Secondary Korean ESL Students’ Perception on Culture Learning and Cross-cultural Adjustments

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This study explored how secondary Korean ESL students perceived English culture instruction in Korea and their cross-cultural adjustments in the United States. A total of 100 secondary Korean ESL students who moved to US from 2000 to 2006 participated in the study. Data were collected through the survey regarding students’ previous experiences of culture learning and cross-cultural differences experienced in American Society. Responses with close-ended questions were analyzed through descriptive statistics and written responses on open-ended questions were analyzed by adopting content analysis. Survey results showed that students viewed culture learning as a very important component in English instruction. However, students reported that the culture instruction they received was not enough and not very helpful in adjusting to the target culture. With regard to the cultural content, they demonstrated that more implicit aspects of culture such as values or thought patterns should be included in the textbook. Overall, secondary Korean ESL students were fairly aware of cross-cultural differences, especially in the area of cultural perspectives and practices. The findings of the study had pedagogical implications for culture instruction and for the understanding of cultural characteristic of secondary Korean ESL learners who are already immersed in the target culture.

I. INTRODUCTION

The impact of English as a global or international language has challenged the current practices of English teaching and teaching materials in ESL/EFL contexts. Especially in the area of teaching target culture, the notion of native speaker has become much more complex and has been widely questioned among scholars for its appropriateness of teaching one native speaker norm (Davies, 1991; Kachru, 1985; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996). In a similar vein, the importance of development of learner’s intercultural communicative competence has been emphasized in foreign language education (Byram,
In Korea, learning about the culture of English-speaking communities has been newly inserted in the 7th National Curriculum by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 1997. According to the cultural recommendations specified in this latest curriculum, educators are asked to describe ways of target peoples’ lives in order to help students attain successful communicative skills of English. As a result of this curriculum change, a number of empirical studies have been conducted in Korean context about culture instructions and teachers’ perspectives on teaching culture. Among these, research on teaching culture in primary school level (Hye-Ryun Kim, 2003; Young-Hee Lee, 2002; Wonkey Lee & Kyungwan Cha, 1999), instructional models developed for teaching culture (Sung-Ae Kim, 2000; Young-Hee Lee, 2002; Jeong-Won Lee & Wook-Kyung Choi, 2002), and analysis of cultural content in various textbooks (Young-Ju Han & Yeon-Suk Bae, 2005; Kang-Young Lee, 2005; WonKey Lee & Kyngwan Cha, 1999; Yunhwa Pak, 1999) are notable.

Recognizing the need of research on Korean students’ attitude and preferred ways of having cultural instruction in EFL classroom, two recent studies (Hye-Ryun Kim, 2005; Young-Ihn Koh, 2004) were conducted with Korean undergraduate or graduate students studying in English-speaking countries. Both of these studies emphasized that students’ interests and needs should be seriously taken into account in curriculum planning and the design of culture instruction. However, little is known about how Korean English learners at the secondary school level perceive and view culture instruction in Korea. Furthermore, there is a need for empirical studies on the effectiveness of culture instruction on the students’ development of cultural awareness and cross-cultural adjustments in the target culture.

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2001, cited in Younghee Kim & Greene, 2003, p. 106), Asian-Americans are one of the fastest growing groups in the United States, and more than one million of them are Korean. This statistics reflects the increasing number of Korean families coming to the U.S. for the education of their children. Recent statistics on Korean students studying abroad revealed that 16,446 students from primary through high school level went abroad to study in a new country in 2004 and about 70 percent of them preferred to go to English-speaking countries (Korea National Center for Education Statistics & Information, 2006). Considering the increase in the number of immigrant secondary school students who come to the U.S. and are already immersed in the target culture, their intercultural competence and acculturation would play a key role in English development and successful academic achievement.

Immigrant students constitute an ever increasing proportion of the school-aged population, particularly those enrolled at the secondary school level. For students at this level, the difficult transitions of adolescence combined with the challenges of learning to
express thoughts, developing a personality, and mastering academic content in a language they are still learning can be overwhelming (Gunderson, 2000). The inability to communicate ideas and express feelings confidently can result in confusion, frustration, anger, and alienation which are the phenomena of culture shock. In addition, immigrant students must balance the value systems of their native culture that are even present at home, with those of the dominant culture, which prevail at school.

Considering the need to heed learners’ voices in culture learning and the increasing number of adolescent Korean students who are currently living and studying abroad in English-speaking countries, it would be a valuable endeavor to explore the cultural dimensions of English instruction from the learners’ perspective. Therefore, this study attempted to investigate secondary Korean ESL students’ perception on culture learning and their cross-cultural adjustments in the U.S. schools. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do secondary Korean ESL students perceive their learning of English culture in Korea?
2. What are the aspects of culture shock and cross-cultural differences experienced by secondary Korean ESL students?

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. Culture in Language Teaching and Learning

The importance of culture in language learning and teaching has been widely recognized in foreign language teaching profession. Applied linguists and language teachers have become increasingly aware that a second or foreign language can rarely be learned or taught without addressing the culture of the community in which it is used. Thomas (1983, 1984) observes that nonnative speakers are often perceived to display inappropriate language behaviors and often are not even aware that they do. She cautions that violations of cultural norms of appropriateness in interactions between native and nonnative speakers often lead to sociopragmatic failure, breakdown in communication, and the stereotyping of nonnative speakers.

Recognizing the fact that language learning and teaching about target culture cannot realistically be separated, there have been a multitude of studies on what to teach and how to teach about culture in foreign language education (Byram, 1989, 1997; Hinkel, 1999; Kramsch, 1983; Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996; Valdes, 1986).

Traditionally, culture in language teaching has been regarded as curricular content, in
which language and culture are seen as complementary but separate entities. In an extensive review of the literature on culture learning in language education, Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, and Colby (cited in Lazaraton, 2003) defined culture learning as “the process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture-general knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures” (p. 215). This view of culture teaching as curricular content has been questioned and regarded as problematic since it puts teachers as the cultural informants, requiring more knowledge and personal experiences with the target culture. As a result, Kramsch, Cain, and Murphy-Lejune note that teachers “feel ill-prepared to teach culture in the same principled way they teach grammar and vocabulary” (cited in Lazaraton, 2003, p. 216).

A postmodern view of culture has emerged to remedy this situation. Seeing culture as a socially constructed practice, this view of culture assumes that language and culture are mutually constitutive. Kramsch (1993) reminds us that culture is a social practice and that language is inextricably associated with culture creation and transmission. Therefore, she emphasizes that L2 educator can no longer afford to teach culture as a disembodied set of facts, because culture is both meaning and identity. As a consequence, it may be more important for teachers and students to negotiate cultures and cultural knowledge rather than to transmit and assimilate any one predefined, prescribed construct of culture about which the teacher knows and the students learn.

Recently, the focus of culture instruction has been more toward the development of intercultural communicative competence which is based on the concept of the ‘intercultural speaker.’ According to Byram (1997), the ‘intercultural speaker’ is defined as “someone who has . . . a capacity to discover and relate to new people from other contexts for which they have not been prepared directly” (p. 32). Byram (1997) believes that the goal of culture instruction cannot be to replicate the socialization process experienced by natives of the culture, but to develop intercultural understanding. Considering the rapid growth of English as an international or global language for communication, it may be more important for teachers to develop their learners’ and their own awareness of the nature of intercultural interaction, and the skills and competences which allow them to relate to cultural differences.

2. Definition of Culture and Second Culture Acquisition

The term *culture* can have different meanings. Some language teachers use the term to refer to cultural products (e.g., literary works or works of art). Others use it to refer to background information (e.g., facts about the history or geography of countries where the target language is spoken). Traditionally, the concept of culture has been defined into two categories, “capital C culture” and “small c culture” (e.g., Flewelling, 1994; Hendon, 1980;
Seelye, 1994). The “culture with capital C” includes the study of literature, art, music and so forth which are related to the history of civilization. On the other hand, the “culture with small c” refers to the study of people’s customs, manners, and beliefs which represent the behavioral patterns or lifestyle of the people.

The foreign language teaching profession in the United States published a comprehensive set of standards for foreign language education, including standards for culture (ACTFL, 1996). They based their definition of culture on three interrelated dimensions, the three poles of an equilateral triangle: products, practices, perspectives. Seen in these broad terms, culture consists of artifacts, actions, and meanings. The three components of culture—products, practices, perspectives—reflect a similar triangular concept, described in different words by other scholars who have defined culture. They are products, behaviors, ideas (Tomalin & Stempleksi, 1993); artifacts, behaviors, knowledge (Spradley, 1980); form, meaning, distribution (Lado, 1986); and form, use, meaning (Larsen-Freeman, 1987).

Based on these three dimensions of culture, Moran (2001) added two more dimensions—people and communities—emphasizing the fact that cultural artifacts, actions, and meanings do not exist apart from the people and communities of the culture. Drawing upon these five interrelated dimensions, Moran (2001, p. 24) defined culture as follows:

Culture is the evolving way of life of a group of persons, consisting of a shared set of practices associated with a shared set of products, based upon a shared set of perspectives on the world, and set within specific social contexts.

Recognizing the fact that no language is culture-free, it is apparent that learning a second language implies some degree of learning a second culture. Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) defined the culture learning process as a “a way of perceiving, interpreting, feeling, being in the world, …and relating to where one is and who one meets” (p. 432). Brown (2000) even suggested that second language learning involves the acquisition of a second identity, which is sometimes called as acculturation process.

As second language learners encounter a different culture, they will normally undergo various degrees of cross-cultural miscommunication, ranging from beginning misunderstandings to serious clashes and profound culture shock. Describing culture shock as the second of four successive stages of the acculturation process, Brown (2000) defined it as “phenomena ranging from mild irritability to deep psychological panic and crisis…with feelings of estrangement, anger, hostility, frustration, homesickness, and even physical illness” (p. 183). Emphasizing the fact that culture shock can occur in any situation where an individual is forced to adjust to an unfamiliar social system, Hofstede, Pedersen, and Hofstede (2002, p. 22) provided six indicators that one is experiencing culture shock:
1) Familiar cues about how others are supposed to behave are missing, or the familiar cues now have a different meaning.
2) Values that the person considers good, desirable, beautiful and worthy are not respected by the host.
3) One feels disoriented, anxious, depressed, or hostile.
4) One is dissatisfied with the new ways.
5) Social skills that used to work do not seem to work any longer.
6) There is a sense this horrible, nagging culture shock will never go away.

Although a number of people experience psychological blocks and other inhibiting effects of the second culture, most learners can find positive benefits in cross-cultural living or learning experiences. As a result of the culture shock process, learners can gain a new perspective for themselves and understand the culturally derived values, attitudes and outlooks of other people.

3. Relevant Studies on Learners’ Opinions on Culture Learning

There have not been many studies investigating learners’ opinions about culture learning and instruction in EFL/ESL contexts. Recently, a lot of empirical studies of cultural dimension of English education have been documented on the analysis of cultural content or cultural biases in ESL/EFL materials (e.g., Alptekin, 1993; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Ilieva, 2000; Kang-Young Lee, 2005; Young-Ju Han & Yeon-Suk Bae, 2005; WonKey Lee & Kyngwhan Cha, 1999; Yunhwa Pak, 1999) and on the role of ESL or nonnative English teachers as cultural mediators (Harklau, 1999; Lazaraton, 2003). With regard to learners’ attitudinal changes in second culture acquisition, Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) presented the results of a classroom study that shows the effectiveness of an instructional program that helps learners’ development of tolerance and understanding of other cultures.

Although empirical research on the learners’ opinion of culture instruction is very rare, two recent studies are notable. Hye-Ryun Kim (2005) conducted a survey with Korean students studying in the UK regarding culture teaching. She also explored how students’ experiences in the UK had influenced their perceptions of culture, in particular, British and Korean culture. The findings revealed that the current culture teaching in Korea is scant and more emphasis should be given to implicit culture in terms of the content of culture teaching. She concluded that the goals of culture teaching need to be changed in a way to improve intercultural communicative competence by exposing learners in diverse English using contexts.

Similarly, Young-In Koh’s (2004) study examined Korean students’ opinions about cultural instruction in learning English. The study specifically investigated opinions on the
importance of cultural instruction, as well as the preferred use of various technological and non-technological sources for learning culture. By conducting on-line survey with Korean graduate students who are already immersed in the target culture, she found that students viewed culture instruction as a less significant component in their English instruction. However, they demonstrated great interest in having culture lessons, particularly, in the aspects of cultural practices and perspectives. The study found that Korean students who participated in the survey regarded television as an efficient and beneficial tool of learning about American culture.

However, only a minimal amount of research has been carried out on the effectiveness of culture learning and learners’ cross-cultural learning experiences. Writers such as Jin and Cortazzi (1998) have examined the effects cultural expectations the learner brings on classroom interaction; others have analyzed factors to successful cross-cultural encounters (Morgan, 1998) as well as the intercultural perceptions of university language learners being abroad (Coleman, 1998). Therefore, the study reported here seeks to fill this void in the research literature by examining the learners’ perception on culture learning and their cross-cultural awareness and barriers presented by two cultures in contact.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

1. Participants

The participants of the study were 100 Korean ESL students attending high schools in the Southern California in the U.S. All the participants were native speakers of Korean and had prior English instruction in Korea before they moved to the U.S. At the time this study was conducted in May of 2006, most of them were recent arrivals in the U.S., between 6 months to 6 years of residence, with the average of 3.5 years. As represented in Table 1, there were 31 males (31%) and 69 females (69%). The school levels they had attended before coming to the U.S. were mostly upper elementary (44%) and middle school (46%). In addition, there were students who already had part of their high schooling in Korea (10%). More than half (N=55, 55%) of the participants have traveled to any English-speaking countries while living in Korea.

Initially 114 students participated for the survey, but students whose length of residence in U.S. was longer than 6 years or who failed to complete all the items in the questionnaire were excluded from the data analysis.
TABEL 1
Demographic Data of Participants (N= 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Current grade level in US</th>
<th>Length of residence in US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No / %</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Instrument and Data Collection

A three-page questionnaire which consisted of background questionnaire and survey questionnaire was used for the current study. The survey questionnaire was written in Korean and composed of closed, Likert-type questions and open-ended questions (see Appendix). The first section of the survey was framed on the research questions regarding students’ perception and opinion toward their previous culture learning and teaching while in Korea. The second part has more to do with the questions based on their current experiences living in the U.S., such as the influence of previous culture learning on cross-cultural adjustments, degree of culture shock, etc. In addition, open-ended questions including examples of culture shock, comparison between L1 and L2 culture, and the difficulties in American schooling were asked. In developing questionnaire items, the researcher referred to the previous studies on culture learning and instruction (Hye-Ryun Kim, 2005; Young-In Koh, 2004) to compare the results based on different group of students.

The questionnaires were administered to secondary Korean ESL students through different networks and resources, either during local high school ESL classes with a large population of Korean students or during the small group meeting after teenage Sunday worship services in a local Korean church in the Southern California area.

3. Data Analyses

The data analysis process consisted of two parts, close-ended and open-ended questionnaire items analysis. Close-ended forms, which included multiple-choice items and Likert-type items, were coded into numbers and were calculated to see the frequency and mean scores for each item. Students’ written responses from open-ended questions were analyzed by using content analysis technique specified by Lincoln and Cuba (1985, pp. 336-351) through unitizing and categorizing process to find the emerging pattern of meaningful information. Specific procedure for content analysis of qualitative data from open-ended questions can be summarized as follows:

1) Unitizing: Units of information stated as a sentence, a phrase, or even a word are entered onto each index card.
2) Categorizing: With the pile of cards that has resulted from the unitizing process, each card is placed into the same “look-alike” or “feel-alike” categories.
3) Labeling the emergence of regularities: Then, a unifying theme is driven by giving a name that catches the essence of each category.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. How Do Secondary Korean ESL Students Perceive Their Learning of English Culture in Korea?

As a part of background information on students’ learning of English, students were asked to write which English skill they think is the most important one. Based on the total number of each skill students have entered, a rank order was derived from the frequency. As can be seen from Table 2, students considered Speaking as the most important skill to develop. However, their perception of importance on other areas changed as they receive schooling in the target culture. That is, students reported Grammar as the second important skill and Writing as the least important while studying in Korea. However, they found Vocabulary as the second and Writing as more important skill to develop in the U.S. The results suggest that these students may be influenced by the ways English skills are used in content area reading and essay writings in American high schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank order</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While in Korea</td>
<td>Speaking (38.6%)</td>
<td>Grammar (27.2%)</td>
<td>Vocabulary (22.8%)</td>
<td>Listening (7.9%)</td>
<td>Reading (1.8%)</td>
<td>Writing (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now in U.S.</td>
<td>Speaking (39.2%)</td>
<td>Vocabulary (18.5%)</td>
<td>Grammar (15.4%)</td>
<td>Writing (11%)</td>
<td>Listening (10%)</td>
<td>Reading (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 reports students’ perceived importance of culture learning and instruction in English education. Nearly three-fourths of participants (73%) indicated that culture learning and instruction is moderately or very important. However, when asked about the degree of culture instruction they received in English classroom, only 39% of respondents indicated that they learned about English culture to some degree or a lot (See Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1=not important at all, 2= not very important, 3=average, 4= moderately important, 5=very important)
TABLE 4
Students’ Perception on the Amount of English Culture Learning in the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>To some degree</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of students</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to find out students’ perception on the aspects of cultural contents in the textbook, respondents were asked to indicate cultural elements they learned and want to see included in the English textbook. Originally, there were 16 different cultural elements listed in the questionnaire (see Appendix Questionnaire items 3 & 7), but similar elements were combined and resulted in 9 categories to make the comparison rather clear. A comparison of responses on the two set of questions is shown in Table 5. Students indicated that they learned a lot about forms of greeting, daily lifestyle, and food in the target culture, but not much about the values or thought patterns. When asked about the cultural contents they want included in the textbook, students chose more cultural contents in terms of the values, thought patterns, and cultural connotations of words or expressions in the textbook. The results are similar to Hye-Ryun Kim’s (2005) study with Korean college or graduate students in U.K., which also reported that more implicit cultural contents such as thought systems and behavioral patterns needed to be included in culture instruction.

TABLE 5
A Comparison of Cultural Contents Students Learned and Want to Learn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Contents</th>
<th>Q3 N (%)</th>
<th>Q7 N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Forms of greeting, introduction, rules of speaking</td>
<td>101 (31.0)</td>
<td>116 (23.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Daily lifestyle, holidays, family life</td>
<td>66 (20.2)</td>
<td>112 (22.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Food, eating-out, invitations</td>
<td>51 (15.6)</td>
<td>42 (8.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. History, geography, education</td>
<td>28 (8.6)</td>
<td>30 (6.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Favorite pastime activities, sports, tourism</td>
<td>22 (6.7)</td>
<td>16 (3.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Literature, music, art</td>
<td>18 (5.5)</td>
<td>20 (4.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Values, thought patterns</td>
<td>14 (4.3)</td>
<td>89 (18.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Use of gestures, body language</td>
<td>14 (4.3)</td>
<td>24 (4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Cultural connotations of words &amp; expressions</td>
<td>12 (3.7)</td>
<td>46 (9.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>326 (100)</td>
<td>495 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q3: What aspects of cultural content have you learned in the classroom?  
Q7: What aspects of cultural content do you think need to be included in the textbook?

Two questions were included in the questionnaire in order to examine students’ perceptions on the use of the instructional techniques in the classroom and the use of resource materials outside classroom. Figure 1 shows students’ perception on culture teaching tools employed by English teachers in the classroom. Video and CD (27.5%) were
the most used materials in culture instruction, followed by teacher’s explanation of cultural information in the textbook (21%) and supplemental reading materials other than textbooks (14.8%). Students also reported that the internet (5.7%) was not one of the favored culture teaching techniques when they received English education in Korea.

**FIGURE 1**  
*Culture Teaching Tools Used by English Teachers in the Classroom*

Figure 2 shows the results of students’ preferred resources for learning about the target culture outside the classroom. Again, watching television and video (28%) were the favorite sources of culture learning, followed by instruction at private English academy (20.4%). The rate of students’ own use of Internet (16.6%) for culture learning was higher than the use of Internet in the classroom (6.7%). This finding is similar to previous research (Young-In Koh, 2004) which found the television to be the most popular cultural learning tool among Korean students pursuing their graduate degrees in the U.S.

**FIGURE 2**  
*Resources for Learning English Culture Other than Classroom*
As the last part of students’ perception on culture learning, students were asked to indicate their opinions on the degrees of usefulness of prior culture learning in the process of their cross-cultural adjustments to a new culture. Table 6 reveals that more than half of the respondents (58%) believed that their prior culture learning or instruction was not very helpful in adjusting to target culture (M=2.38). Only 17% perceived prior culture instruction as helpful. This finding was not surprising, since the respondents already indicated they didn’t have enough culture learning experiences about target culture while in Korea. In addition to the lack of culture learning, the finding seems to indicate that there are many nonspecific and unexpected cross-cultural encounters where previous learning no longer applies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students’ Perceived Helpfulness of Prior Culture Instruction on Cross-Cultural Adjustments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1=not helpful at all, 2= not very helpful, , 3= average, 4= moderately helpful, 5=very helpful, NR= no response)

2. What are the Aspects of Culture Shock and Cross-Cultural Differences Experienced by Secondary Korean ESL Students?

Since the respondents were already immersed and came into contact with another culture, they were asked to provide their culture shock experiences as a result of their own cross-cultural learning process. As shown in Table 7, more than three-fourths of students (76%) revealed that they have experienced culture shock a few or many times. Only two students reported that they never experienced culture shock. The result of content analysis of incidents of culture shock is shown in Table 8. About 20% of culture shock examples was related to their frustration and failure in communication in the classrooms or in the fast food restaurants. Students also reported that they had difficulty in understanding sociocultural rules of speaking such as exchanging greetings between strangers and the meaning of “What’s up?” or “Bless you.” It is interesting to note that these Korean students found it quite surprising to encounter students from diverse ethnic backgrounds at U.S. schools they are currently enrolled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Students’ Experiences in Culture Shock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 8
Content Analysis of Students’ Culture Shock

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>No. of units</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Examples of Students’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication failure and frustration</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>Communication apprehension in classroom (anxious, shameful, shy, depressed), ordering food in restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic failure/Rules of speaking</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>The meaning of “Bless you,” “What’s up?” Responding to formulaic greetings and complimenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social practices and custom</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>Tipping system, Dutch pay, party and special occasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and education system</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.66</td>
<td>Students’ moving to different classes, students’ behavior in classroom, individualized lessons,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinesthetic, body language</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14.55</td>
<td>Hugging friends, physical contact between boyfriend and girlfriend, making eye-contact with teacher,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and ethnic diversity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Diversity of ethnic groups in US, feeling of discrimination because of poor English,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways of thinking, Values</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Not asking private questions, too individualistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 shows the result of students’ awareness in cross-cultural differences between Korea and U.S. as a result of living and studying abroad. Here, the ‘incidents’ or ‘units’ of student responses on cultural differences were categorized into products, practices, and perspectives following ACTFL’s (1996) framework on culture. Students were fairly aware of cross-cultural differences, especially in the area of cultural perspectives rather than cultural products or practices. Since the responses for this cross-cultural awareness somewhat overlap with the responses on the subsequent question on each culture, specific examples are not provided in Table 9. Even though these teenage Korean students spend most of their time at school and interact with their peer groups, they seemed to gain a new perspective of American culture in terms of systems of thinking and acting.

TABLE 9
Dimensions of Cross-Cultural Differences Perceived by Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of culture</th>
<th>Cultural products</th>
<th>Cultural practices</th>
<th>Cultural perspectives</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of units</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the manifestation of cultural differences, students were also asked to write about the positive aspects of each society, that is, Korea and U.S. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate students’ perception on the good parts of Korean and American culture. As shown in Figure 3, more than 50% of student responses were related to close personal bonds between

2 In content analysis, a unit refers to the smallest piece of information or chunk of meaning that can stand by itself. A unit may be a simple factual sentence, a phrase, or may be as much as a paragraph.
people and this reflects the characteristic of Korean society as “collectivistic” which is categorized by Hofstede (2001). More specifically, students mentioned “in-group” orientation of Korean society; for example, showing deference toward elderly people, close friendship between friends, etc. Even though these secondary Korean students are studying in the U.S., the results indicate that they are still emotionally attached to Korean culture and miss their close personal relationship with friends and teachers. The second good part of Korean culture was easy accessibility to public transportation system (18%). These Korean students felt it really uncomfortable not being able to move around by themselves, when compared to their teenage life in Korea where they could use public transportation system to go places.

As for the American culture, students preferred educational system and school environment as their first choice in the positive aspects of American society (46%). Examples of school system are: student-centered and individualized curriculum, less pressure on study, no corporal punishment, etc. Also, they viewed American values and ways of thinking as the second place. Individual freedom, respect for personal opinions, rationalism and diverse opportunities for career were some of the other responses reported by students.

FIGURE 3
Students’ Perception on Positive Aspects of Korean Culture

FIGURE 4
Students’ Perception on Positive Aspects of American Culture
TABLE 10
Most Difficult Part of Schooling in U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>No. of units</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Examples of Students’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 English</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>Communication barrier, difficulty in oral presentation, lack of confidence in speaking &amp; writing essays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Relationship with friends</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>Unable to mix with peer groups, difficulty in making American friends,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Racial discrimination</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>Being called as “FOB”; Discrimination against Asian people,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Academic achievement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>SAT score, managing good GPA, science vocabulary, taking advanced courses for college entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Adjustment to school system</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>Difficulty in participating at school activities, conferencing with school counselor,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Homesick</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>Separation from family, unable go place to place by themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Management of time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Too much free time after school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, students were asked to write about the difficulties they experienced in a new culture to understand their transitional and emotional difficulties in cross-cultural adjustments. As shown in Table 10, a sense of belonging to American school community was deterred by the lack of confidence in English skill and the opportunity to interact with American friends was rather limited. Several informants from my personal communication revealed that they felt it very hard to make new American friends as they went upper grade level of public schooling. Considering the emotional needs of these teenagers, secondary Korean ESL students seemed to expect similar peer group supports and relationships with American friends as they used to have with Korean friends.

V. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate how secondary Korean ESL students perceived their prior culture learning experiences in Korea and cross-cultural experiences in the United States. Participants were mostly recent arrivals in U.S., with their length of residence from 6 months to 6 years. All of these students had prior schooling in Korea and received

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3 FOB (abbreviation of “Fresh off the boat”) is a somewhat derogatory slang phrase applied to people of foreign nationality and commonly used for people who have not yet assimilated into the host culture. Interestingly, Korean students in American schools were even divided into two groups whether they were born in Korea or in the U.S. In the questionnaire response, students called the first group as “FOB” and the latter as “Yitaewon.”
compulsory English education from the 3rd grade in elementary school. As the survey results indicated, secondary Korean ESL students viewed culture learning and instruction as an important component in English education in Korea even though they didn’t get a lot of culture instruction in the classroom. They also revealed that more than half of the cultural contents covered in the classroom were related to the cultural products or cultural practices. On the contrary to the cultural contents covered, they thought that more implicit aspects of cultural content needed to be included in the future textbook.

Overall, the respondents did not think that their previous culture learning was very helpful in their adjustments to target culture. Even though more than half of the respondents in the present study had already been exposed to English-speaking countries in a short duration of time before moving to the U.S., most of them experienced a culture shock and they seemed to have great difficulty in adjusting to new school culture. When asked about their perceptions on cultural differences, students were able to articulate the positive characteristics of each culture based on the cross-cultural learning experiences.

The results of the study address some pedagogical implications for the teaching of culture in EFL classrooms as well as in ESL classrooms. It has already been mentioned that students’ interests and needs should be seriously taken into account in curriculum planning and cultural instruction. Findings from this study revealed that students rated learning culture as very important even though their previous culture learning didn’t contribute much to their adjustment to the target culture. Therefore, the first recommendation is for curriculum planners and educational practitioners to redefine the goals of culture instruction and re-examine the cultural contents and assessment tools to enhance students’ cultural competence. The second recommendation is for teachers to emphasize the importance of learning culture and to plan culture lessons that reflect students’ interests and cross-cultural encounters. Rather than just knowing about the cultural facts or information, learners need to develop an understanding of the underlying values and attitudes of the culture by comparing them with their own culture. Finally, teaching culture should focus on developing intercultural communicative competence as suggested by Byram (1997), by utilizing different categories of instructional context, such as classroom, simultaneous field experiences (not just preparing for the future) and students’ independent learning on target culture.

The results of the present study indirectly revealed that as a result of culture shock process, these students seem to have gained a new perspective on their own culture and understand the culturally derived values and attitudes of other people. As was noted by Adler (cited in Brown, 2000, p. 184), culture shock can be viewed more positively as a profound cross-cultural learning experience. Therefore, teachers with secondary Korean ESL students can help students turn such an experience into one of increased cultural and self-awareness. The study also showed that secondary Korean students had limited opportunities to meet with native English speakers because of their limited English
proficiency, or for some other social or cultural reasons. Considering the fact that interactions with native speakers would be the most important way to improve their English and their learning of target culture, it is clear that school personnel in American schools must develop programs that allow and encourage these immigrant students to meet, communicate with, and interact with native English speakers.

The present study has some limitations. First of all, Korean ESL students who took part in the study were all from one region of the U.S., which had large population of Korean immigrants and diverse ethnic groups including Hispanics and other Asians. Therefore, the results may be different from students in other areas of U.S. or any other English-speaking countries. Second, the length of residence in the target culture was not considered as a factor influencing the responses of students. It could be possible that cross-cultural experiences such as culture shock or the perception of cultural differences might be different between students with less than a year and students with more than 2 to 3 years in the target culture. Therefore, future research should attempt to examine the influence of students’ length of residence in the target culture with more different groups of Korean students in ESL context.

REFERENCES


In C. Park, A. Goodwin, & S. Lee (Eds.), *Asian American identities, families, and schooling* (pp. 105-131). Greenwich, CT: Information Publishing.


설 문 지

* 다음의 설문지는 최근 미국에 와서 중고등학교에 다니는 한국인 학생들의 영어권 문화에 대한 학습과 문화적응에 관하여 알아보려는 것입니다. 가능한 한 본인의 의견과 경험을 바탕으로 솔직하게 기입(한글 또는 영어로) 또는 체크(V) 표시해 주시면 감사하겠습니다.

배경정보
1. 현재 미국 학년: ______________
2. 현재 다니고 있는 미국학교명: ______________ 소재도시: ______________
3. 성별: 남 (       ) 여 (        )
4. 미국에 도착한 년도는 (year of arrival): ______________
5. 미국 오기 전 한국서 다닌던 학교: ______________ 당시 학년: ______________
6. 미국 오기 이전에 미국이나 외국에 여행/거주한 경험이 있다 ( ) 없다 ( )
   ⇒ 있다면 어디서? ______________ 얼마나동안? ______________
7. 미 국 오기 전에 한국에서 학교수업 이외에 영어공부를 어떻게 했습니까? 해당사항에 모두 (V) 해주세요.
8. 영어회화학원 ( ) 보습학원 ( ) 미 국인과 회화수업 ( ) 영어학습이 ( )
   영어개인지도 ( ) 기타 (기입해주세요): ______________
9. 한국서 영어공부 할 때 본인이 가장 중요하게 생각한 영어 skill은? (예: speaking, grammar, listening, vocabulary 등)
10. 현재 미국 와서 공부하면서 본인이 가장 중요하게 생각하는 영어 skill은?
   (예: speaking, grammar, listening, vocabulary 등)

문화학습에 대하여
1. 영어교육에서 문화학습(culture learning)이나 문화지도(culture instruction)가 어느 정도 중요하다고 생각합니까?
   (1) 전혀 중요하지 않다 (  ) (2) 별로 중요하지 않다 (  )
   (3) 보통이다 (  ) (4) 대체로 중요하다 (  ) (5) 매우 중요하다 (  )

2. 한국에서 학교 영어수업시간에 영미문화에 대해 어느 정도 배웠습니까?
   (1) 전혀 배우지 못했다 (  ) (2) 별로 배우지 못했다 (  )
   (3) 어느 정도 배웠다 (  ) (4) 아주 많이 배웠다 (  )

3. 배운 적이 있다면, 어떤 문화적 내용에 대해 배웠습니까? 해당 사항에 모두 체크(V)해주세요 (배운 적이 없으면 답하지 않아도 됩니다).
   (1) 인사 및 소개 (  ) (2) 역사와 지리 (  ) (3) 문학, 음악, 미술 (  )
   (4) 음식과 음료 (  ) (5) 교통 및 관광 (  ) (6) 일상생활 (  )
   (7) 정치, 사회적 관습 (  ) (8) 가족 (  ) (9) 여가 생활 및 스포츠 (  )
   (10) 영어표현(단어, 구, 문장)과 관련하여 우리말로 영미문화에 대해 설명 (  )
   (11) 의식소통 예절 (  ) (12) 상호방식 (  ) (13) 인사 및 소개 (  )
   (14) 신념과 가치관 (  ) (15) 역할극이나 게임 (  ) (16) 영어학원 (  )

4. 한국에서 영어수업시간에 선생님이 문화에 대해 가르칠 때 주로 사용한 방법은? 가장 자주 사용한 것 3가지에 V 표시해주세요.
   (1) 영미문화의 실제, 그림, 사진 등 활용 (  )
   (2) 영미문화의 실물, 그림, 사진 등 활용 (  )
   (3) 영미문화의 실물, 그림, 사진 등 활용 (  )
   (4) 영미문화의 실물, 그림, 사진 등 활용 (  )
   (5) 영미문화의 실물, 그림, 사진 등 활용 (  )
   (6) 영미문화의 실물, 그림, 사진 등 활용 (  )

5. 한국에서 학교수업 이외 개인적으로 어떻게 영미문화에 대해 알게 되었는지 다음 중 가장 많이 활용한 방법에 V 표시 해주세요.
   (1) 책, 잡지, 신문 등 출판물을 통해서 (  ) (2) TV, 비디오 등을 통해서 (  )
   (3) 인터넷을 통해서 (  ) (4) 영어원어민들(native speaker)과의 접촉을 통해서 (  )
   (5) 영어학원을 통해서 (  ) (6) 거의 알 기회가 없었다 (  )
6. 영어교과서를 통해 영어권 문화에 대해 배운 것이 미국에 와서 학교 생활하거나 문화 적응할 때 얼마나 도움이 되었다고 생각하십니까?
(1) 전혀 도움이 안된다 ( ) (2) 별로 도움이 안된다 ( ) (3) 보통이 다 ( ) (4) 대체로 도움이 된다 ( ) (5) 아주 많이 도움이 된다 ( )

7. 한국의 영어교과서에 영미문화 교육에 대한 내용으로 꼭 포함되어야 한다고 생각하는 것 5가지를 골라 V 표시 해주세요.
(1) 인사 및 소개 ( ) (2) 역사와 지리 ( ) (3) 문학, 음악, 미술 ( ) (4) 음식과 음료 ( ) (5) 교통 및 관광 ( ) (6) 일상생활 ( ) (7) 병절, 사회적 관습 ( ) (8) 가족 ( ) (9) 여가 생활 및 스포츠 ( ) (10) 정치, 교육 제도 ( ) (11) 외식, 초대 예절 ( ) (12) 몸짓과 신체접촉 ( ) (13) 영어단어나 표현이 가지는 문화적 의미 ( ) (14) 사고방식 ( ) (15) 신념과 가치관 ( ) (16) 의사소통 예절 ( )

8. 미국에 와서 미국문화에 대한 지식이나 적응력 부족으로 문화충격이나 어려움을 겪은 적이 있습니까?
(1) 여러 번 있었다 ( ) (2) 몇 번 있었다 ( ) (3) 별로 없었다 ( ) (4) 전혀 없었다 ( )
=> 있었다면, 구체적인 예를 써 주세요.

9. 미국에 와서 한국문화와 미국문화의 차이점에 대해 생각해보거나 느낀 점이 있다면 무엇인지 써 주세요.

10. 한국과 미국의 문화적 차이에 대한 질문으로, 미국 문화에 대해 가장 좋아하는 점은 무엇이고, 한국 문화에 대해 가장 좋아하는 점은 무엇입니까?

11. 지금 미국에서 학교 생활하면서 가장 힘든 부분은 무엇입니까?

* 성의껏 응답해 주셔서 감사합니다.

Applicable levels: secondary education
Key words: culture learning, culture instruction, cross-cultural adjustments, culture shock
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