

Educating Chinese, Japanese, and Korean International Students: Recommendations to American Professors

Shelly R. Roy (Doctoral Candidate)
Fairmont State University (USA)

Abstract

This paper discusses the unique barriers and learning difficulties encountered by Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students when they study at institutions of higher education in the US. These learning difficulties arise because of inability of some American professors to use discourse markers, summarize at the end of lectures, write key concepts on the blackboard, etc. (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang, 2004; Huang & Brown, 2009; Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). The author argues that by using emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998), the creating mind (Gardner, 2007), and the respectful mind (Gardner, 2007), American professors institutions of higher education in the US can enhance the learning experiences of their international students.

Keywords: International students, adjustment issues, adaptation experiences, Asian students

The number of international students seeking to attend colleges and universities in the United States has been increasing. In order for American professors to understand cultural differences and to avoid miscommunication and confusion, it is important to acknowledge international students' learning styles. These factors create the need for American professors "To be aware of the non-native English students in their classes and try to help them learn more effectively" (Huang, 2004, p. 222). The author of this paper argues that by first, understanding the barriers faced by some Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students, and then, modifying their teaching styles to incorporate emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998), the creating mind (Gardner, 2007), and the respectful mind (Gardner, 2007), American professors can ensure the success of their international students.

Selection of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean International Students

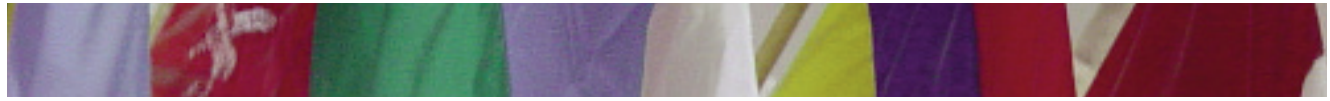
Chinese students from the People's Republic of China are the largest single group of ESL students studying at North American Universities (Huang & Brown, 2009). There are also large populations of Japanese students and Korean students studying in the United States (Huang & Brown, 2009). Therefore, because of the large populations of international students from China, Japan, and Korea, this paper is devoted to understanding the barriers international students from these countries face, and how, we, as American

professors, can modify our teaching styles in order to ensure the success of our Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students.

Barriers Faced by Chinese, Japanese, and Korean International Students

The most daunting barrier faced by some Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students, when they study at US colleges and universities is overcoming the language barrier, because unlike US students, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students are non-native speakers of English, and oftentimes, they have insufficient English proficiency (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang, 2004; Huang & Rinaldo, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). For example, these students may be able to write and read English proficiently, but they may not be able to speak the language, which can be detrimental to their learning, because they are unable to communicate their thoughts and concerns in a way that their professors can understand (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang, 2004; Huang & Rinaldo, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). This insufficient English proficiency, is exacerbated by the structure of the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean languages (Huang & Rinaldo, 2009; Johnston, 1980; Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; and Underwood & Webler, 1992), because these languages do not translate directly into English, and also have very limited morphological capabilities (Huang, 2004; and Huang & Rinaldo, 2009).

Because some Chinese, Japanese, and Korean



international students are non-native speakers of English, they also have difficulties understanding lectures, idioms, jokes, colloquialisms, and the slang expressions of some American professors (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang, 2004; Huang & Rinaldo, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students may also have difficulties understanding the long and complex sentences used by some American professors, as well as the phonological, morphological, or pragmatic reductions of the English language, that some American professors use subconsciously in their daily speech (Huang, 2004; and Huang & Rinaldo, 2009).

In addition to the daunting language barrier faced by some Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students, they also may experience learning difficulties in American institutions of higher education because of the informal teaching styles of some American professors (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang, 2004; Huang & Rinaldo, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). Some American professors do not write key concepts on the blackboard, which provides difficulties for Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students, because they must sift through a lecture, in their non-native language, translate the lecture, determine the key points of that lecture, and then, take notes on each key point (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). Some American professors also do not use discourse markers (i.e., next, then, after, and so on), which makes it harder for some Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students to differentiate one key point from another in a lecture (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students also find it difficult to learn when some their American professors do not summarize the key points at the end of each lecture, which reinforces the key aspects of the lecture (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006).

Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students may also experience learning difficulties in the classrooms of some American professors, because they become confused when the professor goes off on a tangential topic, and does not follow the textbook closely (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). Some Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students also find it difficult to work in teams and groups, which is a common occurrence in most US higher education classrooms (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; and

Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students may also prefer to stay silent in class, and not participate in class discussions, because they may be afraid of losing face in front of their peers (Huang & Rinaldo, 2009). Furthermore, some Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students may be uncomfortable with open-ended class discussions, which is a pedagogical technique used by many American professors in higher education classrooms (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). Finally, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students may also be uncomfortable with the body language of some American professors, because these students may feel that it is disrespectful to make eye contact with one's professors, which is a common and sub-conscious occurrence in the classrooms of many American professors (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006).

Recommendations to American Professors

Since Chinese, Japanese and Korean international students are among the largest international student populations in the United States (Huang & Brown, 2009), in order to ensure that they are able to succeed in the classrooms of American professors, some professors must alter their teaching styles in order to meet the needs of international learners from China, Japan, and Korea (Shin, 2001). Based upon the author's own experiences as an American professor with international students, we must, as American professors, incorporate emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998), the respectful mind (Gardner, 2007), and the creating mind (Gardner, 2007), into our pedagogical teaching methods in order to ensure the success of our Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students.

Emotional Intelligence

With the increased diversity in higher education classrooms, brought about by expanding globalization (Bass, 2008; and Hames, 2007) American college professors must incorporate emotional intelligence (EI) into their pedagogical teaching strategies because "There is little doubt that EI has a strong influence on the ultimate success or failure of a learning experience" (Wakeman, 2009, p. 44). This is especially important where Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students are concerned, because of the language

barriers and learning difficulties they face when studying in the United States (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Mortiboys, 2012; and Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010). According to Liff (2003) by adopting EI, some American professors are able to become “Aware of the social and emotional elements relevant to students’ needs” (p. 29). This then enables some American professors to “Establish a learning environment which nurtures and fosters affective and concomitant academic success” (Liff, 2003, p. 29), thereby meeting the unique needs of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students.

Self-awareness. Goleman (1998) defines self-awareness as “The ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others” (p. 88). Self-awareness is important for American professors, because if students feel “Psychologically threatened in a classroom, powerful chemicals are released in the body and brain, these are the so-called stress chemicals: cortisol and adrenaline” (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010, p. 16) that trigger the flight, fight, or freeze response. When adrenaline and cortisol release into the blood stream, learning becomes virtually impossible (Goleman, 2005; Freshwater & Stickley, 2004; Leathwood & Hey, 2009; Mortiboys, 2012; and Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010).

Therefore, in order to ensure that some Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students do not trigger the fight, flight, or freeze response, American professors must create a classroom environment that is nurturing, positive, and conducive to learning (Mortiboys, 2012). American professors can accomplish such an environment in their classrooms by eliminating “Fear, shame, guilt, and blackmail” (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010, p. 13-14), which is a common teaching tactic used by some American professors. As well as ensuring that common gestures such as “Dismissive looks, scornfully-raised eyebrows, the rolling of the eyes, or a sarcastic tone of voice” (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010, p. 86) are not expressed to Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students, because it may cause irrevocable damage to the professor/student relationship (Mortiboys, 2012). Consequently, the recommendations for American professors, where self-awareness is concerned are as follows:

1. Be cognizant of body language, because sarcasm and dismissive looks (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010) can

ruin the positive and nurturing environment of the classroom, and even cause some Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students to no longer participate in class discussions.

2. Do not force eye contact, because many Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students feel that making eye contact with their professors is disrespectful (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006).

3. Do not blackmail, fear, or shame your students, because this damages the harmonious classroom environment (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010) and can damage the learning experience for Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students.

4. Realize that professors are leaders in the classroom (Mortiboys, 2012; and Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010), and because of this, the professor’s mood affects his or her students.

5. Be cognizant of the body language of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students, because they may be trying to convey a message (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). For example, a Chinese, Japanese, or Korean student may look puzzled during a certain point in a lecture, and by practicing self-awareness, the professor would be able to notice these cues, and repeat that key point of the lecture in a different manner in order to aid learning.

Self-regulation. Goleman (1998) defines self-regulation as “The ability to think before acting” (p. 88). It is important that American professors have self-regulation so that they are able to regulate their emotions, create, and sustain professor/student relationships (Mortiboys, 2012), as well as ensure that they “Do not shout, do not go on about things (e. g. superiority of other classes), explain things and go through things students do not understand without making them feel small, and do not give up on students” (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010, p. 82). The temporary loss of self-regulation of some American professors can cause students to stop participating in class, or drop out of the class (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). A lack of self-regulation in some American professors, is detrimental to a learning-conducive environment, and can cause Chinese,



Japanese, and Korean students to even leave the US and return to their home countries (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Grown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). Therefore, the recommendations for American professors, where self-regulation is concerned are as follows:

1. Take the balcony view (Mortiboys, 2012), meaning remove yourself, temporarily from the emotionally charged situation, so that you do not cause irreparable damage to the professor/student relationship with Chinese, Japanese, and/or Korean international students.
2. Control your emotions, and do not give into your urges, this is extremely important, because many Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students dislike tension and conflict (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Grown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006) so much, that they may no longer participate in or attend lectures.
3. Always be calm and understanding, especially with Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students, because they are non-native speakers of English, and sometimes, have difficulties trying to express their thoughts (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Grown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006).
4. Make sure that you “Enjoy teaching the subject, enjoy teaching students, make lessons interesting and link them to life outside school, will have a laugh but know how to keep order, are fair, and are easy for students to talk to” (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010, p. 82). Because many students, especially international students from China, Japan, and Korea, think that learning cannot occur in an undisciplined classroom (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006).
5. Respect your Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students, and value their input and insight, because their experiences provide teachable moments that can enrich the learning experience for all involved (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006).

Motivation. Gardner (1998) defines motivation as the ability “To pursue goals with energy and persistence” (p. 88). It is important for American professors because we must challenge our Chinese,

Japanese, and Korean international students to succeed (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). However, such challenges are a balancing act, because we must not challenge our students too little, and not challenge them too much, we must find the happy medium between the two (Bass, 2008). Consequently, the recommendations for American professors, where motivation is concerned are as follows:

1. Give prompt and accurate feedback that is clear and concise (Underwood & Webler, 1992).
2. Set goals that are not too easy, and not too hard, set goals generally referred to as stretch goals (Bass, 2008; Mortiboys, 2012; and Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010).
3. To aid the success of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students, some American professors can simplify and clarify the instructions on assignments so that ambiguity no longer occurs (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006).
4. Lead by example (Bass, 2008) because when professors themselves are motivated to achieve student success, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students are motivated to achieve success as well (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; and Huang & Rinaldo, 2009).

Empathy. Gardner (1998) defines empathy as “The ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people” (p. 88). It is important for American professors to be empathetic to their Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students; because some professors forget that, these students are leaving behind everything that is familiar and traveling to another country with a language much different from their own (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Brown, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). The use of empathy would also help American professors to gain greater understanding of the challenges that Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students face while studying in US institutions of higher education, which may lead to greater leniency and a stronger desire to help these students succeed (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Mortiboys, 2010; and Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010). Consequently, the recommendations for American professors, where self-awareness is concerned are as follows:

1. One of the most important relationships in society is that between professor and student (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010), therefore, in order to help Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students succeed, many American professors should create and sustain lasting relationships with these students (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010), which ensures that they do not feel ignored, powerless, marginalized, or vulnerable (Mortiboys, 2012).

2. Be willing to change lesson plans and be willing to provide out-of-class tutoring in order to ensure the success of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students (Huang & Brown, 2009).

3. Help Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students learn English through language-building exercises, which merit integration into virtually every discipline (Mortiboys, 2012).

4. Remember that Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students are leaving everything familiar behind, and coming to a new place in order to obtain an education, therefore, American professors must ensure that their courses are of high quality, and that they are willing to help these students become acclimated to the social mores of the US (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010).

Social skills. Finally, Goleman (1998) defines social skills as “Proficiency in managing relationships and building rapport” (p. 88). Some professors have less than adequate communication skills, and are unaware of their verbal and non-verbal communication, which may offend some Chinese, Japanese, or Korean international students (Underwood & Webler, 1992). Consequently, the recommendations for American professors, where self-awareness is concerned are as follows:

1. Do not use idioms, jokes, colloquialisms, slang expressions during lectures, because these exacerbate language barriers for Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang, 2004; Huang & Rinaldo, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006).

2. Be conscious of body language, because a thumbs-up in the US may mean something positive, whereas in China, Japan, or Korea, it may be an insult (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang, 2004; Huang & Rinaldo, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006)

3. Do not force participation from Chinese, Japanese, or Korean international students, because oftentimes they feel uncomfortable participating in class discussions and are afraid of losing face in front of their peers (Huang, 2004).

4. For some Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students, making eye contact with one’s professor is impolite and disrespectful; therefore, some American professors who force eye contact with their students are burdening their Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang, 2004; Huang & Rinaldo, 2009; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006).

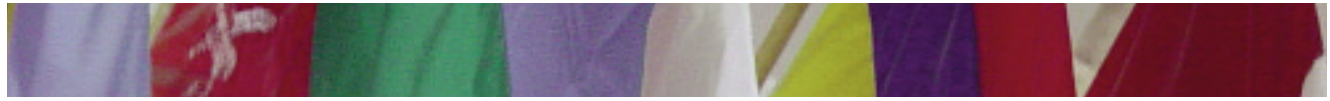
5. Some professors must learn to speak slowly, clearly, to write important information on the blackboard, and to summarize at the end of each lecture, which may help some Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students to overcome a few of the language barriers they face (Huang, 2004; and Huang & Rinaldo, 2009).

Gardner’s Five Minds

In his text *Five Minds for the Future*, Howard Gardner (2007) identifies five minds that leaders must possess in order to lead effectively, and include the disciplined mind, the synthesizing mind, the creating mind, the respectful mind, and the ethical mind (Gardner, 2007). Two of these minds, the creating mind, and the respectful mind (Gardner, 2007) are of particular importance to American professors teaching Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students, as the subsequent paragraphs demonstrate.

The creating mind. Gardner (2007) defines the creating mind as a mind that “Puts forth new ideas, poses unfamiliar questions, conjures up fresh ways of thinking, [and] arrives at unexpected answers” (p. 3). When American professors engage in the use of the creating mind, some of them are able to create novel ideas in order to ensure the success of their Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students. Some creative pedagogical strategies include:

1. Translating notes into other languages (Mortiboys, 2012). Professors can use the tools built in the Microsoft Word® word processing program, as well as Google’s Translate® feature, to obtain positive results. Some professors may also encourage their Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students to type



their assignments in their native languages, translate these assignments into English for grading, type comments on the papers, and then translate the comments into the native language of the student.

2. Professors can also contact interpreters, or students of foreign language within the college or university in order for Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students to have an interpreter (Mortiboys, 2012).

3. Some professors may also post their lecture notes online or even record their lectures via audio and/or visual recording, and make these videos available to students via a You-Tube channel (Mortiboys, 2012).

4. Some professors even experiment with instructional and pedagogical designs (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010) targeted specifically to Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students.

5. A few professors learn a few phrases in Chinese, Japanese, and/or Korean in order to appeal to their international students (Underwood & Webler, 1992).

6. Most professors even allow Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students to use dictionaries on tests to help overcome the language barrier (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006).

The respectful mind. Gardner (2007) defines the respectful mind as a mind that “Notes and welcomes differences between human individuals and between human groups, tries to understand these ‘others,’ and seeks to work effectively with them” (p. 3). By ensuring that the life experiences of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students attract the attention they deserve, many American professors have the ability to capitalize on teachable moments (Mortiboys, 2012; and Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010) and to broaden the paradigms of students and faculty members alike. Examples of professors using the respectful mind include:

1. Professors can encourage Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students to share their experiences in journals, videos, blogs, or even by sharing stories during class discussions (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). However, it is important to remember that not all Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students would welcome such an in-depth look into their life, so individual journals may be the best opportunity to learn from the experiences of these students (Huang, 2004).

2. Some American professors ensure that their Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students contact the Office of International Students at their university, in order to ensure that these students are able to receive the assistance they require (Huang & Rinaldo, 2009).

3. Some American professors, in an effort to ensure that their Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students do not experience ostracism, minimize the cultural differences between China, Japan, Korea, and the US (Shin, 2001).

4. A few American professors even anticipate the needs of their Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students by having other versions of assignment instructions available that are clearer and more concise (Mortiboys, 2012), while other American professors completely redesign the instructions for everyone.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students face language barriers because they are non-native speakers of English (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang, 2004; and Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006), and have insufficient English proficiency. This paper also demonstrates that Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students also experience language barriers because the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean languages cannot directly translate into English; these languages have limited morphology, and a structure that is atypical of the English language (Huang, 2004; Huang & Rinaldo, 2009; and Johnson, 1980). This paper also demonstrates that Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students have sometimes experience difficulties understanding the lectures of their American professors because some professors use idioms, jokes, colloquialisms, slang expressions, long and complex sentences, phonological, morphological, and pragmatic reductions of the English language (Huang, 2004; and Huang & Rinaldo, 2009).

In addition to the language barriers faced by Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students, this paper also discusses the learning difficulties experienced by these student populations, which include some American professors not using discourse markers, not writing key points on the blackboard (Huang, 2004; and Huang & Brown, 2009). In addition, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students also find it difficult to understand their American professors when the professors discuss a

tangential topic, when they do not follow the textbook closely, are assigned group projects, are asked to participate in class discussions, and are expected to make eye contact with their American professors (Huang, 2004; and Huang & Brown, 2009).

Finally, this paper recommends that American professors incorporate emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998), the creating mind (Gardner, 2007), and the respectful mind (Gardner, 2007) into their pedagogical strategies. This incorporation, paired with a willingness by American professors to alter their teaching styles in order to meet the specific needs of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international students, so that American professors can help Chinese, Japanese, and Korean international student achieve academic success and an improved learning experience in US institutions of higher education.

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About the Author:

Shelly R. Roy is a third year student in the Doctor of Executive Leadership program at Mountain State University, in Beckley (USA).
E-mail: sroy1@fairmontstate.edu

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