CHALLENGES OF ACCOMMODATING NON-NATIVE ENGLISH-SPEAKING INSTRUCTORS' TEACHING AND NATIVE ENGLISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS' LEARNING IN COLLEGE, AND THE EXPLORATION OF POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

by

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<u>ABSTRACT</u>

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A continuing growth of non-native English speaking (NNES) instructors hired by American universities has been substantial in recent years. Their presence on campus has brought more diversity into both the academic and university culture. However, currently most of the foreign scholars working in American universities come from countries where English is not used as a native language. Due to the differences between their cultural backgrounds and the American mainstream cultures, major adjustments are needed for both NNES instructors and students in their university lives. This study was

intended to identify the key components of the obstacles and challenges faced by both NNES instructors and students in an academic college setting. It also investigates the coping strategies of students applied to adapt to the teaching styles of NNES instructors and maintains their study quality. Investigation of the strategies and techniques applied by NNES instructors to improve teaching quality and enhance student-instructor relationships, and exploration the potential solutions to improve classroom quality and the relationship between the two parties was also done.

Both interviews and a focus group were used in this research. The interviews were designed to be used as an instrument for the study of opinions from instructors, while the focus group was used to collect input from students. Both NNES instructors and students in this study held relatively positive views on issues related to this growing phenomenon. The challenges NNES instructors have encountered often fell into areas related to student acceptance of diversity, their communication proficiency, classroom culture adjustments, student motivation, conformability of students and classroom organization. For students, the challenges included high expectations by their NNES instructors, communication difficulties due to accents, and different communication styles. The researcher also found that connections actually existed between the challenges perceived by NNES instructors and the challenges of their students. Non-native English speaking instructors often encounter challenges in the classroom and student management. As they strive to pursue career excellence and foster better future professionals, they have to challenge, what is perceived to be, the passivity of the average American student. While American students are attempting to maximally absorb knowledge from their NNES instructors, they also have to face the unfamiliar elaborated expectations from their instructors.

Several strategies were found by the interviewees and student participants, which can be useful in resolving the above issues. Recommendations are suggested from the aspects of NNES instructors, students and university administration.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Non-Native English-speaking (NNES) instructors employed in universities have become a growing workforce in the higher education of the United States. The continuing growth of this population, especially in the field of math and science, has been substantial. This increasing number is directly related to the current educational policies which promote a wider diversity in higher education. On one hand, there is a continuous growth of international students enrolling in Ph.D. programs (Clayton, 2000; IIE, 2003). Most of these students come from countries with different cultural backgrounds than most Americans. English may be used neither as a native language nor as an official language. On the other hand, due to the lack of employment interests in universities, less Americans with doctorates will become instructors in colleges (National Opinion Research Center, 2002). This provides opportunities for foreign students to seek job employment in the academic fields in the United States after their graduation. Currently most of these instructors serve in math intensive, introductory and laboratory courses (Rao, 1993; Clayton, 2000). They are playing an important role in the development of students' college life, which is not only in academic areas but also in the area of social awareness.

The stakeholders of universities may include students, parents, university administration, and instructors. According to recent research (Neves and Sanyal, 1991; Fleisher, Hashimoto and Weinberg, 2002), each of the parties perceives the status of such a change in higher education differently. This fact suggests a definite necessity to study

and investigate the concerns of each stakeholder on the issue related to the presence of NNES instructors in the classroom. However, there is little systematic concurrent study on analyzing and comparing the perceptions of these issues from the point of views of both NNES instructors and students.

Studying only the obstacles or challenges is not enough to resolve any possible dilemma. Study should be directed to investigate the possibility of any existing gap of perceptions between instructors and students, to study the different expectations which each party impose on the other, and to explore the strategies which they use to resolve difficulties and improve their performance in the college either for study or for teaching.

NNES instructors' presence in U.S. colleges has brought multicultural excitement and diversity into classrooms and students' lives. How to maximally accommodate this new cultural phenomenon can be very beneficial for the growth of younger generations.

Objectives

The objectives of this study include the following attempts:

1. To identify the key components of the obstacles and challenges faced by both NNES instructors and students in an academic college setting;

2. To investigate the coping strategies of students applied to adapting to the teaching styles of NNES instructors and maintain their study quality,

3. To investigate the strategies and techniques applied by NNES instructors to improve teaching quality and enhance student-instructor relationship,

4. To explore the potential solutions to improve classroom quality and the relationship between the two parties.

The research questions involved in this study will include the following areas:

1. To what extent do students perceive the level of challenges of having NNES instructors in classroom? What are those challenges?

2. To what extent do NNES instructors perceive the level of challenges of teaching in U. S. colleges? What are those challenges?

3. What are the common coping strategies students use to keep up with their studies in such an environment?

4. To what level do they find the strategies help in their study?

5. What are the strategies NNES instructors use to improve classroom quality and the relationship with students?

6. To what level do they find the strategies help in their teaching?

Definitions

Non-native English-peaking (NNES) instructor

This term refers to a foreign instructor teaching in American university, who does not use English as first language in his/her home country.

Language skills

Language skills refer to the ability of NNES instructors in using English to express his or her contents with students during classroom teaching, student counseling, knowledge conveying, providing instructions and relationship development (Chen and Chung, 1993).

Communicative competence

Communicative competence refers to the ability of instructors to deal with different social situations in host nations (Chen and Chung, 1993).

Pedagogic skills

Pedagogic skills refer to the approaches which the NNES instructors apply to facilitate and accomplish in the classroom teaching.

Dogmatism

Dogmatism describes the extent to how individual can keep open-minded on issues (Rao, 1993).

Individualism

Individualism refers to the level to which an individual will orient his/her work to his/her own goals (Rao, 1993).

Communal orientation

Communal orientation is the degree of individual's attempts to resolve conflicts in different parties, and the ability to bring the conflict members to a mutual benefit (Rao, 1993).

Worldview

Worldviews refers to how people characteristically look at the universe. "It consists of values, beliefs, and assumptions, or the way a cultural group perceives people and event" (Bennett, 1999, page 40).

Limitations

This study will be conducted at the University of Wisconsin – Stout. Even though the samples were randomly selected to reach the objectives, the limited population still may not be sufficient enough to project a large picture of the whole status of NNES instructors teaching in colleges across the United States. Assumption, that students and instructors will be honest in their information, is made.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In the past decade, there were more than 400,000 international students enrolled in American universities in each year. The growth of such enrollment has been steadily increasing. Data show that until the year 2001 to 2002, the enrollment number of international students has reached its historical peak, which was close to 600,000 (Figure 1). A portion of these students will join the workforce as instructors at various universities around the United States after their accomplishment of studies. Even though very limited statistical work has been done on the exact number of the population of international Non-Native English-speaking (NNES) instructors employed in U.S. higher education, the trend of an increasing number in this employment group becomes more and more interesting to different researchers. The continuing growth of this population, especially in the field of math and science, has been substantial. Most of these instructors serve in math intensive, introductory and laboratory courses (Rao, 1993; Clayton, 2000). They are playing an important role in the development of students' college life, which is not only in academic areas but also in the area of social awareness. They have brought multicultural excitement and diversity into classrooms and students' lives. Meanwhile, their proficiency in English and different ethnic backgrounds also challenge many college students.

Increasing enrollment of foreign students in universities

The increase of foreign instructors in universities may result from several collaborated factors. These factors range from economic situations and employment atmosphere, to diversified student enrollments. The following issues have to be taken into

account for this emerging phenomenon of increasing involvement of foreign instructors in an academic setting.

According to the known "Open Doors" report, which is an annual report on international education compiled by the Institute of International Education (IIE) since 1954, there were about 582,996 foreign students enrolled in the universities of the United States from 2001 to 2002 (IIE, 2003). Compared with the year 1991 to 1992, the enrollment has increased about 25% in only a decade (Figure 1). Clayton (2000) also reported that from 1997 to 1999 there was an 11% increase of foreign students.

Among the international students, the top ten leading countries from which students come include India, China, Republic of Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Canada, Mexico, Turkey, Indonesia and Thailand (Figure 2) (IIE, 2003). In the year of 2001- 2002, India became the largest exporter of international students to the U.S. There was an increase of 22.3% in enrollment when compared with the year of 2000 to 2001(IIE, 2003). The growth of East Indian students has significantly exceeded the previous leading country, China, which only had an increase of 5.5%. Beside India, the percentage change of the enrollment from different countries, such as the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Turkey, Pakistan and Colombia, has substantially increased over 6% respectively (IIE, 2003).

Even though the study interests of foreign students vary individually, fields related to mathematical principles are often favored by international students (Figure 3). Generally, foreign students appear to be attracted to subjects related to applied science and business. Their choices of study are frequently found in the area of business and management, engineering, mathematics and computer science, as well as physical and life science, health and agriculture (IIE, 2003).

Student enrollment in graduate programs

Another trigger of this phenomenon is the lack of enrollment of students with

U.S. citizenship in masters and doctorate programs in recent years (Rao, 1993; Clayton,

2000). With the booming U.S. economy, more native students are targeting the industrial

job markets, especially in the fields of math and science, which leave an inevitable gap

between the needs of employers in the higher education structure and the available

population. In the first five years of the 1990's, the growth of Ph.D. recipients was about

two to three percent. However, an unsteady enrollment of Ph.D.s occurred in the last five

years of the 1990's, which left a lower average growth rate of Ph.D. recipients at 1%

(Farrell, 2001). The data from the Doctorate Data Project, done by the National Opinion

Research Center (2002), show that in 2001, the number of doctorate recipients had

decreased 1.4% from 2000, and reached the lowest level since 1993 (Figure 4). Another

study conducted by the Division of Science Resource Statistic, in the National Science

Foundation (Burrelli, 2001), also illustrates that the enrollment of students with U.S.

citizenship had dropped three percent from 1999 to 2000 in the fields of science and

engineering. This is the seventh consecutive annual drop since 1993. Meanwhile, students

with temporary visas more than accounted for the increase of graduate enrollment in

these areas. There was an 11% increase of enrollment of students with temporary visas

from 109,890 in 1999 to 121,827 in 2000 (Figure 5). This increase was the fourth

consecutive increase in foreign enrollment since 1996, which resulted in a slight increase

of 0.8% in the total enrollment of 2000. In 2000, foreign students accounted for to 29.4%

of the total enrollment in science and engineering programs at a graduate level.

Compared with the year of 1993, the enrolled foreign students in such graduate programs accounted for 5% in the total enrolled population in 2000.

A similar trend is also observable with the overall population of Ph.D. students. Doctorates with non-U.S. citizenship have kept a consistent trend of growth since 1971. In 2001, 30.1% of the doctoral awards were granted to non-U.S. citizens (NORC, 2002) (Figure 6). Another report from Siegfried and Stock (1999) reveals the increase of foreign Ph.D. recipients in the field of economics and agricultural economics. Their data show that the proportion of Ph.D. students with U. S. citizenship in such fields has dropped from 67.3% in 1977 to 42.9% in 1996 (Siegfried and Stock, 1999). In 1997, about 50% of the Ph.D. recipients in economics held U. S. citizenships, while the other half was made up of students with different visas from other countries (Wilson, 1999). A similar situation is also occurring in the fields of science. Extreme situations can be found in physical science and engineering (NORC, 2002) (Figure 7). In 2000 the earned doctorates in these two fields only consisted of 53.6% and 41.4% U.S. citizens respectively (Farrell, 2001).

Lack of employment interests in academic fields

The historical trend of the employment sector indicates that interest in working for the government of the United States after doctoral programs continue to decline, which is accompanied with an increasing interest in seeking employment in industries or self-employment (NORC, 2002). With the shortage of student and graduate resources, many universities turn their offers of instructor positions or teaching assistants to foreign students; especially in the field of chemistry, physics, biology, computer science, and mathematics science. Doctoral recipients of non-U.S. citizens tend to stay in the United

State following graduation. In 2001, 72% of foreign doctoral recipients had firm commitments in the United States after graduation, while only 59.1% received firm commitments in 1991 (NORC, 2002).

Demographic status of international scholars

A large portion of foreign-born instructors come from counties where English is seldom a first language. Currently most foreign doctoral graduates are from China, South Korea, India, Taiwan, Canada, Turkey, Thailand, Germany, Russia and Mexico (NORC, 2002). For example, new doctorates from these countries in 2001 accounted for about 20% of the total foreign doctorates. Another study compiled by the Institute of International Education shows that the majority of international scholars in the U.S. are from China, South Korea, India, Japan, and Germany. The scholars from these countries comprise nearly 50% of the total number of scholars in the U.S. (Figure 8, 9). Except for Canada and India, none of the above countries use English as their first language or the official language.

Increasing requirements for teaching quality

The new generation of faculties is facing a much higher standard for teaching quality than their retiring faculty members in the universities. The higher expectations from parents, employers and legislators are focusing on individuals who possess a wider array of talents: expertise in the related fields, effective teaching techniques, integrating and applying knowledge in solving societal problems, and active participation in research projects. With the existence of the tightened financial constraints, these experiences often add more stress and pressure on the current faculty members than their predecessor

(Austin, 2002). It has been suggested that this can lead to a loss of interest for Ph.D. students to prepare to work as professors in universities and colleges (Austin, 2002).

Positive perspectives

The presence of NNES instructors in college has created diversified opinions on the effectiveness of teaching. Some research has indicated that NNES instructors have an adverse impact on students' learning, while others suggest that such instructors are as effective as their native English counterparts, especially in the subjects which highly involve mathematically oriented disciplines. These subjects include physics, life science, engineering, computer science, mathematics and economics (Jacob and Friedman, 1988; Norris, 1991; Finegan and Siegfried, 2000; Fleisher, Hashimoto and Weinberg, 2002). NNES instructors are often perceived to have high expertise in their teaching field and are very familiar with subjects which they teach. In a 1991 study, it was found that the majorities of students identify them as individuals with high empathy, as being very friendly and having respectful manners, and having willing to interact (Neves and Sanyal, 1991). A research study (Fleisher, Hashimoto and Weinberg, 2002), conducted at Ohio State University, provides the evidence that students in economics courses taught by the foreign instructors even had a slightly higher mean grade than those taught by the native instructors. The study also rejected the hypothesis that students with high cumulative grade averages had a different learning experience if the instructors were non-native English speakers. Somewhat surprisingly, in the same study the researchers found a pattern of students' drop behavior, in which students who were assigned in the sections with foreign instructors were more likely to finish the course than the ones with domestic instructors.

Existing Dilemmas

Cultural differences in both academic and social conditions are considered to be one of the major adjustments for NNES instructors. Because of the different cultural background and language differences, problems can often be created in the classroom settings. Studies for international assistants suggested that problems often encountered could be classified into categories, such as communicative competence, language skills, and pedagogic skills (Chen and Chung, 1993).

Communication difficulties due to accents

One of the major problems is obviously generated by the accent of the foreign-born instructors. Currently, most of the NNES instructors have previous working experience as international teaching assistants during their studies in the United States (Chen and Chung, 1993; Clayton, 2000). They are capable in proficiently communicating with basic language and carrying on conversations with the aspects of fluency and grammar. Basic expression in English is not a priority problem. However, the accent caused by their native language is still an issue which sometimes bothers American students during the communication process. Studies show that college undergraduates often found it hard to follow the instructions and communication directed by a foreign-born individual due to the presence of a foreign accent (Chen and Chung, 1993; Clayton, 2000). When the students question academic problems, the heavy accent from instructors often even confused the students more on the questioned subjects. They described the situation as that "it can require hours longer to figure out problems" (Clayton, 2000). This indirectly can generate a resistance from the students to instructors. Some students complained that the strong accent of their NNES instructors hindered them in receiving a

better score in their learning subject and limited their ability to gain the maximum amount of knowledge in the classroom. Some feel strongly stressed out due to their extensive efforts on figuring out the meaning of the instructors instead of concentrating on learning (Clayton, 2000). In most cases (Chen and Chung, 1993), the language proficiency of instructors on grammar, fluency, and expression is not a problem. Instead, it is often found that the NNES instructors can't fulfill the students' expectations in idiomatic and colloquial expressions. When students cannot find confidence in the ability of NNES instructors to communicate effectively, their experience with the instructors can be limited and negatively affected. Eventually this can translate into their evaluation on the NNES teaching quality (Neves and Sanyal, 1991).

Language proficiency

The linguistic proficiency in spoken English is often found to be associated with the student rating for instructors (Finegan and Siegfried, 2000; Bosshardt and Watts, 2001). However, the criteria which students use to judge the level of such proficiency may vary for native English speaking (NES) instructors and NNES instructors (Finegan and Siegfried, 2000; Bosshardt and Watts, 2001). For NES instructors, proficiency may reflect factors such as the clarity of instructors' expression on concepts, ideas, and relationships because technical facility with English is not the major concern for students. For NNES instructors, rating for proficiency often relates to the difficulties of students to understand the words used by those instructors. In these cases, the technical facility with English greatly influences the ability of instructors to explain ideas clearly. In Finegan and Siegfried's (2000) study, student rating of teaching effectiveness in introductory economic courses was compared between NNES and NES instructors. NNES instructors

received lower ratings than their NES counterparts. A weaker relationship between students' perception of language proficiency and teaching effectiveness was found in the rating for NNES instructors than for NES instructors. Bosshardt and Watt's study (2001) also indicates the concern of language proficiency from both NNES instructors and students. However, in their research, speaking English proficiently was not weighted as an important factor for students of both native instructors and NNES instructors (Bosshardt and Watts, 2001).

Finegan and Siegfried (2000) proposed a regression model to predict the instructor's average rating in overall teaching effectiveness. The rating system was as follows:

R = (E, L, C, P, U)

"R" refers to the instructor's average rating in overall teaching effectiveness. "E" is the student rating for the spoken English proficiency of NNES instructors. "L" refers to how much students learned in the course, which was an objective measurement of the difference of the class average score on the same test given at the beginning and the end of the course period. "C" is a cluster of other control variables, such as the instructors' gender, the gender composition of the class, class size, the class' GPA, and students' expected grade in the class. "P" refers to pedagogical methods. "U" refers to characteristics which are unobserved.

By applying this model, the study found that the language gap in rating would not be significantly reduced even if the control variables "C" are controlled (Finegan and Siegfried, 2000). On the other hand, NNES instructors reach a much lower gain in higher overall rating by improving students' perceptions of their spoken English than NES

instructors. In fact, it is rather difficult and unrealistic for an NNES instructor to make great progress in the improvement of language proficiency if he or she has grown up in a different culture. This suggests that language proficiency is not the primary attribute affecting the students' perception on the NNES instructors.

Oh! No Syndrome

The first impression from homogenous students to instructors unlike themselves, such as NNES instructors, is often defined as the "Oh! No Syndrome" (Rao, 1993). This syndrome projects students' instinct resistance and rejection towards the presence of a foreign-born instructor. The negative reaction generated by this syndrome is even intensive when the instructor is in the position of teaching assistant. Studies reveal different opinions on this phenomenon perceived by students, foreign instructors and university administration (Rao, 1993). To understand the existence of this phenomenon, one needs to study the status of such a syndrome. "Oh! No Syndrome" doesn't only involve the NNES instructors and students. The reaction and response of university officials and government ought to be taken into account as well. Both officials from the university and government are concerned about the students' voice on such issues. In Rao's study (1993), officials suggested tightening the screening process for selecting appropriate candidates for the available positions. Students' concerns are often focused on the linguistic proficiency and communication effectiveness. However, the students' personality may affect the severity of problematic perception. In Bresnahna and Kim's study (1991), the receptivity to foreign instructors was compared among students with three different individual traits (dogmatism, individualism, communal orientation). Undergraduates, who are highly dogmatic, individualistic, and authoritarian, tend to have

a low receptivity to NNES instructors. Such students often find themselves feeling uneasy in dealing with NNES instructors. It is often considered to be wasting time for them when foreign culture is discussed (Rao, 1993).

Demographic differences in the student body can play an important role in the level of acceptance towards NNES instructors. In Neves and Sanyal's (1991) study, non-white and older students had a significantly higher rating for NNES instructors. They were more likely to feel comfortable in communicating with NNES instructors, and to take little regard of their communication skill. Foreign-born students appear to be more generous to NNES instructors. This suggested that perhaps it is necessary to construct a diversified, multicultural environment in the campus community, which may greatly assist NNES instructors in establishing a positive image. Students' previous experiences with NNES instructors need to be taken into account as well. In most cases, their first impression of instructors can be a significant cue for reinforcing any positive and negative perceptions. Their developments of the perceptions generated by further exposure to the instructor are often polarized by their first impression. Neves and Sanyal (1991) did not find any significant difference among students from a different year of schooling (junior or senior) in their opinion of NNES instructors. But students with higher GPAs seem to find that NNES instructors are as effective as the other native instructors.

Pedagogical methods due to different classroom culture

Cross-cultural differences in the classroom can exist in a variety of areas in higher education settings. They may result from the way universities operate, the roles of students and professors in classroom, as well as the communication styles, in terms of

interaction with students in or out of classroom and material presentation (Kuhn, 1996).

Kuhn has analyzed those classroom cultural differences which interfere with German

scholars teaching in the U.S. She argued that due to the existence of those differences,

even the handbooks, which are often provided to international instructors or teaching

assistants, are not sufficient enough to help Non-native English speaking instructors to

overcome the lifelong cultural training. Unfortunately, the lack of efficient pedagogical

strategies may cause less positive student evaluations than what the instructor really

deserves, and may even jeopardize their application for tenure-track. Kuhn (1996)

summarized the cultural concerns in the following areas: different concepts in "good

teaching"; public presentation skills; social skills; directness in communication with

students.

Most international scholars are affected from their own education cultural

background before working in the U.S. They pursue their teaching in the way that reflects

how they were taught. However, "good teaching" consists of different concepts in

different countries (Kuhn, 1996). In American culture, teaching requires complex skills

which relate to material organization, classroom facilitation, classroom interaction,

information presentation as well as social ability with students. In many foreign

countries, it is considered to be a privilege for a student to study in universities. A student

is expected to put forth his or her full efforts and be responsible for effectively absorbing

information given by professors. Several other factors which may be accountable for a

lower rating of NNES instructors in teaching effectiveness may include "the students'

perception of less class preparation, less enthusiasm in teaching, less interactive teaching

style, and heavier reliance on multiple choice tests" (Finegan and Siegfried, 2000). These

behaviors are in the exact opposite direction of those preferred by students. An earlier study by Aigner and Thum (1986) revealed that higher ratings from students tend to be given to instructors who conduct less heavy formal lectures and devote more time to students' involvement in the classroom discussions.

Kuhn (1996) pointed out that American students preferred classroom materials to be organized in a linear fashion. For example in a presentation, they "start by saying what they are going to do, then do it, and afterwards sum up what they have done" (Kuhn, 1996). Such explicit ways to present information may be unfamiliar to many foreign-born instructors, especially to the ones who have limited experiences in American universities. In American education, public presentation has been emphasized at a much higher level than in some other countries. American students are encouraged to speak in public even when they are in kindergarten. Courses in speech are available in many colleges, which are neither often available nor required for many other countries. Limited experiences and presentation skills can distance the speaker and audiences. This combined disadvantage can eventually increase the stress for a non-native English-speaking instructor (Kuhn, 1996).

Beyond the different styles in organizing and presenting information and conducting lectures, NNES instructors often find themselves in another dilemma when encountering a situation of social interaction with students. American professors tend to provide positive, gentle, affirmative feedback to students. Their responses to imperfect answers are geared to a focus on the encouragement in finding the correct answer. The efforts made by students are politely affirmed. In an opposite situation, as Kuhn (1996) described with the German style of teaching, many foreign-born instructors tend to give

direct and blunt response to students' work. A vivid situation given in Kuhn's study is her translation of a comparison of how a German and an American professor respond to a "bad writing" differently (Table 1).

Table 1

Different feedback of a bad writing from a German and an American professor

German Professor	American Professor
This paper is totally unacceptable as is. You have not grasped the key concepts of the book. It is not clear which ideas are yours, and which ones are from the book. Read the book again and see me if you have questions.	You have taken on a challenging task with this book review. One can see that you have put a lot of effort into dealing with the content and into doing justice to the author. There are, however, a few points that are not quite clear yet….

Source: Kuhn, E. (1996). Cross-cultural stumbling blocks for international teachers. *College Teaching, 44*, 96-99.

This action is not familiar to American students, which eventually will translate into a lower rating of student evaluation. Another advantage of many American instructors is their ability to conduct small informal discussions before or after class. If instructors are not able to properly respond and interact with students, their relationship with students can be limited and hindered (Kuhn, 1996).

Finegan and Siegfried's model (2000), as described in the previous paragraphs, also proves that NNES instructors could close the students' rating gap from NES instructors by adapting the teaching and testing style used by most NES instructors. The

rating can also score a more significant gain by this adjustment in pedagogical methods than by simply mastering the proficiency of spoken English.

Onus only on instructors

Most current research studies have focused only on the emphasis of linguistic improvement of the NNES instructors (Rao, 1993). It is common sense that intensive language training is an essential factor to solve the students' concerns. But it is not the only creative tool to resolve the tension between students and instructors. The classroom interaction is like two-way traffic. If the students were not able to keep an open-mind to the cross cultural difference, improvement only by the NNES instructors would not have enough power to tackle the resistance and the problem. Rao (1993), and Neves and Sanyal (1991) suggested that students' attitude towards NNES instructors can play an important role in their perceptions of those instructors. The personality characteristics and background of students may affect their receptivity to the instructors. Teaching is an interaction between students and instructors. It is difficult to see significant improvement to occur when only one party is expected to change. Students have undeniable responsibility in the occurrence of the "Oh! No Syndrome," as well as the instructors. The approach can be improved only by the involvement of all the concerned parties: students, instructors, administration, and parents.

Adaptation to students' learning style

One of the major problems between NNES instructors and American students is the difference in the perceptions of the learning process. This often leads to a hard question for instructors on how to effectively motivate students in the classroom setting. The difference may limit the students' interests in establishing a personal relationship

between the instructors and students. Chen and Chung's study (1993) suggested that some students held curiosity about the teacher and his/her instructional methods. Instructors often have to use several weeks to resolve this curiosity, which may or may not be successful.

Dealing with students' expectations in learning

A study of student evaluations on economic education shows that students of NNES instructors view grading rigor as an important factor in forming the overall rating of teaching effectiveness (Bosshardt and Watts, 2001). Rigorous standards of grading seem to be a sensitive subject for students to construct their criteria of evaluating teachers' performance. Students' expected grade is often associated with instructors' rigor on grading. Bosshardt and Watts (2001) suggested that this may result from a lower expectation of students on issues such as fully understanding lectures, and learning more on their own. The students are more likely to be uncertain about their study quality in the classroom if they are experiencing an NNES instructor.

Potential solutions

There are increasing concerns on issues related to properly accommodating students and NNES instructors in college in order to reach a better quality of teaching and learning. The screening process becomes crucial in terms of selecting eligible candidates for their teaching professions. Several articles have reported the application of English tests in universities, especially the oral examination, for choosing international teaching assistants who are candidates as classroom instructors (Rao, 1993; Fox and Gay, 1994; Clayton, 2000) Both university administrations and departmental faculties realize that it is necessary to tighten the recruitment standards and screening process in order to get

quality faculty. Legislators from different states are also establishing laws for setting standard requirements for English proficiency of foreign teaching assistants. In some states, such as Missouri, lawmakers even intend to toughen new legislation for testing professors' English proficiency (Clayton, 2000). After the tightening of the English requirement, universities are beginning to expand their preparation and training sessions. The training sessions for foreign instructors in one university setting have been expanded from a 3- to 4-hour version to a two to three week classroom preparation, which is used to familiarize the new instructors with cultural and pedagogical differences in an American classroom (Clayton, 2000).

Extensive training of teaching skills

Currently much research is directed toward the improvement of international teaching assistants, because often NNES instructors for introductory courses are composed of foreign teaching assistants in some major universities, depending on the complexity of various universities. Various programs are discussed and designed for overcoming problems which an NNES instructor may encounter in or out of the classroom. For example, at Ohio State University (Fleisher, Hashimoto and Weinberg, 2002), extensive training and screening processes are constructed for the selection of instructors from foreign graduate assistants. Foreign instructors must prepare to pass a spoken English test as well as a mock teaching test. A class of teaching methods is also mandated to improve the teaching effectiveness. Their experience shows that properly screened and trained NNES instructors can demonstrate at least similar effectiveness to the NES instructors.

Generally, the research indicates that there are two types of such training programs (Chen and Chung, 1993). One of them uses the form of an intensive one- or two-week orientation. During this period, international teaching assistants are introduced to classroom related issues, such as characteristics of the student population, the development of a syllabus, techniques for student evaluation, exercise for communication involving role play practice, as well as simulated testing situations (Chen and Chung, 1993). The program is often conducted at the beginning of every semester. The other types of training programs aim at an on-going assistance which is offered throughout the whole academic year. These training programs often take different approaches from the intensive orientations. Their objectives focus on the improvement of language proficiency, classroom interaction techniques, philosophical bases for curricula, administrative procedures in universities, communication networking in the university communities, as well as respective roles of faculties and teaching assistants (Chen and Chung, 1993). These training programs provide some fundamental opportunities in teaching for foreign students who are looking forward to full-time teaching after their doctoral degree.

Training in teaching and communications

Classroom and educational techniques training is another possible area to be improved. This is to seek out the improvement of the techniques for instructors to communicate with students, to understand the students' needs, and to understand what to expect from students reactions in the classroom environment (Sensenbaugh, 1995). Currently, many universities have started to develop programs to improve the instructors' teaching effectiveness and communication skills. In those programs, orientation prior to

teaching, seminars, courses and handbooks on enhancing teaching are provided to NNES

instructors (Kuhn, 1996). Information about how the typical classes work, hints on

handling classroom issues, and other knowledge of cultural dimensions of the American

collegiate system are used to help NNES instructors improve their communication skills

with students (Neves and Sanyal, 1991; Kuhn, 1996). Some pedagogical methods are

introduced to the new faculties. These include group interaction, instruction with

politeness, how to criticize, and evaluation methods (Kuhn, 1996). However, good

teaching is a challenging task not only for NNES instructors but also for native

instructors. Its complex characteristics require an instructor to be multi-task oriented. A

one or two- hour seminar may not be enough to overcome the cultural differences. It is

natural for students to be concerned about their learning experience and the teaching

ability of their instructors. This fact further emphasizes the importance of taking into

consideration student perceptions on teaching style and curriculum planning. Training

programs have to go beyond improving communication skills (Neves and Sanyal, 1991).

The understanding of student perceptions of learning is needed for an instructor to

effectively and properly gear his or her teaching.

Applying story telling in teaching

Students often perceive the effectiveness of instructors based on several areas,

such as organizational skills, interpersonal skills, and instructional ability (Sensenbaugh,

1995). In another study (Ma, 1994), a storytelling teaching method was suggested to

improve the attractiveness of a lecture from NNES instructors. One of the important

aspects of teaching is to gain the respect from students. Students may not fully accept

foreign instructors at the beginning. But as they are being exposed to multiculturalism

increasingly, students will have more opportunities to realize what an NNES instructor can offer, especially due to their different perceptions and cultural difference. Storytelling, used as a teaching method, allows the instructor to share their foreign experience and better link, emotionally, with students. As stated by Ma (1994, page 3), "students are likely empathized or sympathized with an instructor whom they become to know as a real person through the personalized episodes". The purpose of storytelling in the classroom is not only to provide novelty, but also to promote pluralistic thinking. While the instructor is sharing and discussing his or her options, the students can have a chance to express their points of view. This can motivate positive reasoning as well as challenge the existing framed model of thinking. These interpersonal activities can bridge the difference between the instructors and students.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

The objectives of this study are to identify the key components of the obstacles

and challenges faced by both non-native English-speaking (NNES) instructors and

students in an academic college setting, to investigate the coping strategies students apply

to adapt to the teaching styles of NNES instructors as well as to maintain their study

quality, to investigate the strategies and techniques applied by NNES instructors to

improve teaching quality and to enhance student-instructor relationship, and to explore

the potential solutions to improve classroom quality and the relationship between the two

parties.

This chapter will describe the subjects of the study and how they were selected for

this research. In addition, the instruments being used to collect information will be

discussed. Data collection and analysis procedures will be presented.

A qualitative study was conducted incorporating methods and procedures for the

approach of the interview and focus group. The research methods have helped in data

gathering and fulfilled the purpose of the study.

Subject description

Both interviews and a focus group were used in this research. The interviews were

designed to be used as an instrument for the study of opinions from instructors, while the

focus group was used to collect input from students. The subjects for interviews were

four NNES instructors who are currently teaching in an American university. The

interviewees were contacted by the researcher in person prior to the interviews and

volunteered to participate in this research. It was explained that the participation was voluntary, and effort would be made to preserve anonymity of the interviewees.

The study also assembled a focus group to accumulate input from the student body. An announcement was made in several undergraduate classes that there was a need for volunteers to participate in a focus group discussion. A comment was made during the initial announcement that volunteers should be students who have had experience with NNES instructors. About 20 undergraduate students responded to the recruitment and expressed their interests in the study. At the actual meeting time, nine students attended the discussion section. All attempts were made to keep the individuals in this study unidentifiable to the general public. The participants in this study were shown as anonymous individuals, if their opinions were quoted. The participants were selected on the basis of their willingness to participate and discuss their experiences.

Procedure

To begin the study, a proposal was submitted to the UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) in Februray, 2003. Approval to proceed with this study was received on March 5, 2003. The research was funded by the Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs through the Student Research Fund. The study was conducted in interview style and focus group discussion. Each interview and focus group session was documented in notation style by the researcher. For increased accuracy, sessions were audiotaped. The topics of the interviews and focus group were pre-planned. Questions used in the sessions are shown in detail in the following desciption. The participants' full names were not required during the study. The strictest confidentiality was maintained throughout this

study and only the researcher had access to any confidential information. At the conclusion of this study, all records which identified individual participants were destroyed.

Interviews

Four NNES instructors, who are currently teaching in an American university in the midwest, were asked to participate in individual interviews, conducted by the researcher, to explore issues and accomodations of being an NNES professor. The interviewees come from different countries of origin. Interviews were conducted at locations convenient to the interviewees. The participants were asked to review issues in regards to confidentiality. Then they filled out the consent form prior to the meeting. Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes to one hour. During the meeting, a verbal set of questions was presented to the participants. The process was audio-taped, for accuracy in reporting. Notations were later transcribed by the researcher. The interview questions included:

1. To what extent do you perceive the level of challenges of teaching in U. S. colleges? What are those challenges?

2. What are the common coping strategies you use to help students studying in such an environment?

3. What are the strategies you use to improve your relationship with students?

4. To what level do you find the strategies helpful in your teaching?

5. What are the recommendations that you would give to other NNES instructors for accommodating their teaching in an American university?

6. What are the recommendations that you would give to students who are under the instruction of NNES instructors?

Focus group

Focus group participants were invited to a focus group study on a designated date. Based on the recommendations from the literature review, a comfortable and relaxing environment was often suggested for such a meeting. The location of the meeting was chosen to be a local university conference room. Light refreshments were provided. The participants were undergraduates who had previous experience studying under the instruction of NNES instructors. The participants were asked to fill out the consent form prior to the start of the meeting. The participant discussion lasted for one and a half hours. The discussion was audio-taped and annotated for accuracy.

The researcher served as a moderator during the meeting. After reminding the participants the purpose of the focus group, the moderator opened with an introduction and icebreakers. Group members were given background information of the study and encouraged to participate during the discussion. During the meeting, a verbal set of questions was presented to the participants. Discussion was conducted around topics as listed below:

1. To what extent do you perceive the level of challenges of having NNES instructors in classroom? What are those challenges?

2. What are the common coping strategies you use to help with your studies in such an environment?

3. To what level do you find the strategies help your study?

4. What are the recommendations that you would give to students who are under instructions of NNES instructors?

5. What are the recommendations that you would give to NNES instructors which would help their teaching in an American university?

At the conclusion, the moderator invited participants to review the issues which were discussed. The meeting was closed after the participants were thanked for their enthusiastic cooperation.

Data Collection

At the initial session, the consent form was reviewed along with the purpose of this study. Data for this study was acquired through in-person interviews with NNES instructors and focus group discussion with college students. These sessions were audio-taped to assist the researcher with accurate transcription as well as to reduce the potential for researcher bias in the transcription process. Audio tapes of the interviews and focus group were transcribed and saved as text files by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Data for this study was in the form of notes from each session conducted. Many times actual quotations from interviewees or participants in focus group discussion were used for the analysis of the qualitative study. A thematic system developed by the researcher was used to code, classify, and sort out actual words from the participants. A list of data was compiled according to what issues were addressed based on different research objectives. The researcher analyzed and categorized the information discussed. The notes were also compared with the literature review done in this study. Issues and suggestions were compared based on opinions from instructors and students. Then the

researcher attempted to find connections of the opinions between instructors and students which allowed the researcher to develop recommendations on how to create a friendly classroom environment in order to successfully accommodate NNES instructors and NES students teaching and learning at U.S. universities.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Discussion

In qualitative research, the priority purpose is to investigate people's understanding of a cultural phenomenon. Whether it is statistically quantifiable is not the major aim and focus of the research. In this study, a selection of interviewees and participants for the focus group had to be representative of students and faculty. In this study, the interviewees were non-native English speaking (NNES) instructors, who are currently teaching at a Midwest American university. For the other component of this research, focus group participants were required to have previous experience with NNES instructors in the classroom. However, there were still variations in demographic status among participants within such similarity. Data compiled from this research was intended to reveal the understanding of challenges faced by both students and NNES instructors, as well as the strategies they may have developed to enhance their college experiences. Quotes from the interviewees and focus group participants are in italics in this chapter.

Overall perception

Currently, the presence of NNES instructors is often a new experience for many American college students. In this study, the researcher found that both NNES instructors and students held relatively positive views on issues related to this growing phenomenon. They both considered that this change in the education system has introduced more diversity into colleges and has flavored students with multicultural aspects. There seemed to be a real attempt, by both groups, to understand the situation from the opposite party's standpoint. However, there are practical challenges existing for both sides of the parties in terms of accommodating and adapting to NNES instructors in or out of classrooms.

This often resulted in multi-faceted emotions: acceptance and stress. In fact, in the process of improving the learning and teaching experiences in universities, both parties have been continuously searching for solutions and coping strategies in order to fulfill their academic or career goals.

Challenges for NNES instructors and the potential solutions

All of the teaching interviewees in this study had studied in an American university prior to their teaching in the United States. In their opinions, to properly express themselves in English was not considered by any means a problem. The challenges they have encountered often fell into areas related to acceptance of diversity, communication proficiency, classroom culture adjustment, student motivation and classroom organization. The following table illustrates those challenges

Table 2 *Challenges perceived by NNES instructors*

Challenges	Major concerned issues
1. Acceptance from student	a. accent
	b. minority image
2. Communication skills and techniques	a. higher requirement in language
	b. bring ideas to students effectively
	c. explain concepts and organize argument
3. Different classroom culture	a. formal/informal
	b. teaching methods/strategies
4. Motivating students	a. remove students' passivity
	b. foster active learners
5. Students' conformability to formality	a. fulfill expectation

Student acceptance

Belonging to a special category of a minority population in the U.S., NNES instructors are not a population with which the majority population in the United States will interact on a daily basis. It is understandable that various concerns would emerge for NNES instructors before they enter the classroom. Such concerns include whether students can accept them as effective as native instructors and whether students are able to adapt to their ways of speaking, more particularly to their accents.

One of the interviewees expressed his/her concerns in this way:

By entering the classroom, the first question I ask myself is how many students do not have experience of being taught by foreign instructors. Especially if students are from a relatively homogenous community, they might not be accustomed with being lectured in the presence of a foreign instructor. It is probably easier in a metropolitan area, where the faculty body may be formed with a diversified population. How to accommodate them in such an environment always becomes my first concern.

It is undeniable that students can recognize the accent carried by NNES instructors. The difference in pronunciation can bring difficulties in the process of understanding. The interviewed instructors agreed that it often took a couple of weeks for students to "*get used to the way in which the instructor expresses as well as the accent he/she carries.*" By using their words, it is said that they can see it "*from students' eyes.*" A sense of imperfection may accumulate from this fact. Teaching itself for instructors is a learning process, too. It is a way to learn from their students. The following strategies were found by the interviewees, to be helped in gaining student acceptance with their teaching.

a. *"To be free and be yourself"*

It is rather important for instructors to have the confidence to free them from being overly concerned regarding accent. As a non-native speaker, one needs to "*be comfortable with the fact that the accent they carry is an unavoidable fact. Build confidence and don't be shy.*" By "*overcoming the psychological barriers,*" one can generally perform better in the classroom setting.

b. Several strategies to minimize the effect of accent

"*Slow is the art.*" All of the interviewees emphasized that a good control on speaking speed can tremendously help in conveying knowledge to their native English speaking students. "*You are interpreting when you are listening. It is the same thing for students. You have to slow down for students, and allow them to catch up with you. Calm down. Speak distinguishingly, slowly, carefully, clearly. Gradually they will be able to catch up with your speaking.*" It is a "*double jeopardy*" if the speaker has a strong accent and speaks with a relatively fast speed. This can significantly affect the clarity of the conversation. It is also necessary to give students time to get used to the accent.

c. *"Be honest"*

One of the interviewees suggested that honesty can play a very positive role in gaining students acceptance. Non-native English-speaking instructors should give students precautions on learning with NNES instructors during the first couple weeks of the class. Some suggestions given were:

"*to ask immediate clarification if anything is not understood during the lecture due to their accent*"

"*to ask instructors to slow down, if the lecturing is too fast paced*"

"to give open options to students. Students should be able to drop the lecture if the accent has heavily disturbed their study."

d. "…*engaging student in conversation*"

The growth of acceptance will not happen just overnight. "*Try to engage students into conversation.*" This can gradually remove the surprises resulting from the foreign accent. "*Let students know that people can speak English differently…The more you talk with them, the more they can get used to your accent…. Eventually accent will be forgotten as the major concern.*"

It is necessary for the NNES instructors to actively participate in communication with students during the process of study. Studies indicate that appropriately applying teaching media in the classroom can increase the motivation of students academically (Sensenbaugh, 1995). Both nonverbal and verbal communication may enhance student learning by increasing students' enjoyment of the instructor primarily and subject matter secondarily. These actions include offering immediate feedback to students' work, praising and affirming students' improvement, showing willingness and interest in talking with students, addressing students by their first names, smiling, relaxing posture when with students, and applying various vocal expression (Sensenbaugh, 1995).

Communication skills and techniques

Even though the foreign accent can be disadvantageous, most of the instructors are capable of using English with "*good grammar, good structure, good spelling, and good constructions.*" Other researchers also suggest that most NNES instructors can use basic language and carry on a conversation with fluency and grammar. In this study, the

interviewees expressed their desires and needs to improve communication skills and techniques. One interviewee commented.

"*Teaching requires a much higher level of language skills. One of my American colleagues sometimes even stays quietly in his/her office right before the lectures, and concentrates in preparing ideas. In classroom, language is not only related to expressing one's ideas, but also related to how to put the ideas in a way that is easier for students to understand the content.* "

Communication skills become even more crucial in the incidents of explaining concepts. "*To explain a concept requires the connection with real life. Some concepts have been embedded in a culture for a long time. In such cases, it becomes harder in teaching for foreign instructors who have limited experience with the native culture. …To teach students concepts requires not only to trace back the root of the concept, but also to relate the concurrent experience which students can connect to*."

Besides adapting appreciated communication skills mentioned in the previous paragraph, several interviewees also found that applying new technology in class actually helped them relieve the tension in communication. Such techniques may include visual instruments (projectors, graphic utilities, and electronic utilities), application software in the studied field, and computer instructions. They qualified the use of such techniques as helping to "*simplify teaching, enhance teaching quality*." But they also emphasized that "*these techniques can not totally take the place of the traditional instructions*."

One of the instructional interviewees found it extremely helpful to use internet to post notes related to the lecture. "*This allows students to have a fairly good idea about the topics which were or will be presented. This allows students to concentrate on the*

materials during lecture other than focusing on figuring out words spoken. Students can remove their tension on understanding the language (of the NNES instructor) to what actually is said by the instructor. Notes also provide students chances to review materials after class. They can go back and read the note if there is anything unclear. If there is a word that they are not familiar with (due to accent), they can find it in the note most likely." This adaptation of new technology actually gained very positive feedback from his/her students. The students' focus group study also showed the students' compliments. Without notes in hand, students sometimes found it hard in lecture because if they are stuck on figuring out the different pronunciation of a word, such a scenario may happen: After they figure out the meaning, information in a lecture has already moved "*a few paragraphs ahead. You can be just lost in the lecture.*"

However, how much teaching should rely on "cutting edge" techniques is often an issue being argued. A current study (Grasha and Yangarber-Hicks, 2000) suggested that the promotion of technology should emphasize the delivery of instruction rather than substituting a learning experience. Without involving students into a "two-way dialogue," students will only become "more passive and act as receivers of information" (Grasha and Yangarber-Hicks, 2000). This occurrence would not satisfy the original purpose of NNES instructors to adapt techniques from the electronic revolution into classroom instruction.

It was suggested by the interviewees that in order to clarify concepts, one must actualize abstract material in the explanation. "*Instructors need to turn abstract concepts into visible material which students can connect to themselves. Story-telling, visual aids*

and other supplies can help this process. After introducing the concept, students should be allowed to think over and discuss the theory with real life examples."

Additional efforts and extra time for class preparation were often mentioned in the interviews. "*To know the subject well will help to have a better structure in the in class.*" As a NNES instructor, to "*be well prepared*" becomes more critical in the classroom. This can not only catch students' attention during lectures and questions, but also enhance the students' acceptance towards instructors.

Different classroom culture

To deal with the different classroom culture is another challenge for NNES instructors. Non-native English speaking instructors come from various cultural backgrounds. The educational experience they had in their homeland may differ from the characteristics in an American university. Such changes in culture can also impact their teaching career. Culture is defined as "the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them" (Bennett, 1999, page 39). As products or by-products of one's culture, one will standardize and develop attitudes in applying their knowledge about life. Similar to other types of culture, classroom culture can also vary in different societies. The interviewees perceived that classroom culture could include the way students interact with teachers, the way students act, their dress, their relationship with instructors, and so on. They often found different cultural perspectives in or out of the classroom. For example, eating in the classroom is not permitted in many other countries, especially in higher education, but it is rather common in an American college classroom. Calling a teacher's first name would be another example. It may be considered disrespectful within some cultures.

"Difference can construct distance between instructors and students." But one of the interviewees suggested that: "*It is not up to you to make judgments. This is something related to the culture here. It is just in a different environment. Just come to teach and do your work. If you are from a culture with high authority, control, attitude, or discipline, it may be good for you to have experience as part of the student body in the U.S. It will help you to understand the background. You can take it from there.*"

Motivating students

Despite the difference in their ethnic backgrounds, the instructor interviewees often found a certain level of passivity possessed by their encountered American students. This brings in the challenge of "*how to motivate students to become active learners and finish considerable amount of work on their own.*" In other words, there is a need to adjust their pedagogical methods to the target students. One of the interviewees used such words to describe the fact: "*They are some what passive. Some students lack in-depth study. I think one reason is that they are used to television. In a way they expect the classroom to be entertaining.*" Kuhn's study (1996) also suggested the passivity of American students. She found that learning materials are often "presented to students in bitesize pieces." Students expect the professor to tell them exactly what they need to accomplish in detail.

Lowman (1994) commented that an outstanding instructor is considered to be a combination of performer and motivator by American students. In other words, he/she possesses both presentational and interpersonal skills. In order to motivate students, instructors first have to promote students' interests in the subjects. By increasing the

interests and involvement in the classroom, instructors can foster a better performance from students. The following practices were found to be useful by the interviewees.

1. Design and involve students in experiments

    "*In order to truly allow students to digest concepts and definitions, I found it especially useful to introduce students with problem solving experiences. I will construct some exercises which require students to develop concepts with me together. This requires students input. They have to apply what they are taught. However, the tricky part is often how to adjust the level of comprehensiveness. The complexity has to match the knowledge students have.*" A study conducted by Craven at Saint Louis Community College (1996), has shown the necessity of example demonstrations in class as well. The survey results in that research revealed 20 top ranking characteristics of teaching excellence perceived by students. Among those high ranking characteristics, there is the use of relevant examples, clear emphasis on facts, showing practical applications, and presenting facts and examples not in the text.

    Some interviewees in this study also suggested that experiences from their colleagues can often help them create ideas. Non-native English speaking instructors could actively ask suggestions and share opinions with their colleagues.

2. Give immediate feedback

    The interviewees also mentioned the importance of feedback. They found that immediate feedback allows continuous thinking. When students are exposed to the same problem in a short period of time, the intensified memory helps to reinforce the learning of knowledge. In fact, in college when instructors provide challenges to students, it is important not to fail to provide students the support they need at the same time.

3. Blend in multicultural materials

Non-native English speaking instructors are advantageous in their multicultural backgrounds. Their presence in colleges provides the opportunities for students to be exposed to many different worldviews. "*To offer students different perspectives and views can allow students to see that even one concept may be understood differently due to the different cultural influences.*" Providing comparative materials is also found to expand students' concepts in diversity.

4. Compromising

"*Don't overstress students, but encourage participation.*" Adapting different teaching styles, giving enough academic incentives, and encouraging students to do research around a selected topic can enhance the instruction quality. "*Anticipate the possible questions. Give them answers.*" By removing surprises, interviewees found that students could also function well in their classroom. In cases of some extreme situations, one interviewee suggested that "*I will invite particular passive students into my office, and we can always work on possible solutions together.*"

Students' conformability to formality

The lack of conformability can be linked to students' passivity. This challenges instructors on how to lead students to keep up with the expectations in class. An example given by one of the interviewees was about the syllabus. "*You can have a senior come to you and say that I didn't know there is a test today… The next question is: Do you have another copy of that? (Syllabus)…. There is a lack of knowledge that certain expectations can directly gear to certain results.*"

In the interviewees' words, "*it is important to explain the rationale of taking the class to students.*" This includes "*to explain the concrete steps of learning, to explain expectation*" at the beginning of the class as well as throughout the courses, and "*to provide guidance and to encourage students to go beyond.*" Meanwhile, it is necessary to "*enforce rules,*" eg: "*Establish and organize the class well*"; "*Avoid too many accommodations and adjustments.*"

Especially for NNES instructors, with their experiences, the interviewees suggested to: "*work within the culture, but accommodate without sacrificing principles.*" College study is based on a concept of "*co-powering.*" One instructor explained to his/her students the learning experience as a "4C" concept: "*co-grading, co-evaluating, co-constructing, co-authority.*" Students have a shared responsibility in their evaluation as well as their peers and instructors. "*The one who can follow the rules appropriately are able to keep up with their programs.*"

Challenges for students and the potential strategies

As NNES instructors have to face various challenges during their teaching in U.S. colleges, their students also experience challenges to exposure to this multicultural instructor population during their college study. According to the student participants in this study, the main challenges for students can be summarized into two areas: high expectations and communication difficulties. However, the existence of the challenges does not necessarily only create negative impacts on students' learning experience in school. It can motivate students to maximize their potentials, overcome difficulties and achieve their academic goals (Figure 10).

Higher expectations

Students often find higher expectations from the NNES instructors than from their counterpart native speaking instructors. As stated by one of the student participants, "*these instructors seem to expect us to be masters of all of our subjects. They will tell you that school is for learning, not for vacation. In a way it makes you feel stressful*." Such expectations are not always familiar to the average American students within their classroom experience prior to college. The stress can cause "*a lot of frustration.*" The interviewed students sometimes also have concerns that their instructors will consider them to be lazy students.

Many foreign countries use different curricula in the higher education system. A filtering system is often implanted, by which only students who can survive examinations are able to continue learning at a higher level. The students from those countries learn to deal with the pressures and competition placed on them by their instructors. Interestingly, the student participants also realized such facts: "*In other countries, the higher competition existing in their education system may result in that only dedicated people can continue the intensive study in college. The students who have worked hard in such an environment and become instructors late will hold the same expectation on his/her students.*" It seemed they also have analyzed the reason why their NNES instructors would have high expectations in the classroom.

Communication difficulties

In most cases, the student participants agreed that accent and the way of expression were the major issues in communication. It takes time for them to figure out a way to get used to the NNES instructors' accent. They are also trying to constantly

modify their English expressions and find the best way to communicate with their NNES instructors. Students often asked themselves questions, such as "*How can I word this?*" and "*How can I get the answer I understand?*", if they need help from NNES instructors.

They also expressed their hesitation in asking the NNES instructors to repeat their words, because of their concerns that they may insult the instructors by asking "*What were you saying*?" However, this only increases their confusion with the problems they encounter, and eventually it may lead to further frustration in learning the subject. Some student participants suggested that if the instructors could inform them that it is acceptable to ask to repeat during lectures, they would be more encouraged to resolve unclarified materials.

As previously presented in this paper, the applications of new techniques in teaching have simplified learning and eased the tension for students in dealing with foreign accents and expressions. The student participants greatly appreciated handing out or posting notes prior to the lecture.

More specifically, the participants listed the following modifications in their learning which they found to be helpful during their study with NNES instructors.

1. "*Sit in the front. That helps you to concentrate and reduce distractions.*"

2. "*Bring notes when I am asking question. Use the words they (instructors) like to use. Imitate their words. Sometimes I will even point to the note where the questions located.*"

3. "*Compare and review materials from class, if not clear.*" They often found it more efficient in learning if they could prepare and review the covered section prior to classes.

4. *"Dare to ask questions. Ask for clarification if it is needed."*

5. Ask the teacher *"to give immediate feedback."*

6. Use of co-operative learning in the classroom appeared to help the students.

The students suggested that sometimes it was easier to learn from their peers than individually directly from their instructors. *"Once they are put into groups, they can web together, and discuss interpretations and help each other."* In this research, the interviewed instructors also recognized the advantage of peer instruction. They are also striving to coordinate co-operative learning and group study into their pedagogical methods.

7. One-on-one time with instructors was also deemed helpful.

Some participants also suggested that to make good use of instructors' office hours can be very beneficial to their study. The one-on-one study helps them to clarify questions effectively, while they don't need to *"take the other students' time in the class."*

Communication style

The differences in communication styles due to the different cultures can also generate challenges in the communication process. Edward T. Hall has categorized culture into two groups: high context and low context (Bennett, 1999). In a high context culture, verbal messages tend to stress being polite, having integrity and being harmonious. This is often found in the East Asian, African, and Hispanic cultures. On the other hand, in a low context culture, such as in Anglo-European culture, verbal messages tend to stress arguments and being direct. Socially, high context cultures form a tight social structure while low context cultures provide a loose social structure. This further influences interpersonal relations. Whether groups or individuals are paramount can be

different in these two types of cultures. The two different cultures also process their reasoning in different ways. In high context cultures, reasoning is based on comprehensive logic. "Knowledge is gained through intuition, spiral logic and contemplations" (Bennett, 1999, page 45). Feelings become very important. In low context cultures, reasoning takes a totally different approach. Linear logic becomes the basis of understanding. "Knowledge is gained through analytical reasoning" (Bennett, 1999, page 45). Words are important in low context conversations. In this research, student participants suggested that they like direct answers, but their NNES instructors sometimes "*tend to give them more background information than they expect*." This may relate to the fact that a large proportion of the foreign scholars in U.S. colleges are composed of people from high context cultures. This concern of students actually suggested to NNES instructors the importance of being precise in their conversations when they are interacting with native English speaking students.

Connection between the challenges for students and instructors

Education is a two-way street. It is an interaction between students and instructors. Whether students can fulfill their learning experience and whether instructors can find satisfaction with their teaching can link their counterparts in this two-way process.

Non-native English speaking instructors often encounter challenges in the classroom and student management. As they strive to pursue career excellence and foster better future professionals, they have to challenge the passivity of the average American student. While American students are attempting to maximally absorb knowledge from their NNES instructors, they also have to face the unfamiliar elaborated expectations

from their instructors. Meanwhile, both parties are trying to find the best way to solve difficulties during communication. Both parties consider the major issues of how to communicate effectively.

Building student-teacher relationship

Learning in classrooms can be an emotional journey for both instructors and students. What kind of relationship can be developed after the period of the whole course is another question which may be carried by both instructors and students before they enter the classroom. American students are often considered as "*out-going*" persons by NNES instructors. Instructors in this research said that their one common goal was to be "*approachable and accessible*." One said that "*If she/he (student) knocks on my door, she/he can just come in.*"

"*Understanding each other is the main thing in relationship. Even though students may only be with you for maybe one semester, a very short time, they have to get a lot of information from you. You need to build the relationship from early on…speak to them…talk to them…hear from them…take you time. Build trust and relationships. (Students') Denial often comes from the lack of approachability.*" Hilt (2001) in one of his studies said that "college courses, especially at the intermediate and more-advanced levels, also depend for their success on the interaction between the teacher and individual students…The outcome is not simply the result of what the professor plans, but what everyone brings to the class."

The essential element for NNES instructors is to "*reduce tension*." To keep the communication path open needs a professor to get down from his/her position only as an authoritative figure. "*Address students with respect*". "*Allow students to speak up in*

class and propose different opinions…The more they feel comfortable with you, the more they can accept you." Students also need to learn to respect their instructors. One of the suggestions from the participants was "*assume formality before interaction with NNES instructors in the classroom.*"

Not only did NNES instructors find it important to communicate with students, student participants also expressed their interests and curiosity to communicate with their foreign instructors. They like to see their NNES instructors care about them.. A simple question like "*How was (your) weekend?*" can easily comfort the students in the classroom. If the instructors can "*crack a joke*" (even if it is about any misunderstandings in language) during the lecture, it will "*smooth away a cut and dry lecture.*" Other issues, such as "*why they chose teaching?*", "*what their culture looks like?*", and "*some events they encountered in a day,*" can often catch students' attention.

Participation of university administration in enhancing college environment

The participation of university administration is also necessary for creating a positive environment which can accommodate NNES instructors in American universities.

1. Training in overcoming cultural difference

With an emphasis of increasing diversity among universities, it is very necessary for the university to provide training on multiculturalism for both instructors and students. Programs should be developed to allow NNES instructors to understand the specific cultural phenomena in an American university classroom. American students often perceive a successful instructor as "positive, democratic and predictable" (Lowman, 1994). This interpersonal dimension can affect an instructor's role in effectively

motivating students (Lowman, 1994). To help NNES instructors in achieving their goal of improved interpersonal skills, training can enhance their performance in the classroom and gain more acceptance from students. Activities should also be encouraged and promoted for students to learn and experience different cultures, especially those which they are not familiar with. This can help students to realize the existence of different worldviews, which will conceivably avoid misinterpretations from their interaction with NNES instructors and gain better understanding of perspectives outside of the dominant culture.

Extensive training during the semesters can familiarize the foreign individuals with the cultural differences in an American classroom. Programs can introduce some discussions between the NNES instructors and some trustworthy undergraduate and graduate students. The open discussion can help in the process of looking for solutions from the point of either side's view. Closing the cultural gap in the classroom is not an easy job, but it is not an unachievable goal either.

2. Enhance communication training

One of the purposes of communication in college is to transfer and convey knowledge. To allow NNES instructors to more effectively convey their knowledge to college students, universities need to create more opportunities to improve their communicative ability in and out of the classroom. One of the interviewees suggested that most of the NNES instructors tended to be "overeducated" in formal English instead of colloquial English. In order to help NNES instructors to overcome the communicative challenges, university administration can encourage them to participate in more social interactions and multidimensional daily activities.

3. Pedagogical methods training

Only knowing the cultural difference in the classroom is not enough for NNES instructors to win students' hearts. Students prefer professors who can organize complex materials in a clear way which can lead to effective learning (Lowman, 1994). This requires the development of a personal style in teaching. Continuous training in both theory and practices of pedagogical methods can open more spaces for NNES instructors to further develop their teaching strategies, which can effectively adapt to an American classroom environment.

How to create and enhance a better college environment for learning is a realistic question posed for all instructors, and university administration, as well as the student body. As the employment group of instructors becomes less homogenous, it is everyone's responsibility to work together and take an active part in the work to search for solutions and modify strategies.

CHAPTER V

Summary and Conclusions

A continuing growth of non-native English speaking (NNES) instructors hired by American universities has been substantial in recent years. Most of these instructors work in fields that require highly intensive math related courses (Rao, 1993; Clayton, 2000), but they can also be found in the full array of degree offerings. Several collaborative factors may have contributed to this increasing employment population. These include the increasing total enrollment of foreign students in American universities, changes of demographic status in student enrollment for graduate programs, lack of employment interests in academic fields, and the increasing requirements of teaching quality in universities. Their presence on campus has brought more diversity into both the academic and overall university culture. However, currently most of the foreign scholars working in American universities come from countries where English is not used as a native language. Their cultural backgrounds are often quite different from the American mainstream cultures. This fact suggests that major adjustments are needed for both NNES instructors and students in their university lives, if both are going to achieve their goals.

Restatement of the problem

The university stakeholders may include students, parents, university administration, and instructors. Each of the parties perceives the status of such a change in higher education differently. This fact suggested a definite necessity to study and investigate the concerns of each stakeholder on the issue related to the presence of NNES instructors in the classroom. However, there is little systematic concurrent study on

analyzing and comparing the perceptions of these issues from the points of views of both NNES instructors and students.

It is not enough to resolve any possible dilemma only by revealing the obstacles or challenges. Study should be directed to investigate the possibility of any existing gap in perceptions between instructors and students, to study the different expectations which each party imposes on the other, and to explore the strategies which they use to resolve difficulties and improve their performance in the college, either in study or in teaching.

Non-native English speaking instructors' presence in U.S. colleges has brought multicultural excitement and diversity into classrooms and students' lives. How to maximally understand this new cultural phenomenon can be very beneficial for the growth of younger generations.

Objectives

This study identifies the key components of the obstacles and challenges faced by both NNES instructors and students in an academic college setting, investigates the coping strategies of students applied to adapting to the teaching styles of NNES instructors and maintain their study quality, investigates the strategies and techniques applied by NNES instructors to improve teaching quality and enhance student-instructor relationships, and explores the potential solutions to improve classroom quality and the relationship between the two parties.

The research questions involved in this study included the following areas:

1. To what extent do students perceive the level of challenges of having NNES instructors in classroom? What are those challenges?

2. To what extent do NNES instructors perceive the level of challenges of teaching in U. S. colleges? What are those challenges?

3. What are the common coping strategies students use to keep up with their studies in such an environment?

4. To what level do they find the strategies help in their study?

5. What are the strategies NNES instructors use to improve classroom quality and the relationship with students?

6. To what level do they find the strategies help in their teaching?

Methods and Procedures

Both interviews and a focus group were used in this research. The interviews were designed to be used as an instrument for the study of opinions from instructors, while the focus group was used to collect input from students. The subjects for interviews were four NNES instructors who are currently teaching in a Midwest American university. The study also assembled a focus group to accumulate input from the student body. Nine students attended the discussion section. All attempts were made to keep the individuals in this study unidentifiable to the general public. Questions, which were approved by the University of Wisconsin-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB), were asked following a script developed by the researcher. Data was collected and audio recorded for accuracy.

In the process of data analysis, the researcher analyzed and categorized the information discussed. The notes were also compared with literature reviews done in this study. Issues and suggestions were compared based on opinions from instructors and students. The researcher then attempted to find connections among the opinions between

instructors and students, which allowed the researcher to develop recommendations on how to create a friendly classroom environment in order to successfully accommodate NNES instructors teaching at U.S. universities, and their students.

Major findings

In this study, the researcher found that both NNES instructors and students held relatively positive views on issues related to this growing phenomenon. They both considered that this change in the education system has introduced more diversity into colleges and has flavored students with multicultural aspects from their early lives. They seemed to be making a sincere effort to understand the situation from the opposite party's standpoint.

In the opinions of NNES instructors, to properly express themselves in English was not considered by any means a problem. However, the challenges they have encountered often fell into areas related to acceptance of diversity, communication proficiency, classroom culture adjustment, student motivation, conformability of students and classroom organization. For students, the challenges included high expectations, communication difficulties due to accents, and different interpersonal communication styles.

The researcher also found connections actually existed between the challenges perceived by NNES instructors and students. NNES instructors often encounter challenges in the classroom and in student management. As they strive to pursue career excellence and foster better future professionals, they have to challenge, what is perceived to be, the passivity of the average American student. While American students are attempting to maximally absorb knowledge from their NNES instructors, they also

have to face the unfamiliar elaborated expectations from their instructors. Meanwhile, both parties are trying to find the best way to solve difficulties during communication. Both parties consider the major issues of how to communicate effectively important.

This study found that not only the interviewed NNES instructors realized the importance of communicating with students; student participants also expressed their interests and curiosity to communicate with their foreign instructors. Interviewees showed that one essential element for NNES instructors to develop a good relationship with their students was to "*reduce tension.*" To keep the communication path open requires a professor to get down from his/her position only as an authoritative figure.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the study of interviews, a focus group and literature. Several strategies were found by the interviewees and student participants which can be useful in resolving the above issues.

For NNES instructors

1. To gain student acceptance

    a. "*To be free and be yourself*"

    b. "*Speak distinguishingly, slowly, carefully, clearly*"

    c. To be honest can play a very positive role.

    d. "*…engaging student in conversation*"

2. Communication skills and techniques

    a. Applying new technology in class actually helped them relieve the tension in communication. Such techniques may include visual instruments (projectors,

graphic utilities, and electronic utilities), application software in the studied field, and computer instructions.

    b. In order to clarify concepts, one must actualize abstract material in the explanation.

3. To adjust with different classroom culture

    Be objective to the differences.

    "*It is not up to you to make judgments. Just come to teach and do your work. It will help you to understand the background.*"

4. Motivating students

    a. Design and involve students in experiments

    b. Give Immediate feedback

    c. Blend in multicultural materials

    d. Compromise

5. Maintain students' conformability to formality

    a. "*It is important to explain the rationale of taking the class to students.*"

    b. It is necessary to "*enforce rules.*"

For students

1. "*Sit in the front. That helps you to concentrate and reduce distractions.*"

2. "*Bring notes when asking question.*"

3. "*Compare and review materials from class, if not clear.*"

4. "*Dare to ask questions. Ask for clarification if it is needed.*"

5. Ask teacher "*to give immediate feedback.*"

6. Co-operative learning strategies, so students can also learn from their peers.

For university administration

1. Provide training in overcoming cultural difference for both instructors and students

2. Enhance language training

3. Provide pedagogical methods training

In conclusion, this thesis project showed that several factors may have contributed to the challenges of accommodating NNES instructors in an American classroom. Both NNES instructors and students have to face challenges in the adjustment to communication and pedagogical culture. However, there are possible solutions and strategies for instructors in improving their teaching quality and the relationship with their students. Strategies are also available for students to maximally enjoy their study with NNES instructors.

Recommendation for future study

This project has used a small number of participants. Based on the findings in this research, studies can be expanded to a larger participant pool. More detailed information can be determined in each specific challenge and strategic adjustments. More studies should also be done to explore how to provide effective training programs for NNES instructors. Such programs should involve materials specifically related to instructors with certain demographic backgrounds other than merely an introduction of American pedagogical culture.

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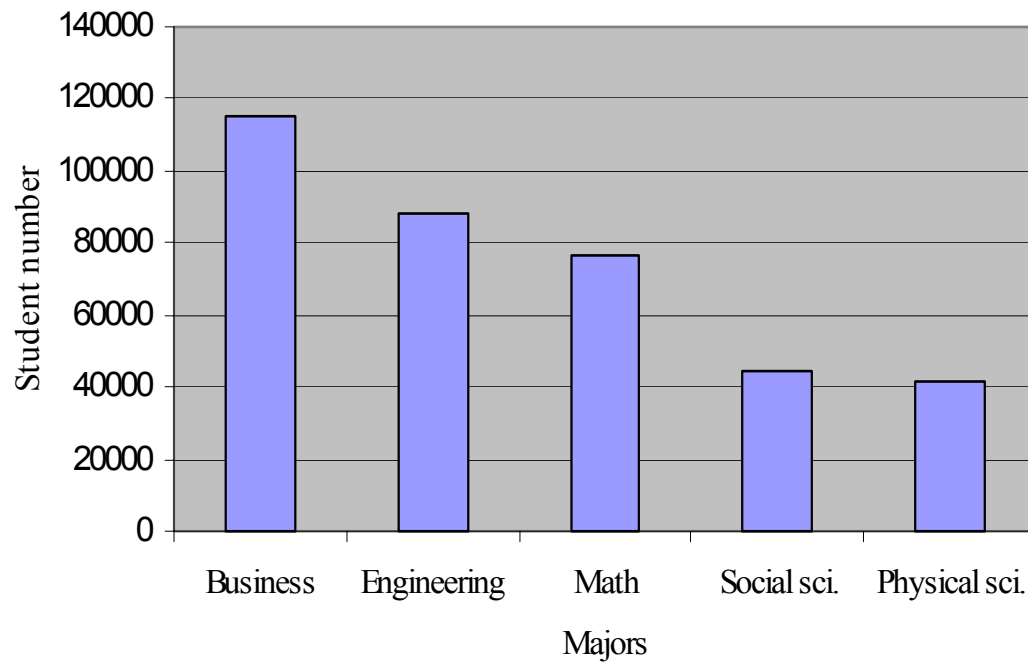
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APPENDIX A

Figures

Figure 1 The enrollment of foreign students in the United States from 1990 to 2002
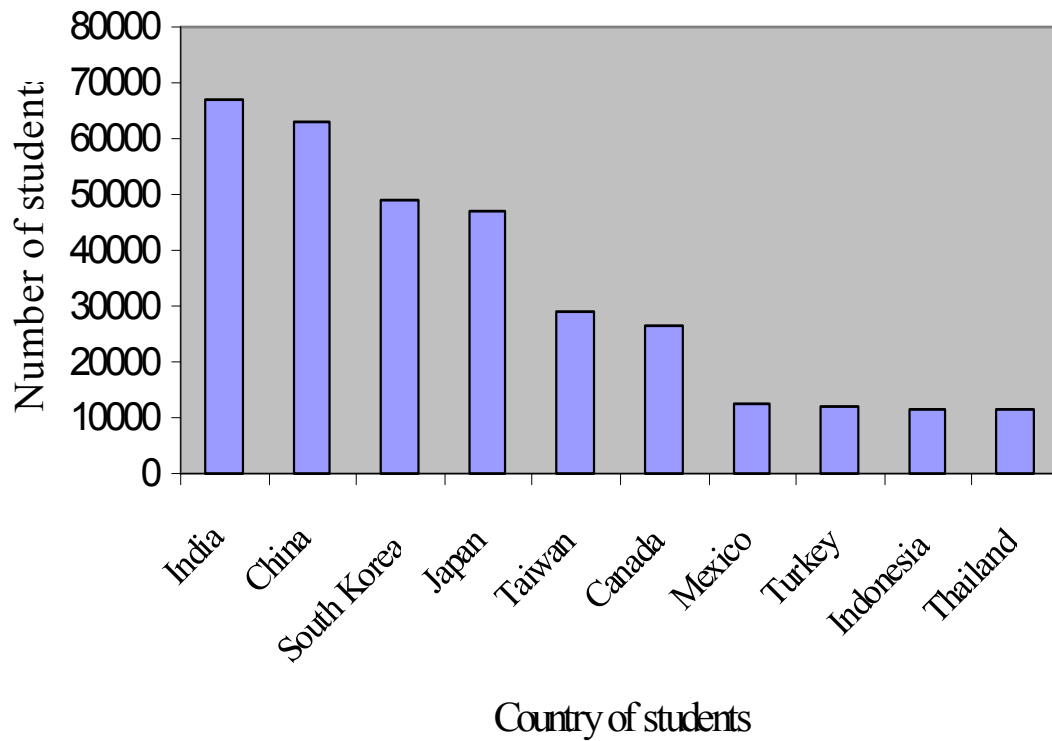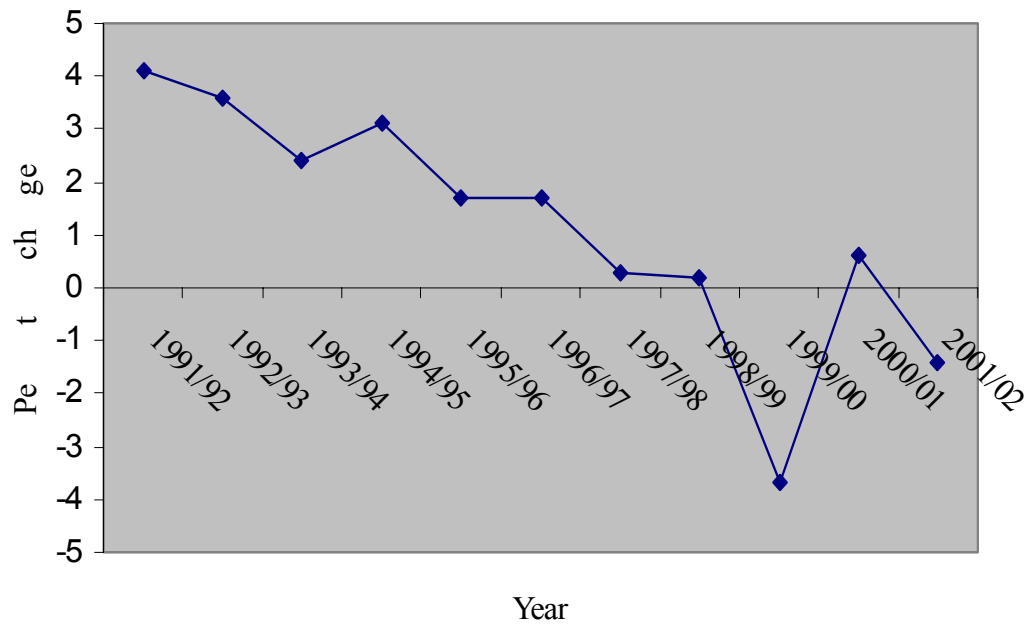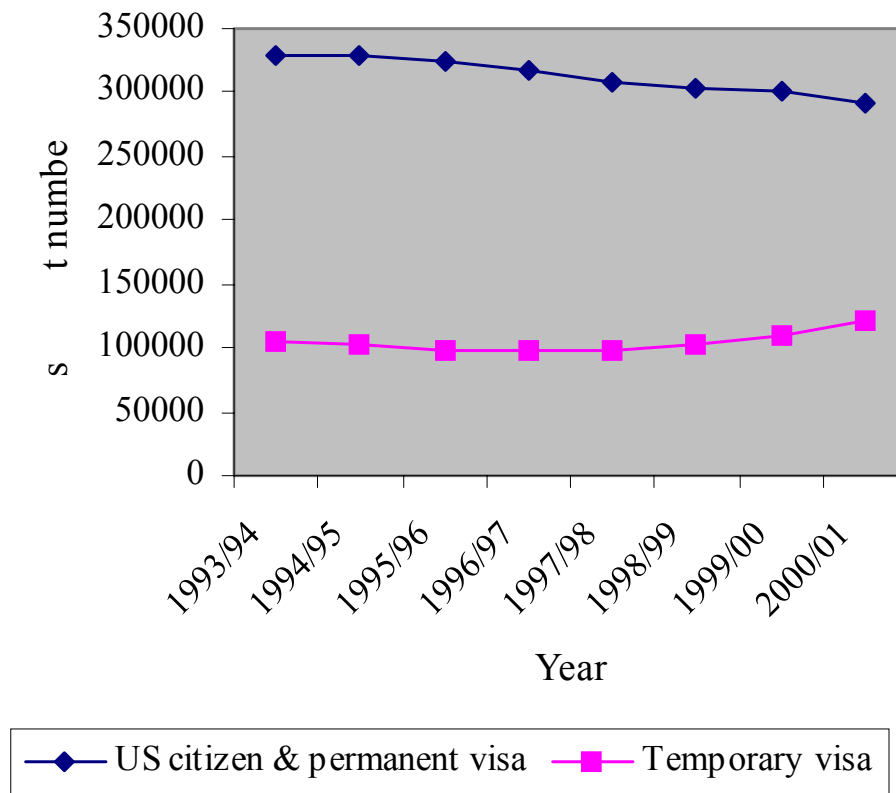
Figure 2 The top 10 origins of foreign students in the United States in 2001-2002

Source: Institute of International Education. (2003). *Leading countries of origin*. Retrieved March 1, 2003,

from http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?g=3390&ct=v2pages&pg_v=pg&pg_pid=8045&pg_fid=19750

Figure 3 The top five fields of study for foreign students in the United States in 2001-

2002

Source: Institute of International Education. (2003). *Field of study*. Retrieved March 1, 2003, from

http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?g=3390&ct=v2pages&pg_v=pg&pg_pid=8048&pg_fid=19750

Figure 4 Annual percentage change of the number of doctorates awarded

Source: National Opinion Research Center. (2002). *Doctorate recipients from United States universities: Summary report 2001*. Retrieved March 1, 2003, from http://www.norc.org/issues/sed-2001.pdf

Figure 5 Annual enrollment of graduate students in science and engineering
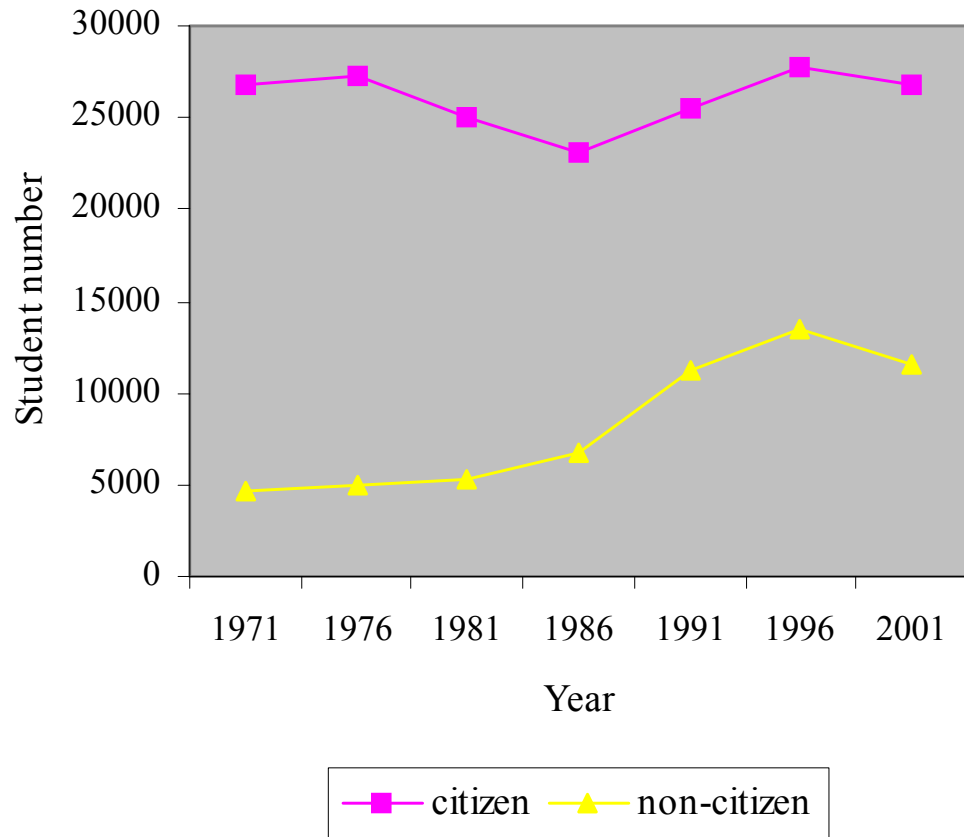
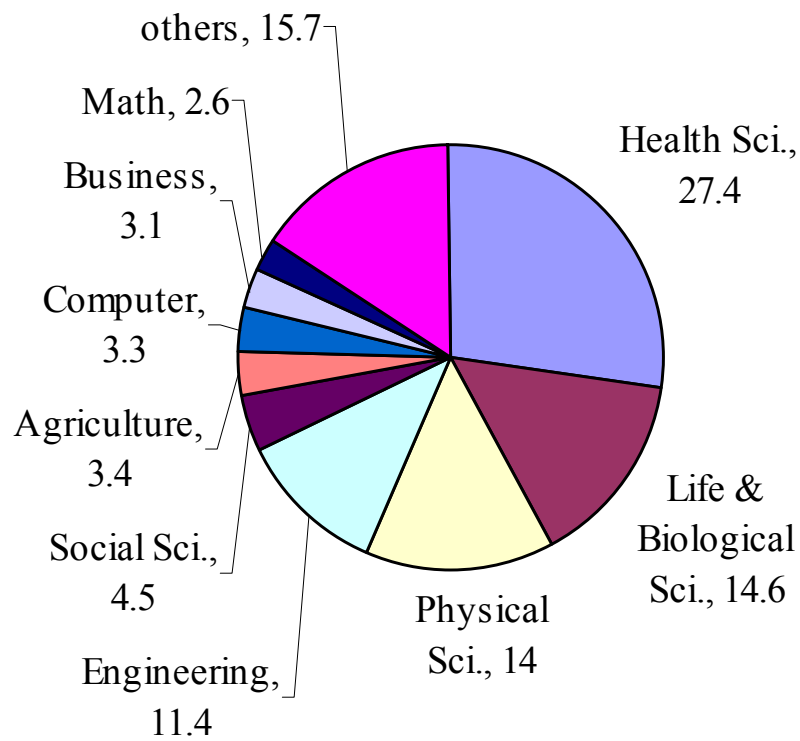*Figure 6* Citizenship status of doctorate recipients in different years

Source: National Opinion Research Center. (2002). *Doctorate recipients from United States universities:*

Summary report 2001. Retrieved March 1, 2003, from http://www.norc.org/issues/sed-2001.pdf

Figure 7 Citizenship status of doctorate recipients in different majors

Source: National Opinion Research Center. (2002). *Doctorate recipients from United States universities: Summary report 2001*. Retrieved March 1, 2003, from http://www.norc.org/issues/sed-2001.pdf
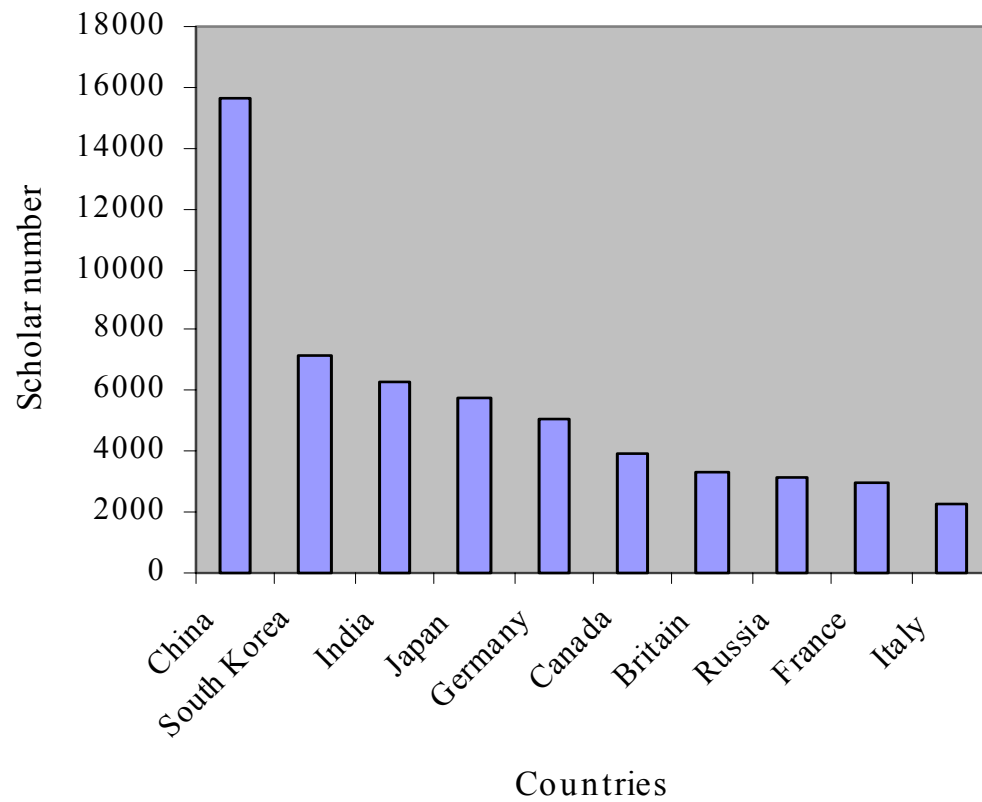
*Figure 8* The top 10 countries of foreign scholar in the United States in 2001-2002

Source: Institute of International Education. (2003). *Leading countries of origin*. Retrieved March 1, 2003,

from http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?g=3390&ct=v2pages&pg_v=pg&pg_pid=8403&pg_fid=20488

others, 15.7
Math, 2.6
Business, 3.1
Computer, 3.3
Agriculture, 3.4
Social Sci., 4.5
Engineering, 11.4
Physical Sci., 14
Life & Biological Sci., 14.6
Health Sci., 27.4

Figure 9 The fields of foreign scholars in the United States

Source: Institute of International Education. (2003). *Leading countries of origin*. Retrieved March 1, 2003, from http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?g=3390&ct=v2pages&pg_v=pg&pg_pid=8404&pg_fid=20488
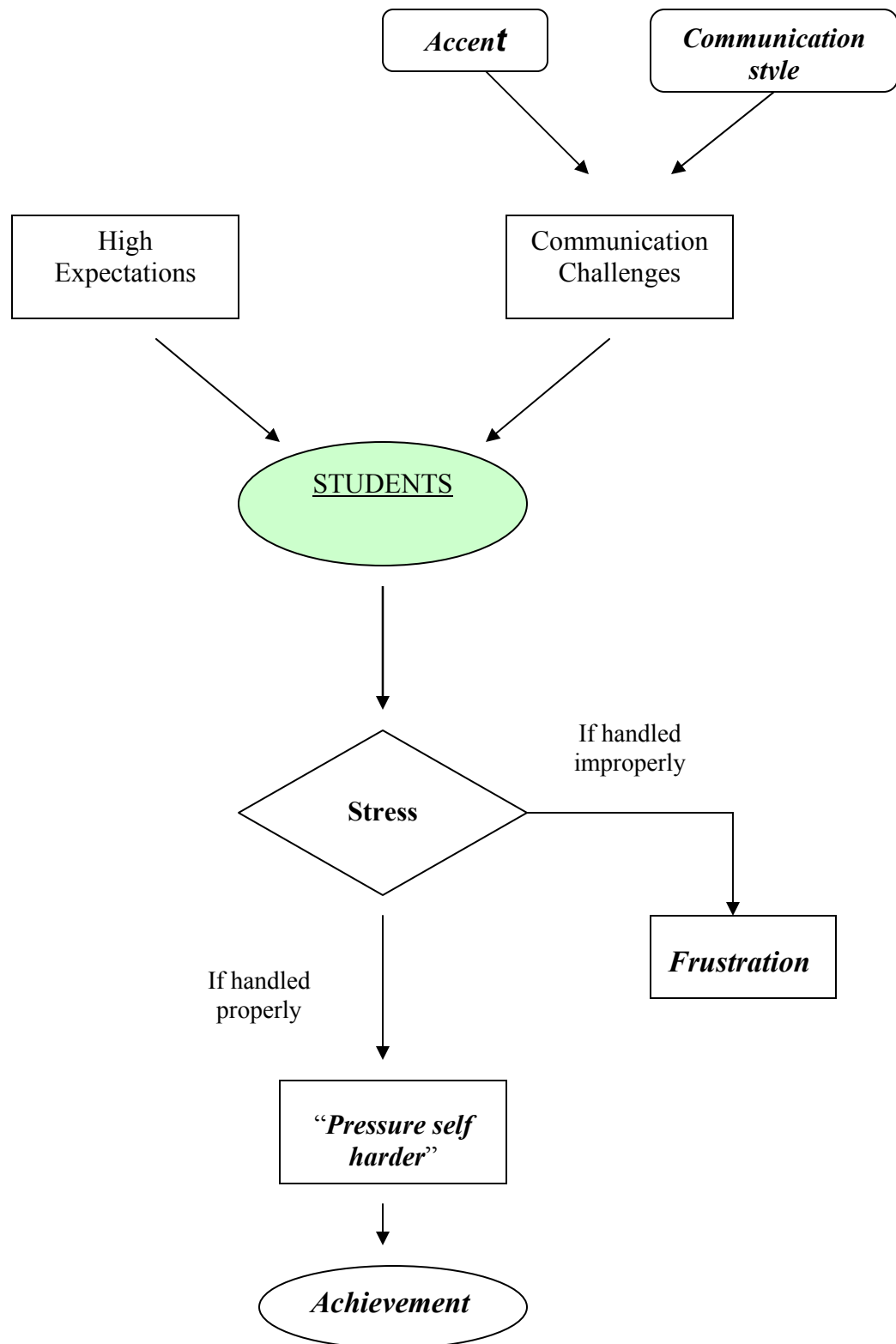
Figure 10 Challenges for the student participants (research generated by Xiaojun Wu)