligence. Hence, people communicate differently primarily because they differ in terms of temperament and personality. Differences in intelligence (and resulting increased or decreased knowledge about and understanding of human communication processes) may result in expressions of temperament that are judged as more or less appropriate by others and may produce more or less positive outcomes for the communicator.
4. Situations have no more than a trivial impact on communication behavior, because
 - a. Genetic programming influences the selection of situations.
 - b. Genetic programming influences how people selectively perceive situations in which they find themselves.
5. Under most circumstances, genetic programming cannot be changed. However, genetic patterns may be impacted prior to birth by a variety of factors, as well as by drug and /or gene therapy either before or after birth.

As a result, CA could be viewed as genetically determined. But, on the other hand, they suggest that traits such as CA might be as much as 80% inherited, with 20%

due to environmental contingencies or learning processes. However, they have also clarified that “the ratio might very well vary depending on the communication function: some functions might be more genetic in origin than others” (Beatty et al., 2001, p. 78). They claim that “the paradigm they proposed is neither final nor definitive in any way” (Beatty et al., 2001, p. xi). The theory is very confusing: First, the researchers are still not quite sure about the results of their study, and, second, if we believe that CA might be as much as 80% inherited, isn’t there a problem with neglecting one fifth of the total possible causes?

A Multi-causal Model

On the contrary, Condit (2000, p. 7) strongly disagrees with Beatty et al.’s genetic view of communication. She argues that debates over the relative importance of nature vs. nurture are misguided, and analysis of the concept of heritability could not answer the “gene vs. environment” question. She declares that whether nature or nurture contributes more to human communication is an unanswerable question: “...from both the ‘symbolic’ perspective and the biological perspective, the question of whether nature or nurture is dominant is irresolvable” (p. 8). Condit also alleges that we should study both nature and nurture, and how they interrelate: “to study human communication in a material way requires that we go beyond biology and incorporate the study of the features of communication that are the distinctive emergent products of the complex coding systems that humans use” (p. 8). She regards that the biological possibilities are structured and formed by the physical properties, but the biological dynamics also add new possibilities; in other words, biology and environment are compound things with

variable overlaps and sways. For example, “a genetic structure that might have permitted tallness cannot produce that height unless proper nutrients are received at each crucial developmental stage” (Condit, 2000, p. 18). Thus, there is no way to contrast their degree of influence against each other. As a result, Condit states that CA is not 80% genetic. And she clarifies that

...any statistical formula that claims that traits such as neuroticism, extroversion, or communication apprehension have a .80 heritability is evidently erroneous in its results, whatever rationalizations are provided for reinterpreting the formulas and data. The errant conclusions arise in substantial part because the term “heritability” is so generally misused and easily misunderstood. (2000, p. 13)

Condit employs the founder of sociobiology's, Edward O. Wilson, definition of heritability: that is “the percentage of variation in the trait due to heredity” (2000, p. 13). And she demonstrates that because heritability can be only measured within given environments and groups, heritability is not a measure of the relative contributions of environment vs. genetics. She states that “in interpreting heritabilities, the fact that environment and genes interact creates complexities in the conclusions” (2000, p. 14).

In order to attend to the sophisticated and capricious interactions due to the many factors contributing to communication behaviors, Condit suggests a multi-causal model to replace a communibiological paradigm for communication. She claims that at least, genes, gene products, physiological environmental inputs, developmental processes, established biological structures, cognitive processes and inputs, cultural processes, social structural inputs, and codes should be included as the key components of any model of the role of genetics in human behaviors (2000, p.17). Human beings are symbol-using creatures, and most of us learn at least one code structure; “these code structures are a

key part of the cognitive developmental processes that accrete over time in our bodies to offer us a specific personality structure” (2000, p.18).

In conclusion, Condit abjures researchers to stop arguing which inputs and approaches are more important – nature or nurture, humanism or social science – and to explore the interaction of nature and nurture through the integration of the insights of social scientific, humanistic as well as biological approaches to communication. Still, the debate has continued.

Biological Predisposition and ICA

To further the research on the communibiological paradigm with respect to CA theory, Jung & McCroskey (2004, p. 170) design a study – “*Communication Apprehension in a First language and Self-perceived Competence as Predictors of Communication Apprehension in a Second Language: a Study of Speakers of English as a Second Language*” – which is based on the fourth neurobiological paradigmatic assumption (Beatty et al., 2001, p. 128). They conclude that CA in both first and second languages is correlated with genetic markers. Therefore, they allege that CA in both first and second languages is approximately equal. They provide us four hypotheses:

H1: CA in the first language is a better predictor of second language CA than self-perceived communication competence in a second language;

H2: CA in the first language is [a] better predictor of second language CA than number of years speaking English;

H3: CA in the first language is [a] better predictor of second language CA than length of time living in the U.S.;

H4: Communication apprehension in both first and second languages is correlated with genetic markers (E, N, and/or P). (pp. 175-177)

In order to verify the hypotheses, they employ the method of data analysis and hypothesis tests. They first asked 120 international students from 26 national cultures and different languages to be participants to complete three measures: the PRCA-24 (Personal Report of Communication Apprehension), the SPCC (a measure of Self-Perceived Communication Competence) and a 32-item instrument to assess temperament. They asked the participants: “how competent they believe they are when speaking their second language (English)” and administered two versions of the PRCA-24 instrument. One version asked them to respond with regard to when they speak English and the other asked them to respond with regard to when they speak their native language. They administered the temperament scales in random order to the participants. In addition, they solicited information concerning participants’ gender, age, home country, native language, years lived in the U.S., and years in which they have spoken English. The result they obtained is that the mean score for CA in English was found to be higher (55.8) than CA in the first language (51.7) (Jung & McCroskey, 2004, p. 178).

While the methods and hypotheses that the authors used and described are explicit, in my opinion, the theory that addresses ICA has the following flaws:

Firstly, the study neglects to indicate participants’ development. Assuming a student who has learned English for about 11 years, has lived in the U.S. about 2 years and 9 months (not a short period, it is possible for a student to learn a new language very well in the language’s domestic environment) and most of the time communicates in English, and has gained a high level or at least middle level education, it must be very strange if she or he still feels quite incapable or apprehensive in the environment. On the

contrary, over 10 years' English language learning could reduce some of their uncertainty about language and cultural differences. Further, living in an English environment and using the language everyday is perhaps the best way for someone to decrease her/his ICA.

Secondly, the theory's conclusion is ambiguous and obscure: "the present study supported the view that the etiology of trait CA is at least partially, and possibly wholly, genetic" (Jung & McCroskey, 2004, p. 180). If we believe what the authors said is true, then how can we address CA or ICA? It does not provide any possible solution. Therefore, it lacks applied value.

Thus, in sum, as an "ICA insider," I deeply doubt that genetic predisposition is the only etiology for ICA. This leads me to share my first two research questions as follows:

RQ1: How do non-native speakers experience and understand ICA?

RQ2: Under what situational condition do non-native speakers experience ICA?

Environmental Influences on the Process of Communication

Some scholars believe that the environment in which interaction occurs definitely influences the communication taking place. The environmental influence on our behavior is so strong that Lewin (1936) includes it as one of the two factors in his definition of behavior: $B = f(P, E)$, where B = behavior, P = person and E = environment. This suggests that the behavior in which we engage is a function of us and the people with whom we are communicating, as well as of the environment within which the interaction takes place.

Types of Environment

Environment is divided into the physical environment, the situation, situational norms and rules, and the psychological environment (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992, p. 178). The physical environment (geography, climate, landscape, and architecture) influences our feelings, emotions, and attitudes, which in turn influence our communication behavior. The situation relates to the setting and the purpose for communication, the participants, and the relationship between participants. The setting provides important cues that we use in determining how we should communicate. The purpose plays a large role in determining how we communicate in the particular situation. The people who are present and our relationship with them indicate whether we should speak formally, avoid certain topics of discussion and so forth. The norms and rules guiding our behavior are a function of the situation in which our communication takes place. Different cultures have different norms and rules – “there are patterned cultural differences in norms and rules” (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997, p. 154). The psychological environment encompasses our perceptual and cognitive beliefs about the environment, and how we use the environment when we interact with one another. For example, while people in some cultures perceive privacy through physical barriers – such as closed doors and fences – people in other cultures do not; rather, they perceive privacy as being regulated by psychological barriers – pretending the other person is not there, for instance. Obviously, all aspects of the environment influence communication. And “misunderstandings can occur whenever people from one type of culture find themselves to be in another type of culture”

(Gudykunst & Kim, 1997, p. 163) because their environment has changed and they are not familiar with the new environment.

Influence of Environments

Holmes (2004), in his research on ethnic Chinese students studying in a western learning environment, presents an outsider's (a native English speaker's) view on the impact of cultural differences as Chinese students engage in communication and learning in a New Zealand university. The purpose for this study is to enhance understanding and raise challenges for teachers in constructing learning environments that facilitate intercultural communication among international students and host students. The author uses several methods, such as observations, interviews, and informal meetings to develop the research and discussion. The article first unfolds the differences in learning and intercultural communication and the result that Chinese students are likely to experience learning and communication dislocations. Then it shows us the two main questions prompted by the situation:

How do Chinese students make sense of their communication and learning experiences with cultural others within a business school in a New Zealand university?

What implications do these experiences have for business teachers? (Holmes, 2004, p. 297)

To answer these questions, the author conducted an ethnographic investigation of 13 ethnic Chinese students' learning and communication experiences over an 18-month period. These students (7 from China, 3 from Malaysia, 2 from Taiwan, and 1 from Hong Kong) were in their 1st year of study in undergraduate, diploma, or postgraduate programs. The findings of the investigation are:

Participants' accounts suggested that they had little knowledge of New Zealand society, culture, or education before beginning their studies. Upon arrival, they all experienced various degrees of reality shock that is, when the cultural patterns of the approached group do not have the authority of a tested system of recipes already formulated by the individual in his or her first culture. (Holmes, 2004, p. 298)

The participants had difficulties becoming involved in discussion because they were only or primarily familiar with a one-way, directive communication style between teacher and student, not a Socratic style. The author concludes that the Chinese students need to “reconstruct and renegotiate their primary culture learning and communication styles to accommodate another way” (Holmes, 2004, p. 303). Finally, the article shows us five suggestions for those (teachers, international students, and local students) in host universities. The basic idea for these suggestions is either international students or host teachers and students should be required to extend the understanding of communication similarities and differences between different cultures (ethnic Chinese and host students) in Western education contexts to promote better intercultural communication experiences, and Chinese students need better preparation for the culture shock they will encounter in the new learning environment.

Therefore, in short, the environment and our perceptions of the environment may influence our communication, and possibly our ICA/CA.

Speech Community Theory

Based on Dell Hymes's theory, Wood (2004, p. 221) defines a speech community as a group of people who share not only a common language but also understandings of rules and norms that guide how members of the group practice and interpret speech activities. A speech community exists when a group of people understands goals and

styles of communication in ways not shared by people outside of the group. A speech code is “a system of socially constructed symbols and meanings, premises, and rules pertaining to communicative conduct” (Philipsen, 1997, p. 126).

Cultures provide people with ways of thinking – ways of seeing, hearing, and interpreting the world. Intercultural communication refers to “the communication process that takes place in a circumstance in which communicators’ patterns of verbal and nonverbal encoding and decoding are significantly different because of cultural differences” (Kim & Ruben, 1992, p. 404). It is manifested when we use a foreign language to communicate with people from a host culture; our native language influences our ways of using a non-native language. It will obviously lead us to misinterpret and misunderstand each other because we are outsiders. As we come from different environments, we don’t belong to the host speech community and we use different languages, norms, rules, and so forth. This situation could create and amplify CA.

If international students are apprehensive about speaking their own language, their fear of communicating must be magnified tenfold. In addition, even those international students who are not apprehensive about speaking in their own language can become apprehensive about speaking in English. (Lucas, 1984, p. 594; cited from Jung & McCroskey, 2004, p. 172)

This means if people have CA in their native languages, ICA must be higher. If they don’t have CA in their native languages, it is possible to have ICA because of the new environment and situation. This gives rise to my third research question:

RQ3: What is the relationship for international students between CA in the home culture and CA in the host culture?

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Just like no two individuals are quite alike, no two cultures are quite alike, either. Intercultural communication presents a significant amount of differences between interactants' cultural backgrounds. Cultural differences introduce a high degree of unfamiliarity to interactants. Unfamiliarity and cultural difference between culturally dissimilar interactants bring the experiences of anxiety or lack of "attributional confidence" (ICA) to the interactants (Gudykunst, 1988, p. 123).

Uncertainty reduction theorists believe: "Similarities between persons reduce uncertainty; dissimilarities produce increases in uncertainty" (Wood, 2004, p. 187). They also think that as we learn more about normative behaviors in the new culture, it becomes more familiar and predictable, and we become more confident of our ability to explain and predict others' actions and others' responses to various actions we might take. This reduces our ICA.

To sum up, speech community theory and uncertainty theory provide us an explanation for ICA, as well as the possibility for reducing it. Therefore, genetic predisposition is not the only etiology for ICA. We can not neglect environmental influences. On the contrary, we should recognize environmental influences and gain more adaptability to help reduce our ICA. Thus, my last research question is as follows:

RQ4: What are strategies for reducing ICA?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, first, theories on CA and the debate regarding the etiology of CA/ICA were reviewed. Second, the studies on environmental influence were explored.

Third, speech community theory and its relationship to CA/ICA were demonstrated.

Fourth, uncertainty reduction theory and its relationship to CA/ICA were discussed.

Each gave rise to my research questions. In the next chapter, the paradigm, methods, and participants of the study will be explained. The concerns regarding qualitative study and my positionality as a researcher will be discussed as well.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Paradigm

A paradigm is a sort of philosophy guides a researcher to her/his research questions and methodology. Researchers usually view paradigms as the worldviews or belief systems that guide investigators. Baxter & Babbie (2004) stated that paradigms are models or frameworks “for observation and understanding that shapes both what we see and how we understand it” (p. 426). According to them, in communication research, we could see four paradigms: positivist, interpretive, systems, and critical. During the past four decades, several debates (e.g., Datta, 1994; Gage, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Rossi, 1994) have raged for superiority between the two major paradigms: positivist and interpretive. Unlike the natural sciences, in the social sciences, competing paradigms might exist simultaneously. Moreover, “Ultimately, paradigms cannot be true or false; as ways of looking, they can only be more or less useful” (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 48).

Generally though not exclusively, the positivist paradigm underlies quantitative methods and research in this vein aims to predict cause-and-effect relations among variables; on the other hand, interpretive paradigm typically underlies or informs qualitative methods, and the researchers are interested in understanding meanings and how they are constructed. Although the positivist paradigm has been more dominant in communication studies research, perhaps because it is believed more “scientific” than interpretive paradigm, for research that seeks to describe the participants’ “voices” rather than identify causes and predict behavior, the interpretive paradigm would prove more

useful. Lindlof & Taylor (2002, p. 11) identify the commitments of the interpretive paradigm as follows:

- The “human sciences” concerned with experience and social action are inherently different from the natural sciences.
- Realities are plural, simultaneous, and local phenomena.
- Realities are socially constructed by and between human beings in their expressive and interpretive practices. Meaningful realities are emergent, collaborative, and symbolic in nature.
- Research should privilege deep understanding of human actions, motives, and feelings. It should illuminate how cultural symbol systems are used to attribute meaning to existence and activity.
- Knowledge of social realities emerges from the interdependence of researcher and researched. The researcher does not use methodological instruments. The researcher is the instrument.
- Knowledge claims are inevitably positioned and partial. As a result, researchers should reflect on and account for the contingencies of their claims.
- True knowledge is gained through prolonged immersion and extensive dialogue practiced in actual social settings. Intimate familiarity with the performance and significance of social practices (e.g., involving membership) is a requirement for adequate explanation.
- Knowledge claims should preserve the subjective experience and motivations of social actors in their meaningful performances.

To sum up, in my interpretation, interpretivist researchers believe that human action is centered in meaning. Their goal for research is to understand what action(s) mean(s) to people in the particular context or process which the action(s) take place. For the present study, I would like to explore international students’ perceptions of ICA and develop a deep understanding of how they understand or apprehend the cause of ICA as well as their strategies for reducing ICA. Thus, I will embrace an interpretive paradigm.

Qualitative Approaches

According to Creswell (1994), “A qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural

setting” (pp. 1-2). This means that qualitative researchers attempt to decode, or construe phenomena with respect to the meanings participants bring to them. McCracken (1988) observes that qualitative methods are most useful and powerful when they are used to discover how the respondent sees the world: “The qualitative researcher uses a lens that permits a much less precise vision of a much broader strip” (McCracken, 1988, p. 16). Unlike quantitative research which usually precisely focuses on a narrow strip of the field, qualitative research seeks for complex interrelationship between many categories rather than sharply delineated relationship between a limited set of them. It is especially useful for the purposes as following aspects:

- Understanding the meaning, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, and actions they are involved with, and of the accounts that they give of their lives and experiences.
- Understanding the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence this context has on their actions.
- Identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, and generating new, “grounded” theories about the latter.
- Understanding the processes by which events and actions take place. (Maxwell, 1998, p. 75)

In terms of my study, a qualitative approach should be a wise choice because it is significant for researchers to reach their participants’ perceptions of the events, actions, and meanings that are shaped by the unique circumstances. As a result, mainly I will embrace two qualitative approaches: autoethnography and long interviews.

Autoethnography

Goodall (2000) claims, “If we are willing to study others, we ought to be equally willing to place ourselves, our lives, our families, under the same critical scrutiny” (p. 110). As an ICA insider, prior to discussing my interviewees’ experiences and

perspectives about the related factors of ICA, I will first share my own experiences and views as an autoethnography.

Baxter & Babbie (2004, p. 64) state that we can see only through our own eyes, and anything peculiar to our eyes will shape what we see. We can hear things only through the way our particular ears and brain transmit and interpret sound waves. And we can only write or speak out what we see, what we hear, and what we ponder. Autoethnography as a creative narrative focuses on examined accounts of experiences from one's own life that are "shaped out of a writer's personal experiences within a culture and addressed to academic and public audiences" (Goodall, 2000, p. 9). As an ICA insider and a non-native English learner, this is a good way to construct my personal voice and develop my self-reflexivity in relation to the issue of ICA.

In my autoethnography, I share my own experiences of learning English and how they relates to my CA and ICA, my attitudes toward the relation between my ICA and environment, as well as what I regard as strategies for reducing ICA. By the means of autoethnography, I can freely share my "self-reflexive 'voice'" (Goodall, 2000, p. 23) on my CA/ICA, but it might not be sufficient to answer my research questions – readers might "mistake my desire to produce a credible voice for the production of too much self-ish prose" (Goodall, 2000, p. 24). In-depth interviewing can be the complement, since it could take me into other international students' world.

Interviews

Interviewing may be defined as "a data collection in which an interviewer questions people to elicit self-reports of their opinions, attitudes, values, beliefs or

behaviors” (Sproull, 1995, p. 162). By interviewing, researchers can elicit information directly from people, and find out why people feel or respond the way they do as well as have an opportunity to probe for more information or insight.

McCracken (1988) describes the long interview (also referred to as an in-depth interview, see Baxter & Babbie, 2004) as follows:

The long interview is one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory. For certain descriptive and analytic purposes, no instrument of inquiry is more revealing. The method can take us into the mental world of the individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. It can also take us into the lifeworld of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience. The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves...
...Without a qualitative understanding of how culture mediates human action, we can know only what the numbers tell us. The long qualitative interview is useful because it can help us to situate these numbers in their fuller social and cultural context. (p. 9)

In my understanding, what McCracken addressed is that by using long interviews, investigators could discover interviewees’ ways of seeing, their ways of being, and what the social world means to them. As a result, I employed long interviews to develop my research, and “to understand the deep meaning of individuals’ experiences and how he or she articulates these experiences” (Yokomizo, 2002, p. 19). Therefore, I could gain access to how non-native speakers experience and understand ICA, under what situational conditions do non-native speakers experience ICA, the relationship for international students between CA in the home culture and CA in the host culture, and their strategies for reducing ICA.

Since “Most people are more comfortable speaking than writing” (Frey at el., 1992, cited in Yokomizo, 2002, p. 21), I met with my interviewees face to face. In terms

of my interview procedures, I interviewed seventeen international students: Fifteen of them were studying in different departments at SJSU, e.g., Studies in American Language (SAL) and Communication Studies Department; and the other two just graduated but were working as F1 student (international student visa)) with optional practical training (OPT) status.

In order to analyze the interviewees' viewpoints on the research questions, my interview guide was semi-structured (see Appendix III for the student interview protocol). Questions one to five were introductory questions interviewees might easily answer so that they could feel comfortable narrating their stories and understandings, and I could establish a rapport with them. This offered important background information as well. In questions six to ten, my interviewees talked about their own experiences and feelings about using English to speak up in different situations. These questions could help address the interviewees' CA and ICA and explore how my interviewees view the relationships between CA and ICA, and ICA and environment. Questions eleven to fourteen inquired the interviewees' opinions on the factors that could affect ICA as well as strategies for reducing ICA

In addition, in order to help me better understand international students' ICA and collect practical strategies through different perspectives, I also interviewed four instructors from the SAL program at SJSU. Instructor interviews were similarly structured to the student interviews; see Appendix IV for the instructor interview protocol. Question one was a general information question. Questions two to four were used to

illuminate what instructors perceive to be the reasons for ICA, and questions five to eight revealed instructors' strategies for reducing ICA.

The length of each interview was about one hour so that I could explore details of interviewees' experiences, feelings, and thoughts. All the interviewees' names are pseudonyms. The interviews were recorded by a mini recorder with participants' permission.

After interviewing, I transcribed recordings of each interview. In general, Rossman and Rallis (1998) demonstrate stages of interpreting and analyzing data as organizing the data, being familiar with the data, classifying categories, coding, seeking for alternative understandings, and writing. In organizing the data, I classified it with prefigured broad categories of themes and patterns that could relate to CA/ICA: language skills, experience, audience, situation, cultural background, identity, place, climate, personality, motivation, willingness and other factors. After each interview, I reviewed the interview and notes, familiarized myself with the data, and modified my questions and expressions for the next interviews. In coding the data, I made them concrete by segmenting them into smaller topics and patterns. Then I judged what was significant and what was not, evaluated and justified how my interpretation was sound. In doing so, I tried to invoke the radical subjectivist position but carefully negotiated the relation between my interviewees and myself.

Qualitative Research Issues and My Positionality

McCracken (1988, pp. 11-12) mentioned, in qualitative research methodology, there are several areas of controversy, such as, the relationship between the investigator and his/her own culture, the relationship between the investigator and the respondent, and the relationship between investigator and the data. These are the great potential and great difficulty of qualitative research that qualitative researchers need to face and engage.

To confront these intricacies, for the present study, I first view myself as an “instrument.” McCracken (1988) stated that “as a metaphor,” “investigator as an instrument” is very important and useful “because it emphasizes that the investigator cannot fulfill qualitative research objectives without using a broad range of his or her own experience, imagination, and intellect in ways that are various and unpredictable” (p. 18). Using autoethnography is good way to present or disclose my experiences of my ICA in my study, because in it, I can address where I am standing, or will stand, when I participate in my interviews.

Second, during my interviewing, I tried to avoid “what is commonly called ‘active listening’ (McCracken, 1988, p. 21)” since it is destructive of good data; instead I worked to “‘read’ the hidden meaning of speech and gesture and ‘play it back’ to the respondent” (McCracken, 1988, p. 21). I avoided consciously coaching the participants to express as well as inadvertently listening. Mainly, I focused on how international students view and make sense of their experiences of CA/ICA. Cissna & Anderson (2002) restate Buber’s view on “interhuman relationship”: “each person happens to the other as the unique and particular person that he or she is”; “the interhuman relation, therefore, is not one of subject to object, but of a partner to partner” (pp. 50-51). While doing my interview, I

presented myself as both an investigator and an international student (or a former SAL student). This helped balance the relationship (formality – informality) between the interviewees and me, and reassure the interviewees that I could be trusted to maintain the confidentiality I promised. This, I hoped, invited my interviewees to feel much more equal and comfortable to talk. Consequently, this approach offered me more opportunity to determine their meaning and feeling about ICA, since “meaning dwells in the ‘between’ of their relationship, in the dialogue in which they participate together” (Cissna & Anderson, 2002, p. 51).

I believe “all our experiences are inescapably subjective” (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 64) and “no knowledge about a reality that is ‘out there’ in the social world can be obtained from interview” (Miller & Glassner, 1997, p. 99). There is no way out. But this subjectivity does not mean whatever we think; it means “objectively reporting on the subjectivity of our subjects” (Thomas, 1993, pp. 16-17). In other words, it means intersubjectivity – “the sphere of between” (Cissna & Anderson, 2002, p. 50). Dilthey (1927) declared his opinion on human expression as:

Every single human expression represents something which is common to the many and therefore part of [the] objective mind. Every word or sentence, every gesture or form of politeness, every work of art and every historical deed are only understandable because the person expressing himself and the person who understands him are connected by something they have in common; the individual always experiences, thinks, acts, and also understands, in this common sphere. (Cited in Thomas, 1993, p. 10)

Since I am an international student, an ICA insider, I have experienced ICA through my ongoing learning process in the United States. Unveiling my experiences and my understanding of ICA could be connected to the “common sphere” of ICA. With

my interviewees, I asked open-ended questions (e.g., what and how questions) to encourage them to express their comprehension of and feelings about CA and ICA. Then I discussed how these “objects” (e.g., CA and ICA) are related to the “common sphere” through data analysis. I strived to be aware and critical of my own perspectives and to reach the intersubjectivity between my interviewees and me objectively. I agree with Goodall’s (2000) standpoint on research:

Viewed this [ethnographic] way, to observe others is to *colonize* them. To write their experiences in your book or article is to *use* them. It is to place yourself, as author, in a *superior relationship* to the persons you are observing, hearing-in, and analyzing... (p.110, emphasis his)

It is this sense of self-critique and accountability I hope characterizes the present study. As a researcher as well as an ICA insider, by the means of autoethnography and in-depth interview, I could better keep the balance between the primary research position as an international student and the secondary research position as an investigator. By taking the primary position – writing an autoethnography, I will freely share my own experiences of learning and speaking English and my standpoints on CA and ICA. By taking the secondary research position – interviewing, I interpret and analyze my interviewees’ experiences and understanding of CA and ICA from a critical perspective. Thus, my attitudes toward to the two research positions are not opposite but rather complementary.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the paradigm and research methods, the issues of qualitative study, and my position in the study were presented. In the next chapter, autoethnography is employed as a method of explaining my personal experiences of learning English as a

employed as a method of explaining my personal experiences of learning English as a non-native speaker. This chapter will help illuminate my perceptions of ICA and provide chances for readers to “touch” the ICA in my world.

CHAPTER 4

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

In this chapter, I share my own experience of learning English, and my experience and understanding of CA and ICA. By disclosing myself, I would like to provide readers with some background information and insights about my standpoint, and then probably encourage them to maintain their/our comprehension of CA and ICA intersubjectively.

My Family, My Father, English, and Me

I am Liu, Ling – a female from the People's Republic of China. I grew up in a famous ancient town, Downtown Jingzhou (the center of Jingzhou City), which has more than two thousand years' history. My parents are from different villages of Shishou County which is one hundred miles away from Downtown Jingzhou. My father is from a large family with eight siblings, and my mother is an only child. My parents have two children: my elder brother and me. My brother is seven years older than me. I got married in 1997. And my husband and I have an eight year old daughter. I should say my family is an average family in China.

My father retired as a government officer: he was a president of a local education bureau in Downtown Jingzhou. Before being an officer, he had been a president and English teacher of a public school (which included an elementary school, a junior high school, and a high school), as well as a dean and a professor in a teachers' college. In general, my father was the decision maker and spokesman of my family. My mother worked and lived in another town while I was young. Before starting school, most of the time, my brother and I were taken care of by our grandparents in the countryside, and we

started schooling at the same school where my father worked. I should say my father is an excellent teacher as well as a great father. But my brother and I both think he was too strict with us, which possibly precluded us from being more expressive and extroverted. We were very talkative in front of other family members, but while facing my father, we could not talk about what we really thought and wanted. Our grandparents, uncles, and aunts always teased us: when we saw our father, we looked like “the mice who encountered a cat.” I should say: In my childhood, I had CA while talking with my father. This kind of communication pattern was very common between parents and their children in my generation. In China, parents had very strong authority over their children. Chinese parents believed the traditional saying “*gùn bàng dǐ xià chū xiào zǐ*,” which means children need to be punished, such as hit with a stick or club, in order to become worthy progenies. In English, this saying is “Spare the rod, spoil the child.”

My father didn’t teach me any English until the summer holiday after I graduated from elementary school, when I would start learning English the next semester in junior high school. That was in 1982; China opened “her gate” to the world for just a couple of years. And English was becoming more important. At the beginning, I was very interested in learning, since before that, I often heard my father practice listening and speaking with a huge recorder and an old radio. I really loved the reporters’ voices on *Voice of America* – even now I still like their voices. It made me interested in learning English. I also knew English would become important like science courses. We have a saying about that: “*xué hǎo yīng yǔ hé shù lǐ huà, zǒu biàn tiān xià dōu bú pà*.” It means if someone is good at English and science courses (e.g., math, physics, and chemistry),

he/she might work anywhere in the world. But that my father hit me when I couldn't pronounce "θ" and "ð" well made me start hating learning English. Consequently, I got more punishments and I hated it more. Another reason I hated studying English was that it filled my "free" summer holiday, which was supposed to have no homework. The more punishments I got, the more frustration with English I felt. Subsequently, I avoided learning English as much as I could, and of course, tried not to speak with my father.

Things changed after I was rewarded in school. Because of my father's "punishments" (e.g., memorizing my textbook), although I disliked learning English, I could have already recited all the lessons in my English textbook. I was appointed to help other students; I was very proud of in the role of a "little teacher." This helped recover my interest in learning English. By then, I felt comfortable speaking English in front of my English teacher and my classmates, but very apprehensive when my father wanted to test or check me.

English as a Powerful Language

After finishing junior high school, I attended a normal school to learn child development and prepare to be a kindergarten or preschool teacher – of course, the decision was made by my father. We didn't have any regular English class then, so I almost stopped learning English. It seemed that English was not important for me anymore.

But five years later, while I was studying Chinese Literature and Pedagogy, I figured out that if I would like to have a B. A. degree, I had to pass an English test. Then I started to learn English again. I didn't take any class, just self-study. I chose two sets

of textbooks: *Xu, Guozhang English* and *New Concept English*. The first one was good for learning grammar, and the other one consisted of interesting Western stories. Reading some stories was fun, but learning grammar and vocabulary was really boring – especially learning for some test as purpose. But later, I passed the test and got my B.A. degree. Afterward, I said to myself, “Ok, that’s it. Goodbye, English!” Hence, after obtaining my B.A., I didn’t really continue studying English.

Between 1994 and 1995, I visited Singapore for several months. At that time, one of my brother’s friends asked me to serve as her substitute for teaching Chinese in a kindergarten. The school was a private school and the students were from middle or upper class backgrounds. The class I taught had eight students who were from different counties and cultures. Whatever native language they spoke, at school they learned two languages: English and Chinese. However, teachers and parents mostly communicated in English, since English is the official language in Singapore.

I was not required to speak English and didn’t really need to worry about communicating with parents, since I was a volunteer Chinese teacher and the English teacher of the class was responsible for communicating and reporting; yet, I felt uncomfortable communicating both with parents and other Singaporean teachers. My English was poor and I was afraid of saying something wrong or inappropriate. In that case, I should say I had ICA. I consciously avoided speaking in English as well as talking with parents. If it was not necessary, I often kept quiet. Instead of talking to people, I just smiled to greet them.

By the time I came back from Singapore, the school I worked for was in urgent need of an English teacher. Since I got my B. A. by passing a certain level of proficiency on an English test, and since I had the experience of visiting Singapore, which uses English as its official language, the president asked me to teach English instead of Chinese.

Since I sensed the importance of English, I took the challenge and started teaching English. But because I had not majored in English, I felt that I needed to return to school to learn more about it. I went to a local university in my hometown part-time for about three years and, after taking a lot of tests, I got a diploma for teaching English. Meanwhile I took and passed the English test for my M.A. degree. English helped me achieve my degrees and diplomas – English was indeed a powerful language! Without it, I could not get either my B.A. or M.A. degrees.

My American Teacher: Hello Judy!

In the summer of 2003, I attended an intensive speaking and listening program for training English teachers of Jingzhou City. The instructors were all from North America, and Judy was my first American teacher. She was from Tennessee. I met her the day before our class started.

It was a very hot afternoon. She was setting up the classroom while I was looking for the classroom. The first time I was walking past the classroom, I didn't see the sign on the front door that had her name "Judy Ditmyer" on it or she had not put it up yet. But while I was passing by, the very nice smile she gave me was impressive. The classroom was at the end of the hallway; this meant that I had missed or overlooked the number of

the classrooms and had to go back to recheck. I turned around and the first one was the classroom Judy was in (later it was my classroom for 6 weeks). I suddenly saw the sign and the name. The first thing that came to my mind was Judy's nice smile. I thought, "I will have a nice foreign teacher! Should I go inside to talk to her now? Is it ok to interrupt her work? What should I say?" While I was hesitating, I had already passed the front door, so I said to myself, "Anyway, I will talk to her tomorrow!" But on the other hand, I wondered, "She looks nice. It is a good opportunity to talk with her and practice my English listening and speaking. Why not take the chance?" Then I prepared what I would say to her in my mind for a while and went back again to the classroom.

"Excuse me, are you Judy Ditm – Ditmyer?" I was not sure how to pronounce "Ditmyer." It made me feel more embarrassed.

"Yes? Oh, yes, I am Judy Ditmyer." She stopped hanging a picture, looked at me and answered.

I was sweaty and panicked for a while and then tried to control my nervous feelings, "My name is Ling Liu. I will be your student. How do you do?" I gave her my hand to shake hands.

"Oh, how do you do?" She shook hands with me and her face turned pink.

"Oh, she looked nervous, too." I thought.

I was surprised by Judy's shyness as well as my courage – in my mind, Americans should be "bold." Maybe in sensing Judy's shyness, I felt much more comfortable speaking to her. Later in her class, I was not as "shy" as I expected. And we became friends. Judy wanted to know Chinese culture, so I guided her to visit my

hometown, invited her to visit my school and my home, and introduced some special foods to her. Judy couldn't speak Chinese (she started to learn Chinese after she went back home), so we communicated in English all the time. But after class what we talked about mostly was Chinese culture, except when I asked her some questions related to Western culture. I could feel that even when we spoke in English, she had more uncertainty. I was only uncertain about how I should express what I wanted to say in correct English. Judy was uncertain about both the context itself and the way she communicated because I was the host and she was the guest in my home town. Actually, by the end of the intensive class, I felt much more comfortable speaking English with Judy as well as some other American teachers, although I often felt bothered by my limited vocabulary and grammar mistakes. Nevertheless, I got a positive impression of Americans: Americans are expressive, warm, polite, and respectful.

Studying in America (1): Home-stay

At the end of 2003, on Christmas Day, I arrived in the United States. The USA I saw was different from what imagined. My brother and sister-in-law told me if I would like to see the United States as I anticipated, I should probably go to New York. To help me understand American culture, my brother arranged for me to live with an American family through an agent.

My first home-stay lasted less than two weeks, and then I moved out. I should say my experience there was unhappy. I had a feeling that there were some problems in that family; however, I could not really understand all the things the host mother said. The host mother had been an English teacher for many years before I moved in. But by

then she was suffering family members' deaths, and she didn't have a job. I should say she was a nice person, but she was often out of control.

The first dinner was very nice. Although it was not really a Chinese dinner, I could understand her willingness to make me feel at home. I felt warm like at home; however, the host father was absent. As host mom mentioned, he was supposed to be there. Actually, he didn't attend any meals while I was living there; I only saw him once when he was repairing something in the basement one afternoon.

I felt that something happened between the couple, and it made the host mother depressed. I felt that she loved the host father very much. One day, I was watching NBC News, and one of the reports was about Michael Jackson. At that time, she jumped in and asked me, "Do you like listening to his songs?" I said, "So so." She said, "I felt the same. But David (the host father's name) likes him, so I like him!" I didn't say anything, but I was wondering, "Are you a real modern American professional woman? Even in China, women don't behave like this now!" I was really surprised with what she said. Anyway, this was not my business, and I could not help. So, I didn't really feel bothered.

But one day she really made me feel annoyed. One morning, after breakfast, she said she was not feeling well, but started to narrate her life experiences and family stories while she opened the door of her bedroom. At that time, I was standing at the door, and she was then sitting on her bed, which was right beside the door. I could see all the things in the room, but I didn't go into her bedroom. We talked about playing piano, since there was a piano in her room, and then she pointed to the certificates on the wall and talked about her education, her marriage, her grief over her grandma's death and so

forth. Then she mentioned she took medicine while my attention moved away from her face. Actually, at that time, I was worried about my assignment and was panicked about how to end the conversation. She probably misunderstood that I saw the bottle of pills on the shelf at the corner right outside her bedroom since I stood facing the corner. She said, "Don't be afraid! Those are from my doctor." In fact, before she told me, I didn't think she had a serious problem. I saw the pills, but I thought it was a bottle of candies because they were very colorful and candy-like. By then, I was not really troubled, although I felt very strange. A couple of hours later, while I was studying in my bedroom, she knocked at the door and asked me whether I had seen her purse. At first, I didn't quite understand what she was talking about because she was in a bad mood and spoke faster than usual as well as with some accent. Later I figured out she couldn't find her purse; I told her I didn't see it and tried to use my poor English to comfort her. She didn't really accept my kindness, and turned around to call someone else. I could hear her from my room; it sounded like she was talking to the agent about the purse issue and she mentioned my name. I didn't really understand every word, but I could feel she suspected that I took her purse because I was the only person who had been there with her. I felt irritated with that, but I didn't know how to deal with it. While I was thinking to call my brother for help, she knocked at my door again and told me she found her purse in her car. She apologized, wrote a card to me at Chinese New Year, and bought a whistle for me in case something bad happened to me on the street. I knew she tried to be kind to me again, but I was afraid of being in trouble and started to avoid talking with her. Though I would

have liked to practice my listening and speaking skills, I didn't feel like interacting with her.

Later, came the toilet paper roller issue: She complained suspiciously that she could not find the roller when I had just come back from my brother and sister-in-law's home. I really felt hurt and I wanted to argue with her, but considering my language limitation, I didn't say anything. I shut the door of my bedroom as well as the door of my heart to her. I almost cried and wanted to call the agent and ask her why she introduced this kind of family to me. But considering my language limitation and cultural uncertainty, I called my brother and sister-in-law first. My brother called the agent and talked about the issues (the agent already knew them from the host mother); without any extra charge, the agent helped me to move out right away and to find a better family as soon as possible. The agent knew the host mom had a medical condition, and she apologized to us about the trouble. Up to then, I started to be more apprehensive when communicating in English with people from host culture.

Before moving to the second home-stay family, the agent let me make a choice between two American families. One had better living conditions (a master bedroom with its own separate bathroom and high speed internet), but would have me live only with the family. With the other, I would have to share a bathroom with another student, and there would be no internet connection in my room. I chose the latter one because a student lived there who was from Taiwan and spoke the same language (Mandarin) as me. This made me feel less uncertain and much safer. My brother wanted me to choose the former in order to force me speak English. But I was really annoyed by the experience in

the first home-stay family and wanted to live with someone who could share a similar cultural background.

Fortunately, my experience in the second home-stay family was great. The host mother was an open-minded and enthusiastic woman in her early fifties. I really liked her sunny face – she always had a big smile on her face while she was talking, and she sometimes laughed loudly. She often brought us to local activities or drove us for short trips. If we had questions, either about school or daily life related to American culture, she was always happy to help. The host father was also a nice man. He cooked better than the host mother, so he cooked more than the mother. He tried to cook Chinese food in order to make us feel at home. I really enjoyed living there. And they helped my positive feelings about Americans return: Communicating with Americans was not always that hard.

Studying in America (2): Learning American English in SAL

I started learning two days after I moved in with the first home-stay family. To be a full-time student after being a teacher for more than ten years was an exciting thing. And to learn American English in an American school would be a great experience for me. I was very excited about this. But the coming events were not all stimulating.

The first day, I took my first TOEFL test at school. I felt bad that I could not really understand or finish the listening and reading sections. The speaking speed was too fast for me. Even so, I chose and marked an answer for each question. Later, I was assigned into the E2 class. From the orientation, I knew this was the middle level of the classes in SAL (it has six levels of classes, from the lowest to highest are: B1, B2, E1, E2,

G1 and G2). I felt very disappointed about my English skills since they were lower than I expected. But considering that my purpose for coming to the United States was to improve my English skills, I soon found psychological balance. I was assigned three required classes: Grammar and Written Communication, Oral Communication, and Current Events Reading and Vocabulary. In Grammar and Written Communication class, I was not as anxious as in other classes because compared to my listening and speaking skills, that was my strength. The most difficult one was Current Events Reading and Vocabulary because, besides the language problems, I had to confront cultural barriers and a lot of quizzes at the beginning of the classes. I deeply remember how I was “burdened” by Kerry and Bush – the knowledge of American presidency elections and legitimacy in the first few classes! The first half of the spring semester, 2004, especially the first month, was really tough either because of the challenges of school courses that revealed my linguistic and cultural problems, or because of the first home-stay issues, or because of the inside circulation of my body was affected by the change in physical environment (the weather of my hometown is quite different from California).

As a former teacher in China, by reading articles, I had already known that the learning style in the United States differs from that in China; yet, I was shocked by the differences. At beginning of the classes, especially in Current Events Reading and Vocabulary class, I felt like a stupid kid: I always performed slower than others. Later, I figured out that, although we were all international students, only I was in my first semester. Although we were at the same language level, they had been familiar with the teaching style and process already. In other words, they knew what was going to happen

next, but I was uncertain about it. Luckily, most of the SAL instructors were very fascinating and encouraging, and the students were very supportive and helpful as well. By the middle of the semester, I had caught up with the others: I got the full score on my midterm exams. I felt more comfortable and confident discussing either in the small groups or in the classes, either with teachers or other students. But outside the classes, I still avoided communicating in English if it was not necessary or I didn't have to.

Ultimately, for some presentations, I was "forced" to do surveys and interviews with American strangers in public with other group members. Since we had group members around, even though sometimes we were not really welcomed, we didn't feel as embarrassed as if we were alone. I got rewards from those surveys, interviews and presentations: the more surveys, interviews, and presentations I did, the more comfortable and confident I felt while speaking English, and the less anxiety I felt.

As the fall semester started, the new challenge was coming. At that time, I had started to apply graduate school. I was at G1 class in SAL, and I took one Open University class, Comm 101, which was a prerequisite for the M. A. program in Speech Communication. However, I had already gotten some sense of American-style learning; learning in Comm 101 was different from learning in SAL.

First of all, in SAL, all students were from other countries, whereas, in Comm 101, the majority of the students were native English speakers. Second, the learning focus in SAL was language, whereas, in Comm 101, the learning focus was communication as a major. Moreover, instructors in SAL would consider the teaching targets to be international students; in Comm 101, the teaching targets are fluent English

speakers. Even though there are some non-native speakers, they are supposed to have a certain level of skills with English. Thus, it is not necessary for the instructor to confront international students' language problems. Furthermore, in SAL, although students are from different countries and cultures, they have the same goal or same problem: their knowledge of the English language and the host culture need to improve. Because of this, it is easy for SAL students to understand each other's difficulties because they are in a same learning context: they are all international students. Conversely, it is hard for the native students in Comm 101 to understand international students if they don't have experiences of studying abroad with inadequate knowledge of host language and culture. In addition, the grades recorded in Comm 101 would be kept as part of my academic record, but the grades in SAL were not as important as that. As a result, learning in Comm 101 brought more challenges and pressure to me.

At the beginning of Comm 101, I could catch the major points the instructor was making, since I had done the reading. But while in the discussions, I was easily lost. The native students kept expressing their opinions, and I kept listening and trying my best to follow them; still what I could catch was less than what I missed. And sometimes I thought I understood what the instructor explained, and I would have liked to illustrate my views when the instructor threw the questions to the floor. But I was afraid that my understanding was not quite correct or my pronunciation and accent could not be comprehensible, and then I waited and waited... and then often missed the chance to speak out or got lost in other students' opinions.

By the mid-term, although I studied very hard, my examination grade was not good. Actually, probably because I was too nervous, I felt that I could not remember anything during the test. I was the last to hand in the test paper and almost cried. Luckily, the instructor was really encouraging and exhilarating. She comforted me with her considerate smile and gentle voice, “I know it is really hard to study abroad. While I study ...” Then she mentioned the hard feeling she had while she was learning a foreign language. And when I mentioned I could not understand the students’ discussions, she said, “Well, sometimes I could not understand, either!”

Although I knew her “could not understand” differed from my “could not understand,” her words really freed me from worry! It also enlightened me to think in another way: Sometimes my “could not understand” was not because of my language problem; it might have other reasons, for example, the other students’ expressions were not clear enough or could not answer the questions at all – this situation could happen even in my native language. But I considered it a language problem because I was not confident about my English language ability or not quite certain about the students’ cultural context(s).

In addition, the grades of my papers were encouraging, which stimulated me to be more confident to practice my English skills. Also, for the group presentation, I met a group of great classmates: D was the only native speaker in our group – a great young guy; Y was from the Middle East – he came to the United States before elementary school, so almost a native speaker, but with an intercultural background; and Angel was from Taiwan – she and I both speak same native language: Mandarin. The topic we

chose was intercultural communication. At the beginning, Angel and I could not quite understand D and Y; after the whole group discussion, we two exchanged our understanding respectively – this helped us to comprehend more of the group discussions as well as bolstered our confidence to raise questions and give suggestions in the whole group meetings. Finally, our group presentation was great. This was the first time I co-operated with native English speakers in group work; the pleasant co-operation and the achievement we obtained were the best rewards for me. Finally, I got an “A- (GPA: 3.7)” as my Comm 101 course grade. I was very exultant, even happier than later when I got all A’s after the second semester because what I got was more than what I expected.

Studying in America (3): Learning Speech Communication in Graduate School at SJSU

The spring semester of 2005 was my first semester as a graduate student at SJSU. As an international graduate student, I was required to take at least 9 units each semester. I enrolled in three courses: one graduate level core course – Comm 201 – and two pre-requisites – Comm 149 and Comm 155. Though I was busy with the readings of the three courses as well as meeting the deadlines of the papers and exams, I was not as anxious as before. I started to feel free to talk in the group discussions, but if I had some difficulties or questions that I needed to ask instructors, I preferred to ask privately after class. I was still concerned that I might ask some very unintelligent questions because of my linguistic and cultural limitations.

Fortunately, for my Comm 201 group presentation, I joined a great group, which consisted of three international students and three American students. In the group

meetings, besides discussing the presentation, we also exchanged our concerns regarding graduate studies, our personal stories and so forth. Because of those chats, I could comprehend more about Americans and the host culture, as well as locate my standing among the classmates. For instance, my grade on the Comm 201 mid-term exam was a B+; I felt very bad about that since I worried that it might decrease my course grades. After we shared the grades in group, I figured out that my grade was above average since most of my group members got Bs. This helped me to be more confident in identifying or predicting my achievements.

Nevertheless, not all chats were pleasing. Once I felt embarrassed because of my wedding ring. One day, we met at Angel's apartment to collect and count the data for our group presentation. During the break, T showed us the pictures of her puppy as well as her husband. The topics moved from pets to family relationships, intercultural marriage (T is a Caucasian, her husband is an Asian), cultural differences, misunderstandings, then to the rings. Before that, I knew that American women usually have two rings from their marriage: an engagement ring and a wedding ring. And I heard that they wear them both on a ring finger, but I was not sure on which hand. In China, people don't care about wearing rings as much as people do in the U.S. (before the chatting, I didn't realize this). In my common sense, in China, the rules for wearing a wedding ring are: women wear their rings on their right hands; men wear their rings on their left hands (I guess probably because traditionally, in China, left means higher rank/position). Actually, I wore my ring on my left hand in China because everybody around me knows that I am married. And I am a right-handed person; working with my hands, wearing a ring on my right

hand really made me feel uncomfortable. But after coming into the U.S., not everyone around me knows I am married, so I moved the ring from my left hand to right hand with my Chinese culture sense. But before T asked me about my ring, I didn't recognize that I wore my wedding ring on a wrong finger in the American marriage context. (In part, because it was my birthday gift; I could not wear my wedding ring because I gained too much weight after I had my daughter... I didn't even bring my wedding ring with me.)

“Ling! Are you kidding me? You are married?! Why don't you wear your ring?”

“Here, see!” I showed my ring on my right hand.

“Aha, you are cheating!”

“What?! ...”

I really didn't know how to explain at that moment, especially when Angel from Taiwan and Takako from Japan mentioned that in Taiwan and Japan people also wear wedding rings on their left hands (I guess that is because American culture has a strong influence in Taiwan and Japan). However, I didn't cheat, and Angel and Takako had known that I was married. At that juncture, I felt so frustrated because I was worried that I had already misunderstood and might be negatively evaluated. In other words, I cared about my reputation. Luckily, we all had intercultural backgrounds; it was not too difficult to accommodate the misunderstanding of cultural differences.

Working on Campus

I started seeking part-time jobs in late 2004. I got my first interview in all my life from C – the HR manager of Spartan Shops at SJSU. I have fifteen years experience as a teacher, but to be honest, I had never been interviewed, since my teaching job in China

was assigned by our local government after I graduated from Jiangling Normal School. At that time, even as we entered school, we were guaranteed a teacher's position – we just didn't know where or which school we would be placed with until we graduated. Without interviewing experience, but with limited language ability and little knowledge of the host culture, you could imagine what could happen in the period of my interview.

I was interviewed with another native student. While C asked us to choose which food store we would like to work – McDonald, Jamba Juice, Food Court, or Burger King – I thought, “What? To choose?” I didn't really know how to choose a job as I had never chosen a job before unless it was assigned. In contrast, another girl decided to work for Jamba Juice just in one second with enough reasons. Then following C, we went to Jamba Juice. C placed the girl at Jamba Juice then got back to me. Probably because of my reluctance (actually, I just didn't know how to choose, not because I was unwilling to do dining services), instead of asking me what I would like to do, C started to talk about my background of teaching and suggested I find some teaching related job. Then I misunderstood that she also managed the jobs for teaching. I answered, “Yeah, I also prefer to have some teaching related job, could you give me some ‘suggestions’?” By “suggestions,” I meant “offer.” When C guided me to the Career Center, where she said, “You can go inside and ask them to help you...,” I suddenly recognized the huge mistake I made! My cheeks blushed, of course! Perhaps because of being aware of my awkwardness, C led me to sit down nearby the student union and started chatting with me for a while, until I felt better... I felt so grateful... And the nice smile she left while she was turning to leave would be forever stored in my memory!

Because of the nice smile C left for me, I didn't give up and continued applying with dining services for Spartan Shops as well as some other kinds of jobs. A couple of weeks later, I got a response from C again, and passed the interview by the Food Court manager H. He decided to hire me, but the job "miscarried" – they couldn't wait until I got my social security number. Nonetheless, I at least got a work permit number for on campus jobs!

In January of 2006, as I continued trying, I finally got two job offers almost at same time: work as a cashier at Burger King or Teaching Assistant at the Associated Students Child Development Center. I chose the later one because it related to my experience. But the coming working days were not as easy as I estimated. I made a big mistake on the first working day because I was short on knowledge about the American working system.

I was assigned to both the toddlers' room (Daffodil room) and the infants' room (Jasmine room) with different hours. But I misunderstood what the coordinator said, "you need to go back forward." And it might also be because the leader teacher in the toddlers' room was a Chinese American who had common cultural background with me and the other was a Caucasian American. I chose to stay in the toddlers' room first, but I did not make the choice consciously! Nevertheless, I stayed in the toddlers' room while I was supposed to be in the infants' room first. However, I asked J – the leader teacher – if she needed me, just let me know. Because of this misunderstanding, I was negatively evaluated by J for the first few weeks. By then, I sometimes doubted, "Is 'my English' English? Am I a real 'A' student?" But sooner or later, I intensely acknowledged that I

should change my Chinese way of thinking! And the culture of the working environment differed from the classroom culture as well. I should not hesitate to ask anything and should try to make everything clear! – Even if I might be evaluated as a fool! – But I would not always be foolish if I keep asking!

Understanding that, I started to be talkative while working at CDC and communicative while learning in class. I could learn English from my professors as well as the kids I took care of. I could enlarge my vocabulary from baby books in addition to my graduate studies readings.

Indeed I could feel my language ability improve. I was not afraid of calling by phone to any further extent, such as Comcast or bank service, cell-phone plans, travel agencies, and job interviews. In the class, I changed from the last to present to the first to have the discussion! At CDC, I was one of the most skillful Teaching Assistants.

Summary

All in all, I felt almost freed from my ICA; however, I need to continue learning the host language and culture. Undeniably, through the trying, learning and practicing process, I was released from the large amount of ICA that I had at the beginning when I arrived in the United States. What I could comprehend from my experiences are: First, to keep trying, learning and practicing in English in different situations or contexts – we could learn English everywhere in the host country as far as you are willing to learn, and then your knowledge of the host language and culture both could be advanced since these two cannot really be separated. Second, be positive in seeking others' response, don't be afraid of losing face, and try to reduce your psychological distance with others, especially

people from other cultures – be always aware of it. In addition, be confident and believe you would be better and better afterward – indeed, that's the truth for me, at least!

CHAPTER 5

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ICA

In the previous chapter, I narrated the stories about my experience of learning English, the cultures of my family and my country, and the ongoing process of my CA and ICA. In this chapter, I present some other international students' experiences of CA and ICA, discuss their perceptions of ICA and situational conditions, reveal their understanding of the relationship between CA in the home culture and CA in the host culture, and collect strategies from both student and instructor interviewees.

The Background of the International Student Interviewees

I interviewed seventeen international students who were studying in different departments at SJSU (6 from SAL, 1 undergraduate student who was working toward a second bachelor degree, and 10 graduate students). They were Takako, Ichiro, and Atsuko from Japan; Angel, Alice, Venus, Keypa, Huimei and Weili from Taiwan; Rick, J. J., and Sunny from South Korea; Divya from India; Note from Thailand; Lilly from Argentina; Elena from Russia; and Johnny from P.R. China. Their ages ranged from 21 to 40, and most of them were in their 20s. They studied English from 6 to 18 years. The length of time they lived in the U.S. ranged from 3 months to 4 years. Before coming to the U.S., all of them already had at least a bachelor's degree or the equivalent, except Atsuko who was a high school graduate but had 6 years' work experience. 14 out of 17 had experience learning English in a language school in North America. Weili, Atsuko, Huimei, J. J., and Note were still studying at SAL. Keypa, Rick, and Divya just started their graduate studies. Keypa and Rick recently transferred from SAL. Alice and Venus

had participated in SAL but, at the time of the interview were, in their second year of graduate school without any part-time working experience in the United States. Takako, Lilly, Elena, Johnny, and Ichiro were in the last semester or two of their studies and, meanwhile, worked part-time on campus or outside as internship. Sunny and Angel had already finished their graduate studies and worked full-time with OPT F1 international student status.

Although different interviewees have different experiences and stories regarding their time in the United States, all of them feel that they have at least some experiences with ICA. They believe that their ICA could be reduced and has, in fact, lessened as they have improved their language ability and learned more about the host and other cultures. They think there are many aspects that could account for their ICA, such as their English language ability/language barriers, self-confidence/self-construals, motivation to English, relationships with interactants/audiences, situations, home cultures and their influences or the host culture, family influences, educational experiences, and personalities.

Mainly, in this chapter, the interviewees' views are accessed and addressed through the following categories: ICA and language, ICA and situational conditions, ICA and culture, and strategies for reducing ICA. In the section of ICA and language, the interviewees' attitudes toward learning English and their views on their language ability are presented. Then their understanding of ICA and different situational conditions are discussed. Under the category of ICA and culture, their standpoints on cultural uncertainty and cultural (the home culture and the host culture) influences are imparted

respectively. Finally, the strategies for reducing ICA from both student and instructor interviewees are reviewed.

ICA and Language

Gudykunst (2004, p. 191) demonstrated, “all languages contain elements that are universal and elements that are unique.” In general, all languages are used for the delivery of messages, but each language has its own form, frame, or codes. People “cannot communicate with the natives effectively unless they utilize the group-accepted language in a way that can be recognized, understood and responded by the natives” (Kim, 1988, p. 89). For this reason, it is necessary for international students to gain knowledge of English, if they would like to be successful in their studies.

Since individuals’ language attitudes reflect their linguistic preferences, their expectations for others based on their stereotypes, and their goals in the interaction (Gudykunst, 2004, p. 217), I will start my discussion by revealing my interviewees’ attitudes toward learning English.

Attitudes toward Learning English: English as a Global Language

“The reason I learn English is because it is an international tool.” (Weili & Johnny)

Interestingly, I interviewed Weili and Johnny separately, but what they said about why they learn English is exactly the same. Weili is a twenty-four year old male student from Taiwan with a B. A. in Industrial Design. He came to the United States six months ago. He is studying the English language in SAL and would like to pursue an M. F. A. at SJSU after meeting the TOEFL requirement. He didn’t really like learning English, but

he had to learn it since he had to pass an English test to go the university, as well as to get his bachelor's degree in Taiwan. Johnny, a twenty-eight year old male student from Mainland China, is working toward an M. S. Computer Software Engineering at SJSU. He feels the same as Weili. He worked in a co-operative company in China for a few years before coming to the U.S. While in meetings, if there were people from other countries, they had to speak English; however, he didn't really get a lot of chances to speak. Also he had to learn English because that was the requirement for schools; he had to pass English tests to attend high school and university, as well as to get his B. S. degree. Both Weili and Johnny consider that if they want to have a better job – either in the US or in their own country – English is a very important and useful tool.

Similarly, Alice stated, "I like learning English because using English I can interact with different people – people from different cultures or countries." Alice, a female student from Taiwan, is now in her second year of the M. A. TESOL program at SJSU. She has a B. A. in Engineering from Taiwan, but she gave up her previous major in order to teach English later. Rather than thinking of English as a tool for a job, she enjoys using English to communicate with people from other cultures or countries. Like Alice, Venus is also a female student from Taiwan. She majors in International Tourism. While she was a child, she didn't really like learning English, but after traveling abroad several times, she changed her attitude. She mentioned, "I like learning English because English is a communication tool. While I was traveling, I felt English was so important..."

Similar to Alice and Venus, Lilly, a twenty-six year old female from Argentina, is a graduate student in Speech Communication. She declared:

I love English! Even if I'm not good at it. I love English! I have to tell you the truth – I don't know if it is because I like the language itself or because English really allows me to talk to people and to get to know people who do not speak Spanish... So, I don't know if it is because I like the language itself or because knowing that learning English gives a big advantage to me, which is, for example, being talking to you right now – because if we don't know how to speak English, you and me cannot communicate – because I don't speak Chinese, and you don't speak Spanish.

Like Venus, while she was a child, Lilly didn't like learning English just like she didn't like other school subjects. She didn't really understand why her parents spent a lot of money to put her in a private bilingual (English and Spanish) school in her hometown. But later she recognized that knowing English really gives her a lot of advantages.

Unlike Lilly, Divya, a twenty-one year old female student from India, has known learning English is valuable since she was a little child. Now, she is working toward an M. A. in Electronic Engineering at SJSU and has stayed in America for approximately three months. Since English is the official language of India, she began learning English when she was three. Other than English, she can speak Telugu – her native language, and Hindi – the national language of India. Though she feels more comfortable speaking Telugu, she loves learning English: “I would like to learn English because I know English is important for my future...”

English is a powerful language. Since last century, as “English is the medium of a great deal of the world's knowledge” (Crystal, 1997, p. 101), English has become a global language. Crystal (1997, p. 1) declared, “...English is a global language... You hear it on television spoken by politicians from all over the world. Wherever you travel,

you see English signs and advertisements.” Many countries have made it their official language or have chosen it as their chief foreign language in schools. All my interviewees, whether they really like studying English or feel forced to learn, understand that learning and using English will put them in touch with more people and would be very beneficial for their future lives.

Therefore, they all have very strong motivation to learn English well. They desire to speak “native-like” American English. But because they know that mastering a language requires a great deal of effort, their feelings regarding learning and speaking English are mixed: On one hand, they are strongly motivated to learn English well and would like to practice speaking with native speakers; on the other hand, considering the limitation of their language ability and cultural uncertainty, they are afraid of speaking with them – especially at the beginning stage (e.g., new international students with limited language ability). The following section, I will discuss how my interviewees perceive their ICA and their language ability.

ICA and Language Ability: The Trouble Is Our English

Gudykunst demonstrated that the language we speak is a major way we mark boundaries between ethnic groups (2004, p. 91), and cross-cultural variations in languages influence how people from different cultures communicate (p. 216). My interviewees clearly sense the language boundary, and they feel the trouble that came to them first is their language limitation. Note directly addresses her struggle:

“My problem is my English.” (Note)

And Huimei feels the same:

“In English, I feel nervous. My English is not so good – not fluent.” (Huimei)

Note is a twenty-three year old female student from Thailand, and Huimei is a twenty-two year old female from Taiwan. Note and Huimei both finished undergraduate degrees before they came to the United States. They are now studying in the SAL program and would like to apply for graduate school after passing the required score on the TOEFL. They directly approach the cause of their ICA as their limited language ability. Similar to Note and Huimei, most of my interviewees considered their facility with the English language their primary struggle. As second language learners, they felt that language barriers are the problem they need to confront primarily. The limitation of their language ability, or the lack of confidence about their language ability, increases their anxiety about speaking English, especially with native speakers. Thus, they feel they have more CA communicating with people in English than communicating in their native languages.

... My English is not perfect, I don't really understand them. And I don't really want to interrupt them. So I don't really know how to do. And I feel uncomfortable there... (Atsuko)

Atsuko is a twenty-three year old female student. She finished high school in a small town in Japan. Then she worked for four years and saved some money. With her parents' support, she came to the U. S. about eight months ago. She is now studying in the SAL program at E2 level and living in a home-stay with an American family. She would like to transfer to De Anza College to learn art. She thinks that the education here is better than in Japan. While talking with native English speakers, she feels more nervous. Above she mentioned was the situation when she was introduced to the friends

of her host family at a party. She indicated that if she were speaking in Japanese, she would not feel uncomfortable: "I think [in] Japanese is easier because it is my native language. I can understand everything. So it is easy to ask – it is easy to communication [communicate] with them because it's the same culture. It's kind of easy."

[In English] Sometimes you cannot express something you want. It's very hard because you use the second language. Some meaning will be changed, for example, if you want to express a proverb. Sometimes, I wanted to say something, but I changed [translated] to English, [it] was totally different... The expression is not good enough to express your mind or ideas... (Weili)

As mentioned before, Weili is studying in the SAL program currently, and he shares an apartment with an American student in an SJSU dormitory. He has to speak English everyday, except when talking to his friends who can speak Mandarin. And he enjoys giving presentations in class, but sometimes he is thwarted by what he perceives to be his limited English language ability.

Likewise, J. J. believes that her limited language ability restricts her communication in English. She said:

I feel very nervous but pretend not to be nervous. I am good at speaking in front of many people. Using Korean, the same, I feel nervous, nervous about a lot of people – en, the difference is language. [In English,] I have to worry about grammar, vocabulary... Using English, I cannot explain the detail. It is easier to communicate in Korean.

J. J. is from South Korea. Her major was English and she finished one year's worth of graduate courses in Korea. She would like to apply to the M.A. TESOL program later. Of all my interviewees, she is the only one who felt there was not a big difference in apprehension between using English and her native language (Korean). Yet, she had more worries while using English.

Like the interviewees mentioned in this section, the others also have experienced language difficulties. Liu (2001, p. 4) stated that a lack of English language proficiency is viewed as one of the greatest problems of international students, particularly those from Asian countries, who often have had little practice in using English in their home countries. All of my interviewees are non-native English speakers, and most of them are from Asia (except Lilly and Elena); they clearly sense the boundaries that are underscored by the English they speak, such as accent, grammatical mistakes, and word choice. This, the limited language ability, gives rise to a lack of confidence or apprehension communicating in English, particularly with native English speakers. As a result, my interviewees perceive they have more ICA while they communicate in English with native English speakers than with people from other non-native English speaking groups.

Because I didn't know what I said to them [native speakers of English] was appropriate – did I make mistakes? You know, their culture background and language background are totally different with me... (Alice)

I prefer to talk with non-native speakers. Talk to native speakers, sometimes I feel headache – They say, 'What? What did you say?' – sounds like couldn't understand me... (Elena)

Like Alice and Elena, all the participants are afraid that they might say something wrong or inappropriate. And most of them feel more anxious while communicating with native speakers because they consider that they share less cultural backgrounds or situational conditions (e.g., the host of the culture vs. the guest of the culture) with native speakers. But most international students come to the U.S. with an American dream: That is, they consider that U.S. higher education is a very important commodity for them, and they

would like to obtain advanced education or training and to gain prestige with a degree from a U.S. institution (Liu, 2001, p. 1). And the knowledge of English – the host language – is perhaps the most critical, and certainly the most salient, aspect of host communication competence (Kim, 1988, p. 88). To make their dream come true, they need to gain certain knowledge of the English language. Gudykunst (1992, p. 383) declared that certain basic “needs” motivate us to interact with others. International students’ “needs” for improving their English language ability motivate them to challenge their ICA and try to practice speaking English with native speakers, which they consider the best way to advance their language ability. Most of my interviewees said that they try to avoid speaking their native languages, and try to practice speaking English as much as possible, either with native speakers or non-native speakers; however, they feel uncomfortable if they speak English with native speakers.

I speak English everyday. I try not to make Japanese friends here. I try to make international friends. And I try to avoid using Japanese. Luckily, not too many Japanese learn Fine Arts... (Ichiro)

Ichiro is a twenty-six year old male student from Japan, who is now studying Interior Design as his second bachelor’s degree at SJSU. In order to improve his English language ability, he lived in the dorm and tried to make friends from different cultures. After studying in the U. S. for about three years and speaking English with people from different cultures/countries everyday, he doesn’t think it feels very difficult communicating in English anymore. But he still senses a distinction between using English and his native language and he feels much more comfortable speaking Japanese: “I need to prepare the presentation [in English] in the very very details – I am nervous,

afraid of what if I may get stuck, then I may not be able to present. In Japanese, even if I get stuck, I can use other words to make up...” This happens to each interviewee. They consider that speaking their native languages sounds like a part of their natures; on the contrary, they had/have been troubled by their limited English language ability.

In sum, international students’ English language ability, or their lack of confidence about their English language ability, is something they perceive to be a primary source of their ICA. In the next section, I will demonstrate how international students think about their ICA in different situational conditions.

ICA and Situational Conditions

McCroskey (1997, pp. 25-26) indicated that situations, such as novelty, formality, subordinate status, conspicuousness, unfamiliarity, dissimilarity, degree of attention from others, and degree of evaluation could cause or increase CA. In order to investigate the participants’ perceptions of their CA and ICA in different situational conditions, I respectively asked them to describe their feelings speaking in English and native language in five situations – in public, in an unfamiliar group, in their class/meeting (familiar group), in conversation with a stranger, and in conversation with an acquaintance/a friend. Then I requested them to compare their feelings and determine in which situation they had or anticipated CA/ICA was the most/least, and put them in order.

Most of the participants (15 out of 17) matched their CA from the highest to the lowest with the situations as follows: in public, unfamiliar group, familiar group, conversation with a stranger, and conversation with an acquaintance/a friend. And they indicated that there was no significant order difference between their CA and ICA.

Related to their CA, in general, they considered that the situation with more audience members, more novelty, more formality, less familiarity, and higher degree of evaluation could produce or increase ICA. But concerning language barriers and cultural differences, they believed that they would have more ICA than CA in most situations.

Most of the participants didn't really experience public speaking, but anticipated that they would be more apprehensive speaking in English than in their native languages. Their major concern is that in English they have less ability to express their ideas. They are afraid of getting stuck and losing face. Sunny, a 27 year old female student from South Korea, stated:

What if I get stuck? In front of many people, it would be very hard to make up while I speak in English. I cannot imagine what I could do then... In Korean, I will feel a little better. Since it is my native language, it is easier to pick up words to make up... But I don't like to speak in front of many people at all.

Sunny just obtained her M. A. degree in TESOL and started working in SAL with her OPT F1 status. She has been in California for about four years, and spent two years to improve her language ability and skills in SAL before transferring to the M. A. TESOL program at SJSU. Like most of the interviewees, she had not had many chances to make speeches in public. But other than giving presentations as a student in class, she has the experience of teaching her students.

Comparing her feelings across different situations – doing presentations in SAL, doing presentations in her M. A. program, and being a teacher – Sunny felt that the most apprehensive situation was presenting in her M. A. classes, and the least apprehensive one was being a teacher. She explained that while she was a student in SAL, at the beginning she could not really speak out, but because all the classmates were at same

language level, and the instructors treated them as second language learners, she was not as nervous as she expected. On the contrary, in the M. A. program, there were many native students with diverse cultural backgrounds, and she was not treated as a second language learner anymore but supposed to be knowledgeable enough to work on her papers, presentations, and so forth. Thus, she felt more anxious and stressed. As a teacher in SAL, since now she teaches entry level at SAL and the students are from Asia, she feels very confident because her language ability is much higher than that of the students and because she is also familiar with their cultural background. She anticipates that if she were to teach a more proficient group of students, she might feel more apprehensive. As we can see, Sunny's experience shows that having self-confidence and positive thinking about the situational conditions (such as the language level or cultural background of the audience/interactant) are negatively associated with ICA.

Lilly feels less apprehensive speaking in English with unfamiliar groups or strangers made her an exception in this group of interviewees. The order of her CA in English from highest to lowest is as follows: in public, familiar group, unfamiliar group, stranger, and acquaintance/friend. Since she works for the Student Health Center at SJSU, sometimes she has to present in front of unfamiliar groups. She observes, "I feel strange, I don't know why I don't feel very nervous to present knowledge for health to unfamiliar groups – I mean I feel less anxious than – doing presentation in front of my classmates and professors." But after thinking for while, she explained,

Probably it is because I don't have to take care of the evaluations or grades. Even if I don't do well, it is not really that matter! Maybe, just forget it and try to do well next time. People [the audience] don't really know me, and maybe I will never meet them again. – Who cares! ... But doing presentations in class, you

know, are quite different, everybody knows me, and the professors will evaluate me and grade me...

As opposed to most of other interviewees, she feels that she is now (but not at the beginning she was in the U. S.) less apprehensive speaking English in the host environment than speaking Spanish in her home country. Since she does some volunteer work helping people who are from the Spanish speaking community, sometimes she needs to speak Spanish. In comparing speaking English in the host culture, speaking Spanish in the host culture, and speaking Spanish in her home country, she feels least apprehensive in speaking English in the host culture, but the most apprehensive while speaking Spanish in her home country. She felt this might have to do with her sense that, in the host culture, people have more equal rights to speak out their standpoints; for example, most professors always respect and encourage students to discuss their opinions, and many sensitive topics (e.g., sexuality and same sex marriage) could be discussed in class. Here she is accepted as a second language learner; even though she couldn't speak as well as native English speakers, people would not laugh at her for trying. But in her home country, especially in her hometown, many people know her; if she does or says something inappropriate, everybody will know – it would be bad for her and her family's reputation.

Similarly, Huimei, another exception from most of the participants, is more comfortable speaking English with friends from international ethnic groups, but not from her own ethnic group. She concludes that people from same cultural group could more negatively judge her since they often make the same mistakes: "They know my mistakes because they make the same mistakes, so they may think I am not good..." Although she

has been here just four months, she really loves the learning atmosphere here; for instance, her instructors sometimes kneel down or lower their bodies to answer students' questions, which create an atmosphere of equality and reciprocal respect. She observes, "As a student, I feel more respected in class here than in Taiwan..."

In sum, as we can see, Lilly and Huimei have some common features. First, they are afraid of negative evaluation or judgment. Since they consider people from their same culture to have the potential to evaluate them more negatively, they prefer to speak with strangers. Also, they believe the host environment "shows openness and acceptance toward strangers" (Kim, 1988, p. 128), and individuals in the host environment have more equal rights or freedom to deliver their thoughts and are more respectful to others' opinions. Accordingly, in some circumstances, they feel they have lower ICA than CA. In some instances, Lilly and Huimei vary from the majority of the interviewees, but we may see them as "from different routes to the same destination." Most interviewees believe they have higher ICA than CA because their lack of knowledge about the host language – i.e., the possibility of cultural misunderstanding and negative evaluations – gives rise to apprehension. Similarly, Lilly and Huimei's fear of negative evaluations from their same ethnic groups increases their CA. Thus, the situational conditions that could cause negative evaluations could increase CA/ICA.

In the above, I discussed the international students' views of ICA and situational conditions. Next, I will illustrate the relationship between CA/ICA and cultural influence by exploring my interviewees' experiences with and viewpoints on cultural variations and ICA.

ICA and Culture

Gudykunst (2004) declared:

Cultures provide us with a system of knowledge that allows us to know how to communicate with others and how to interpret their behavior... The boundaries between cultures usually coincide with political, or national, boundaries between countries. (p. 43)

And “Culture conditions individuals to certain patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving in varied social transactions” (Kim, 1988, p. 46). People from different cultures vary in their world views, beliefs, values, norms, and other assumptions, as well as in their communication patterns. Individuals from the same culture are connected to each other through a common system of encoding and decoding, thus, they could be more certain in predicting each other’s behavior. Conversely, communicating with people from other cultures and/or ethnic groups is characterized by high uncertainty and anxiety. In the host country, communicating with people from other cultures in English is a novel situation for most international students; they cannot use their home culture frame to predict others’ behavior. This uncertainty could elicit and account for their ICA. I will illustrate the relationship between ICA/CA and cultural influence by exploring my interviewees’ experiences and viewpoints of culture variations and ICA.

Cultural Uncertainty

Gudykunst (2004, p. 16) claimed that “cultural information provides the only grounds for communicative predictions.” When international students interact with people from the host culture, they cannot predict people’s behavior based on their own cultural rules and norms. This could lead to misunderstandings and, thus, cause or increase their ICA.

Lilly, the most talkative of all my interviewees, believes that cultural differences sometimes prevent her from communicating with people from other cultures.

... Because it is not just you don't share the language, but you don't share the culture. It is not only what if I make a mistake – such as a grammar mistake, but you also have to think about not offend the other person because the other person is from other culture. You know there are more things, like language is one, culture is another one, being from different cultures is always like – it is always nice, but at the same time is scary – because you don't want to offend the other person, but to be respectful – but you are not really sure how to do it in a right or proper way...

Gudykunst & Kim (2003, p. 13) explained that uncertainty refers to our inability to predict or explain others' behavior, feelings, attitudes, or values. And Berger (1992, p.13) suggested that “uncertainty can breed both stress and anxiety... When persons are unsure of what is likely to occur, they are unable to respond adaptively so as to control their outcomes in the situation.” Lilly is afraid that what she says might not be appropriate in another culture, and then might offend the people with whom she communicates. This makes her sometimes feel uncomfortable or anxious in interacting with people from other cultures. She feels more comfortable speaking with non-native English speakers because she feels that she and other non-native speakers sound similar, like they are “in the same boat” and these similarities could help them understand each other readily.

Correspondingly, Takako, a Japanese female student, also regards cultural differences as a significant factor in her ICA.

Yeah, because of some culture things are different. So, even if I do something with common sense in Japan, it was kind of different here. So, because of cultural differences, I had some bad feelings, you know... In Japan, it is ok to do this kind of thing, but in America may not. If we don't know it, we may make mistakes. We may make someone hurt, you know, hurt someone's feelings. So, culture difference is a big factor...

Now, Takako is in her last semester of the M. A. in Speech Communication. She also teaches Japanese part-time in SJSU's Foreign Language Department. She was a middle school English teacher in Japan for many years. She has some experiences traveling abroad. Before studying here, she traveled in the United States several times. Now, she doesn't feel that it is as difficult communicating with people (either native or non-native) in English as did those interviewees from SAL, and she feels much more familiar with American culture than before. But while recalling the first few times she was here, she said she really felt shocked and anxious. Once, when she went to a bar with some American friends, she was assumed to be too young to drink and was asked to show her ID. She didn't expect that and didn't bring her passport with her. She didn't know why she was asked to show her ID. She explained and explained with her limited English, but they didn't allow her to enter. She felt that she was not respected or trusted. At that time, she felt frustrated and almost cried. Finally she went into the bar when one of her friend drove her back and got her passport. She said she didn't know the rules, such as people would be asked to show their ID if they were suspected that to be younger than twenty-one while going to a bar. Therefore, at the beginning she really felt hurt. This experience, for a while, discouraged her communication with native speakers other than friends, although nobody should be blamed. Later she understood that it was because of cultural differences: there are greater restrictions on going to bars in America than in Japan.

Although she is concerned about her Indian accent, Divya does not feel it is very difficult to learn or speak English, since English is the official language in India and she started learning and speaking English outside of her home (with family members, she

speaks Telugu) everyday since 3 year old. But because she is not sure about the culture here, she feels she is much more comfortable talking with people from the same culture: “To Indians, I don’t have to think what I am talking – they could understand. But to Americans, I need to think, I have to think, and try to put the things properly.” But in comparing people from Asian countries to other countries, Divya feels more comfortable speaking with people from Asia because she believes that Asian cultures have more similarities. The more similarities could be found, the less uncertainty individuals could have.

Gudykunst and Kim (2003, p. 13) declared that when uncertainty is reduced, understanding is possible. And understanding involves obtaining information, knowing, comprehending, and interpreting. Supporting this, as compared to the time when they had just arrived in the U.S., all my participants feel much more comfortable communicating in English with others (both native and non-native English speakers). They feel that as they are getting to know the host language and the host culture better and better; they feel more confident communicating in English. They believe that the more knowledge they could acquire about other cultures, the more their uncertainty is reduced, and the less ICA they have.

Home Culture and Host Culture Influences

Gudykunst (2003, p. 92) illustrated, “our communication with strangers is influenced by our cultures and by the group memberships we form within our cultures. Our group memberships provide us with social identities that guide our communication.” In other words, our cultures framed or shaped our communication. Often, researchers use

individualism-collectivism as the major dimension of cultural variability to explain cross-cultural differences in behavior (Gudykunst, 2004, p. 46). About collectivism, Holliday, Hyde, and Kullman (2004) demonstrated,

Collectivism may be initially defined as a social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as parts of one or more collectives (family, co-workers, tribe, nation); are primarily motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives; are willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals; and emphasize their connectedness to members of these collectives. (pp. 142-143)

In general, all of my interviewees were from collectivistic cultures; cultures in Argentina, China, India, Japan, Korea, Russia, Taiwan, and Thailand are considered collectivistic cultures (Carbaugh, 1993, p. 177; Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p. 62; Gudykunst, 2004, p. 60; Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2004, p. 143). It is not difficult to discover the feature of their home cultures' – collectivistic cultures' – influence on them. Participants identified themselves as sojourners. And they all feel more comfortable communicating with other international students/people than native English speakers. For example, Keypa, a female student from Taiwan, stated:

I am proud of being an international student... To be honest, now, I don't feel language – especially speaking – will cause me any problem because I can express my meaning pretty well. But when I talk to native speaker, I could feel I encounter the difficulty is we have different cultures. So, it's pretty hard to find common topic to talk...

Keypa just transferred from SAL to the Department of Communication Studies as a graduate student, but she has already taken eight Open University courses from different departments at SJSU. She came to America two years ago. She believes that her English language ability has grown. But because of the lack of common cultural background, she

could sense the distance while communicating with some friends from the host culture. She differentiates her social group from other social groups very clearly.

Turner (1982, p. 15) defined that a social group consists of people who share a common social identification of themselves or distinguish themselves as members of the same social category. The social groups could be divided into ingroups and outgroups. Gudykunst (2003, p. 94) typified that the groups with which we are taught to associate are regarded as ingroups; in contrast, the groups of individuals with whom we are taught not to associate are regarded as outgroups. All humans have the tendency to draw distinctions between ingroups and outgroups, but people from collectivistic cultures draw firmer distinctions between ingroups and outgroups than people of individualistic cultures. As a result, all my interviewees think that the environment in California is nice and the people in general are very open-minded, and if they could get a good job after finishing school, most of them would like to stay longer; evidently, all the interviewees considered themselves outsiders/foreigners. They consider that all the international students/people are in “the same boat,” which could be marked as “international social group.” Therefore, they perceive that they have less ICA while communicating with non-native speakers of English than they have when communicating with native speakers of English. Nevertheless, comparing the non-native speakers from same culture to non-native speakers who are from other cultures, most of them feel less apprehensive while interacting with people from same cultural group.

Gudykunst (2004, p. 43) argues that “our cultures provide us with a system of knowledge that allows us to know how to communicate with others and how to interpret

their behavior.” Since collectivistic cultures require that individuals fit into their ingroups, it is not necessary for individuals to be expressive. Like Note stated, “In Thailand, you don’t have to speak out your opinion, but here, you have to...”

Typically, collectivism is often allied to a strong emphasis on interpersonal harmony and preferences for affiliation, interpersonal concern, protecting one’s face, and the *we* identity rather than the *I* identity (Kim, 1993, p. 143). And normally, the communication pattern of collectivistic cultures (Asian cultures in particular) is conformity-oriented (for example, parent-child, teacher-student, and senior colleague-young colleague). As a result, generally, individuals from collectivistic cultures do not express their own opinions if it is not necessary or they don’t have to, and they are characterized as more apprehensive than individuals from individualistic cultures. But sitting in the American classroom, they feel that the atmosphere in the class or the classroom culture here forces them to speak out their opinions.

Similar to Note, Angel felt that the host culture forced her to speak out. Angel, a twenty-six year old female from Taiwan, was a Speech Communication graduate student, and just graduated and started her OPT. While recalling her graduate studies, she mentioned,

Here [in America], I feel like I have to say something – Americans are more expressive... In that case [in the group], you know, everybody talks about something. If you don’t say something, you don’t commit yourself to the discussion. So, in that case, I will try to think some good idea to discuss. You know, to do the contribution to the group. I don’t want them to feel like: I’m just sitting there, and I couldn’t speak anything... I want to be in the group... even though sometimes I may not have something to talk – en, I’ll force myself to say something. I feel, in this environment, you just have to talk... Culture here is totally normal to speak out your opinions... It doesn’t really matter if sometimes your point is not thoughtful or valuable... And here, you know, talking with

strangers is also normal... In Taiwan, we don't talk with strangers... Now, I feel more comfortable to talk to stranger in English...

Angel considered herself a quiet person. At the beginning of her graduate studies, she felt that the new environment brought her a lot of stress, such as concern for her pronunciation, word choice in using English that might not be understandable by others (especially native speakers), and uncertainty about the culture. She wanted to adapt herself to the host culture and didn't want to be evaluated in a negative way. Thus, she felt anxious. But the host culture, especially the classroom culture, forced her to speak out. She felt that she had to confront her anxiety, and after recognizing the atmosphere in host classroom allows everybody to equally express their viewpoints, she enjoyed committing herself in the discussions. Each successful experience from the discussion functioned as a reward, encouraging her to talk more and more. And the more practice she had, the more comfortable she felt. Consequently, her ICA has lessened.

Compared to the other interviewees' stories, Elena's experience was unique. Elena is a female from Russia who is in her late 20s. She was a dentist with a D. D. S. degree in Russia. She married when she was 22 year old and traveled around the world for about two years. Four years ago, when her husband got a job offer in the United States, she came with him. But she divorced one year ago because of family abuse, and then she started her graduate studies in the Department of Communication Studies at SJSU. After continuing speaking and using English approximately six years, she felt very confident and comfortable speaking English. However, when speaking English, sometimes she is concerned that something is improper to say; she feels less apprehensive in speaking English than Russian. She loves speaking English, but avoids

speaking Russian; mostly, she only speaks Russian while calling back home to talk with her parents or when she feels necessary (e.g., when she felt her English word was not strong enough to make some statement/argument in English to a friend who could speak both English and Russian). She explains:

The thing is I avoid speaking Russian [in the U. S.]... You mean [speaking Russian] in Russia? Oh, yeah, I was scared! Because I know since we don't have this kind of human rights and personal liberty things, I was afraid of people would judge me and would talk it verbally. So, I was so afraid... In Russian, I know my human rights can be violated...

Then Elena exemplified her statement about human rights condition in her native country with a timely example: the death of Alexander Litvinenko (who was a lieutenant-colonel in the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation and later a Russian dissident and writer) as well as some other Russian journalists' deaths. She also mentioned that right after she got divorced, she felt she needed some understanding and tried to find someone from same culture to talk. She put her information on websites to seek acquaintances who were in the U. S., and she got a response from an alumnus who lived in New York. While she was sharing her sad story by phone, like sharing the story with some other people who were from other cultures, much to her surprise, the alumnus reprimanded, "How can you talk about this to someone who is a stranger? This information can be used against you!" She was scared by his warning. On the contrary, she always received support from people from other cultures while sharing her story in English. As a result, she observed that she feels safer speaking English, and experiences less CA in English than in Russian. She said, "English is more clear and polite language, and I know the people will not hurt me." However, Russian meant verbal abuse and

judgment to her. Although Elena claimed that she might not be considered a typical Russian, as we can see, her friend from the same culture was even more cautious than her. It reflects that some hidden force (such as political force, family abuse, or terrorism) could cause or increase individuals' CA. Elena believes that in the U. S., people have more human rights to express their opinion than in her home country. Thus, she feels more apprehensive using her mother tongue in her home country or communicating with people from same culture than using English to interact with people from other cultures.

Similar to Elena's feeling, all my interviewees describe that in contrasting the teaching and learning styles and family communication patterns of the host culture with that of their home culture, the former offers them a more communicative atmosphere that stimulates and encourages them to talk more – especially after they develop a sense of the host environment (both physically and culturally), and improve their language ability to certain level (could communicate in English effectively).

In China, we just need to listen to the professors and take notes, it is not necessary to speak out your opinion. Here, a lot of group or team work, you have to discuss with group members and then present in the class. Sometimes, because here everybody has different course schedule, you have to negotiate and schedule the time and the location for meeting, present your ideas in the meeting... At the beginning, I was really nervous about it, but now I am getting used to it...
(Johnny)

Like Note and Angel, Johnny articulated that in his first semester he felt he was forced to speak, and he was really anxious about the group meetings since he was concerned about cultural differences (the way of thinking) and also his limited English (especially listening and speaking). But now he doesn't think that he has any problem, and feels that he is more talkative or expressive than before. Interestingly, Rick, a male graduate

student from South Korea, who considers himself a non-talkative person, said that when he travels back to visit family and friends in South Korea, he feels more expressive than before: “I feel I am more talkative than before. And I feel more comfortable to speak out my opinion.” Similarly, Ichiro states, “I feel I have more complaints – er, not complaints – more arguments. Even went back to Japan – speak Japanese in Japan.”

In sum, at the initial stage, when the interviewees had just started learning in the United States, all of them, except Elena, found they had higher CA while communicating in English in the host culture than while communicating in their native languages within their home cultures. This was, they report, because they were uncertain about the host culture, unsure about their language ability as well as they were not required to be expressive in their home cultures. But as they advanced their knowledge about the host language and culture, their ICA has lessened. And “the expressive climate” of the host environment motivates them to be more communicative. Moreover, after adapting to “the host climate,” the communication pattern in English of the host culture could also influence their ways of communicating in their native language within their home cultures. Thus, it seems that ICA and the participants’ knowledge of the host language and host culture as well as home culture are interconnected, and ICA is not necessarily or not always higher than CA. In other words, CA in the host culture is not always positively related with CA in the home culture. The finding is not consistent with the previous study (Jung & McCroskey’s, 2004): CA was found to be higher than CA in the first language.

Thus far, I have revealed the interviewees' experiences of ICA and their viewpoints of the relationships between ICA and language, ICA and situational conditions, as well as ICA and culture. Next, I will collect the strategies which the interviewees consider to be useful for reducing ICA.

Strategies for Reducing ICA

In order to help international students to adapt to the host environment and to be successful in their academic studies, before ending each interview, I requested that the interviewees provide some strategies they have used or learned from others. I also interviewed four SAL instructors (Peter, June, Candy, and Becky) to gather the strategies they often suggest to their students. I will present these strategies under the categories of improving language skills (verbal and nonverbal), becoming aware of culture differences, and building psychological preparedness.

Kim (1988, p.135) suggested that individuals' adaptive potential is supported by their knowledge about the host communication systems (especially language), informational familiarity with the host culture, their preparedness for change or psychological readiness during the initial period of adaptation in the host environment. My student interviewees' experiences and the instructors' viewpoints support this statement. They believe that knowledge about the host language and the host culture are interconnected or correlated. In other words, if individuals are knowledgeable about the host language, it is easier for them to approach and comprehend the host culture, and more ready and confident to interact with people from the host culture. Consequently, they will have less ICA.

Thus, for reducing ICA, all the student and instructor interviewees report, international students should improve their language ability and communication skills. Like Takako stated: “Well, we should learn English better, and improve language skills, and probably communication skills, too.” Improving language skills doesn’t mean having to practice in classes. One of instructor interviewees, Peter, observes:

Practice... not necessarily just means doing some sort of school work. Putting yourself in the situation where you have to use the language. I think it is sort of – force you to do unconsciously. You don’t think about that sort of language practice; you think about it getting through your day... What I notice in my classroom without exceptions: people that make progress are the people who use the language the most. That’s not exactly a revolutionary idea, but so many of our students who live with family, maybe go to churches, where they speak the native language, they listen to TV shows or radio shows or, you know, movies in their native language, so they don’t use the language as much as they could outside of class. The people who live with a host family, or have an American roommate in a dormitory, or hang out with people from different language backgrounds... so they have to speak the language [English] all the time. The latter ones make a big jump of fluency...

Peter suggests that international students should put themselves in different real situations to force them to practice English skills. And the other interviewees (students and instructors) believe that practicing in everyday contexts is the best way to advance language skills, and there is no shortcut. In order to reduce ICA, the interviewees also suggest some useful communication skills, such as using body language (e.g., facial expression and gestures), rephrasing sentences, and speaking with drawing, to facilitate their communication.

Furthermore, understanding cultural differences between international students’ home cultures and the host culture is very important for reducing ICA. Like Elena stated:

We should try to put ourselves in different host contexts, be open-minded to learn other cultures, and engage yourself to the host culture... to live mixed with people

from other cultures, to find a job... try your best to reduce your cultural uncertainty...

In addition, all the interviewees report that psychological preparedness is as important as learning knowledge of the host language and culture. All the instructor interviewees recommend that if international students promote self-confidence and cultivate positive thinking, they could strengthen their psychological readiness and reduce their ICA.

First, we may need to build up a great relationship either between the students or between students and their teachers... For those shy students, we need to gradually help them to build up their self-confidence. For example, we may set up different roles for group work, and first help them take a role that is not hard for them to speak out... Yeah, it needs some kind of balance: You may have to “force” them take some of the roles, but you cannot really force them – sort of “trick”... (Becky)

... We can use some sort of sense of humor to provide a comfortable learning environment, and to encourage them [international students] to speak out ... through the process of the class, the students are gaining confidence and understanding that they will make mistakes... but it is not going to be the end of the world by making mistakes... (Candy)

We should correct their mistakes, but we need to think about face saving... for example, if my students make some mistakes in the conversation with me, I will repeat the sentences in the correct way, but I will not interrupt them... Face saving is very important to promote their confidence, en, as well as to keep them thinking positively... (June)

The student participants confirmed that self-confidence, positive thinking, and psychological readiness for the new environment are very important for them to reduce their psychological distance about people from the host environment. Generalizing from her experiences, Angel states:

We should put ourselves in different contexts, and be mind of other cultures, but be confident about yourself... if you always think in a negative way; you cannot really get what you want... To be anxious, it doesn't help... Sometimes, you have to force you to do something. You need to be ready...

In summary, becoming knowledgeable about the host language, becoming familiar with the host culture, and being psychologically ready for the challenges in the host environment might be the three keys for international students to reduce their ICA.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explored the interviewees' experiences of ICA and their perspectives on ICA and language and ICA and culture. Under the category of ICA and language, I discussed the participants' attitudes toward learning English and their concern for their language ability. Then I presented their comprehension of ICA and situational conditions. Also, linking to ICA and culture, I discussed the relationship between ICA and interviewees' feelings of cultural uncertainty, as well as their understanding of home and host culture influences. In addition, I generalized some strategies for lessening ICA from the interviewees' experiences and thoughts. In the next chapter, I summarize my analysis in relation to the four research questions I posed in Chapter Two, as well as identify the strengths and limitations of my study, and the implications of this study for future research.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

I discussed international students' experiences and perceptions of ICA in previous chapters. In this final chapter, I first summarize my analysis in relation to my research questions. Then, I raise some suggestions or tips for international students and instructors. Finally, I argue the strengths and limitations of this research and posit implications for future study.

Summary

Research Question One

Research Question One is: How do non-native speakers experience and understand ICA? My analysis suggests that the primary sources of ICA for interviewees are language ability, cultural uncertainty, and personality. Interviewees believed that the inadequate language ability or the lack of confidence about their language ability is one of the most important factors for their ICA. They also think language and culture are intertwined and cannot be separated from each other. Cultural uncertainty is another significant factor of their ICA if viewing culture and language separately. Because they are uncertain about the host language and/or culture, they often experience ICA. As Kim (1992, p. 374) claims,

By definition, intercultural communication presents a significant amount of differences between interactants' cultural backgrounds. And cultural differences that enter into a given encounter introduce a high degree of unfamiliarity with each other's messages and meanings. Such cultural difference and unfamiliarity between culturally dissimilar interactants brings the experiences of anxiety or lack of "attributional confidence" to the interactants (cf. Gudykunst, 1988c; Lalljee, 1987...). The gap between respective experiential backgrounds limits the interactant's ability to encode and decode message with fidelity.

International students come to the United States with diverse cultural backgrounds and different languages. Language barriers and cultural uncertainty about the English language and American culture could cause them to shy away from interacting with people from the host culture. Although communication among international students has the potential for language barriers and cultural uncertainties as well, most of my interviewees feel more comfortable communicating with people from other countries in general. In other words, most international students perceive they experience more ICA while interacting with people from the host culture than they do with other international student or people from their native cultures/countries. They suggest that communicating with other international students could be easier (i.e., they might be more readily understood) since these people, as a group, could provide them a new common ground – that is people from other countries are in similar situations, such as struggling with language barriers and cultural uncertainty. And mostly, they have to use the host language – English – to communicate with people in the host cultural context, which could make their ICA in English within the host culture more conspicuous.

In addition, most interviewees mentioned that individuals' personalities could affect ICA. Regarding personality, they believed that education, family, peers, and media have great effects on one's personalities. Thus, they believed that people who live in an environment with diverse cultures possibly have less ICA than people who always stay within their own cultural groups or in an isolated environment.

In sum, international students experience ICA when they feel or anticipate that they are not knowledgeable enough about the host language or culture. They believe that

many factors could produce or increase ICA, such as language barriers, cultural uncertainty, and personality. They all disagreed that ICA is exclusively or primarily genetic. They perceive that environmental influences on ICA cannot be ignored. Their experiences show that ICA could be and has been reduced after improving their English language ability and by advancing their knowledge of host culture. Related to language ability and culture familiarity, interviewees (e.g., current SAL students) who have stayed in the U. S. for only few months as compared with those (e. g., Angel, Elena, Ichiro, Johnny, Lilly, Sunny, and Takako) who have stayed for a couple of years, (especially those who have experiences other than studying in the classroom, and/or living with mixing cultural groups), have more ICA.

Research Question Two

Research Question Two is: Under what situational condition do non-native speakers experience ICA? To investigate this research question, I requested that the interviewees recall and compare their feelings between communicating in English and communicating in their native languages under five different situational conditions: in public, in an unfamiliar group, in a familiar group, with a stranger, and with an acquaintance or a friend. Similar to their CA in their home culture, most interviewees anticipate that public speaking would make them feel the most apprehensive. After in public, the orders follow: unfamiliar group, familiar group, with a stranger, and with a friend. In general, situational conditions (i.e., more audience members, more novelty, more formality, less familiarity, and a higher degree of evaluation) would produce or increase international students' ICA. Regarding language barriers and cultural

differences, participants believed that they would have more ICA than CA at most situations.

However, there are some exceptions. As opposed to most of the other interviewees, Lilly feels less apprehensive speaking English with unfamiliar groups or individuals. Likewise, Huimei is more comfortable speaking English with friends from international ethnic groups, but not from her own ethnic group. They conclude that people who they are familiar with or who are from the same cultural group have the potential to negatively evaluate them. They dislike to be judged like that. On the contrary, they believe that the host environment shows more respect and openness to newcomers. And people have more social equality and freedom to present their opinions. Therefore, in some situations, they have lower ICA than CA. This makes them deviate from the majority of the interviewees. But we could find some connections between Lilly, Huimei, and the majority. That is, most interviewees believe they have higher ICA than CA because they are afraid of that their insufficient knowledge about the host environment (e.g., language and culture) could produce misunderstanding and negative evaluation. Consequently, this causes and increases their ICA. As we can see, the crux is their anticipation of misunderstanding and negative impression. In other words, where they intuit or anticipate the situational conditions would cause misinterpretation and negative evaluation, they feel more apprehensive.

In sum, although a few deviations exist among interviewees, there is no significant difference between ICA and CA in terms of the order of the five situational conditions – in public, unfamiliar group, familiar group, stranger, and acquaintance/

friend. Participants' concern for misunderstanding and negative evaluation about situational conditions could cause or increase CA/ICA.

Research Question Three

Research Question Three is: What is the relationship for international students between CA in the home culture and CA in the host culture? At the initial stage, most participants in current study believe that they have higher CA in the host culture than in their home cultures, which related to the lack of knowledge about host language and culture. While no interviewee thought he/she was fully knowledgeable about the host language and culture, there are manifest differences between newcomers with lower levels of language ability and less familiarity with the host culture, and those who have stayed for a couple of years with lots of different experiences in different host cultural contexts. Participants with more experience in the host culture recalled that after the years of learning and practicing English in different cross-cultural contexts, they felt what could affect their ICA has been changed.

In the beginning, what could affect their ICA most was their limited language ability and lack of cultural familiarity, but after they gained certain knowledge about the host language and culture, they couldn't feel any significant difference between CA in their home cultures and CA in the host culture. While they may feel more comfortable using their native languages, they would no longer shy away from communicating with people from the host culture. Regarding interviewees' learning experiences at school, while they need to participate in discussion, they could concern themselves more with the content itself rather than language or cultural problems. Furthermore, most of them even

feel more talkative or less apprehensive in the host cultural context (e.g., to communicate with the instructors in the host classroom). They feel that in the host culture, people have more equal rights to express their standpoints and fewer restraints on discussing different topics (such as sexuality and gender orientation). Thus, after learning more about the host environment, they feel that they have less CA in the host culture than in the home culture. In other words, CA in the host culture is not always positively related CA in the home culture.

Interestingly, the communication patterns in the host culture also affected international students' communication patterns in their home cultures. Some of the interviewees felt that when going back to visit their family and friends; they (e.g., Rick and Ichiro) felt that they were more expressive in using their native languages in their native cultures/countries than before.

In addition, Elena's experience suggests that CA/ICA in the host culture is possibly much lower than CA in the home culture. She felt that people in her home country don't have as much freedom to express their opinions as American people do. Her experience and claims reflect that some hidden force (such as political force, family abuse, or terrorism) could produce or increase individuals' CA. Evidently, many factors could affect individuals' CA/ICA. As a result, CA/ICA is not solely genetically determined.

Research Question Four

Research Question Four is: What are the strategies for reducing ICA? In general, participants' responses suggest three types of strategies: improving language ability,

enhancing cultural familiarity, and developing psychological readiness for the host environment.

Participants in the current study felt that inadequate knowledge or skills are the primary sources of their ICA: Everybody alleged that improving English language ability and communication competence in different cultural contexts could help reduce ICA. Once the knowledge of language develops, understandings of the host culture could be more accessible as culture and language are the two sides of the same coin. Participants believed that there are large numbers of ways to advance their language ability and communication skills, such as imitating native speakers (e.g., news reporters), making friends from the host culture as well as other international groups, and continuing to practice in class and other varied situations – all in all, practicing and using English in diverse situational conditions as much as possible.

Moreover, being aware of and open-minded to cultural differences (e.g., collectivism vs. individualism, and typified vs. personalized) could be helpful for reducing ICA. Most the interviewees tried to live with people from other cultures and share their own cultures. At the initial stage, that would bring them more difficulties and apprehension, though they feel that the advantages are much more than the disadvantages.

Last but not least is to become confident, positive, and psychologically ready to confront the challenges in the host environment. Besides improving language ability, cultural familiarity, and communication skills, the interviewees believed that an understanding of that language barriers and cultural uncertainty are common phenomena for second language learners is necessary for building up confidence. While

encountering some problems, it is good to keep a positive attitude and not to be scared. And being psychologically ready for culture shock could reduce the degree of the shock and the related ICA.

Some Suggestions

The United States is a multicultural country. International students come from different countries/cultures all over the world, and that makes the country more various. In the United States, like Liu (2001) argues:

Differences among people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds can be observed everywhere and at every level. Such apparent heterogeneity of human beings bracketed by language and cultural differences, as well as psychological differences, makes the communication strategy of sympathy ineffective and inadequate in intercultural communication. (p. 231)

Thus, reducing international students' ICA requires a mutual effort to enhance intercultural communication. The following are some suggestions for international students and instructors.

For International Students

First of all, international students should prepare and improve their language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) for school as well as everyday conversation.

Also, international students should learn the host culture through different contexts, and be aware of cultural differences.

Making friends and sharing a dorm room or an apartment with people from the host culture or other international groups could be meaningful for reducing ICA, so international students shouldn't always stay with people from same culture.

Moreover, international students should work to develop confidence in speaking English; asking questions or making mistakes can be important learning experiences.

Furthermore, international students can use body language (e.g., facial expressions and gestures) to facilitate communication.

In addition, other than studying for school, international students should try to engage in different school or community events, and attend different orientation workshops. This could be helpful for enlarging their understanding of the host culture.

For Instructors

Positive experiences with communication are very important in helping international students reduce their ICA. This requires support from the people around them, such as administrators and instructors at schools. In addition to student interviewees, my instructor interviewees help me comprehend international students' ICA from another perspective as well as to collect strategies for reducing ICA.

First, instructors should “force” international students to practice English in different situations and help develop their language skills through, for example, conducting surveys or group work assignments.

Also, instructors should be aware of cultural differences (e.g., teaching and learning styles) between the host culture and international students' home cultures, and gradually introduce the host culture to them.

Furthermore, instructors should provide opportunities for (e.g., assigning different roles for groups) and encourage international students to actively participate in class discussion, group work, and other events (e.g., volunteer employment).

Moreover, instructors should create a comfortable class or study atmosphere but with certain challenges to help build up trust and friendship between students as well as between students and instructors.

In addition, since international students would make different mistakes in using English, instructors should correct them without discouraging them: for example, if students have some grammar mistakes in speaking, repeating what they said in a correct way might be a good method to save face.

In short, the above suggestions might be more practical for ESL instructors, yet they could be used in general. Besides, instructors in any classroom need to provide more support to international students in class if necessary since they might be minority in the class, which could cause or increase ICA.

Strengths, Limitations, and implication for Future Study

I proposed this research as an initial study to reveal international students' experiences and perceptions of ICA, ICA and situational conditions, the relationship between CA in the home culture and CA in the host culture, and the strategies for reducing ICA. Like all other studies, this research has some strengths as well as some limitations.

While, there are numerous of previous studies on CA or related topics, only a few of them directly discuss ICA. Most of these are conducted from a positivistic perspective, using quantitative methods. Because this study engages in the interpretive paradigm, it is an important contribution to this forum.

Moreover, no previous study on ICA engaged in a combination of autoethnography and in-depth interviews. Goodall (2000) claimed:

What counts as the truth depends on where you are standing when you observe or participate in it ... regardless of who represents it, or what gets represented, cultures are *not* “out there” for inspection and amenable solely to received scientific truths. Rather, cultures are apprehended, theorized, studied, explained, storied, and otherwise rendered *symbolic* through language. They are *constructed*. (pp. 12-13, emphasis his)

As an ICA insider, I “construct” this research by “sewing” international students’ experiences of ICA and my own together; my intersubjective understanding is a new and valuable input for ICA research.

The finding of my third research question is not mentioned in former studies: CA in the host culture is not always positively related to CA in the home culture, and ICA in the host culture could be lower than CA in the home culture. It indicates that many environmental factors could affect ICA. Evidently, ICA is not “wholly genetic” (Jung & McCroskey, 2004, p. 180). To address ICA, a “multi-causal model” (Condit, 2000, p. 7) should be suggested.

In addition, my purpose for proposing the last research question – what are the strategies for reducing ICA? – is an endeavor to identify some subtle solutions for reducing ICA. Only a few prior studies have tried. My study is a complement to them.

Nevertheless, several limitations need to be acknowledged in this study. First, although their age, ethnicity, major, length of stay in the United States, and their language level were varied, participants were all from SJSU. Future study should invite interviewees from different schools in order to more fully address international students’

perceptions of ICA. And longitudinal studies might be recommended to help better understand the increasing and decreasing process of ICA.

Second, I need more interviewees, especially male participants as well as participants from non-Asian ethnic groups. The number of my student interviewees is seventeen, but only four of them are males and two of are non-Asians. To make the study be more persuasive, future study should balance the gender of interviewees as well as their ethnicities.

Third, although all the student interviewees could speak English, it is possible to have some misunderstanding since both the interviewer and the interviewees are non-native English speakers. For the future studies, different versions of interviewing might be considered for reducing the potential misinterpretations if it is possible.

Final Remarks

By the time I started doing interviews for the study, I was taking my last M. A. course – Comm 210. Professor S. was one of the professors with whom I took courses in the first semester after I enrolled in Communication Studies as a graduate student. Both Professor S. and I were surprised by my change in class participation. In the first semester, I hesitated to ask and answer questions in the class: thus, I rarely spoke out my opinions. Luckily, after class, Professor S. always stayed for while to allow students to ask questions individually. I was always one of those who asked questions individually, and I usually waited and waited, until nobody else remained. In contrast, I was never reluctant to either ask or answer any questions in Comm 210. Interestingly, there were four other international students from Asia in this class. Three of them were in the first

semester; the other was in her last semester. Because of this research, I was very aware of the differences between us. I felt that they were two mirrors for me: from the three I could see me in the first semester; the other was my reflection in Comm 210. This special feeling encourages me to continue the research. And it also makes me believe that this study is meaningful.

I appreciate that I have had the chance to disclose my understanding of my ICA as well as to explore other international students' experiences and perceptions of ICA. I have already gained many benefits through the writing process. I hope what I wrote for the study could be beneficial for others as well.

In conclusion, as more and more students study abroad, as the world gradually becomes a global village, for more effective intercultural communication, it is necessary for us to pay attention to both the study and experience of ICA.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

The Letter of IRB Approval

**Office of the Provost
Associate Vice President
Graduate Studies & Research**

One Washington Square
San José, CA 95192-0025
Voice: 408-924-2427
Fax: 408-924-2477

E-mail: gradstudies@sjsu.edu
<http://www.sjsu.edu>

To: Ling Liu
707 Continental Circle #1112
Mountain View, CA 94040

From: Pamela Stacks, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President
Graduate Studies and Research

Date: July 10, 2006

The Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board has approved your request to use human subjects in the study entitled:

**"International Students' and Instructors' Perceptions of
Intercultural Communication Apprehension: Etiology and
Promising Strategies"**

This approval is contingent upon the subjects participating in your research project being appropriately protected from risk. This includes the protection of the anonymity of the subjects' identity when they participate in your research project, and with regard to all data that may be collected from the subjects. The approval includes continued monitoring of your research by the Board to assure that the subjects are being adequately and properly protected from such risks. If at any time a subject becomes injured or complains of injury, you must notify Dr. Pamela Stacks, Ph.D. immediately. Injury includes but is not limited to bodily harm, psychological trauma, and release of potentially damaging personal information. This approval for the human subject's portion of your project is in effect for one year, and data collection beyond July 10, 2007 requires an extension request.

Please also be advised that all subjects need to be fully informed and aware that their participation in your research project is voluntary, and that he or she may withdraw from the project at any time. Further, a subject's participation, refusal to participate, or withdrawal will not affect any services that the subject is receiving or will receive at the institution in which the research is being conducted.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (408) 924-2480.

cc. Deanna Fassett HGH 211-0112

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Channel Islands, Chico,
Domergue Hall, East Bay, Fresno,
Fullerton, Humboldt, Long Beach,
Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San Jose, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Appendix B

Agreement to Participate in Research

**San José State
UNIVERSITY**

**College of Social Sciences
Department of Communication
Studies**

One Washington Square
San José, CA 95126-0112
Voice: (408) 924-5360
Fax: (408) 924-5366
E-mail: commstudies@csj.sjsu.edu
www.sjsu.edu/depts/commstudies/

Agreement to Participate in Research

Responsible Investigator: Ling Liu

Title of Protocol: International Students' and Instructors' Perceptions of Intercultural Communication Apprehension: Etiology and Promising Strategies

You have been asked to participate in a research study investigating the factors (heredity and environment) of Intercultural Communication Apprehension among international students who are non-native speakers.

You will be asked participate in 1-3 interviews (each approximately one hour long) with the investigator Ling Liu at times, dates and locations that are mutually convenient; these discussions will be audiotaped; the audiotape will be transcribed, and a pseudonym will be used to protect your identity. Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included.

You will receive no monetary compensation for participation in this research study.

Questions about this research may be addressed to Ling Liu, (650) 793-5780, lingliu160@yahoo.com or Dr. Deanna L. Fassett, dassettg@mail.sjsu.edu. Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Dennis Jaehne, Department Chair, Department of Communication Studies, (408) 924-5360. Questions about research subjects' rights, or a research-related injury, may be presented to Dr. Pamela Stacks, Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, (408) 924-2480. For those who may experience fear or anxiety associated with the interview, you may contact Counseling Services, Administration Bldg. Rm201, (408) 924-5910.

No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose to not participate in this study.

Your consent is being given voluntarily. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. If you decided to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or with any other participating institutions or agencies.

At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the investigator.

- The signature of a participant on this document indicated agreement to participate in the study.
- The signature of a researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the above named participant in the research and attestation that the participant has been fully informed of her or his rights.

Participant's Signature

Date

Investigator's Signature

Date

The California State University
Presidents' Office
Bakersfield, Clovis, Merced, Chico,
Dominguez Hills, Fresno, Fullerton,
Hayward, Humboldt, Long Beach,
Los Angeles, Maritime Academic,
Modesto, San Bernardino, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San Jose, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, San Rafael, Stanislaus.

Appendix C

The Student Interview Protocol

1. What is your name? (Please introduce yourself first: your name, main life experience.)
2. How long have you learned English? Do you like it? Why/why not?
3. What degree of education have you finished already?
4. How many years have you stayed in the United States? How often do you speak English?
5. How do you identify yourself here (in the United States) (e.g., social position)? How did you identify yourself in your native country?
6. Using English, while speaking up in public, how do you feel? How do you feel when using your native language?
7. Using English, while speaking up in an unfamiliar group, how do you feel? How do you feel when using your native language?
8. Using English, while speaking up in a class/meeting, how do you feel? How do you feel when using your native language?
9. Using English, while speaking up in a conversation with a stranger, how do you feel? How do you feel when using your native language?
10. Using English, while speaking up in a conversation with an acquaintance, how do you feel? How do you feel when using your native language?
11. Some researchers believe that Intercultural Communication Apprehension (ICA) is inherent, do you agree with that? Why/why not?
12. What factors do you think could affect ICA?

13. Which factor(s), do you think, has/have the most influence on you?

14. What strategy/strategies do you think is/are useful for reducing ICA?

Appendix D

The Instructor Interview Protocol

1. How long have you been a (language school) teacher to teach international students?

How long have you been at SAL?

2. What is your opinion about CA/ICA?

3. What factors do you think could cause or increase CA/ICA?

4. Do you think the students in SAL/your international students have some different levels of CA/ICA?

5. What strategies do you usually use to reduce their CA/ICA?

6. What strategy/strategies you consider most useful?

7. How do you usually instruct students to improve their communication?

8. How do you usually create the learning environment for the students?